



A Mission Trip
Devotional
Journal

Why Not?

"Let your
light shine..."

From the Author

Thanks for saying “yes” to being a part of a short-term mission experience. Whatever your destination, keep in mind that Jesus invites you to let YOUR light shine. Here’s what he said in his “Sermon on the Mount:”

**Let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your Father in heaven.**

(Matthew 5:16)

What does it mean to let YOUR light SHINE?

Matthew West tells the story of Andrea who inspired the song “Do Something” from his album, *Into the Light*. She was a University of Colorado student when she spent a semester in Uganda studying micro-financing. She took time to volunteer at an orphanage where the children were being badly neglected. Instead of returning home at the end of the semester, she continued to work at the orphanage. Because of her ongoing efforts, Musana (meaning “sunshine”) is a thriving orphanage today and offers a loving home to more than 100 children. When asked what made her want to stay, Andrea said, “I just kept thinking, if I don’t do something, who will?” Christianity is about doing something to be light (“Musana”) in the places of darkness. (Watch the music video at [youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8).)

To let YOUR light shine is to contribute to the good of others and to make life better for someone else. Maybe it’s a friendly “hello,” wiping the tables, speaking a kind word, carrying a brick, encouraging someone who’s discouraged, going after a tool, digging a hole, giving a smile. For Andrea it was working for the orphanage, but for you, it can be whatever it is God calls you to do - the small and very large things.

Why not let YOUR light SHINE?

Robert Kennedy said: “Some see things as they are and say Why? I dream things that never were and say why not?” By saying “yes” to mission, you are saying “Why not?” Why not serve? Why not love? Why not do something for others? Why not let MY light shine?

During the coming days why not let your light shine before others, that they will be able to see your good deeds and be attracted to the light of Jesus, who is light for the whole world. So may *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.* (Numbers 6:24-26)

Have a great trip!
Rev. Dr. Frank Nelson, author



Why Not get the most from this journal?

7 PRE-TRIP DEVOTIONALS

Prepare your heart for mission by using the 7 pre-trip devotionals. Set aside 10-15 minutes daily to complete the devotionals that begin on page 8. A daily time of devotion will be one of the ways to allow God to open you to the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead. A “Why Not?” page is offered to you each day as an open page to take notes, write prayers, sketch, record thoughts, new ideas, stories and commitments.

10 ON-SITE DEVOTIONALS

You will find light, inspiration and guidance during the days of your mission trip by using this devotional journal to reflect and pray your experiences. For each on-site day you’ll have a full page of suggestions to guide your prayer and scripture readings that will help you to be more open to God’s presence and guidance. The “Why Not?” page will give you a place each day to record your thoughts and experiences. If your mission trip will have fewer than 10 days, adapt the use of the journal to fit the number of mission days you will be on site.

7 POST-TRIP DEVOTIONALS

Continue to use this devotional guide when you return home. Know that God will provide you with new mission opportunities when you return home. Keep in mind, also, that your need to shine for God doesn’t end when the trip ends. There will be new challenges to let your light shine as you serve your church, family, and community.

Before, during and after the trip remember the challenge Jesus gives in Matthew 5:16:

*Let your light shine before others,
that they may see
your good deeds and glorify
your Father in heaven.*



Ideas & Suggestions

for parents & leaders

1-3 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Gather your mission team or family for pizza, training, team-building and orientation.
- Distribute the journals and invite someone to read *"From the Author"* on page 1.
- Review the *"Table of Contents"* on page 2 and *"Why Not Get the Most from this Journal?"* on page 3.
- If you have already developed a team/family covenant, write or tape a copy onto page 6. If you don't already have a team/family covenant, take time to list some of the important values and guidelines your team or family will want to follow and be committed to during your mission trip.

Beginning on page 8, write in the dates for the Seven Pre-Trip Days. Urge everyone to take 10-15 minutes daily to complete these journal pages during the days before departure. The devotionals are an important part of being prepared for the trip and will be done on their own. For families, especially families with younger children, these pages can be completed as a daily family devotional. Note that one option is for you to complete the first pre-trip day on pages 8 - 9 during the orientation meeting.

INVITE EVERYONE TO THUMB THROUGH THE PAGES OF THEIR JOURNALS. POINT OUT THAT THERE ARE...

- 14 preparing-for-the-trip pages for the 7 days before departure;
- 2 pages for each day of the mission trip – a full page of scripture and prayer and an open "Why Not?" page where you can collect new insights, scriptures, songs, sketches and notes.
- 4 "Telling My Story" pages starting on page 42 which will help you to summarize some of the highlights of your mission trip;
- 14 Post-Trip pages starting on page 46 to be completed during the days after you return home from the trip;
- On pages 60-62 you'll be invited to think about ways to continue to let your light shine in the church and community where you live.
- Pages 63-64 provides a place to collect names and email addresses of some of the people you may want to stay in touch with after the trip.

INVITE EVERYONE TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES to write today's date at the top of the first Pre-Trip Day on page 8, and then to complete the page with each person working on their own. Provide pens and plenty of time for them to do this. Parents will want to work with younger children to help them read and discuss the page together. When all are finished writing, choose 2 or 3 items from the page and invite volunteers from your team/family to share their responses.

Close the meeting by inviting members of your team/family to read the prayers they have written on their "Why Not?" page.



Ideas & Suggestions (cont'd)

COMMISSIONING AND DEPARTURE

If possible, arrange to have your mission team commissioned during one of the church worship services prior to your departure date. The commissioning service might include:

- an introduction of your team members
- information about what you will be doing and where you will be serving
- and a commissioning prayer led by a pastor.

THE DAY OF DEPARTURE

Invite parents, spouses, friends, grandparents, youth leaders, neighbors, pastors and anyone who might be interested to the send-off on your day of departure. Thank everyone for their support and ask for their continued prayers. Form a prayer circle and invite any who are present to offer a brief, sentence prayer for the team. After the "Amen," load the vehicle(s) for departure.

ON-SITE JOURNAL SUGGESTIONS

It's important that your team/family gathers each day to debrief the experience you are having. Plan to use the journals to guide this daily debriefing. Ask members of your team/family to share some of the thoughts and new insights they have written in the journal. If your team is larger than 6, you may want to break into small groups of 2-3 to discuss the devotionals. This daily check-in time can minimize the conflicts that often develop and relieve the loneliness and homesickness some experience. This daily debrief builds unity, adds purpose to your trip and provides a time for mutual encouragement and prayer.

AFTER THE TRIP

Be sure to remind the members of your team/family to complete "*Telling My Story*" on pages 42-45. Some may want to do this as you travel home. Others may want to include this as part of the group or family debriefing and picture sharing that needs to happen after the trip. When everyone has had a chance to complete the pages of "*Telling My Story*," invite small groups of 2-3 to share their stories and insights with each other. Next, invite all who are willing to share their "Elevator Speeches" from page 45 with the whole group. If your team/family has been invited to report back to your church, this is a great time to plan your presentation.

Remind everyone when they are back in their own homes to complete the 7 Post-Trip Pages of the journal starting on page 46.



Why not SHINE?

KEY VERSE: *Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

QUOTE: *"Work for a cause, not for applause. Live life to express, not to impress. Don't strive to make your presence noticed, just make your absence felt." —Unknown*

WHY NOT REFLECT ON THE PAST 24 HOURS? (Write responses on the "Why Not?" page.)

1. Do you agree with the quote above? Why or why not? Any examples?
2. During the past 24 hours I enjoyed it when I...
3. God helps me to feel positive about myself when I...
4. A "good deed" I did for someone (or they did for me) was when...
5. The mission trip will be an opportunity for me to...

WHY NOT OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD'S WORD? (Take notes on the "Why Not?" page.)

- *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*
- *He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. (Psalm 37:6)*
- *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. (Isaiah 60:1)*
- *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)*

If time permits read Isaiah 60:1-5 & Matthew 5:13-16. Take notes on the "Why Not?" page.

WHY NOT PRAY TO GOD? Take a deep breath, relax in the light of God's presence, and pray:

Dear God, there are many reasons I chose to go on this mission trip, but I'm not quite sure why YOU chose me to go. May your purpose for this trip become more clear to me as I seek to be your light to the people I will soon meet. Thank you for choosing me for your mission. Please guide me to shine your light of goodness and love to all others. In the name of the one who is the light of the world, Jesus, Amen. (Continue by writing your own prayer on the "Why Not?" page. Complete these phrases: Dear God, I'm thankful for... Forgive me for... Help me to... I praise you for...)

WHY NOT SHINE?

- Begin to memorize Matthew 5:16 which is on the back cover. Write it down on a piece of paper and refer to it often while you prepare for your mission trip. Put it on a post-it note and stick it to your mirror.
- Set a goal to brighten someone's day during the next 24 hours, and write your goal on the "Why Not?" page.



Why Not?

A place for new insights, scripture verses, songs, stories, experiences, sketches and commitments.



Why not LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR?

KEY VERSE: *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* (Galatians 5:14)

QUOTE: *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHY NOT REFLECT ON THE PAST 24 HOURS? (Write responses on the "Why Not?" page.)

1. During the past 24 hours I saw love for others being expressed when...
2. Do you agree with the quote above that only love can drive out hate? Can you give an example?
3. A personal high point and low point for me during the past 24 hours...
4. I have a hard time loving people when they... I believe God has been helping me to love...

WHY NOT OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD'S WORD? (Take notes on the "Why Not?" page.)

- *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.* (Leviticus 19:18)
- *To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.* (Mark 12:33)
- *Do everything in love.* (1 Corinthians 16:14)
- *Those who love their fellow believers live in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.* (1 John 2:10)

If time permits read Luke 10:25-37 and take notes on the "Why Not?" page.

WHY NOT PRAY TO GOD? As you focus on a source of light, let the light of God's love flood over you. Relax and breathe as you recite Matthew 5:16. Pray this prayer: *Dear God, I have met many new "neighbors" in this place. I confess that I have not loved every person as you would want me to love. Please forgive me. Renew my willingness to do what is good and right in the way I treat my neighbors. May I really love others and not just talk about loving them. In the name of Jesus, who shared the light of his love with everyone he met, Amen.* (Continue by writing your own prayer on the "Why Not?" page.)

WHY NOT SHINE?

- Make a list on the "Why Not?" page of some of the practical and good ways to express Jesus Christ's love to others.
- Now think of someone you have had a hard time loving. Set a 24-hour goal to show love for that person by doing something kind and good for them. Pray that the light of Jesus Christ's love will shine through you to him/her.

Why Not?

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Telling my story

Many of your family and friends will want to hear about your trip. The following questions can help you put together some of your thoughts so that you'll be ready to tell others when they ask (and even if they don't ask). On page 45 is your "Elevator Speech." It's a great way to summarize your experience in less than 30 seconds, the time it takes to get from one floor to the next in an elevator.

Three words that describe my experience include...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I'm most thankful to God for...

Three positive things about my mission experience...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three negatives...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My "Elevator Speech"

Back at home people may ask you, "How was your trip?" What will you say? It's a great idea to write and rehearse your answer. Try to make your response less than 30 seconds, the time you might have in an elevator with someone who wants to know about your mission experience. Create your "Elevator Speech" in the space provided below, and then, practice giving your short speech to some of your friends and family, so that you'll be ready when each new opportunity to tell your story presents itself.



Why not PLANT SEEDS OF HOPE?

KEY VERSE: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)*

QUOTES: *"Wake up every morning with the thought that something wonderful is about to happen." —Unknown*

"Nothing can dim the light which shines from within." —Maya Angelou

WHY NOT REFLECT ON THE PAST 24 HOURS? (Write responses on the "Why Not?" page.)

1. A high point during the last 24 hours... A low point...
2. In the future I hope that I will be able to...
3. Someone I know who seems to have lost hope or is discouraged is... And I'd like to be able to...

WHY NOT OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD'S WORD? (Take notes on the "Why Not?" page.)

- *Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. (Psalm 31:24)*
- *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 43:5)*
- *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)*
- *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)*

If time permits read Romans 8:24-27 & 5:1-11 and take notes on the "Why Not?" page.

WHY NOT PRAY TO GOD? Take a deep breath and relax in the hope of God's presence. Recite Matthew 5:16 and pray: *Please God, teach me to hope for things that will satisfy me long term. Help me to focus on the things that are most important. Help me to see the positive and be hopeful. May I put my trust in your love, goodness, peace and forgiveness, and place my hope in Jesus in whose name I pray, Amen.* (Write your own prayer on the "Why Not?" page.)

WHY NOT SHINE?

- Plant the seeds of hope by contacting someone you know who is discouraged. First, take time to listen to how he/she is doing. Next, offer words of hope and encouragement.
- During the next 24 hours tell at least one other person the story of how the mission trip has caused you to be more hopeful. Send a text, email or phone call.

Why Not?

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WHY NOT

Continue to Let Your Light Shine?

Directions: Listed below are a variety of activities that will help you to stay on the right path as you move forward in your spiritual life. Take time to write a personal plan for each one.

WHY NOT STUDY THE BIBLE MORE?

Begin by reading the books of Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Philippians and James. Find a guide to help you read through the Bible in a year. Check out your church, local Christian bookstore or internet for resources to help you become excited about reading the scriptures.

This is my goal and plan...

WHY NOT CONTINUE TO WRITE IN A NOTEBOOK OR JOURNAL?

If you have found this journal helpful in keeping you focused and helping you to grow, get a notebook or blank journal. Write insights that come to you as you read the Bible and other devotional books. You can actually continue to use some of the same reflection questions and ideas from this "Why Not?" journal to help guide you.

This is my goal and plan...

WHY NOT WORSHIP?

Worship is essential to Christian growth! Plan to worship regularly at church. Worship God daily with a reflection and prayer time similar to the ones you have experienced from this journal. You will have many opportunities daily to think about God and give praise and thanks to God.

This is my goal and plan...

