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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Equipping Short-Term Missionaries for Effective Service and  
Smooth Re-Entry”**

written by

**Haley Michelle Barron**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for completion of the  
Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 21, 2010

**“Equipping Short-Term Missionaries for Effective  
Service and Smooth Re-Entry”**

By

**Haley Michelle Barron**

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## **Introduction**

A couple hundred years ago missionaries would go to the mission field without any cultural or language training. They often arrived in one country and spent their entire life figuring out the lifestyle, language, and culture. However, times certainly have changed. Long-term missionaries are never sent to the field without training. Short-term missionaries should also be trained, but this does not always happen. On a short-term mission trip, there is not enough time to dive into the culture or to face huge cultural barriers without training. Since short-term missionaries are abroad for a short amount of time, it is necessary that they prepare as much as possible before leaving home. With the number of short-term missionaries on the rise, a great deal of money is going to fund these short-term trips. Thus, training and developing short-term missionaries into people with a big vision for the world is very valuable. Investing in proper training materials is valuable because it may turn short-term missionaries into long-term missionaries or long-term missionary supporters.

This paper will look at culture shock and reverse culture shock, as well as the different steps that are needed for well-rounded short-term mission trip training. The information and analysis will focus mainly on short-term mission trips overseas, as opposed to short-term trips that stay in the United States. This writer's passion is to see short-term missions leaders who are excited about training the next generation of missionaries to be wise, courageous, and effective as they bring the gospel of Jesus to people of every tongue, tribe, and nation (Rev 7:9). Proper pre-field, on-field, and post-field training is critical for raising up this generation of short-term missionaries into changed and radical Christians for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Part One: The Need for Short-Term Missions Training

Many books and articles on the Internet today question the value of the impact of short-term missions. The number of short-term mission trips is on the rise, so it must be more than just a passing fad since the trend has stretched more than two decades. Reese thinks that the following three emphases will help short-term teams to strengthen their program and their trips in the future: “better training, integration of short-term missions with long-term strategy, and a commitment to avoid creating dependency.”<sup>1</sup>

### I. Short-term trips are happening

There is no way to know exactly how many people participate in short-term mission trips each year, since short-term evangelical mission trips are organized through schools, churches, denominations, and private organizations. Research done by Scott Moreau in 2001 found that 350,000 people have been on short-term trips through mission organizations alone. This does not take into account trips taken through churches or schools.<sup>2</sup> In 2003, the number may have been closer to one million according to research done by Peterson, Aeschliman and Sneed.<sup>3</sup> Since then participation in short-term trips has continued to increase according to similar reports by Robert Priest of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.<sup>4</sup> The number of short-term missions’ volunteers is at least one million today and perhaps even beyond that. Most of this research only takes into account people who have been on a trip anywhere between two weeks and one year, so it does

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Reese, *Short-Term Missions and Dependency*, <http://www.missionsfestlancaster.org/page.aspx?id=242674> (accessed March 11, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Peterson, *What's Happening in Short-Term Mission?*, March 2006, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives/265/03-2006?pg=all> (accessed March 2006, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

not account for the hundreds of thousands of trips that are shorter than two weeks. Moreau, Corwin, and McGee in their book *Introducing World Missions* define short-term missions as ranging from one week to one or even two years.<sup>5</sup> This definition is supported by many, but the scope of this paper will be directed towards teams who go anywhere between one week and three months.

Things were not always this way. Short-term missions started to become popular in the 1950's. This decade was a time of change and adaptation for the world of missions. Not only were the World Wars finally over, but the invention of the airplane decades before became a way for any average citizen to travel. The world grew smaller as transportation became faster and more efficient. In 1793 when William Carey set sail from England, it took him and his family five months to reach the shores of India.<sup>6</sup> Today, a person can fly to India in about a day. As is evidenced by William Carey, throughout church history up until the twentieth-century, being a missionary meant a lifetime of service often without any hope of returning home. Today people can travel overseas for just a couple days or weeks. Since travel is fast and easy, North American Christians have proven short-term missions to be a lasting trend, as seen from the statistics above. Furthermore, taking short-term mission trips has enabled people to see how God wants to use believers to reach the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

God has called people to leave their families and go to new places for the sake of his name since the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-9). Although there is not space in this paper to go through the eras of mission's history, it is important to recognize that God is a missionary God.

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<sup>5</sup> A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 13.

<sup>6</sup> A. Christopher Smith, "The legacy of William Carey," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16, no. 1 (1992): 4, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed March 11, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> J. Mack Stiles and Leeann Stiles, *Mack and Leeann's Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 21.

In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be a testament to the nations, so that all people may see God and know God (Deut 4:5-6; Isa 55:4-5; 49:6). After the time of Jesus, the disciples and apostles went out as missionaries. Paul was the very first short-term missionary because he traveled around to different places ministering and usually only staying a couple months. Therefore, even though there were thousands of other missionaries between him and those today, he will be the focus of this section.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples and the first-century church were just beginning to carry out the Great Commission. Paul, who had once persecuted Christians, latched on to Jesus' message, and he became God's messenger to the Gentiles. His journeys took him all over the Roman Empire to many cultures and languages. He supported himself through his profession as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), but it is apparent in many of Paul's letters that the churches also stepped up and supported him when he was in need (Phil 4:14-16; 2 Cor 11:7-9). When Paul returned to Jerusalem and Antioch between his three missionary journeys, he made connections among the churches, and he recruited other people to join his ministry. At times, Paul lived in comfort, and at other times, he lived on the edge probably barely squeezing by. But he said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13). Paul is a good example of the way that short-term missions can be done and the attitude and humility that short-term missionaries should have.

Today there is much debate about which is more important short-term or long-term trips. For long-term missionaries sometimes having one convert can take years. William Carey did not see a convert in the first several years of his ministry in India even though he labored tirelessly.<sup>8</sup> However, short-term trips cannot be measured by the number of converts or the number of bricks laid. Sneed would rather measure success through the relationships made on the field and among

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<sup>8</sup> Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1987), 186-87.

the team members.<sup>9</sup> Long-term missionaries are often thankful for the energy and force that short-term teams bring to their ministries, or as it is often called “a much needed shot in the arm.” On the other hand, long-term missionaries are sometimes left to clean up the pieces left by short-term teams because short-term teams have set a bad example, created dependencies on outsiders, and have disregarded past commitments made to the nationals.

Previously, some short-term mission teams have been ineffective and sometimes harmful in the place where they were serving, but maybe there is a correlation between a team’s adequate pre-trip training and their effectiveness and cultural sensitivity on the field. A study done within the past decade compared the consequences between short-term missionaries who received training and those that did not.<sup>10</sup> Randy Friesen, a regional director for Serving in Mission, researched what could be done to strengthen the long-term impact of short-term trips.<sup>11</sup> He noticed that participants who received pre-field spiritual discipleship were more likely to experience lasting positive spiritual and behavioral change after the trip. He also found that people who go on mission trips overseas have a greater awareness of what is going on around the world, and the longer the trip the more likely the participants were to come back and serve in the church and fight for social justice causes. Those who were supported by their families and their home churches were able to take their experiences and grow from them. Relational ministry on the field rather than just a service project indirectly encourages participants to be more aware of Christian community and cultural reconciliation. Also, Friesen found that the more times a person went on a short-term trip the more likely he was to be interested in full-time missions. This means that if a short-term missionary experiences positive growth, and if they understand

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne R. Sneed, “The Short-Term Mission Team Leader: A Job No One Should Have to Endure,” *Mission Maker* (2005): 51-52.

<sup>10</sup> Randy Friesen, “The Long Term Impact of Short-Term Missions,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, (October 2005): 450.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

God's vision for the world, then they are more likely to return and eventually be involved in long-term missions in some way.<sup>12</sup>

However, there seems to be a disconnect with the number of short-term missions participants going out and the number of long-term missionaries on the field. If going on short-term mission trips leads to people deciding to do long-term missions, then the number of long-term missionaries should be on the rise. To the contrary, the American Society of Missiology found that in the past twenty years the number of long-term missionaries has been declining.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, there must be a missing link in the short-term process.

The gap between developing short-term missionaries into long-term missionaries is widened by other negative effects that Friesen observed. These negative changes occur between re-entry and a year later. The short-term missionaries that he interviewed, most of whom did not receive pre-field and post-field training, sometimes experienced a deterioration of personal purity and lack of spiritual discipline. Overall participants who experienced pre-trip and post-trip training experienced more long-term positive change, so the desired impact appeared stronger and lasted longer. Also since he found that some participants regressed spiritually and morally from where they were prior to the trip, there should be a strong system of debriefing sessions and follow-up even up to a year after returning home.

Tim Dearborn points out that short-term mission trip participants do not live up to their full potential when they return home. They may start feeling guilty and will probably long for that on-field feeling of community again. This grief has plagued so many returning short-term mission trip participants.<sup>14</sup> The negative change and reaction that Friesen observed is happening

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 450-52.

<sup>13</sup> Chuck Holton, *Are Short-Term Mission Trips Effective?*, December 30, 2009, <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2009/April/Are-Short-Term-Mission-Trips-Effective-/> (accessed March 14, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Tim Dearborn, *Short-Term Missions Workbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 96.

to many returnees, and the best way to combat the negative feelings and reactions is through proper training and awareness.

## **II. Short-Term Missionaries Experience Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock**

Blending into one group from every tongue, tribe, and nation does not really seem like a possibility right now, since there are so many differences between cultures and languages. People experience culture shock when they try to adjust to an unfamiliar culture, and much to their dismay they are not able to use the same cultural rules and guidelines during daily life. This sends the mind and emotions into a spin of confusion. With so many people traveling today, there are plenty of information resources available about other cultures and about travel in general.

Experiencing culture shock is common and often perceived as normal, but reverse culture shock, the shock experienced when returning home, is usually not addressed or taken as seriously, especially on short-term mission trips. If not prepared for the culture shock or reverse culture shock, the results can be hurtful to the national team members, to the ministry's reputation, and even to the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> However, "the more a missionary knows about it, the more likely they will be to come out on the right side in the end. The goal here is not to eliminate culture shock but to 'reduce the voltage' of the shock."<sup>16</sup> By being aware of what one is likely to feel and experience when entering another culture or returning to one's own, any short-term missionary can lessen the effects. With this in mind, short-term missionaries should be prepared for what they will face so that their short time on the field can be used effectively.

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<sup>15</sup> Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 203-7.

<sup>16</sup> *Culture Shock: Reducing the Voltage*, <http://baptistmissionary.info/cultureshock.html> (accessed March 16, 2010).

Although each short-term missionary experiences culture shock to a different degree, there is a common level of awareness that people should have.

Steffen and Douglas define culture shock as, “psychological disorientation resulting from being in an unfamiliar culture.”<sup>17</sup> Another definition of culture shock is, “a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture without adequate preparation.”<sup>18</sup> Culture shock is not a spiritual experience but a psychological experience as the definition states. One experiences culture shock when moving to college and living with a roommate who has a different family culture or when getting married or moving to a new town. People deal with these types of culture shock occurrences every day, and they adapt without ever really noticing. When traveling to another country, people experience these same cultural stresses except the disparity is much greater than the cultural stresses they encounter at home. The coping mechanisms are overwhelmed with the new language, new foods, new manners, and new attire of a strange culture.<sup>19</sup> No one can avoid the effects of culture shock, but one can take steps to prepare for it. Mack Stiles sees it more as a journey moving from no knowledge of that culture to being fully acclimated to daily life within that culture.<sup>20</sup>

This journey can be split up into several stages of emotion and levels of acclimation. Lisa Espineli Chinn, the Director of International Student Ministry at InterVarsity, says there are three successive stages—enjoyment, disorientation, and appreciation.<sup>21</sup> Scholars have constructed three-step models, four-step models, and nine-step models, but all of these models can be combined into three categories according to Steffen and Douglas—enchantment,

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<sup>17</sup> Steffen, 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary Unabridged*, s.v. "Culture Shock," <http://www.mwu.edu/~mwu> (accessed January 10, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Stiles, 93.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>21</sup> *Round Trip: A Short-Term Missions Documentary and Curriculum*, DVD, directed by Chris Blumhofer and Andy Crouch (Carol Streams, IL: Christianity Today International, 2008).

disenchantment, and adjustment, which is very similar to Chinn's model. For example, not all people get frustrated when they face cultural stresses, and not all people go through a stage of immense excitement at the beginning. However, it is helpful to understand what typically causes this stress, and to know what to do when cultural stress arises. In this case, it is helpful to know the stages of culture shock.<sup>22</sup> The writer of this paper remembers sitting in the living room of a family in Russia, and the man identified the exact emotions that she was feeling and had felt on several previous mission trips. Then, he gave her practical advice for how to deal with these specific emotions. Finally, he told her how to go back home and take what she experienced and apply it to daily life. This was an earth shattering moment because the writer of this paper finally recognized each stage of the culture shock that she had often experienced.

One of the first people to chronicle culture shock was Kalervo Oberg, a professor of anthropology at Oregon State University. In fact, he was the first person to use the phrase "culture shock." Oberg mapped four stages of culture shock: the honeymoon stage, the crisis stage, the recovery stage, and the adjustment stage. During the honeymoon stage, it is common for people to be really enthusiastic and excited about being overseas, especially short-term missionaries. The moment the plane touches down fascination fills the eyes of the first-time short-term missionaries. On a really short trip people usually do not make it through all of the stages of culture shock. People may be in the honeymoon stage for a week, especially if they are surrounded by a team of Americans, before they experience a crisis of culture.<sup>23</sup>

The crisis stage can be marked by anxiety, disgust, depression, strain, confusion or frustration. These feelings are normal, but under these circumstances human beings do not react the same way they normally would in their home culture. However, working through these

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<sup>22</sup> Jim Schnell, *Understanding the Shock in "Culture Shock,"* 1996, ERIC, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2010), 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

emotions can lead to personal growth and a broader worldview.<sup>24</sup> The writer of this paper's personal experiences supports this. She has been to Russia many times, and she can confidently say that she understands more about their culture now than she did at the end of the first trip. She also recognizes now that she was in the honeymoon stage for most of her first trip.

The next stage, the recovery stage, also known as the resolution stage, is when a person begins to develop new ways of coping with different situations in a new culture. On trips less than three months, missionaries do not usually reach this stage. Even so, there is always more to know about the culture. Missionaries on the field after years of being immersed in the culture still face cultural misunderstandings.<sup>25</sup> Steffen and Douglas say that if a missionary comes to the point that they think they do not need to keep learning about the culture, then they are headed for a fall.<sup>26</sup> Jim Schnell points out that a person can go through these stages of culture shock on a smaller scale. For example, if a cultural misunderstanding or crisis arises, it can be resolved through honest dialogue.<sup>27</sup>

Tourists often do not notice culture shock in the country that they are visiting because they stick to Americanized-hotels and restaurants and tourist sites. They do not interact as much with the people and daily life. On the other hand, short-term missionaries often become fully immersed in the culture and see poverty in places where tourists would never dare go. This clash of cultures leads to some confusion and disorientation. Often these phrases enter the mind of every short-term missionary: "I want to do something to help the people right now" or "This would never happen in America." At this stage a person begins to idolize American culture,

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<sup>24</sup> Kevin F. Gaw, "Reverse Culture Shock in Students Returning from Overseas" (paper presented at the 103<sup>rd</sup> American Psychological Association Annual Convention, New York City, August 15, 1995), *ERIC, EBSCOhost* (accessed January 9, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Schnell, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Steffen, 205.

<sup>27</sup> Schnell, 3-4.

forgetting all the bad things and remembering only the good.<sup>28</sup> Then, they return home with great expectations, but often they are rudely confronted again by culture shock. Yet this time they were not expecting it.

Reverse culture shock has the same effects as culture shock except it occurs when a traveler returns home. Once a short-term missionary re-enters America, they are often taken aback by people's responses to their stories, by the pace of life, and by people's skewed priorities. The excitement period or the honeymoon stage often happens on the airplane, but reality hits and things are not exactly as they remembered. Each returnee's worldview is now broader, and maybe the cultural glasses that he or she once saw the world through are a little bit clearer and less tinted. Before this, returnees usually would never expect that they would experience culture shock at home.

There is evidence that some groups of people experience reverse culture shock more than others. According to his research, Kevin F. Gaw found that children and teenagers are more apt to experience signs of reverse culture shock than adults in the same situation. This may be due to the fact that before adulthood, children and teenagers are still trying to figure out who they are and where exactly their identity lies. This confirms that more attention should be given to children and students returning from life changing short-term mission trips.<sup>29</sup>

While many people expect to experience culture shock when they travel abroad, they do not expect that they will encounter similar stresses and shocks when returning home. The reason for experiencing reverse culture shock is that short-term missionaries have a broader worldview and a better understanding of wealth and poverty, just to name a few possible points of change. Most short-term missionaries do not start realizing how much they have learned or changed until

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<sup>28</sup> Stiles, 158.

<sup>29</sup> Gaw, 4.

they return home.<sup>30</sup> Life continues on as normal while short-term missionaries are growing and learning and changing overseas. Just like there needs to be a balance between the home culture and the new culture when adjusting to living overseas, every short-term missionary needs to find a balance between how he or she has changed on the trip and how his or her identity is portrayed in the home culture.<sup>31</sup>

Short-term missionaries should change while they are away and hopefully for the better. Sometimes the reactions to the initial reverse culture shock can be bad. In order to lessen culture shock it is important to know about the other culture, but when reentering the short-term missionary already knows everything about that culture. They do not need to study it more in order to try to adjust back. Steffen and Douglas as well as several other re-entry scholars recommend training a family member or a trusted Christian friend to ask the hard questions.<sup>32</sup> The International Mission Board (IMB), the branch of the Southern Baptist Convention that sends out international missionaries, has a list of five actions that family members should take in order to help the returning short-term missionary—

- 1) Listen well and listen a lot.
- 2) Expect a change to have taken place in their life.
- 3) Help them to locate places to share their trip testimony.
- 4) Encourage them to get involved with internationals at home.
- 5) Assist them in mobilizing other Christians to give to missions and to go.<sup>33</sup>

Even though reverse culture shock is much like culture shock, there are several issues that are unique to the coming home experience. There are often feelings of resentment, confusion, anger, disappointment, discouragement, and withdrawal towards the home culture and

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<sup>30</sup> Stiles, 158.

<sup>31</sup> International Mission Board, "Debriefing and Re-Entry for an International Missions Experience," *The Task*, [http://thetask.org/students/Info/parents\\_debrief-reentry.htm#How%20To%20Cope%20With%20Re-Entry%20Stress](http://thetask.org/students/Info/parents_debrief-reentry.htm#How%20To%20Cope%20With%20Re-Entry%20Stress) (accessed April 11, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Steffen, 338.

<sup>33</sup> International Mission Board, "Debriefing: Basic Debriefing Tips," *The Task*, <http://thetask.org/students/Approved/debriefing.htm> (accessed January 2010).

towards others. These are normal, and it is much easier to give in to these negative emotions than to try to reach out and adapt. The IMB has compiled a list of scenarios that people experience, what the typical reaction is, and what can be done to avoid it. This list is a very helpful resource for any short-term missionary returning home (See Appendix 2).

### **III. Proper Training Equips Short-Term Missionaries for Dealing with These Issues**

Every culture is different, and each one is made up of “shared beliefs, feelings, and values.”<sup>34</sup> These beliefs and principles are the basis of the framework for the way decisions are made and how actions are perceived and how one interacts with other people. Moreover, Dearborn explains that culture is part of a person’s purpose in life both now and in the future as well as a defining factor of their identity. It is imperative that all missionaries, short-term included, understand that a person will not fully understand the gospel unless it is communicated through their culture, their identity, their purpose, and their outlook.<sup>35</sup> This puts cultural and culture shock training on a whole new level. Studying the culture will prepare a person for entering a new culture, in order that they may share the Gospel more effectively and clearly.

Leann Stiles discovered that to reach the women of the Maasai tribe in East Africa she would have to sit in a hut passing her child around while drinking soured milk. Like many young mothers, Leann did not feel comfortable passing her infant son around the circle to women that she barely knew and definitely did not understand. By not allowing the Maasai women to hold her son and by not drinking soured milk, Leann showed her disapproval of their culture. As a result the Maasai women lost their respect for her, and Leann certainly had no audience in which

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<sup>34</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, “Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 373-83.

<sup>35</sup> Dearborn, 29.

to share the gospel.<sup>36</sup> She learned that just because a Christian has committed to missions or feels called by God to minister to a certain people group that does not exempt them from feeling culture shock.<sup>37</sup> A short-term missions participant can be spiritually prepared for the trip and still experience culture shock. Therefore, it is necessary to research and try to understand the culture as much as possible before departure.

Through conducting thirty interviews with people who have been on mission trips all around the world, it was discovered that people found it beneficial to study the culture beforehand. Researching the culture will not only inform the team members about cultural geography and religion, but it will help the team members to pray for and be burdened for the people to whom they are going to minister.<sup>38</sup> Several interviewees noted that if people are not properly informed then they could greatly hinder the communication of the Gospel. This in turn can be a hindrance for the missionaries who live there and for the national believers.<sup>39</sup> Being culturally aware can aid in a smoother transition by monitoring one's negative actions and words, as well as lessening the barriers between cultures so that the Gospel can be shared.

First, a person must be aware of factors that typically are drastically different when dealing with cultures. Many things can create culture shock, like encountering a new language, new ideas about space, time, privacy, and comfort. The lack of daily conveniences, different standards of cleanliness, and abject poverty also can contribute to feelings of culture shock.<sup>40</sup> Mack and Leann Stiles say that people react to negative emotions either through "redlining" or "greenlining." "Redlining" is displaying outwardly the negative feelings inside. This can be very

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<sup>36</sup> Stiles, 95.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>38</sup> A short-term mission trip leader, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire, February 3, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> A short-term mission trip participant and leader, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire, February 2, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Jerry Rankin and Phyllis Tadlock, *Basic Training for Mission Teams* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2006), 34-38.

hurtful to people of the other culture because they will see it as disapproval of their culture. People who react this way can quickly break bridges and strain relationships. “Greenlining,” on the other hand, is learning from the internal feelings and working to see how one can better understand the other culture. This not only takes work, it also takes humility.<sup>41</sup>

Second, a person needs to be aware of his or her prejudices. Dearborn points out that a person’s culture is strongly related to their prejudices. The first reaction may be to say, “Well, I am not prejudiced”. However, the fact is that people are typically drawn to other people who are like them, and people stereotype other groups of people.<sup>42</sup> Prejudices do not just go away when someone becomes a Christian or later when he or she commits to go on a cross-cultural mission trip. Often short-term missionaries do not know their prejudices before leaving, but they quickly see them when they enter the new culture. Not being self-aware of one’s prejudices can inhibit cross-cultural communication, but crossing cultures can also make a person aware of his prejudices. Therefore, if a person is culturally aware of how his culture has shaped his ideas, and if he goes on the trip with an open mind ready to learn more about himself, these prejudices can be recognized and handled appropriately.<sup>43</sup> Lisa Espineli Chinn says, “The first rule is: Hold off on your judgment and say, ‘It is different, but it’s not wrong.’”<sup>44</sup> Howard Hendricks, a renowned scholar and teacher, says, “The word *communication* comes from the Latin word *communis*, meaning ‘common.’ Before we can communicate, we must establish commonness, commonality.”<sup>45</sup> A few reasons then that short-term missionaries need to study culture are first of all so that they will not offend others and second, so that they will be able to communicate the Gospel effectively.

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<sup>41</sup> Stiles, 101-2.

<sup>42</sup> Dearborn, 25-27.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Round Trip: A Short-Term Missions Documentary and Curriculum*, DVD.

<sup>45</sup> Dr. Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1987), 70.

When coming home, some short-term missionaries feel that they have done a great work for God so they should receive a pat on the back, but nowhere in the Bible does it say that people who serve overseas are better than people who stay home.<sup>46</sup> A short-term missionary should return humble, with a servant's attitude, ready to reach out, but also prepared to put on the full armor of God every day. Satan is still on the prowl for those who can do great things for God, and after a mission trip, great things can happen. It is imperative that in those times, God is at the center.<sup>47</sup> A wise missionary once said that many more people come to Christ on mission trips than at home because so much prayer goes into mission trips and back home there is a level of comfort about daily life.

Keeping God at the center helps the short-term missionary check his responses to people and situations. Short-term missionaries returning home respond differently to the stresses they experience, but they can be grouped into three common response groups. Sometimes short-term missionaries know that they have changed, but they see that it is contrary to how they acted before or how their friends act. At this point, they have a choice either to continue to grow and learn from their mission trip experience or slowly forget and adjust back into the culture.<sup>48</sup> The first group appears to have changed, but overtime they forget what God did in and through them on the trip. In contrast, the second group is made up of people who become indignant at their home culture, and they realize how much they have changed on the trip. However, this change has not been guided, and they set out without compassion and humility to try to change people and persuade them to love missions or to have a passion for God. This person ends up disappointed, alienated, judgmental, and depressed. Obviously, the extent of these feelings is

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75. <sup>46</sup> Peter Jordan, *Re-Entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home* (Seattle: YWAM, 1992),

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-94.

<sup>48</sup> Stiles, 161-62.

different for each returnee. The last response is the most beneficial. This group of people has been fully equipped to process what they have experienced, and they understand how they have changed and how others will react when they return home. Furthermore, they know that short-term missions does not just end on the field, but mobilizing and sharing stories about what God has done and is still doing can spur other people to go, give, and pray.<sup>49</sup>

According to research done by Gullahorn and Gullahorn, travelers who are aware of the culture shock that they will experience both overseas and when returning, will experience the shock less severely. The affects of culture shock and reverse culture shock can be minimized if a person is properly trained and prepared for what they will encounter. This simple fact is vitally important to how short-term mission preparation should be approached and executed.<sup>50</sup>

Training which is led by the team leaders for short-term missions teams must make Christians think about Jesus' call: "Come and follow." Participants should encounter God in such a way that they leave changed, and they should be able to process what they experienced so that they can turn into missions mobilizers at home. Short-term mission trip leaders are fundamental in shaping and building a team that is centered on God and is properly prepared for cross-cultural ministry. Proper training should remold any erroneous ideas that participants have about missions both short-term and long-term, and it must broaden the participants perspective of who God is and his world. Training must also prepare participants for culture shock as well as reverse culture shock.<sup>51</sup> Within the past five years short-term missions training material has become significantly better (See Appendix 4). There are some really good training materials available, but it is still up to the leaders to train their teams.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>50</sup> Gaw, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Chris Blumhofer and Andy Crouch, *Round Trip: Participant's Guide* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today International, 2008), 87.

## Part Two: A Four-Step Guide to Proper Short-Term Mission Training

So if there is a need then there must be training. Brian Howell, Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College, recommends that short-term mission trips emphasize cultural preparation and that short-term trips keep in mind the long-term vision and goal.<sup>52</sup> Proper training should prepare each short-term missionary for effective cross-cultural ministry, successful re-entry, and consistent missions lifestyle.

Research shows that good short-term mission results in the following: (1) Short-termers move farther along in their understanding of God and in their personal walk with Him. (2) Short-termers spend more time in prayer for missions. (3) Short-termers increase their mission giving<sup>53</sup> (numbering added).

A “good” short-term mission trip, as stated by Sneed above, incorporates spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects during training before and after as well as throughout the trip. Spiritual training should make way for growth of self-knowledge. Each participant should be making sure Christ is the focus of the trip, which requires much prayer before and during the trip. Participants need to be emotionally prepared for the poverty that they will see, the culture shock that they will experience, and the changes that they can expect. Physical preparation includes immunizations and other types of physical training. For example, participants may be required to be able to walk for long periods of time or be able to do manual labor. There are no short cuts for good training. Good training should guide participants in preparing one’s whole self to go, processing experiences and emotions, pouring in when one is pouring out, and mobilizing others to go.

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<sup>52</sup> Brian M. Howell, "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 211, *Academic Search Elite, EBSCOhost* (accessed March 8, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> Sneed, 51-52.

## I. Pre-Field Training

Whether it involves team building or rehearsing a skit or learning more about the culture, pre-field training is extremely important. Sometimes there are some obstacles when trying to complete pre-field training—people do not live in the same place or the whole team is new or the leader is so well-traveled that culture shock does not affect him or her anymore, and they forget the importance of preparation. Sometimes when churches are trying to start up a missions program they do not have access to training materials or even knowledge of where to start. The idea of trying to find all of the materials and information can be daunting. Often denominations have materials for their churches or big organizations have materials for their teams. In the past five to ten years, short-term mission trip training materials have become more and more abundant. However, it is not always easy to find material that incorporates pre-field, on-field, and post-field training (See Appendix 4).

Even if a team is not able to physically meet together, they should all go through the same material on their own and discuss some issues on the trip. Ideally the team would meet in one city for a night before they fly out the next day, or they could plan the first day after arriving or the day of arrival as a training day. Five main topics should be covered in pre-field training—worldview adjustment, cultural awareness, re-entry culture shock, trip logistics, and post-field mobilization.

Worldview adjustment means grasping God's broad vision for the world, but this obviously will not be complete until after the trip. A person's worldview consists of beliefs, feelings, and values which all join together to influence a person's behavior and routine.<sup>54</sup> Pre-field training begins to prepare short-term missionaries by shaping their worldview, so that they

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<sup>54</sup> Rankin, 28.

can see the trip through God's eyes.<sup>55</sup> Each participant must evaluate his or her worldview. This step is vitally important to the unity of the team.

The worldview of the American church should also be evaluated. Many American Christians do not understand the Christian life as it relates to the whole world and as it relates to missions. To address this, The Traveling Team, an organization dedicated to the education and mobilization of college students and future missionaries, has created a study called *The World Christian Bible Study*. Through this twelve-week study, people get a small glimpse of the world and God's plan for how Christians are to be involved. The final lesson shows that there are five ways to be involved in missions, and every Christian should be involved in one or more of these ways. Only one of these involves going overseas. There must be people at home who are willing to give sacrificially in order to send people overseas, and there must be people to pray. There must be people who will welcome immigrants and foreign exchange students. There must be world religions teachers who will mobilize on campuses around the country or people who will speak on behalf of the missionaries and be an advocate for action. God has put this huge wheel in motion so that His people will go out in force to change the world.<sup>56</sup>

As short-term missionaries spread out across the globe, they need to be equipped with the appropriate tools. Often teams meet six to ten times beginning about three months before the trip. This gives teams a time to bond and get to know each other, to pray for God's guidance, to go over any logistics, and to start learning about worldview and culture. It is necessary to meet that far in advance to make sure that each person has time to raise support if they need to and to get passports and the necessary immunizations.

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<sup>55</sup> Chris Blumhofer and Andy Crouch, *Round Trip: Leader's Guide* (Carol Streams, IL: Christianity Today International, 2008), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Todd Ahrend, *Lesson 12: Finding Your Role in World Evangelism*, <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/?q=node/376/> (accessed March 2010).

When it comes to security, each short-term missionary needs to be informed about the religion of the country they will visit and how open they are allowed to be about the Bible. They should know about appropriate attire, acceptable relational interactions, and proper forms of greetings. They should also be informed about some of the history and things that are taboo. This is where the hosts, the people who will lead you once you get overseas, can be a big help. Sometimes hosts are underappreciated and taken advantage of because Americans come in with their own agenda without realizing that God is already working there, and typically there are people who live there who are capable of completing the same task. Americans frequently come in with an agenda such as building a wall when the people do not need a wall, and then they want to get it done and get it done efficiently. God is not always about efficiency; He works on His own time schedule. Friesen and Sneed found that the amount of impact a trip has on its participants is directly related to the relationships that are formed on the field with nationals and with teammates and thus not as dependent on the efficiency of the work or the completion of the project.<sup>57</sup> In American culture being efficient and being on time is often placed above relationships and sometimes indirectly above the opportunities that God has put in one's path. On the other hand, sometimes Americans view cultures that do not work on a strict, efficient schedule as lazy and wasteful. God has chosen to use people to be his instruments to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world, even if He could have done it faster another way. It is a privilege to serve Him in this way.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sneed, 52 and Friesen, 452.

<sup>58</sup> Stiles, 32.

## II. On-field and Post-field Debriefing

Debriefing sessions help people process the experiences and emotions of the day, and it is important that these sessions happen daily or every other day and at the very end or immediately following the trip. Soldiers deployed overseas undergo debriefing sessions prior to their return trip. Long-term missionaries have debriefing sessions as a team a few times a year. On a trip that is packed into such a short time and that aims at fostering spiritual and emotional growth, teams need to have debriefing sessions at the end of the trip as well as daily, typically in the evenings. The debriefing sessions will look different for different teams based on the available amount of time, age of the participants, and size of the group. However, one of the people whom the writer of this paper interviewed states,

Debriefing for any age group needs to include: observed differences between the home and foreign cultures; telling good experiences of how God worked; discussing the struggles and hardships of the trip; relating how individuals experienced God on the trip; and a description of how each person's worldview has changed—how he or she will think or act differently as a result of the experience.<sup>59</sup>

Being able to talk out the observations and changes is very helpful. Often there is something that other people can see that one cannot. It is difficult to bond with a team if there is not some sort of daily debriefing going on. Sometimes people are not comfortable sharing experiences in a group, but it is up to the leader to decide the best time, place, and structure for the daily debriefing sessions. Sometimes it is very difficult to make debriefing a priority because everyone is tired, but it is necessary for growth and unity.<sup>60</sup>

*LeaderTreks*, an organization dedicated to raising up student leaders, has a unique type of debriefing session for student teams. The whole process can take anywhere between an hour and three hours. Their daily debriefing begins with a time of worship followed by a prepared Bible

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<sup>59</sup> A short-term mission team participant, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire, February 1, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Blumhofer, *Leader's Guide*, 49.

study on the morning's appointed quiet time passage. Next, the team discusses not only the surface level problems or joys of the day, but the leader should aid them in deeper reflection and discussion. Participants can share a story or they can share what they want to go back home and tell their family about the day or they can share about changes that they have undergone. This fosters a sense of openness and community as the participants get to know each other better. The next step is very important to the debriefing process. As a team they will highlight things that the team is "doing well." This is not limited to the outward result but what the actual driving force was behind that result. Next, the team agrees on something that "needs improvement." After that, they agree on a means of making that area of improvement a success the next day. Participants will then hold each other accountable to do this so that the team as a whole completes their goals. *LeaderTreks* created a device called the "Encouragement Circle." This requires a fairly high level of maturity to execute, but it is beneficial for the students to be able to look someone in the eyes and tell them what they are doing well. This is followed by a challenge for the next day. This process of debriefing is aimed at growth, and it is most beneficial for students.

There are many reasons that debriefing sessions are beneficial. The *Round Trip* video, a short-term missions documentary and training guide for leaders and participants published in 2008, shows an American team in Kenya splitting into smaller groups to talk about their experiences. Dave Livermore points out that often there are problems within the team. This can be harmful to one's witness, and it is definitely not beneficial for the unity on the team. Probably the fastest way that this can be worked through is through daily team debriefing sessions.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes the locals can join in on the debriefing time, but there are other times when the locals should not be present. This is a time that people can express any struggles that they are facing or

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<sup>61</sup> *Round Trip: A Short-Term Missions Documentary and Curriculum*, DVD.

any other team business.<sup>62</sup> Throughout the day, the leader must be watching and very aware of the team's responses to what is happening around them. One of the most important things for a short-term mission team leader to do is to "seize the moment." Make these moments teaching moments by drawing the team's attention to something amazing that God has done and talking about it right then. On the flipside, it is good to pull the team aside and pray together if there is a heartbreaking situation that is difficult to encounter. Not everything has to wait until the evening and then having to try to fit everything in to one short session.<sup>63</sup>

A separate longer and more intense debriefing session at the end of the trip will help the team bring closure to their time there. This will help team members sort out their thoughts and emotions. This will also prepare them for what they can expect when they return home and how this experience should affect them as they go about daily life. Each short-term missionary must work through the closure process, the process of bringing the trip to a conclusion so that one can move on. This definitely does not mean forgetting the relationships that were built, the commitments that were made, or the life changes that were experienced. The truth of the matter is—every short-term missionary must return home whether they want to or not. This may mean coming home and going to school in order to be able to go back out and serve long-term. This may mean going home and having a passion for missions by praying and supporting others financially.<sup>64</sup> Bringing closure to a mission trip does not mean forgetting it, but it means that there is more growth coming, and following God home may be just the place to experience it. Bringing closure to a trip should begin during the debriefing process.

Usually short-term team preparation books have an outline for the final debriefing session, but if it does not there is a simple debriefing outline laid out in Peter Jordan's book *Re-*

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<sup>62</sup> Blumhofer, *Leader's Guide*, 49.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>64</sup> Jordan, 26.

entry: *Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home* (See Appendix 2). The writer of this paper was in the Philippines for a two-month mission trip one summer, and her team used his outline in final debriefing sessions. It was very beneficial to have time alone while also being able to discuss thoughts with people who had experienced similar feelings. Ideally, debriefing sessions would be done before returning home, but in the case that there is not time before the flight home, each participant can go through this same basic outline on his or her own with the help of a mentor or family member. For leaders, understanding the importance of this element is vital. Most team leaders will be more than willing to lead their team through the process, but often they are not aware of how it should be done.<sup>65</sup>

### **III. On-Field discipleship and guidance**

This topic is the most difficult to find in any short-term mission training material, but it can be supplemented with a leader's own Bible study outline or Scripture memory passages (See Appendix 1). The *Round Trip* curriculum does not include an outline for on-field growth and devotionals. Many youth programs and mission trips have a set Bible curriculum that all of the participants will go through. This can be done by one of the leaders teaching a Bible study in the evening that goes along with each participant's quiet time for the day. Typically this requires each participant to have the same training book that they go through. However, whether a trip is made up of adults or of students it is beneficial to have a common daily devotional or a common curriculum throughout the trip. This will aid in the building of community among team members, which will show the love of Jesus to those around, and it will also bring closeness and unity, which will help the team be more effective and single-minded.<sup>66</sup> When a team is trained and is

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>66</sup> A short-term mission trip leader, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire, January 28, 2010.

working together to accomplish God's purpose there is a natural camaraderie.<sup>67</sup> This is definitely prompted through pre-field and on-field spiritual discipleship with a Biblical focus.

Creating this type of curriculum can be very time consuming, and sometimes it does not fit every group. Often each church or organization has its own curriculum for trips. This is especially true for strong, well-established youth programs and big organizations. One tool that is mentioned in the pre-field section is the World Christian Bible Study. One missions program has the team members go through the World Christian Bible Study over the course of the summer, but it would also be beneficial to complete it before going. Another tool that can be very helpful in shaping one's perspective is to read bibliographies of missionaries past and present. Nehemiah Teams, a program designed to grow students to have a Godly vision of the world through cross-cultural training and experiences, uses a book of several missionary bibliographies that have been compiled into very convenient daily readings. This can be helpful because it attests to what God has done, and what He wants to do through missions now. It shows the mighty faith and extreme perseverance of missionaries.<sup>68</sup> *LeaderTreks* also has many on-field Bible study materials to choose from.

Sometimes short-term mission teams have a team devotional in the morning just to get everyone on the same page. Short devotionals are a part of spiritual growth but team leaders should consider taking this process a step further though. Of course deeper Bible studies will not work for every team, but it is beneficial for accountability and discipline on the trip as well as unity. Each Nehemiah Team, a program through the IMB, participant reads through the book of Acts during the summer. Usually each chapter is read through twice, but every participant no

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<sup>67</sup> A short-term mission trip participant and leader, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire January 23, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Jess Jennings, *Look What God Can Do!* (Makati City, Philippines: Church Strengthening Ministry, 2007).

matter where they are in the world, reads the same passage everyday. It is great to see different things that people have learned from the passage. Another thing that is unique to Nehemiah Teams is their intense memorization program. There are twenty-six verses spread throughout the summer, equaling about one every other day, which each team member must memorize. Typically the passage is just one or two verses long, but the second-timers receive longer passages to memorize. Memorizing these Scripture passages with my team was one of the highlights of my summer. It was a good way to grow and to always keep Jesus at the center. At the end of the summer during debriefing sessions, every participant came together and shared what each had learned in Acts and through Scripture memorization, the World Christian Bible Study, and the missionary biographies. There are not any special shortcuts for spending time with God in His Word; that is where growth flourishes.

Being in God's word instigates growth, and journaling is a great way to record that growth. Journaling is not everyone's forte, but it is very beneficial for helping team members remember what is done each day, for assessing what changes have taken place over the course of the trip, and processing thoughts and emotions. At first journaling may seem forced, but it can turn into a way to honor God through prayer and thoughts. Sometimes the best way to figure something out is to write about it. Emotions are often difficult to understand, especially when experiencing culture shock. Sometimes someone will cycle through the same emotions and recording the previous reaction will help for a better response the next time. Journaling is especially beneficial on short-term mission trips because so many things happen that one cannot possibly remember every detail. Journaling is not only for remembering the details, but it is a way to watch God move as he works in and among the team and the people that they minister to. Rereading one's on-field journal following re-entry can bring hope and a sense that God is doing

a mighty work. Also writing down a story that was amazing on the field can help to better express it to friends and family back home.

There are always exceptions to every rule. An appointed Bible reading or mandatory memorization is not feasible for every short-term trip, but the leader should have a good knowledge of the project and the team in order to be able to discern where the team's needs lie. There will probably be a team member, who does not want to participate for one reason or another. As mentioned earlier, student short-term mission teams typically have a certain Bible study or growth journal that they each go through on their own. An adult short-term participant probably has a Bible study routine, and like many students they do not need to be told what to do and when to do it. However, this can lead to adult trips not having as much unity as youth trip. Often adults are set in their ways, but youths are still teachable and willing to follow.

The leader must foster unity and must continually be focused on God's purpose for each trip. The leader is very important when it comes to debriefing sessions, and he or she has more responsibility than anyone else on the trip. There are several leaders' guides available to help guide leaders through this time. The leader is typically in charge of the pre-field training, on-field spiritual organization and leadership, debriefing sessions, and answering all kinds of question. The leader is a guide and the go to person. *Round Trip* has a comprehensible leaders' guide that goes along with the curriculum. The best leaders are those who are F.A.T. people, meaning "Faith-full," Available, and Teachable. With these characteristics a person can grow to become a strong leader both on short-term mission trips and in life.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> A short-term mission trip leader, interview by author, e-mail questionnaire, January 28, 2010.

#### IV. Post-field Mobilization

Being a post-field mobilizer means telling people about one's experience both one-on-one and before a group. This comes naturally due to a person's excitement upon return. However, there is an active component to mobilization. A short-term missionary cannot effectively mobilize if they are not properly debriefed.

Sometimes being a mobilizer takes some encouragement from others. It can be helpful to tell friends and family what they will have to do when their loved one returns from a short-term trip. The returnee will not exactly know why he is feeling the way he is feeling, and friends and family will not know how to help them through this time of re-entry. As mentioned previously, the International Mission Board has a worksheet for friends and family with a list of encouraging steps that will ease the re-entry stress of a participant.<sup>70</sup>

Short-term missionaries need to be able to tell their story in such a way that it leaves the audience with a good feel of what went on. Friends and family at home are not interested in every little detail, and they may just want to hear one short story. This is something that every short-term missionary must be prepared to face. After the writer of this paper's first trip to Russia, she was in love with the people and the country, and she wanted everyone to know about it. She thought they would be excited to hear about everything that she did, so she wrote all of her supporters a three-page letter describing the entire trip. Honestly, they probably did not want to read it and afterwards they probably did not get a good glimpse of the trip.

One of the main ways that short-term missionaries can miss mobilizing and impacting people at home is by not preparing a summary and story about the trip before they return. Most short-term missionaries want to share all of their experiences with everyone that they meet, but there are just so many stories and the impact was so great that when they were asked the cliché

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<sup>70</sup> International Mission Board, "Debriefing: Basic Debriefing Tips."

question—“how was your trip?” They respond with a sigh and say, “It was wonderful. I cannot even put it into words.” That may be true, but that just left the listener with absolutely no visual of what God did in the life of the short-term missionary or in the lives of people that they ministered to. Through interviews, which the writer of this paper conducted, she has found that a common regret of short-term missionaries is that they did not know how to come back and communicate what they had seen. A simple way to fix this is by preparing a two or three minute vignette or “verbal snapshot”<sup>71</sup> of one story from the trip. This story should be rehearsed, concise, and poignant. In these short two or three minutes a short-term missionary is able to share what God is doing and what he has done in and through them. In that moment, a short-term missionary can be the eyes of those people who are not able to travel overseas.

Therefore, short-term missionaries have a bigger responsibility than just raising money and serving on the trip. They must report back to those who sent them and prayed for them. Losing sight of what God has done in one’s life on the short-term trip is dangerous. However, the pre-field and on-field experiences should equip a participant to be ready to share, to be able to make a decision about missions as lifestyle, and to be able to move forward effectively mobilizing others to go, give, and pray.

It is sometimes difficult for returning short-term missionaries to readjust and become involved in the local church. This can spur from either a disdain for the way church is done in America. Maybe the African style of free worship and fellowship or the Filipino hospitality and adaptability to any situation seems to match more with the Biblical view of church than church at home does. The lack of interest from pastors can discourage people from sharing their stories or getting involved, but people are encouraged not to give up. However, everything must be done in love, and God will honor those who speak His Word in truth and in love.

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<sup>71</sup> Blumhofer, *Participant’s Guide*, 84.

Friesen points out that sometimes there is an extreme drop in morals and in spiritual growth after a year, so the first year after a short-term mission experience is vital.<sup>72</sup> Jordan mentioned that each participant should write a letter to himself that will be sent in six months to remind him of changes that may have been forgotten or about commitments that were made that may have been forgotten in the hustle and bustle of life.<sup>73</sup> *Round Trip* recommends that participants find a trusted Christian friend that will help them and challenge them during the months following the short-term trip. This group will help each person initiate the change that they want to see happen. For example, the group that was documented in the *Round Trip* video decided to put on a benefit concert to raise money.<sup>74</sup> Christians who were not able to go on the short-term missions trip may see the need to help the poor and the oppressed in their own community due to the passion and testimony of the short-term missionaries. Often times, passion to evangelize and to support missions that typically follows a missions trip passes because no one else seems interested. However, sharing these ideas in a group with a common interest can invoke change.

This short-term trip probably changed the participants more than it changed those that were ministered to unless there is follow-up that occurs. A good way to follow up is to return to the same place several times, so that relationships can be firmly established.<sup>75</sup> Paul is a good example of this because he made it clear that he wanted to visit the churches that he had been to before. Paul's life centered on missions, and he eventually gave up his life for the sake of the Gospel.<sup>76</sup> The writer of this paper hopes that short-term missionaries will not fall back into life as normal upon return but will return home as strong advocates of God's vision and hope for the

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<sup>72</sup> Friesen, 453-55.

<sup>73</sup> Jordan, 142.

<sup>74</sup> *Round Trip: A Short-Term Missions Documentary and Curriculum*, DVD.

<sup>75</sup> Stiles, 46.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

world. This must encompass training before, during, and after the short-term trip. God wants all Christians to be World Christians.

## **Conclusion**

When the writer of this paper was fourteen, she went on her first short-term mission trip to Russia, and when she returned home, she was fired up and ready to convert everyone to a life of missions. She experienced disgust, depression, and disappointment, and it was a miserable six months for her family as she continued to try and adjust. That was a dark period for her, but she can say now that if she had not previously experienced the bad affects of reverse culture shock, she would not be so eager to see short-term missionaries trained with the purpose of incorporating missions smoothly into everyday life. The hope is that all short-term missionaries will thrive both on the field and off the field because they have been properly trained and have the tools to come back and mobilize others to give, go, and pray.

Short-term missions really began to take off in the early 1990's, but it was not until a decade later that scholars and leaders began to develop short-term mission trip training materials. Still, many short-term missionaries leave home without the proper training and cross-cultural tools. For that reason, proper training not just any training is necessary in order to have a life-changing and effective short-term mission trip. However, not all training materials are created equal. There is a list below of several good training materials that organizations, schools, and churches can use for training their next short-term mission trip (See Appendix 4). This paper looked at the basic aspects involved in short-term missionary training including culture shock, reverse culture shock, pre-field, post-field and on-field training. The hope is that this paper will

help Christians to better understand how God can use short-term mission trips in the lives of the participants and in the lives of people who stay at home.

## Appendix 1

Below is a three-week outline for Scripture reading and memorization.

| Day                                      | Daily Scripture Reading | Scripture Memory   |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Live for God Alone</b>                |                         |                    |
| 1  | Galatians 1             | Galatians 5:22-25  |
| 2  | Galatians 2             |                    |
| 3  | Galatians 3:1-25        |                    |
| 4  | Galatians 3:26-4:31     |                    |
| 5  | Galatians 5             |                    |
| 6  | Galatians 6             |                    |
| <b>Live as Imitators of Jesus Christ</b> |                         |                    |
| 7  | Philippians 1           | Philippians 3:8-11 |
| 8  | Philippians 2           |                    |
| 9  | Philippians 3           |                    |
| 10                                       | Philippians 4           |                    |
| <b>Live With Purpose</b>                 |                         |                    |
| 11                                       | Ephesians 1             | Ephesians 2:8-10   |
| 12                                       | Ephesians 2             |                    |
| 13                                       | Ephesians 3             |                    |
| 14                                       | Ephesians 4:1-16        |                    |
| 15                                       | Ephesians 4:17-5:21     |                    |
| 16                                       | Ephesians 5:22-6:9      |                    |
| 17                                       | Ephesians 6:10-24       |                    |
| <b>Live with a New Identity</b>          |                         |                    |
| 18                                       | Colossians 1            | Colossians 3:1-4   |
| 19                                       | Colossians 2            |                    |
| 20                                       | Colossians 3            |                    |
| 21                                       | Colossians 4            |                    |

The outline above is simply a blueprint for what an on-field devotional or spiritual growth plan may look like. There are many factors including the amount of down time per day, the time spent at the place(s) of lodging or the time spent traveling. Another common book of the Bible to study on a mission trip is Acts since it tells about Paul's missionary journeys and the foundation of the church. Beyond the Biblical topics studied on the trip, Scripture memorization and a daily time with God is a good discipline to learn. There may be at least one person on your team who struggles with one of these, but if they start this discipline as a group it may turn into a habit after the trip. The impact of the trip can only be strengthened by Scripture memory and time in the Word of God.

## Appendix 2

| Missionaries Returning Home Did Not Expect:  | Reaction:                                   | Suggestions for Avoiding Problems In The Future:  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>To feel so “foreign” upon return</b>  | Confusion, disorientation                   | Make yourself aware of changes within yourself before you return.   |
| <b>A “let-down” feeling after arrival</b>  | Disappointment, unfulfilled                 | Be prepared for a possible “let-down”; realize that you probably have been operating on an emotional “high” prior to and shortly after your return.                           |
| <b>Others to show so little interest hearing about your experiences</b>                        | Discouragement, withdrawal, resentment      | Take it as fact that others are usually not able to relate to your experiences, as you would wish. Some are just not interested.  |
| <b>Peers back home seem so insensitive to materialism and wastefulness</b>                     | Irritation, disappointment, contempt        | Do not allow yourself to slip into resentment, anger, or other responses that appear judgmental.  |
| <b>To see so much apathy and unconcern for the needs of the world</b>                          | Anger, discouragement                       | This may rightly disturb you, but do not become self-righteous or indignant over another’s response or lack of response. Lovingly try to inform them about the world’s needs. |
| <b>To be so troubled over the imbalance of Christian workers at home versus workers abroad</b> | Impatience, discouragement, disillusionment | Accept this imbalance as fact. Instead of reacting emotionally, plan how you can use your life and experience to challenge others back home to missions service.              |

\*This list is compiled from a document on the IMB website, which is entitled “Common Unexpected Situations,” <http://thetask.org/students/Approved/debriefing.htm>.

## Appendix 3

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### Debriefing in a Group Context

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|-------------------|---|
| <b>Step One</b>   | <p>Try to set aside at least three hours by yourself: first meditate on Philippians 4:8-9, then reflect back over your missions experience, jotting down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any insights you have learned about yourself and about missions.</li><li>• What you intend to do with what you have learned, i.e., your goals.</li><li>• Any obstacles that might keep you from achieving your goals (e.g., fears, uncertainties, lack of strategy).</li><li>• Your plan for achieving your goals and for overcoming any obstacles you may have identified.</li></ul> <p>Write down your findings as concisely as possible. A notebook, your diary/journal, and your Bible are essential for this step.</p> |
| <b>Step Two</b>   | <p>Pair off; preferably with someone you don't know too well—this helps both of you to be more objective. Share with the person what you have noted in Step One. Receive feedback about these observations from your partner. Have your partner pray for you. Then reverse the process by having your partner share the four points with you, and so on.</p>  |
| <b>Step Three</b> | <p>If there is enough time and the group is big enough, put three pairs of people together, and repeat all you did in Step Two in this larger group. Then everyone should come together, and a spokesperson from each group should take fifteen minutes to summarize their group's feelings about the missions experience.</p>  |
| <b>Step Four</b>  | <p>Each person will then take a sheet of paper and write himself a letter based upon his findings from the reflection time, adding any helpful feedback from the others. Place the letter in an envelope, seal it, and address it your permanent address. The leader should collect the letters and arrange to mail them out in about five months' time. When the letter arrives, it will serve as a good checkup on your progress in re-entry and in applying the insights and lessons learned on the mission field to your life at home.</p>  |
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\*\*Material from Peter Jordan, *Re-Entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home*, 141-142.

## Appendix 4

### Five Excellent Short-Term Missions Trip Training Kits

Short-Term Evangelical Missions International is a great resource for any short-term team leader looking for more training, and it has a large collection of training materials, including the five listed below. Check them out at [stemintl.org](http://stemintl.org).

These resources were chosen because they effectively incorporate pre-field and post-field training. One of the resources also provides on-field spiritual growth workbooks.

1. **Round Trip**--[www.roundtripmissions.com](http://www.roundtripmissions.com)
  - DVD and Leader Guide, \$29.95.  
The DVD presents the information in a clear, understandable, and appealing way. It also includes a step-by-step leader's guide that lays out a simple timeline. The sessions encompass both pre-trip and post-trip training.
  - Participant's Workbook, \$9.95.
  - Blumhofer, Chris and Andy Crouch. *Round Trip: A Short-Term Missions Documentary and Curriculum*. Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today International, 2008.
2. **LeaderTreks**--[www.leadertreks.org](http://www.leadertreks.org)
  - This curriculum is developed by LeaderTreks, and it is designed specifically for students. There are three parts to this curriculum: (\$169.65)
    - Pre-trip training material: *Passport*
    - On-trip Field Guides (several options)
    - Post-trip training material: *Mission Life*
  - Both the pre-trip and post-trip curriculums include extensive facilitator/leader guides as well as complementary student guides. The Field Guides can be chosen based on the length of the trip, and they provide fantastic devotional, prayer, growth, and evaluation lessons for each day.

The following three resources are approved by the U.S. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission (SOE).

3. **Short-Term Missions Workbook**
  - This book can be used for teams who are spread across the country and for teams who will meet weekly. The workbook is for all participants, and it includes the leader's notes in the appendix.
  - Dearborn, Tim. *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003. \$15

4. *GO Prepared*--[www.tcci.org](http://www.tcci.org)
- This is a one disk DVD series for \$99. There are six lessons that will prepare a short-term missions team for what they will experience on-field when they cross cultures, along with what they will experience upon re-entry.
  - *GO Prepared*. "The Essential Training Series." Orlando: Teams Commissioned for Christ International, 1999.
5. *The Next Mile*--[www.thenextmile.org](http://www.thenextmile.org)
- Leader Kit \$145.99 which includes:
    - Leader Guide --This leader guide provides sample meeting outlines and informational power points, as well as many other important resources (\$123.99).
    - Goer Guide (Youth and All-Age Edition)--Participants guide used for pre-field and post-field training (\$11.99).
    - Mentor Guide This is a good resource for accountability before and after the trip, and it will help the participant to continue to grow after the trip with the guidance of an appointed mentor (\$5.99).
    - Mile Post Devotional--This is a book designed to aid spiritual growth after the trip (\$9.99).
  - *The Next Mile: Short-Term Missions for the Long Haul*. Waynesboro, GA: Authentic, 2005.

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