



# *Preparing for Your Involvement in West Africa*

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# Basic Logistics



## Passports

Make sure that each person has a passport that is **valid at least 6 months past your planned return**. To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 8,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States (for locations and instructions visit <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>) with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license. These items will be sent to the Passport Agency and your passport and documents will be mailed to you.

This process can take from 2 weeks to 6 months. Prepare to get your passport in plenty of time so that you can then submit your passport with your visa application to the appropriate embassy.

## Visas and Other Entry Requirements

A visa (entry permit) is required to enter most countries in West Africa. To obtain a visa, you will need to send your passport, application, fee and other paperwork to the country's embassy in the United States.

Remember, requirements and fees are subject to change. Contact the embassy before trying to obtain a visa to receive up-to-date information. Specific details for each country:

- **Benin:** Passport with minimum validity of six months and visa required. Proof of yellow fever immunization needed. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Benin, 2124 Kalorama Road, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/232-6656/7/8).
- **Burkina Faso:** Passport and visa required. Proof of compulsory yellow fever immunization needed and cholera vaccination recommended. For more information, call the Embassy of Burkina Faso, 2340 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/332-5577) or Honorary Consulate in Los Angeles, CA (213/575-5567) or New Orleans, LA (504/284-6351).
- **Cote d'Ivoire:** Passport required. U.S. citizens traveling to Côte d'Ivoire for business or tourism do not require visas for stays of up to 90 days. An international health certificate showing current yellow fever immunization is required. For specific requirements, consult the Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, 3421 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/797-0300) or Honorary Consulate: CA (415/391-0176).
- **The Gambia:** Passport, visa and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required. Travelers are urged to obtain the latest information on customs and entry requirements from the Embassy of The Gambia, 1156 15th Street, NW, Suite 905, Washington, DC 20005 (202/785-1399); or from the Permanent

Mission of The Gambia to the U.N. at 820 Second Avenue, Suite 900 –C, New York, NY 10071 (212/949-6640).

- **Ghana:** Passport and visa required. Proof of yellow fever vaccination required. For additional information, contact the Embassy of Ghana, 3512 International Drive, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/686-4520) or Consulate General, 19 East 47th St., New York, NY 10017 (212/832-1300). Internet: [www.ghana-embassy.org](http://www.ghana-embassy.org)
- **Guinea:** Passport, yellow fever vaccination and visa required. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Guinea, 2112 Leroy St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/986-4300).
- **Mali:** Passport and visa required. Obtain visa in advance. Proof of yellow fever vaccination required. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Mali, 2130 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/332-2249). Internet: <http://www.maliembassy.us/>
- **Niger:** Passport, visa and proof of yellow fever vaccination required. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Niger, 2204 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/483-4224). Internet: [www.nigerembassyusa.org](http://www.nigerembassyusa.org)
- **Nigeria:** Passport (with minimum 6 months validity) and visa required. Proof of yellow fever vaccination required. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Nigeria, 3519 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/822-1500 or 1522) or the Consulate General in New York (212/808-0301). Internet: [www.nigeriaembassyusa.org](http://www.nigeriaembassyusa.org)
- **Senegal:** Passport and onward/return ticket required. Proof of yellow fever vaccination required. Visa not needed for stay of up to 90 days. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Senegal, 2112 Wyoming Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/234-0540). Internet: [www.senegal-tourism.com](http://www.senegal-tourism.com).
- **Togo:** Passport and visa required. Proof of yellow fever vaccination required. For more information, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Togo, 2208 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202/234-4212/3). Internet: [www.visatogoabroad.com](http://www.visatogoabroad.com)

## Airline Tickets

Airline tickets should be researched, purchased and confirmed at least 1-3 months prior to travel. Often, purchasing tickets in advance allows for a greater discount. It is generally best to get a passport before obtaining a ticket.

## Vaccinations

A current Yellow Fever vaccination is **required** for entry to all countries in West Africa. This shot is valid for 10 years. Contact your local health department to find out where

you can obtain this vaccination. Generally, you will need proof of this vaccination to apply for a visa.

Other recommended vaccinations are: Meningitis, Hepatitis, Tetanus, Typhoid.

For more health information go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## **Malaria**

**Prevention** is the best treatment. You should arrive in West Africa with some form of oral malaria prophylactic (preventative).

The best prophylactic is the one that works best for you! Consult a physician for your prescription. Some commonly used prophylactics are: a combination of Paludrine 100-200 mg daily and Chloroquine (Nivaquine) 300 mg base weekly; Lariam (Mephlaquine) 250 mg once a week; or Doxycycline 100 mg taken daily.

The anopheles female mosquito feeds (bites) in the early morning (5:30 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.) and early evening (5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.). Spraying with insect repellent such as OFF is highly recommended to help prevent bites.

## **Travel Insurance**

Volunteers are required to have travel insurance for the duration of their trip, including flight time. Check to see if your team leader already arranged this. If not, obtain insurance at minimal cost through Adams & Associates International at <http://www.aaintl.com> or (800) 922-8438.



## What to Pack

Highly recommended:

- Prescription medications you are taking
- Extra pair of contacts or prescription glasses
- Small “stash” of your favorite candy or snacks (granola bars, snack crackers, trail mix, beef jerky, snack cakes, etc. – nothing that will melt)
- Loose, comfortable, modest clothing – cotton works well
  - For men: Slacks, khakis, jeans, t-shirts, and polos are appropriate attire. Shirts should remain untucked. Shorts are not acceptable in public unless you are playing sports.
  - For women (above the age of 12): Calf-length skirts and dresses are appropriate attire. Pants and shorts are not acceptable in public. In some places sleeveless shirts are not acceptable and/or heads must be covered with a scarf or other head wrap. Check with your missionary host.
- Bible and devotional material
- Small flashlight and batteries
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Comfortable tennis shoes or hiking boots
- Sandals and/or flip-flops
- Insulated water jug
- Antibacterial hand wipes or liquid hand sanitizer
- First aid supplies (Band-aids, anti-itch cream, antiseptic cream and over-the-counter medications for colds, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, headache, etc.)
- Travel-size toilet paper or tissue packets
- Personal toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, contact solution, dental floss, Q-tips, razor, feminine hygiene products, wash cloth, etc.)
- Plug adapters (check online for the adapter you will need)

You may also want to bring:

- Small book-bag/backpack
- Camera (and film, if your camera uses it)
- Sunglasses (note: it is important to remove sunglasses when talking with someone or looking them directly in the eye)
- Hat (women might need bandana or scarf head covering)

- ❑ Travel-size sewing kit
- ❑ Writing supplies (journal, pad, pen/pencil)
- ❑ Chap stick
- ❑ Lotion, light face moisturizer
- ❑ Package of Clorox cleaning wipes
- ❑ Alarm clock
- ❑ Ear plugs and eye mask (for sleeping in villages)

## **What NOT to Pack**

- ❑ Bottled water (can be purchased on the field)
- ❑ Large rolls of toilet paper (can be purchased on the field)
- ❑ Liquids or items that could melt – anything liquid or squishy should be placed in a double zip lock bag
- ❑ Expensive jewelry or watches
- ❑ Anything irreplaceable – while unlikely, it's possible items could be lost or stolen
- ❑ Hairdryers, mp3 players, laptops, and other appliances that only work on 110 voltage (West African voltage is 220 – check the labels on your appliances. Purchase voltage converters or transformers if necessary.)

## **Packing Your Carry-On Bag**

It's possible your checked luggage will miss a connection and not arrive on the same plane as you. Pack your carry-on accordingly and be sure to include:

- ❑ Passport, International Certificate of Vaccination, tickets, money, credit cards
- ❑ Contact names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of missionary host for filling out immigration paperwork and in case of travel delays
- ❑ Change of clothes, toiletries and prescription medicines (including malaria prophylaxis). See <http://www.tsa.dhs.gov/travelers/index.shtm> for current restrictions regarding what you can take onboard the airplane.
- ❑ Snack and small roll of toilet paper, in case of unexpected delay
- ❑ Camera and other valuable electronic items
- ❑ Instructions for getting through your arrival airport

## Packing Tips

If at all possible, do not send your checked baggage unlocked. TSA approved locks are acceptable.

Pack discreetly; wrap personal electronics in clothing so they won't be so visible.

If you purchase anything new to bring, for yourself or for ministry, take it out of the original container and remove the price tags. Keep the receipts separately, if needed.

If you are bringing cassettes, videos or other items to give away, divide them equally between all team members' luggage (i.e. do not bring a whole suitcase of videos; it looks to customs officials like you will be selling them.)

Enclose items that might leak (liquid or powder) in Ziploc bags and pad them with clothing.

Do not pack any non-canned food item in the same bag with soap, detergent or strongly perfumed items – the food may take on the flavor of the item. If you must, separate them with layers of clothes or other objects.

If using a soft-sided suitcase or duffel bag, enclose everything in large plastic bags within the suitcase to protect items from rain, in case they are left outside and uncovered at the airport.

Display your destination address prominently on the inside of each piece of luggage (write it on a piece of paper or index card and leave it on top of your clothes or taped to the inside of your suitcase) as well as in an outside zippered compartment if there are any.



## Basic Health

### Jet Lag

Jet lag is the temporary disruption of the body's normal biological rhythms after high-speed air travel through several time zones. This causes the body to become sluggish and unusually tired.

Adjust your “internal clock” to the new time zone as quickly as possible. You may feel that you are “ready to go” and see it all, but you could crash and burn at any time.

Try to maintain bedtime according to local time and not U.S. time. Go to bed even if you are not sleepy.

### Rest

Give your body plenty of rest, even if you have to skip an activity. The heat can really get to you and will subtly zap your energy.

If possible, take seriously the local custom of *sieste*, or rest after the noon meal. (This is most common in French-speaking countries.) This is the hottest part of the day and many West Africans take several hours to rest. Stores and businesses are closed during these hours as well. Even if you cannot sleep, resting your body and mind will be of great benefit.

### Water

Drink only bottled, filtered and chlorinated water – never tap water.

Drink water frequently to avoid dehydration – about 3-4 liters a day! Take water with you whenever you go out.

Make sure you brush teeth with bottled or filtered water.

Please, do not ask to drink from another person’s thermos bottle; this is a quick way to spread germs.

### Clean Hands

Bacteria and germs abound. Make it a practice to wash your hands IMMEDIATELY upon returning to your residence, preferably with an antibacterial soap. Do this also at other convenient times during the day.

Whenever possible wash hands before eating and in a way that is not offensive to your African host.

## **Sun**

Be aware of the sun – burns can happen quickly and be severe. Try to avoid the afternoon sun.

Wear a hat and sunscreen and stay in the shade as much as possible. Please check with missionaries if sunglasses are okay to wear. Some Africans may look at you with suspicion. When talking with someone, one should always remove the sunglasses so they can see your eyes.

If possible, take several baths/showers a day to help keep yourself cool. Even sponge baths help. Sometimes water is carried from a far away well, so be sensitive to your host. You may have to carry your own water from the well.

## **Malaria**

Take your anti-malarial medication as directed by your physician. There is no immunity to malaria.

Use mosquito repellent, especially in the evenings.

## **Eating**

Do not eat fresh vegetables or fruit unless you know they have been cleaned properly.

If you are preparing your own meals, wash and treat all uncooked fruits and vegetables with chlorine. (Fill sink or dish pan with filtered water and add a capful of bleach. Leave vegetables and fruits in the bleach water for 20 minutes and then remove, dry and refrigerate.)

Enjoy any food that has been cooked and is still warm! If you are allergic to something it's okay to decline the food and let people know why you can't eat it. (Remember, your body needs nourishment.)

## **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea can be common with the stress of travel and change of schedule, but especially if you're experiencing new foods and different water. Most diarrhea is viral and will stop in 3-5 days without medications. Anti-diarrhea products such as Imodium or Lomotil are not usually advisable because they only treat symptoms and not the source of the problem. Inform your missionary host so they can advise you on the best way to treat diarrhea.

If you get diarrhea (defined by three or more watery, loose stools in a 24 hour period), you will need to increase your fluid intake, adding a pinch of salt, several teaspoons of sugar and a squeeze of lemon or orange juice to every quart of water.

## **Medications**

Be sure to bring any prescription medications you are currently taking or may need during the volunteer trip.

Someone on the team should bring a travel first aid kit.

Bring a small supply of basic over the counter medications: Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, Tylenol, ibuprofen, etc.

## **General**

Try to keep germs to yourself – don't drink from another person's thermos bottle. If you're sick, don't help with food preparation.

Always wear shoes outdoors.

Do not touch dogs or cats – they usually are not domesticated or vaccinated, and are NOT considered pets.

Immediately clean and disinfect any wound, however small. Keep even minor scrapes, cuts, and blisters clean and covered. Open wounds of any kind can become infected easily.

Be aware of emotional strains and stresses. (Radical changes in environment can really cause stress on your body.) Tell your missionary host and team leader if you are feeling a little "off," physically or emotionally. They can help you prevent an illness or stressor from getting out of hand.

If you have any flu-like symptoms when you return to the USA, be sure to see your doctor AND inform him/her that you've recently been on a mission trip to a country in the tropics where malaria is prevalent.

# Cultural Do's and Don'ts



Be aware that some customs change from country to country or even village to village. Keep alert to what others are doing around you and when in doubt, ask your missionary host or a national.

## Attire

Modest and appropriate dress is crucial to a good witness. Dress that is considered modest and appropriate in the USA setting may not be appropriate in West Africa. Make sure you communicate with your missionary host about appropriate clothing BEFORE you arrive on the field. In public, men should wear long pants, not shorts, and ladies should wear calf-length skirts or dresses. Women should not wear sleeveless shirts.

Care must be taken when wearing jewelry. Certain locally made bracelets, pendants and rings have religious meanings and should not be worn by Christians.

Don't wear sunglasses when interacting with nationals.

## Eating & Drinking

Always eat with your right hand. The left hand is used for unclean tasks, and it is very offensive to use it for eating, holding clean things, etc. If you are left-handed, ask your missionary host for advice.

Before eating, wash both hands if possible. Never leave the eating area after you wash your hands. If you do leave the area, rewash your hands before eating again.

You may have the opportunity to eat out of a common bowl. Only eat what is in front of you. Imagine the bowl divided into pie pieces. Each person gets a pie piece; you only eat the pie piece directly in front of you.

Don't expect much talking during eating. Africans eat and then talk.

Visitors to a home are often offered a drink of water as they are greeted. Ask your host missionary what is the appropriate way to handle water offered in a cup that is not bottled or filtered. Drinking the water is a way of accepting hospitality. You may also thank your host, politely indicating that you don't need to drink.

## Photography

Ask permission before taking photographs, especially of people. Some people may not want their photo taken for various reasons.

Some people may ask for a tip or a copy of the photo. Giving a small tip is appropriate, but try not to make promises about copies. You may never see the person again!

It is **AGAINST THE LAW** to photograph airports, police stations, military units, hospitals and other government buildings or personnel. Tip: If a flag is flying in front of a building, it likely belongs to the government.

## **Privacy**

Americans sometimes sense a lack of privacy while in West Africa. There will almost always be someone around watching, talking, staring, sitting with you. It is normal to be constantly surrounded by people.

Just because you are with people does not mean you have to be in constant conversation with them. Learn to be comfortable with silence.

While visiting in West Africa, you will see people doing publicly what Americans consider should be done privately. Urinating in public along the side of the street is common, especially among men. Breastfeeding is done whenever and wherever it is necessary with no attempt to cover up. It is not uncommon in rural areas for children to be bare-bottomed and women to be bare-breasted.

Your response should be the same as the Africans, pretend as if nothing unusual is happening. Do not stare and do not appear shocked.

## **Beggars & Other Requests for Help**

You will frequently come across beggars, especially in larger cities. Ask your missionary host which is best to do in the area, give money and food or not to give anything.

It is not considered impolite for someone to ask for things (a gift, a personal possession or money). It is also not impolite to say “No.”

People may ask you help them move to the United States (financial assistance, help obtaining a work permit, etc.). Politely explain that you cannot assist.

## **Gift Giving**

Giving gifts is an issue that requires thought and guidance. While not “forbidden,” it is strongly discouraged. According to this culture, if you give to one, you must give to all. Therefore, it is best not to give, since jealousy or injured relationships could occur, and those you’re ministering to could begin to depend on you for other needs.

Remember: We do not want the Gospel to be confused with a “give-away program.” The Gospel should be accepted as a life-changing experience rather than a means to obtain material gain. Remember, the **MOST IMPORTANT** thing you can give them is Jesus and His love for them.

Note: It is entirely appropriate to bring a small gift of thanks to your village host, spending no more than five dollars. Examples of appropriate gifts: an inexpensive watch,

flashlight with batteries, ball cap, t-shirt, a piece of American cloth (two yards), lotion, etc.

## **Greetings and Leave-taking**

Greetings and leave-taking are essential parts of interpersonal relationships. Make an effort to learn a few words of greeting in the local language and be prepared to greet everyone you meet.

A greeting usually consists of a handshake, a smile and a few basic phrases (good morning, how are you? etc). It is also polite to inquire about a person's health and family.

Always greet when walking up to someone. If someone is walking up to you they will greet you. Be sure to greet everyone in a group, not just the person you know or need to talk to.

Always greet the older person first. Start with the older men, then younger men and then women.

In some countries women should be careful about shaking hands or touching men. Always let them initiate. In others women are free to shake hands with anyone. Ask your missionary host which is most appropriate for your people group.

When leaving a place, always announce that the time has come for you to leave. Wait for them to "give you the road," or permission to leave.

In general, your gestures should not indicate that you are in a hurry to get rid of someone. Linger a bit when saying goodbye to someone on the street. Announce that you are preparing to leave someone's home well before you intend to leave.

## **Relationships**

Relationships between males and females are not the same as in the U.S. Hugging, holding hands and other public signs of affection are not culturally appropriate, even for married couples.

Do not visit an individual of the opposite sex in their room or house unless there are chaperones present. You need to meet out of doors in view of others.

Females will likely have to deal with regular marriage proposals. This is almost always done in a joking manner and the best response is to not take it seriously. If it were a real proposal they would do it privately or through someone else.

It is acceptable (and common) for members of the same sex to hold hands. This is a sign of friendship.

In public, younger women should not look men directly in the eyes when walking on the street, greeting or in casual conversation, especially if the women are alone. This can be seen as flirting. You should be polite and smile and nod as you walk along, but you do not need to stop or enter into conversation unless there is a reason for doing so. Older

women may smile and nod more freely than younger women. It is acceptable to look into the eyes of men you are being introduced to, especially if they are Christians, or men you have met before.

## **Church**

When attending a church service, be prepared to introduce yourself during the service. Opportunities for giving testimony, preaching, or special music are possible – perhaps even on the spur of the moment. Try to prepare ahead of time, just in case.

## **Public Prayer**

Do not be afraid to pray in public (unless you are in a high-security area). This is an excellent opportunity to show that Christians are also people of prayer.

Ask people if you can pray for them and their village or neighborhood. Pray with people who have problems, express sadness, or ask for help.

Do not touch or “lay hands” on people when praying with them.

Muslims often pray with hands palms up, out in front – it is appropriate for you to do likewise.

## **Bargaining**

In West Africa bartering for the best price is a normal practice. Tourist items are often initially offered at a price two or three times the actual value.

It is appropriate to bargain for a lower price.

Do not offer a price unless you are serious about making the purchase. If you offer a price and the seller accepts, you are expected to purchase the item.

Remember, they will not sell the item at a loss.

When bargaining be friendly and think of it as a game. You’ll enjoy it!

As a general rule, do not bargain for day-to-day items such as food, toiletries, etc.

## **Village Life**

Sometimes Africans remove their shoes before entering a home. Watch their lead and do as they do.

Many people sit and/or pray on thin floor mats. Never step on a mat with your shoes on. Before you sit on a mat, it is also polite to take off your shoes.

Observe how the men sit and how the women sit on mats and do likewise. (Sometimes it is straight-legged, sometimes with legs folded, etc.)

Look for opportunities to join in on village activities. If work is being done while you are sitting with a group, join in. They may tell you that you do not have to help – they are just being polite because you are a visitor. Insist that you want to help. This is a major way to build relationships and break down barriers.

### **Right hand vs. Left hand**

The left hand is generally considered “unclean” since it is used for personal hygiene. Using your left hand for eating or offering items to others can be very offensive. It is always best to use your right hand.



# **Safety and Security**

## **Money Exchange**

ONLY change money at official shops, banks or a mission office. Always ask for a receipt.

## **Personal Information**

Be cautious about giving out personal information such as where you are staying in West Africa, your stateside address and telephone number or e-mail address. You may receive unexpected visits, solicitations for financial assistance or even a collect call. This does not apply to personal information required on official documents as you enter and exit airports.

## **Bugs & Snakes**

Don't be afraid of the bugs, spiders and lizards that you may see. Most are harmless.

Snakes, scorpions and other dangerous insects do exist. Wear shoes at all times when outside and covered shoes when walking in the bush or long grass. Carry a flashlight at night.

## **Critical Comments**

Remember, you are guest in the country. Do not write or say anything negative concerning the people, country or the political situation. Always assume that what you say or write will be heard or read by people other than your intended audience.

## **Sharing Your Faith**

Sharing your faith openly and praying in public may not be acceptable in certain countries or settings. Find out what is appropriate in the country where you will be serving.

## **General Safety**

Pickpockets can be a problem. Be cautious as you walk in crowds, particularly in the city and around shopping areas.

Keep your purse and other bags zipped, and do not carry anything in a pocket that you cannot afford to lose.

Do not wear a lot of jewelry or an expensive watch.

Do not carry a lot of money with you.

Don't pull out large sums of money in public.

Do not leave important articles (brief case, camera bag, backpack, etc.) in your vehicle when you're away from it, as it may attract thieves.

When in cities or traveling by vehicle, keep your passport with you at all times. Keep a photocopy of your passport in a safe secondary location.

Walk defensively. Look down frequently to see what you might be stepping in or on, like sewer products or snakes!

Always stay with at least one other person from your group.

Avoid restless crowds.

Carry a flashlight with you at night.



# Spiritual Preparation

It is a necessity to be covered in prayer – before you travel to West Africa, during your ministry and for several weeks after you return home. Spiritual warfare is constant and takes a physical, emotional and spiritual toll.

Be expecting spiritual attacks of all kinds before, during and after the trip. It is important not only to prepare yourself spiritually, but also help prepare your prayer partners to help you with this mission.

## Enlistment of Prayer Partners

Each team member should recruit at least 5 individuals who will pray for them before, during and after the trip. Ask prayer supporters to begin praying at least one month before you depart for the field, and at least one month after you return home. This is an excellent way to involve church members, friends and family members in your mission experience. Keep them informed about what God did as a result of their prayers!

## Journaling

Consider keeping a personal journal as a reminder of how God has worked throughout your mission experience. Remember how God called you and made provisions for you to serve in West Africa. Record special verses, answered prayers, devotional thoughts and even concerns or fears. The journal can be a source of encouragement to you and others as you review what God has done!

## Regular Team Meetings

Plan regular meetings with your team members. Use this time to pray together, as well as to cover trip logistics, ministry preparation and accountability.

## Personal Spiritual Growth

In the period leading up to the trip, make extra efforts to strengthen your personal walk with the Lord.

- Regularly attend worship services.
- Make daily quiet time with the Lord a priority.
- Pray daily for the members of your team.
- Spend time praying for the West African people you will visit. Ask God how He wants to use you while you are here.
- Be aware you are about to experience a culture very different from your own. Pray that God will give you an open mind and an open heart for this new culture.
- Prepare your personal testimony in a simple way to share with the people you will encounter. Make sure that your testimony can be understood by someone who is not from your culture.

## Pre-Trip Devotionals/Studies

Some excellent pre-trip devotional and study resources exist:

- *Before You Pack Your Bag, Prepare Your Heart* ([www.campfireresources.com](http://www.campfireresources.com))
- *Follow Me: Becoming a Lifestyle Prayerwalker* (<http://resources.imb.org> or 800-999-3113)
- *God's Heart for the Nations* (<http://resources.imb.org> or 800-999-3113)
- *Impact Your World: Basic Training for Mission Teams* (<http://resources.imb.org> or 800-999-3113)

## Pre-Trip Activities

Invite prayer partners to participate in a group activity that gets them as excited about your trip as you are! Or join together as a team for a special event before you depart.

- Women's Prayer Tea – Pray for Muslim women while moving through Islamic prayer positions. Guides available at <http://resources.imb.org> or 800-999-3113.
- Flavors of West Africa – Practice traditional West African hospitality while serving guests chocolate- and coffee-themed treats. Resources available at [www.gowestafrica.org/pray/events](http://www.gowestafrica.org/pray/events).
- Devotional Dinner – Find West African recipes in the library or at [www.gowestafrica.org/media](http://www.gowestafrica.org/media), then cook and serve a traditional West Africa meal. After the meal, present a drama or narrative story about the people you will be going to serve. Spend time praying for the trip and the people group.
- Daily Prayer Guide – Create a daily prayer guide so that church members and other prayer partners can be lifting up specific prayer needs each day of the trip.
- Commissioning Service – Ask your church to host a special service in which they dedicate your trip to the Lord and cover you in prayer before you leave.

## Post-Trip Activities

In the weeks following your return home, continue praying for the people group or country you have visited. Unless you go back to West Africa, never again will your heart be so very in tune with what God is doing ... consider it a prolonged prayer walk!

Be sure to let your prayer partners know what happened during the trip. They'll want to know about the many ways God worked in response to their prayers. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Set aside a specific time period (30 days, four Sundays, etc.) for concerted prayer for the people group or country.
- Invite friends, prayer partners and team members to a post-trip dinner where you share photos, stories and prayer requests, along with favorite African foods.

- Prepare a video, slideshow or other presentation to share in a worship service, so that the rest of the church can hear how God worked on your trip! Include a time of prayer for the people group.



## Staying Involved

We hope your mission trip is only the beginning (or, if you are a returnee, the continuation) of a lifetime commitment to the task of sharing the Gospel in West Africa.

You will now be the resident expert on Africa in your family, your church and in your other communities of influence. Consider yourself a part of the West Africa team, and utilize the realms of influence God has given you to help us tell the story of what He is doing in West Africa -- and what He longs to do.

Here are some suggestions to stay involved, involve your church and others, or consider long-term involvement as a missionary.

### Four Easy Ways to be an Advocate

1. Tell about your experiences. Ask your pastor or mission's leader for opportunities to share in a worship service, Sunday School class or missions group. Consider making a slideshow or video of your experience or people group.
2. Use pre-made videos in Bible study and missions groups. Many West Africa videos are available online at [www.gowestafrica.org/media](http://www.gowestafrica.org/media).
3. Distribute West Africa-focused materials to churches and individuals. Set up a display table in your church's foyer or post materials on your church bulletin board. To order or download resources, go to [www.gowestafrica.org/media](http://www.gowestafrica.org/media) or <http://imbresources.org/index.htm/fa/store.prodlist/CatID/34/DeptID/1.cfm>.
4. Encourage church members and other Christian friends to subscribe to the free bi-monthly newsletter, *The Intercessor Connection*. This will allow them to receive stories and prayer requests on a regular basis. They can fill out a subscription form online at [www.gowestafrica.org/pray/signup.php](http://www.gowestafrica.org/pray/signup.php).

### Three Ways Your Church Can Be More Involved

There are many avenues available for churches and individuals to be vitally involved in mission work in West Africa. Here are three specific opportunities:

1. *Pray*. Here are some ideas for specific prayer strategies:
  - Pick a people group to pray for -- you may want to focus on one group, or you could emphasize a different group every month or year. Visit [www.gowestafrica.org/peoplegroups/](http://www.gowestafrica.org/peoplegroups/) for information on West Africa's priority unreached people groups.
  - Formalize your commitment to pray for a specific West African people group through a PRAYERplus Partnership. Visit [www.imb.org/CompassionNet/prayerplus.asp](http://www.imb.org/CompassionNet/prayerplus.asp) for more information.

- Plan a special event or "virtual prayer walk" to lift up the missionaries and unreached people groups of West Africa. Find resources at [www.gowestafrica.org/pray/](http://www.gowestafrica.org/pray/).
  - Distribute West Africa's bi-monthly prayer newsletter to church members or Bible study classes. Visit [www.gowestafrica.org/pray](http://www.gowestafrica.org/pray) to print each issue or subscribe to the e-mail version.
2. *Partner with a missionary team or Baptist convention.* Work alongside an existing missionary team or West African Baptist convention to advance witnessing and church planting among a specific people group or in a certain country. Learn more at [www.gowestafrica.org/partneringchurch](http://www.gowestafrica.org/partneringchurch) and [www.gowestafrica.org/baptistpartners](http://www.gowestafrica.org/baptistpartners).
  3. *Engage a people group with no missionary presence.* Some West African people groups are so small that it's likely a full-time missionary will never be sent to live among them. Your church can be the one to take the gospel to a group who otherwise may never hear! Check out [www.gowestafrica.org/engagingchurch](http://www.gowestafrica.org/engagingchurch).

## Materials for Distribution

The IMB Resource Center offers many free West Africa materials, including maps, brochures, bookmarks, postcards and calendars. Inexpensive items are also available for purchase, including T-shirts, wristbands, videos and children's prayer journals.

Check out <http://imbresources.org/index.htm/fa/store.prodlist/CatID/34/DeptID/1.cfm>.

## Future Opportunities for Service

Your mission trip may be God's way of telling you He wants to continue using you in West Africa.

If you sense God leading you to return for a **two or three-year** stint, check out:

- ISC: <http://going.imb.org/go2years/isc.htm> (Individuals, couples and families serving two or three years.)
- Journeyman: <http://going.imb.org/go2years/journeyman.htm> (Unmarried college graduates in their twenties, serving two years.)
- Masters: <http://going.imb.org/go2years/masters.htm> (Individuals or couples at least 50 years old, serving up to two or three years.)

If you believe God may be leading you to **career** service, please check out:

- Career: <http://going.imb.org/longterm.asp> (Lifelong commitment to cross-cultural study, language learning and ministry.)
- Associate: <http://going.imb.org/longterm.asp> (Four-year assignments, often renewable, with modified requirements due to age or education.)

If you want to serve in another **short-term volunteer project** in West Africa, visit <http://www.gowestafrica.org/gosend/go.htm#>. (This site also lists current ISC, journeyman, masters, career and associate requests.)



# Ministry Preparation

You want to be absolutely prepared for every kind of opportunity you may have to bring the Gospel to West Africa. We've included three of the most practical and effective tools volunteers are using on the field. If your team leader hasn't provided other ministry training, prepare yourself with one or more of these tools:

## Creation to Christ Story (C2C)

For generations, West Africans have passed down their traditions through stories. Stories are perhaps the best way people in this oral culture process truth. The Creation to Christ story is a panoramic look at the Bible that can easily be memorized and retold time and again. This story is helping people all across the region understand God's plan for salvation from the beginning of time.

## Prayerwalking

Prayerwalking can break down spiritual barriers and claim an area for Christ. This guide offers tips and scriptures for how to do it.

## Two-Minute Testimony

Learn to create a version of your testimony that can be shared in two minutes. Your story includes a life before Christ, a realization of need, a commitment and your life now. This lesson will also help you determine how to develop your testimony for a West African setting.



# Creation to Christ Story

## Part 1

I want to tell you a story. This story is from a book called the Bible. Men did not make up the Bible. It is the word of the Most High God. These stories are true and reliable because they are the words of the Most High God.

True story.  
God's word.  
Most High  
God is most  
powerful.

There is only one God, and He is the Most High God. The Most High God is more powerful than men and kingdoms. The Most High God is more powerful than other gods such as the fire god, sun god, or dragon god. He is also more powerful than idols made by men. The Most High God is the most powerful.

## Part 2

In the beginning the Most High God existed. The Most High God is the Creator. He created everything on earth and in heaven and is all powerful over everything. His name is God.

Most High  
God is  
Creator.  
Made  
everything.  
It was good.

When God began to create things, He just used His words. He spoke and everything came to being. He created angels to worship and serve Him. They were very beautiful.

God created everything in 6 days. [He created the sky, land, water, mountains, oceans, sun, moon, stars, all plants, and animals. He created everything.] Finally, He created man according to His image. God created man to enjoy all that He has created. God created everything and saw that it was good.

## Part 3

God placed the man and woman in a beautiful garden to live. They had a very good relationship. He told them to take care of the garden and enjoy everything. He gave them a special command: they could eat from every tree in the garden except one. If they ate from that one tree, they would die. Man and woman listened to God and had a wonderful relationship with Him in the garden.

Man & woman  
in garden.  
Good relations  
with God.  
Disobeyed  
God.  
This is sin.  
Broken  
relationship.

However, do you remember the angels God created? One of the angels was very smart and beautiful. This angel became very proud. He wanted to be like God and to have the other angels to worship him instead of God. Only God deserves all the worship and service. Therefore God cast the bad angel, Satan, and the other angels who listened to him out of heaven. These bad angels are known as demons.

One day, Satan tempted the woman, named Eve, to eat the food from the tree that was forbidden. [Satan lied to the woman. He told Eve that if she ate of the tree, she would be just like the Most High God.] Eve listened to Satan and ate the fruit. Then she gave it to her husband, Adam, to eat. Both of them disobeyed God's command. Disobeying God's command is sin. God is righteous and holy. He must punish sin. God cast the man and the woman out of the garden, and their relationship with God was broken. Man and God were now separated forever.

Like Adam and Eve, all people since then have sinned by not listening to God's commands and are separated from God. The result of sin is eternal death. We cannot live with God forever.

#### **Part 4**

Over time, the number of people on earth multiplied. God loved them very much and wanted them to have a relationship with Him. He gave them 10 commandments to follow. Remember God is perfect and holy, so we must be perfect and holy to live with him. [The 10 commandments teach man how to relate to God and how to relate to people. Some of the commands were: do not worship other gods or make idols; honor your parents; do not lie, steal, murder or commit adultery.] However, no one was able to obey all of these commands. So, each time they sinned, God allowed them to repent of their sins and offer a blood sacrifice to take the place of their punishment. This sacrifice was shedding the blood of a perfect animal. If they would repent and offer the blood sacrifice, God would forgive them. Only by the shedding of blood can man's sin be forgiven. However, man kept sinning and the sin sacrifice became a ritual rather than something from their heart. God became tired of the blood of animals. The shedding of animal's blood was never sufficient to bring men back to God.

People multiplied.  
10 commands.  
Sacrificial system: blood.  
Men kept disobeying and insincere sacrifices.

#### **Part 5**

Remember that God loves man whom He created very much. He is angry that they disobey Him, and is sad that they cannot come back to Him. Therefore He gave man a perfect way to reconnect to Him.

God sent Jesus to show us the way back to Himself. Who is Jesus? Jesus is God's son, His one and only son.

Jesus was a wise teacher. [Many people would come to hear Him teach about how they could return to God.]

Jesus was a powerful miracle worker.

Out of love,  
God sends His  
Son – Jesus.  
He is a  
teacher,  
miracle  
worker  
(storm, 5000,  
legion,  
Lazarus),  
perfect.

Jesus calms the storm. [On one occasion, He was with some of His students crossing a large lake on a boat. It was late at night. While Jesus was sleeping, a powerful storm arose on the lake. Jesus' students were very afraid. They awakened Jesus and said, "We are about to die!" Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Immediately the wind and rain stopped.] Jesus' power is greater than natural powers.

Jesus fed over 5,000 people. [On another occasion over 5,000 people came to listen to Jesus teach about God. When evening came they had not eaten and were hungry. Altogether they only had five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus used the five loaves of bread and two fish to feed over 5,000 people.] Jesus' power is able to satisfy man's needs.

Jesus cures a demon possessed man. [Another time, Jesus saw a man with many demons inside him. The man was very powerful and dangerous. Jesus loved the man and cast the demons out of him.] Jesus is more powerful than demons.

Jesus raised the dead. [Jesus' good friend became sick and died. Jesus was not with him. Four days later Jesus arrived at His friend's house. Jesus felt very sad. His friend was already in the tomb. Jesus went to the front of the tomb and said, "Friend, come out." His friend was resurrected. He walked out of the tomb alive!] Jesus' power is greater than death.

Jesus was the good shepherd. He loves and cares for people.

Jesus was perfect. He never sinned.

## **Part 6**

Jesus was the Lamb of God.

People loved Jesus. However, some leaders were jealous of Jesus. These men grabbed Jesus and decided to kill Him. They placed Jesus on a cross. A cross is made from two large pieces of wood formed together in the shape of a large cross. They took His hands and His feet and nailed them to the cross. His precious blood flowed from His hands, feet and body. Jesus suffered much pain on the cross.

Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. Jesus was perfect and did not deserve to die. Instead, Jesus died for all mankind. God loves us and allowed Jesus to die on the cross in our place. Only through the shedding of Jesus' precious blood was God able to forgive our sin. Jesus' death demonstrates God's love

Jesus = Lamb of God. Crucified. Perfect sacrifice. Rose from the dead!
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towards us. However this story doesn't end here. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead!

### **Part 7**

[Before His crucifixion, Jesus told a story to his followers about a father and his sons.

The father had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the inheritance." So he divided his property between them. The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there wasted his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'"

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

We are all like the younger son.] We all have left God and are forever separated from Him. We all must repent and return to God. Jesus can lead us back to God's side. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

We must go through Jesus to return to God. How can we go through Jesus? You must believe in your heart and with your mouth confess that Jesus is the son of God. Do you want to go through Jesus and return to God's side?

Prodigal Son shows us how to come back to God. Go through Jesus only! Do you want to do this?

## Part 8

The Most High God wants you and your whole family to return to Him. To do this, you must go through Jesus. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. Only through Jesus can your relationship with God be restored. Do you want to go through Jesus to return to God's side?

If you want to, you must believe in your heart and confess, *"I have sinned. I have left God. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for my sin. I believe and trust in Jesus. I want to repent and allow Jesus to lead me back to God."*

In the same way I just talked with God, now you talk to God with me. I'll say each part and you repeat after me.

Great! Now your relationship with God is restored.

I know you care about your family. God is waiting for your whole family to believe in Him. Go home and tell your family and friends this good news. God loves them too!

How to accept Christ.  
Pray together.  
You've now been reconnected to God!

# Lesson Plan for Creation to Christ Story

(From Training Rural Trainers curriculum)

## Story

Tell the story, then have 2-3 people re-tell the story.

## Questions

1. What is this story saying?
2. What do you not understand?
3. What does it teach you about God?
4. What should you obey?

## Memory Verse

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

1. What does this verse say?
2. What do you not understand?
3. How should you obey?

## How to Obey

1. Learn to share the Gospel
  - a) Train how to share the “**Creation to Christ** (Most High God Gospel)”
  - b) Each trainee should be able to share the entire **Creation to Christ** story non-stop, start to finish in 15-20 minutes.
  - c) Select a partner for accountability and support.
  - d) Share **Creation to Christ** with those who you have shared your testimony with.

## Pray

Pray right now and commit yourself to share the Gospel with someone in your circle of influence.

## Scriptures for the story

- 2 Timothy 3:16
- Psalm 115:3-8
- 1 Chronicles 16:25-28
- Nehemiah 9:6
- Genesis 1:1 – 2:3
- Genesis 1:26-27

- Genesis 2:4-25
- Ezekiel 28:12b-17
- Isaiah 14:12-15
- Genesis 2:8-9, 16-17; 3:1-24
- Isaiah 59:2
- Romans 3:23
- Romans 6:23a
- Exodus 20:1-17
- Hebrews 9:22b
- Leviticus 1:1-3; 4:13-21
- Isaiah 1:11
- John 3:16
- Luke 1:31-37
- Matthew 5:1-7:29
- John 10:7-15
- Psalm 23:1-3
- I Peter 2:22
- Hebrews 9:14
- John 1:29
- Luke 23:20-25, 32-48
- Revelation 5:9
- I Peter 1:19
- Romans 5:8
- Luke 24:1-50
- Isaiah 53:6
- Luke 15:11-24, 32
- Luke 14:6
- Romans 10:9,10
- John 3:16 (memory verse)



# Prayerwalking

We know you will be in a constant mindset of prayer throughout your trips to the field, but at certain times you will likely have a long trek or drive to get somewhere, or some time for a stroll. Consider using that time for a formal “prayerwalk.”

## How to Do It

- Gather 2- 4 team members or local believers to walk through the village/neighborhood. (Be sure you can find your way back!)
- Consider leaving the camera behind.
- Pray out loud together before you start, asking God to guide your words and steps.
- As you walk, take turns praying out loud conversationally. Don't cause a scene or fail to greet people. (Remember to keep your eyes open.)
- Build on each other's prayers. Silent moments or songs are okay.
- The same thing can be done while traveling in a truck through the bush.

## Prayers

- Pray for God to sensitize you to everything around you – sights, sounds, smells and the people.
- Pray for individual things you see, and overall for God's salvation to overcome the people.
- Consider memorizing or jotting down some scriptures on cards to use during your prayer walk. Some examples: Matthew 9:38, John 17:77, Acts 26:18, Romans 15:13, Philippians 1:9-11, Ephesians 14-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:1

## What Happens When We Prayerwalk?

- God deepens our hearts to the realities and spiritual needs of the people.
- The aroma of God is left on the community, weakening darkness and advancing the Kingdom. (Revelation 5:8)
- We gain insight regarding our role in the community.



# Preparing Your Two-Minute Testimony

Every believer should be prepared to share his personal story of how he came to know who Jesus is, of his personal need for Christ, how he committed his life to Jesus and the difference Christ has made in his daily life. While on the mission field, it's also important to make sure that testimony can cross cultures. Use images to which a West African villager can relate. Avoid American concepts and focus on West African concepts, especially shame and honor as opposed to sin and guilt. Review the *Traditional Religions* and *Six Factors for Effective Church Planting* articles for further insights.

There are four easy steps to preparing your testimony. It is best to write out your testimony. Often we do not realize areas of weakness in communicating our personal story until we examine it on paper.

## Four Steps to Prepare Your Testimony

### 1. What your life was like before you met Christ.

What common circumstances would a West African identify with? What were your attitudes that a West African could identify with? What was most important to you? What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life? (sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, entertainment)

### 2. How you realized you needed Christ.

What significant steps led up to your conversion? What needs, hurts or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God? (Consider choosing a theme from the list on the next page.) How did God get your attention? What motivated you?

### 3. How you committed your life to Christ.

What specifically did you do to step across the line? Where did it happen? What did you say in your prayer? Be specific and avoid “churchy” phrases, such as altar, at the invitation, asked Jesus to come into my heart, prayed the sinner’s prayer, etc.

### 4. The difference it has made in your life.

What benefits have you experienced or felt? What problems have been resolved? How has Jesus helped you change for the better? How has it helped your relationships?

**Question:** I was raised in the church. I accepted Christ as a child. How do I make my testimony relevant to someone who knows nothing about Christ?

**Answer:** A testimony doesn’t have to be about conversion. There was a time, no matter what your age, when you knew you needed Christ. You perhaps felt an emptiness or guilt in your life. Give a testimony of how God delivered you from this.

## Examine Your Testimony

When you have completed writing out your testimony, read it out loud and ask yourself: Does it communicate what I really mean to say?

- Have I made my testimony too pastoral, or used “church words” – words only a believer will understand, such as “sinner” or “repented”? Will an interpreter have trouble with any of the words?
- Is there a basic Gospel message somewhere – that Jesus was sent by God to die for our sins, and that He rose again?
- Have I emphasized Christ in my life, rather than my life before Christ?
- Can West Africans relate to this story since they are coming from a different worldview?
  - Avoid idioms, slang or long phrases a translator may struggle with.
  - Don’t talk about money or cultural taboos they might not understand or respect.
  - Don’t refer to geography within the US or Canada.

Next, try your testimony on a friend – a believer or an unbeliever. Request their honest feedback.

## Theme-Based Testimonies

Sometimes a person is not ready to receive your full testimony. You may meet someone struggling with a particular issue, and you can offer a short testimony about how God has worked in your life in a similar situation. Ask yourself if you have a testimony about one of the universal themes listed below.

West Africans love Bible stories. Is there a short Bible story you can incorporate into your theme testimony?

Worries/Anxiety	Inner Peace
Guilt/Shame	Forgiveness
Anger/Temper	Patience and love
Grief	Purpose in life
Poor health/strength	Comfort and joy
Low self-esteem	Addictions/Habits
Assurance of heaven	Loneliness
Marriage problems	Financial problems