

Debriefing

Can you believe it's nearly time to begin traveling home? Back to "regular" life... whatever that is!

It's a mistake to think you can jump easily from one world into the next or from this experience into the nine-to-five routine. You need an adjustment period. Allow yourself to have it.

You may feel uneasy or self-conscious or even guilty about taking some R & R after living amid need and want. But this time is necessary for integrating your experience in the host community with your experience of plenty at home. We live in a world of many heartbreaking contrasts. And it is important to know what God would intend our response to be.

People will have different reactions and learn different things from their VWAP (Vacation With a Purpose). Do not judge others on the basis of what God is doing in you. Your call to be faithful may not be like somebody else's. But pay attention to what God is teaching you. Take the extra hours you have during the R & R to reflect, pray, and make some decisions about your life back home. Is there another team member you can meet with on a regular basis for prayer? Does someone need to hold you accountable for choices that you are going to make?

The R & R portion is not meant solely for reflection; it is also for recreation. So enjoy. God rejoices in our fun as well as our work when we do it unto Him.

The following material may help you think through the reality of entering life back at home. Be sure to talk through these tips with others on your team.

Tips for Entering Life Back Home

Don't expect too much from other people. People may be too busy to listen to you as much as you expect them to. They won't be as excited by your trip as you are (not even your close family and friends). Remember, they had their own experiences while you were gone. Keeping your expectations low allows you to be pleasantly surprised by those who show great interest.

Share briefly. People do not want to hear everything that happened to you. Stifle the tendency to take them through a day-by-day account. They'll lose interest about midway through the second day!

Be careful about value judgments. Do not argue with people about values. It is counterproductive and alienates them. Upon your return, you may tend to be judgmental about the values in American culture. We all need to reevaluate our lifestyles from time to time, but it's not up to us to determine others' convictions for them. The Holy Spirit is far more effective than a censorious spirit. Let them see a changed life.

Do not be critical of others' spirituality. God may be teaching others in ways you do not understand. Just because you went on this trip and learned what you did does not give you the right to be critical of others.

Be prepared for nostalgia. Sometimes you may long to be back in the country. You may ache to be back with some of the nationals that became your friends. And believe it or not, you may even want to be back with some of your teammates! Expect those feelings and be prepared for them.

Don't let a little depression take you by surprise. When feelings of nostalgia hit, you may experience a little depression. Others go through it too, so call a teammate and talk with him or her about what you are feeling. Remember, you are not alone!

Be cautious about negative reporting. Things may have happened on your trip that were not to your liking. They are fresh in your mind now, but time will give you perspective on them. If you are very critical and negative in your reporting, you do a disservice to others and the VWAP. Share the tough experiences in light of what God taught you and the team through them.

Try to stay in touch with one or two individuals you met on your trip. Receiving a letter may help you remember the good experiences you had.

Contact your prayer partners and financial supporters. Of all the people back home, these will be the most interested in your trip. We suggest you make this contact as personal as your situation allows. Thank them for their prayers and support. Ask them to pray for you as you readjust to daily living.

Develop some realistic, practical applications for your life. Avoid making unreasonable demands on yourself like, "I am going to pray for every missionary in that country for an hour every day." Think through some realistic ways of integrating your experiences into your daily routine at home.

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