

Journaling

(Some parts borrowed from *Essential Guide to the Short-Term Mission Trip*)

Perhaps the most valuable thing you can do for yourself during a mission trip is to keep a journal. Journals are a good friend to talk to when you are feeling confused or lonely. They can help you see how God is speaking to you; they can record memories you don't want to forget; they can help you process what you are learning and hold you accountable to changes you intend to make in your attitude or lifestyle. They are helpful when you go back home and want to tell everyone about your experience. Even if you are not a good diary keeper or writer, you'll want to keep a record of your mission trip in your own words.

Keeping a Missionary Journal

Purpose: There are many personal reasons for keeping a journal, but when serving on a mission trip, there are two major purposes which should be recognized:

1. To reflect upon what God is saying to you about your own sanctification.
2. To reflect upon God's mission in a fallen world.

Both of these purposes are related and together they often help to redirect your life. Keeping the two together helps to prevent both unhealthy individualism ("me and Jesus") and western pragmatism ("we can do this and this...")

What to journal about: It is best to journal in the evening, at the end of your day when you still have things fresh in your mind. Thus, we suggest you go over your day in chronological order (even noting times so you remember 'it was a 2-hour traffic jam!'). When you do this, remember to keep the following in mind:

1. **Record prayers:** Pray about your day, your Bible study, your relationships. Confess your sins, ask for wisdom and pray that your eyes would be open to see what God has for you this day.
2. **Record observations:** When you see people, events, temples, foods, etc. that are different or unusual to you, write them down. After a few weeks, you will forget how they are different. (You should also record smells.)
3. **Record questions:** Note issues which come up which you don't understand. Habits, customs, behaviors that don't make sense to you should be recorded for later questioning.
4. **Record frustrations:** You will certainly encounter frustration because of cultural differences. Write down what you find frustrating, or what makes you angry.
5. **Record ideas:** Write down ideas you have about missions, church work, lifestyle etc. It may be that God is speaking to you about how you should change, or you should be a change agent.
6. **Record facts:** Be sure to write down (correctly spelled) names of people and places. You will be amazed at how fuzzy the human brain remembers other cultures!
7. **Record impressions:** Your impressions (interpretations of what is going on) may not be correct, but write them down and then test them later in conversation.

Remember: Don't be embarrassed to say that you need to go off now and do your journaling. Your journal, combined with your pictures, will be most valuable in your interpretation of what you experienced and in your own Christian growth (sanctification).

Journaling Checklist

A diary of daily thoughts & events A record of my prayers & emotions A way of preserving joy for the future A list of daily priorities A place for favorite sayings and quotes A book for creative writing Somewhere I can retreat to in peace My own history book Where I can review my day with God An exercise in self-discipline A record of answered prayers A blueprint for better future living	1. Start before you leave home 2. Set aside quiet time for writing 3. 'Talk to it' as if it were your best friend 4. Keep your journal confidential 5. Answer some questions in the entries: -Where is God in my life right now? -What am I praying about? -Who did I meet today? -What different thing did I see today? -Include my interactions with the team? -What work did I do today? -What did I learn about serving Him?
---	---

Other Journal Questions to think about...

1. How where you stretched today?
2. What surprised you today about the culture?
3. What strengths do you see in fellow team members?
4. What insight(s) did you gain about yourself?
5. What have you learned today from one of your hosts?
6. What truth is God revealing to you today?
7. How did you use your gifts today?
8. What are the struggles and difficulties that people are dealing with?
9. What has God reveal to you about the church?
10. How has the Lord drawn you closer today?
11. What are some things about your life at home that you want to examine?
12. What insights have you gained for your church?
13. How have you been able to offer encouragement today?
14. What blessing has God given you today?