

Think Home

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These studies are designed to help Christian internationals to prepare for return to their home environment after a prolonged period abroad.

They are primarily intended to be a basis for reflection rather than study, and should lead those involved to pray together about the issues raised. Although it is possible for a student to work on this alone, as a basis for prayer and preparation, it is best tackled in a one-to-one situation between two people who know each other well and have an established relationship of support and trust. Two returning internationals could do this together, or a local Christian with an international friend. Honesty is essential if maximum benefit is to be gained from the exercise.

It is also possible to use this material with a sympathetic not-yet-Christian, although obviously not all the questions would apply. It could well raise some issues for them that would highlight their spiritual needs, and possible Christian answers.

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(Former Friends International staff worker)

Think Home 1 – What have you experienced?

1. What were your goals in coming to the UK? Have they been achieved? If not, why not?
2. What factors made life positive and pleasant?
3. List things you like about life in the UK and why (values, attitudes, practices, etc). Which would you like, if possible, to take home with you?
4. What factors made life unpleasant and difficult? What have you struggled with and what are you glad to be leaving behind?
5. For what experiences, good and bad, have you been most grateful?
6. Apart from study, what experiences have enriched you, and how?
7. Who are the people who have most influenced you, and how?
8. What are your observations about Christianity in the UK? How does it differ from Christian faith and practice back home?
9. Have your attitudes to the Christian faith been affected by your relationships with Christians here?
10. What factors have helped or hindered your Christian growth here?
11. What have you appreciated about your UK church life and experience? What practices would you take home with you, and why?
12. What UK church practices will not fit or adapt to your home situation, and why?

Think Home 2 – Who is going home?

1. Are you more or less conscious of physical appearance or 'image'?
2. Have you changed your manners towards other people? E.g. the opposite gender; older people; your tutors
3. Are you more or less outgoing or shy?
4. Are you more or less free to express your feelings to others?
5. Are you handling your emotions differently now than you did back home?
6. Are you more or less class or status conscious?
7. Do you feel more or less academically competent?
8. What study habits have you changed or maintained?
9. Can you identify any other significant changes in your attitudes, aspirations and lifestyle?
10. To what extent have your attitudes towards politics and other social issues been affected by the media in the UK, your tutors, fellow students and others?
11. Have you changed your views on political issues at home, or on British foreign policy?
12. In what ways has your attitude towards money and material possessions changed? Have you acquired different buying habits and 'tastes'?

13. Are you more or less generous with your money and possessions?

14. How have your attitudes changed towards the religious beliefs and practices of your family and friends at home?

15. To what degree have you changed in your theological and doctrinal views? How will this affect your relationship with your home church and Christian friends?

16. Is your relationship with God stronger or weaker? How? Why?

17. Have your purposes and goals for life changed? How? Why?

18. In what way have your expectations changed? Have you become more optimistic, pessimistic or realistic?

19. Would you consider your experience in the UK life changing? How and why?

20. What are your concerns and fears about returning home?

Think Home 3 – Who is at home?

1. Do you feel informed and close to people back home? Why or why not?
2. Do you enjoy being with others of your nationality here? Why or why not?
3. What major changes have occurred in your country while you have been away? How will they affect your return home?
4. How have you maintained your relationship with the church back home and with your Christian friends?
5. If you became a Christian here, who at home knows about it? For those who don't know, but should, when and how will you tell them?
6. What do your non-Christian family and friends know about Christianity and how do they respond? How might you pray for them?
7. What have been the major changes in your family since you left? (E.g. marriages, deaths, new home, new job)
8. What aspects of family life do you expect to be the same?
9. What family characteristics and traditions have you come to appreciate more since you've been away? Which ones do you value less and why?
10. Who are your friends back home? How do you think they will have changed? How will the changes in both of you affect your relationship?
11. To what job situation are you returning? What major changes have taken place there and how will these affect you? Or if you're joining the working world for the first time, how will things be different from your life as a student?

Think Home 4 – Growing and serving

1. What spiritual 'roots' and habits have you developed here that will help you grow back home?
2. What are the essentials for your spiritual growth? Where will you find them? What will you do if you can't?
3. What spiritual battles will you face? How will you deal with them?
4. What other factors could affect your spiritual growth?
5. What are some ways that you can serve in your church back home (if you already have a home church)? If you haven't found a church yet, what will you look for in a church? Have your expectations of church life changed?
6. Read Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4. What do you consider your gifts to be?
7. Where and how can you exercise them?
8. What will it mean to you to serve God in your profession? How can you best do this?
9. What possible problems or barriers may you face?
10. Who do you think is prepared and hungry for you to share the gospel? What barriers do you face and what bridges can you use?
11. What dreams and visions do you have of what God may do in and through you?