

## Building and preparing your team

After doing this for 30 years much of this for me has become instinct or habit. I'm just starting to try and write some of this down so bear with me as this is a work in progress.

I start with this goal in mind: **By the time we set foot on foreign soil we have already become a unified and loving body.** This means we approach our mission with one mind and that we already know and care for one another.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

John 13:34 and 35

For this to happen team members have to log a good deal of “directed” time together. There is no exact recipe for how much time is required, merely, the more time the better. There is a direct correlation between the amount of time team spends together in preparation and the quality of the trip and the fruit of the mission after the trip. This puts the burden on those who are organizing the trip to be as crafty as possible in maximizing how much time team members will be willing to give. If you ask for more time than people are willing to give, they will choose to not participate. There are those that view a mission trip merely as accomplishing a mechanical task. They put on a simple information meeting and the team reassembles at the airport. Even worse, there are ministries that recruit strangers from across the country who buy into their “trip package” and the team meets when they arrive in country. I know of no examples of where a team has spent too much time together, except when meetings are run poorly. If meetings are boring, or are wasting people's time this becomes counterproductive to teambuilding. So, figure out if you can get people to agree to several weeks or several months and begin to lay out an outline of what you can do in that timeframe. There are numerous books with study guides that can be used to form the outline of your schedule.

Some of our favorites

[The Hole in our Gospel](#) by Richard Stearns

[When Helping Hurts](#) by Fikkert, Corbett, & Perkins

[Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists To Global Citizens](#) by Tim Dearborn

[Why Jesus crossed the Road](#) by Bruce Main

Every time I meet with the team I have several objectives in mind. Missions they somewhat parallel the “greatest Commandment”, loving the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, strength.

Strength = physical objectives

Soul = spiritual objectives

Mind = mental objectives

Heart = emotional and social objectives

**Physical preparation** Perhaps someday this will become more important to me. At this point I feel it's hardly worth mentioning. The transition to Belize is very easy.

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We are not like the military so we give little to no time for physical preparation. People should be up-to-date on their tetanus shot and encouraged to be rested for their arrival.

**Spiritual preparation** however is a major issue. Christ must be at the center from the beginning to the end. The team leader should see their role as pastor and constantly concerned with how to help the team grow spiritually. Every meeting should include a time for worship, letting God speak through his Word, and time given to prayer for ourselves, and for the situation and people we will soon encounter. If the team is coming from diverse backgrounds, our time of worship is where we develop a common language of praise that will become more meaningful as the trip progresses. This is a great time to introduce new songs and songs that will have special meaning if they fit the context of our trip. It's not a bad idea to assign specific Scriptures to memorize.

**Mental preparation** has no boundaries. As the trip is an opportunity for discipleship, there is a vast amount of knowledge that can be gained. The knowledge I want to impart can be classified as Information, Intent, and General Knowledge.

INFORMATION: specific info related to the trip

At each meeting time can be given to dole out information  
the country and its culture  
where we will go and what we will do  
schedule and what each day entails  
what to bring  
contact information  
finances related to the trip  
health and safety  
packing and travel  
and the list goes on.....

INTENT: being clear on expectations of individuals and the group.

This is more about "how" we go about our mission and functioning as a team. Being clear on expectations eliminates many potential problems on the trip. Here we come to agreement on lines of authority, attitude, participation, dealing with stress, hardship and conflict. Some teams use this as an opportunity for a group exercise in establishing a "group covenant". Sample group covenants are in the leadership packet.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: this is the area where time will dictate how far you can go. Anything related to spiritual growth, missions, group dynamics is fair game. Come up with a list of topics, prioritize them, and see what fits into your timeframe. Here is a list of some of my favorites.

Missions: understanding God's call?

Missions: why do some say we should stay home?

Our destination: Crossing cultures and cultural differences

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Humility: being open to what God will do in me rather than through me  
What's my story?: Sharing our faith with others  
Keeping a journal  
Listening to God: how God speaks to individuals  
Prayer and worship: how we speak to God  
Many gifts-One body: the purpose and nature of spiritual gifts  
Poverty: our responsibility and response  
Best practices in mission: helping without hurting (shame, disempowerment, dependency etc.)  
As I said, there is no end to the number of topics to learn about. Decide what's most important and fit it into to your schedule. Some topics could extend over several meetings while some meetings might cover several topics depending on how deep you go.

**Emotional/Social preparation** is what I refer to as “team building”. This involves the activities and exercises we intentionally plan to facilitate team members growing in their knowledge and love for one another. This takes lots of time and effort, moving from superficial toward deep and meaningful interaction. I've put together some helpful thoughts in another document called “teambuilding ideas”.

### **Assigning tasks**

This is a part of team building whereby people share their gifting and their efforts and hopefully receive affirmation as a result. Begin to work as a functioning body. Allow the group to serve one another and experience the interdependence that God desires to see in his Body. (1Cor. Chap. 12-14)  
Try and find a job for everyone to contribute and play a part.

### **Information report on the country of Belize:**

This is something anyone can do for themselves but if you assign it to a team member, to research and print out reports for the rest of the team, you've created an opportunity for someone to serve and hopefully be affirmed for it. This particular task is a good one for young people. Even primary school or middle school youth have learned to do this kind of thing in school. I find it harder to come up with ways for the younger people to shine and serve the team but this is a good one.

### **Leading worship:**

Sometimes this can be assigned to more than one. Have a worship team on your team.

### **Songbooks:**

I would let the worship leader and the rest of the team give input but letting a separate person create the songbook creates another job.

### **Hospitality:**

In trying to foster relationships I prefer the team to meet in homes rather than in a church. When a person opens their home they are in part opening their life. Meeting in the church has the feel of a “church program”. Meeting in a home has a

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feel of entering into someone's life. You might rotate between homes of team members or you might meet in the same place. You can ask for volunteers to bring food or a desert. Again, the idea is to create opportunities for each to serve one another.

**First aid:**

Whoever has the most medical experience gets named the trip nurse. They can be asked to bring or build a first aid kit for the trip.

**Teaching or leading devotions:**

Often the trip leader or pastor has the most experience but if this opportunity is shared with other competent team members new leadership is built and more team members can exercise their gifts.

**Team building:**

Do you have someone on your team that is good at interjecting fun and/or building community? I would work together with them to prepare games or skits for breaking down barriers and exercises that promote disclosure and information.

**Photographer, videographer, journalist:**

Designate individuals with these skills to begin documenting the trip with a view toward a church-wide presentation at the conclusion of the trip, as well as keeping the congregation informed of the mission prior to the trip.

**Organizers:**

Put your type-A personalities to work on organizing  
Packing  
Transportation to and from airport  
fund raising for trip  
mission supplies

**So, for every team meeting I lay out my plan..... How many minutes for**

**Worship**

**Team building**

**Teaching**

**Sharing information and planning**

**Prayer**

Decide what songs, exercises, topics and information need to go in these categories for each of your meetings. Delegate what you feel you should to increase team participation and ownership. I like to use Excel spreadsheets so I can view the big picture all at once and zoom into small units that need work.

Please let me know any questions you have: [tamtam@twaw.org](mailto:tamtam@twaw.org)

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