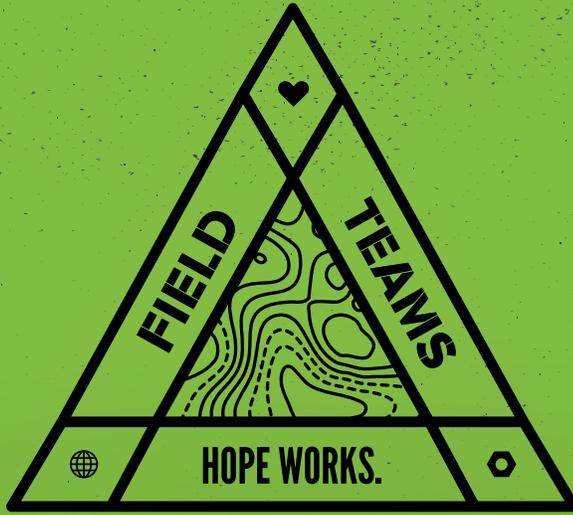


Helping communities flourish.



A CONVOY OF HOPE EXPERIENCE



FIELD GUIDE



◆

JOURNEY WORK FLOURISH

◆

Nothing compares to a circle of conversation with a group of exhausted friends after a long day of serving God and the people He loves. What Isaiah 58:10 calls “*Spending ourselves in behalf of the hungry,*” impacts not only the ones we came to serve, but it changes us as well.

Since 2002, I’ve loved opportunities to lead teams to places throughout the United States and dozens of countries around the world. Though foods, languages, worship styles, levels of poverty and wealth, and perspectives on time or task may change from place to place, two things remain constant: people are people, and God loves people.

May the thoughts shared through this Field Teams Field Guide and companion videos provide a healthy foundation for discussions where you gather in your

community and at the end of those long days on the field. Throughout the journey, I pray you gain insights into people, God’s heart for the spiritually and physically poor, and His overwhelming love for you.

I also pray your Field Teams journey is marked by focused prayer, joy from serving, hunger for justice, passion to learn, an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit, newly discovered realities, significant laughter and a deeper love for Jesus.

Thank you for your service and the sacrifice involved. You’ve taken a bold step in the midst of an incredible story.

With anticipation,

Matt Wilkie
Field Teams Director

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**CONVOY OF HOPE
IS A FAITH-BASED,
NONPROFIT WITH
A DRIVING PASSION
TO FEED THE WORLD
THROUGH CHILDREN'S
FEEDING, COMMUNITY
EVENTS AND  **CONVOY OF
HOPE**
DISASTER RESPONSE.**

OUR CORE INITIATIVES



INTRODUCTION

The Author of Life Invites Us to His Story.

Miguel and I chatted on the steps of his guesthouse just outside Lima, Peru. He was a nice man who promised to take good care of our team. In my years of leading missions trips I'd met other kind guesthouse owners and confess I arrogantly believed Miguel to be a standard-issue host with whom we'd spend a few days. Not true. God's a better author than that. Standard-issue characters don't exist in His story.

As we talked, he shared about his two trips to the United States ... both were at the invitations of Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush. As I asked more questions, he reluctantly told stories of praying with each at the National Prayer Breakfast. Really? Yes, really.

As I listened and learned, Miguel told me about his family, some of whom were of the first Christian converts from the previously unreached and unjustly oppressed Quechuan people of the Andes



Mountains. His family shared their new faith in Christ passionately with people throughout the Andes who had never heard of Jesus. Many in the family ended up losing their lives as martyrs in the process, and he witnessed many of their deaths. To tell the story of the church in Peru, one must include much about Romulo Suané, his nephew and closest friend, whom he watched die a violent death at the hands of Shining Path terrorists in 1994. The 2nd-century Church father Tertullian's words are true of Peru, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." Miguel's closest friend and family member died a martyr's death, and he watched it happen.

Miguel is a character in one of Peru's most important chapters. My conversation with him taught me many things, including:

- Everyone lives a unique story. No one is "one-dimensional".
- Our team joined the beautiful story of what God is doing in Peru.
- Unreached people are still scattered across the earth.
- Large groups of people, individuals created in God's image, live with injustice.
- People are often best reached by members of their community.
- Listen without making presumptions.
- When we don't listen, we run the chance of missing out on very special relationships and experiences.

Your Journey

You're preparing to embark on your own mission. The story of your life will soon collide with the stories of others, which will ultimately connect with a beautiful and enormous story of what God is doing in the world.

What is He doing? How do compassion and Convoy of Hope fit in the story? How about your team? How about you?

In order to best prepare you for your journey, we'll backtrack and take a deeper look at the mission of God throughout history, then we'll explore the intersection of compassion, justice and His mission. All this will take place in the light of the Convoy of Hope story.

When you leave home, the next phase of the journey begins. We'll share devotional thoughts with you throughout your time on the field and you'll be able to journal your experiences, thoughts and prayers.

Because one of the main goals of this journey is to engage your mind, heart and hands, we'll also take time to help make sense of what you're seeing and hearing. Throughout the guide, we'll move towards a greater understanding of the world, a deeper heart for the things of God, and richer understanding for the practical elements of cross-cultural service.



MIND



HEART



HANDS

There's no doubt you could raise some money, show up to do good work, experience some new things, help some people, and then come home with great pictures and stories. But we believe this Field Team opportunity is about much more than that. It's also about the opportunity you'll set in motion while you're there, and the truth God will set in motion in your life for future. The story He's writing is a flourishing significantly larger than the time you'll spend on the field.

We'll start with the big picture, and narrow things down to your story as part of this team.

For Further Engagement:

One Bright Shining Path: Faith in the Midst of Terrorism by W. Terry Whalin and Chris Woehr, tells the story I heard from Miguel that afternoon.

PREPARATION

SESSION #1: WHAT IS GOD'S MISSION?

Seattle Pastor Eugene Cho tweeted, "A wise person prays, 'God, how can I be a part of what YOU are doing, rather than, 'God, be a part of what I'M doing.'" In a sentence or two, how would you describe the mission of God in the world today? Think about it and share your thoughts below.



From the Bible

What does the Bible say about the mission of God?

Image of God

On page one of His Word, in Genesis 1:27 we read,

"So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them."

God created us in His image! We'll look at various implications of this truth throughout our journey, but for now:

- We, unlike animals, trees or the sea, may have a personal relationship with God.
- We may make decisions, work creatively, and serve others.
- When in an obedient relationship with Him, we may speak and act on His behalf, serving as His ambassadors.

He created us in His image, paving the path for us to live in a personal relationship with Him, our Creator.

Scattering

In Genesis 1, God created Earth and then man in His own image. His desire is that man will flourish and grow in number: *"Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it,"* (Gen. 1:28). After the flood, God commanded Noah and His sons saying, *"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth"* (Genesis 9:1).

However, people rebelled. Shortly after the command to Noah and his sons, people gathered at Babel and sought to build a tower that would reach heaven. If you're familiar with the story, you know God got angry, scattered the people around the world and confused their languages. From your understanding of the story, what was the sin committed by the people of Babel?

The people acted in arrogance, believing they could achieve the same status as God. They also acted in rebellion. In Genesis 11:4, they stated one of their reasons for building the tower, *"...otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."* They wanted to stay together where they were rather than obeying God's command to fill the earth. They did not want to spread their resources or move from their comfort zone. Since the beginning of time, people have missed out on relationship with God because they refused to cooperate with His plan for their lives.

Through your journey, you'll join God's mission by helping people around the world understand the relationship they too may have with their Creator.

Do people still refuse to go where God wants them to go today?

The Blessing

The first 11 chapters of Genesis may be seen as an introduction to the Bible and to all of history. In Genesis 12:2-3, the story God wrote expanded as God made an important covenant, or promise, with Abraham:

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3).

In this covenant, repeated four times in Genesis, God promised that a descendant of Abraham—Jesus—would come and bless the world. These verses also make it clear that other descendants of Abraham will join Jesus in blessing people.

Who, if anyone, do you believe should live out this covenant by blessing people throughout the earth today?

All followers of Christ are to bless people on the earth. We saw in Genesis 1 that we are created in His image and we see in Genesis 12 that we live with a mission to bless the earth.

Through your field team, you'll live a piece of the covenant God made with Abraham, as you seek to bless people around the world.

The Kingdom

Two times, while reading through the New Testament, I've circled every use of the word, “kingdom.” What is the “kingdom of God?” How does it help point us to the purpose of God's mission?

We see dozens of references to the kingdom of God in the New Testament. We also see a way of life available for those who follow God's plan. In the kingdom of God, life is different: the persecuted live blessed lives (Matt. 5:10), people pray for their enemies (v. 5:44), tiny mustard seeds become big trees (v. 13:31), the last are first (v. 20:16), and the king of kings comes to serve (Mark 10:45).

This beautiful way of living with peace in the midst of difficulty stands available for everyone on earth today. The peace of knowing Him and the life we can live will be perfect someday in His kingdom, when those who follow Him live in heaven. The kingdom of God is “already here, but not yet” lived in perfection.

Through your team, you'll join God's mission by showing people that there's a different way to live ... a different kingdom. We can live with peace, strength, dignity, courage and joy ... even in the midst of extreme difficulty. It's possible only when we step into the kingdom of God, which is available to all people.

The Cross

God created us in His image, with a desire for people throughout His Creation to live in relationship with Him. Knowing struggles would arise, He encouraged His followers to live as a blessing to others. He provides a life in His Kingdom where people can find strength and hope in the midst of challenges. How does all of this work? Where does it all connect? The Cross.

Jesus came with a message like none had ever heard, with incomprehensible love to all and as a servant to His creation. Sin keeps us separate from God, but the Cross provides a path to reconciliation. On the cross, Jesus shed blood so that people created in God's image could live in relationship with Him. His blood is a blessing that makes the kingdom of God available to all people throughout the world.

As Samuel Rodriguez says in his book, *The Lamb's Agenda*, "The cross is both vertical and horizontal. It concerns redemption and relationship, covenant and community, kingdom and society, righteousness and justice, prayer and activism, sanctification and service, personal salvation and societal transformation."

The cross means forgiveness, healing, freedom, courage, eternal life and much more. This great act of blessing means we may live in right relationship with God.

Through your journey, you'll join God's mission by pointing people to the Cross.

Revelation

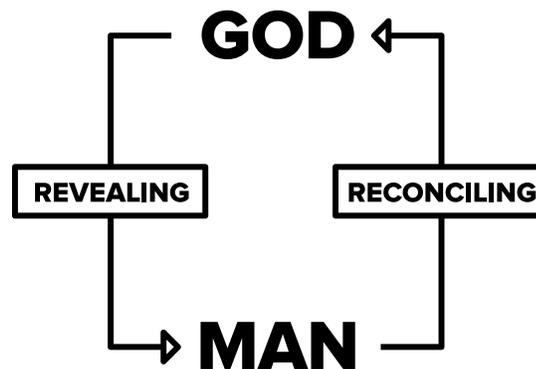
The author of Revelation shares a glimpse of the future when he writes in Revelation 7:9-10: "*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'*"

Someday, people from every tribe of earth will gather around Jesus in praise. That's the future. However, many people have never heard. More work needs to be done.

God's Mission

What does the Bible say about God's mission in the world? After reading these thoughts, how would you summarize His mission?

I describe His mission this way: God is continuously revealing Himself to people around the world, so He may reconcile them to Himself. Here's a simple diagram.



Through your journey, you'll join God's mission by helping to reveal Him to people around the world, and by sharing about the opportunity for reconciliation with Him.

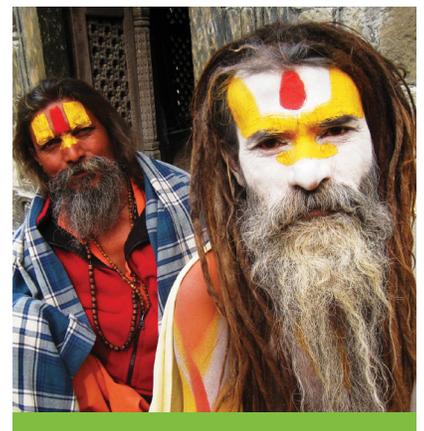


Unreached People

Of the 7 billion people in the world, approximately 2.5 billion have never heard a clear presentation of who Jesus is! Of the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and animists around the world, more than 86% do not know a Christian. People in inconvenient places around the world still need to hear about the life available to them with Him.

The 10/40 Window refers to a geographic area of 10 degrees north of the equator to 40 degrees north. A majority of unreached people lives in this geographic window. The Convoy of Hope Field Team leaders set our alarms to remind us every day at 10:40 a.m. to pray for unreached people of the world.

Through your Field Teams journey, I pray you'll spend good time listening to Jesus. We see strategy in taking teams to places where the Church exists, so that an ongoing connection may continue. However, as God speaks to you, perhaps He'll challenge you to engage with those who have never heard. Perhaps someday, because of your influence, a people can move from "unreached" to "reached."





Practical Preparation

You'll soon join the mission of God around the world through your Field Team—this requires practical preparation! In connection with this material, we've sent your team leader the web address for a portal that is filled with information for your team. Your trip leader will also provide you information during the journey.

- **Passport:** If you don't already have one, and your team is traveling internationally, now is the time to secure your passport. Also, if you do have a passport, please look at it to confirm that your name is correct and that the expiration date is at least 6 months after the return from your Field Teams trip.
- **Immunizations:** We encourage you to connect with your doctor regarding immunizations for foreign travel.
- **Packing list overview:** Please read through the packing list and other key resources on your team's web portal.
- **Prayer team:** Ask two to three friends and family members to begin praying every day for you and this journey. Through prayer, we connect with the heart of God.

We encourage you to begin securing items you'll need for the journey.

Conclusion

Understanding His story and His mission helps us understand our role in life and on the Field Team trip. God is at work! Throughout time, He continues to reveal Himself to people so He may reconcile them to Himself. Through our lives, and through Convoy of Hope Field Teams, we're offered the privilege to join Him on this mission. In order to do so, we must prepare.

Looking at the big picture helps us understand His mission. Next, we'll look at how compassion plays a role in this mission.

Discussion Questions

What are some things that God is doing around the world today?

How would you describe the mission of God?

How does your understanding of God's mission impact your perspective of what is ahead on your Field Team trip?

How can you and your team join God's mission through this Field Teams opportunity?

For further engagement:

JoshuaProject.com is filled with information on the unreached peoples of the world. There, you may sign up for a daily prayer email.

The Lamb's Agenda by Samuel Rodriguez, is a book by the director of the National Hispanic Leadership Conference. The book is a passionate call to living a life of justice today.

Operation World, the Definitive Prayer Guide for Every Nation by Jason Mandryk. This book highlights information and prayer points for every country in the world.

SESSION #2: COMPASSION IN GOD'S STORY

A few years ago, a compassionate T-shirt shop owner decided to make a difference among the poor of Africa. Combining his love for people, great intentions and connections to the T-shirt community, he launched the One Million Shirts campaign. Through this campaign, he stated, “Share the wealth, share your shirts; we’re gonna change the world.”¹

At the same time, missionaries and aid workers lived among the poor of Africa, helping those in need to use resources in their own villages to develop their own local clothing industry.

These similar motivations led to vastly different methods, which led to international drama among the aid community. Those living among the poor of Africa realized that shipments of these shirts could stifle progress, weaken potential, and impact dignity.

The right motivations are important when showing compassion. Using the best methods, or best practices, is important as well. What does the Bible say about how good intentions from a heart of compassion fit into the overall mission of God? Does the Bible give insights into some of these best practices of showing compassion?



Compassion and the Mission of God

God uses missionaries, professors, preachers, police officers, stay-at-home moms and dads, writers, musicians and all others who join Him, to carry out His mission around the world. Where does compassion fit in His story? We know that anything we do should be done in love and with compassion, but where does the helping the poor-widow-and-orphans kind of compassion fit?

Poverty

First, let’s look at poverty. Then, we’ll look at how a compassionate God engages the poor throughout Scripture and how people throughout history have joined His story by serving the poor. Finally, we’ll talk about His compassion and our story. Throughout this journey, we’ll look for elements of a good strategy of helping the poor.

What is poverty?

- To some, poverty is a lack of “stuff.” The proposed solution? More stuff.
- Some say, “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day, teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.” To them, poverty is a lack of information. The proposed solution? Education and information.
- Some say, “What about those who have no access to a pond?” To them, poverty is about access, which also includes issues regarding corruption, unfair laws and more. The proposed solution? Advocacy toward governments and other structures to provide access, or creating that access ourselves.
- Finally, there’s an issue of people who “know how to fish,” but don’t think of this skill when they’re hungry. Sometimes re-igniting initiative is the key to helping someone move from surviving to thriving.

All of these ideas express important elements of truth regarding poverty, but underlying all of these

insights is the internal heart and mindset of men and women. Involved in the issue is:

A misunderstanding of the fact that God created us in His image with an ability to thrive. After saying we're created in His image, God immediately says, "Be fruitful...". We are created to flourish! This involves...

- Dignity.
- Generational history.
- Culturally or self-imposed barriers to flourishing.

Why Poverty Exists: The Bite That Changed History

Though created in His image, with an ability and challenge to thrive, Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden. As they took the bite, four relationships were simultaneously broken:

- People with God-Sin.
- People with each other-Conflict.
- People with themselves-Regret & Shame.
- People with the earth-Misuse.

As Bryant Myers says with great insights in his book, *Walking With the Poor*, all poverty can be traced to one of more of these relationships needing reconciliation. Volumes exist with much more thorough diagnoses, but the root of poverty lies at the spot where sin first occurred. This certainly doesn't mean that a person's level of poverty is directly tied to their personal sin. However, in the course of history, sin has led to the need for reconciliation, and the reconciliation in these relationships can help move a person towards the flourishing life God intended for them.

A God of Compassion

We've seen how people are created to flourish, but a broken world is often in the way. So, what does God do to attack poverty?

First, He promised Jesus, and then Jesus came. In Genesis 3:15, After Adam and Eve's sin, in the midst of God's sadness, He said to the serpent, "*And I will put enmity...between your offspring and hers; and He will crush your head.*" Who will crush Satan's head? Jesus. At the end of this age, Jesus wins ... an important element of God's mission, and the end result of His compassion. What a story!

A Culture of Compassion

Old Testament writers share stories that make clear the culture of compassion God desires for His creation.

God used Joseph and his strategic mind to help alleviate suffering in the midst of an Egyptian famine. He oversaw the storage of food that families could journey to receive.

¹ 1MillionShirts.org Trying to Donate 1,000,000 T-Shirts to Africa <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYZFzmyCRE>, accessed April 16, 2018

Old Testament laws required those harvesting crops to leave a corner for those less fortunate to gather for their families. With this structure, landowners show compassion, and those in need keep dignity as they gather food for themselves. We see this in action in the story of Ruth and Boaz.

Laws also required debts to be forgiven every 50 years during a “Year of Jubilee,” keeping poverty from becoming a generational pit. The Scriptures continue with multiple examples of God’s compassion.

Isaiah 58

In Isaiah 58, we see a forceful challenge from God to live a culture of compassion. Please read this powerful chapter now. What Scripture from this chapter most strongly connects with you?

In the early verses, His people are seeking to know His ways and fasting with expectation. God makes it clear: life with Him isn’t about us, it’s about serving God by serving others. I felt my call to Convoy of Hope while reading Isaiah 58:10, “*And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness and your darkness will become like the noonday.*”

Together, we join His mission by sharing our food with the hungry, rebuilding broken walls and so much more!

Jesus

As Jesus started His public ministry, He stated in Luke 4:18-19, “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*”

Jesus knows compassion. He knew the 5,000 were hungry for spiritual and physical food, and in John 6, with help from a young boy, He gave them both. He knew the woman at the well in John 4 needed physical and spiritual water, and as she showed effort by drawing water, He made sure she had both. He healed lepers, the blind, the weary, the lost and the hurting. Jesus is compassion.

The most compassionate act in the history of the world? The Cross.

We join His work by showing compassion in the midst of physical and spiritual needs, pointing people to reconciliation and to the Cross. He approached people holistically—caring for their emotions, physical health and spiritual health.

The Last Page

On the first page of the Bible, we learn we’re created in His image with the opportunity to flourish. The next pages take us on a journey of need where we see difficulty, pain, miracles, freedom, joy and eventually the opportunity for salvation through the Cross. On the last page of Scripture, in Revelation 22:17, John writes, “*Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” He shows compassion from the beginning of the Word to the end, and the compassion continues.

History

Often today, people separate the ideas of showing compassion and proclaiming Jesus. Throughout most of history, people of God naturally did both without distinction.

The monks of the fourth century lived their faith to people in their communities by providing food or clothing and communicating the love of Christ.

The 12th century friar, St. Francis of Assisi, stated, “We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.”²

Martin Luther led a reformation of Christian thought. Along with his theological leadership and courage, he and his wife took in orphans who needed help he knew their family could provide.

George Mueller ran an orphanage in England, providing a place for children in need to have a home. His teaching, his compassion, and most famously, his prayers, led to beautiful change in the lives of many.

Mother Teresa served the poor in Calcutta, one of the world’s poorest cities. I won’t forget the time I spent with her in 1994, when she spoke of the physical and spiritual need in her city, saying to us, “Calcutta is everywhere.” Needs exist all over the world ... physical and spiritual needs. She worked to meet both.

Beth Grant transitioned from a worker to India to the head of an organization that fights human trafficking. Through her leadership of Project Rescue, she uses her voice to proclaim, “God’s compassion and justice lived out by this generation will be a key to disarming hearts that are broken and betrayed and minds that are closed to a Jesus they don’t even know. This is the moment, this is the time for a courageous life-changing compassionate mission.”³

None of these people forced or manipulated people to follow Christ in exchange (real or imagined) for food or other helps. These people served with no strings attached, living their faith with their actions as well as their words.

Today, compassion is both needed and expressed all around the world.

- Nearly 1 billion people lack access to a purified water source.
- Sex trafficking and other forms of slavery are at historic highs.
- More people will go to bed hungry tonight than the populations of the USA, Canada and the European Union combined.
- As referenced in our last session, over 2 billion people don’t know that Jesus cares for them!

People are responding with compassion:

- Since 1982, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has dropped from 52% to 26%.
- Organizations like Compassion International, World Vision, Project Rescue, Convoy of Hope, and many others join churches and denominational groups to actively express compassion and hope.
- Most missionaries serve people by meeting both spiritual needs and physical needs.



Reconciliation

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”

I’ve read this chapter from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount many times since childhood. However, the latter part of this section on anger stood out to me for the first time in a recent reading. Jesus is teaching that not only should we be careful with our anger, but we should seek reconciliation with others who may hold something against us.

This Field Teams trip is a gift to Jesus and people of time, treasure and talent for you. I believe Jesus’ instructions can apply to us. Now. Before the gift of these things on the field.

Is there someone in your life who has an unresolved problem with you? Perhaps this is the time for you to make a difficult choice of pursuing reconciliation with them. We cannot dictate their actions, but we can seek to speak and act with a desire for reconciliation. The final outcome is only partly up to us, but that doesn’t mean we should abandon the pursuit.

We’ve referenced that the root of poverty is almost always connected with a need for some kind of reconciliation. We’ve also looked at the mission of God and His desire for reconciliation. Perhaps this season will be one of surprising importance to you, as you take hard steps towards reconciliation with someone in your life.



Towards Best Practice

The truths shared above show a strategy that includes love from God, a compassionate heart from those who follow Him, and often, effort from those in need. This combination leads to a strategy and best practices we must consider as a Field Team:

- The people we’ll serve are created to flourish. Rather than giving them handouts, let’s work alongside them towards creating things in their community. Handouts work much better in the midst of disaster when they help meet short-term needs.
- The people we’ll serve might live in conditions that we may not be able to survive. They’re not completely helpless, but instead are creative, resourceful and determined.
- As we take photos, we must remember the dignity of the people we see. We don’t want to take pictures that could embarrass or exploit, but rather the photos we take should be welcomed and inspire hope.
- As we respect the people we see and their potential, we ask that you don’t hand out money or other gifts. Often, people who ask for money on the street are exploited and unable to keep the money they’re given. Any gifts should run through leadership on the ground, and should support the local leadership in their endeavors to influence the community. You may read a bonus resource in your

² St. Francis of Assisi quotes. Retrieved April 16, 2018. <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/400106-we-have-been-called-to-heal-wounds-to-unite-what>

³ ChiAlpha “Compassion-Message Shared by Beth Grant at the World Missions Summit.” Youtube. April 16, 2018.

team's web portal called, "Some Thoughts on Donations" to learn more about Convoy of Hope's perspective on giving out things.

- One important tool for connecting with people of other cultures is to learn their language, if theirs is different than your own. We don't expect you to become fluent in the language of the people you'll serve, but if you're headed to a country where people typically don't speak English, we've provided a short list of simple words that will be helpful to know as you serve through your Field Team. You may find this as a resource on your team's web portal.

Conclusion

God's compassionate heart may be seen from the creation of Adam and Eve until today. His mission includes revealing Himself to those in need by showing compassion, and then reconciling people to Himself as the ultimate act of compassion. We're able to join Him on this mission!

As He writes our story, He shows compassion to us and through us. The problems we see won't be solved overnight, and providing temporary help will bring smiles for a moment. Getting to the root of poverty takes time and tears...and an encounter with the God who reconciles. Field Teams can be an important part of this process, but frankly, we're only part of this story. I'm thankful for the opportunity to be even a part of what He's doing!

The kind man who led the One Million Shirts campaign decided to send the shirts he gathered to people in the midst of disasters, rather than those who are working to better themselves. This provided necessary and timely help to those in immediate need, and didn't discourage those on a path to flourishing.

Next, we'll look at the Convoy of Hope story and its connection to the compassionate mission of God.

For further study

58: The Film

Hope Rising: How Christians Can End Extreme Poverty in This Generation, by Dr. Scott Todd

www.live58.org

Courageous Compassion: Confronting Social Injustice God's Way, by Dr. Beth Grant

SESSION #3: CONVOY OF HOPE AND A HEART OF COMPASSION

Convoy of Hope: A Brief History

On August 25, 1969, life changed forever for the Donaldson family. Hal, David, Steve and Susan Donaldson, who were ages 12, 10, 9 and 5, respectively, stood with their babysitter and waved goodbye to their parents who drove away to a church board meeting at the small Concord, CA, church they pastored. On the way, a drunk driver hit the car and instantly killed their father, leading to a long season of hospitalization for their mother. In the midst of grief, the family also lost the little income the parents earned.



Thankfully, people from the church helped the children and their mother. In fact, the Davis family welcomed the children into their small home for the months that their mother was unable to care for them. The government and local charities helped through Food Stamps, Welfare, and other various acts of compassion. Things weren't easy for the Donaldson children ... but, despite the circumstances, their needs were met.

Years later, Hal earned a degree in journalism and began reporting for various periodicals and writing books. On assignment in Calcutta, India, Hal interviewed Mother Teresa. In their 30-minute conversation, she asked him with genuine interest, "What are you doing to help the poor?"



As Hal says, "You can't lie to Mother Teresa!" He was sad and embarrassed, as he answered, "Nothing."

Hal's life changed as her question reminded him of his childhood and those difficult years of need. As he returned to the United States, he kept thinking about Mother Teresa's question and the generosity from so many people years earlier in his season of great pain.

He spent a year reading over and over through the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to better understand the compassionate heart that Jesus has for the poor. Through this time of reflection and prayer, God placed an idea in Hal's heart. He discussed his idea with his brothers and sister and soon they began loading pickup trucks with groceries and working to help communities around Northern California where they lived.

In 1994, the journey took a formal step with the first official Community Event with Convoy of Hope. A few years later, Hal moved to Springfield, MO, to work as editor-in chief at a magazine. Convoy of Hope, and the staff of the organization, soon followed.

Convoy of Hope focused only on doing Community Events in places throughout the U.S. until 1998 when flooding destroyed much of Del Rio, Texas. Though the staff was small, and resources few, when the team saw the needs of Del Rio, they realized that Convoy of Hope had resources that could help

survivors. Convoy of Hope then started responding to disasters.

Shortly after the initial disaster response in Del Rio, Hurricane George pounded the Dominican Republic. When Convoy of Hope sent a container full of relief supplies, the international work began!

A few weeks later, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and El Salvador, and Convoy of Hope responded robustly with containers full of helpful supplies, people, money and more. Since then, Convoy of Hope has responded to disasters throughout the United States and around the world, providing resources in more than 100 countries.

As the Hurricane Mitch disaster response slowed and communities began to recover and function with a new normal, Convoy of Hope worked with relationships developed across El Salvador and launched what is now a longterm focused Children's Feeding Initiative and other international programs. By the beginning of 2018, more than 177,000 children in 11 countries around the world were receiving meals each school day through Convoy of Hope's Children's Feeding Initiative.

All these years later, Hal continues leading as the President and CEO and Steve serves as Senior Director of Rural Compassion. Together with our donors, partners, churches across the world and other friends, Convoy of Hope serves with a driving passion to feed the world through disaster response, community outreaches and our Children's Feeding Initiative.

Disaster Response:

We respond to those in immediate need, providing food, water and other assistance.

Community Events:

We work with and through local churches and organizations to provide assistance to people in rural and urban areas. Our goal is to serve as a catalyst in these communities, as local churches and community leaders continue with a focus on those who are in need.

Children's Feeding:

We provide food to children, helping them learn more effectively, leading to longterm success. This initiative assists with more than simply nutritious food; we also work to provide clean water, agricultural and women's empowerment training, clean and healthy living environments and an education.



In 2013, Convoy of Hope Field Teams launched to provide a unique opportunity for our partners to serve this driving passion to feed the world.

The Convoy of Hope story includes difficulty, and a desire to do something beautiful to help others facing difficulty. Now, millions have been impacted because of the heart, courage, vision and partnership of the Convoy of Hope founders and team

Now, you're a part of the Convoy of Hope story.



Hearts and Heads Working Together

As we join God's mission by showing compassion around the world, we strive to serve strategically with methods that benefit people most. We'll briefly look at the differences between relief and development, the strategy of sustainability and the importance of awareness.

Relief and Development

When lives are in danger, or when disasters require temporary help, we provide supplies and services during the immediate response. Response efforts include providing food, water, debris removal and other quick helps. When responding immediately, we don't focus on sustainable help, we simply desire to assist "until Wal-Mart opens," or until people are able to recover and get back on their feet. When disasters require long-term assistance, the work transitions to long-term recovery efforts with the potential of assisting with home repairs and complete rebuilding.

When people seek to live healthier lives in a better environment, we work with them to help towards a sustainable way of living. Along with our Children's Feeding Initiative, we work through Mothers' Clubs and a Women's Empowerment Initiative around the world, offering long-term assistance. Our Agricultural Initiative works in tandem with local farmers, providing food long after our initial contact.

Good development requires a strong connection that utilizes input from local leaders and provides assistance that extends beyond the time of crisis.

Relief is typically quick and concrete, with easily documentable results. Development is slower, messier, and more complicated. However, development can be extremely fruitful when done well. The fruit of development takes longer to document, but is empowering and beautiful to experience.

Sustainability

Bob McGurty, a worker in India, defines sustainability as "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." When we work with local people and utilize local resources, we empower others to meet needs in their futures.

We love the children in our feeding programs, but if we still need to feed the same people when they're adults, we've failed. Serving alongside local churches, we hope to engage the children, reach their families and transform their communities.

The Field Teams Goal

While each International Development Program serves in unique settings, most of the Convoy of Hope Field Teams connect with our Children's Feeding Initiative in a developing community around the world, or in various rural and urban settings in the U.S. or Europe — helping people in specific locations serve more effectively. The goal of Field Teams is to take advantage of our short time on the ground to work towards long-term, developmentally-minded goals.

The Importance of Awareness

I'm thankful for a gracious God, who serves through me despite my ignorance. As illustrated in my conversation with Miguel in the opening of these sessions, my ignorance unfortunately can include arrogance. At times, while serving internationally, I've been like what Robert Priest calls, a "(dog) in an art

museum; they see everything and understand nothing.” I’d much rather live as a child in an art museum, learning about a world much bigger than my own, serving in a way that truly supports the compassionate mission of God!

Through more than a decade of leading international teams, people have taught me many truths, most of which I’m still learning:

- If all we do is give things to people, they may come to expect that we’ll continue to do so, regardless of the reality. If not planned strategically, projects may pause when teams depart, as local leaders wait for the team’s return to continue.
- Listening leads to greater impact.
- Everyone we serve is created in His image, with a unique personality, abilities and potential. Doing things *for people*, rather than *with people*, can diminish one’s understanding of this truth.
- Again, I’m thankful that God serves despite my ignorance. Our Convoy of Hope staff will work to ensure a good connection with local partners, and serving opportunities designed to meet long-term needs. As we serve together, let’s pray that God helps our eyes stay open, our hearts ready, our hands prepared and our minds focused on all that’s ahead.



Who’s on the team?

The way we view our team—from home or from the field—involves a heart attitude. Let’s look at the team and our opportunity to serve together.



Who is on the team? Is the team simply you and the people traveling with you? How about the people sending you—the ones who are praying, or who have contributed towards your trip or encouraged you? Are they part of the team? How about the Convoy of Hope staff, or nationals on the field, your interpreter, local pastor or youth from the local church? All of these people are on the team!

Here's a grid that includes these groups of people, and the time frames associated with your experience on the field:

	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
SENDERS	1	2	3
GOERS	4	5	6
RECEIVERS /HOSTS	7	8	9

Maximum Impact Short-Term Missions (MISTM) Grid by Wayne Sneed / Roger P. Peterson

We won't reference each box ... but through this simple grid, there are various combinations of time and people. For instance, in box #1 (senders and their interaction as part of the team, before the trip), perhaps your family helped your raise funds for the trip. Hopefully, in box #4, you and your team are preparing emotionally and practically for the trip and raising funds. In box #8, the nationals will work with you as you serve on the ground.

The team includes encouragers, donors, local hosts, interpreters, Convoy of Hope staff, and ... you!

Every box represents a very important element of the Convoy of Hope Field journey. We need everything these numbers represent to result in the most effective trip.

For instance:

- #1 (senders/before)? How can you go unless you're sent?
- #4 (goers/before)? If you're not prepared, what impact will you make?
- #5 (goers/during)? The work on the ground is your chance to impact!
- #6 (goers/after)? How will this impact your life?
- #9 (hosts/after)? What happens after you're gone?

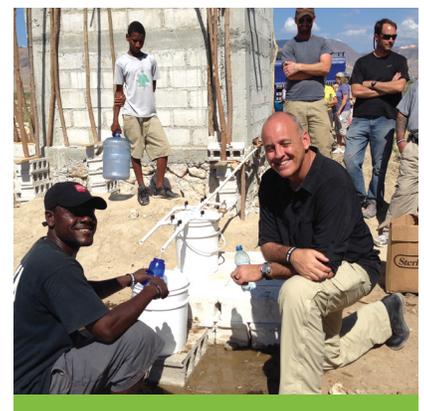
Which box represents the area you believe is most important for the focus of your work for true success?

Consider this story:

One time a team (not from Convoy of Hope) prepared for the task well, worked hard and saw their lives impacted on their trip to a remote area of South America. It was an AWESOME trip. They were excited to build the simple church on the best part of the land ... but soon learned the location they had chosen to build the church was the locals' favorite spot to play soccer.

"There are lots of places to play soccer," the team said repeatedly. They knew they were making the right choice in building the church on the best piece of land and couldn't imagine why the locals wanted the church built elsewhere.

The team worked hard during their time on the field, took many photos and told stories after they went back home. At the same time they were showing friends and family back home their photos and



Facebook updates, the local people were tearing down the church so they could keep playing soccer.

Did the team succeed in their goals? Perhaps ... they took pictures! But did they really succeed in the goal of their hearts? Of course not.

When what you set in motion continues on a good path after you're gone, the trip is successful. Let's remember box #9! Our staff may refer to "With the 9 in mind..." All of us desire to make a lasting difference, and keeping this strategy in mind helps that goal.

As we engage with local people, we believe it's most strategic to work toward ongoing, sustainable success after we are gone. Thus, our focus should be on Box #9.

- The local people with whom we work are on the team with us.
- The local people will stay in the community after we're gone. We need to set them up for continued success!
- Sometimes, allowing the local people to stand in the spotlight leads to greater long-term influence.
- Often, time spent connecting on a deeper level with local people can encourage them to serve way beyond the task of the moment.

That said, we love people on teams and believe Field Teams can impact the team members perhaps as much as those in the field! Box #6 is important as well. As the work ends, and there is opportunity for conversation in the evenings, the experience can begin sinking into your heart. And, as the trip comes to a close, it's important to apply the things you've seen to your life and future.

What can you learn from the trip?

How can this Field Team impact you?

As the work ends, it's important to focus on Box #6.

When we keep the focus in the right place at the right time, we can impact people on the field in beautiful ways and also grow through the experience in ways that can impact us forever.

Leaving home to effectively help in another culture requires patience, humility, courage, listening skills and a willingness to learn.

Different Cultural Norms

Cultures around the world look at important elements of life from different perspectives. In the book by Sarah Lanier called *Foreign to Familiar*, the author discusses key cultural differences in perspective like:

- Relationship vs. Task orientation
- Indirect vs. Direct Communication
- Group Identity vs. Individual Identity

These cultural differences are some of the easier to understand among peoples. Other factors play into culture as well such as national identity, family structure, personal history and much more.

Remember as you arrive, you're a visitor. The time on the field can be a wonderful time to listen, ask questions, build relationships and learn about another culture.

Cultural Interaction and the Grid

Again, here's a simple grid that represents the larger team and time frames represented by your trip. I'd like to pay special attention to numbers 4, 5, and 6. This represents you and your time in preparation,

service, reflection and growth. Properly preparing during Box #4 (you, before you leave home to serve in the field) will lead to much brighter illumination during Box #5 (when you're serving) and then Box #6 (after your return home).

Consider these scenarios regarding the location of service:

Judah read numerous relevant online stories found through Google, watched a documentary found at the library and met a friend from the country for coffee to ask questions. This desire to learn a little about the destination and cultures before the trip helped prepare Judah for a more meaningful field experience. Then, along with getting his hands dirty working on the team project, he engaged in meaningful conversations with COH field staff and program participants, while seeking to understand even more about the people.

After returning home, Judah purposely took time to reflect on his experiences, gaining understanding of people around the world and also growing in his desire to help in his local community.

Sadly, Ray — another Field Team member — did none of those things. Before the trip, he wasn't exactly sure where the place of service was on a map, but he knew he'd get there eventually. His preparation included mostly packing and making sure things would be taken care of at home while he was gone.

During the trip, he worked hard, but was often frustrated when local people didn't do things like him. Rather than wondering about underlying reasons, or asking questions, Ray assumed they weren't as educated or experienced.

Upon returning home, Ray was mostly thankful to be in a more comfortable place, but also knew he had done some good. Nothing about the trip changed his perspective or understanding of other cultures or his desire to impact in a greater way at home.

Preparation leads to greater illumination during the trip and greater impact when your return home.

Conclusion

It's not just what we do and see, but what we set in motion. Through deep connections with new friends around the world, we can influence the future beyond what we may ever see!



Staying safe and healthy!

As we serve, it's important to keep not only our spiritual health, but also our physical health in mind. Through your team leader, or via www.convoyofhope.org/fieldteams, you'll receive material on how to stay safe and healthy during the Field Teams experience. Please read through these pages, and listen during team orientation on the first day of your time on the field. It's important to stay safe and healthy on the journey!

A short list of keys to good health:

- Keep your hands clean during meal times.
- Keep your hands out of your mouth, eyes and nose, even during meal times.
- Drink clean water, which we will provide for you. Water is medicine.
- Listen to the leadership and local staff for best results.
- If you could possibly burn, wear sunscreen!
- Get rest! Rest is medicine!

A short list of keys to safety:

- Follow instructions.
- Don't show people money or other valuables you may be carrying.
- Don't share your personal information such as your phone number, address or email address. Be very careful regarding adding friends on Facebook or other social media.
- If a leader says to leave "now," then leave now!
- Be aware of your surroundings, and don't get separated from the group.

Discussion Questions

Has there ever been a difficult season of your life that God used to do something that helped other people?

What part of the Convoy of Hope story and mission most connects with you? Why?

In reference to the grid with nine boxes, which box did you originally think was the most important for true success? All are important, but what do you now believe is most important? Disagreement among the group is okay here!

How can you show the “Senders” that they’re part of the Field Team and work you’ll do on the field?

What are some strategic things you can say or do when on the field to help the local people succeed after you return home?

For further engagement:

Convoyofhope.org shares current stories from Convoy of Hope and the work around the world.

Compassion Revolution by David Donaldson shares more of the Convoy of Hope story.

Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries by Roger Petersen, includes a more robust rendering of the nine box diagram, and great insights regarding short-term missions.

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, challenges anyone who desires to help those in need to do so with long-term goals in mind.

Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It) and *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life: Rethinking Ministry to the Poor* by Robert Lupton each provide wonderful guidance on best serving those in need.

From the Roots Up: A Closer Look at Compassion and Justice in Missions by Dr. JoAnn Butrin, provides powerful insights on transformational Christian development.

SESSION #4: SHARING HOPE THROUGH CONVOY OF HOPE FIELD TEAMS

Brad and Charissa couldn't wait to get to Haiti. The stories, photos, videos, challenges from Scripture and words from friends who knew the country led to sleepless nights full of anticipation.

They filled out paperwork, went to team meetings, researched the country, learned a few words in Creole, raised their funds and prayed! On their trip, they saw needs up close, worked with passion, met new friends who impacted them, and returned different than they were before. After their return, they wanted to live a new normal where they allowed their experience to change them forever. They have continued to work there to meet needs they experienced and have even returned as a result of the relationships formed on the first trip with Convoy of Hope. This new normal affects how they spend their time, money, and influence as they've joined the story of God's work around the world.

We pray every Field Team member returns to a new normal and that people on the field and from the team experience lasting change. Here's a glimpse of what's ahead with more tools to help prepare for the journey.

Field Teams: A Brief Overview

In the previous session we looked at the Convoy of Hope story and some philosophies that influence our work. As the organization grows, we're continually thankful for people who partner with God on His mission to show compassion through Convoy of Hope's work around the world. In fact, we don't encourage people to give **to** Convoy of Hope, but to give **through** Convoy of Hope. In 2013, after hearing many people request to not only **give** through Convoy of Hope, but also **go** through Convoy of Hope, we spoke to people on the field and with their input launched the Convoy of Hope Field Teams.



Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions

We desire to serve well, and are proud of our affiliation with the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions (soe.org), an organization committed to effective cross-cultural engagement. Team leaders, missionaries, academics, anthropologists, national hosts and others who care about short-term missions, compiled these standards over a three year process. This impacts you, so we wanted to briefly share the Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions.

1. God-Centeredness

An excellent short-term mission seeks first **God's glory** and His kingdom, and is expressed through our purpose, lives and methods.

- Hope in Jesus is proclaimed verbally as well as shown through deeds.
- We spend team time in daily devotions.
- We encourage all team members to find a prayer partner from home.
- We consistently work to process and understand the role we play in God's mission and the bigger

picture of what He is doing.

2. Empowering Partnerships

An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, ongoing relationships between sending and receiving partners, and is expressed by focusing on the intended receivers with plans that benefit everyone.

- Knowing local leadership continues to serve after our return, we work to resource their service to the community in ways that continue after we leave.
- What we set in motion to happen after we leave can be more important than what we do when we're on the field.

3. Mutual Design

An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants and is expressed through long-term strategies of the partnership.

- Projects are field driven, but within the capacity and vision of Convoy of Hope and the team.
- Local people play a part in the entire process of the project, from the dream to implementation.
- We work together to serve while culturally aware and appropriate.

4. Comprehensive Administration

An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants. This is expressed through truthfulness in promotion, appropriate risk management and a quality program.

- We do our best to communicate effectively with teams and our partners on the field before, during and after the trip.
- We work to make good choices that help the safety of the team.

5. Qualified Leadership

An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership with godly character, appropriate skills and deeply held core values.

- Convoy of Hope staff are trained to serve with you in a cross-cultural environment.
- We're passionate about God, people on the field, the mission of Convoy of Hope, and you.
- We ensure professionals oversee various projects in their areas of expertise.

6. Appropriate Training

An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by biblical, timely and ongoing training.

- Beyond preparing for a simple set of tasks, we hope to train and equip for rewarding cross-cultural connections.
- Team members don't need to become experts in cross-cultural developmental work, but we hope to train towards an opportunity approved by anthropological, academic and theological leaders around the world.

7. Thorough Follow-Up

An excellent short-term mission assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants, and is expressed by comprehensive debriefing, re-entry preparation and post-field follow-up and evaluation.

- Each team member, leader, and national director completes a post field evaluation.
- All work is connected to and followed up on by a local church or Christian partner who will take care of further needs, discipleship, and spiritual care.

Conclusion

We believe following the principles shared above will best facilitate Convoy of Hope Field Team members to serve God by serving the mission of Convoy of Hope and those in need around the world.



Serving Like Jesus in a Cross-Cultural Environment

You are you. You're joining a team you call "us." You'll soon serve in a radically different cultural and physical context with "them." People see the world differently and serve through various means. The cross-cultural challenges ahead with your Convoy of Hope Field Team may seem daunting. How can you best navigate this opportunity? Let's look at Jesus.

The Greatest Missionary

Jesus knows life as a son, brother, carpenter, the King of kings, the Alpha and Omega and our Savior. He's also, by most definitions, a missionary. How did He serve after leaving home to go on His cross-cultural mission?

Jesus Embraced

"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us..." (John 1:14).

Jesus became flesh, living like those whom He came to serve. He arrived as a baby, and let people teach Him the language. He listened. He learned to dress like the people dressed, ate what the people ate, spoke with their slang, frequented their hangouts and more. He lived as a missionary among the people.

Some call viewing missions through this lens as “the incarnational model” of missions. I suggest *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, by Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayer. It goes into the various cultural norms that must be navigated by those who serve, and the ways Jesus did so with perfection.

So what does embracing mean?

We start by engaging the culture. What do people eat, wear, and care about? What are some of the political issues they’re facing? Most cultural issues cannot be seen on the surface. I suggest books like *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot - And Cold - Climate Cultures* by Sara Lanier to help understand some of what could be ahead.

Some specific ideas:

- If they speak a different language, learn some words in their language, and try using them! (If you don’t already know the language, we know you won’t be fluent, but when necessary we’ll have interpreters.)
- Try some local food, and eat what the local people place before you.
- Are they task oriented? People oriented? In the places we serve, most people are people oriented; spend some time with them!
- Learn what’s important to people. Soccer? Baseball? What makes them proud?
- If working on a practical project such as building a kitchen, understand that the local people may use different tools or methods of building. See what you can learn from their resourcefulness!
- Going hand-in-hand with the concept of embracing the culture is the necessity to serve. Perhaps the best book on cross-cultural living is Duane Elmer’s *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*. In John 13, Jesus removed His robe of power and grabbed a towel to wash His disciples’ feet. He came not to be served, but to serve.



We’re just beginning to scratch the surface of the deep differences in ways of thinking from one culture to another, and methods of engagement.

May God help us to embrace the culture we’re in, and when we simply cannot, may He help us to endure.

Jesus Endured

“...who for the joy set before him endured the cross...” (Hebrews 12:2).

I shared multiple examples and thoughts in the section on embracing, but what do you do when you simply cannot embrace the situation, food, or cultural challenge?

With some of the teams I've gotten to know well, I've shared a three word phrase that may be spoken when someone expresses frustration about something: "Deal with it."

Jesus endured. In fact, He had to endure difficulty far greater than we'll experience. Hebrews 12:2 says, "*Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross...*" Not only did He endure the summer heat of Jerusalem, or the cracked feet of one who walks in sandals, or the lack of medical care of the first century A.D., He endured the cross! He didn't like it, but endured for "the joy" that followed.

Knowing His pain would lead to others finding salvation gave Him the strength to endure the most difficult of situations.

Life on the field isn't always easy, yet even at its worst it will never be as difficult as what Jesus faced. He endured. We are to endure, too.

Sometimes, as much as you desire to embrace or enjoy something, you won't. You'll need to endure.

I don't like heat. I endure.

I don't like getting up early. I endure.

Thankfully, He gives strength to endure. Remembering 2 Corinthians 12:10 where Paul says, "*For when I am weak, then I am strong,*" has given me strength on a number of occasions to "deal with it."

I should note that missionaries in the U.S. and abroad who live in tough situations are my heroes when it comes to endurance. A good friend who lived for years in Africa told me of times he would drop teams off at the airport, only to drive home in tears, wishing he could return to the U.S. as well. His strong desire and commitment strengthened him to "endure for the joy set before him."

The need for endurance applies to not only cross-cultural situations, but to the familiar as well.

I've shared thoughts on embracing and enduring. Will each moment of your life and mission be one or the other? No. What's the alternative?

Jesus Escaped

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Escaping doesn't take the place of embracing or enduring, but it empowers us to do these things. Jesus escaped on a regular basis and we should as well.

We can learn at least two truths from Jesus and His habit of escaping: prayer is necessary for effective ministry and connecting with home is a fine idea.

Work on the mission field can be tough with early mornings, late evenings and hard work all day. Life at home can be tough too, with business and distractions that accompany life in the world today. Time to connect with Jesus provides strength, wisdom, clarity, and courage.

It can be difficult to get away with Jesus while traveling with a group. Often, living quarters may not allow much personal space, schedules are often packed, and alone time can be scarce. However, escaping with Him is a must.

As you give God space to move in your heart and speak into your life, you may hear a refreshing truth, revolutionary challenge or even a life-changing calling from Him you never imagined!

Also, as Jesus prayed, He connected with home. Jesus was fully God and fully man, so I'm not sure how He prayed. I've wondered if He ever said, "Dad! How's Michael the Archangel? Have they brought in the trucks of gold for our upcoming building project?" I don't want to be sacrilegious, but He was connecting with what He'd known His whole life, with family, and with the familiar.

In the right context, with the right spirit, motivation, and balance, this is very appropriate. How about phone calls home, social media engagement, time on the internet and more? If these things take you or the team off mission, wait until you're home! However, if your leader approves, you could use these things as a tool to share updates of the trip, wind down when you have the time, or connect during free time with family.

So...when you're escaping to spend time with your Creator, or even connecting with home, escaping is a great thing!

Conclusion

May God help us to embrace all we can, to endure all we can't embrace, and to escape with Him! One of my favorite things to hear on the last day of a trip is, "I feel like I'm leaving home." May God connect you with those you're serving in deeper ways than you dreamed possible, and may intense and effective ministry flow through the relationships you build and the work of the Holy Spirit as He uses you in powerful ways!



Final Preparations

As you make final preparations to join God on His mission in the place you'll serve, we encourage you to go over an important checklist, consider your time of life in community, and prepare spiritually for what's ahead.

The Checklist

Through information on your team's web portal and your team leader, we hope you understand the items on this checklist below:

- Request a prayer partner to pray for you each day of the trip.
- Passport (with an expiration date of 6 months after your return and only if you're traveling internationally).
- Please complete all online forms.

- Clothing and non-clothing items from the downloadable packing lists (or the lists from your team web portal).
- Back up all information from any electronic item you may choose to bring (phone, computer, etc.).
- If traveling to a place where English is not the primary language, study some words from the language you'll soon hear.
- Spend time daily in prayer for the people of the place you'll soon serve.

Life in Community

As you serve in close proximity with your teammates, these simple tips can help prepare you for life in community.

- Respect the space of your fellow team members.
- Work to keep your area of the room as clean as possible.
- When eating a meal buffet-style, use silverware rather than your hands to get your food (or in the case of something like a bag of potato chips, pour instead of reaching), and make sure all have eaten before getting seconds!
- Respect quiet hours so your fellow team members may sleep.
- Remember the principles from session 3 on staying safe and healthy.
- If you know you snore, consider bringing earplugs for your roommates.
- Prepare for a life-changing week of bonding with members of your team.

Spiritual Warfare

We must remember that Satan hates everyone, and despises the fact that we'll soon serve Jesus and some special people. Satan desires division, aloofness, selfishness and confusion from the team. As Ephesians 6:12 says, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

In final preparation for this journey, may we search inward, and also recognize the seriousness of the spiritual battle ahead.

May we pray David's prayer from Psalm 139:23-24, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

Before soldiers fight, they make sure their armor and weapons are in place. May we follow Paul's teaching from Ephesians 6 and spiritually prepare our hearts and minds for this battle.

Bill McDonald, a missionary to Ecuador, says he once prayed for God to give him His burden. In Bill's words, "God told me He wouldn't give me His burden or it would kill me, so instead He just gave me a bit of it and that changed me forever." May we feel a bit of God's burden and may it change our hearts and minds forever.

Effectively engaging in spiritual warfare requires sincerity, purity, time in conversation with God and time in His Word. As we feel a bit of His burden, may we fight this battle with a ferocious focus!

Conclusion

You'll soon board a bus or plane to travel to a place where you'll play another role in the story of what God is doing around the world. Like Brad and Charissa, you're praying, preparing your heart and doing everything possible to make the most of the upcoming opportunity.

Thank you. We look forward to serving Him with you. We're thankful to pursue justice and live out the Isaiah 58 fast with you as part of the story He is writing. We anticipate changed lives—ours, yours and theirs.

Discussion Questions

What excites you most about the journey ahead?

What cross-cultural opportunity do you look forward to embracing?

What cross-cultural experience are you prepared to endure?

What, if any, hesitations do you have about spending a week with your team in community?

What last minute questions or ideas do you have for your team leader and the team?

For further engagement

At www.soe.org, you'll see more about the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission.

Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot - And Cold - Climate Cultures, by Sara Lanier

Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships, by Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayer

Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World In Christlike Humility, by Duane Elmer

AFTER THE JOURNEY

SESSION #5: DEBRIEF

Welcome to a New Normal

You knew you needed to sign up for the Field Team. You filled out paperwork, raised some money and served with your team.

Now, you're home. Is today like the days before the trip or is today different? Were you stretched, challenged, frustrated, inspired, called, disappointed, burdened or changed during the experience? Do you feel your heart connected more with the love God has for lost or hurting people around the world?

The most important season of the journey for you is the time after your return. Now. Tomorrow. The future, if you're living in box #6, as described in session 3.

What can be different? What should be different? What will be different? In this closing session, we'll look at questions to help process along your journey, issues of the heart and some action steps to help you move forward.

Processing the experience takes time! Questions should be asked now and multiple times in the future to soak in all God longs to do through the trip and as His story continues.



Processing the past for the future

Experiences shape us. On your journey you saw living conditions more difficult than at home, perhaps heard worship in another language, smelled new smells, held beautiful children created in His image, and tasted some adventurous food. What perspectives can develop from what you sensed? How can your mind process all that happened on the trip? How will these things affect your future?

As you take time to reflect on the trip, consider these questions:

- What brought you the most joy?
- What caused you the most frustration?
- What are some things from home you “laid down” on your journey? This could include TV shows, relationships, hobbies, habits, and other elements of home. Many of these things may be wonderful, but inaccessible on the field.
- What did you learn about the Global Church?

- What did you learn about how culture impacts everyday life?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Who is someone from the trip you'll never forget? Why?
- What are some causes of poverty and personal struggle?
- What most impacted your heart?
- Where and how did you notice God revealing Himself to people?
- Where and how did you see God reconciling people to Himself?
- How do you feel you and your team were able to join God on His mission?

Reflecting on these questions from your time on the field provides a good foundation for processing the experience. Next, let's consider some questions regarding how your time on the field can impact you now, and tomorrow, and in the future:

- How can you speak up on behalf of the people you met?
- How might you pray differently?
- Regarding the things from home you "laid down" for your journey, should you pick them all back up, or might it be healthier to proceed without some of them?

- How did God challenge you regarding your finances?
- What similarities do you see between the field where you served and your community?
- Where and how is God revealing Himself to people in your community?
- Where and how do you see God reconciling people to Himself in your community?
- What do you now see differently regarding life in your community?
- What opportunities exist for you to join God in His mission in your community?
- How might you play a role in helping them in the future?
- What are you willing to give?
- Where are you willing to go?
- How are you willing to pray?

Dwell on questions such as these. Allow God to help you soak in everything He has for you and your future. Move forward with passion, depth and clarity.

Advocacy: Tell Stories and Speak on Their Behalf

You have stories to tell and photos to share. Why, when, how and with whom should you share your experiences? How can you remember what you've seen and heard?

Share your stories

Towards the end of one of literature's most epic journeys, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, we see a scene relevant to the team and what you experienced.

Frodo and his sidekick Sam are the main characters in the story, and the only ones who experience the most intense moments of the journey. During a time of celebration with their closest friends, all of whom played a role in the drama, they all jump on a bed and leap with joy. Then, Frodo and Sam pause and give each other a knowing look—a look that communicates, “We're thankful these people are in our lives, but we're the only ones who truly understand what we've been through together.”

As you tell stories, know that only the team can truly understand what you experienced together. At times, frustration may set in if others don't show as much interest in your stories as you expect. Still, sharing your experiences and speaking on behalf of those whose voices cannot reach your circle of influence may be one of the most impactful actions to take.

A Healthy Perspective

As you tell the stories and relive the experiences, I share insights gained from Hal Donaldson, Convoy of Hope's President and Co-Founder. In a Convoy of Hope chapel, he spoke of a perspective that guides him.

“In the midst of celebration, our perspective shouldn't be the prideful, ‘Look at me,’ but instead, ‘God deserves the glory!’ In the midst of trials or discomfort, it's not self-pity, ‘Woe is me,’ but ‘God was with me.’”

NO

Look at me!
Woe is me!

YES

God deserves the glory!
God was with me!

How? Why? When? With whom?

Time, passion, technology and stories to tell provide numerous avenues to communicate. Consider:

- Writing a follow-up thank-you letter to everyone who supported your trip through finances, prayer or encouragement. Perhaps you can share a gift or a printed photo with them.

- Using your online presence to share photos, videos, short stories, reflections, and plans for the future.
- Sharing as a group or individual at church in classes, small groups, or a main service if invited by your pastor and leaders.
- Sharing at work, other churches, at a school or other gatherings regarding your experiences.
- Taking advantage of numerous opportunities to share experiences throughout everyday life.

As you communicate, consider:

- Incorporating a Scripture that impacts you.
- Telling stories of individuals, beyond just numbers or general stories.
- Encouraging others to join God on His mission of showing compassion to those who live in poverty.
- Sharing the story of Convoy of Hope and opportunities to join the work of Convoy of Hope through giving, prayer and advocacy.

Remembering

In Hebrews 2:1, the writer shares a challenge, “*We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*” You don’t want to waste this experience! Consider these ideas to remember this mission:

- With your experience fresh in your mind and heart, write yourself a letter and seal it. Give it to someone, asking him or her to send it you in six months or one year. Challenge your future self!
- Keep a memorable photo or souvenir from the trip in a place you’ll see it regularly.
- Consider gathering as a team in the future, perhaps six months after the trip, to hear updates from the field, share updates in life and invite accountability.
- As you reflect on the time on the field, tell stories that can impact others, and look to your future, may you continue to walk with God on His mission of revealing Himself to people while reconciling people to Himself!

* Her name has been changed.

Life is a Missions Trip

The Convoy of Hope leadership and family around the world appreciate your sacrifice and love for God and His people! We're thankful for your sacrifice of time and money, and that you chose to join God on His mission of showing compassion through Convoy of Hope Field Teams.

Calcutta is everywhere

Life changed for me on a 1994 missions trip to Calcutta, India. During the trip, our team had the privilege of spending time with Mother Teresa at Mother House, the convent in the slums of the city where she and other Sisters of Charity lived.



In the 30 minutes we spent together, Mother Teresa opened a book where she noted the places where the Sisters of Charity worked around the world. We saw dozens of hand-written country names with cities listed below. She led an enormous work.

She then asked us if we had seen the poverty, lostness, hopelessness, and hurt on the streets of Calcutta. In that very poor city with beggars, Hindu temples, people afflicted with leprosy and a smell I'll not forget, we let her know that we could indeed see the lostness.

Then, she shared words that I remember constantly; "Calcutta is everywhere."

Physical poverty may look different, but spiritual poverty is the same. People all over the world live with lostness, hopelessness, hurt, and despair. May we join God in His mission to help people in "our own Calcutta." May God show each of us the places and people He longs for us to serve!

As we saw needs in the city and on our missions trip, we sacrificed to meet those needs. In reality, needs exist everywhere. May we sacrifice with open eyes, realizing that life is a missions trip.

Connecting With the Heart of God

Perhaps through this experience, God helped you see His burden from a new or expanded perspective. Perhaps you understand lostness or poverty with a depth you've not known. God loves people! God hurts when people don't worship Him or when they're living in extreme poverty.

Perhaps through this experience God will choose to call you to a new life of giving financially towards His work around the world, or even going to lost and hurting people.

God may call you to something new!

In session 3, we introduced the diagram with 9 boxes and discussed pursuing ongoing transformation on the field, focusing on Box #9 and the fruit that will last. In this session, we're looking at Box #6, and the ongoing impact this experience can have on your life. As part of our effort to continue to encourage you,

we'll send periodic emails called, "The Six" with updates on Field Team projects, specific ways to pray for Convoy of Hope's ongoing work, and some soft accountability about continuing to let this experience change you forever! Of course, you can opt out of this communication, but we believe this can be an excellent tool to help remind you of what God did through your Field Team while encouraging ongoing things in your life.

Give God space to help you soak in all He has planned for you in response to your time on the field. He will respond by giving you a deeper connection with His heart for lost and hurting people, and perhaps it will lead to:

- Continuing to help specific people in the place you served.
- Joining His mission in a place where His name is not known! You'll recall from the first session, that of the world's 7 billion people, over 2.5 billion have never heard a clear presentation of Jesus!
- Financially supporting specific organizations, such as Convoy of Hope, or specific missionaries in the endeavor to help hurting people. Through COH's FeedONE Initiative, you can feed a child for only \$10/month.
- Joining on His mission to help those trapped in extreme poverty, the grips of human trafficking, or the despair of a disease such as HIV/AIDS.
- Finding specific opportunities to help lost and hurting people through your home church and in your own communities. Through women's shelters, food pantries, school adoptions, helping foster children and more, God loves to use His people to serve in their own communities!

Conclusion

The Author of Life writes a great story! Thankfully, He's invited us to be a part of that story. Through joining His mission by showing compassion through Convoy of Hope and your Field Team, you've helped reveal God and His love to others, and helped reconcile people to Him.

As your journey continues, may you continue to experience life on His mission, and may this trip play a part in helping to launch you to a new and stronger normal with Him! Also, may your endeavors on His mission continue to help those in desperate need around the world as He writes the story of their lives.



Discussion Questions

What was the funniest moment of the trip?

What was the biggest “God-Moment” of the trip?

For whom would you like to share a “shout-out” on the team for their influence and inspiration?

How will you be different as a result of this Field Teams journey?



For further engagement

Convoyofhope.org shares the latest Convoy of Hope news

Convoy of Hope social media provides a method to learn the latest and share updates with others:
facebook.com/convoyofhope, twitter.com/convoyofhope, instagram.com/convoyofhope, feedone.org

FIELD TEAMS

A CONVOY OF HOPE EXPERIENCE

Helping communities flourish.