

# MISSION MINDSET



SHINING CHRIST'S LIGHT  
IN THE COMMUNITY YOU ARE VISITING.



[nextstepministries.com](http://nextstepministries.com)

## LIGHT: A MISSION MINDSET

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You are the light of the world.

Matthew 5:14A

”

For generations, youth groups have stepped out on mission trips—serving, learning, and being changed in the process. Yet it's natural to ask: Are we truly making a lasting difference? Are we entering communities with the right heart and mindset?

As followers of Jesus, we're called to share His love with the world. That calling carries weight, a sacred responsibility to reflect Christ in every word, action, and relationship. This week, you've stepped into something far bigger than one project or one trip. You're joining the ongoing story of God's light shining through sustainable, long-term partnership within communities.

At Next Step, our heart is to see short-term missions partner with long-term community development. We haven't always gotten it right, but through listening, learning, and growing alongside local leaders, we've discovered powerful lessons about serving like Jesus. Our hope is that you embrace this journey with humility and joy. Let's keep learning together what it means to live and serve as the LIGHT of Christ—bringing hope, love, and lasting impact wherever we go.

*Barak Jake Todd*

BARAK, JAKE, AND TODD

*directors and co-founder*

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## OVERVIEW

This packet is here to help get your team ready for what God's going to do on your trip! It's packed with tools, ideas, and challenges to help you grow as leaders and as a team.

You can use it in one of two simple ways:

- 1. One Big Session:** Go through everything in one meeting and get the full picture.
- 2. Five Mini Sessions:** Break it up into five smaller meetings, focusing on one section each time so that you can dig deeper with your team.

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## WHAT'S INSIDE

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You are the light of the world, like a city on a hill that can't be hidden ... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

**Matthew 5:14-16**

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A mission trip isn't just about what you do, it's about who you are as you let God's love shine through you. That's why we created the **LIGHT** framework at Next Step Ministries: to help you serve in a way that actually makes a difference and points people to Jesus.

Each letter in **LIGHT** stands for a key way to live this out. For each one, you'll find:

**Scripture:** A verse to inspire you.

**Description:** What it looks like in action.

**Key Takeaway:** The main thing to remember.

**Discussion Questions:** A chance to reflect and grow with your team.

## THE LIGHT FRAMEWORK

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### LISTEN FIRST

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Hit pause and really listen to the people, the leaders, and God. You're there to learn, not try to fix everything.

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### IDENTIFY STRENGTHS

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Look for what's already working well in the community. Celebrate the gifts, talents, and leadership God has placed there.

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### GIVE HUMBLY

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Serve like Jesus: no pride, no pity, just love. Give your time, energy, and heart without expecting anything in return.

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### HONOR RELATIONSHIPS

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People matter more than projects. Make friends, laugh, listen, and build relationships that last beyond the week.

T

### TAKE IT HOME

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Don't leave what you've learned behind. Bring God's heart for love and service back to your school, neighborhood, and church.

Think of this guide as your **game plan for the week**, helping you grow, serve, and shine bright wherever God sends you. Living out **LIGHT** isn't just about making an impact, it's about showing the world what Jesus looks like.



## LISTEN FIRST

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Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

**JAMES 1:19**

Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

**PROVERBS 1:5**

”

When you step into a new place, it's easy to want to jump in and start doing things the way you think they should be done. But God calls us to pause first, to listen. Listening shows respect, humility, and love. It means tuning in to what others are saying, paying attention to what God is doing, and slowing down enough to really understand before acting.

### **On your trip, listening first might look like:**

- Hearing the stories of people in the community before offering ideas.
- Paying attention to what local leaders share about their needs and goals.
- Listening to your teammates' thoughts and feelings.
- Spending quiet time in prayer, asking God to guide your heart and actions.

**REMEMBER:** You're not there to fix everything, you're there to learn, to connect, and to join what God is already doing.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Listening shows humility and that you care about others.
- God often speaks when we slow down long enough to hear Him.
- Real change and understanding start with open ears and open hearts.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 | Why do you think God asks us to be “quick to listen and slow to speak”?
- 2 | What’s one way you can be a better listener: to God, to your team, or to the community?
- 3 | How might listening first change the way you serve this week?
- 4 | When is it hardest for you to slow down and truly listen?
- 5 | What do you think God could show you if you made space to listen more?



## IDENTIFY STRENGTHS

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Use your God-given gifts to serve others. Be faithful with what He's given you.

**PETER 4:10**

We all have different gifts, given to us by God's grace.

**ROMANS 12:6**

”

When you're serving in a new community, it's easy to notice what seems broken or what could be “fixed.” But God invites us to look deeper, to see the beauty, talent, and strength that already exist there. Identifying strengths means spotting the ways God is already at work in people's lives. It's celebrating what's good, not just addressing what's missing. Every person and every community has something God has placed in them that's worth honoring: skills, stories, creativity, leadership, faith, and courage.

When we choose to see those strengths, we show respect and humility. We stop seeing ourselves as “the helpers” and start seeing ourselves as partners in what God is doing.

### **On your trip, identifying strengths might look like:**

- Noticing the leadership and passion of a local pastor, teacher, or youth leader.
- Complimenting a community member's creativity, hard work, or joy.
- Asking people what they love or are proud of about their town or church.
- Seeing how people care for each other and celebrating their kindness.
- Recognizing that God is already at work long before your team arrived.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Every community reflects God's creativity and strength in unique ways.
- Focusing on strengths builds encouragement and unity.
- You're not bringing God to this place, He's already here working.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 | Why do you think it's important to notice strengths instead of focusing on needs?
- 2 | What strengths or gifts could you look out for when you arrive?
- 3 | How does celebrating others show the love of Jesus?
- 4 | What gifts or talents do you bring to the team, and how can you use them humbly?
- 5 | How can your group keep building others up even after the trip is over?

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## GIVE HUMBLY

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Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.

**PHILIPPIANS 2:3**

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

**MATTHEW 20:28**

”

When Jesus served people, He didn't do it for attention or credit—He did it because He loved them. That's what it means to give humbly. It's serving others the way Jesus did: not for likes, recognition, or a “good job,” but because you care.

Giving humbly is about having the right attitude—seeing people as equals, not projects. You're not here to “save” anyone; you're here to love, serve, and be part of what God is already doing. When you give humbly, it's less about you and more about Jesus working through you. That's where real impact happens.

### On your trip, giving humbly might look like:

- Volunteering for the less glamorous jobs (like cleaning up or carrying supplies) with a smile.
- Serving without needing recognition, photos, or a shoutout.
- Letting others take the lead, even if you think you could do it better.
- Offering encouragement and help without expectations.
- Remembering that every act of service, big or small, honors God.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Serving humbly means pointing to Jesus, not yourself.
- Love should always be the reason behind what you give.
- True service doesn't need to be noticed, it just needs to be faithful.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 | What's the difference between giving humbly and giving to be noticed?
- 2 | Why do you think Jesus modeled humility through service?
- 3 | How can you check your heart before you serve this week?
- 4 | What's one way you can serve without recognition, just between you and God?
- 5 | When the people you are serving are aggravating or hard to be around, how can you still give humbly, remain grateful, and grow from the experience?
- 6 | How might giving humbly change the way you view mission work?
- 7 | What comforts or conveniences from your everyday life are you being invited to release during this mission trip, and how can letting go of them help you cultivate humility and a deeper dependence on God?
- 8 | How is God inviting you to shift your mindset from the self-focused rest and enjoyment of a vacation to the outward focused humility of a mission trip, where the needs, stories, and dignity of others become your priority?

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## HONOR RELATIONSHIPS

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Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

**ROMANS 12:10**

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

**JOHN 13:34**

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Serving on a mission trip isn't just about getting stuff done, it's about the people you meet along the way. Honoring relationships means putting people before projects and caring more about who someone is than what they can do.

When you honor people, you build real trust and connection. You laugh together, listen to their stories, and create friendships that can last long after the trip is over. God's heart is all about people, so ours should be too.

True impact isn't just measured in what you build or fix, but in the love you share and the relationships you form.

### **On your trip, honoring relationships might look like:**

- Remembering someone's name and using it.
- Taking time to genuinely listen to someone's story, not just their needs.
- Sharing a laugh, playing a game, or just hanging out with kids or community members.
- Supporting teammates and community members even in small ways.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- People matter more than projects; relationships are the heart of mission work.
- Honoring others reflects God's love in action.
- Genuine connections go beyond the trip.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 | Why is it important to value relationships over tasks or projects?
- 2 | How can small acts, like remembering a name or sharing a laugh show honor?
- 3 | How can you honor your teammates when things get stressful or busy?
- 4 | How does God model honor in His relationships with us?
- 5 | How can you intentionally honor the relationships you build on this trip, especially the local community, and the staff by listening well, showing respect, and valuing their culture and leadership?
- 6 | In what ways can you demonstrate gratitude and humility toward the people hosting us, recognizing that we are guests in their community and seeking to support their work rather than imposing our own expectations?

# T

## TAKE IT HOME

“

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

**MATTHEW 28:19-20**

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

**MATTHEW 5:16**

”

Your mission trip isn't just a one-week experience, it's the beginning of a lifelong journey of living out God's love. **Taking it home** means bringing what you've learned, experienced, and felt on the trip back into your everyday life: your school, your neighborhood, your church, and your friendships.

It's about living with the same love, humility, and passion for serving others that you show on the trip. Even after the week is over, the mission keeps going, every day is another chance to shine Christ's light, show His love, and make a difference in the people and places around you.

### Taking it home might look like:

- Sharing what God did on your trip with your friends or youth group.
- Volunteering locally using the lessons you learned about humility and service.
- Encouraging teammates or community members through calls, messages, or social media.
- Letting the trip change how you see the world and the people around you.
- **Taking it Home** means living out the **LIGHT** values: listening, identifying strengths, giving humbly, and honoring relationships, in your daily life.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The mission doesn't end when the trip does, you carry it with you.
- Your light matters—God can turn your love and actions into something amazing anywhere you go.
- Small daily acts of love make a huge impact.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 | What's one thing from this trip you want to keep living out every day?
- 2 | How can you keep serving others and building real friendships back home?
- 3 | How could sharing your trip experience inspire your friends, school, or church?
- 4 | What might make it tricky to "take it home," & how can God help you stick with it?
- 5 | What's one way you can keep growing your faith once you get back home?

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## RESOURCES

It is an honor to serve alongside these communities and partner with you in that process. God will use you in this journey in a very unique and specific way. Please be encouraged to dig deeper into these topics and become experts on the community in which you will be serving.

Here is a list of various sources you can explore in order to continue your learning:

### **When Helping Hurts**

by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert

### **Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence**

by David A. Livermore

### **Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right**

by John M. Perkins

### **Anthropological Insights for Missionaries**

by Paul G. Hiebert

### **Toxic Charity**

by Robert Lupton

### **Beyond Charity: Call to Christian Community Development**

by John M. Perkins

### **Christian Community Development Association Website**

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