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**20 Mile Markers**

**Short-Term Missions for the Long Haul**

Here are 20 simple ideas to use to inspire you after returning from the mission field. These activities and ministries can help you get more involved in the church body and will help you live out the Great Commission on a more personal and meaningful level.

There are enough Mile Markers to use one each week for almost five months. Use all of them or only a few; change the order and customize. Some ideas can simply be added to other ministry opportunities you’re involved in. Let the Lord lead you in this “follow-through” adventure!

**Week #1: Live and Learn – Walk down memory lane.**
(On-Field) Life and experience have a way of teaching all of us. Take some time to look back at your journal from your trip. While you’re reading consider these three questions:

1. What is one thing the Lord has pointed out to you about His heart for the nations?
2. What changes have occurred in your life (physically, socially, or spiritually) on this trip?
3. How has your understanding of people or culture deepened on this trip?

**Week #2:  Hindsight is 20/20 – Process out loud.**
As soon as possible upon your return, schedule an appointment with your mentor, small group leader, or mission pastor, someone who knows your spiritual journey. Process the following questions during your meeting:

1. What things do you miss?
2. What don’t you miss?
3. What surprised you about yourself while on the trip?
4. What surprised you about yourself since you have been home?
5. What did God show you through your short-term experience that you don’t want to forget for the rest of your life?
6. If you were to convince others to go on a short-term mission trip, what compelling reasons would you give?
7. How do you nourish your new desire to know God beyond your limited American setting?

**Week #3: Breaking News – Sharing your experience.**
Showcase your mission during a reporting home service, small group, house church, Sunday school, etc. Tell stories of how God impacted you and how God used you to impact others. Show pictures; give a broad overview as well as a specific story of how God showed up. A memorable service with a message will inspire others in their Christian journey.

**Week #4: Focus on a Person – Call someone.**
Arrange a call or a time to Skype with an individual or missionary who served with you on the mission field. Talk about how the ministry was for you as well as listening to them. Share and listen equally. This will encourage both of you to keep pressing on. Take time to pray for each other.

**Week #5: Name night – Pray often.**
Think about the people from the mission field who are not saved or who have great personal needs. Write down 2 or 3 of these people’s names on a 3x5 card and put it somewhere you’ll see it a lot, whether it’s the dashboard of your car, your bathroom mirror, or over your kitchen sink. Seeing their name will remind you to continually pray for them on a regular basis.

**Week #6: Potluck with Flair – Eat to remember.**
Arrange for a potluck at your house or ask a friend to host one. Invite your family and friends, people who prayed or gave money, your church family, even your pastor for a night of food native to the location where you served. Thank all of them for the support they gave you during your trip.

**Week #7: Worth 1,000 words – Wow the field.**
Don’t settle for just sharing your pictures with family and friends. Pick out a few of your favourite pictures that really express how the trip was; include friends, food, fun and activities. Put together a photo album or scrap book and mail it to the field. Include a thank you note.

**Week #8: It’s a Small World– Get out of your comfort zone.**
No matter the size of your town, there are cross-cultural opportunities within. Put yourself out there and attend an ethnic church service, volunteer at a soup kitchen or a rescue mission.

**Week #9: Give ‘em a Break – Fill the gap.**
The nursery workers and children’s Sunday school teachers serve week after week. Offer to help out and give them a week off by offering to take their place for a Sunday. You could even go a step further and give them the month off! If there is a need for another worker, fill it permanently!

**Week #10: Just a Click Away – Be a blessing.**
Arrange a phone call or Skype call with your missionary host and/or pastor. The time of this call may depend on the time difference at the location of your ministry. Ask for updates from the field and share about how the trip was for you.  It’s not often that hosts get a personal call from those who have served with them.  Ask caring questions and be the best blessing in their day!

**Week #11: Fast and Pray – Make a day of it.**
You have been away from the mission field and involved in your own daily routine. But, your hosts are still on the mission field doing the same ministry as when you left. How quickly we forget. Set aside one day where you will skip lunch and go somewhere to pray for your host and their ministry. Every time your stomach tells you that you’re hungry, use it as a reminder to say a prayer for the field again.

**Week #12: Missing You – Send a message.**
One of the criticisms of short-term missions is that team members never write back to the field. “Been there, done that, and now it’s back to normal life.” Write an email or a message to friends on the field.

**Week #13: Fire Up a Prayer Meeting – Go to battle.**
So why not host a missions prayer meeting one night a week for an entire month and make sure you help fight the spiritual battle with and for those on the mission field? Set a theme, agenda and have refreshments available. Make the meeting memorable and allow for plenty of prayer time.  Invite your church to attend and focus on missionaries that your church supports as well as on the ministry location that you just returned from.

**Week #14: “Thanks Giving” Letters – Show gratitude.**
Write “Thanks Giving’ letters to the host missionaries. If the hosts aren’t from the United States, include a statement explaining the American custom of Thanksgiving Day. Include praise to God for the missionaries and for all He has done through the field and the short-term mission. Include personal life-change stories of the continuing spiritual pilgrimage that you’re on.

**Week #15: Operation Christmas Child – Fill a shoe box.**
Each year Samaritan’s Purse collects thousands of shoe boxes for needy kids all over the world. Get involved.

**Week #16: The Power of Together – Reach out and connect.**
You’ve been back from your trip for some time now. How has your communication with the field and people you met been going? Have you stayed in contact? Arrange for a meeting or a phone call or a time to Skype to reconnect. See how each other are doing and if there is anything that you guys can be praying for.

**Week # 17: Written Prayers – Bless your hosts.**
Have a group get together and write “prayer letters” to God for the host missionaries or other missionaries from your church. These “prayer letters” are actually written prayers on behalf of the missionary and the ministry. Write meaningful and specific prayers. At the end of the night, collect them and share them with the missionary via email.

**Week #18: Giving Back – Meet a need.**
It can be challenging for missionaries to be away from family during the holidays. Put together a care package for them. Ask them if there is anything specific they need or want, or better yet, make it a surprise! Get the whole church involved by including them in the process of getting things to fill the package with.

**Week #19: The gift of time – Serve somewhere.**
There are needs right in your own neighbourhood and city and a lot of volunteer opportunities during the Holiday season. Look in your city for chances to serve others in need and take a friend or your family with you. Try and make it apart of your regular schedule.

**Week #20: Change adds up – Get others to give.**
In the weeks leading up to Christmas, have a competition between boys and girls, high school and junior high, or other groups within your church. Collect as many pennies (or other coins) as possible for the mission field where you served. This can be a Christmas gift\* to the mission for a known need. Place two large jars in the entrance to the church or a classroom and promote the opportunity to the whole church.

\*Be sure this gift is given through the pastor or missionary on the field and not directly to the field.