



RE-ENTRY: YOU'RE BACK HOME...SO NOW WHAT?

You've just returned from a short-term mission trip. Perhaps your perspective on a few things has changed...

You may have a better understanding of how blessed and privileged you are in many ways.

What does God want you to do with the reality of how fortunate you are?

Luke 12:48b – "From the one who has been given much, much will be demanded."

You may have discovered the joy that comes in serving others in Christ's strength.

What opportunities do you have for service to others at home?

Matt 23:11 – "The greatest among you will be your servant."

You may have a new understanding of how you can serve in your profession as a veterinarian.

What steps will you take to change how you do business?

Mark 9:36 – "For what good is it for a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul?"

You may have a new understanding of how big God is.

What will you do to continue growing in your relationship with God?

Is. 55:8 – "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord."

You may have a new understanding of the importance of finances in the work of ministry.

How will you increase your giving to further the work of God's kingdom?

Matt. 6:21 – "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

You may realize that people who have never gone don't understand what you've experienced.

What opportunities do you have to raise other believer's awareness of the international community and the needs of the body of Christ around the world?

Gal 3:28 – "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

You may have a deeper understanding of the power of prayer.

What steps will you take to ensure that you spend more time in prayer?

James 5:16b – "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

You may have a new understanding of what is available to those who put their faith and trust in God.

How will you trust God more and step out in faith in bigger ways?

Mark 8:38 – "If anyone is ashamed of me in this life, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him..."

You may have a greater appreciation for other cultures and other perspectives on life.

How will you seek to love and understand others better?

1 Peter 4:8 – "Above all, love each other deeply, for love covers a multitude of sins."

You may have discovered a bigger, broader meaning for your life.

How will you now live your life differently?

Mark 8:35 – "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me & for the gospel will save it."

How will you SERVE? How will you GIVE? How will you GO? How will you PRAY?
WHAT IS YOUR PART in impacting your world at home and abroad for Jesus Christ?

RE-ENTRY: CULTURE SHOCK IN REVERSE

One of the fascinating aspects of international travel that is so often neglected is Re-Entry, or Counter-Culture Shock. When a person visits another culture they experience a certain degree of culture shock, depending on what their expectations were before they arrived, and how immersed they became in the culture while there. But an interesting thing occurs when you return home – you have to re-adjust to your own culture, and depending on how much of a shock the international culture was for you physically, spiritually and emotionally will determine how well you adjust to being back home.

You may be relieved to get back home to familiar territory, but it is very likely that things will not be the same; your perspective on many things may have changed. Some of the potential problems encountered during re-entry are:

- A negative, sometimes disgusted attitude toward North American affluence and a materialistic society, which is obsessed with the “good life” and self-gratification.
- Sudden confusion and difficulty in adjusting back to your local home, church or occupation; difficulty understanding where you fit in or what your role should be.
- Disillusionment with “comfortable Christianity” and the state of the church in North America, which has what you now perceive to be a lack of concern for others. This can manifest itself as an attitude of criticism or of spiritual superiority.
- There is a potential danger of viewing your former commitments, or domestic responsibilities and routines as trivial and unimportant in comparison to the overwhelming needs of the third world mission field.
- A frustrating inability to adequately express the profound changes and experiences you encountered overseas with those back home.
- An apparent lack of friends who seem to want to listen or empathize with what you have experienced.
- A sense of resentment and anger towards others who do not share the same depth of conviction about the burdens you may have carried back from the mission field.

HOW DO INDIVIDUALS REACT TO THEIR RE-ENTRY EXPERIENCE?

People tend to fall into one of three predictable reactions:

- Some come home in a state of initial euphoria and excitement which soon fades. Due to a strong need for acceptance by the home culture, they quickly resume life as though nothing happened. The emotional and spiritual “high” soon wears off and is forgotten under the crush of well-worn patterns and cares. Though these individuals appear to have adjusted well to the whole experience, they have, in fact, missed a tremendous opportunity to grow by failing to redeem the things which they saw, learned and questioned during their missionary trip and integrate them into a new view of their Christian life and the world.
- Some have been deeply impacted on many levels by their experience, but have failed to balance out the changes they have undergone, and thus they return home with a wrong attitude that tends to be counter productive. They re-enter their home culture with an attitude of contempt and rejection, which tends to create misunderstandings and ends up alienating the very people they want to reach back home. They may become critical and pessimistic about their home church, their family, and themselves for being a part of something they now view as not hitting the mark.
- Finally, there are those who embrace the spiritual, intellectual and emotional challenges they have experienced in a healthy manner, which “proves all things and holds fast to that which is good.” They have spent time in prayer reflecting on the experiences they have encountered, considering what the implications mean for their life. They desire their experiences to have a lasting, life-changing impact on their life and the lives of those around them. They return with a patient and tolerant spirit toward those who have not yet experienced what they have, and a desire for God to work in their own life and in the lives of those around them according to His own timing.

STEPS FOR ASSURING A POSITIVE RE-ENTRY:

- **Take care of yourself physically** | The trip can take an emotional and physical toll on your system. The hazards of emotional burnout and jet lag are many. Upon re-entry, it is common to experience physical exhaustion, fatigue, apathy, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, etc. All these are normal, considering the rigors of a long flight and the weeks of travel under stressful circumstances. A balanced diet, plenty of fluids, adequate sleep and exercise should not be taken lightly. It usually takes one to two weeks before you regain your stateside balance.
- **Expect re-entry culture shock** | Be mentally prepared for the unique challenges you will encounter.
- **Debrief with others you are close to** | Share with those who will listen and ask questions about what happened, such as your spouse, children, friends, pastoral staff, home group and church if the opportunity presents itself.
- **Become a storyteller** | Learn to tell a few brief stories from your experience that will communicate quickly to those with whom you want to share.
- **Journal** | Review your journal to refresh yourself in the experiences and insights you gleaned from the trip. You may want to add thoughts and comments to your journal as you refine and update the implications of your experience.
- **Pray** | Salt your whole experience with prayer, looking to God for guidance.
- **Consider the following questions** | What did I see God do during this trip? What did I learn about myself (values, character, priorities, attitudes, ministry, long-term vision, missionary commitments, etc.)
- **Recall the spiritual successes** | the breakthroughs and accomplishments of this outreach.
- **Give yourself a spiritual checkup** | Do you feel closer to or more distant from God? What challenges do you feel the Lord gave you on this trip? What will help your love for Christ to grow?
- **Commit yourself to obedience** | In the next six months, do whatever God directed you to do during your short-term mission outreach, and do whatever he directs you to do now that you are home.

In conclusion, please know that we are praying for you as you transition to being back at home. Sometimes it can take weeks or even months to process how your time affected you. We are always willing to talk with you any time you have questions about your experience, or just need a listening ear to talk to! We pray that God will use your short-term mission experience in a positive and enriching way for all involved. Please call on us.

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