

## **Guidelines/Ideas/Suggestions For Maximizing the Use of the Mission Journal**

### **If you are a group leader:**

#### *Before the Departure Date...*

Gather your group for a training/orientation time approximately one to two weeks before your departure. As a part of your meeting, distribute the journals and ask each person to write his or her name and address information on the inside cover. Next, take turns reading the "Welcome" on page 3. Paste or write the team covenant that you have developed on page 4. Review the information on page 9, and then ask everyone to take a look at page 10. Beginning with page 10, write in the dates for the 7 days before departure. Urge everyone on your team to take around ten minutes each day before the trip to complete the journal pages. Thumb through the rest of the journal, and highlight pages 45-47, a place to write each group member's story of the mission trip experience, the check list on page 48, the pages of "What Next???" on pages 49 – 51, the pages for gathering the names and emails of new friends, and the seven "back home" pages that will complete the journal and guide their thoughts after coming home.

As you gather on the departure day, it's a great idea to invite parents, pastors, friends and anyone else to join with you in a "circle of prayer." As a part of that time, invite a few of the participants (ahead of time) to share from some of their journal pages.

#### *While you're on-site...*

While on-site during the days of your mission trip, it is very important for your group to take the time to gather each day for devotion, debriefing and support. Yours may be a self-motivated group with members who will complete the journal pages on their own without any prompting. However, many groups may need to have everyone take a few minutes at the beginning of the group time to complete the pages in silence. Next, invite everyone to share parts of their journal pages with each other, either in small groups of two to four or with the whole group. This "debriefing time" is extremely important, and can minimize the inevitable challenges of conflict, loneliness and homesickness that seem to be a part of most mission trips. Debriefing the experience helps to bring unity to your group and is an opportunity for prayer and support.

One option is to have participants fill out pages 45-47 on the way home from the mission site. Another option is to gather as a group within a week of returning home and take time during the meeting to fill out these pages. You will also want to share pizza, swap pictures, and stories. Some groups will be invited to share their story with the whole church, so it's helpful to gather to debrief the trip for that purpose, too.

### **If you are an on-site coordinator:**

Plan to do the journaling yourself during the seven days before the beginning of the on-site mission, and share parts of your own journaling to model the use of the journal with the trip participants. Encourage participants to remember to bring their journals to the evening worship gatherings, since you may ask them to use their journals during the gathering. The journal is also a great place to take notes during the evening talks. Consider making the theme for each day of the journal the theme for your evening worship. Utilize scriptures as a theme for the talks and testimonies that will be given. During the interaction time, invite participants to partner with someone they do not know and go over some of their journal responses under what they have "seen, heard, tasted, touched and smelled." Get with a different person to go over notes on the scripture for that day and share the prayers that have been written. Toward the end of the mission week, you may want to invite group members to write their stories on pages 45-47. During the worship program on the final evening, invite people to share parts of their story with at least one other person, and a few to share their story with the whole group. This helps to solidify the experience, but also, models the importance of telling the story to others when we return back home as a witness to what God has done in our lives.