

Dear Missionary,

Congratulations on responding to the call of God to be a missionary for Him to His beloved people of Haiti! This is an exciting opportunity that can bring some life-changing results. I would like to share with you some important thoughts to help you prepare that you may get the best out of this mission experience.

**Prayer:** First, pray! Read the Scriptures. As a missionary you are an ambassador of Christ, and you cannot represent Him if you do not know Him. Remember also that you will be seeking Him in the face of everyone that you meet in Haiti. Keep in mind that the poorest of the poor are Jesus in disguise. Because you are a missionary, expect spiritual warfare. Prepare with the instructions from Ephesians 6:10-20. Also, everyone must obtain an intercessor, someone who is committed to pray for you before, everyday during, and for a couple days after the trip.

**Culture:** Remember that you are going to a whole different culture. Haitians are very warm and welcoming. Particularly in the mountains, they love to receive a wave from you, and you will enjoy the big smile or the wave returned back to you. The children will flock to you so you can play with them; many of them do not receive that kind of playful attention from young adults or adults.

There are two main rules for our mission: 1. No complaining and 2. Be flexible. Follow these simple rules, and you will make life easier both for yourself and for everyone else. Be prepared to experience some discomfort if necessary such as riding in the back of a truck. Expect plans to change and just “go with the flow!” Do not try to be in control. Remember that as a missionary you must pour yourself out, as Jesus did, so that you can give yourself over to service with humility, joy and sacrificial love.

TIME works very differently in Haiti. In the mountains for example, not many people even have watches; so telling them to meet for church at 6:00 is meaningless. It is easier to say “in the evening around 6”. Also do not be surprised if you do not have the church packed precisely at 6 o’clock. Time is much more fluid for Haitians because they have different priorities. A helpful analogy that another missionary has used is the following: our culture in America is task-oriented whereas in Haiti it is people-oriented; in America, we are time-sensitive, in Haiti they are situation sensitive. We must grasp this point so we do not judge the people by our own standards. Just remember that in Haiti we will operate on Haitian time.

Remember that on a group mission like ours, there are several “groups” involved for the success of the mission, and each depends on the other; that will affect time estimates greatly. For example, we may decide that one morning we will leave the house at 8:30, but it’s 8:45, and the food is still not ready! Your frustration must be conquered in light of the fact that these women who are cooking are the first to get up and the last to go to bed and that they are ALWAYS doing something to serve. Also, they cannot just turn on a stove; rather they have to make sure someone fetches dry wood, water, and other items they will need. Cooking takes much more time and effort in Haiti.

Be open to enjoying food from another culture. Haitian food will usually consist of rice (main part of the meal), beans, meat (chicken, beef, goat), plantains, pasta, salad,

potatoes, and more. We usually have some freshly squeezed juice with the meals. Mornings bring good coffee, hot chocolate, eggs, bread and other goodies. Try a bit of everything and be sure not to be shy about eating. The women LOVE it when you eat a lot of the food. NOTE: DO NOT drink the water from a faucet or the stream. You WILL get sick. The staff will direct you as to what water has been purified. If you are ever in doubt, do not drink the water.

**Dress:** Haiti is a tropical country so dress accordingly. Khaki shorts and t-shirts are great. Please dress modestly, especially for the Mass. Haitians, out of reverence, typically do not wear shorts to mass.

**Security:** You can get information from the State Department's website: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_917.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_917.html) Our time will be primarily in the mountains with simple peasants in the villages, where it is very peaceful. When we go through the city, please be careful not to take pictures directly of people watching you; most people don't like that. If you have doubts, please ask a leader.

**Preparation:** Before you go on the trip, be sure to do the following:

- OBTAIN INTERCESSOR
- TURN IN APPLICATION & MEDICAL INFO FORM TO GROUP LEADER
- TURN IN LEGAL WAIVER TO GROUP LEADER
- GO THROUGH THE ENTIRE PACKET
- GIVE ALL CHECKS TO YOUR GROUP LEADER
- VISIT YOUR DOCTOR/TRAVEL CLINIC NOW TO GET NECESSARY VACCINES AND MEDICATION (For a list visit: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationHaiti.aspx> )
- MAKE THREE (3) COPIES OF PASSPORT INFO PAGE AND:
  - o GIVE ONE TO YOUR GROUP LEADER
  - o LEAVE ONE WITH A RELATIVE OR FRIEND
  - o KEEP ONE WITH YOU, *NOT* IN YOUR PASSPORT
- PACK YOUR BAG FOLLOWING PROPER AIRPORT SECURITY GUIDELINES

You will learn more as you prepare for the trip with your coordinator, and especially when you are actually in Haiti. I am looking forward to working with you as we serve Jesus through our brothers and sisters in Haiti!

Sincerely,  
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Julie Forrest, Mission Trip Coordinator

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