

from mission trips to missional living

Persevering through 2009's economic woes doesn't make anyone feel wealthy. But a family earning \$50,000 a year is among the top one percent of the world's richest people. What if you're lucky to clear \$20,000? You're still in the top 11 percent. Even a high school student working 20 hours a week for minimum wage pockets more than 85 percent of the world's earners do. (Check out globalrichlist.com to see where you fall.)



■ Learn from who you serve.

Don't miss the "wealth" that exists among the financially poor. They often have insights and perspectives we miss when leaning on the perceived securities of our money.

■ Challenge kids to think about one tangible goal they can achieve back home.

Then hold one another accountable.

■ Do a post-trip fund raiser solely to meet the needs you encountered.

Your trip can be a beginning, not an end.

■ Find ways to be advocates back home.

Identify issues important to kids (local ownership, fair-trade coffee, worker exploitation, and so on), and help them brainstorm tangible ways to live justly.

■ Get to know "under-resourced" people in your own community.

You don't need to cross borders to extend love and encourage relationships.

We miss the point of short-term mission trips if they're simply a summer programming event. Treat them as opportunities to highlight what may be clouding your vision in your own community. That way, mission trips can help shepherd your youth group to missional living. ■

This isn't a "you're overpaid" guilt trip. But as another season of short-term mission trips begins, it's good to think about the economic disparity we encounter on them. These summer trips often provide an up-close look at poverty while exposing the greed, excess, and waste in our own lives.

When done well, service projects and short-term mission trips are one of the most powerful ways to teach stewardship, sacrifice, and generosity. The challenge is that these experiences are relatively brief. What starts as high-minded resolve to change our spending habits is usually abandoned after a few days back home.

With some intentional planning and follow-through, however, the determination to live with a new perspective regarding money and possessions need not be a passing fancy. Instead, mission trips can be a transforming rite of passage. Take yours to the next level with these suggestions: