

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRIP: RETURNING HOME

So you're back from the trip. You got to experience God's creation in another region of the world, share God's love through veterinary medicine and (hopefully) see how much this can make a difference. You connected with people and heard their stories, maybe even shared your own. There were ups & downs, but really, it may have all felt like the mountaintop of experiences. But now, there are hundreds of voicemails waiting, thousands of emails in your inbox, bills to pay, and laundry to do...not to mention work or school or family needing you as well!

We understand the struggle of coming home, of needing to be fully home, of living your very full life, and yet having new experiences and possibly new perspectives on the world around you as a result of your short-term mission. It might seem difficult to share what you experienced while on your trip or to process it with people, and to get them to care and understand as well.

Serving on a short-term trip is more than just the experience you have while you are on-the-field. You've been impacted by your time serving, as much as your service impacted others. You're a changed person! Praise be to God! But research shows that these changes, these "mountaintop" experiences, can quickly fade if returning participants aren't equipped to talk through their story with their community, to invest in God's ongoing mission in the world, and to continue pursuing relationship with Him & His people. We want to help you think through what God is calling you to do now – on the other side of your trip.

Now What?

Below are a list of questions for you to think about as you continue to process your trip and think through what God did during your time of service and what He is continuing to do in your heart and life now that you are back. We want to encourage you to look at these questions from time-to-time after you return as you will continue to learn more about yourself and your God as you continue to engage your experience. If you kept a journal during your trip, you might consider looking over those entries to remind yourself of what God spoke to you.

1. What did you learn about yourself during this trip? Strengths? Weaknesses?
2. What did you learn about God during this trip?
3. In what ways did you see God at work in the community? In the local church? In your team?
4. In what ways was your perspective about the materially poor challenged/changed?
5. What were the stories of some of the people you met? How did their stories impact you and change your perspective?
6. If you could share one thing with your church or fellowship group, what would that one thing be? Why?
7. Who is one person that I can continue to process my trip with and with whom I can continue to keep myself accountable to seeking God, both here at home and serving elsewhere?
8. How will your experience on the field, what you learned about yourself, God, and the world around you, change how you live life at home?
9. In what ways can you continue to live out God's calling in your community? In your church? In your school/workplace?
10. How will I continue to support the ongoing work of the ministry where I served? Am I being called to long-term or repeated short-term missions? To planned giving? To committed prayer?
11. What difference would it make if I lived each day with the same intensity and focus on Jesus and others as I during my trip? What keeps me from living life at that level now?
12. How will I share what I have learned about myself, God, the people I served with those people who helped to send me here? (my financial and prayer partners/supporters)
13. Is there something I want to do to thank my in-country host(s) for what they and their ministry have done for me during my trip? Do I want to keep supporting their ministry in some way now that I am back?

¹See Friesen, Randall Gary, "Improving the Long-Term Impact of Short-Term Missions", http://www.mbmission.org/files/staff/rfriesen/friesen_stm_thesis_summary.pdf; Corbett, Steve and Brian Fikkert, "Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions: Participant's Guide". Moody Publishers: 2014.