

Making a Mission Trip a Spiritual Experience

Purpose of Mission Trip: To allow God to impact the lives of participants as they serve people.

Purpose of Mission Team Leaders: To coordinate the logistics, training, and ministry of the mission team while intentionally guiding the spiritual growth of team members.

LowCountry Ministries (LCM) Goal for Mission Team Growth: To provide the structure mission volunteers need to fully experience God's spirit of growth as they move outside their comfort zones and serve people in Christ's name.

To facilitate the spiritual growth of mission volunteers, LowCountry Ministries commits to:

1. *Provide a Prayer and Devotional Journal for all mission volunteers.* This journal will follow the typical mission team week schedule. Encourage volunteers to spend time each day in prayer, devotion, and journaling. These disciplines will allow the daily mission service to take on a more spiritual nature. This journal will become a witness to God's work in the lives of team members during this week.
2. Provide adequate training for mission volunteers. LCM will train all mission team leaders for their term of service. Being well prepared allows participants to focus more on God than trying to remember what comes next.
3. Provide balanced supervision of mission volunteers. LCM will provide ministry supervision during the volunteer's mission service. This supervision will include four specific contacts:

Orientation: Before your team's first ministry activity, a LCM mission team supervisor will spend time welcoming your team to the field, introducing them to LCM, and orienting them to the field. This time is used to begin building a relationship with the team, answering any questions the team may have, and including any last minute information about the area or the ministry. This time will be fun and informative.

First Day Supervision: LCM will provide a local coordinator during your first day of ministry. The coordinator will make sure everything goes as planned at your ministry site. If there are any problems or changes that need to be made, speak to this coordinator.

Ministry Contact: A LCM supervisor will make contact during the week to make sure everything is going well. Of course, if you ever need assistance, please feel free to call immediately.

Commissioning: A LCM supervisor will lead each team in a time of commissioning on the last day of mission service. This will be a time of reflection on the mission service, a challenge for future mission service in your home community, and an opportunity for LCM to send your team home as missionaries.

Ideas for helping mission team leaders facilitate spiritual growth among members:

Before the Mission Trip:

1. Build spiritual preparation into the training process.
2. Filter participants between those wanting to work and grow and those wanting to vacation and play.
3. Prepare and train and train and prepare some more.
4. Recruit prayer partners from the home church and within the mission team.
5. Work to prepare the team for the opportunity of spiritual growth.

During the Mission Trip:

1. Work to build team unity throughout the trip to the mission field. Be creative. Strong team unity provides a solid foundation for spiritual growth.
2. Before the first ministry day arrives, lead the mission team in discussing their fears and anxieties and excitement about the first day. Do not get so caught up in being prepared that you forget the team members.
3. Have different team members lead morning devotion before ministry begins.
4. Provide debriefing opportunities throughout the day to give members a chance to talk about their ministry and what God is doing in their lives.
5. Be intentional about speaking with individual members about what God is doing in their lives through this experience.
6. Offer unique opportunities of worship at different times during the week.
7. Assign prayer partners.
8. Have a time of dedication and spiritual processing before the team leaves.

After you return:

Bring the team together a few weeks or months after the mission experience to continue the debriefing. What has God taught you through this experience that continues to impact you? People go on mission trips to be used by God to change the lives of other people. Many times, it is the mission volunteer's life whose life is most radically changed. Mission team leaders must recognize this dual nature of missions in order to make the most of the mission experience. Leaders must put together the logistics of the trip, train the team for its various ministries, prepare the team spiritually for the experience, and lead the team in processing the work God does in team member lives through the mission process.