

SECTION 8 – POST MISSION

OKLAHOMA VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

- **POST-MISSION RESPONSIBILITIES**
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- **TEAM MEMBER MISSION REFLECTION**
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- **MISSION SITE REFLECTION**
- **DEBRIEFING THE MISSION**

NOTES:

OKLAHOMA VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

Post-Mission Responsibilities

The mission may be over but your responsibility as a Team Leader is not complete.

1. 5 – 30 days after the mission, please communicate with the OKVIM Coordinator to report on your mission. You are the eyes and ears for our ministry. It is very important that you let the OKVIM staff know how the mission went.
 - **If OKVIM managed your team's arrangements, please bring your financial report (Budget vs. Actual) and receipts to us.** Auditors may ask to see the receipts during the Conference Office's yearly audit. For this reason, please submit receipts to us immediately after the mission.
 - **Please share press releases, team journals, photographs and videos** with us. OKVIM wants to tell the mission story. OKVIM makes many presentations and produces many publications each year. Sharing your team's story helps us. It also helps teams that will go to the site in the future. OKVIM would love to update our web page with current information and pictures of mission sites and projects. Please put photographs on a disc.
 - Please take time to hand out to your team members the **Team Member Reflection** form (Section 8, Pages 4, 5) on their experience. There is a lot you can learn from these forms better to prepare you for future missions.
 - Also, please complete and submit the **Team Leader Reflection** form (Section 8, Pages 6-11) to the OKVIM office. This will help us serve you and other teams better. Before you leave for mission, you will be given a handout on the latest information we have on your site/project on our files. It would greatly assist future missions if you would take the time to look over and update and correct the information contained therein, and then return the form to our office.
 - The **Mission Site Reflection** (Section 8, Pages 12, 13) is for you to give to your site hosts while you are on mission. This allows them to reflect on the experience of being in mission with your team. You can get in back from them before you leave or ask them to mail it/e-mail it to the OKVIM office.
2. Hold a team reunion to share pictures and experiences of mission.
3. Send a letter of appreciation to each team member.
4. Tell the mission story by making a report to church(es), prayer partners, and others (GBGM Manual, Pages 34-35).
5. Assist team members to debrief after the mission.

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Press Release Format & Press Release Example

Press Release Format

Oklahoma Volunteers In Mission encourages all teams to share their experiences with newspapers, church newsletters, and any other appropriate media. Below is a suggested outline for composing articles. Please send articles relating to your mission to the OKVIM office with permission to edit and reprint for possible use in OKVIM materials. Include contact information so the OKVIM staff can reach you if necessary.

DATE: _____

TO: (Name of publication and address)

FROM: (Your name/address/phone/e-mail)

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Title: _____
(Although the editor may change what you write, it helps to have a title.)

Begin your article here, double-spacing the lines. Use short, easy-to-read sentences. Three to four paragraphs are generally accepted. Give enough information; the editor can cut it down to size if necessary.

Be sure your first paragraph tells briefly who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then elaborate in the remaining paragraphs.

After the Article, Add

“Photo(s) Included”

(Write a one-line description of each, including names if necessary.)

Press Release Example

DATE: February 1, 2006

TO: Contact, 1501 N.W. 24th St., OKC, OK 73106

FROM: Molly Missioner, 123 Servinghim Dr., Anywhere, OK 98765, e-mail: sharelove@christ.com

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Title:

On January 1, 2006, eleven members of a Volunteers In Mission team from Humble Servant Church of Anywhere, Oklahoma, traveled to Mexico to serve in a seven day mission. The OKVIM team helped complete construction of a pastoral home for the local Methodist Church in Morelos, Mexico. Pastor Sergio, his wife, Linda, and son, Sergio Jr., coordinated efforts for the mission, along with Humble Servant member Molly Missioner serving as the Volunteers In Mission Team Leader.

Pastor Sergio currently oversees a number of churches in that area. When the Methodist Pastoral home is completed a full-time pastor will be appointed to their church.

The mission team painted a sealant on the entire outside of the 36' x 36' concrete building and then applied an oil stain to the wooden peak. Then they sealed and painted the entire interior including walls and ceiling. The Humble Servant team of volunteer missionaries also scraped and washed the windows. Work lasted for four full days. Local women of the Morelos Methodist Church prepared wonderful meals of authentic Mexican dishes for the team.

Team Leader Molly Missioner reports “the mission was a wonderful experience in doing God’s work for a people we came to love and enjoy. We worked hard, prayed and gave thanks for being able to reach out to those in need. We were amazed that not only was a physical structure changed but, our hearts were transformed as well”.

Other members of the Humble Servant Church OKVIM team were: (Names and titles such as “Worship Coordinator” or blurbs about the service or experience of each member)

B. THE MISSION SITE/PROJECT

Please complete this report of the mission site served by your recent mission team. Your frank evaluation and comments will be helpful in making this ministry more effective. The following questions are suggested to guide you in your reflection of the mission site listed below. This reflection may be completed in an onsite meeting with the mission site host team if desired. Your response will be used to plan future experiences, to learn what you considered most important, and to find out where we need to work harder. Please add anything you feel was not adequately covered in these questions.

Mission Site Name: _____ Mission Site Location: _____

Name of Mission Site Host: _____ Phone number: _____ Email: _____

Name of Project Coordinator: _____ Phone number: _____ Email: _____

Please feel free to comment in detail on any of the questions below and use the back of this page for answers if needed.

1. What were the objectives of the mission as you understood them before the mission?

2. Were those objectives accomplished? If not, why not.

3. Did the Project Coordinator or Mission Host hold an orientation / training on arrival? If yes, what kind?

4. Was there an orientation on the worksite to explain the work? If yes, what kind? If no, why not?

5. Was there an On-Site Project Coordinator at this project? If yes, please describe your experience with the Project Coordinator.

6. Did your work situation measure up to your expectations? YES / NO If not, why not?

7. How would you improve your work situation?

8. How do you rate your living arrangements?

9. How do you rate the food?

10. Did you find the transportation arrangements satisfactory?

11. How did you coordinate with local personnel?

12. Summary of work accomplished at end of mission / current status of project:

13. Suggestions for improvements by this Mission Site Team in hosting future teams:

C. MISSION STATISTICS

Each year end, OKVIM reports on our mission activity to our jurisdictional office, which in turn compiles the returns and sends them to Global Ministries. However, behind the numbers, we are able to interpret a whole lot of issues relevant to making our work more effective and meaningful. So, please take the time to complete the requested information below, knowing you are contributing immensely to the wider work of Volunteers In Mission!

Mission Dates: Began: ___/___/___ Ended: ___/___/___ Team Number: _____
mm dd yyyy mm dd yyyy

Originating Church: _____ Originating City, State: _____

Mode of transportation to mission: Air Road

Location of mission: _____
City and state (for USA); City/region and country (for outside the USA)

Mission project: Construction Medical Mission Bible School
(check all that apply) Other: _____

Number of team members involved in: Construction: _____ Medical: _____ Mission Bible School: _____
 Other: _____

Total team size: _____

Total days on site: _____

Costs: Administrative: \$ _____
Mission site: \$ _____
Contribution for construction \$ _____
Contribution for medical \$ _____
Contribution for Bible School \$ _____
Travel \$ _____
Other \$ _____
TOTAL MISSION \$ _____

Cost charged per missionary: \$ _____

SEND REFLECTION TO: Mail: OKVIM 1501 N.W. 24th Street Oklahoma City, OK 73106
E-mail: okvim@okumc.org

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Mission Site Reflection

The following questions are suggested to guide you in evaluating your experience with the OKVIM Mission Team listed below. This reflection may be completed in an onsite meeting with the mission Team Leader if desired. Your response will be used to help prepare mission teams better to serve at your mission site and to find out where all of us need to work harder. Please add anything you feel was not adequately covered in these questions. Return this to the Team Leader, email it, or mail it directly to the OKVIM Coordinator at the address listed below.

Mission Site Name: _____ Mission Site Location: _____

Name of Mission Site Host: _____ Phone number: _____ Email: _____

Name of Project Coordinator: _____ Phone number: _____ Email: _____

Name of Team Leader: _____

Date of Mission: _____ Team Number: _____

Personal Reflections

1. Did this mission team fulfill your initial expectations of what they were assigned to do on this mission? Please explain.
2. In what specific ways did you (or your mission site team) "share the love of Christ in ways that make a Christian difference?"
3. What was the single most meaningful moment shared with this mission team for you? What touched your heart the most?
4. Did you have sufficient opportunities to worship and interact with the mission team? Please explain.
5. In six words or less, how would you describe your experience with this mission team?
6. If this mission team expressed an interest to return to your mission site, what would you tell them?
7. List any suggestions that might be helpful for the OKVIM office in sending future teams to your mission site.
8. Were your expectations or impressions of the team prior to arrival on-site reinforced? Changed? How?
9. Did the work of this team measure up to your expectations? _____ If not, why not?

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Debriefing the Mission

Debriefing the Mission Trip

by Mike Woodruff

I'm almost 40 years old. I've been a Christian over half that time. I have a master's degree in divinity, more than a dozen years in ministry, and a job that regularly keeps me in touch with missionaries and leading Christian nationals all over the world. I've read about missions, written about missions, raised money for missions, and been on more short-term mission trips than I can immediately recall.

However (drum roll please), when it comes to reentry—that two-week period immediately following cross-cultural outreach—I'm a mess. In fact, more often than not I turn into a puddle of goo. One minute I'm happy. The next I'm in serious need of Prozac. At noon I'm planning a return trip to Guatemala, and at 12:15 p.m. I'm promising to never leave the U.S. again. Right is left and up is down (except when it's up). Which side of the street do we drive on again? Can I drink the water? What time is it in Kenya right now? Did I really just spend a \$1.44 for a cup of coffee? While people are starving? I must not be a Christian!

Reentry is a confusing, upside-down whirlwind of emotions that can put even veteran missionaries on their ears. And if it does that to people who don't regularly spend much time on their ears, imagine how it can affect teenagers who regularly do! Which means that you deserve 20 years of hard labor—or two hours watching presidential election debates—if you don't take the time to weave debriefing into the fabric of every mission trip you lead.

A Definition

Though the word itself has CIA overtones, debriefing is simply a matter of helping people reflect on their experiences. It can be done in a group setting or solo, both during the trip or after it. And in fact, there is no one right way to debrief. Because people—even those who look alike, dress alike, and have pierced the same body parts—are unique. But there is a goal: *We need to help people process what they've learned so they can grow in Christ and become of greater value to his work in the world.*

Rest assured, if you leave your students alone, they will sort through their experiences and lock into some high and low points. But they're also likely to take a circuitous path and return home more hurt than helped by the trip. I find it helpful to think about debriefing as a process that occurs in four stages:

Pre-Trip

Several years ago I joined a half dozen buddies on a hike to the top of Mount Baker in Washington. It's a three-day ordeal for a novice, and while it's no Mount Everest, it's far more taxing and dangerous than any E-ticket ride at Disney World. We had a wonderfully challenging climb to the summit and enjoyed glissading—i.e., skiing without skis—back down to base camp.

But after that point, the trip fell apart. Why? Because we were emotionally unprepared for the six-hour hike back to the van. We never talked about the last part of the trip. I never even thought about it. In fact, I sort of mindlessly figured that once we stepped off the glacier, took off our crampons, and unhitched our ropes, we were done. But we weren't. We faced a 10-mile hike, all carrying 40-pound packs, on a dangerous ridge. And we'd been up for 20 hours when we started. Needless to say we were a surly group when we finished. But it didn't have to be that way.

The next year we climbed a different mountain and easily survived an equally difficult hike out. Why? Because I started preparing people for the descent while the trip was still months away.

And that's when debriefing starts! Months in advance. Your students need to be told—when they pay their deposits—to expect a disorienting reentry. Parents must be told that their kids may be out of sorts when they return. Everyone is miles ahead even if you pass out a packing list that includes "bring a good attitude for reentry because it can be confusing" right next to "bring bug spray, a Bible, and Spanish- English dictionary."

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I'm not suggesting that we offer kids a heads up in order to take the pain away. It's necessary for students to struggle with the gross inequities of wealth and opportunity on our planet. I want them to wrestle with spending more money on a movie than it takes to feed a third-world AIDS orphan for a week. I think we should be worried if their transitions back into Western culture are seamless. I just don't want them becoming catatonic or ripping anyone's head off during their reentry struggles. That's why advanced warning can help kids stay sane. They face enough emotional peaks and valleys during adolescence—as adult leaders, we need to help them process the additional ones that short-term mission trips will add.

During the Trip

The second natural stage for debriefing occurs during the trip itself, especially if you're on the field for more than a week. It can be as simple as ending the day with some probing questions: *What's been the high point of your trip so far? The biggest surprise? How did God break your heart today? What was the biggest lesson you've learned? What was the memory you will most likely hold onto? What do you think God is calling you to do?*

You can also encourage your kids to spend 20 minutes writing in their journals. But even that can be more deliberate—and should be if you've had a particularly taxing day or if the team is facing some internal conflict. Sometimes I've found it helpful to give people a couple hours on their own to simply sit before God. Other times it's wise to gather the group together for a Bible study or circle of encouragement (i.e., pick a person and have everyone on the trip share one thing they appreciate about that person, then move around the circle until everyone has been affirmed).

Pre-Reentry

When the hostages were released from captivity in Iran, the U.S. Army flew them to Germany for a week before reuniting them with their families. Why? Because our government learned a hard lesson from the Vietnam War: *People under great stress in faraway lands need places to catch their breath before they're dropped back into everyday life.*

If possible add a day to your trip and spend it someplace between the field and home. Devote part of the time for fun: Go to a nice restaurant. Visit a museum. Hit the beach. Act like tourists. Give your group a chance to stop thinking and to begin unwinding.

Then gather your students together for an extended time of prayer, sharing, and reflection. If the group needs prompting, ask any of the standard debriefing questions listed above—or others like them. Be careful to facilitate the discussion in a healthy way.

Everyone needs a chance to share. Broad, sweeping promises to God—or others—are to be avoided. Remind your kids that they're emotionally vulnerable and that it'll take time to really sort through everything God is teaching them.

Post-Trip

In the days and weeks following your mission trip, there is value in pulling your team together just to talk. The first, obvious opportunity is after the pictures are developed—and in some settings you can get away with just a little gathering to look at slides, eat some ethnic food, and retell funny stories. But after other trips—especially longer ones or those that were particularly taxing emotionally—you may need to be more thoughtful.

After one spring-break trip where God had touched a number of students' lives, the group felt that our regular debriefing drill was inadequate. The group wanted more time together, and that led about 60 of them to meet for prayer late into the night—every night—for a week. I didn't know what to do about their meetings and briefly entertained the idea of telling them to phase them out so they could get back to being students. But in the end I simply decided to leave them alone. Eventually they felt God's call to "do something local." The result was the formation of a soup kitchen that continues to provide a weekly meal to the poor more than a decade later.

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I realized the importance of mission trip debriefing after hearing a college pastor say that he didn't want any more of his leaders "ruined by summer missions projects."

It reminded me of how close I came to being a short-term ministry casualty myself.

After leading a team of college students on a spring-break trip to inner-city Los Angeles, I returned home so drained and confused that I thought about quitting the ministry. I was exhausted, restless, and depressed—and couldn't bear the thought of returning to the office.

It was only after I reread my journal entries for that same trip—taken a year earlier—that I remembered I felt the same way then and that the feelings left after a few days. Armed with that additional insight, I started to set a different pace on future trips and came home prepared to face the confusion. As leaders we can not afford to do otherwise.

Some jobs aren't over until the paperwork is finished. Your job as mission trip leader isn't finished until debriefing is over.

Mike Woodruff divides his time between serving on the staff of Christ Church Lake Forest (Illinois) and directing several other ministry projects, including The Ivy Jungle Network, a loose association of men and women who minister to collegians. He's also the author of *Managing Youth Ministry Chaos* (Group).

The above author bio was current as of the date this article was published.

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Found on <http://www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/missions/debriefing.php>

Home Again! (cross-cultural re-entry) by [Linda Olson](#)

How to survive and grow in your re-entry from a cross-cultural experience

Whether you went on a mission trip this summer or know someone who did, you might want to learn more about “re-entry”—what happens upon returning to your home culture. Re-entry culture adjustment is simply the transition back into one’s home culture after living for a time in another. It can be major, including confrontation with one’s own personal identity and the impact upon that identity of both one’s home and foreign cultures.

What causes this re-entry time to be difficult for some? Generally it’s because the person has changed or is changing in attitudes and values, and is coming back to an environment that has not changed in the same way. (For long-termers, the home culture may have changed drastically since the time they originally left. For short-termers, it’s the person who has changed most over such a short period, while the home culture has changed less dramatically.) The deeper these attitude and value changes are in the individual, the more likely it is that the transition period will be unsettling. Points of dissonance that a returnee may experience include:

- Unexpected tiredness, confusion and sometimes discouragement.
- An awareness of habits or behaviors that were second nature before leaving but seem meaningless or disturbing once home.
- Adjustment to role changes, either defined or undefined, that lead to an unsettled feeling.
- A change in responsibilities, a change of pace.
- An unexpected adjustment period leading to frustration or anxiety.
- A sense of loneliness and a need for a close friend to listen.
- An inability to express or share the experience and resulting changes.
- A reaction to North American affluence.
- A reaction to values presented in the media.
- Disillusionment with the abundance in the North American church and seeming lack of concern for the world.

How do people handle this re-entry time? There are three basic reactions or ways of handling this transition time. One may experience a little of each in the process.

The *Assimilators* seem to slide right back into the home culture with little to no problem and appear almost to have forgotten their short-term. These people seem to have adjusted well, but may have missed out on the greatest growth opportunity, for they don’t seem to integrate the things they saw, learned and questioned into a new view of life and the world.

The *Alienators* seem to reject the home culture, although for the very short-term traveler this may not last long. They may be very pessimistic and critical of the home culture, realizing that they too were a part of it. They may nitpick about small things, missing the range of possible social structures and their appropriateness for creating personal alternatives for life values. They may finally succumb to the home culture out of a need to belong somewhere. As with Assimilators, this reaction does not afford a growthful re-entry.

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Integrators expect the dissonance they are experiencing, although maybe not in each form it appears. They are able to identify the changes they have undergone or are still experiencing and don't demand immediate closure on them. They desire to see their short-term cross-cultural immersion have a lasting impact on their lives and the lives of others. This means that they will grapple with how to integrate the things they saw, learned and questioned into creative alternative choices.

How can I become an Integrator and experience growthful re-entry? The first step is realizing what can happen on re-entry. Most people spend all of their time training for the new culture they will enter, but give little time and attention to their return. Expectations play a key role in this transition time. If you are expecting a re-adjustment process, you can create the space and time for it and will be less likely to get discouraged while it is happening. Here are a few other helpful hints:

Upon initial re-entry, get balanced sleep, balanced meals and balanced exercise. These will help combat the jet lag, tiredness and apathy that sets in the first few days upon return.

Spend some time thinking through expectations. Think about the expectations you had going into your experience, how you felt in the midst of it and what you're thinking and feeling now that you have returned. Notice any dissonance you may feel now as you return and journal. Notice what values and attitudes are changing.

Remember to apply the training you received before leaving. The tools you learned for crossing into a new culture are just as helpful for returning to your home culture.

Debrief with others. Find one other person or a group and ask each other questions like these: Tell me about the faces and lives of people you met. What stories mark your time with some significance? Or even insignificance? What did you learn about God? About yourself? What voices did you hear that also need to be heard here at home? Where do we go from here?

Reread your journal. Read one entry every day for several weeks and ask God to remind you of the things he was teaching you then.

Pray—alone, with others, with a prayer partner. Pray for the people you met, the church, each other, the people you want to tell your story to.

Give yourself a spiritual checkup: Do I feel closer or more distant from God? What will help my love for Christ grow? Do I need to try something new in my devotions? Take a few long walks for my Quiet Time? Spend a day in a personal retreat?

Be disciplined, yet creative. Remember that your spirituality is not limited to a "productive Quiet Time." God is present with you throughout the day no matter how you feel.

Recall the success and accomplishments of the short-term and develop a list of gifts and strengths that God gave and affirmed. Likewise, make a list of weaknesses and areas where God moved in spite of yourself.

Learn how to answer—not despise!—the question when someone asks, "How was your summer?" Use a few descriptive words and ask if you can spend more time together to share from both of your summers.

Become a storyteller and learn to tell your story well.

Is there life after a short-term cross-cultural experience? There most certainly is! And the ones who have the greatest impact upon others are those who take the time to process and integrate their experience with plans for the future. Have a blessed re-entry!

—Linda Olson makes her home in Denver with her husband, Joel, and three children. In addition to providing missions training for InterVarsity, Linda is studying for a Ph.D. and teaching at the University of Denver in the field of human communications.

Reprinted and adapted from the Global Projects Journal Guide from InterVarsity Missions. ©2002 found at <http://www.intervarsity.org/slj/article/1439>