



# Praying Pelican Missions

---

Participant Handbook

## 12 Ways to Ruin a Trip of a Lifetime

1. Be a loner. Go off by yourself or with one or two others and don't get to know the other team members or nationals.
2. Expect things will be done in the way things are done in North America and make suggestions as to how to do things better.
3. Be inflexible. Complain and whine when things don't go as expected.
4. Don't eat the food of the country you are visiting. Make jokes about how bad it tastes and what it looks like and then sneak off to find "American" food.
5. Stay up late talking and don't get enough sleep.
6. Look for ways in which this trip will benefit you instead of how you can serve.
7. Point out the negative side of people on your team and those you are visiting.
8. Come unprepared for ministry. Just stand around while everyone else puts forth effort.
9. Don't try anything new. Stay in your comfort zone.
10. Don't find Prayer Partners. Don't pray for your upcoming trip. Don't pray for the trip preparations and logistics. And DON'T pray during your trip.
11. Don't take the sun seriously. Rarely drink water and never apply sun block.
12. Don't read through this handbook and never journal!

## Clothing Guidelines

Our desire is to dress in a manner that does not distract from the message of Jesus Christ at all times. Therefore, wearing dressier and more conservative clothing is a requirement. Washing facilities will not be available, so please pack accordingly. We suggest bringing plenty of shirts and long shorts as you most likely will need a change of clothes on many days because of the heat. Please be sure to pack with the knowledge that it will be very hot.

### So, what should I wear...

	MEN	WOMEN
For Church?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress pants</li> <li>• Dress shirt</li> <li>• Dress shoes</li> <li>• Potentially a tie</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skirts that fall below the knee, lightweight dress pants or capris</li> <li>• Dress with sleeves</li> <li>• Dress shirt</li> <li>• Dress shoes</li> </ul>
For Work Projects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knee length shorts or pants</li> <li>• T-shirt</li> <li>• Tennis shoes, work shoes, or boots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knee length shorts or pants</li> <li>• T-shirt</li> <li>• Tennis shoes, work shoes, or boots</li> </ul>
At Other Ministry Sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress shorts or long athletic shorts</li> <li>• Polo shirt or nice t-shirt</li> <li>• Tennis shoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skirts that fall below the knee, lightweight dress pants, capris, or long shorts</li> <li>• Dress with sleeves</li> <li>• Nice shirt with sleeves</li> <li>• Tennis shoes or closed toe shoes</li> </ul>

### Common Questions

#### How much clothing should I plan on bringing?

As you are packing for a generally hot climate, we recommend bringing extra of everything as you may have to change a few times each day. Generally bring 2-3 church outfits, 3-4 work project sets of clothes, and 6-8 “other” ministry sets of clothes

#### What about for swimming?

Ladies, please make sure you bring a one-piece modest bathing suit. Guys, please bring swimming trunks

#### What should I NOT bring?

Sleeveless shirts, low cut shirts, tank tops, tankinis, bikinis, short shorts, or jewelry

#### What am I forgetting?

Hat or baseball cap, socks, undergarments, lightweight sleepwear, sunglasses, or raingear

## Health Guidelines

1. Drink water that you know is safe. This usually means drinking bottled water. We provide as much water as you can drink. Bring a water bottle (**with a large mouth opening**) to have refilled and keep it with you. Drink water early in the day and often throughout the day.
2. When you are drinking other liquids, look for the word “purified” or “pasteurized” on the container. When you have ice, make sure it is from purified or filtered water.
3. Do not drink out of anyone’s water bottle other than your own. The local children may want to drink from your water bottle, instead find a cup to give them water in.
4. Wash your hands or use anti-bacterial gel frequently but inconspicuously before every meal. Avoid fruit that cannot be peeled, uncooked vegetables, salads, fruit juices, raw eggs, and uncooked meat or unprocessed cheese.
5. Bring all customary medications with you in their original bottles and take them as directed.
6. Keep your passport and medical cards with you at all times.
7. Be aware of the intensity of the sun and temperature. Apply sun block frequently and dress at all times to avoid sunburn and heatstroke.
8. Do not take unnecessary physical risks and be conservative with physical limitations. Nobody should be a “hero.” Do not push yourself too hard. Take frequent water breaks, get enough sleep, wear shoes at all times and gloves when necessary.
9. Always take a partner with you when you are away from the group and communicate where you will be with the team leader. Be aware of your location and the people around you at all times.
10. Bandage up your cuts and don’t touch anyone’s cuts that are bleeding. We have First Aid kits available...use them!
11. Notify the team leader or seek professional help if you experience physical problems. These could include diarrhea lasting more than 48 hours, persistent cramps or vomiting, severe chills, or any other symptoms that are of medical concern.
12. Please stay away from and do not pet or touch any local animals including insects, lizards, dogs, cats and other pets. Animals are not vaccinated like our pets are in North America and they could carry rabies.
13. Zip up your belongings before leaving the hotel. Turn off your air conditioning when leaving your room for the day. Stay on the hotel grounds unless you receive permission to leave.

## Policy Agreement

I agree to follow the outlined policies as a mission trip member with Praying Pelican Missions (PPM):

1. As a representative of Jesus Christ, North America, and PPM, I will behave at all times in a manner that brings glory and honor to these institutions.
2. I am aware that my every word and action is being watched during the entire mission trip experience. Therefore, I agree to act and talk in a manner that glorifies the name of Jesus Christ. I want everything I do or say to draw people to Jesus.
3. I will be spiritually, physically, and mentally prepared for a mission trip that will stretch me and mold me in ways that I can only imagine. I will do everything I can ahead of time to prepare myself for a "trip of a lifetime".
4. I am a guest in the country I am visiting. I will respect and follow the traditions of the local people and nationals. For example: if the way I dress offends them, I will change. If I am offered food, I will take it with a "thank you" and a smile.
5. I will not criticize the culture, efficiency, work habits, food, traditions, etc. with which I come in contact with. I have come not to judge, but to learn and to share the person of Jesus through my words, actions, and deeds.
6. I will respect and follow the PPM Trip Leaders and Group Leader and his/her decisions.
7. I agree to have a servant attitude at all times. When I am doing a task or ministry I don't particularly care for, I will put my best foot forward and be a witness in this activity and in everything I will participate in while on the trip.
8. I will use words that encourage and build up my team members and the nationals at all times. This means I will refrain from gossip or words that bring dissention and take focus away from the goals of the trip.
9. I will have a positive attitude at all times. Every trip has its challenges and unforeseen circumstances. People could get sick, items lost, and plans changed. I realize that there are times I will need to "roll with the punches" and look at challenges as opportunities to be a witness for Jesus Christ.
10. I will refrain from pursuing romantic relationships during the trip. If my spouse or significant other is on the trip with me, I will make every effort to spend time with each person of the group and interact with all team members. I realize that sleeping accommodations most likely will not allow me to stay in the same room as my spouse. Men will be in rooms with men and women with women. Rooms will usually have four people per room and shared beds.
11. I will attend all team meetings and fulfill the responsibilities I have agreed to before, during, and after the trip. If I am not able to attend a meeting I will be in contact with my group leader as to what I missed.
12. I will not talk negatively about North American politics or the host country's politics during the trip.
13. I will abstain from using, consuming, purchasing, or possessing alcohol, tobacco products, and illegal drugs while on the trip.
14. I will not steal or commit any crime or do anything illegal while on the trip.
15. I will meet all medical, logistical, and legal travel requirements. I will follow all import and export laws. I will not attempt to bring any item or good into the host country or back into North America that is banned.
16. I will follow the travel, supply, clothing, financial, medical guidelines, etc. set forth and explained to me prior to the trip. I am responsible for knowing and following everything in the PPM handbook and explained at group meetings.
17. If in the future I desire to return to the host country on a mission trip to visit any connections or ministry locations from this mission trip, I must do so through PPM or receive their written permission to do so. This will enable the overall vision for the ministry as agreed upon through PPM connections in the host country to continue.
18. If I break any of the rules listed above, at the discretion of a PPM representative and in conjunction with my group leader, my mission trip can be terminated and I can be sent home at my own expense. I realize that to attend this trip and represent Jesus Christ on the mission field is a privilege and if I abuse that privilege this constitutes the right for my trip to end prematurely.

## **My Testimony**

As you prepare to embark on the trip of a lifetime, you may want to spend some time reflecting on what God has done in and through your life. There is a likelihood that an opportunity to share some of your testimony while you are on this trip is great! These opportunities may be in a formal setting such as at church, or in an informal setting such as at a nursing home, orphanage, or just walking through the community. You will be most effective if you know what you want to share ahead of time and have practiced prior to the trip.

### **Possible Themes:**

- Your life story with an emphasis on your walk with Jesus
- Your faith journey throughout the years
- Your conversion experience
- Something God is teaching you now or has taught you in the past
- Personalize a Bible story
- A couple of ways that God has impacted your life

### **Some Reminders for a Formal Setting**

- Plan to share for 4-5 minutes
- Write your testimony on a note-card and keep it with you during the trip
- Smile, relax, and share from your heart
- Be real
- Have a solid opening and closing
- Remember you are in another culture and some things may not be culturally relevant
- When you are finished, stop
- Speak loudly, slowly, and clearly
- Be ready to share at any time during the trip
- Know what you are trying to say

### **Helps**

The following page has questions that may help you prepare for sharing your testimony or faith story. Please take some time prior to your trip to think about what God has done in your life and how He may use your story to impact the lives of others. He may surprise you with many opportunities throughout the trip to share!

## **Preparing to Share**

Prayerfully consider the following questions and as you prepare to share what God has done in your life during your trip and potentially after your trip is completed!

**Who is your favorite Bible character and why?**

**What is your favorite Bible story and what does God teach you through it?**

**What has God taught you recently?**

**When did you come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? How has that changed your life?**

**What was the first Scripture verse you memorized and how has that impacted you?**

## **Belize Overview:**

Belize is located in Central America and borders Mexico and Guatemala. The capital, Belmopan, is carved out of the jungle in the center of Belize, near the Maya Mountain foothills. Belize City, over 300 years old and the country's main commercial area and seaport, is the largest city, boasting over 80,000 inhabitants and continually growing. It combines a mixture of colonial architecture, functional wooden buildings and historic cathedrals, exuding a ramshackle charm. Other towns of note are Dangriga, Punta Gorda, and the blooming beach town Placencia to the south, and Orange Walk and Corozal to the north.

Belizeans are a laid back people with a low-key demeanor. To the short-term mission participant, Belize will appear quite rural and undeveloped.

## **Climate, Language, and Safety:**

Belize enjoys a subtropical climate the entire year. The wet season occurs from August through November, followed by a dry season from December through March. The normal highs all year are 85-90 degrees Fahrenheit, while low temperatures rarely reach the 60's.

Belize is the only English speaking country in Central America. Creole is also often spoken by locals, as well as Spanish in the western part of the country near Guatemala.

Belize is safe by Central American and Caribbean standards, though street crime is not uncommon in more urban areas. Local theft and pick pocketing are the most frequent occurrences. Awareness of one's surroundings is paramount at all times.

## **Economy and Currency**

Belize's economy is seeing steady growth due to an increase in international tourism. Its jungles are being touted as destinations for eco-lodges, and being located next to the world's second longest barrier reef has obvious advantages. Telecommunications companies are growing, attempting to usher Belize into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The per capita income in Belize is just over \$8,000 USD annually.

Belize's dollar value is tied to the United States dollar. Two Belizean dollars equal one U.S. dollar, and either currency can be used. At this time, Belizean banks are not connected to the international banking system, so ATM's are unusable for Americans. Visa and MasterCard continue to gain acceptance at most hotels and restaurants.

## History and Religion

Belize was dominated by and in the middle of the Mayan empire for the better part of a thousand years. The Spanish arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and used the area primarily for logging. During the next two hundred years, many British and Spanish pirates inhabited the area, battling for naval supremacy. Finally in 1798, the British navy defeated the Spanish and laid official claim to the area. In 1862, Britain formally named the territory “British Honduras,” a title that lasted until 1962 when a peaceful independence was granted and British Honduras became Belize.

The vast majority of Belizeans declare some sort of spiritual faith. Many are Roman Catholic, while Christian Protestantism continues to grow. Other practiced cults are Jehovah's Witnesses, Hindu, and Voodooism.

## Food and Fun

Latin American, Creole, and Chinese restaurants represent the vast majority in Belize. Most restaurants serve a variety of foods, from chicken and rice to shrimp or pizza. Local fruits such as mangoes, bananas, and pineapples are widely available and taste excellent. Any fruits that are not peeled or cooked should be avoided.

Belize boasts dense jungles loaded with creatures that fly, swim, and walk. Among them, the toucan, jaguar, and tapir are most famous. The Belize Zoo offers a great opportunity to see the local flora and fauna up close. Also within Belize are a number of Mayan ruins, including Altun-Ha and Xunatunich, which rises 131 feet from the jungle floor.

**What's included in the cost?**

Once in Belize you will receive transportation to and from the airport, transportation to and from ministry sites, three meals a day, purified drinking water, sleeping accommodations, group t-shirts, customizable ministry options, an opportunity to attend local church services, evening worship, prayer, debriefing meetings, and a local sightseeing activity.

**What's NOT included in the cost?**

Airfare, passport, vaccinations, spending money, offering at church services, construction and/or ministry materials, personal insurance, and optional recreation.

**What language do they speak in Belize?**

English is the official language. Belize is the only English-speaking country in Central America, although creole, a language combining English and other languages is commonly spoken. Spanish is also spoken in the Orange Walk and Corozal districts which border Mexico and Guatemala. Many Belizeans are bi-lingual or even tri-lingual.

**Is it safe?**

Yes. We take extra precautions and lay down strict ground rules to ensure safety. Crime occurs in Belize just like everywhere else, but we have never had a PPM team experience an incident of crime. Our genuine partnership with pastors and other community leaders in Belize ensures there is always someone looking out for the well being of our teams.

**What about bugs, snakes and other poisonous creatures?**

Belize has its share of these, as does every tropical country, however, the chance of seeing anything dangerous is very, very slim. In the unlikely event that one of these creatures is encountered our staff is well prepared and equipped to handle such a situation.

**How do I get from the airport to the ministry location?**

PPM staff will be waiting for you at the airport when you arrive in the host country. We will then provide transportation from the airport to the ministry location and back again at the end of the trip.

**How does transportation work within country?**

All transportation within the host country is included in the cost of the trip and will be arranged by PPM. Most often, teams will be riding in buses.

**Can I eat the food and drink the water?**

All food and drink provided by PPM during trips is safe for consumption. Purified drinking water will be provided and even our cooks use this for preparing meals.

**Will there be an opportunity to buy souvenirs?**

Yes. There will be a time set aside to buy souvenirs if so desired.

**What kind of food will we be eating?**

While serving in Belize a variety of meals will be offered from local favorites to American food. A typical meal in Belize consists of chicken, rice, coleslaw, beans and juice.

# Post Trip Checklist

## Continue to grow:

- Spend time each day in prayer
- Commit to read the Bible and journal daily
- Attend Church
- Attend a Youth Group
- Join a Bible study or small group
- Attend a trip reunion

## Continue to serve:

- Volunteer at your church or in your community
- Pay it forward -Contribute financially to your church or charitable organizations
- Make plans to attend a future mission trip
- Use this trip to share about Jesus Christ with people who don't know Him
- Send letters to the nationals you met

## Share about your trip:

- Send thank you letters to financial supporters and prayer supporters
- Share pictures with others by posting them on a website or blog
- Send a story and picture to your local newspaper
- Share trip experiences at school, church, or work

“May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together— spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ.”

- 1 Thessalonians 5:23

## Dear God...

Take some time to write a letter of thanks to God for all the things He has done in, through, and sometimes in spite of you this week.

“You need to know, friends, that thanking God over and over for you is not only a pleasure; it's a must. We have to do it. Your faith is growing phenomenally; your love for each other is developing wonderfully. Why, it's only right that we give thanks.”

- 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (MSG)

## **Sharing Your Experience**

You may find upon returning home, that some people want to hear every single detail about your trip and will sit down with you for hours as you share about what you saw, who you met, and how God worked on your trip. More often, though, you will find people who will only want to hear one two-minute story about your trip. Make it a good one! The following questions and suggestions will help you prepare to share your mission experience effectively in any situation!

**Think of one “God” story that you witnessed while on the trip...**

**Think of one person you met that had an impact on you...**

**Think of one funny thing that happened on the trip that may still point people to God...**

**What did you learn about God on the trip?**

**What did you learn about yourself on the trip?**

**What was one thing that surprised you on the trip?**

**What is one thing that you will NEVER forget?**

## Bringing Missions Home

It is vitally important that you continue thinking about what God has revealed to you on this mission trip and continue serving once you return home. Please prayerfully consider the following.

**What things will you do differently upon returning home?**

**What are some lessons you learned on this mission trip that you will never want to forget and which you can apply to your life back home?**

**What are some goals for the rest of your life that God has revealed to you on this trip?**

**In what ways have you grown in your faith?**

In the following chart, please list the ministries you were involved in during the trip and how you can continue to serve in those types of ministries upon returning home.

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Plan to continue at home.</b>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## Devotional and Prayer Journal

Dear Fellow Servant of Christ,

My heart goes out to you as you begin this mission experience that will change your life forever. Each mission trip that I have been on has been a life changing experience in a different way: whether that is through learning about a different culture, serving with my team, seeing a new side of God's beautiful creation, or being away from the distractions of my day to day life. God is truly faithful to reveal Himself in new ways on short term mission trips. I find that each time, no matter how many times I go or where I go, I always come back with a slightly different perspective on my life and with more passion for serving my King. I pray that this will be true for you as well!

One of the most precious things that I have been able to keep from each mission trips aren't pictures—although those are a blessing as well—but the journals that I keep throughout each trip and for the months afterwards. I have been so blessed to be able to look back and read about where I was, who I was with, and how God was working through me, in me, and in spite of me. I am incredibly humbled as I look back that God chooses to use an individual who is so imperfect and faulted to show His love to the nations. He does though! He uses all of us in different ways to show His love and glorify His name.

As God uses you in the coming weeks, months, and years, I would like to encourage you to first of all study God's Word often and second write down not only what you do, who you are with, and what God is doing, but also what God is revealing to you through His Word! His Word is living and active and when you are away from the distractions of home, He may reveal something to you that you never would have noticed at home. While you are serving on your upcoming mission experience write things down in the following pages and be filled up by God's Word! Believe me, you will never be the same!

We all need to be reminded of God's faithfulness from time to time. Even David, in Psalm 77, was in desperate need of seeing God move. He begged God to see His hand moving again. Then David started to think about what God had done in the past. In verses 11-14 he says, "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember Your wonders of old. I will ponder all Your work, and meditate on Your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your might among the peoples." When this journal gets full and worn, please don't throw it away! Looking back at them in the weeks, months, and years ahead will be a blessing to you. It will remind you of God's faithfulness, love, grace, and beauty!

Seeking His Face,

Cassie Nash

## Three Simple Things

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:3*

**Be Joyful:** To be full of joy, as a person or one's heart; glad; delighted.

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13*

**Pray:** To offer devout petition, praise, thanks, etc., to God.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6*

**Give Thanks:** To express gratitude, appreciation, or acknowledgment.

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.” Psalm 107:1*

### What’s the Point?!

God is so good—to give us such simple instructions and give us the tools and strength to complete those instructions. Today, consider joy, prayer, and thankfulness! See what Scripture says as you prepare to serve on a team, in a foreign country, and away from home. Consider how you can be joyful, pray continually, and give thanks no matter what challenges may come your way!

### Discussion Questions:

1. Which of these three things can you see yourself struggling with the most today?
2. How about while you are on the trip?
3. Look at the three simple things again. What do they have in common?

**Digging deeper:** James 1, Colossians 4, Psalm 100

## Shine On

*“Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.” – Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG)*

At the end of a short-term mission trip in central Jamaica, the local churches gathered with us for a farewell service. We had poured ourselves into ministry that week. We loved intentionally with all that we were. That last day in the community was an incredibly difficult day as tears flowed from our eyes and our hearts ached with the thought of leaving these children, families, and fellow believers. As we gathered one last time with our new friends, we were able to share with them what a blessing it was for us to serve with them for the week. There were several members of the church and community who also wanted to share about how we made a difference in their lives. One woman who we saw a few times through the week with her children stood up with tears in her eyes. She cried as she shared with us that she had watched us pour love into her children and the children of the community. She said something we will never forget. “I didn’t know there was that much love left in the world. You have taught us how to love. Now, we can love each other.”

### **What’s the point?!**

Even though we didn’t know her name, we were light to her. God used us to bless her in an incredible way. We won’t ever know the extent of the impact our willingness to let God use us in that community had, but we know that God is faithful.

As you prepare for your short term mission trip, know that you will be light. People will be watching you, even when you don’t know it. God can use every breath you take to shine His light! So, be a city on a hill! Go public with your light and your faith—start today!

### **For Discussion:**

1. Why are we, as Christians, compared to a city on a hill?
2. What is one thing we should remember as we are going through our day-to-day lives?
3. What is one thing you may want to do less of as you know others are watching you?  
How about more of?

**Digging Deeper:** John 13:35, Philippians 1:9-11, 2 Corinthians 4:5-6

## The Pioneer

*The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* – Genesis 12:1-3

Welcome to another country, another culture, really another world. As we grow and mature, we're constantly walking into new environments, new places and circumstances, and new adventures. You may be thousands of miles from home. But it doesn't take a thousand miles to find a mission field, it takes an open eye. The world we live in every day is a mission field- we're just in a different one.

In Genesis 12, Abraham (then called Abram) was literally called by God to leave his own country, a lot like you did when you decided to serve God on this mission trip! The difference is that Abram had no idea where he was going, he was a pioneer. What Abram had was great faith in God. God promised in this verse, and would continue to affirm throughout the Old Testament, that He was going to make Abram "the father of many nations". Abraham turned into one of the best examples of faith that history has to offer.

### **What's the point?!**

During this week your challenge is to begin to develop your spiritual faith. You may not know what tomorrow brings. You may not even be sure why you're in the middle of nowhere in a third world country, but what you need to remember is that Abram had great faith, and God used him in mighty ways. You might be sitting in a place that looks like the cliché mission field. Just remember, you haven't arrived in THE mission field, you've arrived in a DIFFERENT mission field. Open your heart to God, live by faith, and see what the Lord can do with you this week in this vastly different world.

### **For Discussion:**

1. What made Abraham's faith so monumental?
2. How do you think you'd respond if you felt God asking you to leave your life and go to an unknown land?
3. What are your thoughts about what it's like being in the mission field this week?
4. How do you feel God can use you this week?
5. What are some other Biblical examples of faith?

**Digging Deeper:** Matthew 17:20, Luke 7:9, Habakkuk 2:4

## Paul – The Missionary

*“I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” – 2 Corinthians 11:27-28*

The Apostle Paul is a monumental figure in the area of service. Most people don't know that upon his conversion Paul “at once” began preaching and serving God (Acts 9:20). The world was astonished in the change they saw in Paul. At one time a persecutor of Christians, Paul would be persecuted for his own faith during his time of missions work. He summarizes his service and frustrations in hardships in 2 Corinthians 11.

### **What's the point?!**

Missions work is not supposed to be easy and God can use anyone for his purposes. God uses broken people like Paul to do extraordinary things. Paul was far from a perfect Christian. At once he was far from even being a Christian. But God chose to use Paul to do amazing things, and in turn Paul accounts for over half of the material in the New Testament. As we find in 2 Corinthians 11, his work was often hard and challenging, and the effects of his ministry were sometimes harsh. What Paul did that we should keep in perspective is that He persevered and realized that God was using him for something Great. What is God using you for this week? Are you prepared to run the race and persevere? Do you realize that God uses imperfect people to do extraordinary things?

### **For Discussion:**

1. Has your mission trip experience been physically, mentally or spiritually challenging yet this week? How?
2. Do you think Paul's experience was worth it? Why?
3. Why do you think hardships like these happen to people like Paul?
4. Are you willing to go through hardships for Christ, is it something you ever wonder about?

**Digging Deeper:** 2 Timothy 4:6-8

## Being a Barnabas

*“Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement).” – Acts 4:36*

One biblical character we don't hear enough about is Barnabas. Barnabas was an early Christian who worked alongside the Apostle Paul during his missionary journeys. Barnabas is specifically written about a number of times throughout Acts and in Paul's letters throughout the New Testament.

The interesting thing about Barnabas found in Acts 4:36 is that his name changed from Joseph to Barnabas, meaning “Son of Encouragement.” What a phenomenal name to have! The fact that he was named Barnabas sheds so much light on his character. What a great example and biblical example that we should be striving to be more like!

### **What's the point?!**

Encouragement is contagious. When someone is encouraging and uplifting, it establishes healthy relationships and enables others to succeed and to strive to be the best person they can be. Encouraging words can make a person's day. Your challenge this week is to be a Barnabas. Being a Barnabas can make someone's day so much brighter, maybe even someone's whole week. Is your personality one of encouragement? Do you daily uplift others with affirming words and challenge them to be the best Christians they can be? This week as you spend time serving others, strive to be a Barnabas!

### **For Discussion:**

1. How have you seen someone on your team encouraging another person this week?
2. What do you think about encouragement and words of affirmation in your everyday life?
3. Do you think being an encouraging Christian can be part of your witness? Explain.
4. Can you share anymore examples of encouragement in the Bible or elsewhere from your life?

**Digging Deeper:** 1 Thessalonians 4, Hebrews 10:24, 1 Thessalonians 1

## Panic Button

*“And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him”- Romans 8:28*

A young Pastor was on vacation with his family during Christmas to Wisconsin. The trip was great. They spent their time with family and friends, exchanging gifts and playing games. It was the perfect Christmas vacation. Everything changed when they got to the airport for their flight home. It was just after Christmas and there was a rough snow storm in wintry Wisconsin. No flights would fly into or leave the airport that day. They had to wait an extra day before flying home, making them miss church on Sunday and pushing back plans with friends at home. On top of it, when they arrived home, the Pastor could not find his car in the massive airport parking lot. As he walked up and down the lot, he decided to use the panic button, hoping the car would flash it's lights and sound it's horn. He had no luck, the panic button wasn't working and it took him over a half hour to find his car. Eventually the family made it home and enjoyed time with their friends and reflected on a great vacation that ended in a way they did not expect.

### What's the point?!

It's easy to sound a panic button when plans change. But God doesn't always want us to use the panic button. During your mission trip this week, if plans change, don't sound the panic button or sound the alarm. God is always in control and has a plan.

### For Discussion:

1. Do you think it's good to have plans? Why?
2. When things go wrong do you sound a panic button? Why?
3. Why do you think God allows plans to change, especially plans for major things?
4. Share an example of how something changed dramatically for you and it turned out better than expected.

**Digging Deeper:** Matthew 6:32-34, Proverbs 16:3

## Every Pawn Counts

*“For God does not show favoritism.” – Romans 2:11*

Chess is a very old but popular game. One of the interesting things about chess is the individuality and personality of each chess piece. From pawns to kings, each piece does something different and some are much more important than others. There are many pawn pieces on a chess board, and a chess player tries much harder to protect their kings and queens than they do pawns. Any experienced chess player would sacrifice a pawn for the sake of their queen.

### **What’s the point?!**

God’s chess game looks quite a bit different. Instead of sacrificing pawns for queens, God decided to make the ultimate sacrifice to save the entire army- Christ’s death on the cross. Through our human nature we often see some people as less fortunate or not as likeable. We have our preconceived ideas about a person based on things that we see and hear. God’s view of people is completely different. He doesn’t see people as pawns and queens, he see’s us all equally and loves us all the same. His love crosses culture and time, and is beyond what we can imagine. This week strive to love a little more like God loves. Move away from your everyday thinking and realize that God loves every individual person equally.

### **For Discussion:**

1. Why is love important?
2. Do you have an example of a time when you judged someone without really knowing them? Why was it a mistake?
3. Do you think it’s possible to treat everyone the same way as humans and Christians?
4. How can you move towards loving people more like God loves?
5. What can you do this week to take a step towards loving others?

**Digging Deeper:** Romans 2:9-20, 1 John 3:11-20, John 3:16

## The Big Sacrifice

*“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*  
*Matthew 16:24*

Pat Tillman was a professional football player in the NFL from 1998 to 2002. He played for his hometown Arizona Cardinals and enjoyed an all pro career for four seasons. At one point, Tillman turned down a multi-million dollar contract out of loyalty to his team and teammates. After the attacks on September 11, 2001 Tillman turned down another multi-million dollar contract out of loyalty again. The loyalty was different though. This time Tillman was turning down his own team to fight for something he believed in. He turned down the lures of the NFL and enlisted in the U.S. Army. On April 22, 2004, Tillman was killed in battle.

Tillman's story of sacrifice is a harrowing one. He gave up millions of dollars in order to take a stand and attempt to make a difference for a cause he believed in. Stories of sacrifice are all around us in the world today; ordinary people making extraordinary sacrifices. These stories of sacrifice are merely glimpses of Christ's death on the cross for our sins.

### **What's the point?!**

To come on a mission trip takes sacrifice. But now that you're on the trip, what will you sacrifice in order for the greater good, for the cause you believe in, or for the faith you profess? Take the challenge today of sacrificing your own will or your own desires to serve a greater cause. Sacrifice your own comfort to share your faith with someone. Today your challenge is to make a big sacrifice.

### **For Discussion:**

1. Have you ever had to give something up that you didn't want to? Explain
2. Have you ever made a sacrifice in order to benefit another person? Explain
3. What are your thoughts on Christ's sacrifice and death?
4. What can you sacrifice this week and in the coming weeks after this mission trip to help benefit others?

**Digging Deeper:** Matthew 16:25, Philippians 2:4-5

## Little Things

*“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” – Matthew 25:23 (ESV)*

Some little things in life make a big difference. Our world is comprised of tiny particles, little atoms and molecules. These particles create what we know as life. As hard as it may be to understand, it takes millions and millions of these miniscule little things to bring about something as big and as functional as a human being. Without these little molecules and cells life as we know it would not exist. A car has many parts but every part is very important. If you were driving a car and wanted to eliminate the windshield wiper, you might have some serious issues when it rains. Little things often make a big difference in life.

### **What’s the point?!**

The principle of little things carrying a weight of responsibility directly relates to our faith and personal lives, too. Think about how often the little things in life make a big difference to you. A phone call, a “congratulations”, a “thank you”, an “I love you.” These are all examples that can have a big impact. Even when God calls us to do small things, we need to respond and be faithful because we never know just how impactful they might be. This week as you’re spending time around others remember to listen to God’s simple nudging. As you continue to be faithful in the little things, God will give you more and more responsibility. Through this responsibility you may have the opportunity to change someone’s life!

### **For Discussion:**

1. Have you ever thought about little things compared to “big” or “important” things? What are your thoughts?
2. Why do you think little things are important?
3. Why would God ask you to first be faithful in the little things before entrusting you with the bigger things?
4. What can you do this week that is a little thing that can become a really big thing?

**Digging Deeper:** James 2:14-26, Hebrews 10:24, 3 John 1:5

## The Golf Cart

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*  
– 2 Corinthians 5:17

Joshua was at a church camp five years ago and had got a special treat. He got to ride around on the golf cart with his youth pastor. They cruised back and forth on the campgrounds running errands and making sure all the kids were safe and having a good time. The temperature suddenly spiked and out came the water guns. Josh and his youth pastor devised plans for a water attack on a number of the other students. Josh decided to take it to the next level. Hanging off the back of the golf cart with one hand and shooting his water gun with the other, Josh was the James Bond of camp that day. It all came to a close when the cart took an unexpected sharp turn. Josh had a split second to decide whether or not to hang on to the cart, now quickly heading out of control. Josh decided to bail. The pain and road rash settled in quickly. The embarrassment was something he'd never forget and Joshua's perspective on golf carts was changed forever.

### **What's the point?!**

The same is true of mission trips. After building a home for someone who doesn't have one – your perspective will change. After being able to support a pastor in need or helping replace the tin roof on a local church – the way you look at and appreciate your church will be different. After investing a week in the lives and hearts of little kids who don't have parents or any material possessions – your heart will just not be the same as it was when you boarded the plane several days ago. As you head home after an incredible week of ministry – spend some time reflecting on everything God has done in you and through you. May your perspective always be changing and may it always be eternal.

### **For Discussion:**

1. Coming into this mission trip, what was your perspective of the church in the mission field where you're at?
2. Is your perspective changing at all over the course of the week? How and why?
3. Do you think it's important to experience other cultures?
4. What can you learn from the culture you're being exposed to this week?

**Digging Deeper:** Acts 9:1-10, Exodus 34:29-35