

A JOURNAL FOR STUDENTS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THEIR MISSION TRIP

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USE THIS BOOK

Our names are Tony and Rob.

We've been best friends since high school, and we've gone through a lot together. We spent years as roommates living on a budget. We were the best men in each other's weddings. We even stayed best friends as Rob left to become a missionary in Africa and Tony served as a pastor in churches a little closer to home. We've helped each other grow spiritually and we crack each other up with cheesy inside jokes.

One thing our friendship has taught us is that, every once in a while, we all need an outside perspective on own lives. That's why we'd like to invite you into our friendship through this book. We also encourage you to read it with friends and family. Much of what we've written is for you to interact with personally as you prepare for your mission trip. But some things should be shared with others—people from your church or team members joining you on your trip.

This book is meant to be used BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER your trip!

Before: In the first part of the book, you'll find 12 interactive studies and challenges to prepare your mindset, your heart, and your expectations for what's to come. We recommend doing two studies a week for six weeks before your trip.

During: In this section, you'll find six morning studies and six evening reflections to use during your trip.

After: Like in the first part, this section includes 12 interactive studies. They will help you debrief your experience and cement the things you learned on your trip into your daily life. We recommend doing two studies a week for six weeks after your trip.



Scattered throughout this book, you'll find special notes from each of us based on our different experiences. The From the Pastor notes are from Tony and the From the Missionary notes are from Rob.



Tony is a pastor who has led many teams on mission trips over the years. This gives him unique insight into what it's like to engage a culture from the outside.



- Rob is a full-time missionary with special knowledge about mission
- trips from an inside perspective.



You'll also see a number of short **Trip Tips**. These offer interesting bits of information about mission trips that you've probably never heard before. Keep your eyes open for these nuggets of insight taken from our combined experience with mission trips.



WEEK ONE
HELPING OR KNOWING?



Imagine moving to a new town and attending a new school. As you walk into your first class, you're not sure where to sit until a few students invite you to an empty desk. You take your seat and begin talking with them before class starts. Without learning anything about them, you start spouting off your opinions about what they should do to fix their lives. Do you think they'll appreciate your help?

After class you notice another student carrying a stack of books and papers. The student slips on a newly waxed floor. School supplies fly everywhere. You've never met this student, and you worry he'll feel awkward that a stranger is helping him. You hurry past without picking up any papers. Do you think the student cared whether or not you knew him?

Which should come first, getting to know people or helping them out? Which is more important? We choose option three: all of the above.

FLIP IT:

Imagine going on a mission trip where you aren't allowed to do anything. You can't dig wells, repair fences, or paint buildings. No one lets you pass out supplies to kids. Your only job is to get to know the people you're visiting.

The ad for this trip might read:

Join us on this cross-cultural experience to fix nothing! Your job is to come, be still, and encounter others right where they are. You won't be expected or allowed to do anything about their hardships. You'll merely observe and listen.



Now imagine another ad describing a very different trip:

Join us on this cross-cultural experience to swoop in, do some work, and zip out, all without meeting the people you're helping. You'll build a school, paint a building, and construct a jungle gym. Do they want these things? Do they need them? Who knows? But you'll feel like the answer to their prayers one way or another!

Both trips are obviously off track, but they could become something amazing if they were merged together. They might even resemble how Jesus spent his time on earth, first living among humanity relationally for 30 years, then filling his last three years with intentional acts of service, teaching, and investment. More than 20 centuries later, we're still feeling the impact of his "mission trip."

OWN IT:

If you had to pick between the two trips described, which would you sign up for? Why?

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WEEK ONE HELPING OR KNOWING?

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- Circle the statement that best describes you. Then explain why you chose that statement.
- I like to make a difference by fixing broken things and helping broken people.
- I like to build relationships with people by getting to know them and their situations before imposing my thoughts and opinions.
- Read Acts 1:3–8. What does it reveal about waiting and doing?

LIVE IT:

- 1. One day this week, do an act of service for someone you've never met.
- 2. Another day this week, try to go all day without giving your opinion or telling anyone else what to do. Instead, listen closely to what other people are saying to you.
- 3. Below, write down what you discovered from these two experiences.

"For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are."

C.S. LEWIS, THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW

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MORNING DEVOTION LISTEN AND LEARN



Read Proverbs 18:1–2. Write down any words that stand out to you or anything you can apply to the coming day.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

You aren't bringing God to a foreign culture. He's already there. So what you are bringing? Yourself. And guess what—all your preferences, habits, and quirks are coming along for the ride. That means you'll only be able to stretch yourself so far before feeling the need to pause or pull back.

That's okay. You'll need to stop and get your bearings from time to time. Give grace to others who may need more or less space than you do. That said, don't use this as an excuse to stop stretching yourself entirely. Abandon any distractions that will only make you wish for your own culture, such as flirting, listening to music, or longing for a sports score from your favorite team back home. Unplug from the usual to give yourself more space for the unusual. You only have a few days; don't waste any time wishing for things that will be waiting for you back home.

MORNING DEVOTION LISTEN AND LEARN

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MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE

There's a lot to learn, see, and experience on the first day. It won't take long to figure out that flexibility and a learning attitude are two must-haves when you're serving in a new community. Your local hosts may even provide an experience for you to take part in. That may involve going on a "boring" tour or jumping into an unfamiliar task instead of doing what you had planned for your first day. Push through it. Your actual mission today is to develop an attitude of learning.

The first day is also full of first impressions, which we all know can be pretty inaccurate (from both sides of the fence!). Slow down and pay attention to the culture. Talk with people and try to recognize their values, strengths, styles, and communication methods. Pay attention to how people greet others. Pray that God will allow you to see this new culture through his eyes instead of your own.

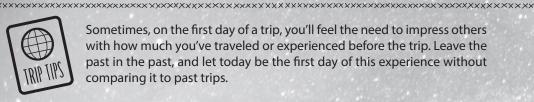
REFLECTIONS

What can I focus on or do today in response to these thoughts?



An old saying claims that you can tie two cats' tails together and have union but not unity. Sure, the cats won't love it, but it's also dangerous for the person trying to tie the cats together.

Your trip leader and local hosts are attempting to do just that. They're doing their best to connect the various members of your team and the people you're encountering. Help them out by holding onto your attitude of learning, even when you're tired at the end of the day. Listen to the observations of others without talking over them. You should be serving your mission trip team just as much as you are serving the people of this new culture.



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Sometimes, on the first day of a trip, you'll feel the need to impress others with how much you've traveled or experienced before the trip. Leave the past in the past, and let today be the first day of this experience without comparing it to past trips.

Process what God did in and through you today by answering the following questions.

YOUR HEART // What were the various emotions you experienced today, and what triggered them?

EVENING REFLECTION

TEAMING UP

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YOUR MIND // If you had to guess, what is one thing people think about differently here than from your own culture?

YOUR SOUL // What is something you sense God may be trying to draw your attention to?

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YOUR STRENGTH // How did your level of rest or fatigue play into today?

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS // Is there an age group or set of people here that you feel drawn to serving? What about serving them appeals to you?



WEEK ONE MISSION TRIP HIGH



Welcome back.

It may take time to settle back into your home environment, especially if your trip involved spending time with the materially poor. It's common to have a reverse-culture shock as you walk into your home and look at the clothes in your closet or the food in your refrigerator.

Maybe you feel grateful to be back in familiar surroundings. Or maybe you feel disgusted and disappointed with your luxuries. As everyone asks about your trip, you may find yourself struggling to describe how you feel about your life at home.

FLIP IT:

You may have heard the phrase "mission trip high" before. It describes the positive feelings people experience after coming home from their trip. Ironically, it may cause you to do negative things, like expect others to feel like you do or critique them if they don't get how you're feeling.

It's important to remember that your culture is just as fallen and needy as any other culture. You can reenter it feeling prideful about your humility, or you can become a missionary here just as you did when you went there.

Eventually your enthusiasm and willpower will run out, which is why so many mission trip participants find it hard to keep living differently. If you want to defy those statistics, you'll need a lot of time with Jesus and a tangible plan to foster your takeaways. One strategy is to use the interest others show in your trip to process the things you'd like to implement in your life.

WEEK ONE MISSION TRIP HIGH

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When we went to Zambia, we decided to share updates online to keep people interested in our mission. We later learned that some of the things we wrote from our perspective ended up offending the nationals. They felt like we were saying their orphans were not loved or cared for. Of course this was not the way we felt or what we wanted to convey, but after carefully looking at our posts, we could see how they could be taken that way. Share your post-trip summaries with sensitivity and wisdom.

BEGIN WITH ONE SENTENCE // You'll have about 30 seconds to grab someone's attention about your experience. Pretend you're fishing and the first thing you say is the bait to catch people's interest. What is one powerful statement that sums up your experience?

UPGRADE TO A STORY // If it feels like people want to know more, offer a story of one of your favorite moments. Share pictures if you took them.

CREATE A CONVERSATION // Some people will kindly ask about your trip and leave it at that. Others will be moved by your experience. Either way, turn it into a conversation by asking about any mission experiences or interests they may have to share.

FLIPPING MISSIONS

FLIP YOUR PERSPECTIVE TO CHANGE HOW YOU SERVE

We all know that mission trips can be powerful experiences, but we also know they don't always help in the ways we'd like them to. There's only so much a small group of inexperienced but well-intentioned people can do over a week or so. For mission trips to have the best kind of impact (in our team and in the community), it's going to take something huge: a complete shift in perspective. Students will have to see their trip through the eyes of their leaders, their missionary hosts, and the communities they're serving. This interactive journal will help you see behind the scenes from all these angles so you can push your trip from a one-time experience to something life-changing.

Flipping Missions guides you through the three phases of your mission trip:

BEFORE THE TRIP // 12 interactive studies (best done over a six-week period)

Everything you need to set goals and get ready: Bible studies, personal challenges, trip tips, group check points, trip checklist.

ON THE TRIP // 6 morning devotions and 6 evening reflections

Hear from two perspectives every day as a longterm missionary and an experienced pastor lead you through morning devotions and evening reflections.

AFTER THE TRIP // 12 follow-up studies (best done over a six-week period)

Debrief your trip, and make a plan to live everyday life on a mission; these lessons, hard questions, and experiential challenges will help get that process started.



TONY MYLES is the Lead Pastor of Connection Church in Medina, Ohio. With over 25 years of experience and advanced education in youth ministry, he is also a volunteer youth worker in his church, a national ministry coach, a book author, a columnist, and

a blogger. Mostly, Tony is a messy Christ-follower with an overflowing love for God; for his amazing wife, Katie; for their two awesome boys and one beautiful girl; and for the Church in all its imperfect, redemptive beauty.



ROB MURPHY has a wealth of service experiences as a pastor, missionary, and ministry consultant. He founded African Child Zambia, a medical advocacy mission to orphans and vulnerable children. A gifted international communicator, Rob speaks

passionately about missions and issues facing the church internationally. He is married with seven children, and they regularly volunteer together wherever there is a need to serve.

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