

Preparing Your Heart

Many people look at a mission trip as they would a revival or a retreat - an opportunity to fix themselves. *"If I can see how people live in another country, it will make me less materialistic and therefore a better person."* *"If I can see another culture, it will make me a well-rounded person."* *"If I can just get away from my bad influences for a week or two, I really think I could find God."* The reality is that most people that go on a short-term mission trip find it beneficial to their lives in multiple ways. However,

Self-betterment is not the purpose of your mission trip.

The purpose of mission trips is to:

1. Spread the glory of God.
2. Share the story of His love.

You are not to be an empty vessel going to be filled;

You should be a full vessel going to be poured out.

2 Timothy 2:20-21 *"Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work."* Are you going to be ready for the work? You will not find yourself a useful vessel by accident. It will take months of spiritual preparation to be effective on your upcoming trip.

Where are you spiritually?

It is possible for a Christian to go to the mission field and be ineffective.

1 Peter 1:8-9 states *"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins."* The qualities mentioned at the beginning of verse 8 are qualities that you will possess as you grow spiritually.

If you are not growing spiritually, scripture tells us that you will be:

1. Ineffective and unproductive, and
2. Spiritually nearsighted and blind.

Every day you have between now and when you leave on your mission trip is a precious gift from God. You have time to daily get into the word, to seek God, to grow spiritually and to develop the qualities mentioned in 2 Peter 1. If you will seek God daily, you will not be ineffective and unproductive on your mission trip.

Make the qualities listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7 part of your life. You don't have to be perfect at them, but you need to be growing them in your life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Recognize that you do not have the power to make changes on your own, but it is through God's divine power. 2 Peter 1:3-4 states *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."* If you will seek God daily through reading the Word, increasing your knowledge of Him, God will change you from the inside out and you will grow spiritually.

Take a moment to focus on the qualities of a Godly person described in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Goodness/Virtue: The life of a virtuous person desires to be known by everything that is good. Focus your heart and life on God. Philippians 4:8 states *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

Knowledge: Give yourself over to the knowledge of God. Get to know God. Prayer and Bible study are the two wings that your spiritual life will either soar on or crash on. Get in the word! While devotional books are great, don't depend on devotional books. Don't depend on what others tell you the Bible is saying. As a Christian you have the Holy Spirit and scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit gives us discernment and understanding of the Word. 1 Corinthians 2:10 states *“these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”*

A really simple technique for studying the word is to use the **SOAP** technique.

Scripture: Pick a book of the Bible and commit to reading a passage or a chapter at a time.

Observe: As you read the passage that you have chosen, write down in a journal key verses of the passage or any verse that jumps off the page at you or that makes you stop and think.

Act: After you write it down (or write down two or three verses), think about what the verses are saying to you personally. Write in your journal what you hear God saying through these verses. Is it applicable to something in your life that you are struggling with? Does it speak to a situation that you have been praying about? Make a plan of action as to how you can apply these verses to your life.

Pray: Pray these verses throughout your day. If these verses speak to a situation in your life, pray about that situation.

Self control: You are not living according to your desires, but according to who God wants you to be.

Perseverance: Strive for daily consistency with God. Decide that you will daily spend time with God. Decide that this is what I'm doing and I'm not backing down.

Godliness: We need to study Jesus Christ (study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) to follow His example so that when people see us they see Christ. God cares more about your holiness than your happiness.

Mutual affection: You need to be deeply connected with your local church. If you aren't actively serving in your local church, going across the world to show love is a shame. Love people where you are! Sin blinds us and the beautiful thing about the local church is that they can open your eyes to what God says about sin. The local church helps you learn to serve. Go to your pastor and ask where you can serve.

Love: Love as Christ loves us.

Think about being effective and being a vessel of honor that God can use. Be filled up with God so that He can pour you out.

Douglas Wilson says it like this: *What you practice at home is the show you take on the road. What you grow in your fields is what you load on the trucks. Compassing sea and land doesn't generate a new message. The way you live when you get on the plane is going to be the single best indicator of how you live when you get off the plane. In short, don't expect geographical location to fix anything.*

Remember, the days between now and your trip are each a gift of God. These are days for you to prepare. Through the Cross of Christ, He has granted all that you need for Godliness but it comes through seeking Christ every day. You do that everyday from now until the day you leave and the nations will be blessed through you. *“What you practice at home is the show that you take on the road. Don't expect a geographical location to change anything.”*