

## ***Missions Xtreme Pre-trip Devotions (Days 1-5)***

### **DAY 1-The Most Important “To Do”**

You have a “to-do” list and you’re counting down the days until your mission trip! Does your list contain the essential item: “Prepare my spirit”? If you forget that important element, your *mission trip* may turn into just a *trip*.

Your mission trip serves a higher purpose! You may be traveling around the world or to a location nearby. No matter where you’re headed, it is essential to prepare your heart to serve God and others.

Melissa shares her hesitations before a trip to Kosovo:

*Before I left on my first mission trip in Kosovo, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I was excited and completely terrified at the same time. I kept checking my motives. Why am I going on this trip? Do I simply want to travel? Do I really want to serve God? Do I just want others to think I am a good Christian? I knew I wanted to be with my friends who were also going, but I was hoping God had a higher purpose for my time.*

*A few days before we left, I poured my questions and concerns out to God. I asked Him to take away any ungodly motives and replace them with His heart for the children of Kosovo. I wanted to be His ambassador and show the children His love—a love they hadn’t experienced before. I asked God to align my focus with His purpose for the trip.*

In our verses today, we learned several important elements about service—

First Peter 4:10 calls us to use our gifts to serve others, not ourselves. Sometimes our motives are misguided. Take a few minutes to write down your motives for going on this trip—the good and bad ones. Confess and ask God to align your motives with His purpose.

In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we learn that we are Christ’s ambassadors. In a general sense, an ambassador is an official who acts as a representative of nation. The ambassador is called to reflect the official position of the country who gave him or her the authority. So, when we’re called ambassadors of Christ, it means that we are *chosen* to represent Him! He is the Savior, not us. We are on duty 24/7, always representing our Savior.

**Suggested prayer:**

God, I'm excited to serve You. May I be a faithful ambassador as I serve you with my whole heart. Remove any selfish desires or ill motives and align my heart with Your purpose. Create in me a selfless and humble heart to reflect Your love. Prepare me for this trip. I want to learn more about You. Amen.

**Think It Through:**

- Why am I going on this trip? List good and bad motives.
- What does it mean to have compassion?
- As I embark on this trip, how would I define poverty?
- How can I demonstrate God's love and compassion to those I serve?
- How can I align my motives with God's will?
- In what ways can I be a good ambassador for Christ?

## **DAY 2-Follow The Leader**

Please read Exodus 13:17-22

Are you scared? Are you excited? You're probably experiencing a little of both emotions. Imagine how the Israelites must have felt when Pharaoh let them go. They must have been terrified! They were headed into unknown territory, away from familiar things.

God did not leave the Israelites to wander around aimlessly though. They were being led—led by their God, by *your* God. By day, God went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud and by night, God led them in a pillar of fire. He led them through unfamiliar territory in a remarkable way.

You're headed away from familiar things too. In just a few days, you'll experience new foods, new cultures, new languages. You can trust God to prepare the way for you. It is His pleasure to open and close doors. It is His delight to lead you exactly where He wants you to go. We can follow God as humble servants, available and willing to serve.

Grace has taken numerous cross-cultural trips:

*When I arrive in an unfamiliar culture, I often get overwhelmed. I start to focus on the comforts that are absent—like drinking water from the tap or enjoying my favorite foods. I get distracted by the cultural differences. Perhaps I'm a bit like the Israelites when they were wandering in the desert. They so often got distracted from God's leading and reacted by complaining. They took their focus off of that pillar that was leading them and relied on their own efforts and ideas for how to fix everything.*

*Each time I go on a cross-cultural trip, I have to intentionally remind myself of God's promise from Psalm 46:10: 'Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' When I rely on God to lead me, He orchestrates everything. Our agenda may fall apart, but God is working out something better! Let's allow God to lead us. He will show up and show off!*

### **Suggested Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, you know my hesitations. You know my excitement. I ask you to lead our team clearly in the assignment you have selected for us. We ask you to prepare our hearts and the hearts of those we will be serving. Help us to closely follow your leading and not our own expectations. Let us lay aside our agenda and only follow Yours. Amen.



## **DAY 3-Cultural Respect**

Please read Acts 17:22-33

Cultural sensitivity is vital to the effectiveness of your mission trip. Whether you're going to the inner city or halfway across the world, the culture you are entering is different than your own. In our passage for today we saw Paul arrive in Athens at the Areopagus, which was the citadel of many Greek gods. It was the center for religious and educational matters in Athens. Standing in this amazing location, surrounded by philosophers, Paul masterfully and respectfully uses their own culture as an opportunity to share about the one true God.

There is no better way to experience another culture than to immerse yourself in it. When you arrive to your destination, how can you display cultural respect?

Mae shares three items she has learned over the years of taking cross-cultural trips:

*Have humility – God is asking you to die to your pride. More than likely, you will be arriving to help in an established ministry. Your purpose is not to arrive on the scene and fix everything that is wrong with the local's ministry. You're there to support them and serve alongside them. Be an encouragement to them. Be a learner, not a knower.*

*Be loving – Remain loving in all areas and remember that serving others glorifies God. This may require you to be flexible with your schedule, your expectations, and your dreams. Other cultures will do things differently. Instead of complaining, seek to understand and learn why they do things that way. Pray and ask God to teach you how important flexibility is in His work.*

*Be teachable – When you arrive, you may experience culture shock. In fact, there will likely be a stark contrast between your daily life and theirs. You may see poverty in a brand new way and it will break your heart. Concentrate on being a learner of the culture, so you can understand and grow. Ask God to prepare you and help you serve Him wholeheartedly.*

### **Suggested Prayer:**

God, I understand that I may experience culture shock when I arrive in a few days. I may feel lost and overwhelmed by what I see. Make my heart pliable so I can learn. Help me make an effort to understand my surroundings. As I enter this new culture, give me eyes to see where you are already at work. May I join You there.

**Think It Through:**

- How does the culture in which I'm traveling view age and authority?
- How does the culture view time and punctuality?
- What is appropriate, respectful and modest clothing?
- How am I to greet a peer? What is the respectful way to greet an authority figure?
- How do I say "thank you"?
- What dining etiquette should I be aware of?
- What religious traditions or beliefs should I know?
- What does the average person believe about Jesus?

## DAY 4-Cultivate Relationships

Please read Colossians 3:12-14

Going on a mission trip can be life-altering. Oftentimes God works strongly in your life, the lives of your teammates, and the locals you are helping. This creates an opportunity to significantly impact other people.

- **Encourage and pour into the local leaders** – Perhaps your mission trip is focused on children or on building homes. If so, that's great! God will use you. However, remember that your greatest impact may be to the missionaries or church leaders you are helping. Spend time with them, pray with them, listen, and serve them. The missionaries and leaders may be stressed, discouraged, ill, burnt out or overcome with self-doubt. When you encourage them, your ministry continues long after you leave.
- **Pray for the families** – You will encounter many families throughout your time. Perhaps you will have the privilege of visiting their homes and hearing their hearts. Take time to pray for these families, not just during your trip, but long-after you've returned. Bring them hope.
- **Serve your teammates** – The relationships cultivated on your trip may result in lifelong friendships. You and your teammates may see God move in incredible ways and those experiences often result in great bonds of friendship. Be authentic and vulnerable with each other. Be open to change and available to learn from one other.

Shane shares some insight:

*Mission trips create a special bond between a team of people. It may be the hours of traveling together or the excitement of experiencing a new culture with one another. I think it's also the joy of seeing God work in each other's lives.*

*Time after time, I've seen a tight bond develop between people when they serve together—putting aside pride and oneself to see God work. It's not only a friendship, but also accountability to continue serving once we return home. I encourage you to take time to invest in the lives of your teammates. Encourage each one. Pray for each one. Let God work through your team to create a bond that will last.*

### Suggested prayer:

God, we want our team to be strong. Remind me to encourage each one. I know that each person handles culture shock differently, so give me grace to help and kind words to uplift those who are down. Prepare each of us to serve you with all of our hearts, souls, mind, and strength. Amen.



## **DAY 5-Prayer of Dedication**

### **Please Read Romans 12:1-8**

Using the Bible verses we read today, let's dedicate our trip to God through prayer.

Father God, we offer our bodies and our trip to You as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to You. We do this as true and proper worship to You, God. We ask that You help us make wise and God-honoring choices so that we do not conform to the pattern of the world. Instead, transform us by the renewing of our minds. May we test and approve what Your will is—Your good, pleasing and perfect will.

We know it is by the grace given to us by You that we can come to You humbly. We don't want to think too highly of ourselves for we know that this is Your trip, Your mission. We desire to think of ourselves with sober judgment in accordance with the faith you have given to each of us.

We know that our team has many members and each one serves an important function. Though we are many, we form one body—one team. We have different gifts from You. We ask You to use those gifts in our mission and to encourage one another on our team. We don't want those gifts to clash or for some to be diminished. Help us build each other up. We ask you to keep us diligent and cheerful.

Send me, Lord. Use me, Lord. Change me, Lord.

### **Think It Through:**

- Write your personal prayer of dedication.