



A debrief guide for group leaders

We trust that the Lord worked powerfully in and through your students during this trip. A thoughtful debrief is an important part of helping participants process what they experienced, recognize how God was at work, and discern next steps as they return home. While each group's context may differ, we recommend scheduling a debrief gathering **within two weeks of returning home**, while experiences are still fresh.

This guide is designed to help you lead a meaningful, pastoral debrief that encourages reflection, growth, and ongoing engagement in God's mission.

DEBRIEF OUTLINE

1. Group Reflection and Processing (approximately 60 minutes) _____

You do not need to ask every question listed below. Choose the questions that best fit your group size, dynamics, and experiences. The goal is to create a safe space for participants to process what they saw, felt, and learned.

Suggested Questions:

- What was your favorite or most meaningful part of this trip?
- What was something difficult or challenging you saw or experienced? *Leader Note: Participants often mention poverty, sickness, or injustice here. Affirm that it is good and appropriate to feel the weight of these realities—we do not want to become calloused. At the same time, gently help the group recognize that the greatest need in the world is spiritual lostness and that the gospel brings lasting hope.*
- How did you see God at work during the trip?
- Who is someone you met who impacted you personally, and why?
- How do you think this trip will shape you as you return home?
- What might change next week, next month, or next year as a result of what God taught you?
- How do you sense God leading you to continue partnering with the IMB?
 - Through prayer?
 - Through financial support?
 - By going again?
 - By helping send or support long-term missionaries?

2. Telling Your Story (approximately 30 minutes) ---

Helping team members learn how to talk about their experience is a key part of the debrief process. Encourage them to focus on how they saw God at work, rather than simply recounting travel details or logistics or rambling for an hour.

Explain that while there are many stories they *could* tell, it is often most helpful to have one or two short (2-minute), clear stories they can share in everyday conversations.

Activity:

1. Ask each person to think of one story from the trip that highlights God's work during the trip.
2. Give them a few minutes to outline:
 - An opening line
 - One or two main points from the story
 - A simple closing or prayer invitation
3. Have them pair up and practice telling their story.
4. Encourage them to keep it to 2-3 minutes or less.

Here's an Example:

"How was your trip? I hear Indian food is really spicy."

"It was spicy, but my favorite part was spending time with local believers. I met a man named Suraj, and I went with him to share the gospel in his neighborhood. I was amazed at his boldness and passion to share the gospel in his own neighborhood. So many Hindus had never heard of Jesus before. It was encouraging to hear Suraj share his own testimony and get to share with several people about who Jesus is and how much he loves them. Would you pray with me for this community to know Jesus? Pray for Suraj as he continues to share here and that there would be a church started in this place."

Leader Tip:

Be prepared to model a strong example—and, if helpful, a "not-so-great" example. Explain that once home, they do not need to use ministry acronyms or insider language that others may not understand. Clarity and simplicity help others connect and pray.

3. Writing Letters to Yourself (approximately 20 minutes) _____

Provide paper and envelopes, and ask each participant to write a letter to themselves. Encourage them to include:

- People they want to remember
- What God taught them during the trip
- Any commitments or next steps they sense God leading them to take

Have them write their **full mailing address** on the envelope. Collect the letters and plan to mail them back to participants **three to six months later** as a reminder of what God did and what He called them to pursue.

4. Prayer and Commissioning _____

Close your time together in prayer:

- Pray for those who heard the gospel during your trip.
- Pray for the local believers and missionaries you partnered with.
- Pray for your team as they return to their workplaces, campuses, families, and communities.

If appropriate, consider commissioning your team—reminding them that while the trip has ended, their role in God’s mission continues.

Final Encouragement for Leaders

A strong debrief helps turn a short-term mission trip into a long-term work of spiritual formation and obedience. By guiding your team to reflect, articulate, and respond, you help ensure that what God began on the field continues to bear fruit at home.