

Group Devotions Ideas

Here are some suggestions for a more meaningful group experience.

1. Prayer Partners

The first time you meet with your group for devotions, have each person write their name on a piece of paper – put them all in a hat and then have each team member pull a name (not their own). The name that they draw is the person who they will be praying for each day of their time on the field

At the end of your time together (your last evening together as a group – not the debriefing with field staff), have as part of your devotional time, a sharing by each member of who they prayed for, what they may have prayed for, for that person, during the time on the field and some words of affirmation and encouragement to that individual. A neat way to do this is by using a candle, which represents the light of Christ. Have the first person light the candle and share that it represents the light of Christ and that by doing this exercise your group will share in that light. Once the first person has shared, he/she will give it to the person who he/she had prayed for. Then that person will do the same thing. You can also have a candle for each individual and share the light of Christ by lighting your prayer partner's candle. That way you start with one light and after the exercise is completed all the candles are lit – symbolic of sharing Christ's light with many creates a brighter world for all. If you do not have a candle, use something else – ie: flowers. Use your imagination.

OR....

Another suggestion for prayer partners is to pull names out of a hat, a few weeks prior to your team's departure. Do not share who your partner is, but begin praying for that person in preparation for the trip. Also pray for that person during the time away as above.

OR....

Involve your church family as much as possible – even if they are not part of your team going on this mission trip. About 4 weeks before departure, ask church members to sign up as a prayer partner for a team member. Have each prayer partner write notes of encouragement for each day away and then provide them to the team leader who will give the notes upon arrival at the mission site. Involve prayer partners in the team's Commissioning service.

2. Sharing

Another idea for your evening devotions is to begin (or end) it with an open time of sharing for example: "how was your day and/or how did you see or experience God today?"

Another question would be: "What did you learn today about yourself, others, God?" The more you share with each other, the better the experience.

3. Faith Objects

Another wonderful experience for your group would require some advance preparation.

Ask each team member to bring something along with them that represents some aspect of their faith – or their faith journey. It could be something as concrete as a wall plaque with a meaningful scripture verse or a song or a story or a book or a t-shirt or..... for every person it will be different. Set aside one evening (during the middle of your work team experience

is best, so there's a level of trust with each other), and allow for each person to share "their story" and why the "object" they brought has significance to their faith. This can take quite some time, so be prepared – and be prepared for a wonderful time together. Make sure to thank each person for their contribution. Close in prayer remembering the things shared.

4. Personal devotions

Personal devotions are also of prime importance for team participants. You may want to put together a small booklet with daily reflections - following a specific theme. Try to set some time aside each morning, either before or just after breakfast, in order to spend some personal time in quiet. If the opportunity allows for it, you may want to encourage team members to walk around the perimeter of the work site you are working on – in reflection and prayer. These reflections and thoughts can also be shared at the evening devotions – if people so desire. Use your own ideas.

5. Prayer

Always end your devotional time with prayer. Try different formats.

- one person prays for the whole group – joys, concerns etc.
- open prayer – anyone can pray (have one person open and another close)
- pray for the person sitting beside you (ask for requests) – go around circle so everyone has been prayed for
- sing a prayerful song together
- your own ideas

6. Team work

Instead of one person leading the devotions every evening, assign different group members to a specific night. Maybe people want to share something with the group that is very meaningful to them. This will require advance preparation before the team leaves, so plan ahead.

7. Music

Bring some song sheets along so you can share in that manner. If at all possible, bring some local songs so the people of the community where you are staying can share in song with you. Taking along a musical instrument (guitar?) is always beneficial to your group's devotion times.

8. Something Special

This next idea also takes lots of advance planning, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Without team members' knowledge, contact their family members and have them write notes of encouragement to the family member going on the trip. Give yourself about 2 – 3 weeks to do that (you will require some assistance with this). Collect the notes/cards/letters and take them with you on the trip. At one of your last devotions together – or possibly in the middle of the week – among other things, discuss how we need to be encouraged in our faith. Talk about people's commitment to go to the country you are visiting and the support everyone got from home and church. Then tell them you have letters of encouragement from the special people in their lives. Hand out the mail and enjoy the smiles, laughter, tears etc. A good place to link this activity is with activity #3 above.