

NO TRACE MISSION TRIPS

Facilitator Guide

Before You Start This Session:

Look up Romans 12:9-21 and print off the text in whatever translation with which your students are most familiar. Print off one copy for each student and make sure that you have markers, pens or highlighters for each student to use (anything but black). They will have the opportunity to mark up the text during your session, and this will help those who don't want to write in their Bibles participate. Have also a blank piece of paper for every two students to write down ideas during your conversation.

In This Session Students Will:

- Understand the difference between serving that helps and serving that hurts.
- Help students make sure the imprint they leave in the community is a positive one and able to be built on.
- Take a look at what Paul tells us in Romans about being in community with people who aren't necessarily like us.

Leader's Intro:

Ask: When we think of our trip coming up, what things come to your mind first? (Allow them to answer)

Say something like:

No Trace Camping is one of the best ways to camp. When camping became really popular, some big problems were uncovered. More and more people were trekking through uninhabited areas, and although one or two individuals barely made any difference in the environment, the culmination of many people trekking through nature, leaving trash, and taking mementos, began to affect some of the earth's most precious and natural places in a bad way. So No Trace Camping was started with the motto being "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints." The message was clear: leave this place better than you found it.

Mission trips can be the same way. Journeying through different cultures, places, and through the years of hard work that long term missionaries or local pastors have invested, can be either really good or really bad. We want to make sure our impact on the community leaves no trail of destruction, but only the footprints of God's love.

No Trace Mission Trips In Life:

Bill and Andy were college friends who lived just down the hall from each other. They hung out all the time. Andy was the life of the party, always the kind of person you wanted to have around to lift you up and Bill was the consistent and stable friend that Andy needed to balance him out.

Andy's church was having a weekend of service coming up, and without thinking Andy volunteered to be a driver. Now Andy didn't actually have a car, but he knew his friend Bill would be behind lending him his car for the event. Yet when Bill met him with some hesitancy, he explained it was serving Jesus and they would only be a few miles away. Bill gave in, and Andy was set to go for the weekend.

Throughout the weekend, Andy had a blast, and he helped do some really great things. They were working on the house of a grandmother who had been recently widowed. Andy carted tools and lumber back and forth from the hardware store, and even bought his group a round of slushies when they were struggling for energy. They repaired her sinking floor, gave her kitchen a new coat of paint, and showered her with groceries. At the end of the weekend, Andy was wiped out and ready to get some good sleep. He didn't get in until late, so he left the keys on Bill's desk with "thanks" written on a post-it, walked down the hall and climbed into bed.

The next morning, Bill got ready to go to work and walked out to his car. As he got closer, he became more and more concerned with what he saw. There was a large scratch right across the back fender of his car. His lips tightened as he shook his head, because he did not have time for this. So he climbed in and started the car

up, only to discover the needle was resting right over the E on the fuel gauge and the stick shift was covered in something sticky. Bill's anger rose as he discovered a tear in the seat from carrying lumber, and splattered paint all over the floor. What was Andy thinking??!!!! Didn't he know how much this car had cost Bill? He was already strapped for cash paying his way through college, and needless repairs with extra gas costs were not in his budget. Bill was livid, vowing never to loan his car to anyone again.

Discuss

- Were Andy's actions helpful or hurtful that weekend? Explain.
- How could Andy have left no trace of destruction but only the footprint of God's love that weekend?
- What are some of the possible long-term effects of Andy's actions?
- What do you think Bill remembers about the weekend of service?
- Who are some of the people that are like the "Bills" of your trip? (Maybe you are staying with them, or using their tools or facility, even their car!)

No Trace Missions in the Bible:

Paul understood how different people were. He was really the guy that pioneered preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, rather than taking it only to the Jews. This was a big deal! The Jews and the Gentiles were like night and day. Lifestyle, food, education; you name it, they were different. So when Paul began to cross the great chasm standing between him (a Jew) and the Gentiles, he had to take extreme caution. He had to make sure he left no trace of hurt, judgment, or destruction, but only left the imprint of the Good News on their hearts.

Paul's Advice:

Take a few minutes to read through Romans 12:9-21 on your handout.

Now go back and read it again, this time underlining or highlighting every descriptive of love. Example: "Love must be sincere"

Read through it once more, but this time put your initials over the things in this passage that are easy for you, and circle those that are more challenging.

Discuss:

- What are the actions one who loves like this is supposed to do?
- What is someone who loves *not* supposed to do?
- How do these lists shape a leave-no-trace mission trip?
- How might forgetting what Paul writes affect a community negatively?

Foreign Exchange Activity:

Imagine for a moment that you are about to do a foreign exchange program through your school and you are spending a semester in China. You will be staying with a host family outside of Beijing, and you will be doing all the things the rest of the Chinese high school students around you are doing. Based on what you know from foreign exchange students you've run into in life, or even just good common sense, answer the following questions:

- What are the things you want to make sure you do in order to build friendships in China?
- What are the things you want to make sure you do in order to have good relationships with your host family?
- What are the things that you will make sure not to do?

Apply It:

Based on the activity, and what Paul tells us in Romans what are the things you want to make sure you do (or don't do) in order to leave no trace of destruction on your mission trip? How will you do that? Who will help you?

Optional Activity:

Take a few minutes and search online to find out about the city you'll be visiting. As a team or on your own at home, write down 7-10 things about that place you didn't know before. It's okay if this takes you a few minutes, it should! Check local chamber of commerce pages, Facebook fan pages about these cities and look up demographics.

- What are the things you discovered?
- What about this place is similar to where you live?
- What about this place is different from where you live?
- What are some things you need to do (or not do) to best serve in this community?