

A Devotion for Mission Trip Leaders

30Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him (Acts 8:30-31 NLT).

Lots of amazing personal aha's happen on a mission trip. Two of the most remarkable are what I call "God sightings" and "teachable moments." In the Scripture above, God alerts Philip to the fact that a teachable moment is coming his way. He's so eager to take advantage of it that he runs to meet the Ethiopian man in the carriage.

You may not have to do a lot of running, but you absolutely must have your eyes and ears open. For multiple reasons, a mission trip provides more teachable moments and God sightings than most any other youth event. When students get out of their comfort zone and don't get a break from people, there's no choice but to drop their guard. They can't keep pretending to be someone they're not. When the defenses are lowered, the teachable moments happen.

In moments of great joy, distress, fear, anxiety—and any other strong emotion—doors open for you to speak and for others to speak to you. In my experience, these moments have happened on every mission trip I've ever been on. It doesn't happen for everyone, but it happens for someone every single time. And when you witness God using you or someone around you, your faith is permanently forged into something that it wasn't just moments before. That's the magic of a mission trip. You're immersing yourself in what God is doing—every minute of every day. So be ready for God to show up and do something!

Being ready is first and foremost about being available. God will work out the "when" and the "where." Your job is simply to be ready to share your story. Yes, knowing Scripture verses can be very helpful. But being available and ready isn't about having exactly the right answer for every situation. It's really about allowing God to have his way with you. If you read the entire story of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40) you'll see that the Holy Spirit said, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

Philip wasn't told what would happen, what to say, or even how long it might take. Just "go over there." A mission trip is a great big "go over there" opportunity to minister to your students. Like Philip, be ready for something to happen.

I encourage you to read the entire story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26- 40, and consider this:

- When have you experienced a teachable moment? (Take time to write down what happened that made it teachable.)
- Think about keeping a journal about the mission trip. Start it now and begin practicing looking for God sightings and teachable moments.
- Look for opportunities to share your God sightings as you and the rest of the team prepare for the trip.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for making yourself visible to me. I love seeing your handiwork. Open my eyes and heart to see teachable moments—moments when I can be taught and moments when I might be able to share with others. I can't wait to see what you have in store for us on this trip. Amen.