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# I'm back ... now what?

**As you start thinking about heading home, you should know that your re-entry is as important as the actual mission experience.**



*This journal will walk you through the re-entry process and help you answer some very helpful questions.*



## Have fun:

*“I can’t wait for a hot shower.”*

*“Oh, I love my own bed!”*

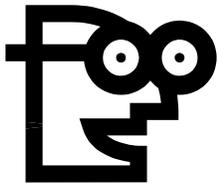
*“I really miss my parents.”*

*“I never thought a hamburger would taste so good”*

You’re glad to be home. It’s great looking at pictures of your trip. You feel changed in your life—your relationship with God—your vision of the world. You’re ready to do things differently.

*What are the things that you can’t wait for when you return home from this trip?*

*Do you see any challenges when you return home? What are they?*



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**Based on your interaction and answers to all these questions, what would you want to include in a mission statement for this next period of your life once you’ve returned home?**

*Write it down.*

*Live it out!*

**I feel a deep desire and sense of responsibility to help others learn from what I've experienced.** *If I could summarize in a few key thoughts the impact of this time in my life, and what I think God would have people do in the US in response to the needs and lives of people I met, what would I say? What are ways I can communicate this message to others?*

**What steps do I want to take to explore more fully what God might want to do through me?** *Do I need further training? Do I need to discover what opportunities might be available? With whom do I need to discuss this?*

**What are the barriers that keep me from refocusing my sense of vocation (calling)?** *Why is this difficult? How can these be overcome?*

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## Flee:

*“No one seems to be interested in my experience. They only ask me ‘how was your trip?’”*  
*“Everyone here is so busy. Life seems so fast.”*

You're discouraged by how materialistic, impersonal and busy life here seems to be. You feel alone and miss the community you experienced with your team. People seem to be preoccupied with petty concerns, and easily depressed by silly issues—compared to the faith in God, joy and community you witnessed on your trip. Somehow life felt more real, more solid, more significant there than it does here. You wish you could return. Because you can't, you find yourself spending lots of time reliving memories, looking at pictures, trying to make contact with your team members. However, even that is hard because you (and they) are being swept up in the pressure and the busyness of life here.

*What will you tell people about your trip? How will you talk about it?*

*How will you live a busy life differently when you get back?*

## Fight:

*“People seem to take their faith so much more seriously in Jamaica.”*

*“People are more interested in expanding their savings account than in saving the lost.”*

You find yourself actually feeling depressed about life here. People seem indifferent to the real issues in life. Even the church seems to foster a self-indulgent, self-preoccupied spirituality. Money dominates everything. You’re becoming highly critical of life in the US and speak out against what you see. When you’re silent, you find yourself feeling spiritually superior, like you understand better than others.

*Can you think of any other inner struggles you will have going back? Maybe your friends aren’t going to understand the changes in you or your family just won’t get it.*

*How can you overcome these feelings?*



**Where am I going? What is God calling me to be and to do as a result of this experience?**

**I felt a deep sense of significance while on this trip.** *How can my life count for the Kingdom of God? I want to make a difference in the world, and not just live for my next short-term mission trip in order to feel a sense of adventure and significance. If I could dream a big dream for how I think God might want to work through me, what would it be?*

**I encountered my gifts (and limitations) in new ways.** *With what has God entrusted me that I could use in God’s service? How do I want to develop and enhance these gifts? Are they currently fully employed for God where I am? Why or why not? What might God be calling me to do differently?*

## 7 What's of value? How do I live here in light of what I've seen there?



**I encountered people whose way of life is radically different than mine.** *What questions have been raised for me regarding our lifestyle as Americans? What really is necessary for happiness? Why does everyone else in the world seem to want to live like we do, yet often seem so unhappy? What are five or six central values that I would like God to enable me to live out in my life? What would I hope others would say characterizes my life?*

**I want to live appropriately here at home—in light of what I've seen here!** *What values do I want to characterize my life? How would I feel if someone from there came to spend a week with me here as my guest? How would they feel? What are several simple realistic, do-able changes I want to make in my lifestyle?*

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## Fit:

*"I can't live here like people do there. I tried to live differently, but it's impossible."*

*"The cost of living is so much higher here. I have to accept it."*

*"I have to return to my normal responsibilities. I can't just drop everything. I've got so much that I have to do."*

*"I'm losing all my friends because they view me as a 'mission fanatic'."*

You have many responsibilities to go home to, summer jobs, baseball, soccer, summer school, camps, you name it. You can move on and fit into those things and continue to live out the life of mission that Christ has called for you! Maybe you've started to think about doing another mission trip. Maybe the trip has become a distant memory, something you rarely think about.

Step up to the plate and make the . . . **MOVE TO FRUITFULNESS!**

Moving into ... **Fruitfulness**

**The trip may be over, but a new journey has begun!**

**I Will ...**

**... continue to keep a journal:** letters to God, talking with God about what I am feeling, experiencing and thinking as I reenter society.

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**6 What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?  
What have I learned about discipleship?**



**I felt closer to God there than I do here.** *Why? Why was it so much easier to spend time in prayer and bible study there than it is now? Why am I so undisciplined here?*

**I encountered people with great joy in circumstances that might utterly depress me.** *Why can people in contexts of poverty seem to live with such vibrant joy? What gives me vibrant joy?*

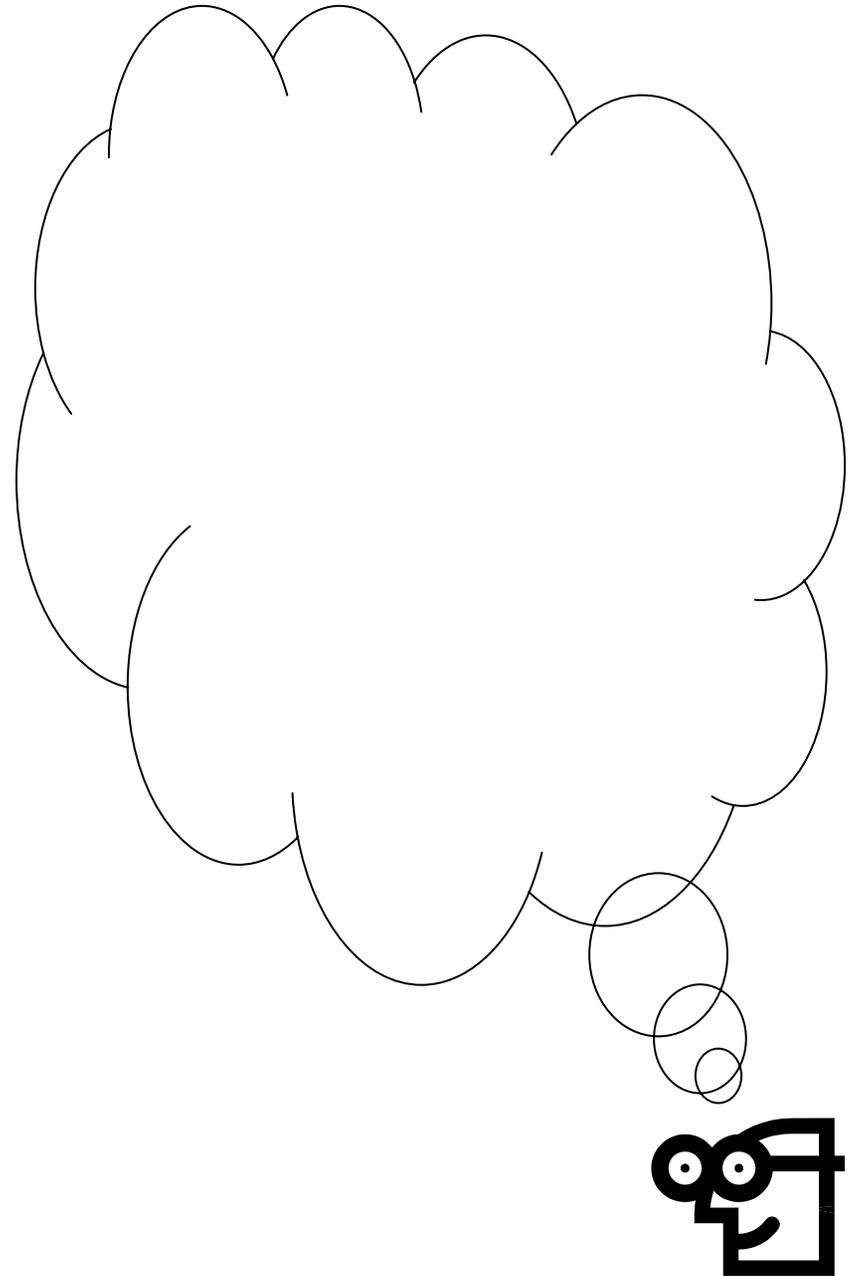
**I encountered people with a whole-hearted commitment to Christ.** *Why were people there willing to pay a high price for their faith, while in the US we tend to expect a high benefit from ours? What have I learned that I want to incorporate into my own life as a disciple of Christ?*



**What's wrong with the world? Why is there such suffering and injustice in it?**

**I have encountered new forms of suffering.** *What have I learned about the causes of suffering? What is the role of society, of the environment, of God, of the individuals themselves? What are helpful immediate ways to respond to people in distress? What are ways to address the structural causes of suffering?*

**I have seen new forms of corruption and injustice.** *What are effective ways to address injustice in the world? What would God seek to do through the Church in response? To what extent are international entities—governments, corporations, etc.—responsible for injustice? What is the role of the US?*



## Fruitfulness...

Write reflections on these eight questions: take some time to answer these questions and discuss them with your prayer partner and your friends. Be there for each other, and encourage one another!

Be patient: be patient with yourself and with others as you figure out how all this goes together for you.

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## 4 What is the impact of culture on our faith? How do I see life and the Gospel differently because of what I've experienced?

**I've seen radically different ways of life.** *What have I learned about the impact of culture on our faith? What do I now see in my own understanding of the Christian life that was formed more by my life in America than by the Gospel?*

**I have encountered different ways of dealing with the Bible.** *How do I read Scripture differently after this experience? How do I discern what is biblical, and what is merely cultural in our Christian practices and understanding? How do I decide in a culture what is neutral in relation to the Gospel and what needs to be changed?*

**I have seen many ways in which cultures are changing.** *How can a culture be encouraged to change in ways that are life-giving and consistent with the Gospel, rather than destructive of good qualities in people's lives?*

**I long for the same sense of community I experienced on this trip.** *What ways do I need to alter my lifestyle in order to make more room for people? What commitment do I want to make to maintain some of the relationships I built on this trip-interaction with people here at home, correspondence with and prayer for someone there?*

**I find myself critical of life back here.** *How can the ways I've changed be bridges that will draw people here into a deeper encounter with Christ and a deeper engagement with God's work in the world? How can I avoid simply being an irritant in others' lives, alienating them from me, from God, and from mission?*

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## 8 Questions:

### 1 Who am I? What have I learned about myself?



**I have changed.** *Some of these changes are temporary (necessary to adjust to my short term mission experience), others are permanent (ones that God would weave into the fabric of my life). While gone, I faced the issue of my own identity. What gives me a sense of worth and significance?*

**I have experienced new forms of conflict.** *Often the stress of adjustment on a trip leads to significant conflict both with my teammates, as well as with the people in the community where we were serving. What have I learned about forgiveness and conflict resolution?*

**I have experienced myself in new ways.** *What surprised me about myself while I was on this trip? What do I perceive now to be strengths and gifts that God is developing in me?*

**2**



**Who is God? How has my understanding of God changed?**

**My encounter with poverty, injustice and suffering may have raised some question of my life.** *How do I reconcile the sovereign goodness of God with the suffering of the world? Why are there such injustices happening if God is so good?*

**I may have seen forms of worship that are new to me.** *How has my understanding of worship changed?*

**3**



**Who are we? What have I learned about community?**

**I experienced new forms of dependency as well as hospitality.** *What have I learned about how to be a welcoming community? How do I want to treat strangers in light of how I was treated?*

**I may have experienced tension in interpersonal relationships.** *What have I learned about teamwork, confrontation, forgiveness and reconciliation?*