



Training Teams for Cross-Cultural Mission





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Introduction

We are passionate about God’s mission, and if you are reading this manual, perhaps you are too! If you hold a desire for your church or group to join in with what God is doing in the world, then we are excited for the learning that is ahead for you.



This guide is intended to help leaders pray into, plan for, and implement all the elements that are necessary for a team to flourish through a cross-cultural encounter. There is so much potential for meaningful impact and transformation through a group of people who come together to participate in God’s mission in the world.

The structure of this manual is in six parts:

- Part One: Vision for Mission
- Part Two: Logistics
- Part Three: Training the Team
- Part Four: On the Ground
- Part Five: Preparing for Re-Entry
- Part Six: Re-Vision for Mission: Discipleship and Integration

The New Zealand Church Missionary Society (NZCMS) is an evangelical mission community, seeking to mobilise the Church in New Zealand for God’s mission in the world. We partner with individuals and churches who share a common vision: to obey the call of God to proclaim the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus to all peoples.

NZCMS helps churches and dioceses develop a clear mission and discipleship pathway for teams. In particular, we have a lot of experience in training and coaching groups who are considering Cross-Cultural Ministry in Aotearoa or globally.

What we offer:

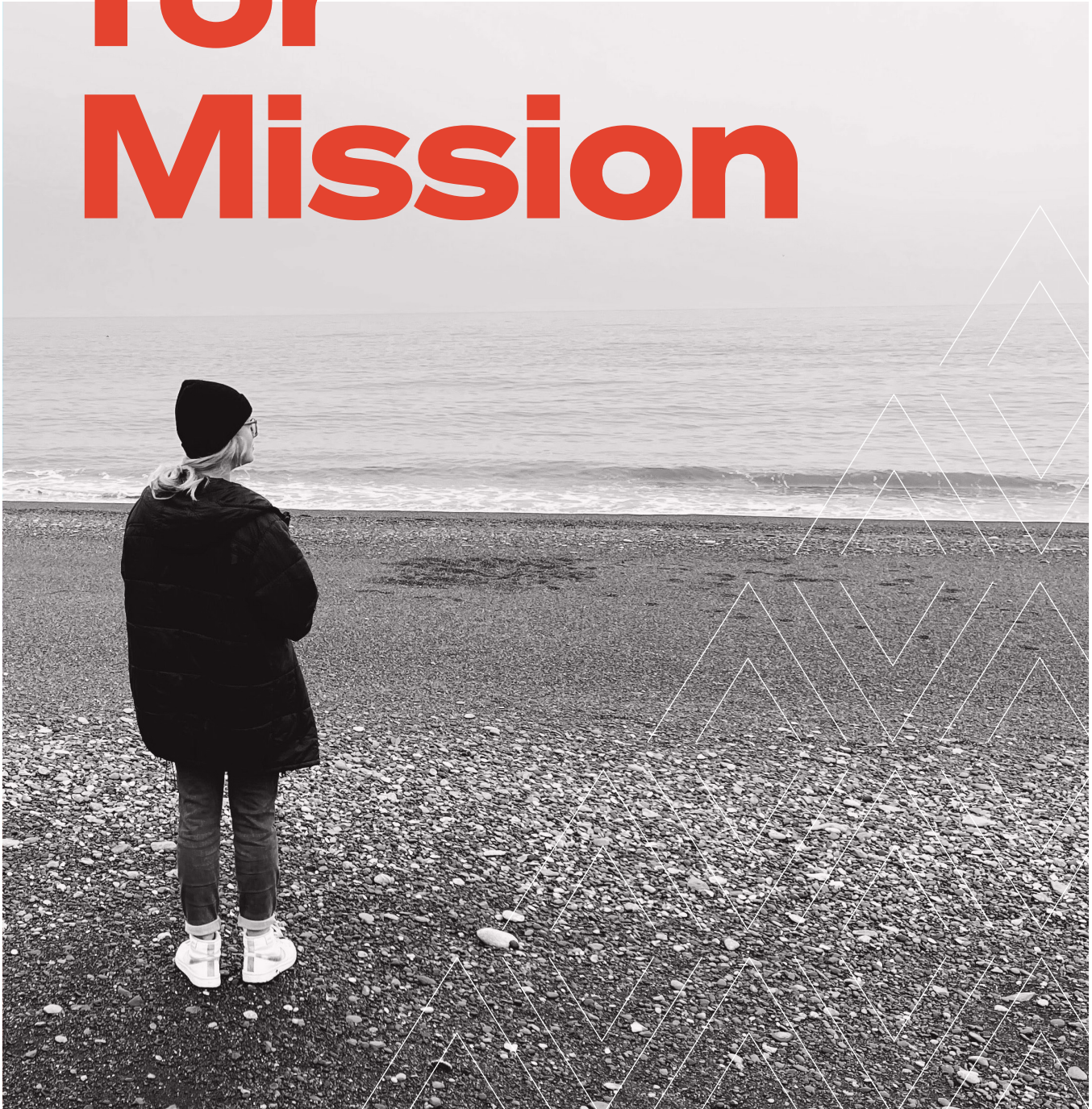
- Support and coaching: We help leaders to establish the purpose, vision, and reality of a cross-cultural partnership.
- Training of teams: We run daytime or weekend training events.
- Training of team leaders: We mentor and coach team leaders, in conjunction with this Preparation Manual. This includes logistics, mission and cultural training, and debriefing.

We’re here to support you. For more information, contact us: office@nzcms.org.nz



PART ONE

Vision for Mission





What's the Big Picture?

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of organising a team, we need to pause and ask together: 'What's the Big Picture?' and 'What is God's Mission invitation for us?' Sometimes we can be so excited about the 'going', and so rushed with all the details of who-what-where-how-when, that we can forget to do the deeper work of asking Why? We want to encourage and challenge you: **asking the 'Why' is so vital.** It really is the foundation for everything else.



LANGUAGE: 'CROSS-CULTURAL' AND 'ENCOUNTER TEAMS'

The word cross-cultural is used to acknowledge the understanding that a group or individual is intentionally 'crossing' outside of their cultural norm to engage with another culture. Cross-cultural engagement happens within Aotearoa New Zealand – it's not just an overseas thing! However, it is often used with the language of mission trips to recognise that while there are cultural differences, the intent of crossing cultures is for a mutuality and reciprocity in which all parties give and receive.

NZCMS recommends the use of an alternative to 'mission trip' or 'short-term missions' as the language for a cross-cultural team. We suggest that instead, you use 'Encounter Team', as it best describes the way in which a team gathers together with the intention of encountering God, encountering another culture, and

encountering oneself in new ways. We've chosen not to use the language of 'mission trip' because we want to see 'Encounter Teams' form part of a larger mission vision for any church or group.

We want to encourage you to ask how an Encounter Team is part of a bigger vision and picture of God's Mission. How does it fit with your other mission engagements as a church or group? How does it fit within the discipleship journey of your church? A cross-cultural trip can be a very formative and deeply impacting experience for team members, and an opportunity for a church community to undertake discipleship in the following areas: mission theology, poverty, stewardship of resources, justice, evangelism, cross-cultural partnerships, local and global mission, and understanding God's call to mission long-term. So, as a team leader, how are you intentional in what you are discipling your church or community in, and how is this team trip a part of that?

Clarifying the Vision



We invite you to ponder the following questions to help you shape up and firm the vision for this team as part of a wider Mission Vision for your church or group:

- ✘ **How does this trip fit with the church's wider vision and missions involvement?**
- ✘ **Is the church/group open to a long-term relationship with the host community? What would need to happen on and around this trip in order to consider/progress that relationship?**
- ✘ **How do you envision this trip impacting/fitting with the church's ongoing missions activity?**
- ✘ **How would you describe the 'average church-goers' grasp of God's Mission?**
- ✘ **What are the needs/gaps for training/preparation that you see?**

The vision that is outlined by you and the leaders will help identify what kind of people would be right for this trip, who God is inviting to join this team, the best time of year to go, and the kind of group that you could be joining in mission with.

Part of NZCMS' role is to provide support in these vision stages as you discern how your group is involved in God's Mission, and how a team going cross-culturally might be a further part of that. We can help you consider the overall vision and purpose of an Encounter Team; we can help partner your group with a community; and we can also help leaders shape the preparation and debrief parts of this journey.

DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The preparation before a Short-Term trip, and the debrief after, have a significant impact on both the team and the people they spend time with. We therefore encourage leaders to expect a commitment from team members to meet in the months leading up to and following the Encounter Team experience. For example, if a team is going to Fiji in December, we'd suggest meetings beginning at least by July, continuing monthly until December, and/or a training weekend a month prior to departure. Once in the host context, we recommend regular (daily) debriefing and a full day debrief immediately at the end of a trip, with follow-up monthly meetings for the next three months. Whatever the agreed expectations of meetings, planning these with your team early is important as they can easily get



Leadership Team: Accountability & Support

The team leader is vital for any team to flourish on an Encounter Team, but so is a wider leadership and support team. We recommend that any team has the ‘go-ahead’ from the Church leadership including support from the pastor. Also, if the church has a Mission Group they will play an important role in supporting and praying for the trip. It is important to establish clear lines of authority and accountability. We encourage you to also see your Host Contacts as a part of this Leadership Team: they will be instrumental in guiding and supporting you and the team, so including them from the beginning in the vision and planning is critical.

Some things to consider in terms of leadership:

- Who are you directly accountable to as the leader of this team?
- How will communication about this trip happen within the wider church?
- Is fundraising possible as a church? What are the limitations?
- How can you involve the host leaders in the vision and planning of the trip?
- Who will be the specific people praying for this team from within your church?
- How is NZCMS a part of supporting and training you and the team for this trip?



Relationship with Hosts

As we mentioned above, we encourage you to see your main host contact as a part of the bigger leadership team for this Encounter Team. Their input and relationship is so valuable, not just for the role they play in hosting this specific trip, but also for the ongoing mutual partnership in the Gospel and God's Mission. The team has as much to learn as it does to give in visiting the host leader's community, and the host community are the gateway for your team to be able to learn, serve and minister together effectively. *We highly recommend that your own vision and ideas around what this Encounter Team might be is guided throughout by the vision and mission of the church/community/leaders who will be hosting you.*

Some basic beginning points to consider are:

- How has this relationship come about, and is there an invitation from your host contacts to bring a team?
- How might you establish this?
- Are you letting the Host Leaders know about your intentions for training your team, and, where possible, asking if they can contribute to this?

Remember, we are not seeking to use people for our own cultural adventure or growth journey; instead, we are together seeking to join in on God's Mission, discovering ourselves as image-bearers with needs and gifts to offer the Church and the World. Relationships are central.





Below are some suggestions for questions to ask your Host Leaders:

(We don't recommend asking these in one big email; rather, stagger these questions in your ongoing communication.)

VISION QUESTIONS

- Tell me about your community/church? What has been the mission and vision focus in the last few years, and what are your hopes for the ministry at present?
- What are some of the things you are celebrating as a community?
- What are some of the struggles facing your community?
- What are the biggest assets you see your community possessing?
- What are some of the needs you see in your community?
- What kind of ministry gifts and practical skills would be helpful for our team members to bring to share with you?
- What kind of ministry gifts and practical skills would you like to share with us?
- Are there things we can be praying for as a team for you, as we prepare to come?
- If we were to come, how would you like us to be involved in the ministry and work of the church and community?

LOGISTICS QUESTIONS

- How long would be appropriate for us to come?
- What time of year suits you for us to come? Is there any time of year when it doesn't suit you to have us come?
- What is the best airport to fly into, and what is the transport like for getting from there to your community? What kind of transport is available locally for us to use? Will we need to hire a vehicle for our transport? What would be approximate costs of this?
- Accommodation: How do you usually host guests who spend time in your community? Would you like us to arrange this, or do you want to? What is the nature of the accommodation arrangements? (i.e. sleeping on the floor/ dormitories / billeted with families?)
- What is the daily cost per person for accommodation and food? (in their currency or NZD)
- What is the climate and weather like at the time we will be visiting?
- Is there anything we need to be aware of in terms of safety and security for our team?
- Is the local water safe for visitors to drink, or should we arrange bottled water?
- How can the team alleviate the financial costs or time stress of us being there? Can we bring certain resources, or buy food, or offer monetary gifts?

ADVANCE VISIT TO THE HOST CONTEXT

In some parts of the world, communication can be difficult long distance, via email or phone. Additionally, many cultures place high value on communicating face to face. If this is a newer relationship and an unfamiliar part of the world that you as a Team Leader are travelling to, it may be a good idea to plan to visit the place with one or two others from the church leadership for a few days. This would need to take place as a part of the ‘visioning’ stage, at least a year in advance of the team trip. Although it would be an extra financial cost, there is nothing like being physically present in a community to really get a feel for a place, and to get an idea of what bringing a team to this location would be like. It is also the best way to build the relationship with the Host Leadership and to envision together how a partnership can be mutually beneficial.

We’ve included a Contacts Sheet in **Appendix Seven** to record all contact information from the people you are in communication with and the people you meet while on the ground. This is helpful for you to refer to in preparation, as well as carrying with you on the ground.) It is also a beneficial record for future teams going to the country that your team visits.

COMMUNICATION WITH HOSTS AND OTHERS

Building relationships across cultures, where each person may speak a different first language, is challenging! This is made even more difficult when the interactions are taking place without face-to-face (kānohi ki kānohi) interaction. Effective communication means that the receiver of the message has heard and understood the message as it was intended.

Communication includes both verbal and non-verbal communication, what is said and (especially important when interacting across cultures) what is not said.

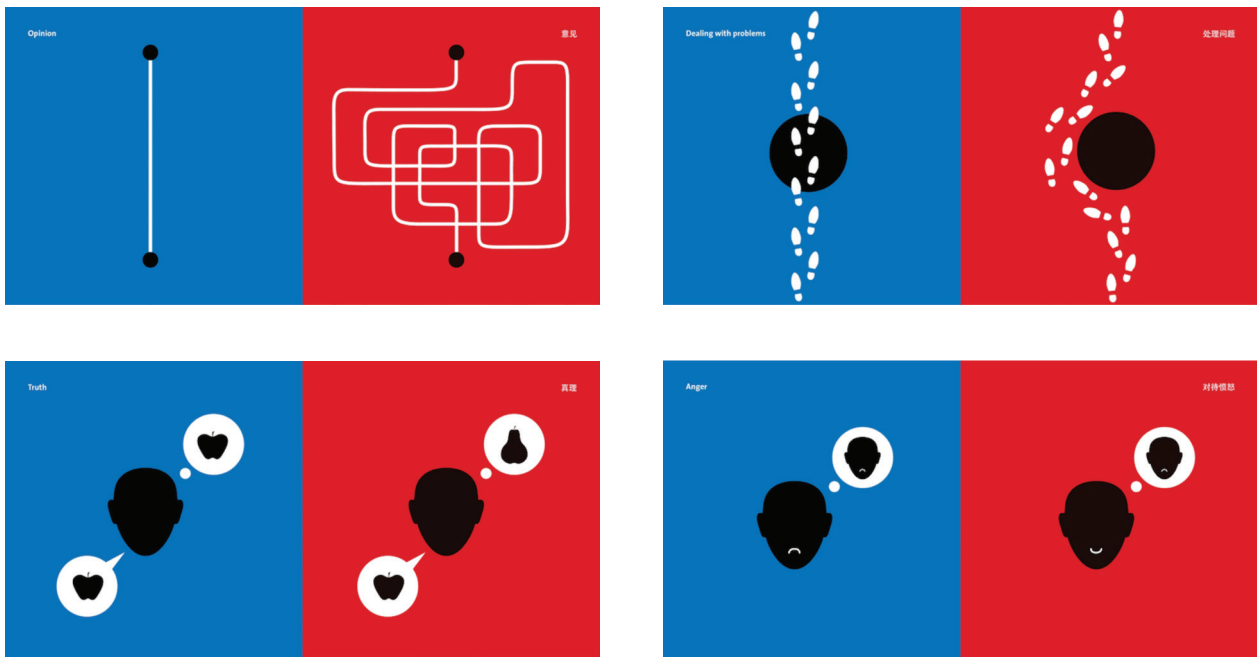
As we interact with our hosts, we need to be aware of how we can reduce the barriers and challenges to communication, so that we can both express ourselves, and interpret what we receive, in ways that are culturally and contextually appropriate. The overarching aim is to build relationships. Once we are aware of the specific barriers and challenges, we can adapt our communication for the particular context.

Some of the most common barriers and challenges are:

- *Assumed differences and similarities.* We may assume that because someone has grown up in a particular country, they will communicate in a particular way. However, their language, ethnic group, family background, level of education etc. may mean that they don’t easily fit the stereotype.
- *The assumption that proximity means similarity.* We can easily assume that countries/ethnicities/cultures that share proximity or language will have shared understandings – but this is not always the case. For example, between the UK, Australia, and NZ we have different words for jandals (slippers, thongs); togs (cossie, bathers, swimsuit); underwear (pants); and pants (trousers).
- *The different ways that non-verbal communication is used.* A common example is the use of eye contact. Direct eye contact is perceived as respectful in many European and Western cultures. The opposite is true in many Pasifika and Middle Eastern cultures, where it is considered respectful to avoid eye contact when communicating. Furthermore, how we point to or beckon someone is culture-bound. For example, a palm-up gesture used to summon a person in some contexts is the means used to call a dog in some parts of Southern India. In that context, a palm-down version is used to call fellow humans.
- *Other barriers and challenges:* Whether someone is from an individualist or collectivist culture; how they perceive power distances and distribution; the type of environment that the communication takes place in; worldview; cognitive style; assumptions about roles and authority; unarticulated goals and values; and empathy.



The illustrations below by artist Yang Liu from her book *East Meets West* articulate some of the challenges that will be faced in culturally diverse situations. These illustrations highlight some of the differences that Liu observed between Chinese and German cultures while living as a student in Germany. Clockwise from left: Expressing opinions; dealing with problems; speaking truth; and expressing emotions (in this case, anger). The blue illustration is more likely to be typical in a Western culture, whereas the red illustration is more likely in an Eastern culture.



Artwork by Yang Liu, 2015

Don't let these challenges put you off! It is only through actual engagement with those who are different from us that we learn the nuances in the way that they communicate. In response, we can learn how to adapt our own ways of interacting to be able to communicate effectively. We must seek to better understand both ourselves and the other person or people involved in order to overcome the barriers and challenges presented by intercultural communication.

We do this by:

- Learning what we can about the cultural context that we are planning to visit.
- Reflecting on our own cultural context and assumptions.
- Using active listening skills:

- Listen to what is said and notice what is not said.
- Observe body language and other non-verbal communication.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Repeat back what you are hearing to check that you have understood correctly.

We wanted to include this section on communication with hosts early in this training manual, as this learning and understanding is fundamental to cultivating cross-cultural partnerships for leaders, host contacts, churches, and participants. Included in the training section are sessions dedicated to this content.

For more input on this topic, we recommend:

- Foreign to Familiar* - Sarah A. Lanier.
- Serving with Eyes Wide Open* - David Livermore.
- Episode 4 of Growing Global Disciples Course.

Recommended Resources

VIDEOS

NZCMS has created a video series called ‘Growing as Global Disciples’, which covers topics such as ‘What is God’s Mission?’, ‘Cultural Awareness’, ‘Understanding Worldviews’, ‘Gospel and Culture’ and more. These videos work in conjunction with the training sessions in this manual, and will be invaluable for you and your team to watch as preparation for a trip. Several sessions are also intended to help teams integrate their learnings after a trip.

You can find this series on our website:

www.nzcms.org.nz/resources/growing-global-disciples



READINGS

Below are some suggested readings to help grow your understanding of, and passion for, God’s mission:

God’s Mission and Ours: The challenge of telling the nations

CMS Australia, edited by Peter T. O’Brien

This little book is an easy read, and frames the big picture of mission as well as offering a thought-provoking challenge to what it means to proclaim the gospel in a post-modern society. This book is produced by CMS Australia, so it has a lot of CMS ‘DNA’ that is shared with NZCMS as well – particularly the closing chapter on our Society’s beginning, and five guiding principles.

Foreign to Familiar

Sarah Lanier

If you read nothing else about cultural awareness, read this book! It’s a quick overview of the differences in ‘hot climate’ cultures and ‘cold climate’ cultures in terms of worldview, and how this impacts relationships, events, status, and leadership.

Serving with Eyes Wide Open

David Livermore

A comprehensive guide to understanding culture and worldview, and how this impacts the perceptions of Christianity. This book helps Christians see what the church is doing on the mission field, understand the assumptions people make about Christianity, and learn what it takes to adapt God’s message effectively for new cultures.

When Helping Hurts

Steve Corbett and Dr Brian Fikkert

This book is summed up by the phrase ‘good intentions are not enough’. It explores Western culture’s understanding of poverty, and then uses poverty alleviation as the lens to explore how cross-cultural mission is shaped by our deeper understanding of poverty/brokenness as well as our theology of mission. “When Helping Hurts” offers a different framework for thinking about poverty and its alleviation. Rather than simply defining it as a lack of material things, the book addresses the roots of the issue: broken relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.



The Mission of God

N.T. Wright

Most Christians would agree that the Bible provides a basis for mission. But N.T. Wright boldly maintains that mission is bigger than that - there is in fact a mission-al basis for the Bible! The entire Bible is generated by, and is all about, God's mission. This new perspective provides a solid and expansive basis for holistic mission. Wright emphasises throughout that a holistic mission is the proper shape of Christian mission. God's mission is to reclaim the world- including the created order - and God's people have a designated role to play in that mission.

Subversive Jesus

Craig Greenfield.

A great read for young adults upon returning from the Encounter Team. "Subversive Jesus" is the story of what it looks like when we put the most counter-cultural teachings of Christ into practice. When Jesus says invite the poor for a meal, we welcome homeless friends, local crack addicts, and women from the street corner over for dinner. When Jesus proclaims freedom for the captive, we organize 'Pirates of Justice' flash mobs to protest cruise ship exploitation. When Jesus teaches love for enemies, we make homemade cookies and lemonade for the local drug dealers, and none of them show up! This adventure takes us from the slums of Cambodia to inner city Canada and back again.

True Story:

A Christianity Worth Believing in

James Choung

This book is used for the Gospel Proclamation training in this manual. It addresses the problematic behaviour of Christians who have a bad track record of hating and condemning those they disagree with. It also challenges that notion that Christianity is just about "saving souls," giving people an escape ticket to heaven while the world falls apart. Is Christianity really only about Jesus forgiving our sins? There must be more to it than that... In this engaging narrative, James Choung weaves the tale of his search for a Christianity worth believing in.

FURTHER TRAINING

If you want to undertake training as a team leader, we recommend you contact International Teams NZ, a New Zealand Training Provider: www.iteams.org.nz





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Thanks to the contributors and editors from:

- New Zealand Church Missionary Society (NZCMS).
- Anglican Youth Ministries (AYM) Auckland.
- Baptist Youth Ministries (BYM).

A lot of the training material is reworked from a variety of cross-cultural team training sources, including:

- Journey Guide – OMF.
- Helping Without Hurting: Short Term Missions.
- Short Term Overseas Mission Trips: Team Leader Manual, Nelson Anglican DOMC, by Josie Smith and Chris Donaldson.
- James Choung - 'True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In' - Gospel Presentation resource.
- Team Leader Training Workshop: Delta Ministries International

