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Cross Cultural Missions Training Guide: Leading Volunteer
Teams Effectively, 2nd edition

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Cross Cultural Missions Guide: Leading Volunteer Teams Effectively

Purpose: Once, during the years when we were living in Nigeria, my wife and I were doing an orientation with a volunteer team which had come into Nigeria on a vision trip. They were hopefully going to select a people group to adopt and begin to make frequent trips into that tribe to see the Gospel planted among the people. We had previously emailed a copy of our “Nigeria Volunteer Guide” to the pastor who was serving as the team leader. He was supposed to have shared the information with the team members. As we began to work through the orientation, we noticed that the team members were exchanging glances and looking confused and even asking questions which they should have already had answers to. It soon became obvious that the pastor had never felt it necessary to share the contents of the volunteer guide with the ladies who were on the trip. In fact, he had not shared it with anyone! The guide contained important information for the women as to how they should dress and act in the Islamic culture of northern Nigeria. The pastor was in the hot seat when it became known to the group that he had received the info but not shared it! And the group was not really prepared for the experiences which lay before them. However, we spent extra time with the ladies and got things in order and lined out for the remainder of the trip.

It was no surprise that this church failed to adopt a people group in Nigeria, nor did they return on another mission trip of any kind. They had been badly prepared by their trusted leader. There is never a reason that this should happen. This simple guide is intended to help you avoid such a scenario.

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Chapter 1

Personal Preparation

In the book of Judges 5:1 Deborah is beginning her prayer song of praise and she says, “When leaders lead in Israel and when the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the Lord!” (NKJV). In the NIV it is quoted as “When the princes in Israel take the lead...”.

When leaders get it right and the people willingly offer themselves, watch out! God IS going to do something good!

In order for you as a leader to get it right, you must first prepare yourself properly. This section is for you. *Don't skip it!* Pray right now that God will show you the things here which you need to pay special attention to. If you are so busy that simply reading through this is too tense for you... stop now. Set it aside and come back to it when you are ready and able to be serious about it. If you don't prepare yourself properly to lead your team, *then you are disrespecting those who have called on you to lead in this effort.*

Jesus said to love others as you love yourself (Mark 12:31). You would never think of going into a difficult and possibly stressful or dangerous situation without adequately preparing yourself. Why? Because you care about you! Well, you are commanded to care about others just as much as you care about yourself. Don't be guilty of failing at that, so take the time to pray and think through the areas listed here as well as any other areas God's Holy Spirit brings to your mind to consider.

A. Preparing spiritually:

For those of us who serve as leaders in God's work on the mission fields of this world, here hides the root cause of our failures. If we do not continually strive to be faithful to the One who called us and gave us the privilege to serve in this capacity, then we court disaster. (King Saul in 1st Samuel 13:13). It is simply a matter of time before we fall (Proverbs 14:14a). Don't be like this. Begin now to pray for God's guidance and wisdom. True wisdom comes only from God and that is what we need to be successful leaders (James 1:5-6).

Resources: When it comes to resources, the main thing I use is God's Word. Study it. Learn it by heart. Be able to tell the stories that are there. If you don't already do it, have a daily devotional time of reading and prayer. My own is as long or as short as I and the Lord agree on. I have practiced reading the complete Bible through a few times. At other times, I have worked to read just the New Testament through. At other times I have just done series of readings. I usually have access to a couple of devotional books which, if I feel God leading, I'll pick one of them up and see what it has to say about that particular day, but usually my readings come straight from the Bible. At present I am reading through various prayers in the Bible. I don't think it matters how you do it, just that you do it.

Here are some possible locations (there are many available) where you can find additional help and advice as you seek to grow closer to the Lord and hear His voice as He seeks to guide you in this effort.

www.leadnet.org

www.christianitytoday.com

<http://johnmaxwellonleadership.com/>

The bottom line here...begin a daily search of scripture and pray for God's wisdom and guidance. The stakes are too high to fail at this. And along with this, seriously seek out people who will pray for you as you lead this effort. Having that group of folks who are praying that you won't "mess it up" is critical! Be sure to appreciate them for praying for you and give them regular feedback as to how you see God at work in your life as you work towards leading this team to accomplish its task(s). This will then be an encouragement to your prayer supporters as well.

B. Preparing Physically:

It is amazing how many people come to Africa or to other parts of the world and expect to find things to be the same as they are in the place where they live. Trust me...it doesn't happen like that most of the time! For example, you need to be prepared to live without air conditioning for 2-3 weeks or as long as your trip lasts. So start practicing while still at home. You need to be able to camp in a tent and sleep on a mat on the ground for a few nights. You need to be able to trek for at least 3 miles without passing out. Some mission trips involve prolonged walking around in urban centers or out in rural areas. In Lesotho mission teams often have to ride a horse back into the mountains to reach their destination. In parts of southern Senegal and Guinea some mission teams have to ride in dugout canoes to reach their work areas. In Niger Republic some teams have to ride in hot pickup trucks and dusty conditions for 10-12 hours to get to their work areas. If you have not prepared yourself for such difficult circumstances, then how can you prepare your team for them?

Begin now to condition yourself to be as highly effective as you possibly can be in a less than comfortable environment. This will pay dividends for you in both improved physical health as well as improved ability to maintain a positive attitude out on the mission field.

C. Preparing Emotionally:

This is a good point to follow "Preparing Physically" because the two tie together. If you are physically exhausted, you are more likely to give in to depression and frustration. Such things can kill your witness on the mission field whether it is in a clothing ministry in Inner City, USA, or serving the Lord out in Africa or Asia.

Understand, people who live in different countries and/or cultures usually are going to be different from the folks you usually hang around with. Now if you are an Anglo person who works all day with a group of Hispanic folks, then going to Central America won't be such a big shock to you. Though the environment will be different, at least the people will appear to be the same or similar. However, they

will not be exactly the same and you will soon find that out. When I say different, I mean they may smell or dress differently, they may eat different types of foods, think differently, etc.

Prepare yourself to accept the folks you meet as they are. Don't try to immediately change them into what you think they should culturally be. They are the way they are for a reason. Try to understand the reason. Open your mind to trying to understand their culture. For instance, if you gave uncooked food to a Turkana man who is fresh from the north Kenyan bush, he may give it to someone or go look for a woman to cook it for him. Almost every time, he will not cook it himself. Why? Most American men would. The reason is simple. In Turkana land women cook and men are warriors whose place in society is to be strong and protect their land, people, and possessions. Men do not usually learn how to cook.

One of the major points made to field missionaries as they prepare to come to the mission field is "be flexible". Not flexible in your beliefs as to spiritual matters or how you live as a family and relate to each other in the home. But be flexible when it comes to issues such as time, food, greetings, availability of items and services, public shows of affection, etc. This list could go on and on. The point is... you are not at home anymore and things here are often not what you are used to. Dig deep and use a lot of patience. Read and learn the principles of 1st Corinthians 9. Especially take heed of verse 22.

D. Preparing Knowledgeably:

Proverbs 10:14 says that "Wise people store up knowledge..."

As a properly prepared leader you cannot possibly know too much. You can say too much and bore folks with your newly found wealth of knowledge, but simply knowing too much isn't a problem. There are many things which you need to know about as you seek to prepare this team to go out onto the chosen mission field and accomplish their task. And thankfully, there are people God has prepared to assist you in learning these things. But here I need to warn you...don't wait too late to begin to learn! Begin your preparations as soon as you know you are the chosen leader... I would even say begin as soon as you know you may be going on the trip!

One of your most valuable sources of information is your *field contact missionary*. If you are going to partner with a field missionary in their assigned task, this person is one of your best resources. *But, be sure they know you are coming to aid them in their strategy and work, not to do what you want to do!* This is crucial to having a good working relationship with field missionaries. Build a good working relationship with this missionary. Read everything they send you. Ask as many questions as you have and study the responses to be sure you don't continually ask the same thing. If you are going to work among a particular people group then there are also other good options to gather information from. Some resources:

1. One is this website www.missionfrontiers.org
2. Another website to gather information from is www.peoplegroups.org and also the Caleb project website can be helpful.

3. The website www.chronologicalbiblestorying.org is also very helpful and can provide you with a lot of help with using oral strategies which are proving effective all over the world.

4. <http://www.wmpress.org/index.shtml> This ministry is dedicated to producing Gospel tracts or scripture portions in many languages. We have used the Gospel of John and some smaller scripture portions. Resources are free, but a donation is appreciated. They will also help you to do a translation of an appropriate tract into your people's language. Contact them for the details of how that works.

5. If you want to learn about the country you are going to you can look up www.bbc.co.uk/

At this page then scroll down to the bottom and look under Explore BBC and find "News" and look under that. There you will chose the area of the world you are going to such as "Africa" and click that. It will take you to the Africa service news page. Scroll down to the bottom and click on the country you are going to and you will get the info you want to see.

6. Here are a couple of others:

Doing Missions in Africa: A Mini Preparation Guide and *Families Doing Missions: A Mini Preparation Guide*. Both are available from www.amazon.com

There are many other resources "out there" for you to use. Ask your field contact missionary for ideas.

Chapter 2

Recruiting for the Task

When recruiting team members for the mission trip, the church must first decide what type of trip is being planned. Many churches are not strategic in their thinking and they schedule one “catch all” type of trip a year, regardless of what is actually needed on the mission field. That is a symptom of an “It’s about us” type of church. This usually results in a lot of people going on one big trip overseas somewhere and then coming back and “celebrating” what they did for Jesus. Instead of doing this sort of thing, it is much more preferable for a church to adopt a people group or urban area and focus on doing what needs to be done to bring those folks to Christ. Then working with their field contact, a meaningful strategic plan can be developed which will probably call for smaller groups going 3-4 times in a year (or more) and having a much more positive impact on the targeted area or group.

When this approach is taken, the leadership can then develop teams of people which have gifting and abilities which are more in line with what is actually needed on the field. This also helps to cut down on frustration among team members when all of them have an opportunity to serve in areas where they are gifted to serve. Instead of the “forcing square pegs to fit in round holes” sort of trip.

A. Focus and goals of this team

If at all possible, the leadership should sit down at the beginning of the project or calendar year and ask: “What are we in this effort for?”

“What is our focus here?”

“What are our achievable goals?”

“Are we willing to pay the price to plan and be strategic?”

“Are we in this for just this trip or year?”

“Is this strategically meaningful missions work or is it just a tourist trip disguised as a mission trip?”

If the leadership doesn’t know what the expected outcome of this mission effort is, then how can they effectively lead the church to do anything of a lasting and meaningful nature? Jesus did a great job of training two different groups and He obviously thought they needed a plan of action to handle whatever may come up. *Check out Matthew 10:5-42 and Luke 10:1-11.*

A few years ago I was leading a team of missionaries in a West African country. We were researching and then targeting micro-sized people groups with the Gospel. In one area, I attempted to begin a church by meeting in a public school. We were forced out of the community after about 2 months by local Islamic leaders. I then developed a plan to target the people group from outside their tribal area using nearby churches, national personnel, etc. Nothing worked. We tried about five different approaches. Finally we requested a church in the US to adopt this group and assist us in this project. A

church in Louisiana adopted the group and then accepted training from me on which practices to use in engaging the people group. As a church, led by a committed pastor, they sat down and decided what their goals would be. As I remember it, they decided on a three year commitment and hoped to begin 2-3 churches in the tribe. They then sat down and planned out their trips, personnel, and methods. It worked! After the first two years of hard work, they had two new churches begun within that people group. They had a plan and they followed it. God honored it. The door was cracked open in that area and today there are at least 5-6 churches as others have now moved into the region to begin work.

Pray, plan, pray, be flexible and go! Paul exhibits this process in Acts chapter 16. Here he is leading a team as they move from location to location doing evangelism and church planting. As we see in verse 5, they were being very successful. In verse 6 we see that though they had a plan, the Holy Spirit changed it. This is where the “be flexible” part comes in. We have to adjust our plans as God’s Spirit leads. However, that is no excuse for refusing to plan. People who do not plan for success are planning for failure. In verse 7 the Spirit again changed their plans. In verses 9-10 we see why. The Gospel needed to be shared in Europe. God had a plan! Paul and his team were flexible enough and praying enough that they could adjust and follow it. What about you?

B. Spiritual giftedness

The issue of spiritual giftedness has not received enough attention on church staffs when it comes to the makeup of mission teams heading overseas or cross culturally even in the US. The reality of people being gifted by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church is one which can be a double edged sword in mission work. When we train teams to go into a people group for the first time, we ask that they send people who are gifted in evangelism, apostleship, administration, the types of giftings that will enable the first team in to make good level headed decisions without their planning and thought processes being overcome by a sincere desire to “help these poor folks”. If that first team which comes in is loaded with people whose spiritual gifting is heavily in favor of mercy and helping, etc. then you run the risk of your initial evangelism/church planting efforts being linked and therefore retarded by the group deciding to begin humanitarian efforts first. This is a good time to have already had a Luke 10:1-11 Bible study. Here Jesus clearly told them to leave their wallet at home! They were to pray for the sick and teach them about God, first. God is STILL today in the miracle business, but in the American church we have become so accommodated to paying for folks to be helped and/or healed that there is often little room for God to receive His glory for what He does.

Set up your teams according to what task each team is to perform on that trip. Recruit people gifted for those tasks. Don’t first ask for volunteers and then decide what tasks they will perform. This isn’t strategic. This more strategic approach requires a church and its missions leadership to put in time communicating with the field contact missionary and planning out their engagement in the project. It is like building a house, the roofers don’t come out to work on it until it is time for roofers to be there. Send your discipled when there are people to be discipled. Send those committed to humanitarian work when the local church is established well enough that they can then work THROUGH that local church to do their ministry. *This approach enhances the standing of the local church in the community instead of giving all the glory to your team.*

C. Ability

This is simple. Don't put round pegs in square holes. Everyone can and should be able to "walk and talk". We ALL have that ability, so require that everyone who is going on the trip be prepared for that. We will discuss this more in the team training section.

D. Spiritual concerns

This work is very serious work. Oftentimes youth ministers and other mission trip leaders will allow folks to go on trips who are not spiritually qualified. They do it in the hopes that the individual will "get serious" about his relationship with the Lord as a result of that trip. But... in Africa people are often killed when they decide to whole heartedly follow Christ. In Islamic environments, if they are not killed, their commitment to Christ can cost them their jobs, their family, their life's savings, and make them a social outcast in their community. The same is true in many parts of Asia. If we are serious about asking these folks to leave everything behind for Christ, why would we take such a careless approach to the task of witnessing to them?

If your church has someone they want to send on a mission trip to help him spiritually "grow up", then send him downtown to the social ministry center or enlist his/her help in the local clothing closet or meals on wheels type of ministries. This is not the guy you want giving advice to a herdsman from Northern Nigeria or southern Sudan who is facing either death or becoming a social outcast if he decides to follow Christ and leave behind all the trappings of Islam. This is not the guy you want trying to explain to a gang member in the slums of Nairobi why he should leave his gang to come live for Christ. The reason is simple... these types of people know full well what will await them if they make this decision. And the questions they will bring will be hard questions to answer even for mature Christian believers. For instance, if the herdsman from northern Nigeria asks you what he should do with his wives if he becomes a follower of Christ, what will you tell him? After all he may have 3 or 4 of them and several children. Do you want a partially committed church member to be the one having to answer that question? Think of the ramifications!

There are certain types of trips in mission work where this type of individual can be used and allowed to help out. For instance, he might do well on a trip to New England or downtown Atlanta to help conduct an outreach at an inner city park or a backyard Bible club where he/she can serve alongside a mature leader and learn from the experience. Again, it goes back to carefully recruiting the right folks for the right tasks.

Chapter 3

Training for the task

A. Individual team member preparation

It is imperative that individual team members take their personal preparation seriously. For too long we have allowed folks to just “show up”, don their yellow tee-shirt and join the crowd as they board a bus and head out on a “missions adventure”. It is time to change that attitude. Today, we have churches adopting unreached people groups and working in exciting and hard places. Great things are happening for the glory of God! BUT... often those whom we win to Christ and leave behind in foreign lands have to pay a price for their decision to follow the way of Christ. I personally have known people who have been imprisoned, had homes burned, have been poisoned, beaten, and in other ways persecuted.

For the American, a missions trip is often a chance to step outside their usual lifestyle and do something which they hope will honor God. For many it is a chance to do something “exciting”. However, many of them are ill prepared to do the serious work and as a result, they sometimes make really bad mistakes.

Once I lived and served as a missionary in northern Nigeria which is an Islamic dominated environment. One day, I was sitting in a small downtown restaurant at lunch time. The place was owned by a Muslim family. As I sat there looking out through the front glass windows I saw an American man of about 50 years of age stopping people along the sidewalk and handing out Gospel tracts to those who would accept them. Nearby was a Muslim man who sold fruit and whom we had been sharing secretly with for a while. Actually, as a result of our sharing with him, a few others had also heard the Good News and at least one was requesting to hear more. However, this day all of that changed. The well meaning American zeroed in on the fruit seller and began trying to win him to Christ. Unfortunately the fruit seller spoke limited English and was also in danger from this man’s activities. As a result he nodded or said “Yes” to every question the American threw at him in order to get the guy to leave him alone as he worked. According to the American, the fruit seller “Got saved”. For the rest of the time I was there, the American stopped passersby on the sidewalk and told them that they needed to get saved like this man had done! Since that day, we have never been able to continue our efforts with this man nor with the others. In fact, the man has renewed his commitment to the mosque. And he is lucky to still be alive.

If this volunteer had been properly prepared by whoever brought him to Nigeria, then I do not think he would have been so careless. Personal preparation is very, very important.

Individual team members must prepare themselves spiritually through serious prayer times and Bible study, through memorizing whatever evangelism materials the field contact missionary asks the team to memorize, through attending all team meetings and training sessions, and rounding up as much prayer support as they can. This work is too important to take chances with.

B. Training as a team

Often times, team training times wind up being a prayer time and a discussion of immunizations, visas, and other issues. It needs to be more than that. In the stateside trainings which I and my wife lead in our role with the International Mission Board we teach folks to practice through role play and to practice story telling before going to the field. We insist that each team member know every story they have been asked to be able to tell. The only way to ensure that they have taken this seriously is for the team to meet regularly and tell the stories to each other. They must hold each other accountable to get it right, just as you as the team leader must hold the team accountable to be prepared.

Schedule regular meetings beginning a couple of months before the trip. Share all information you receive from your field contact person with the team members. Practice the telling of the stories by working in groups of two then having each person tell a story in front of the whole group. It is best if folks hear a story done correctly at least 5-8 times to help them learn it well. If they do not practice telling this story to people who are staring at them at least 4-5 times, they will “chicken out” once they hit the field. The intimidation they will feel when 20-30 non-smiling but listening faces confront them will be too much to overcome if they have not prepared well.

Don't cheat your team, don't cheat those whom God has called you to work with... do the team trainings. Don't be surprised if the first time or two you meet for training some of your team members find excuses not to show up. Confront them lovingly and insist that they be there. Also, some may giggle and in other ways show their high level of discomfort when you begin these trainings. Most folks do not work in vocations where they are required to stand and deliver an address or speech while others stare at them. They will try to avoid these situations. However, your team practice times need to mimic the realities on the mission field as much as possible. Not to do so would make as much sense as a football team practicing by watching cartoon shows of cheer leaders playing football. Any similarity between the practice and the real thing would be barely minimal at best. So, get real, get right. Do it. It's worth it in the end.

C. Church and support training

In this area there are a couple of things I'll emphasize. One, help your church to understand the importance of security for the team on the field as well as those they talk with. Some pastors and church support staff are so involved in proclaiming to the world the activities of their church that they rebel against toning it down some when it comes to their church's missions efforts. This can cause a team going into places like Mali, northern Nigeria, coastal Kenya, the Middle East, North Africa, and a few dozen other places serious problems. Many areas dominated by Islam do not allow missionaries to go in openly. To then broadcast that your missions team is going into such a place endangers the team's chances of accomplishing their goals. There are people in the world who spend their time guarding their country's security by trolling through the internet and looking for things they view as threats to their country. Your church's website could easily pop up on their search grid and your team could be confronted in a foreign airport by immigration people who know that the team is not there to only visit the game park or do whatever tourist activity they listed on their visa application. The team could end up sleeping for a day or two in the airport and then be sent back home without ever getting into the host country.

Then there is the issue of causing harm to those you witness to. After visiting with a Christian teacher in a public school one day, I once spent about ten minutes talking with a Muslim man in a new town I had entered. He politely refused my witness, so I left the town and returned home. I found out about a week later that the man had been attacked by the Muslim youth in that town for “Bringing a missionary to their town”. Sometimes we cannot help what happens, but if we do not attempt to get it right we can cause it to be much worse.

The second area I’ll emphasize here is prayer support. This is vital to the success of your efforts. I know of a church in South Georgia which has set up a prayer room to support their mission efforts. As the team boards the bus in the parking lot to head for the airport, the first person enters the prayer room and someone is in there every hour around the clock until the team returns from the mission field. Believe me, they have needed it! They have almost had a head on collision. They have been persecuted by state security, and were kicked out of their first village. However, they have pressed on and continue the struggle to see their adopted people come to Christ. Prayer is vital. Train your church and set up a good prayer support team.

Chapter 4

Accomplishing the Task

The enemy will use many different methods to try and retard or destroy your efforts. In one instance I know of, a pastor's wife threatened to leave him if he didn't back off. In other instances, church members have come to the team members and questioned why they didn't spend their efforts in the local community instead of going across the world. One influential deacon in a South Georgia church actually had the pastor voted out of the church because he insisted on carrying the Gospel to people in Africa! Only prayer and a firm conviction in the calling of God will see you through such unChrist-like behavior.

A. Be focused

Many of our church members in the US have "hearts of gold". They mean well and will help anyone they can help. This is a very good thing, but it can also cause your evangelism and church planting efforts to get sidetracked into things which are good but will not lead you to the accomplishing of your goals. This is where it is very important that your church have a set strategy and that you lead your teams to stay on track with it. If you don't keep your focus, you will not achieve your goals. Work with your field contact missionary and stay focused.

B. Be flexible

One of the primary things we teach new missionaries to the field is to be flexible. Interestingly enough, many Americans go overseas and expect things to be just as they are in the US. Obviously, they are not. Plans sometimes change 2-3 times during a day or in a week while on a trip to the mission field. Be flexible. Trust that God is in control and you are where you are for His reason. If you are prayerfully seeking to glorify God in every situation, then you will be fine regardless of how much your schedule is disrupted.

As team leader it is a good idea to play the "What if" game with your team during your preparation time. What if there is a natural disaster and you are unable to reach your final destination? What if the flights are late or canceled? What if you only planned for evangelism, but instead you get 4-5 believers on the first day? What will you do with them? What if the hotel has no reservations for you? Did you consider where else you might stay if this should happen? Be creative when you play this game...after all...anything can happen!

C. Beware of settling for "good" and "better" instead of "best"

What is "best"? Best is what you came for. It is your goal or set of goals. You have a planned out strategy. You have consulted with your field contact missionary and you have a stated purpose for this trip. It is a part of the overall plan for achieving your strategy. Don't settle for something which is good but not in line with achieving your strategy. Your strategy was planned with good consultation and

through a heavy emphasis on prayer. Trust God that it is what he wants. If He shows you differently, then be flexible and adjust to it, but be sure it is His will and that you are not settling for the easier way or the “good” way and abandoning the “best” way.

In church planting, we say that planting a church is good. Planting several churches is better. But planting churches which will plant churches which will plant churches till Jesus comes back is best. If that is your approach, then it greatly affects how you do your missions work. You must carefully consider such things as reproducibility and dependency issues. Ask yourself, “Can the local people do what I am doing with the resources they have available to them?” If you are involved in the work of church planting and you answer “no” to that question... you have a problem. Please, don’t settle for less than “best”!

D. Be brave

Fear is the enemy’s greatest weapon against us. Do not fear. God has called you to do what you are doing. He is in control. Fear is from Satan and is not of God. (2nd Timothy 1:7) Abandon it. Sometimes, it is the result of improper training or lack of preparation which opens the door to this issue. That is one reason proper and serious team/ individual preparation is so important. Pilots practice various scenarios of a crisis situation in flight simulators so that they will not give in to the fear and stress of a particular situation and accidentally kill people who trust them with their lives. Our practice times during team preparation can help us the same way. Fear becomes a bigger issue when people have not been prepared. A team’s lack of trust in their leader is also a reason which leads people to fear. By preparing them properly, you build trust with them.

E. Be true to God’s Word

This one is simple. If it is in God’s Word then teach it. If it isn’t in there then don’t teach it. Be careful that you do not replace God’s Word with your pastor’s last best sermon. Or someone’s well written book. Do not plant American cultural Christianity in a foreign land. Teach God’s Word only. Teach it, follow it, live it. Period.

5. Returning Home

When you return home, you will be full of excitement for what you have seen God do. That is natural. But, remember that the rest of the church was not “over there”. If they seem a little shy or hesitant to catch your excitement, one reason may be that they simply can’t “see it” in their mind’s eye. They were not there. They still view where you went with their American mindset. You have been changed somewhat, even though you may not realize it. They have not. Don’t be discouraged by this. Find others who have “been there” and share with them and you will feel better. As team leader you have to help your folks to realize this.

Be sure that when you return home, you give a report to the church and especially appreciate those who prayed for you while you were gone. Take time with them and answer their questions. They battled on your behalf and they deserve this.

A. Debriefing

You should always debrief with your field contact missionary to be sure things are on track strategy wise. It is good to assign someone to keep a journal for the team while on the trip and use this in the debriefing time. During the course of the trip, sit down and help the one assigned to do the journaling remember the events of the day/trip and get it down.

Once you are back home, as team leader you must also schedule a team meeting to debrief everyone and plan for your report to the church. Allow everyone time to talk and be at ease with what they have been through. Review your goals for the trip.

B. Turn around and planning for it

The journal you kept and the notes from the debriefing time with your field contact missionary will be important items to help with the planning for the next trip. The review of the last trip's goals will be important here as well. Don't wait too long before beginning this process. The earlier, the better. Take your time, start early, and pray through it very well. Be focused on what goals were achieved last time and which ones you are shooting for this time. Plan your trip with purpose and plan your team training times. This allows the church members who will be participating to adequately plan their vacations, etc. to match up with what needs to be done. Planning should include both the last team's leader and the upcoming team's leader. I would include the leader of your prayer team from last trip as well...or the coordinator of it if it wasn't an actual team. Ask the members of the last team for their input on the team preparation and the actual trip. As leader, you cannot be shy about asking for their evaluation of how the last trip went. Learn from this type of input and grow as a leader.

Conclusion

We who are allowed the privilege of leading carry a heavy responsibility. We have been entrusted to lead the assault on the enemy's strongholds. Too many team leaders, whether they are staff or lay people, fail to realize the seriousness of our position. Possibly because few people are ever actually persecuted for their faith in Christ in the US, we do not realize the enormity of the task in front of us. We are leading God's chosen few to a foreign land and into the stronghold of the enemy where we will work to pull from the very door steps of hell those whom we can reach. Some who read these words will laugh and say I have gotten too dramatic. However, you may not have stood in the waters of a small hidden stream to conduct a baptism while scouts stood on the surrounding high ground to give warning of a possible attack. You may not have been kicked out of villages where you were attempting to begin a church for the glory of God. You may not have helped with leading leadership training in hidden locations so that those men and women could go back out into the work where their lives are at risk for

the glory of God. I have had that privilege a time or two. I hope you get that opportunity as well. It'll be an experience which you will never forget.

Don't sell yourself short or those you are called to lead. God bless you and guide you. Cb

The End

(Got questions? Email me at cbowman505@gmail.com. Bless you.)