

HEREFORE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS,

909 - GO

God Op GO-Team LEADER Handbook



19 Therefore go and make
disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name
of the Father and of the
Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 and teaching them to obey
everything I have commanded
you. And surely I am with
you always, to the very end
of the age."





GO - Team Leader Handbook

First,

thank you for accepting the responsibility of leading a God Op GO-Team from Hope Community Church. Your obedience to God's calling will certainly have an impact on your spiritual life. You can also rejoice in the fact that you are accepting Jesus' "Great Commission." (Matthew 28:16-20)

Second, know that there are no two God Ops that are exactly alike. Some go to foreign countries, while some take place in the US. Some go to Islamic nations, while some go to areas less resistant to the Gospel. Some involve work camps with large teams, some are scouting missions with one or two members.

So...

This handbook will provide a broad range of guidance, and you will need to discern which elements pertain to your particular God Op.

For your convenience, we've divided up the leadership of a God Op into four phases:

Planning
Pre-Trip Preparation
GO-Time
Post-God Op

Remember, you are not "out there on your own." There are a number of God Op-experienced Hopensters who can council and assist you with all phases of leading a God Op. Please rely on them when you have questions or concerns.





Communicate with Missionary or Organization:

You will need to work closely with the missionary or the organization you are serving on the God Op. Ask a lot of questions, and then ask some more. Ask them from a servant's perspective. Determine the following:

- purpose or mission of the God Op
- dates of the God Op
- costs of the God Op
- in-country transportation
- lodging and food
- construction/ministry materials
- security, ministry education, etc.)
- size of team needed (maximum and minimum size)
- skills or expertise needed
- background education on the ministry, culture and nation
- special training needed
- ideas on how to augment the mission with members' special skills and experience

Set God Op Costs, Dates, Location, Purpose:

Once you and the missionary/organization have agreed on all pertinent logistics, provide all the information to one of the Hope 303-GO co-directors of the GO-Teams. This information will be used to communicate the God Op to the Hope body for recruiting and funding purposes.

Recruit Team Members:

Depending on the purpose of the God Op and the team size, you will need to decide how to recruit GO-Team members. Some God Op missions are limited in the types of personnel needed. In these cases, you may want to use a one-on-one recruiting method... targeting specific people. In other cases, when a God Op can use a variety of personnel, you may want to use mass communications (announcements, flyers, web site) to recruit from the entire Hope body and even outside of the body. Announce things like: what talents/skills are needed, if the trip is family-friendly, background on the organization being served, etc.

God Op Application Form:

You may find there are a significant number of people interested in the God Op you are leading. In your first communications with them, provide a God Op Application form. This form is available for download (Word.doc) on the Hope web site (www.welcome2hope.com → Online Forms → OutWord Focus). You can edit or add to the form as you see fit. The form asks for standard contact information, and asks a number of questions to help you discern the applicant's skills and experience, spiritual condition, heart for ministry, and rationale for sensing they are being led to take part in this God Op.

This form will help you to determine if the applicant is a "good fit" for the mission. If you have more applicants than are needed for the team, this form can help you determine the best applicants for the team. A CAUTION: while you may have a pre-determined goal or mission for your God Op, leave room for God to guide or augment your mission. Often, He will lead people to a God Op who may not seem to fit the pre-determined mission. If such a person is certain he or she is being led by God to this God Op, seek God's help in determining the GO-Team's final roster.

Medical Information Form:

You will also need to have each applicant fill out the 303-GO Medical Information Form prior to final determination of the team. It's main purpose is to help you determine if the applicant's health will allow them to participate in the mission, and alert you to any medical conditions of which you should be aware. This form is also available for download from the Hope web site. The form requires the applicant's personal physician to provide some information.



Commitment Deadline:

You should determine this deadline based on how much time team members will need for background education, training, raising support, and mission preparation. On the date of the Commitment Deadline, all applicants interested in being on the GO-Team must provide a \$100 down payment. While this down payment is not a large sum of money, it will help “weed out” the people who are not serious about being part of the God Op.

SEND- and PRAY-Team Leaders:

Each God Op may have one or more SEND-Team Leaders and PRAY-Team Leaders assigned to it. These people can be very important to your God Op, and you will work closely with them throughout the Pre-Trip Preparation Phase.

SEND-Team Responsibilities:

The SEND-Team assigned to your God Op can assist you with:

- raising travel funds/support
- logistical coordination (securing airline tickets/itinerary, traveler’s insurance, etc.)
- Team-Building training/exercises
- Background research and training on the targeted country, (spiritual, government, history, culture)
- Any specialized training for a specific mission
- Encouragement
- Communications/Mission-Documentation training

PRAY-Team Responsibilities:

The PRAY-Team assigned to your God Op will task a group of people to pray for your team, the missionary/organization you will be serving, the people group/nation you will be serving, your mission, your safety, your effectiveness, etc. It is important for you to include PRAY-Team members at your GO-Team meetings so that they can observe and respond with prayer for needs of the team and mission.





Determine Final Team Roster:

Determine Final Team Roster: Soon after the commitment deadline, you should determine the final roster for your GO-Team. Be certain to notify anyone who was interested but could not be included as to why they were not chosen. As soon as this is done, create a master communications list of the GO-Team, SEND-Team and PRAY-Team members. In your personal computer's Email application, create a group specifically for this God Op. This will help insure you are communicating with everyone involved, and make communications simpler and more convenient. This list should include:

Name

Phone (home and cell)

Address

Email Address

Team Member Bio Sheet:

Do a little research and type up a short "bio" on each team member. Find out about hobbies and personal skills. Find out who likes to hold babies or play with kids. Who is an engineer-type. Who are the "Queen Bees" and who are the "Worker Bees?" Who is ultra emotional and sensitive to spiritual matters? Who is hyper, and who is laid back? Who has the spiritual gift for mercy, for teaching, for discernment, for administration?

Knowing these types of characteristics can help you watch for how God may be leading the team. If he has called an abundance of people who are especially spiritually sensitive, your work camp may take on a broader mission.

God Op Info Sheet:

This sheet should be provided to all team members as soon as possible, and no later than the first team information meeting. It should include the following, plus any other pertinent information:

- GO-, SEND- and PRAY-leaders names and complete contact info
- Dates of the God Op
- Flight information/itinerary
- Destination/Location of the God Op. Include address, phone number, Email address if possible
- Brief paragraph on the missionary/organization to be served
- Complete contact info of the missionary/organization to be served
- Purpose of the God Op
- Estimated Cost of the God Op, include a breakdown of the costs (travel, insurance, vehicle rental, food, materials/supplies, etc.)
- Immunizations needed for travel to the destination country
- List of the GO-Team members/phone/Email
- Information on a Facebook group page, blog or web site you will be using to communicate with the teams.

Passports and Immunizations:

In your first communications, be certain to inform all GO-Team members they are required to provide you with two copies of their U.S. Passport and driver's license immediately. If a member does not have a passport, provide them with instructions on how to obtain one. This process can take up to 6-8 weeks, so be certain to allow for adequate processing time. Applications are available at any US Post Office, and each applicant must provide two passport photos with their application. A fee for passports is also charged (approximately \$80.00).

Determine what immunizations/vaccinations/medicines are needed for your God Op's destination country by visiting the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site at: www.cdc.gov/travel. It is wise to also consult a physician.



Visas:

Some countries require a visa in addition to your passport. You can find the requirements for visas on the U.S Department of State website - http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html. You can obtain visas directly from a country's embassy. You may have to be "invited" by an organization that is authorized to issue a Letter of Invitation. Follow the directions for a specific country and call the country's embassy if you have any questions. You have to send your passport to the country's embassy to obtain a visa, so start the process at least six weeks prior to your departure date to allow enough time to get your passport and visa back before your leave. There is a cost associated with obtaining a visa. This fee varies from country to country.

Gather Team's Personal Information:

You will need to gather information on the GO-Team and prepare three Info Packets. Prepare one packet to leave in the office at Hope. Provide it to Angie Friesen. This folder should include copies of each member's US Passport, Driver's License, Travel Insurance card/policy #, emergency contact info, and signed Security/Behavior Contract and Liability Release. The second packet is for you to take on the God Op. It should include copies of each member's US Passport, Driver's License, immunization records, complete contact information, emergency contact information.

Provide the SEND-Team with a packet that includes copies of all GO-Team members' passports, contact info, emergency contact info, T-shirt size. The passport info will be needed for purchasing airline tickets and traveler's insurance. The shirt size is needed for the purpose of ordering God Op t-shirts. These sizes must be provided at least one month prior to the departure date.

Provide the PRAY-Team with the GO-Team roster/contact information and any information you know of to help them know how to pray for the team, the missionary/organization, the mission, etc.

Information Depot:

Create a central place for all team members to check on trip information, meeting times, updates etc. This can be in the form of a web site, blog, Facebook group page, or some other electronic communications media. Be certain to provide team members information on how to access this "Depot." Inform them that they should check this site on a regular basis, and to refer to it for God Op information. Invite other people interested in the God Op to visit this site as well. It is important to keep the entire Hope body interested in the team's activities and adventure. You or your assigned communications person should update the Depot on a regular basis. It can include info such as:

- Important dates to remember (travel dates, meeting dates, training dates, etc.)
- Photos of the missionary/organization and their ministries
- Videos relating to the God Op
- Updates on the missionary/organization and their ministries
- Words of encouragement (from you, other team members, family, the missionary, etc.)
- Items needed to be donated for the God Op mission
- Pertinent Scripture verses
- Travel Tips
- Packing Tips
- Reminders of Upcoming Deadlines (immunizations, physicals, passport applications, fundraising, etc.)
- News about what is happening in the destination country and with the ministry to be served



Pre-trip Preparation phase

Initial Information Meeting:

As soon as possible after the team roster is determined, hold this important meeting. At this meeting you should cover the following:

- prayer for the meeting, the team and the mission
- introduce each team member, have each tell why they believe they are being led to be part of the God Op
- background on the missionary/organization you'll be serving (provide a handout)
- the mission of the God Op
- international travel (passport, visas, immunizations, customs process, team security processes, odd sights and people, don't attract attention, etc.)
- travel agenda
- security issues/dos and don'ts
- food, water, lodging issues
- appropriate clothing
- packing tips/what to bring/what not to bring
- electricity issues
- currency exchange issues
- cost of the trip, what it covers
- stress, illness, spiritual attacks
- "Behavior/Security Contract and Liability Release Form." Handout and require signatures. (This is available for download on the Hope web site.)
- Overview of the destination country's history, culture, government, spiritual background, daily life, climate, etc. (provide a handout produced by SEND-Team)
- Discuss the roles that will need to be filled. (Communications, cooks, drivers, clean up, laundry, video/photography, gophers, leaders, worship leaders, spiritual leaders, etc.)
- importance of "prayer warfare," being "prayed up," having a personal prayer team
- raising financial support
- provide Pre-Trip Checklist handout (available for download on Hope web site)

Team-Building Exercises/Events:

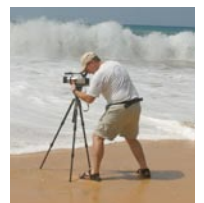
These can take many forms. Examples: Take on a local service project so that team members can work with each other and get to know each other's personality quirks; Take the group to Mosey's Outdoor where Kenny Allen can run them through team-building exercises; Have a BBQ together; hold a fundraising event at which the entire team is required to serve together; hold a prayer warfare gathering prior to going on the trip; etc. These types of team-building events are very valuable in helping team members adjust to each other prior to the trip, eliminating a great deal of stress and negative reactions.

Donation/Trip Accounts:

As soon as you have a final roster, provide the names to Angie Friesen, in the Hope office. Accounts for each team member will be set up. As donations come into the church the funds will be applied to the appropriate accounts. Those funds will be used to purchase airfare and other trip costs. For donations to be tax deductible, checks should be made out to Hope Community Church and placed in an envelope with the name of the person being supported written on the envelope. Names should NOT be written on the check or in the memo line.

Special Training Events:

Depending on the mission of your God Op, you may need to provide special training. Examples: construction techniques (how to mix mortar, how to build trusses, etc.); Videography/Photography; how to provide a VBS; how to operate a medical clinic; disaster relief training; grief counseling; evangelism in Muslim culture; etc. The SEND-Team will be instrumental in helping provide this training. You will need to determine what training is needed following conversations with the missionary/organization you are serving.





Assign Roles to Team Members:

It is helpful for team members to know what is expected of them on the God Op. It also helps prevent misunderstandings when roles are pre-assigned. For instance, if your God Op is a work camp sent to build a church, it is important to establish who will be the construction foreman. They will be the final decision on all construction-related issues. If you are holding a VBS, a person or team of people needs to be assigned to planning and producing this event. Each God Op should have a person who is the official photographer and videographer—this role would be their top priority. Some God Ops will need to have cooks and clean-up details. One person may be in charge of first aid. So, write out a list of roles that will need to be filled on your God Op, then thoughtfully and prayerfully determine the best person for each role. Be sure to let the entire team know what all the roles are, and the person assigned to each role.

Examples of various team roles:

- Photographer
- Videographer
- Praise and Worship Leader
- Spiritual counselor/mentor
- Security Chief
- First Aid medic
- Clerk/Accountant/Bank officer
- Work Camp Foreman
- Transportation Chief
- Food Services coordinator

Fundraising:

Because funding is one of the biggest hurdles preventing people from participating in God Ops, you may need to assist your team members in raising support. Even people who can afford to pay for their trip themselves should be encouraged to raise at least part of their support. Asking for support is not easy, so it can help humble them. It prepares them to serve God instead of themselves. It can help put them into a mode of “reliance on God.” The SEND-Team can give your team guidance on how to write and distribute a “support letter.” There are many templates available for this, but the biggest things for them to include in the letter is 1) why they believe God is leading them to go on the God Op, 2) the mission of the God Op, 3) what they hope to achieve on the God Op, personally and as a team, 4) how much support they need to raise, 5) and how to make a contribution.

If your God Op requires a significant fee, you may need to work with the SEND-Team on fundraising events. There are many ways to approach this, and the SEND-Team has people experienced in fundraising.

Notify your team that they may apply for some funding – up to \$300 – from Hope’s OutWord Focus team. An application for this funding is available on the Hope website on the Online Forms page.

Personal Support Team:

Each GO-Team member must recruit their own PST. It will include people to support their trip financially, one or more people to serve on the God Op’s PRAY-Team, and one person to serve on the God Op’s SEND-Team ... helping them prepare for the trip.

Itinerary:

Work with the missionary/organization you will be serving to establish an itinerary for your God Op. Provide this to the team as soon as possible prior to leaving so that they can share it with family and friends. It is also good to post this on the Information Depot site so that supporters of the God Op can see what you will be doing. Stress to your team that “flexibility” must be kept in mind with the itinerary. Being on-schedule is something that isn’t a priority to most cultures outside of the United States.



Pre-trip Preparation phase

Security Issues:

There are a number of things to help insure the safety of your GO-Team on a foreign God Op:

- Discuss any possible security issues with the missionary/organization while planning the God Op.
- Cover all security issues with the entire team prior to departing on the God Op.
- Register your entire team on the U.S. State Department's website. This will notify the embassy in your destination country of your presence and whereabouts in that country. If a natural disaster or other major event should occur while your team is "in country," this will help the U.S. government move more efficiently in getting your team returned to the U.S. To register your team, go to:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

You will need a copy of each team member's passport, travel dates, address/contact info of where you are going, contact info for each team member, and emergency contact info for each team member.

- Sign up for Email Travel Warnings and read about current travel warnings on the U.S. State department web site, also: <http://www.state.gov/travel/>
- Get the phone number, address and directions to the US embassy in your destination country. Take these with you on the God Op.
- If needed, send one or more of your team members to a Missions training facility for security training.

Packing Party:

Some God Ops require team members to transport supplies/tools/equipment/food for the mission. It is wise to meet at the church in order to distribute the supplies for packing. You will need to make certain all bags weigh no more than 50 lbs. Most international flights will allow (2) checked bags and (2) carry-ons. Always check with the airline you are using for current restrictions.

Travel Itineraries and Travel Insurance policies:

Be certain to distribute any travel itineraries to your team well in advance of your departure date. This will allow them to provide copies to family members, co-workers, etc. Also remember to provide them any Travel Insurance policy numbers or info cards at the same time.

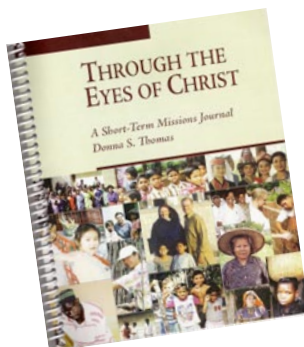
Customs Information:

If your God Op takes your team to a foreign country, you will need to provide the following information to each team member:

- Name of missionary or organization to whom you are traveling to serve
- Address of missionary or organization
- Phone number of missionary or organization

Team members will be required to write this information, along with personal information such as name, address, passport #, on a Customs Dept. survey card that will be distributed on the flight landing in the foreign country where you are disembarking.

It is also good for team members to provide this information to family members in case of emergency. In addition, provide this information to the staff in the Hope CC office.



God Op Journals:

Your SEND-Team Leader should also supply you with one journal per team member. These journals are specifically designed for people participating short-term missions or God Ops. They provide daily scriptures and discussion questions that cover nearly every situation GO-Team members encounter. These are a very important part of every God Op, and you should stress to each member to use them diligently and faithfully. Often, the simple act of writing down what is encountered and experienced on a God Op can help the team member more clearly understand what God is trying to teach them.



Pre-trip Preparation phase

Team Commissioning:

On the Sunday prior to your team's departure, require that your GO-Team take part in this important ceremony where the entire Hope body prays for your team. You will need to give the church office prior notice so they can schedule it into both Sunday services. Of course, you will also need to notify the GO-Team members that they should be at both services. This is a very important event. The prayers of 100s of Hopesters can significantly affect your God Op. This event also serves to remind the entire Hope body of the importance we place on carrying out the Great Commission.



Luggage Tags:

OutWord Focus will supply bright orange 303-GO luggage tags to your group. You should have each member put one on each bag/container they are taking on the God Op. These tags are very convenient for quickly identifying bags coming off of an airplane. With international travel, this is especially helpful for eliminating some of the chaos of a foreign airport. Ask your SEND-Team leader to supply these to you for distribution to your team.

Team T-Shirts:

At least 30 days prior to your departure date, provide t-shirt sizes of your entire team to your SEND-Team leader. They will then order GO-Team T-Shirts for your team. They should all wear them 1) at your Team Commissioning, 2) when traveling to your destination if it is not a security hazard, 3) when traveling to return home, again if it is not a security hazard. When your team all has on a uniform shirt, it is easier to make headcounts at each leg of the journey. It also visually notifies airport officials that you are traveling as a team, and the logo on the shirt will connect you to the luggage tags. Following your God Op, encourage your team to wear their shirts to Hope frequently to help inspire others to "GO."



Prayer Cards:

After your team is finalized, and no less than 30 days prior to your departure date, provide a photo of your team to your SEND-Team leader to be put on prayer cards. Also provide any specific prayers the team or individuals on the team would like included on the prayer card. After they are printed, you and all your team can hand them out to family members, prayer partners and the team's PRAY-Team. Because prayer is so important for the safety and effectiveness of a GO-Team, these cards can become very valuable tools.



This is the fun part. You and the team get to go somewhere, spend some time with some new friends, and experience a different culture and environment with a group of people that you put together. Always remember: When in charge, take charge. You are the leader of this group and the group has put their trust in you to guide them, challenge them, protect them, admonish them (if necessary) and disciple them. However, you are not alone. Always have a person designated to take charge in your absence. For instance, you may have to go meet with a small group of tribal leaders prior to your group building a school in the mountains of Peru. Who is in charge of the group while you are gone? You may become ill while on the trip. Who can take over while you recuperate? Just some things to think about as you put your team together.

Ok, back to the trip. Safety first, mission always. The people you have on your trip are your most important asset. Your situation and the task at hand may change on an hourly basis while you are working. Adjust the load as you go. If your team is working along and you feel like they may be in some danger due to unsafe working conditions, not having safe equipment or the right tools for the right job, or the natives are getting restless (people can get restless in downtown Chicago as well as in other countries), take some time to stop and reassess the situation. Make sure that as a leader you are able to step back from the details and take a look at the big picture. You should have put together a team of experts who can do the tasks you are working on. You, as a leader, need to focus on the situation, the mission, the logistics, and the health of your team. If you are busy pounding nails and don't see the trouble on the horizon, you either need to stop pounding nails or put your second-in-command in charge during the time you have your nose to the grindstone. Safety first, mission always.

You put this trip together to accomplish something specific for someone specific. How are you going to make sure you succeed? What is success? How are you going to hold people accountable for their actions? Who are you accountable to? Make sure that your expectations are in line with the expectations and limitations or possibilities you encounter in the culture you are working in. Do not promise more that you can deliver. Remember, if this is your first trip to this location and the first time you have worked with this culture you have the responsibility to assess whether there are going to be future trips. If you get into a situation where you cannot deliver what you promise or complete what you started to do, be totally honest with all the people you are working with so that no one gets left in the cold. There are many examples, unfortunately, of teams promising to accomplish certain tasks and then never returning for the second trip. This hurts the people we are trying to help. We like to build long-term relationships with groups so we can continue to help and continue to make disciples. Nothing happens overnight when you work in other cultures. Take your time and do it right.

Every God Op should have goals. What are your goals for this trip and the next trip? What are you trying to accomplish? Make sure your goals are focused first on building relationships and making disciples. Everything else will take care of itself if you keep these two goals in mind. Let's say the goal of a particular team is to build a school in a 3rd-world country. You get your team put together, fly half-way around the world, put nails in boards and, ta-da!, you have a school. Are you done? What about next year? How about the year after that? Can you make the goal of the next trip to bring teachers to the country to teach about a specific topic? Was the school the goal or is teaching the goal? The point is: think long-term as a team leader. What do the people in the area you are traveling to really need? If they ask for a school, do they really mean they need teachers? If they really need teachers, the first step is obvious to most to build a school so the students have a place to study. What if the people need health education and immediate fast-growing agriculture education? These subjects could be taught under a tree and have an immediate impact on the survival of these people. If we just focused on the building, the team might accomplish that goal but miss the opportunity to minister to people in dire need. Sometimes the people we are trying to help will not ask directly for what they need because of cultural specifics that make it impossible to ask for what they need. Hence, we need to know the people we are trying to serve. Ask questions, get feedback, get a cultural expert involved, and make sure you are helping in the correct areas.



THE JOURNEY

Air Travel Issues:

If your GO-Team is utilizing air travel, require your team to be at the airport no later than 2 hours prior to departure time. Traveling as a large team will slow down your "airport process." You will often have to deal with hauling and checking large amounts of baggage/equipment/supplies. You will have to wait on all team members to get through check-in processes, security checks, ticketing, etc. There are typically a lot of family members to whom each team member will need to say goodbye. And, Satan likes to use airlines and airports to make things go haywire. Always allow extra time for something to go wrong in the check-in process, the security checkpoints, and the customs process.

International Travel:

Foreign air travel has some unique differences from domestic travel. One is the use of passports. You will need to show your passport multiple times at the airport, so keep it handy and secure. It is best to keep it and the one ticket needed for the current leg of your flight together until you have boarded the airplane.

Prior to landing in a foreign country, flight attendants will pass out cards that the destination country's customs department requires each foreign traveler to fill out. Make certain your team has all the destination information they need to fill out these cards.

Some foreign flights may "fog" the cabin. Flights coming from a country known to have a lot of mosquitoes may be required to do this for disease control.

When you pick up your luggage in a foreign airport, it is very common for people wearing uniforms to simply start carrying your luggage for you. They will act as though they are supposed to do this. They will seem very helpful. Politely, but firmly, tell them, "NO THANK YOU. I WILL CARRY MY OWN BAGS." They will be persistent, but you need to be as well. Your t-shirts announce that you are a foreigner, if that is not obvious by your skin color, and they will consider you as an "easy mark." They will expect a fee if they carry your bag, or do anything for you. Firmly tell them, "NO THANK YOU."

Most foreign airports have luggage carts for carrying large amounts of luggage from the luggage carousel to your ground transportation. It is best to leave half of the team with your pile of luggage, while the other half goes to get some of these carts.

Even after you load your luggage on carts and begin moving toward your ground transportation, there will be aggressive people trying to "help you" with your luggage. You will need to be very assertive in telling people, "NO THANK YOU."

On many God Ops, ground transportation will be provided/arranged by the missionary or organization you are serving. But sometimes you will improvise and take taxis, buses or other forms of rentable transportation. Be certain to get a recommendation for a reputable transportation provider from the missionary/organization prior to traveling. There are many unscrupulous taxi drivers in foreign countries waiting for "Rich Americans."

Headcounts:

At each leg of your trip, at each bathroom stop, after each meal stop... do a headcount. You do not want to leave a man behind, especially in a foreign country. Don't get lazy and forget to do this half-way through the trip. It gets old. You will get tired of it. But it is essential. Anytime you load up in vehicles, count heads.



THE MISSION

Mission to Serve:

Regardless of the type of God Op you are on, your team is there to serve the missionary/organization. Some people on their very first God Op may forget this important fact over the course of the God Op. You may need to remind your team that this is not a vacation. Their comfort is not the highest priority. Their individual desires are not typically on the agenda. And their first priority should be in thinking of others, not themselves. The concept of teamwork is very important on a God Op. Satan will use fatigue, discomfort, fear and other negative situations to cause divisiveness within the team. Be on the lookout for cliques forming and negative attitudes. Deal with them in a loving way.

Meals:

On many God Ops, the host missionary will provide meals as part of "the package." Even when this is the case, be certain that your team assists with meal preparation and clean up when it can. Ensure your team is eating regularly to maintain energy levels and fight off disease and infections. Make sure your team is consuming enough water. Dehydration will compound other physical and psychological weaknesses.

Safety:

In most foreign countries, hospitals and medical clinics are not close to what Americans are accustomed. Make certain your team understands this, and don't take unnecessary risks that could result in injury.

Circle of Hope:

Each day of the God Op, reserve some time for a "Circle of Hope." During this time you can:

- Sing praise songs. 303-GO songbooks are available for your team. Get them from your SEND-Team.
- Recount the day's events and how the team has been affected by what they've encountered.
- Share a few personal testimonies.
- Share what God has been teaching team members or showing them on the God Op.
- Discuss the positives and negatives of the mission. Adjust. Refocus.
- Discuss the culture, the people being ministered to, how meeting them has affected team members.
- Pray for answers to problems, as well as assistance, guidance and success with the next day's activities.
- Pray for each other.

This is one of the most valuable things a team can do together on a God Op. It helps team members see, understand, sort through, and deal with the many unusual things they are being bombarded with, and it helps them draw closer to God. DO NOT underestimate the value of this daily activity. It can be the one thing that will help every team member realize why they were called to take part in the God Op.

On the final day of your God Op before beginning your journey home, use your Circle of Hope time to work through the "Going On" debriefing at the end of the Journal. Answer the questions together. Discuss them as a group. Much can come from this time of searching, thinking and praying over everything together.

Postcards to Supporters:

It is encouraging to supporters and families back home to receive postcards from a traveling GO-Team. If it is possible, have your team send postcards to their supporters, giving a few exciting details about the God Op, and inviting them to the post-God Op Download Session where everyone can hear all about the God Op and how God impacted the mission.





THE MISSION

Security:

When Americans travel to foreign lands, especially 3rd-World countries, they encounter many, many differences. For several days, they will be seeing things they've never encountered before. This leads to distracted attentions... which can lead to safety and security problems. As the team leader, you and whomever is assigned to security need to maintain a vigilant focus on the team's security. Keep your "radar" up and your head on a swivel. Be alert for possible dangerous encounters. In unknown/uncontrolled situations, keep the team together and alert. Don't let everyone get out of vehicles all at once in an uncontrolled situation. Watch for faces that seem to have "an agenda." Listen to the missionary's security concerns and always follow their lead. Don't "freelance" a road-trip or side-trip off the beaten path. Always keep some money with you that can be used to pay "back alley fees."

Instruct team members to always keep their passport with them when traveling inside a foreign country. This can prevent it from being stolen out of their room, and can be shown to a foreign police officer requesting identification.

On a foreign God Op, make certain at least one team member has a cell phone or satellite phone with international service. If you are going to be in a rural area, ask the missionary/organization if cell coverage is available. You should also locate an Internet terminal at which you can send and receive Email messages in case of emergency.

Leader Tips:

- Always go with a buddy. Even if it's a trip in the US to a familiar place, always travel with a buddy.
- Know your location. Spend time studying the culture, language, food, etc.
- Know your team. Know strengths, weaknesses, personalities, etc.
- Know YOUR strengths and weaknesses. Figure out how to accentuate your strengths and overcome your weaknesses. Ask for help.
- Pack light. You don't need to take everything you think you need to take.
- Drink lots of water. Water overcomes jetlag, helps avoid dehydration, and helps you adjust to altitudes.
- Eat on a regular schedule.
- Sleep on a regular schedule.
- Pace your work. You are not Superman.
- Try to help the local economy by buying supplies and labor locally.
- Pray, a lot.
- Watch your buddy.
- Have your buddy watch you.
- Take pictures and video. Do interviews of locals and team members (but, be sensitive to the culture-some cultures don't like to have their pictures taken. It may not be appropriate to take pictures in a disaster area)
- Use common sense.
- Have fun.
- Be the hands and feet of God.





One of the main reasons you went on this trip centers on discipleship. You went to disciple other people. You were a disciple to the people on your team. Now that you are back you will start to make disciples of the people who did not get to go on your trip. You are going to “report out” to those who stayed home. It is your responsibility to give a proper report. Keep in mind that your trip is not a one-time event. This was the first of many. When you report out back at home, you will be recruiting for your next trip. Keep this in mind as you pour over your journal, photos, and video.

You will want to sit down with an expert in various forms of media to produce a DVD-type report out. It is amazing how powerful a well told story is with moving music accentuating pictures and video. Take some time to interview the people that went on your trip after they get back and have had some time to think about what they just did. Hopefully, you interviewed them while they were on the trip also so you can compare facial expressions, voice tone, and lessons learned. Spend some quality time putting together a story of your trip. Why did you go? Why did you do the things you did? What did you learn? Where was God? What did God teach you? Would you go again? How have you changed?

Encourage Relationships:

Take steps to encourage your GO-Team members to deepen and continue their relationship with the missionary/organization you have served. Make sure each member has website URLs and Email addresses for the missionary.

Also, encourage the team to deepen relationships with each other. After returning, they are part of an exclusive club. They will be able to recount and share their memories with each other for years. These relationships may also lead to a deeper relationship with God.

Download session:

A few weeks after completing a God Op, plan to hold a “Download Session.” By waiting just a few weeks, this will give your team an opportunity to contemplate and process all of the things they encountered and experienced. At the Download Session, encourage everyone to discuss all of the things that impacted them most. This can be similar to the “Circle of Hope” sessions. It is very valuable for helping some team members fully realize everything God wanted to show them. A list of excellent questions/topics to discuss has been compiled by OutWord Focus, and is available for download on the Hope website → Online forms → OutWord Focus.

This session can also create interest and excitement within the rest of the Hope body. Consider inviting others to your Download Session to help them see how God uses God Ops to work through us and teach us. Download Sessions are great opportunities to get together and EAT, too! Plan it as a dinner.

By the way, this team that you built and spent two to three weeks with in a faraway place is now your base for building the next team. Some of the people might go again. Some won't, but know someone who will. Invite your SEND- and PRAY-Teams to the Download Session, also. They will be instrumental in recruiting for the next God Op, too. Some of them might not have been able to GO this time but want to GO next time.

Pass It On:

Once you've led a GO-Team on a God Op, you're part of a small select group. Pass on your knowledge and experience to future GO-Team leader. Help recruit new GO-Team leaders. Keep 303-GO going and growing.