

Commitment to the Church

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We drove until the road ended and then walked through trees and around huts until we reached the church. The straw building was packed with enthusiastic worshippers waiting for us. So many had come to meet the visitors to their country that they had removed the back wall of the church to allow those sitting on the grass to see inside.

You likely have stories like that to tell when you came home from your trip. You remember the enthusiastic worship. You remember being stunned by how little they had, but how little it mattered. You and your team now share a bond and the challenge is to bring home the best of what God has taught you without becoming discouraged in the process.

The first impact on returning from a Short Term Mission trip is the contrast between home and the field. This contrast can impact you two ways; you can withdraw and live in the past or you can engage and be a catalyst for what Jesus wants to do in your life. Withdrawing is not an option because the Lord has commanded us to fellowship and worship together (Hebrews 10:25), so let’s explore what we can do with this challenge.  
Your team exposed you to a whole new level of trust, humility, love and care for one another. As you return home, determine to live like that as you relate to others. They will not all respond the same way your team did because they didn’t share your experience, but if you rise above that disappointment, you can be the Lord’s instrument to show them what He showed you about unconditional love.

Being in a very poor country impacted my life when I returned to my church. Never again was I able to be a part of complaining about little things when I could remember how little they had. What lessons have you learned? You now have a new assignment from the Lord to live out those lessons among others. If others are caught up in complaining you can take the route of praising and change the tone of the whole meeting.  
A danger some face is giving up on church. Your life becomes busy, it is hard to make the commitment and then you justify it because what you’ve seen seems so much more vital than what you have come home to. Believers meeting together are God’s great design for discipleship so don’t cut yourself off from the things He wants to teach you there.

A rock polishing machine is my favorite illustration of church life. Place rough, dirty rocks in a rock polisher and turn it on. Days later you take out smooth, beautiful stones. Church is exactly like that as we bump into one another, grind against one another and otherwise knock off the rough spots that do not reflect the character of Jesus. Let God use you in a fresh new way after your trip to step back into the rock polisher and help in His grand scheme to “present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27 KJV)