Get Connected!

We connect to a lot of **THINGS**...
- Websites.
- Printers, fax machines, scanners and video games.
- Cable boxes, antennas, satellite dishes.
- Cell phones and text messaging.

We connect with **PEOPLE**...
- Members of our family.
- Friends, teachers, and neighbors.
- People from our church.

We connect with **GOD**...
- The Bible, God’s Word.
- Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit.
- God’s mission to love and serve the world.

We connect with **OURSelves**...
- Feelings.
- Questions.
- Insights.
- Doubts.
- Beliefs and values.
- Purpose.

Sometimes our connections can become slow and even disabled, and so we need to make adjustments, repairs or upgrades. Our connections with God and the people we care about can become slow, too, and we need to upgrade, make adjustments, re-connect!

The days before, during and after a mission trip can be a great time to make some of the adjustments and upgrades needed in order for us to connect in some new ways with the most important things in life – faith, friendships, family, the church, and God.

Listen to what God has to say about connecting in Ephesians 4:22-25. Read it slowly, and then read it again and again until it begins to sink in and you can “hear” what God wants to say to you as you prepare for the mission trip:

> Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything - and I do mean everything - connected with that old way of life has to go. It’s rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself. (The Message)

Here is my hope and prayer for you in the days ahead: **Get Connected!**

Franklin W. Nelson, Author
# Welcome to Get Connected!

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## 7 Days before We Travel

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**Also available:**
Using this Journal

The Countdown Journal Pages...
During the days before you travel to your mission destination, let God prepare your heart for the trip by taking 10-15 minutes to complete the journal page for that day. This daily time of devotion is a very important part of helping you prepare spiritually for the trip. If you miss a day, try to make it up the next day.

On-site Journal Pages...
During the days at the mission site, set aside time every day to connect with God and to reflect on what you are learning from your experience. This devotional journal will help you think it through. Two pages will guide your reflections and a third “doodle page” is an open space for notes, sketches, poetry, songs, or whatever. While on site, you may want to carry your journal with you during the day to record your ideas and thoughts, and you can do that in the “doodle space.” Also, remember to bring your journal to all group gatherings.

Returning-home Journal Pages...
After having such a great experience with new and old friends, it’s often hard to return home, but that’s where God calls you to live the new commitments you will want to make. There are seven additional devotional pages at the end of your journal to help you continue to reflect and write during your first days back home.

Here’s another suggestion: During the days before and after the trip, whenever you connect to the internet, turn on the TV, answer your phone or send a text message, remember to say this brief prayer… “Lord, help me to connect with You.”

And then take on an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. (Ephesians 4:23-24)
1-2 Weeks before Departure...

Gather your group or family. Distribute the journals. Ask one person to read “Get Connected” on page one. Next, review the “Table of Contents” on page two, and then “Using this Journal” on page three. If you have developed a team or family covenant, write or paste the words of the covenant on page four; if not, take some time to list some of the promises you need to make to each other during the trip. Beginning on page nine, write in the dates for the Seven Countdown Days before your departure. Urge each person to take 10-15 each day to complete these journal pages on their own. You’ll be completing the first page during this meeting.

Invite everyone to thumb through the pages of the journal, and as they do, point out that there are…

- 7 pages for the days before departure;
- 3 pages during the mission trip – two that are guided and one “doodle page” open for whatever you want to put there;
- 3 pages starting on page 45 for writing the story of your experience at the end of the trip;
- 7 “Back Home” pages to be completed when you return home;
- Additional pages at the back of the journal to give you a place to collect the names and email addresses of some of the people you will want to stay connected to.

Next, invite each person to take a few minutes to complete the first countdown journal page (page 9) on their own. If you are working with younger children, read and discuss the page together, depending on their level of understanding. After 10-15 minutes, choose 2-3 items on the page and invite members to take turns sharing responses. Close the meeting by hearing some of the prayers that the team members have written.

Commissioning and Departure...

If you are connected with a church, ask your pastor if on the Sunday before the trip there could be a brief time during worship for the commissioning of your mission team or family.

The Day of Departure...

Invite parents, spouses, friends, grandparents, youth leaders, neighbors, pastors and anyone who might be interested to gather on the day of departure for the send-off. Thank everyone for their support and ask for continued prayers, then form a circle for group prayer letting several have the opportunity to speak their prayers. Then, load the vehicles for departure.

(continued on page 6)
Ideas & Suggestions for Group Leaders/Parents (cont'd)

On-Site Journal Suggestions...
It’s very important for the members of your group or family to stay connected during the on-site days of the trip, so find a time for your group or family to gather each day. Make this a time to debrief, share what you have been learning and experiencing, and encourage one another in prayer.

Invite the members of your group or family to share some of what they have written in their journals, either in small groups of 2-3 or with the whole group. This “debriefing time” is extremely important, and can minimize the inevitable challenges of conflict, loneliness and homesickness that are often a part of mission trips. Debriefing also brings unity and an opportunity for the group to connect in prayer and support.

After the Trip...
Invite the members of your team or family to complete “The Story of My Mission Trip” on pages 45-47. You might find time to do this during your travel home or when your group or family meets back home to share pictures and debrief the trip. When everyone has had a chance to complete the pages, invite individuals to talk about the experience. Some of this might be in groups of 2-3, and some might be with the whole group. If your group or family has been given the opportunity to give a report of your experience to your church, this meeting can also be a time of planning and preparation. Remember to encourage your team or family to complete the 7 back home pages of the journal.
Connect with Yourself...
One reason I decided to go on the mission trip is…

Right now this is how I’m feeling about getting ready for the trip… (circle one)

Connect with God...
Read Ephesians 4:22-25 and circle the part that speaks to you today…
Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything - and I do mean everything - connected with that old way of life has to go. It’s rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself. (Ephesians 4:22-25)

I think my behavior or “conduct” honored God recently when I…

I doubt that my behavior honored God when I…

More from God’s Word… 1 Peter 2:4-10

Connect with Others...
Think of someone who could use your help, and in the next 24 hours, let God help you to connect with them by offering your help.

Connect in Prayer...
Dear God, Help me to honor You in my conduct and behavior. I want to know how to be more connected to You, Lord. And help me to learn how to connect in love with the people I care about, my family and friends, and those who will be traveling with me on the mission trip. Especially, help me to…
Connect with Yourself...
The weather today is…
(circle one)

My Mood today is…
(circle one)

During the Past 24 Hours...
I saw…

I tasted…

I touched…

I heard…

I smelled…

I noticed someone else reaching out to help someone belong when ____________ did what?

I had a feeling of belonging when ____________ did what?

A new insight or discovery…

I reached out to help someone belong when I…

A 24-hour low point was when…

I felt good about myself when…

I felt close to God when…

Mission Day 2 Today’s Date__________
Get Connected to BELONGING
Connect with **God**...
Read Ephesians 4:22-25 and circle the part that speaks to you today...

*Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything - and I do mean everything - connected with that old way of life has to go. It’s rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ’s body we’re all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself.* (Ephesians 4:22-25)

I feel close and “connected” with someone if we…

When I meet someone new, I feel “connected” quickly if I’m willing to…

Ephesians 4 says, “we’re all connected to each other.” One thing that makes all of us connected in this place is that we all...

**More from God’s Word...** 1 Corinthians 12:1-27; Galatians 3:26-29

Connect with **Others**...
Find a rock or pebble small enough to carry with you during the week. Let it remind you of God’s constant connection and His plan for you to love and connect with others during the week. When the trip is over, carry the rock home as a reminder that you belong to God and are an important part of Christ’s body.

Connect in **Prayer**...
**Dear God...**
**Thank you for...**

*I’m concerned about...*

*Help me to reach out to...*

*Forgive me for...*

*In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

(Continue to pray in silence as you offer yourself to God.)