

## Missions Trips, Social Media, and You

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**\*\*NOTE:** For the safety and privacy of other team members, **DO NOT** tag anyone on the team when posting to Social Media.

Does social media have a place on the mission field? It's a good question. Some mission trips will stress the "Unplug" mentality. When respectful service meets social media, the results could be helpful or harmful to both you and people you serve.

So on this mission's trip we are asking that,

When you reach for your phone...

When you line up a picture...

When you write an update...

...do these things first: ***Promote the Dignity of Others, Separate Service from Self-Promotion, Tell the Right Story, and Prioritize Presence over Posts.***

### ***Promote the Dignity of Others:***

We all have deep worth and deserve respect. Before you take a picture and share an update, consider how the people you're highlighting would like to be portrayed. Recognize that your service extends beyond your actions to the words you use and the stories you tell.

Be careful when you take a picture, ask permission, and avoid pictures that highlight projects over people. Pick your words carefully. You don't have to pretend brokenness doesn't exist but share the whole story – that there is also hope, strength, and beauty in the people you meet.

When you promote the dignity of others, you are being like Jesus, who sees through our brokenness to people who are desirable, worthwhile, and loved.

### ***Separate Service from Self-Promotion:***

Jesus cautioned a crowd not to "Practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them" (Matt. 6:1). In today's world of instant status updates and apps dedicated to recording your every move, service in secret is increasingly difficult. But, we are called to love with our hearts and not seek worldly rewards. It is impossible to fully love God and others when we are focused on getting others to love us. So don't let your mission trip become a marketing campaign. Before your next post, consider what reward you're seeking. That doesn't mean you shouldn't share the story of what happens during your mission trip. Just make sure you're telling the right story...

### ***Tell the Right Story:***

Every post is a story:

...A picture that proclaims, “I gave out a pair of glasses”

...140 characters that declare, “I served at this church”

...A six-second video that says, “I helped this child”

In each case, you are the protagonist...the main character...the hero. Unfortunately, when the plot is about you and what you did the real story is missed.

When you share about the trip, position your story in the narrative of what God is doing, you are a character in God’s bigger story. So tell your story! But point to the larger context of the work. Make God the hero when you share...

...A picture that proclaims, “God empowered us to help the blind to see”

...140 characters that declare, “God gave us the chance to help out a struggling pastor”

...A six-second video that says, “God worked in and through us as we ministered to this child”

### ***Prioritize Presence over Posts:***

What makes you reach for your camera? A completed project. A scenic sunset. A cute kid. A funny face.

Each of these instances can cause a knee-jerk reaction to record the moment. Are there words to describe what you are feeling – have you already begun typing in your one-liner that will accompany your picture.

Some moments were never meant to be captured but simply lived in...experienced fully...released gratefully.

Give yourself the freedom to be present. Leave someone a hundred miles away hanging so you can fully be with the people next to you. Pass on taking a picture and fully experience God’s presence in the moment.