

# BASE CAMP

A TEAM WORKBOOK FOCUSED  
ON THE WHY OF SHORT TERM  
MISSIONS

**TEAM MEMBERS  
BOOK PRE-FIELD**

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# INTRODUCTION

Over the last several decades, millions of people and hundreds of millions of dollars have been used on Short Term Mission Trips (STMT) with varying degrees of success. The negative effects of STMT throughout the globe have been well-researched and documented. However, we have also seen the positive effect of more international workers being called to the field through their experience on a STMT. Missionaries and national workers who receive teams will easily tell you about their experiences of receiving amazing teams that help move the mission forward, and of teams that have only caused damage and hurt to the ministry. This history and use of resources begs us to ask the question: Is it worth it? Should we be doing STMT?

I would emphatically say YES, it is worth it and we should be doing STMT. However, I believe they should be carried out with a greater clarity, understanding, compassion and vision for what needs to be accomplished/the needs that must be met. For many years, STMT have been about experiencing a new culture, helping the poor \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank), or about your personal discipleship. On the surface these things are not bad; however, when you drive to the heart of what these things are about, this is where conflict arises. When the focus is on these areas, the trip is about “you” - your heart, your growth, your experience, your feelings. This can cause unintentional harm to the field, the national church, and the ministry teams.

So, if the focus shouldn't be on “you”, then where should the focus lie? I think the natural response would be with those you will be serving. Just like reasons stated above on the surface, focusing on those you are serving is not a misplaced answer to the question. However, if you focus the trip on those you are going to serve, then how is your STMT different from any voluntourism trip? It is not! There are people who are in need and, as Jesus Christ shows us by example, we are to care for and love people. On the other hand, when you focus your trip on only caring for people, you miss the biggest part of why Jesus Christ cared for and loved people - to be a witness of the glory of God.

The entirety of your trip, from planning and preparation, to being on the field, and ultimately to returning home for post-field growth, needs to be solely and centrally focused on the Glory of God. Everything else will be a by-product. How you grow, to the glory of God; the good works that have been done, to the glory of God; the people who heard the good news of the Gospel, to the glory of God; the impact on your sending church, to the glory of God. All that we do needs to be focused on and pointing to that end.

Think about the example Jesus gave us through the story of the paralytic man in Mark 2:1-12. This is just one of many examples of how everything Jesus did was for the Glory of God. If you remember the story, four men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Jesus told the man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” This immediately caused a confrontation with those listening. Jesus responds with, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” The man then gets up and walks. The story ends with everyone being amazing and doing what? Glorifying God! Christ's whole mission was to glorify His Father. Should ours be any less than that?

As you prepare for this trip, continually remind yourself to glorify God in all you do. From fundraising to returning home, God is to be celebrated. This workbook will not go through all the details of planning a trip; there are a lot of useful resources out there that focus on that. This workbook is designed to work on your heart as it relates to glorifying God. Use this book as you see fit. Work through it in small groups, on your own, or for homework and discussion; it is designed for flexibility. May your STMT be filled with the glory of God.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 2 - INTRODUCTION

PAGE 5 - LESSON 1: WHY DO WE GO?

PAGE 10 - LESSON 2: SPIRITUAL HEALTH

PAGE 14 - LESSON 3: CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

PAGE 20 - LESSON 4: POVERTY

PAGE 25 - LESSON 5: HEART AS SERVERS, MIND AS LEARNERS

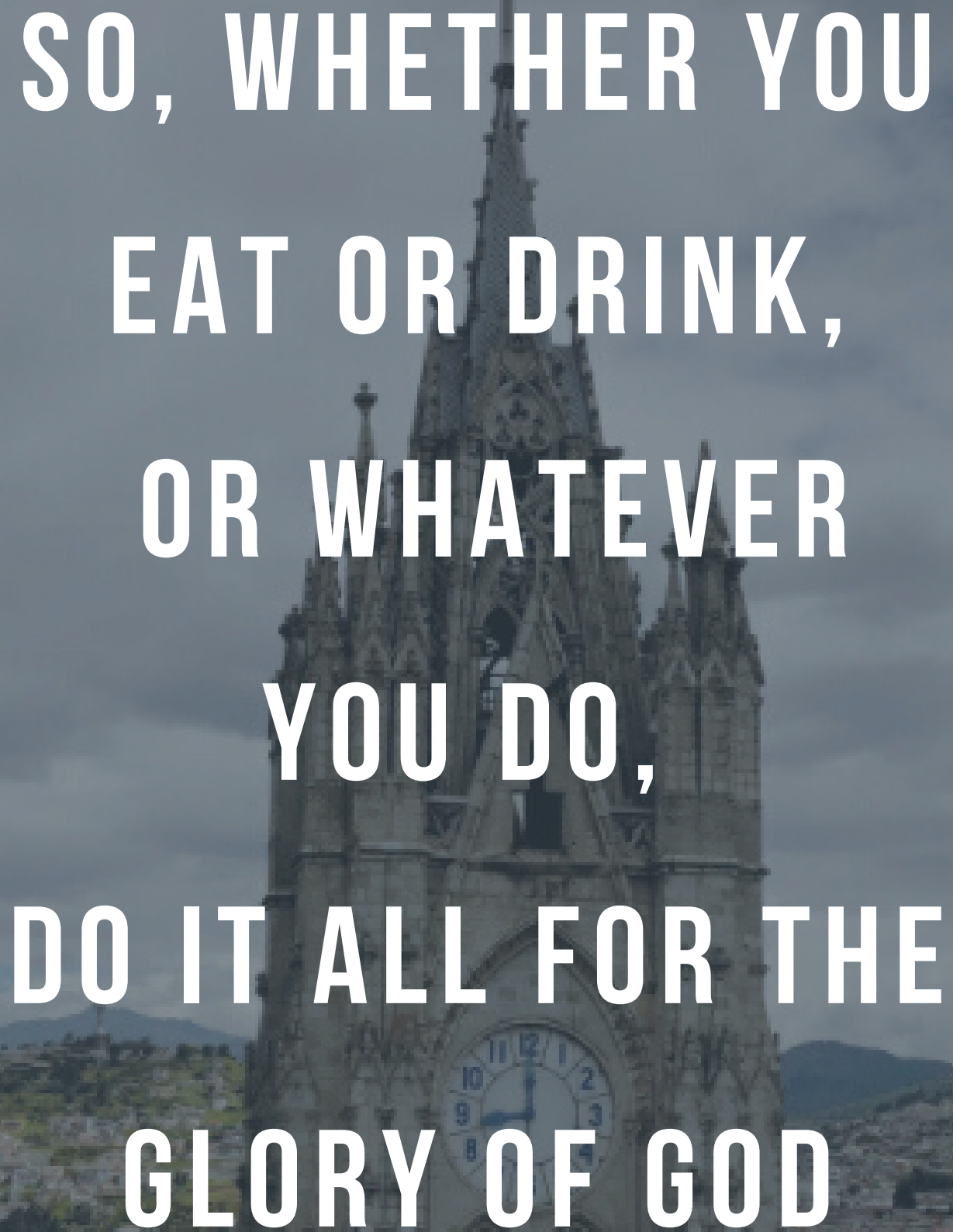
PAGE 29 - LESSON 6: SELF-AWARENESS, HEALTHY BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

PAGE 36 - CONCLUSION

PAGE 37 - INCA LINK INTERNATIONAL

PAGE 38 - WORKS CITED

# HIS GLORY



**SO, WHETHER YOU  
EAT OR DRINK,  
OR WHATEVER  
YOU DO,  
DO IT ALL FOR THE  
GLORY OF GOD**

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31  
ESV

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

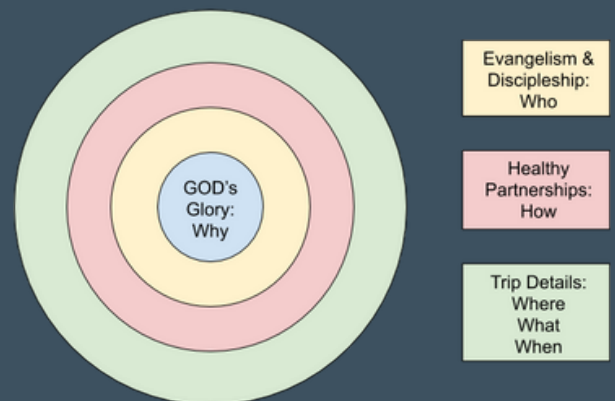
Matthew 28:18-20  
ESV

## LESSON 1: WHY DO WE GO?

Why we go is so important to the success and direction of any STMT. Many times we get so focused on the details of the trip, we miss out on the most important part: God's Glory. As discussed in the introduction, it is the most important part of any trip.

What does it mean to glorify God?

Our goal is to keep God and His glory at the center. But what does that mean for the other aspects of the trip? Each portion of the trip has its usefulness and importance. It is valuable to remember though that in all things, everything we do, we seek to glorify God. This includes how we prepare for our trip. God can be and is glorified with well-prepared teams and trips. This graph helps highlight how to view the different aspects of a trip.



God's glory is at the center of the trip and everything else is built off of that. Keeping focused on God's Glory allows us to do evangelism and discipleship in a healthy Kingdom-focused way, which enables healthy partnerships with those receiving your team, and having a healthy partnership makes the details so much easier and more rewarding.



## **THE WHY OF STMT: REVELATION 5:9-14**

The center of our STMT must be and must always remain our desire to Glorify the Father. From the early chapters of Genesis when God sets Abraham apart from the rest so that God's name would be made great, through the completion of Revelation when all of creation glorifies the Father, the entirety of the Bible looks back and forward to God's Glory through God's Mission.

Looking at Jesus and His mission on the earth, His goal was to Glorify the Father, even to His death on the cross. This was the desire of his Heart. Ours cannot be anything less than that.

What gets in the way of always glorifying God?

How can you be glorifying God today?



## **THE WHO OF STMT: MATTHEW 28:16-20**

The Who of STMT is really a direct response to the Why. Keeping God and His glory at the center of the trip, we can evaluate the who as anyone impacted by God's Mission. The Great Commission tells believers to make disciples who baptize, teach, and obey God's commands. While a STMT is in process, these key components should be impacting the team going, the church sending, and the field receiving them. All three "Who's" will experience these components through your desire to glorify God.

How can our STMT and our desire to glorify God impact our sending church?

How can our STMT and our desire to glorify God impact those receiving us?

How can our STMT and our desire to glorify God impact our own hearts?



## THE HOW OF STMT: PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

Any good STMT will be connected with the national church, a para-church ministry, or missionary on the field. This important aspect allows for the team to learn from and serve alongside an expert in the field's culture and ministry goals. This requires humility and a desire to learn from anyone heading out on a STMT. In this space, both the team and the receiving ministry need to have a combined focus where God is centered in everything they are doing. Healthy Kingdom-minded partners work together to expand God's mission.

Read Philippians 1:3-11 and highlight the key things partners do together.

Example: Philippians 1:3 - Partners thank God for each other

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

Philippians 1:3-11

ESV

How is your sending church/school partnering with the ministry you are going to serve with?

What are ways you can work to be a better partner today?





## THE WHERE, WHAT, WHEN OF STMT: LUKE 9:1-6

The details of any trip are wonderful, exciting, and sometimes overwhelming. Most of a team's focus can be spent on details, planning, and creating curricula for children's programs. These are important things and definitely need to happen, but they must happen through the focus on the heart of the trip. Jesus sent His disciples on what you could call a STMT and gave clear instructions on the where, what, and when, but that was after a lot of time had been spent directing and pointing each of them toward the Glory of God. As the team works through the details, explore how God can be glorified in the details.

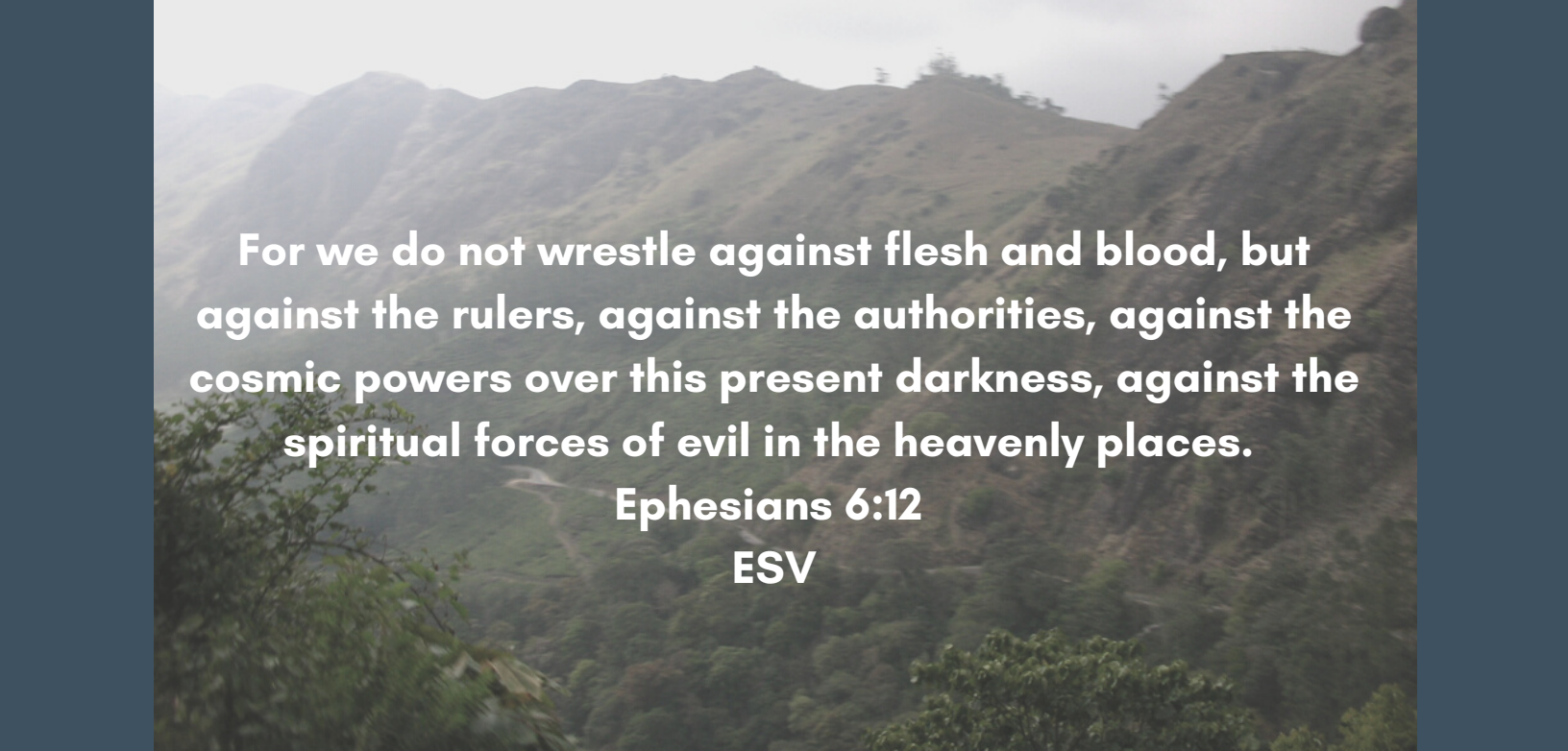
What does it mean to glorify God in the details?

What about when the details are not “fun” or “enjoyable”?

What things can distract us from the WHY of our trip?

What tools and techniques can our team use to keep the glory of God at the center?





**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

**Ephesians 6:12**

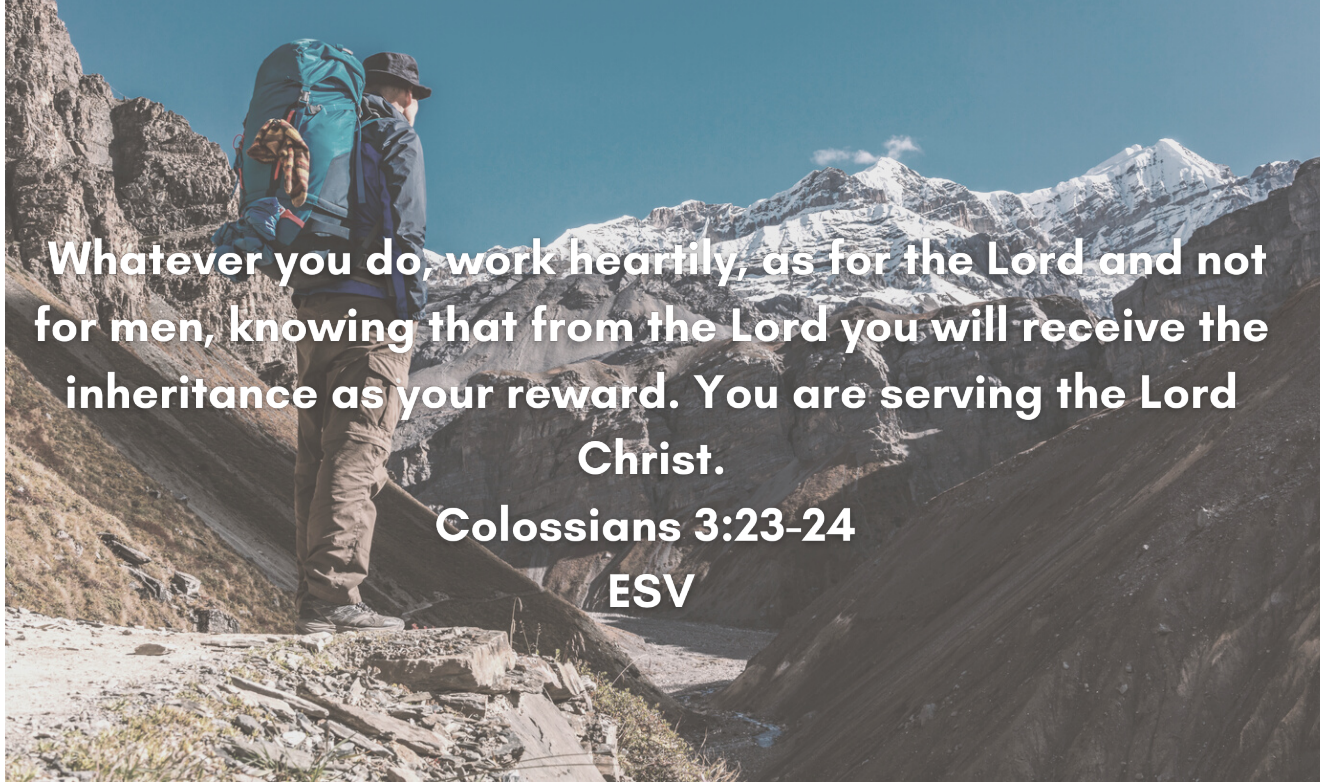
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## **LESSON 2: SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

What does it mean to wrestle with rulers and powers? Christ came to the earth to glorify his Father, and in doing so has destroyed the kingdom of the enemy and reclaimed His power on earth. So if Christ has overcome the enemy, why is there still evil?

It is easy to think that spiritual forces do not exist or do not have an impact on our everyday lives. Our culture today focuses on the tangible and quantifiable. It is very difficult to quantify a spiritual battle. However, as we see in the Bible and as every missionary can attest to, the enemy is actively at work and is trying to tear down the expansion of God's Kingdom. There is nothing the enemy hates more than the Glory of God being spread around the earth. As we prepare for our STMT, we have identified and stated that our trip centers on glorifying God. We desire to share HIS love, heart, and redemption with the world. By taking a regular and active role in the Kingdom of God, we have placed a target on our backs for the enemy. It is easier for him to keep a believer from actively participating in the Kingdom than it is to slow us down. Therefore when we get excited and move in a direction that glorifies God, he wants to stop us, get in our way, or minimize our effectiveness. There are many ways that the enemy can accomplish this - through fear, discouragement, disunity of the team, sickness, cultural blindness, arrogance, hard hearts, and more. It is our role to guard against these obstacles and stand together for the Kingdom of God.





**Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.**

**Colossians 3:23-24**

**ESV**

How do you feel knowing there is an enemy out there that wants you to fail?

In what other ways in addition to those stated above do you think the enemy can try to make you fail?

There is encouragement in all of this. Our trip, our lives, our mission is not for the sake of ourselves or anyone else. Ultimately we do not serve people, programs, or ministries, but the Father in heaven. We are not just serving in the name, life, power, and glory of God, but we are also serving God directly (see Col. 3:23-24 above). Keeping our hearts and minds centered on Him is one of the greatest tools against the adversary. God in His wisdom and grace has given us several tools to help strengthen our resolve against any enemy.

The first thing we were given that has great authority over the enemy is the name and person of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 8:28-32). We need to recognize that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus and therefore He has power over the enemy.



What does the Bible tell us about Christ's authority in:

Matthew 28:18-20?

Luke 9:1-6?

The second thing that God gave us is the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples that when He left, the Helper would come, and that is exactly what happened at Pentecost. Today we get the privilege of having the Holy Spirit guide, direct, and intercede for us. Read Romans 8:26-27.

What does Romans 8:26-27 say the Holy Spirit does for believers?

What is the role of prayer in all of this?

How does the Holy Spirit lead us in prayer?

How have you seen the Holy Spirit work in your life so far?



The other thing God has given us is a community of believers to rest in and build us up. One of the greatest things about our faith in Jesus is that we are called to live in community together - to lift one another up, to strengthen each other, to love one another as Christ loves us, and to stand up when others cannot. Your team is a great resource to strengthen you against the enemy and his ways.

What does the Bible promise if we gather together (Matthew 18:20)?

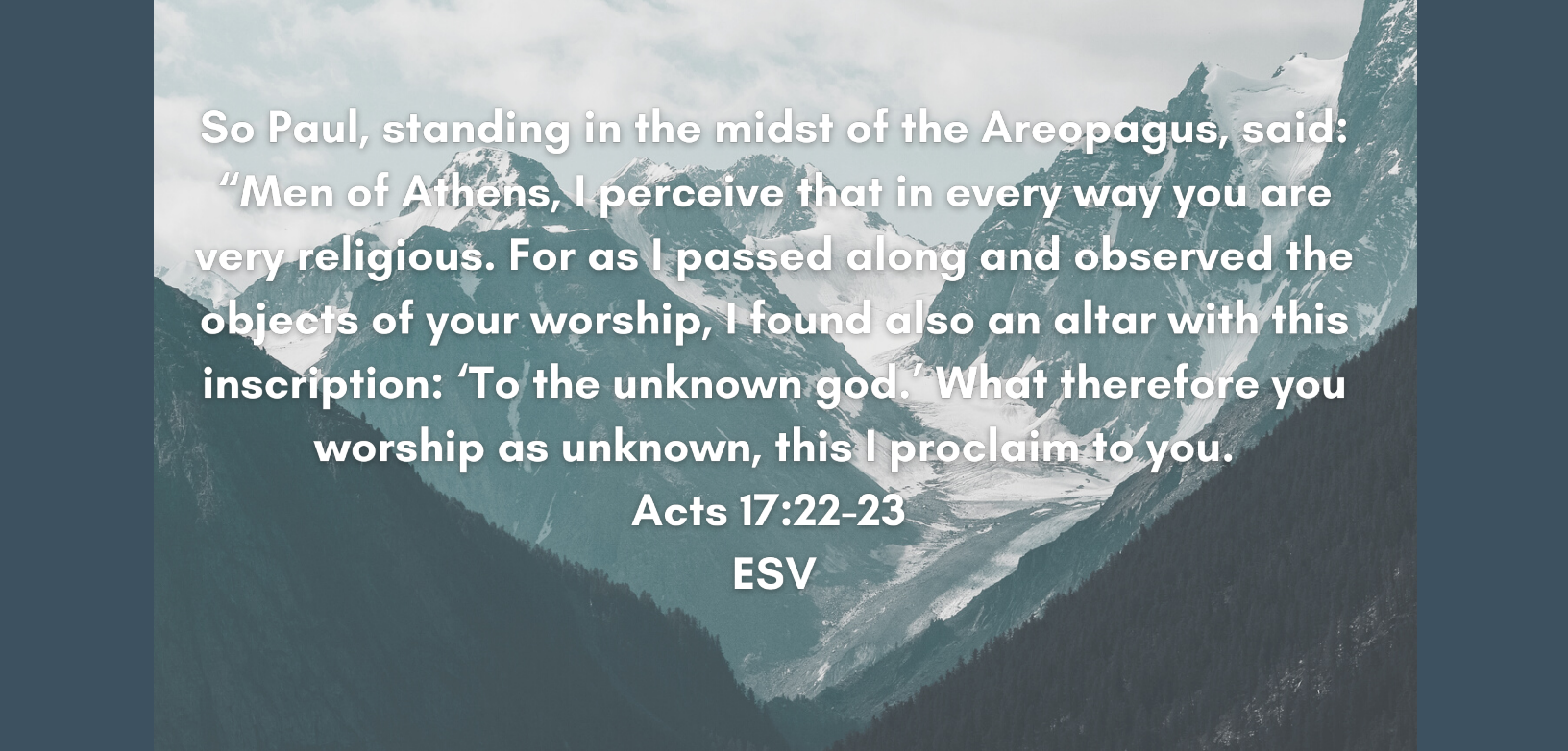
What does that mean for your trip?

What are some tools you can use to work against the attacks of the enemy?

What opposition might you anticipate feeling?

What oppositions are you dealing with today?





So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said:  
“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are  
very religious. For as I passed along and observed the  
objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this  
inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you  
worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:22-23

ESV

### LESSON 3: CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Read Acts 17:16-34

In Acts, Paul is on one of his missionary journeys to spread the gospel to all the Gentiles. As we examine Paul’s response to the Athenian culture and its way of life, there are several lessons we can learn from and use on our own STMT. The first thing that we notice is that Paul was an observer of culture and of the Athenian way of life. He saw that the city was full of idols and even an altar to an unknown god. It is easy to see that Paul viewed Athen’s culture with the respect and the dignity that it deserved. When speaking with people in the market, he earned so much respect from them that he was invited further into the culture of Athens, creating an opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel. He even quoted Athenian poetry as he shared. You can almost imagine Paul standing before all the learners sharing from his heart, but also from his knowledge of the local culture.

It is also important to observe that Paul earned the right to speak at the Areopagus. He did not just burst into Athens and impose his will, his vision, or his culture. Instead, through his research and observations, he was able to connect with people through their culture. This in turn was respected and created the opportunity for him to share the story of Christ with some of the most influential and intelligent people in Athens. As he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.



Through Paul's effort to get to know the culture, his earning the right to speak, and his boldness to share, the verses end with many coming to know Jesus as their Savior.

How can you be an observer of culture?

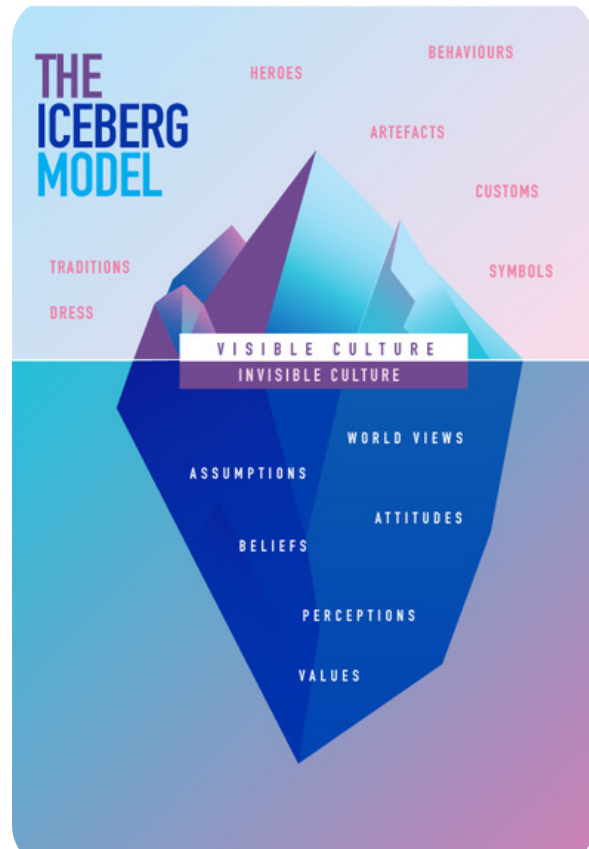
What does it mean to earn the right to share the Gospel on our STMT?

How is God glorified and kept in the center of our trip when we observe cultural understanding?

What do different cultures tell us about who God is and his character?



Culture is a complex and evolving aspect in anyone's life. There are many parts to culture and only a few pieces are visible. It is important to remember that as a member of a STMT you are entering someone else's culture, traditions, and community. As guests in another culture we need to be aware that our own culture is not the most important or that the host should adapt to your culture. Culture has been described as an iceberg, where only 10% of the whole iceberg is visible, the rest is hiding below the surface invisible to the eye - see the diagram to the right.



What are some Visible Cultural examples in your own culture?

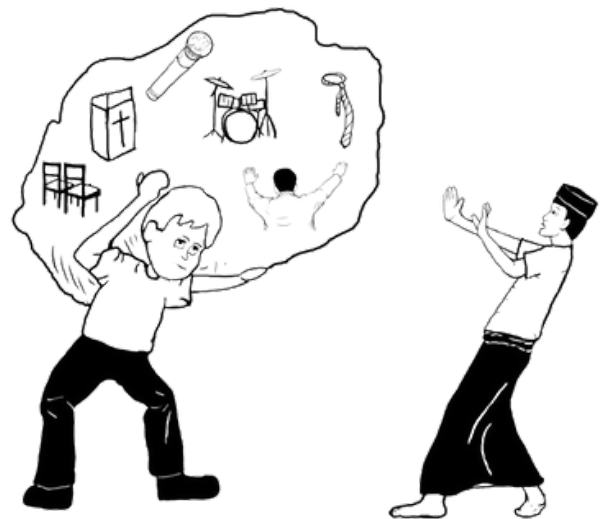
What are some Visible Cultural examples in the culture you are traveling to?

What are some Invisible Cultural examples in your own culture?

Do you know any Invisible Cultural examples in the culture you are traveling to? If not, how can you discover what those are?



A major stumbling block of culture and missions is the misunderstanding or interpretation of the Gospel using our own cultural biases or worldview. This is an inevitable byproduct of being human and growing up in a particular culture. The important part is to recognize that we all carry these cultural biases into our reading, sharing, and explanation of the Bible. Many of these biases are unspoken and therefore hard to identify.



The trouble with this is that when a cultural component is unspoken, most people assume that this is a universal truth and therefore applies to all cultures. This would be a major oversight. The diagram above shows what this missionary is bringing into a new culture. The missionary's way of doing church and expressing faith is not just unusual to the recipient, it could actually hurt the ministry or the church in that community.

What cultural "baggage" could you be carrying into these different areas:

Church:

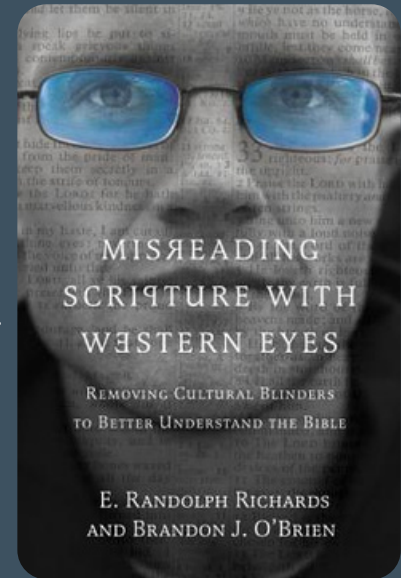
Friendships:

Self Expression:

Sharing your testimony:



This insert is from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* by Brandon J. O'Brien and E. Randolph Richards.



“Taking stock of the cultural assumptions that affect our interpretation of Scripture is important for several reasons. To begin with, we can no longer pretend that a Western interpretation of the Bible is normative for all Christians everywhere. Christianity is growing at such a rate in South America, Africa, and Asia that soon the majority of the Christians worldwide will not be white or Western.

In *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins notes, “By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world’s 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. Soon, the phrase ‘a White Christian’ may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as ‘a Swedish Buddhist.’” In terms of sheer numbers, then, non-Western interpretations of Scripture will soon be “typical” and “average.”

These changes in the global distribution of Christians are also taking place closer to home. Many sociologists estimate that by 2050, the majority of U.S citizens will be non-white. Demographic changes in the United States population in general are changing the face of Christianity in the U.S. The “average” American church will look very different twenty years in the future than it did twenty years ago.”

(O'Brien, Richards. Pg. 16)

Brandon J. O'Brien and E. Randolph Richards raise a compelling argument for the need of anyone to assess and evaluate the way in which they read and interpret Scripture. As participants in a STMT, we also need to be aware of our personal cultural components that could actually hinder the work of the Church, ministries, and expansion of God's Kingdom. We need to always keep in mind that the goal of a STMT is to glorify God and not to perpetuate our Western culture throughout the globe. Brandon J. O'Brien and E. Randolph Richards continue in their book;

“Moreover, the question about how our cultural and historical context influences our reading of Scripture has practical and pastoral implications. If our cultural blind spots keep us from reading the Bible correctly, then they can also keep us from applying the Bible correctly. If we want to follow Jesus faithfully and help others do the same, we need to do all we can to allow the Scriptures to speak to us on their own terms.” (Pg. 17)

A practical example of this from my own experience would be Halloween. Growing up in the United States, Halloween has regional mixed responses, some Christians practice the holiday and ignore the darker side and choose to focus on the free candy and cute costumes. Whereas other regions of the United States, Christians totally avoid and reject all parts of the holiday, some choosing to do a harvest festival instead, others opting to just stay home and ignore what is happening in their community. If you grew up participating in Halloween and later in life moved to a community and attended a church that rejects all aspects of the holiday, you may not recognize this unspoken cultural norm. You participate in the Holiday and by doing so you unintentionally offend your new friends at your church. This is just one example of the complexities of culture and the diversity of it. Inside each country there are local and regional cultures that do not apply to the broader population. If we miss regional cultural elements in our home country, it will be far easier to miss cultural elements in a new country we are visiting to serve on our STMT.

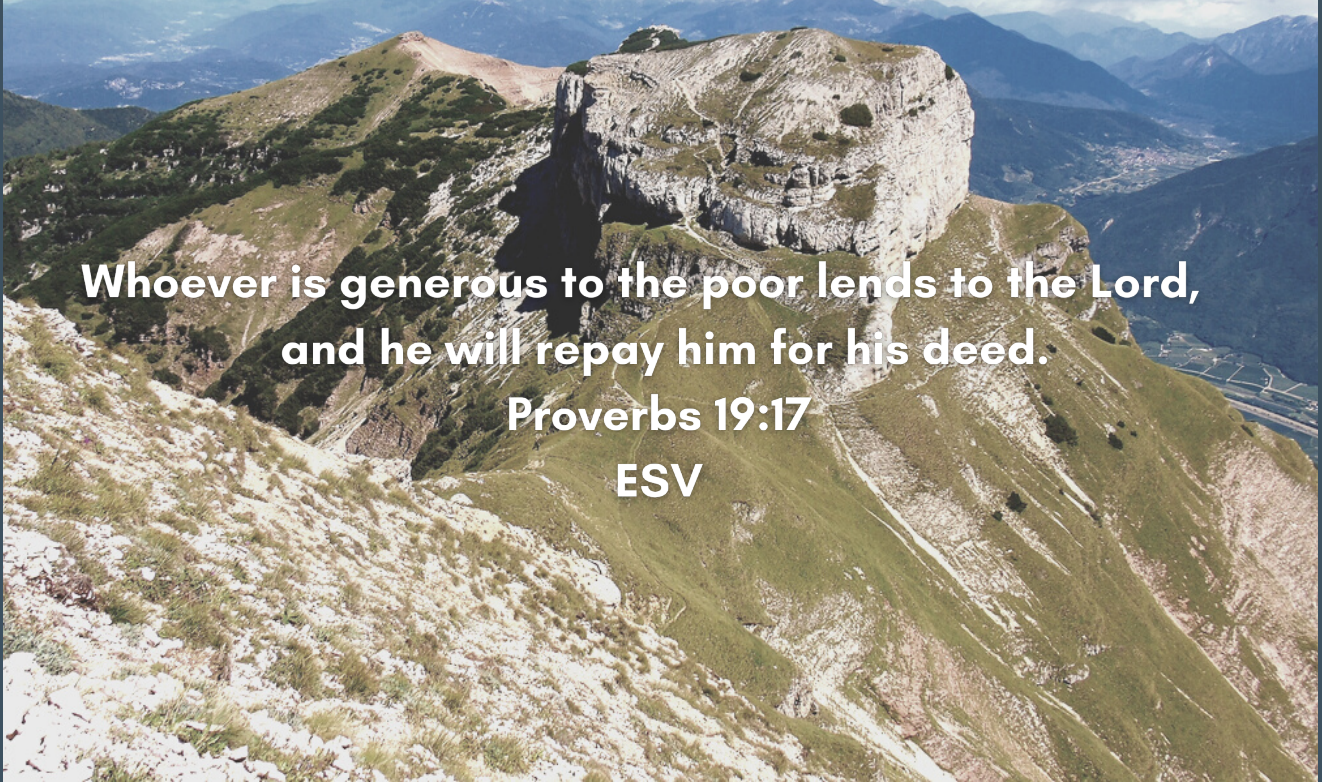
How would you feel if someone came into your community and tried to force their cultural norms on you and your family?

How can we act in a way that is respectful of cultural norms?

Why is it important to the expansion of God's Kingdom that we are aware and honor other cultures?

What can you do today to practice cultural understanding?





**Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord,  
and he will repay him for his deed.**

**Proverbs 19:17**

**ESV**

## **LESSON 4: POVERTY**

Adapted from sections of *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert

How do you define Poverty?

Did you know that people who live in poverty, as defined by the World Bank, versus those who are financially affluent define poverty very differently? Those who have resources tend to define poverty by a lack of wealth, security, food, housing, clean water, access to healthcare, and so on. They are tangible things that you can measure. In contrast, those who live in financial poverty tend to define poverty as a lack of opportunities, loss of identity, a feeling of inferiority, and no access to self-improvement. They measure poverty in intangible, emotional terms.

How do these two views conflict with each other?

What negative impacts can come from those conflicting views of poverty?

I would love, however, to examine a biblical definition of poverty and how the world is affected by the brokenness created by sin. Poverty made an entrance into this world the moment Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, forever casting each of us in the shadow of poverty and brokenness.

Read Genesis 1.

As we read Genesis 1, we can easily see that God is very creative and enjoyed the work of His creativity, calling it “good” and “very good.” Reading further we see an in-depth description of how humans were made, by God forming Adam from dust and breathing life into him. In the moment that God created humans, God created relationships for humanity. Every person has four relationships that impact their lives. Can you identify them based on the reading of Genesis 1?

The four relationships are: between God and a human, between the human and themselves, between the human and another human, between the human and creation.

How do these four relationships relate to poverty?

In the garden before Adam and Eve ate the fruit and the fall happened, the world was perfect and there was clarity within these four relationships. Life was GOOD. God was Glorified. However, when the fall happened, these relationships were broken and humans were thrown into poverty.



The brokenness of the relationship between God and a human being is called *Poverty of Spirit*: Many people live a life of spiritual poverty. They either deny the existence of God outright or worship false idols. This spiritual poverty prevents them from seeing the wonder of God, His creation, and how God is calling them into deep personal relationships with Himself.

How are you living in Poverty of Spirit?

How does Poverty of Spirit impact material poverty?

The brokenness of the relationship between humans and themselves is *Poverty of Being*: When someone has a broken self-image, it is difficult for them to operate in the space that God has created for them. Each human contains the fingerprint of God on their soul or, as Ephesians 2:10 tells us, they are masterpieces of the Creator. When we have a poverty of being, we will either allow others to take advantage of us because we believe that we are worthless or we will have such an inflated ego (god complex) that we take advantage of others.

How are you living in Poverty of Being?

How does Poverty of Being impact material poverty?



The brokenness of the relationship between human beings and another person is *Poverty of Community*: Humanity was designed to live in community with one another. That is why God created Eve to work with Adam. However, because of the brokenness of the world, poverty of community is rampant with people abusing, taking advantage of, exploiting, and neglecting others. People become so self-centered that they do not care if they are hurting or exploiting other people.

How are you living in Poverty of Community?

How does Poverty of Community impact material poverty?

The brokenness of the relationship between human beings and creation is *Poverty of Stewardship*: God created all the earth and everything that is in it. He then gave the responsibility of caring for the earth to Adam and Eve, and by inheritance to all of humanity. However, brokenness has once again caused humanity to destroy, exploit, and pillage God's creation for their own gain and in non-biblical ways. This destruction is in deep contrast to what God's plan was for HIS creation. All the earth is HIS and humanity is to care for it and honor God through how they steward HIS creation. This brokenness has caused the ground to be cursed, which has led to major implications for humanity. The further humanity exploits the earth, the worse it becomes for the material poor.

How are you living in Poverty of Stewardship?

How does Poverty of Stewardship impact material poverty?



When examining these four broken relationships, we can see how there are many different kinds of poverty someone can be living in. Through these relationships, someone can also be impacted and constrained to material poverty, keeping them from living a healthy life. Poverty wears many faces and requires many approaches for working to alleviate it. The first step in true poverty eradication is recognizing we all are living in some form of poverty. Our poverty of community might be exploiting someone else, causing damage to that person and keeping them in material poverty.

How can we work toward poverty alleviation if we contribute to the problems?

How do we redefine poverty?

As believers, what is our response to poverty and these broken relationships?

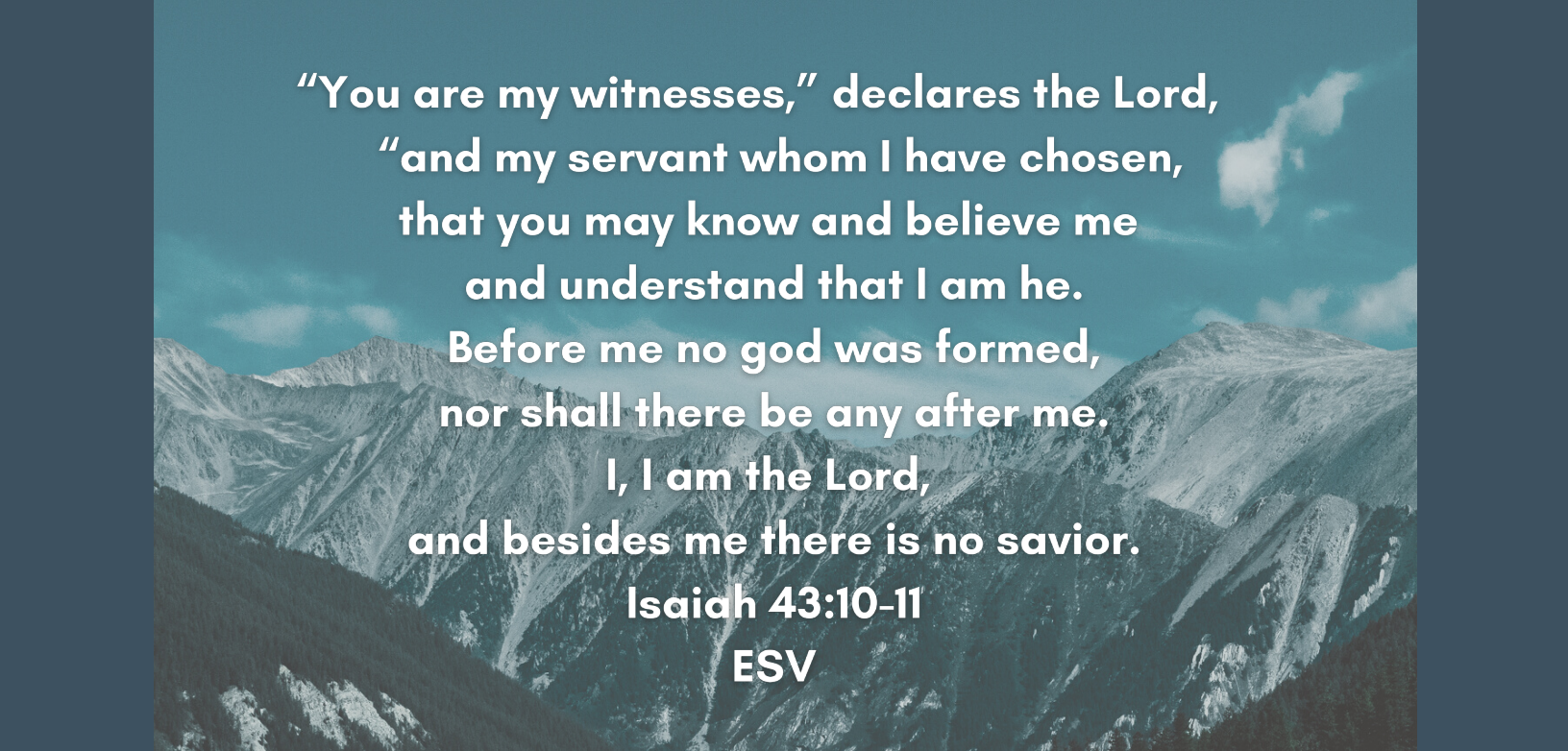
What poverty are you experiencing or potentially ignoring in your personal life?

Who is living in Spiritual poverty in your life?

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to free them from spiritual poverty.







**“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord,  
“and my servant whom I have chosen,  
that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.**

**Before me no god was formed,  
nor shall there be any after me.**

**I, I am the Lord,  
and besides me there is no savior.**

**Isaiah 43:10-11**

**ESV**

## **LESSON 5: HEART AS SERVERS, MIND AS LEARNERS**

As discussed earlier, we volunteer on a STMT for one reason - to glorify God. It is important to evaluate our posture for this trip in order to keep the focus on God and His kingdom. As we read throughout scripture, we are called to be witnesses of God and the work of Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought about what it means to be a witness? Most of us might say it means to verbally share the good news of Jesus, and that wouldn't be wrong. However, as we read throughout Isaiah and evaluate the life of Jesus Christ, to be a witness means to be a servant and student of God. On your STMT, arriving with the heart of a servant and the mind of a learner will be the best tool for your witness of God to those around you.

### **HEART AS SERVERS**

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45 ESV



As we think through being a witness of Christ, one of the very best ways to do this is through our actions. Christ himself served with humility, passion, and empathy. He cared for the marginalized, forgotten, and neglected. To serve as a witness of Christ is to serve in a way that clearly says no task is too small, dirty, or uncomfortable for you to take on. Remember, we work not for the sake of men, but for the glory of God.

How would you define having a heart as a server?

What would it look like for you to have a posture of a heart as a server?

What would happen if you arrive without this heart?

What does that do to your witness to serve as Christ serves?



## MIND AS LEARNERS

An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. Proverbs 18:15 ESV

Another key component of being a witness is having the mind of a learner. We see throughout the Old and New Testaments that heroes of faith took their time to learn more about God, His ways, and His mission for the world. We also see this example set by Jesus. Think about His interactions with Zacchaeus. Jesus studied the situation, evaluated Zacchaeus as a person, and ultimately earned the right to speak into his life. Paul does a similar thing in Athens. A good witness will learn from our surroundings, experienced believers, and leaders in our life. On any short term mission trip, there will be a lot of individuals who will know more than you about culture, local ministries, and reaching people. We need to humble ourselves to learn from these individuals.

How would you define having a mind as a learner?

What would it look like for you to have the posture of the mind of a learner?

What would happen if you arrived on the field without this mindset?

What does it do to your witness if you are a humble learner?



A big key in understanding these postures is to recognize that 99% of the time you will be partnering with national leaders, missionaries, and ministries who are already doing amazing Kingdom-driven work. It is also important to remember that 100% of the time, the Holy Spirit is already working in people's hearts. It is easy to think we are “taking Jesus to the \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank),” but the truth is the Holy Spirit and other people are doing that work already. This knowledge is vital to having a humble enough spirit to have the heart of a servant and the mind of a learner.

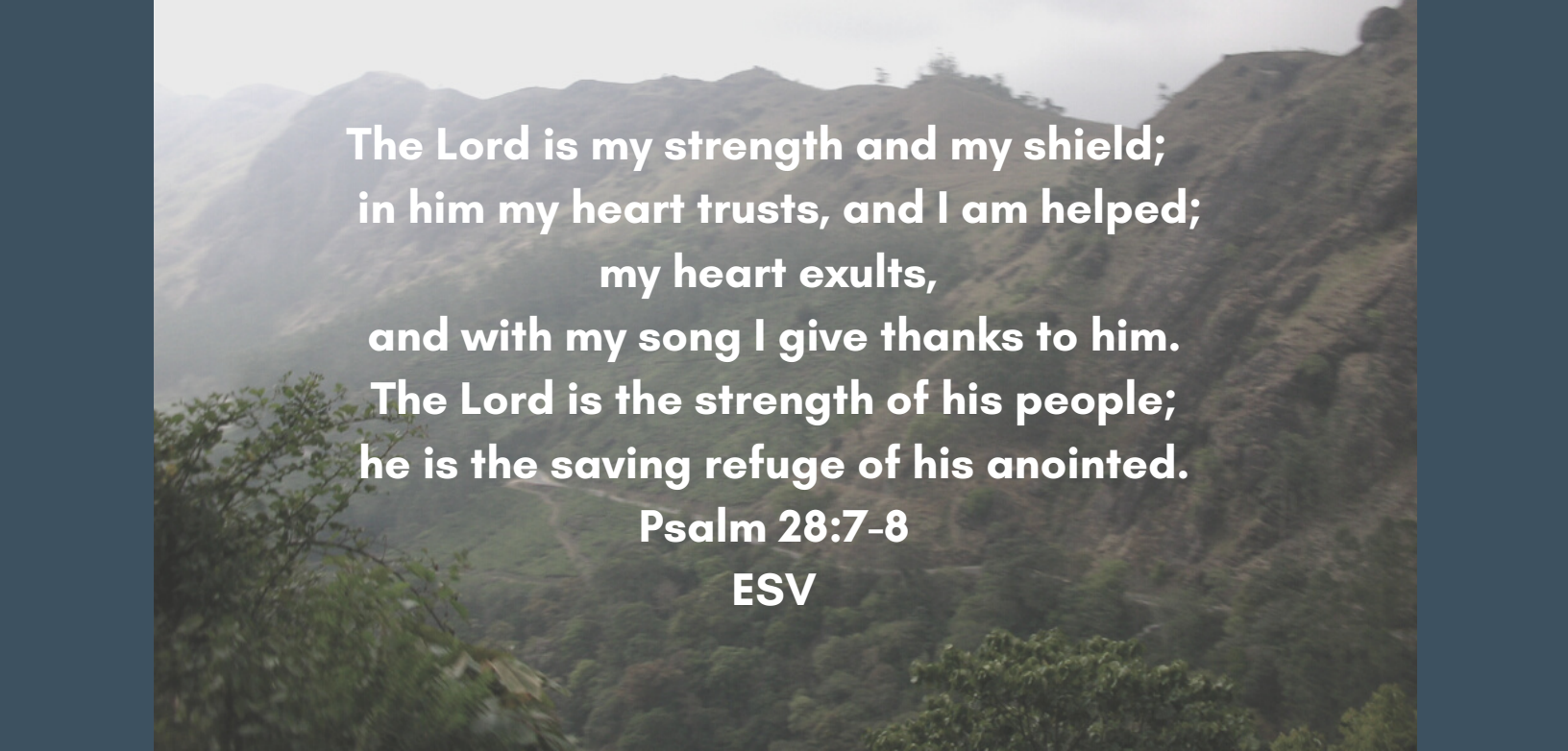
How does the Holy Spirit come into play for these postures?

How is the Holy Spirit already working on the field where we want to serve?

How should having the heart of a server and the mind of a learner shape (or effect) the way we witness to others?

What are areas in my life I need to grow in? What could I learn while on the field?





**The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;  
my heart exults,  
and with my song I give thanks to him.  
The Lord is the strength of his people;  
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.**

**Psalm 28:7-8**

**ESV**

## **LESSON 6: SELF-AWARENESS, HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS**

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

Most of us have never been shipwrecked, whipped within an inch of our lives, or had a group of assassins after our blood. But all of those things and more happened to Paul, who spent his life frequently under incredible pressure.

This is not to say we don't live in a world filled with stressors of its own. Traveling to a foreign country, eating new foods, listening to a new language, witnessing extreme poverty and spending a lot of time with new people can stir up a lot of stress! Stress has a way of changing our temperament, influencing us to act in uncharacteristic ways, and making us much more vulnerable to temptation and frustration. We may find ourselves snapping at people, losing patience when we need it most, or becoming depressed and "shutting down". Ultimately stress can cause us to take our eyes off of God and focus only on ourselves.

When we're under pressure, it's important to realize that if we are not careful, it could have an adverse affect on our relationships with others and our ability to serve God effectively. When we are at our wit's end, it is very important that we recognize our limits and use the stressful situations to lean into God and learn to rely on His strength.

(Adapted from: <https://today.reframemedia.com/devotions/stress> George Young)

Think about a time in your life when you were extremely stressed out about something. How did you behave differently during that situation? How was the situation resolved?

Describe some behaviors you have noticed in other people when they are stressed. How can you help them recognize and resolve the stressful situation that has caused their behaviors?

What does scripture say that God wants us to do when we are afflicted?

Make a list of your “typical responses to stress” and prayerfully offer those responses to God, asking for His strength and the fruit of His Spirit to cover you when you feel stressed in preparing for and while on your STMT.  
(Galatians 5:22)



Serving abroad takes you out of your comfort zone, which forces you to rely on God and on one another, strengthening your relationships and growing your faith. Sometimes this happens through discovery and celebration and other times through struggle, challenge and hardship; all of it leading to an enriching, unforgettable experience.

Remember, difficult doesn't mean bad. God often teaches us the most during our struggles, and while serving on a STM team will not always be easy, it will be so worthwhile.

Today we will focus on the intra- and interpersonal skills you may find valuable in traveling, living and serving with a group of individuals in a foreign context.

### **Self-awareness and Setting Boundaries:**

Understanding your personality, your strengths and growth areas, and the drivers of your emotions will go a long way in helping you in interacting with others, especially when you are out of your comfort zone. Do you gain energy by being around other people (extrovert) or from periods of quiet reflection (introvert)?

One way to help clarify your self-awareness is to take a personality survey. There are many different versions on the market, one of the most common in the Myers Briggs. A quick, free, online version of the Myers Briggs/NERIS Type Explorer® survey is linked below. Please take the survey and review your results report as well as the personality type links, paying special attention to your strengths and weaknesses, as it will be discussed at your next team meeting.

Test:

<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

Personality Types:

<https://www.16personalities.com/personality-types>

Knowing your limits and needs will help you set boundaries with others on your team and with those whom you will be serving. It can be easy to become frustrated with people when in close quarters or to feel overwhelmed by the extreme circumstances of those whom we serve. Remember to seek the Lord when this happens and His peace will guard your hearts and minds (Phil. 4:7).



## Engagement:

If you find yourself moving into the frustration stage of cultural adjustment, or are physically or emotionally exhausted, overwhelmed or simply not feeling well, it may be easy to find yourself not fully engaging in your STMT. It is important to recognize when you are pulling away, and to discuss it with your team leader. Work with your leader to identify the cause and seek a solution to any physical problems, and have your leader hold you accountable for participation. Here are some other suggestions:

- Taking time for quiet reflection and prayer is critically important and may be helpful in re-energizing you. 10-15 minute intervals each day may help.
- Make sure you are drinking enough water; dehydration is a sneaky culprit. If you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated!
- Rest during rest periods and sleep at night. Sometimes people are prone to avoid “down-time” on trips and exhaustion will kick in.
- Deal with digestive issues. They can be common on trips, and ignoring things like constipation or diarrhea is a bad idea.
- If you are an introvert, be honest with team members about needing some “non-chit-chat” time.
- Communicate how you are feeling and what you are thinking with an accountability partner/mentor, in a journal, or with a leader.
- Push yourself out of your comfort zone, even when you “don't feel like it”.

How have you encouraged yourself to engage in new things in the past?





## Communication and Conflict Resolution:

One of the most critical aspects for the well-being of your team and those you are serving with is effective communication. Often, individuals on a STMT become extremely focused on the potential language barriers with their hosts, which is one key component in the trip. However, they fail to recognize the equal importance of communication with their team members. Effectively communicating within the team will be important for the avoidance of risks, accomplishments of tasks, and your overall witness and ability to glorify God.

How can we practice effective communication with the team?

- Take a moment to reflect on a situation, your feelings, and your potential response
- Be honest
- Use “I” statements
- Be aware of body language
- DO speak with the individuals involved
- DO NOT gossip or “speak behind someone’s back”
- Set apart time for open communication
- Give everyone a voice

What do I do if a conflict arises?

The first step is to commit the situation and your feelings to prayer. Approach the individual, if it is a personal conflict, and present the issue in a calm manner. If it is a group issue, or if the individual doesn’t respond, take it to your mentor or team leader so it can be discussed together. Keep in mind that everyone on the trip is dealing with the same experience, but may not be dealing with it in the same way. Emotions can run high, and reflecting God’s grace toward others is key. Whatever you do, don’t stew on your emotions and allow anger to build. Remember that when those moments of stress, exhaustion or anxiety crop up that “the Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, lift your situation to the Lord in prayer and he will cover you in His peace” (Phil. 4:5b-7).



## Social Norms, Expectations and Avoiding Pitfalls:

While you are traveling, there are three sets of social norms you will need to be aware of and perhaps make adaptations for: your group's social norms, your host's social norms and your service recipient's social norms. An acceptable behavior or activity under your group's social norms may make the host uncomfortable in theirs while causing a shutdown of relationship-building in the community at large. These vary by location, and following your host's guidance is key to avoiding pitfalls in relationship-building, even for norm adjustments that may seem like "no big deal".

Some possible examples of this may include:

*Clothing choices:* Wearing shorts and tank tops may be normal for your group, but your host may be uncomfortable with you wearing them. The host may allow the clothes to be worn on their property, recognizing that it is the group's norm. However, the host may insist you do not wear them to the ministry site because he/she knows that the people they serve or work with will be offended.\*

Once on a combined STM team of US and Salvadoran youth serving in Nicaragua, we found out the hard way that in several of the Nicaraguan churches we were to visit, females were expected to wear skirts or dresses. Not one girl on our team had a skirt because the church we served in El Salvador did not have that norm. While it may be easy to feel offended by a custom that seems old-fashioned or sexist, the bottom line is: Don't let the enemy use your clothing as a distraction or stumbling block and rob Glory from God!\*

*Behaviors:* Roughhousing with loud yelling/talking/laughing may be the norm for your group of teenagers, but the host, whose cultural demeanor is much quieter and reserved, may be uncomfortable with the volume and physicality of your play on campus. The local church running the children's ministry may be deeply distraught if the same behavior is taking place in their ministry center with the children they serve bearing witness (especially if they have spent months establishing routines and class behavioral expectations).\*

\*Note: These are just examples. Please follow the guidance of your team leadership and hosts, and ask questions when uncertain of local norms.



What do you feel will be your biggest challenge?

How would you describe your personality?

What is your biggest strength when it comes to new situations?

Biggest weakness?

If you had to pick one thing that others do that drives you crazy, what would it be?

How can you make sure it doesn't impact your ability to serve?



# CONCLUSION

As you prepare to head out on your STMT, it is our desire that you recognize you are stepping into more than just a fun or cool experience. Whether you are heading to a country far away or the community down the road, you are going as ambassadors of the King. In all things that you do, keep HIS glory in the front of your mind. As ambassadors you are taking on a big responsibility, we hope that this workbook has helped in some way to prepare you. Here are a few of the key take aways we hope you remember;

- God's Glory always comes first, the whole trip is about that
- Your spiritual health matters and is important
- Culture is complex, be humble, learn, and observe
- Poverty is also complex, we all may be living in some form of poverty
- Have a heart as a server
- Keep of mind of a learner
- Practice healthy boundaries

Now that you have finished the pre-field work, you are getting ready to head out on your trip. You may be getting really excited and packing or you're nervous but expecting to learn a lot. We would encourage you to just be expectant. Be expectant that the Lord is going to do something on your trip; that He will show up! We pray you are open to listening when He does.

As exciting as your STMT is, we would be remiss if we did not share with you that the post-field time is possibly the most vital portion of your STMT. In the post-field time, you will have the opportunity to grow, put in practice what you learned, and produce fruit. It is highly suggested that you go through the post-field workbook, ABSEIL, and meet regularly with your team. Seek to glorify God and grow in the ways He leads and directs.

May your trip expand God's kingdom and see His glory magnified.





## INCA LINK INTERNATIONAL

This team workbook and the corresponding curriculum was prepared by the team of Inca Link International. Inca Link has been operating and serving in Latin America since 2006 with the mission of reaching the 300 million youth of Latin America with Christ's irresistible love.

One of many ways Inca Link is working to reach youth is through the work of short term mission trips. With years of experience they have seen the good, bad, and ugly of STMT. However, through all of it they still believe in the power and ability STMT have to be tools in God's Kingdom. Several missionaries serving with Inca Link first got exposed to missions through a short term trip. It is Inca Link's deep desire that every trip bring glory to God and through that more Latino/a youth come to know God as their Father.

If you would like to learn more about Inca Link or serve with them on a STMT, internship or as a missionary, check out their website at [incalink.org](http://incalink.org).



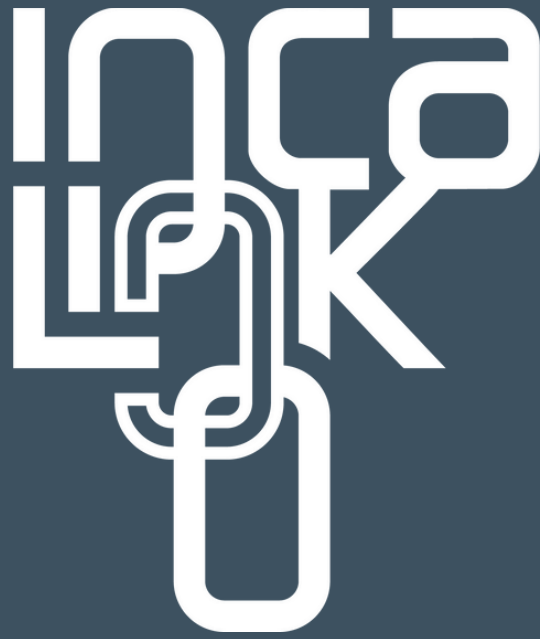
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[www.incalink.org](http://www.incalink.org)