



"...heal the brokenhearted..." *Isaiah 61:1*

LoveServes.org

Mission Team Orientation Manual

Dear LoveServes Traveler:

Welcome to the LoveServes ministry! We are excited to have you join us on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. We want this trip to be a defining moment in your life as you follow Christ's example in serving others.

We have prepared this manual to equip you for the upcoming trip. The manual outlines what you need to know to get the most out of your travel experience. In addition, we will meet with you to share information that will equip you spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically for your mission experience.

We will have three orientation meetings that we strongly urge you to attend! During the meetings you will have an opportunity to meet members of your team and get to know them. We will also provide details on the work and ministry opportunities you will encounter. Additional handouts, opportunity for questions, and time for prayer are all important ingredients that you will not want to miss.

We also urge you to set aside time as a mission group for prayer and team-building. The most effective teams are those that are comfortable with each other and have spent time together in prayer. It is a time where you can share your personal testimonies, prayer requests, and bond together as a team.

Each of you has a gift or gifts that God can use to bring about kingdom-changing work through you and in you. Be willing to stretch out of your comfort zone to reach others and grow in your spiritual life.

We look forward to getting to know each of you!

The LoveServes Team

LoveServes
INTERNATIONAL

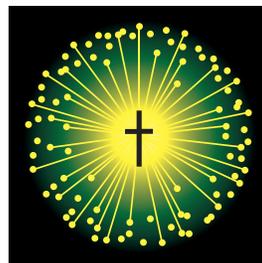


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What is LoveServes and Why do we exist?

LoveServes International seeks to bring sustainable spiritual and community transformation by coaching national pastors to develop healthy churches.

- We seek to model Jesus while coaching pastors in achieving a healthy church.
- We desire to have pastors and leaders realize their Biblical role as equippers.
- We want churches to be healthy inside and outreach-focused with a vision for their communities.
- We believe in training pastors to equip all believers to use their spiritual gifts and natural abilities for kingdom work.

We accomplish our mission through various means, including the following:

- Having nationals mentor nationals.
- Selecting national coaches that successfully apply the principles they are teaching.
- Having each coach conduct monthly sessions with assigned pastors in their region.
- Offering over 30 specialized workshops for coaches and pastors.

The result is a principle-based sustainable model:

- Pastors and leaders begin leading by example.
- Spiritual gifts, talents and abilities are identified in the Church to meet the greatest needs.
- Pew-sitters are inspired, equipped and motivated to become active ministers.
- Impoverished churches take ownership of the Great Commission.
- There is cross-denominational collaboration.
- Churches are not dependent on American resources.
- Community leaders see a relevant church that is a force for change in their community and seek to partner with resources.

Purpose of a Mission Trip

- To come alongside and partner with a local church that LoveServes has been coaching.
- To help, build, connect, and strengthen the church's relationship with the local community.
- To expose you to a unique ministry emphasizing the equipping of God's people for works of service (Eph 4:12).
- To be inspired by what you see in the local church.
- To be used by God to love and reach people in your own community with the gifts and talents God has given you.
- To become an advocate for LoveServes in the USA.

Helping Without Hurting

- LoveServes is working hard to raise up national leaders. We want to break the entitlement or "welfare" mentality prevalent in many Dominican churches.
- The team is NOT there to "fix their problems" or "to save the day"! It is important that Dominicans don't perceive Americans coming to take over and assume responsibility for the success of the ministry!
- In humility, we seek to build a mutually benefiting relationship that brings long-lasting solutions to the community's physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Motivation for Helping (Attitude is Everything)

- What is my motivation for helping?
- Do I consider myself superior in some way to the people in the Dominican Republic?
- How will my attitude affect how I would help someone in poverty and/or minister to the lost?

The Right Attitude Must be Humility

The Right Motivation Must be Love

The Right Application Must be Partnership

Be Humble, Adaptable and Teachable (H.A.T.)

So, put your H.A.T. on and let's go!



Pre-Trip Preparation

Travel Team Orientation Schedule

Session 1

- Introductions
- Icebreaker
- Vision and Mission
- Trip Overview
- Required Paperwork and Passports
- Team Building/Prayer
- Fundraising and Financial Deadlines
- Immunizations
- Travel Arrangements
- Cultural Training I

Session 2

- Icebreaker
- Team building/Prayer
- Dominican Republic History and Culture
- Cultural Training II
- Team Roles
- Guidelines and Boundaries
- Schedule in the DR
- Relationships through Language

Session 3

- Icebreaker
- Team Building/Prayer
- Packing List and Clothing
- Baggage
- Airports, Customs
- Money/Currency Exchange
- Contacting Home
- Emergency Contacts
- Cultural Training III
- Cultural Shock/Reverse Shock

Paperwork Checklist

- ___ Application
- ___ Passport Copy
- ___ Medical History and Current Medications

Passport

All North Americans traveling to the Dominican Republic must have a passport. Check with your post office for a passport application, go to the U.S. Department of State web page: <http://travel.state.gov/passport> or the Passport Canada web page: www.passportcanada.gc.ca. If you are applying for a new passport, please allow 4 – 8 weeks for this process.

Flight

Individuals/group are responsible for all airfare and travel arrangements to and from Santo Domingo. A LoveServes International representative will meet you at the airport in Santo Domingo, and a LoveServes driver and transportation will be waiting for you. Be sure to check with the airline for current restrictions, luggage weight limits, etc., prior to arriving at the airport (Review the luggage section on page 13). Don't worry if you are an individual; we will make sure you are connected with your group when you arrive.

Medical Insurance

LoveServes carries International Medical Insurance for each person; however, it is recommended you carry your own medical and/or airline trip insurance, as well.

Currency Exchange

You can exchange US dollars for the Dominican Peso before leaving or at the airport in the Dominican Republic. However, you might want to wait until we arrive at our destination where we will have funds available for you to exchange at the best rate available.

Things To Do At Home Before Leaving

- **Make two copies of your passport main page;** leave one copy at home, and place one copy into your carry-on luggage. Verify that you have a least four (4) blank pages in our passport that can be stamped by officials.
- **Make a list of all the medications** you are taking with you on the trip and make two copies. Leave one copy at home with your family and place the other copy into your carry-on luggage.
- **Get immunizations** recommended for travel to the Dominican Republic
- **Review the packing list** (page 11), and begin preparations for acquiring the necessary items for your trip.
- **Make copies (front and back) of any credit cards** that you are taking on the trip and leave them at home so you can make contact in the event they are lost or stolen on the trip. (You may wish to also take photos on your cell phone so you can immediately call—unless, of course, your phone is lost, too.)
- **Contact your credit card company** if you are planning to take a MasterCard or Visa.
- **Remove** your driver’s license, insurance cards, checks and non-essential credit cards from your wallet. You will not need these while traveling.
- **Register** for frequent flyer program if you haven’t done so previously.
- **Leave** emergency contact information with your family (this will be provided to you.)

Financial Cost and Payment Information

- The mission trip is \$850 plus project costs and airfare.
- A \$200 non-refundable deposit for each trip participant is due no later than 60 days prior to leaving. (the Balance then would be 650.00)
- The Construction/Ministry project costs are a separate expense that the team will raise together
- Project costs are due 45 days prior to leaving. Your trip coordinator can provide you with the cost of your mission project. In some cases, your church will help cover project costs.
- **The balance for every trip participant is due 30 days prior to leaving.**

USA Mail: Make your check payable to:

LoveServes International
3310 US Hwy. 301 North
Ellenton, FL 34222



(Please write “Mission Trip” in the memo line)

You may also pay online at loveserves.org

Funding Guidelines

- Mission trip members are expected to raise their own funds to cover trip expenses. Some can cover all their expenses, but others will want or need to raise funds through projects or gifts.
- We suggest the following approach to fundraising:
 - One-third of the total trip expenses should come from your own funds or through your own fundraising activity.
 - One-third should come from soliciting attendees at your church.
 - One-third can be raised from family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others outside your church.
- Involving others in helping you meet the mission trip costs is a great way to develop interest in missions, commitment to helping others, and giving them an opportunity to be part of serving God!

Financial Recommendations for Travel Team Members

- As with any travel, be mindful of your money at all times.
- Once you arrive at your accommodations, you may wish to secure your valuables in your suitcase using a travel lock.
- Avoid allowing your money to be seen by local residents and use caution when exposing your funds in public markets and souvenir shops
- MasterCard and Visa are the most widely accepted cards internationally.
- Your bank may charge you a transaction fee for the international travel exchange. Ask about these fees prior to traveling.
- If you plan to use a credit card, call your company and alert them that you will be traveling so a “stop payment” is not put on your account.

Immunizations, Medications, and Health Cautions

Visiting a third-world country frequently requires immunizations to protect against potential diseases. Although we don't require any immunizations or medication, the following are current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for traveling to the Dominican Republic:

- Routine vaccines: You should be up-to-date on measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot.
- Hepatitis A: CDC recommends this vaccine because you can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in the DR, regardless of where you are eating or staying.

- Typhoid: You can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in the DR. CDC recommends this vaccine for most travelers , especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas.
- Malaria: When traveling in the DR, you should avoid mosquito bites to prevent malaria. Use repellent with Deet and a mosquito net (can obtain one through LSI for about \$2).
- Zika virus is a risk in the DR. Pregnant women should not travel to the DR because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects.

What to Bring on Your Mission Project



- 4-5 sets of work clothes (long pants and t-shirts with sleeves are required on worksites; Capri pants are acceptable for women)
- A 3-4 sets of clothes to wear after work and on day-off
 - Fingertip length shorts are OK at camp/lodging and on day-off
 - No tank tops or sleeveless shirts in community where we will be working or ministering but are fine on our day off and around camp.
- 1-2 outfits for church service (bring **extra pair of shoes** so you aren't wearing work shoes to services)
 - Men should wear long pants and collared shirt (lightweight polo shirts are good)
 - Women should wear skirts or dresses that reach the knees, no tank tops or sleeveless shirts
- 1 pair of **work gloves**, but we recommend you bring two pairs
- 8 sets of underclothing
- 1 pair of sturdy work shoes, boots or sturdy tennis shoes
- 5 pair of work socks
- Lightweight pajamas, please be conservative
- Bandanas or "Cooling Towel" (Walmart carries them) for work site
- Swimming suit - Please be conservative one piece for women or wear a shirt over; no speedos for men
- Flip flops for the shower
- A pillow and twin sheets for bunk beds (NOTE: Pillows are not considered "carryon" or "personal item" on airplanes – so if it doesn't fit in your suitcase just carry it)
- Mosquito Net (our DR staff will have nets for rent \$2)
- Soap Brush or comb Toothpaste and tooth brush Shampoo
- 2 Towels for showers are recommended because it usually takes a full day for a towel to dry when hung
- Razor and shaving cream Insect repellent Chap stick
- Flashlight
- Ibuprofen and other medications (baby powder or other skin protectant is good for keep from chaffing)
- Sunscreen (SPF 15 and above is recommended)
- Bible and pens (Mission Journal will be given to you in advance)
- Hat and sun glasses for the work site
- Refillable Water bottle!** (Insulated kind are best to keep cold)
- Extra batteries
- Anti-bacterial gel for cleaning hands or wipes
- Some spending money for snacks and souvenirs and meals in the airports; \$100 is usually plenty.

Optional Items

- Camera and extra batteries (please remember to be sensitive when taking pictures)
- Fanny pack or backpack to carry items to the work site and on day-off
- Toys and activities for playing with kids in the community **but not to give out**. (Frisbees, tennis balls, jump ropes, bubbles, coloring books, crayons, fingernail polish, etc.)
- Powdered Gatorade or small liquid bottles that you can add to water that has electrolytes and vitamins (i.e., MIO)
- Granola bars or other SEALED SNACKS, please remember that food attracts bugs, so all food must be kept in sealed bags or containers

Additional Comments on What or What Not to Bring

- Your work clothes may be subject to concrete, paint, sweat, mud, etc. Please do not wear work clothes that you don't want ruined. **Long pants or capris are required at work sites.** Wear work clothes that are cool and comfortable.
- **Do not** bring any valuables. You are responsible for anything you lose. LoveServes does not recommend wearing jewelry in the Dominican Republic. Wedding bands are fine.
- Do **NOT** bring any illegal substances, tobacco, or alcohol. We will send someone home if we find someone using these during the week.
- Our staff in the DR will exchange money for your group at the current rate. Airport rates are usually higher!

Cell Phones

- If you bring your cell phone – PLEASE check with your cell phone provider to find out what fees or charges you might be subject to when you go out of the country! You might consider a Temporary International calling card, because very high roaming charges will apply on your regular plan.
- Always keep your cell in Airplane Mode unless you made arrangements with your carrier to use an international plan for phone use including cellular data.
- Electric voltage and frequency is the same in the Dominican Republic as in the US and Canada (110V and 60Hz). The power plugs and sockets are the same.
- Internet is not readily available at the camp, but limited access will be provided by LoveServes to send an email or post on Facebook.



Airline Reservations, Flight Information, and Transportation to the Airport

- In most cases, you will need to make your own flight arrangements. You should do so approximately two months before you leave.
- If the team is predominately from one church, a travel team leader could make the reservations for the entire team through a travel agent. Payment for the trip by the traveler could be made to the church and would, therefore, be tax-deductible. This procedure is legal under the IRS code.
- If at all possible, make arrangement to travel to the airport together as it helps build a team's spirit and enthusiasm.

Baggage Guidelines (subject to change)

Number of Pieces Permitted and Weight

- As an international traveler, some airlines allow one free checked suitcase. Others like Spirit air charges for each. Weight limit varies a well. 40 lbs on Spirit Airline and 50 lbs on Delta, United, and American. A second bag will cost approximately \$25-35, depending on the airline.
- On Delta, United, and American, you can carry on a second small suitcase that fits in the overhead bin and a personal bag or backpack. Check with the airline to see allowed sizes. Spirit Airline will charge for a second carry-on suitcase for the overhead bin but does not charge for a personal bag or backpack.

Carry-On Baggage Reminders

- Be sure to pack some extra underwear, and a full change of clothing in your carry-on in case your checked bag does not arrive the same day you do.
- Be sure your medications are in your carry-on luggage where they are accessible to you in the airports, in flight, and during road travel to the lodging site.
- If you are packing any type of toiletries in your carry-on, please remember those items must comply with the following restrictions:
 - Containers can be no larger than **3 oz.** (including liquid soap, toothpaste, shaving cream, shampoo, etc.).
 - All 3 oz. containers should be placed in a **1-quart zip lock bag**. If you do not have this size bag, your items could be taken. You are permitted to have more than one quart-sized zip lock bag of toiletries.
- Bringing open packages of food into the country is prohibited by law. Should a customs official find open food packages in your possession, they may be confiscated, or you may be asked to discard them.

- Keep your valuable items with you while traveling, in either your carry-on or personal bag. This includes money, jewelry, electronics, cameras, phones, laptops/tablets, etc.
- Tools that could potentially be used as weapons (screwdriver, hammer, wrenches, etc) should be packed in your checked luggage. This includes pocketknives, as well.

Airport Procedure: Outbound

You will check in using your passport. You should also have your e-ticket and frequent flyer number (if you have one). Check your baggage to its final destination, and place the baggage claim ticket in a safe place, as you will need it. You will then proceed to the security check-point where you will need to show your passport and boarding pass.

Airport Procedure: Arrival

- You will go through customs upon arrival in the Dominican Republic. You will need your passport and a customs form that will be provided to you on the airplane before landing. Complete the form while in the air and have it ready with your passport. Typically you will NOT have any items to declare. *You do not need to claim any items that you are transporting into the country as they are humanitarian supplies/gifts and are not subject to taxes.*
- If you are questioned as to why you are entering the country, simply tell them you are “on holiday for missionary work.”
- You will need the location where you will be staying. Your team leader will provide you with the address.
- After going through customs, you will collect your luggage from the designated carrousel and go out to the reception area. A LoveServes representative will be waiting for you.

Processing and Preparing for your Trip

- **Pray** – Thank God for the call to serve. Ask him to prepare you spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally.
- **Meet** – Get together with the other members of your team for a time of prayer and relationship building. Share your testimonies, discuss your spiritual gifts, and talk about your expectations and dreams for your experience.
- **Write** – Journal your thoughts, feelings, and things God is revealing to you through prayer, scripture, and your interactions with others.
- **Review** – Read through your training manual and attend all orientation meetings.
- **Follow Through** – See your physician, obtain your immunizations, and turn in paperwork.
- **Communicate** - Tell others about your upcoming trip. Ask for their prayers and financial support. Use this as an opportunity to share Jesus.

- **Prepare** – Begin working on a 3-5 minute testimony of what God has and is doing in your life. Try to include your favorite Bible verse and why or how it has impacted your life.
- **Care** – Get plenty of sleep. Eat healthy foods. Begin to break bad habits.

Travel Team Roles

Team Leader_____

The Team Leader is responsible for daily oversight of the team—including division of tasks, setting the schedule, daily debriefings, managing volunteers, settling disputes, addressing concerns, and final decision-making on matters of importance to the team and LSI representatives. The TL is the primary point of contact with our local hosts and partners.

Devotions Coordinator_____

The Devotions Coordinator is responsible for coordinating prayer/study/fellowship time under the direction of the Team Leader. This includes scheduling prayer meetings prior to departure, as well as coordinating *daily devotions* while in country. The DC is not responsible for leading all devotions but should encourage and arrange for members of the team member to lead a session.

Worship Leader_____

The Worship Leader is responsible for selection of songs, instrumentation, and leading the team through a time of worship at the beginning of the devotional period each morning. Bringing copies of song lyrics for the team to use is helpful.

Team Photographer_____

The Team Photographer is responsible for keeping a digital record of the trip. It is helpful to have images of the team in action, as well as before/after photos of construction projects. The TP also helps coordinate the sharing of photographs among team members both during and after the trip. While all team members are welcome to take pictures, the TP is charged with the responsibility to document the trip activities.

Team Recorder_____

The Team Recorder is responsible for keeping a written record of the team's activities as well as insights and feedback for the LSI leaders. Each day during the trip, the Team Leader should gather the team for a time of reflection and debriefing. The TR is responsible for capturing important notes, decisions, key things learned, and suggestions for future trips. This information should be shared at a debriefing meeting with LSI leaders after the return of the team.

Children's Program Leader _____

The Children's Program Leader is responsible for planning Bible lessons, songs, games, kid's crafts for indoor and outdoor use. The CPL should work with the Team Leader and REVISION in the DR to get information from the DR pastor on what he would like the team to accomplish, who they will work with, how much time they will have, how many they expect to attend, and a description of the site for the program. The CPL will work with volunteers on the team to develop the program, materials for crafts, and description of games including balls, etc.

Construction Leader _____

The construction Leader will obtain a description of the construction project including plans, materials, and tools needed. The CL will work with the pastor and/or on-site project leader(s) and communicate to the team what needs to be done. The CL will assign members of the team to specific tasks, assess progress, and make necessary changes as needed. The CL should always be assessing tasks to determine that safety standards are met.

Guidelines for Your Stay in the Dominican Republic

Arrival in the Dominican Republic

Airport

As mentioned in a previous section, after disembarking, you will go through customs, collect your baggage, and proceed to the waiting area where a representative from LoveServes International will be waiting for you. The representative will lead you out to the parking lot where you and the luggage will be loaded on a bus for the trip to your destination.

Lodging and Meals

LoveServes contracts with a Christian organization called REVISION for transportation, lodging and food. REVISION is based in the Dominican Republic and has a team that works with each mission group to take care of the day-to-day needs. **It is very important to let the LoveServes coordinator know if you have any food allergies or special dietary needs.**

Incredibly Important to Remember!!

- Never drink any water that isn't bottled or from the team Water Coolers!
- Use your refillable water bottle instead of plastic cups.
- Use bottled water for brushing your teeth.
- Never throw toilet paper in the toilet! The plumbing system in the D.R. can't handle TP. Always fold up and place in the small trash can next to the toilet.
- Don't go anywhere alone and don't wander off the property!

Guidelines, Personal Conduct and Boundaries

When you volunteer with LoveServes, please remember that many of the people you will meet are watching you carefully. It is important that you adhere to some guidelines of behavior so that you can be positive role models and live out your faith in a way that encourages others.

Church

- Team members are expected to show deference and respect to the pastor.
- Resist the desire to give things to individuals you encounter or work with during your mission experience. We are striving to break the poverty mindset. If you have something to donate (clothing, tools money, etc.) leave them in your room when you are ready to leave and our partners, REVISION, will take them to the pastor for distribution as he deems appropriate.
- The presence of an American team at a church is noted by the community. Simply by serving, you raise the authority and credibility of the local pastor.
- Please respect the church as the house of God at all times.

- Do not talk, read, sleep, chew gum, or use your cell phone during services.

Community

- You will have opportunities to go in small groups with a member of the church and a translator to do home visits. Don't be afraid to engage people that you meet on the street or in the home. Invite them to attend a service, ask if you can pray for a specific need, or give a testimony.
- When walking on the street or visiting in a home, don't snap pictures like you are at a zoo. Place yourself in their situation and be sensitive. Appropriate times include during ministry times, on the jobsite, or inviting someone you've met to take a photo with you.
- Never give to individuals in the community or church. If you brought items to donate or leave behind, you will have an opportunity to place them in a location where the Revision Team will distribute them to the church or individuals.

Accommodations

- Items such as alcohol, drugs, pornography, or weapons are strictly prohibited.
- Depending on the male/female ratio of the group, married couples may be in separate rooms, although all efforts will be made to keep couples together.
- Being in a private room with a member of the opposite sex is not permitted without authorization.
- Respect of the dress guidelines is expected.
- Please respect that the lounge areas are shared with other volunteers; they must be kept clean.
- Respect for the personal property of others is expected.
- Bedrooms and bathrooms must be kept neat.

Personal Conduct

- Swearing, smoking, fighting, cursing, drinking alcohol, and gambling are prohibited.
- We request that books and music brought with you reflect a positive, Christian lifestyle.
- Any complaints or incidents involving ministry staff or participants, or conflicts with other volunteers should be brought directly to your team leader.
- Please be punctual for all activities, meals, and departure times out of consideration for the schedule and for staff and other volunteers.
- Jewelry and clothing must be modest.

Processing Your Trip While You Are in the Dominican Republic

- **Separate** – Set aside time for solitude. Designated quiet time just to listen from God is restorative.
- **Engage** – Get to know the local residents. Connecting with them as people expands your compassion.
- **Care** – Adequate sleep, hydration and nutrition are very important to maintaining your health.
- **Share** – Tell your teammates what you are experiencing, what are you learning, what are you struggling with, and how they can support you.
- **Write** – Journal your activities, your accomplishments, your reactions, your feelings, and the things that God is doing in you and through you.
- **Debrief** – Meet as a team daily to discuss what went well; what challenges you encountered; what information you need to bring back home; and how you prepare for the days ahead.
- **Worship** – Praise, acknowledge, honor, and thank God for who He is. Thank Him for calling you to serve.

A Brief Overview of Dominican Demographics, History and Culture

The Dominican Republic is a study in contrasts. It is a third-world country rich in history, yet struggling to find it's place in the fast-paced, high-tech 21st century. The ease with which Americans may enter the D.R. may obscure the fact that this country is vastly different from the United States in history, customs, and standards. Since your ministry trip will bring you into direct contact with the Dominican nationals in far different circumstances than if you were traveling as a tourist, it will be helpful to have some background regarding the Dominican Republic. When you know the history of a country and what the people have been through to get to where they are now, it helps you to understand and love the people.

- The current population of the Dominican Republic is 10,713,532 as of January, 2017, based on the latest United Nations estimates.
- The Dominican Republic ranks 86th in the list of countries (and dependencies) by population.
- The population density in the Dominican Republic is 577 people per square mile.
- The total land area is 18,654 square miles.
- The urban population makes up 81.6 % of the total.
- The median age for the country is 26.4 years.
- Roman Catholics make up 57% of the population, with Protestants at 23%.



History of the Dominican Republic

Christopher Columbus landed on the island of Quisqueya, as the original Indians called their island, on December 6, 1492. The Spaniards virtually wiped out the Indian inhabitants and made the island the first seat of their New World Empire.

Dominican history is a story of conquests by such countries as Spain (three times), France (twice), Haiti (twice), and the United States (twice). From 1916-24, the country was under the administration of the U.S. to help collect custom fees for the payment of the national debt. Marines were sent to the D.R. in 1965 to maintain order, protect U. S. citizens there, and to keep communists from taking over the country. In 1874, the U.S. almost accepted an offer to annex the country. Four periods of national independence have been known, the most recent beginning in 1924.

Santo Domingo, the capital city, has the distinction of being the first city in the Western Hemisphere founded by Europeans. To put this city in proper historical perspective, consider that Santo Domingo was already 75 years old when William Shakespeare was born. When the Mayflower landed on Plymouth Rock, Santo Domingo was well into its second century. Harvard University was founded a full 100 years after Santo Domingo's University which was the first to be chartered in the Western Hemisphere. Today Santo Domingo, is a thriving metropolis, with more than a few disadvantages of urbanization.

The capital city has been pillaged by the likes of Sir Frances Drake. The entire nation was held under the thumb of the cruel dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo for some 30 years. His reign ended in 1961 when he was assassinated.

Culture

In the Dominican Republic, the family forms the basis for stability and loyalty to the family is of utmost importance. The family provides a social network and helps members when there is a need. Family includes two or three generations and tends to live together in the same general area.

Dominicans take pride in extending hospitality and will work hard to please their guests.

Use a firm handshake and direct eye contact when greeting a Dominican. Maintain eye contact when conversing, as it is a sign of interest in the person.

Class structure is generally based on racial and economic background. Social stratification divides into lighter skinned European descendents and darker skinned African descendents. A mixture of the two, form the majority of the middle class.

Guidelines for Your Return Home

US Customs and Border Control

- On your return to the US, you will go through customs at the airport. You will need your passport and a filled-out declaration form that will be handed to you by a flight attendant prior to landing or you may pick one up at a kiosk in the customs area.
- The declaration form requires you to declare the souvenirs and other items you purchased in the Dominican Republic, including the value of each item. You are eligible for a duty-free exemption of \$800.
- Question 11 (d) on the form asks if you have been on a farm, ranch, or pasture at any time during your stay. If you have, you may be questioned and the bottoms of your shoes examined and disinfected.

What Do I Do When I Get Home?

Believe it or not, one of the toughest things about a mission trip is going back home! When you think about the truly mind blowing-things you've experienced in the last 7 days, it is nothing short of a miracle what GOD has done in your life!

Obviously, you've thought about home, family members, friends, and even work or school . . . you've probably thought about all the people who are praying for you on this trip . . . all those who didn't come on the trip but, perhaps, supported you.

Here is where the rubber meets the road (as they say). You're excited to share your experience with others—to tell them all the amazing things God did. You're aching to show the people you love all your photos and videos of the experience that has captured your heart . . . but . . . many of them will give you a few minutes of interest, but then it will be “business as usual.” It's NOT that they don't care about you; they just did NOT experience what you did and cannot possibly understand. Most people you try to share your stories with will disengage much sooner than you want them to.

(Ask a few veterans to share with group what happened when they returned home from their last mission trip)

Here are four tips to help with Re-Entry:

- Recognize God's work in your life was truly real and important, regardless of what other's reactions are.
- Pray for God's wisdom and contentment.
- Think of ONE highlight from your experience and focus on how it impacted you personally. Then think of a SINGLE word that will serve as your trigger word and a HOOK word for the people you want to share your story with.

Don't make the word too "obvious," but a more obscure word that will cause your listener to mentally stop and ask you what you mean by that word. (Ex., When someone asks, "How was your trip?" Instead of saying, "It was so good . . . blah, blah, blah . . ."; say, "Handcuffs" (or some such word). Trust me, they will stop and say, "Wait, what?" Then, proceed to tell them the ONE story associated with that word and keep it short. (2-3 minutes)

- Now practice with someone in your group.

Reverse Culture Shock

Just as visiting a third-world country can be a culture shock, returning to one's own country can produce a reverse culture shock. After returning home, many who visit abroad begin re-examining their priorities, their values, and what they think of themselves and the United States. You may experience feelings of frustration, anger, guilt or loneliness and not understand exactly why. You may have a heightened sensitivity when others complain, and you could find yourself complaining a lot less. You have experienced what is critical for survival in the D.R. and how it is both a blessing and a distraction in our American culture to have so much more than we need.

You might feel Americans are too focused on themselves and unaware of what is going on in third-world countries. You will be more aware of how much we waste. You may feel guilty about your home, clothes, and all the nice things you take for granted. As a result, you may develop new attitudes, beliefs, and habits. Take time to be thankful for what you have and be more generous with what God has given you.

How You Can Impact Your Home Church

You can have an impact on the missions program in your home church! Here are some ideas:

- Either as an individual or as a group make an appointment with your pastor to give him a briefing on what you experienced and how it changed you.
- Ask if he would be willing to give you a short segment in a service to show pictures and give a couple of testimonies (Be sure and prepare so that you stay within the allotted time).
- As an alternative, ask him if he would rather interview a member of the team during the service. That way, he could control the timeframe.
- Focus on the life-changing experience and what God did in your life and the lives of the team as a result of going to the D.R.

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