****

**Helping Spouses and Children in Re-entry**

*From The Next Mile Curriculum*

How does a returnee share their experience with their spouse?  How can they make their spouse feel more a part of the mission?  Sometimes only the husband or the wife may be able to go on the mission trip.  In other cases, the short-term mission trip may be more the "wife's thing" or the "husband's thing."  In either case, you would not want the short-term mission experience to be a wedge in the relationship.  If anything, you would like to see it contribute to the enrichment of the marriage, and the couple's commitment to Jesus Christ.

**Communication**

Communication is the key.  In spite of the busy and driven schedules people keep, a time set apart to talk is still a must.

**Schedule Debriefing Time**

As a couple you must be committed to the concept and the need to talk about the trip.  A dinner together may be sufficient.  Or it may call for a more extended time.  Share, listen, and ask questions.  Although the focus of the attention may naturally be on the one that went on the trip, this time should be designed to give the "goer" and the "sender" an occasion to share about their experiences while away from the other.  If you have children, debriefing should not only be for the couple.  There are benefits and blessings in including the children in discussing appropriate aspects of the trip.

The following questions can draw out information, feelings, insight, and shifts in values, etc.  Some of the questions may be converted into a "Tell me about…" approach.

**Questions for the One Who Went**

1. What was the best part of the trip?
2. What did you see God do on the trip?  What did you learn about God?
3. What do you think was your strongest contribution on this trip?  In what ways were your gifts/talents used?
4. What did you discover about other people?  About yourself?
5. In what ways do you think you have changed as a result of this trip?
6. What things do you think will be different now (in yourself, between us, in our family) now that you are back?
7. In what ways can I help make your re-entry smoother?
8. How could I have better prepared myself, or the children for your return?
9. What role or responsibility do you find hardest/easiest to fit back into?
10. Would you recommend a similar trip for me?  Why?

**Questions for the One Who Stayed**

1. What was the easiest/hardest about being by yourself, or being a solo parent?
2. How did you want the short-term experience to affect me?
3. What prayers did God answer while I was away?
4. Who/what was most helpful to you while I was gone?
5. What changes do you notice in me since my return?
6. How do you feel about my going on another short-term mission trip?
7. What responsibilities do you find easy or hard to turn back to me?
8. How can I be more sensitive to your needs upon my return?
9. What new roles need to be negotiated between us?  How do you feel about them?
10. How did my mission involvement affect your relationship with God and His work in the world?

**When Couples Go Together**

1. What were your expectations of me on this trip?
2. What would you do differently next time?
3. What are some new discoveries you had on this trip?
4. What could God be telling us from this trip?
5. What was most enjoyable?
6. What new guidelines should we include on our next trip?
7. What did you see in other couples (nationals and those on the trip) that you would want to incorporate in our lives?

**Re-Entry Questions for Children**

These questions are designed for parents to ask their children, and for children to ask each other.  The kind and number of questions will vary according to the ages of the children.  Children may also be encouraged to share and communicate through drawing or painting.  A “before” and “after” the trip drawing is a good start.

**Questions for Children Who Went**

1. What was fun?  What was boring or hard for you?
2. Would you do it again?  Why?  Why not?
3. Who were the other children you met?  In what ways were they like you? In what ways were they different?
4. Who became your friend on the trip?
5. What was your favorite part of the trip?
6. How do you think God used you on the trip?
7. Would you recommend a similar trip to friends and classmates?  Why?
8. What did you pray for while you were away?  How did God answer your prayers?

**Questions for Children Whose Parent(s) Went**

1. What do you like/not like about your parent(s) being gone?
2. What do you want your parent(s) to do as soon as they return from a trip?
3. What concerns did you have while your parent(s) was away?
4. Would you like to go to the field with your parent(s) sometime?  Why?  Why not?
5. What did you pray for while your parent(s) was away?

These questions are a guide to how you may be able to draw out the child's feelings and concerns while on a trip or as they stayed behind.  Do not trivialize their responses or feelings.  Listen well and help them put things in perspective.