

Team Gathering

Intro

Experience Mission Team Gathering sessions highlight EM's 7 Healthy Service Principles through **guided audio devotionals** along with discussion questions and daily challenges to help mission teams engage and serve in a healthy way.

EM field staff will lead this time if they are present on your trip. If not, the sessions are designed to be easily led by volunteer team leaders. An ideal outline and schedule are included in this packet, but sessions can be done at whatever times of day make sense for your trip.

Tips for Gathering

EM Team Gatherings are designed as time of reflection and growing together, as we consider what it means to follow Jesus and serve together in this new context. When gathering, we recommend these best practices:

Delegate leadership

Have one person facilitate group debrief questions, another facilitate the discussion (if in a large group), and someone else lead worship.

Let the group lead the conversation

It can be tempting to try to steer questions in a specific direction, but it's always more meaningful when discussions feel natural and unforced. As a leader, you have the ability to encourage people to keep sharing or shut it down by talking too much. Do what you can to make sure everyone gets a chance to answer and share who would like to.

Mix up the format

Depending on the makeup of your group, a large group discussion may not be everyone's ideal place to share. If that's the case, try engaging in the discussion and prayer time in smaller groups that give space for more team members to engage.

Leave room for God to work

These outlines are simple. This is meant to leave space for what God is doing in a particular group in a particular place. Instead of speeding through the content or moving on after one answer, create space in your gathering time for everyone to consider their responses and share thoughtfully. This may look like having people journal ahead of time, share answers with the person next to them before large group sharing, or simply allowing for silence a few seconds longer than is comfortable after a question is asked. You never know what God is stirring in the hearts of team members or when people will feel emboldened to share.

Downloading Audio Sessions

For the person facilitating Team Gathering sessions, we highly recommend you download audio session files to a Bluetooth device ahead of your trip. Not all mission trip locations will have good enough Wifi available at all times to stream audio. Use the QR code to download all seven, 5-minute audio files.



DOWNLOAD HERE!

Gathering Outline — Morning

1. Individual Devotional Time (20 min.) — Team members may use provided EM Devotional Journals if desired.

2. Listen to the *Team Gathering* audio session (~5 min.) — Use an audio speaker to play the audio session—focusing on common challenges for mission trip volunteers—for all to listen.

3. Daily challenge / reminder (in this document!) — Follow-up each listening session with daily challenges meant to help you process and grow together.

4. Prayer / instructions for the day — End the session with a group prayer for the day. Finish up the gathering by explaining the plan for the day and giving any instructions for the morning's activities.

Gathering Outline — Evening

1. Start with worship — Teams are in charge of organizing this part on their own. For groups with no instruments, you can use an audio speaker to play music to sing along to.

2. Group debrief — Follow the debrief questions provided at the beginning of each session (in this document).

3. Listen to the *Team Gathering* audio session (~5 min.) — Use an audio speaker to play the audio session—focusing on common challenges for mission trip volunteers—for all to listen.

4. Group discussion / daily challenge / prayer — As one group (if 12 people or less) or in smaller groups (if more than 12), engage in a reflective discussion using the questions and challenge(s) provided in this document. End discussion time with prayer.

5. Team time / additional worship — This time should be set aside for each team to be on their own, however they would like to end the day together.



Gathering Schedule — 6-Day Trips

Sunday

Orientation

Monday

MORNING — 1. Not About Us
EVENING — 2. Guests

Tuesday

MORNING — 3. We Get To
EVENING — 4. Joining In

Wednesday

MORNING — 5. Projects
EVENING — 6. Stories

Thursday

MORNING — 7. Each One
EVENING — Final Debrief

Friday

Travel Home

Gathering Schedule — 7-Day Trips

Saturday

Orientation

Sunday

MORNING — (open for church)
EVENING — 1. Not About Us

Monday

MORNING — 2. Guests
EVENING — 3. We Get To

Tuesday

MORNING — 4. Joining In
EVENING — (open)

Wednesday

MORNING — 5. Projects
EVENING — 6. Stories

Thursday

MORNING — 7. Each One
EVENING — Final Debrief

Friday

Travel Home

I. Not About Us

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

*Listen to the “HSP1 - Not About Us” audio session together (6 min).
Follow up with the questions and challenges below.*



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

Why do we feel good when we serve others? Is this a good thing? A bad thing? Both?

What do you think changes when we serve “with others at the center” instead of ourselves?

How do we see Jesus set an example of selfless service? What did he do to lift others above himself?

Daily Challenge —

Adopt some “side character” energy.

Over the next day, intentionally make a point to remove yourself from the center of your volunteer work. Instead, imagine each person you meet is the “Main Character” of today's story, and you get to be a side character on their journey. Observe how this changes the way you serve others.

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

2. Guests

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

Listen to the "HSP2 - Guests" audio session together (5 min).

Follow up with the questions and challenges below.



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

So far, in your time in this community...

Have you encountered a custom or social norm that was very different? How did you react, and what did you learn from it?

Have you misunderstood a cultural practice? If so, how did you handle the situation, and what would you do differently now?

In what ways does immersing yourself in a different culture influence your understanding of diversity, dignity, and mutual respect? How does being exposed to a different way of life challenge or expand your worldview?

Daily Challenge *(Pick 1)* —

Observation and awareness.

Over the next day, write down 3 cultural differences you observe (e.g., greetings, body language, meal times). Make an attempt to try doing something in this new way.

Connection and conversation.

Over the next day, initiate a conversation with someone from the community about a tradition, holiday, or custom that is important to them. Try to learn something new!

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

3. We Get To

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

Listen to the "HSP3 - We Get To" audio session together (6 min).

Follow up with the questions and challenges below.



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

What has been your mental approach to this experience so far? Have you found yourself on the lookout for what benefits you will receive?

How might an "I GET TO" mindset change the way you approach the rest of this trip? Reflect on all the things "you get to" be a part of this trip that you otherwise never would.

Daily Challenge *(Pick 1)* —

Let go of the list.

Over the next day, take a few minutes to **write down** everything you hoped to gain from this experience. (If this were a transaction, everything you hoped to gain by giving your time and money toward this trip.) Reflect on how the things on this list may be holding you back from experiencing the true gift of this experience that's in front of you. Take some time to ask God to release you from your expectations and to be open to what he has for you instead.

Re-train your brain.

The opposite of "I get to..." is "I have to..." (often followed shortly after by "...and I don't want to."). Write the words "**GET TO**" on your hand or wrist to help you respond to your own negativity with a reminder that everything that happens on this trip is a beautiful gift of participation that God wants us to experience. If you do this along with other members of your team, you can remind each other (in the kindest, gentlest way possible) to focus on all the "I GET TO"s of everyday life here.

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

4. Joining In

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

*Listen to the "HSP4 - Joining In" audio session together (4 min).
Follow up with the questions and challenges below.*



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

Reflect on the community you're serving in right now. In what ways has God already been present here? What beauty exists here? What goodness resides here? Where are people sacrificing for family, neighbors, or strangers? What signs of God's love can be found here?

What does it look like for your group to "join in" with the work God is already doing here (instead of seeking to start something new)?

Daily Challenge *(Pick 1)* —

Play "I See You".

As you continue to serve in this community, keep the lines of communication open with God, and play a continual game of "I See You". Whenever you notice a way God is present in this community in big and small ways, say aloud (however quiet or loud you're comfortable with) "I see you!" as a reminder to yourself that God is and has always been here if we just have the eyes to see.

Walk in Job's shoes *(metaphorically)*.

The story of Job is one of profound loss, frustration, anger with God, and ultimately, God's response. Job 38-42 goes into great detail, as Job is reminded just how big, vast, and ever-present God is. If you've never read Job before, skip to the end and read these 5 chapters, and make a note of any details that change your picture of God and your place in this world.

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

5. Projects

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

*Listen to the “HSP5 - Projects” audio session together (4 min).
Follow up with the questions and challenges below.*



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

In the story from Luke, do you relate more to Mary (sitting at Jesus' feet regardless of the tasks at hand) or Martha (putting great importance on doing the best job you can)? Are you more broadly a “people person” or a “project person”? How might this effect the way you serve others?

Reflect on the sentence, “Success isn't measured by how much you accomplish but by the depth of the relationships you build along the way.” With this in mind, do you think anything needs to change in your approach to this trip? If so, what?

Daily Challenge *(Pick 1)* —

Pray for the people.

Over the next day, make a point to stop and pray for the specific people you will be working with before you start any service activity or project. In the act of praying for all of the specific people (by name!) that you can think of, seek to remind yourself that the “success” of this day has less to do with tasks and outcomes, and more to do with people being reminded they are seen and loved.

Move toward mutuality.

While we have the privilege to travel and be the ones to serve others, it's important to remember that this should not create a dividing line between us and those we're seeking to serve. Over the next day, look for a way engage on a mutual level with a member of the community — a conversation during a break, playing a sport or game, worshipping alongside one another, or simply enjoying the view together.

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

6. Stories

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

Listen to the “HSP6 - Stories” audio session together (6 min).

Follow up with the questions and challenges below.



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

Why do you think people are naturally drawn to oversimplified narratives about others? Can you think of a time when your first impression of someone was proven wrong?

What are some everyday visible struggles in this new place, and how do they compare to the hidden struggles many people face?

How do hidden struggles—like pride, apathy, and self-centeredness—affect relationships and personal growth?

The audio session suggests that real growth happens in honest community. What are some barriers that make it a challenge to be vulnerable? How can we overcome these barriers?

Daily Challenge —

Challenge your first impressions

Over the next day, journal or make a note about one assumption you make about someone else (a community member or fellow team member). Ask yourself: *What unseen struggles might they be carrying?* Reflect on how you can shift your perspective from judgment to compassion.

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.

7. Each One

Group Debrief *(if evening)* —

What did you experience that was new to you today?

Where did you see or sense God at work in the community today?

Where did you see or experience God's love, grace, peace or beauty today?

How is your view of the world being challenged, changed or broadened this week?

Audio Session —

*Listen to the "HSP7 - Each One" audio session together (6 min).
Follow up with the questions and challenges below.*



LISTEN & DOWNLOAD

Discussion Q's *(if time)* —

Where have you seen pieces of God's character shining through others on this trip so far?

Thinking personally, are you able to see yourself as a "good creation," created in the image of God? If this is a hard idea for you, what do you think is stopping this from being 100% believable to you?

Jesus was pretty clear when he said, "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me."
How does it change your perspective on a typical day, knowing that God is receiving your love for others as love for Him?

Daily Challenge —

Call out the Light.

Over the remainder of this trip, remind yourself that every human being is created in the Image of God. Regardless of how anyone appears or acts on the outside, look for goodness in each person you meet. When appropriate, try calling it out when you see it. ("You're radiating joy today!" "Thanks for your grace!" "You delight in your work. Thanks for sharing!")

Looking for ideas of things to notice? Galatians 5:22-23 calls these attributes of God present in us, "the fruit of the Spirit", listing a few examples: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

Daily Reminders *(if morning)* —

Today... be attentive to the new things you experience—how they make you feel and what thoughts they bring to mind.

Pay attention to the ways God is speaking to your heart—challenging, changing or broadening your worldview.

Look for ways in which you see or sense God at work in this community—demonstrating love, grace, peace, or beauty throughout your experiences.