Strong Tower Ranch Summer Mission Trip
Preparation Steps - Overview
(Details are included on the Prep-Checklist.)

First Step: Set the date and begin recruiting

Decide on a week that fits STR and your church calendar. Meet with the STR representative to review expectations and confirm trip date. (Ideal time to have this confirmed is by December.) Put the date on your church’s calendar and then send it out to your youth and their parents through your regular communication vehicle. Keep this and other “Important Dates to Remember” (such as training sessions) at the bottom of every communication that goes out from now on. We have general flyers available.

Begin filling in the Mission Trip Group Member List with the names and information needed on your members. This is an alternate way of gathering the information on your group. Usually, volunteers fill out the online STR Day Camp Volunteer application. As a group leader, you may have your group members apply online and/or you can use the Mission Trip Group Member List to record information on one sheet and give the list to the STR Volunteer Coordinator in advance of your confirmed week of service. Adults 18+ must have a background check run by STR. Youth need to have a parent sign the liability waiver portion of the online application.

It’s important to know the numbers you are shooting for as a team. Availability of leaders (adults) might shape the number of students you can bring. Three responsible adults (25+) to supervise your group in the evening is minimum because often someone will need to be busy with something else (showering, etc.), making it two supervisors for all practical purposes. If your group is 5 or fewer volunteers (youth), 2 adults may be supervising in evenings. Make sure you recruit an adult to be in charge of your breakfast and dinner meals. Most people bring a dedicated cook who can do something minor during the camp day (i.e. help with crafts). We had one group that organized people from their church to bring out their dinner each evening. The person in charge of meals may want to come out to STR to see the kitchens.

Second Step: Make financial decisions

Create a budget for your trip. Will the trip cost be covered by your church budget or do you need to decide how support raising is done? Will you write letters, do fundraisers, church projects, etc.? If raising support, you need to have a cost/goal for support raising efforts. It is usually most helpful to have an individual cost amount (a group amount can work, but can lead to some people letting others do the work to raise it).

Budget Items:
- STR cost of $75 per person (Includes lodging, lunches & snacks during camp, when campers have snacks, an STR t-shirt, name tag, etc. Leaders have a different colored t-shirt from the campers to keep leaders more easily distinguished.)
- Food: possibly $88 per student if you have a group member prepare (6 breakfasts $5 x 6 = $30, 6 dinners $8 x 6 = $48, 6 snacks about $10). This is a cost for your group, not paid to STR.
- Transportation: ? (if coming from out of state or optional activities are planned)
- Contingency fund (if needed)
- Sponsoring campers if desired: $150 each
- Optional: Fun activity on the way home from STR on Saturday (It’s not recommended you do it on the way to STR as students can start the week overly tired).

Third step: Set more dates and communicate them

Set a deadline for confirming a member’s participation three months prior to the trip so people have the trip and training dates on their calendars and have time to raise money. Confirm your training dates (See below)
and get all dates presented to your church. Make sure your adult group members plan to attend the training dates and everyone knows these meetings are mandatory. Decide what time you will return from your trip. Will you leave late Friday night or on Saturday morning? Will you make any stops on your way home on Saturday? Make sure everyone knows the departure and return times for the trip dates (arrival at STR by the start of training).

**Fourth step: Help STR to place your team members well**

When you fill in the information on the Mission Trip Group Member list, you will use the short recommendation questionnaire for STR (Pastor Referral form) to help STR determine the appropriate position each mission team member will fill: Senior Counselor (Sheriff), Assistant Counselor (Deputy), Support Staff (might be placed in a group with children but not be a “counselor” or might be given a task that is not with children), or other. Indicate who is going to teach lessons or verses. Indicate who would like to help with music, either singing or playing an instrument. Our music leader will contact them to invite them to two practice sessions. We gather this information from volunteer applications and references if you do not know your members well enough to provide this.

**Fifth step: Meet with Adult Volunteers**

Meet with your adult members to strategize about how to minister to your own youth on this trip. Plan a group devotional for your evenings together at camp. Make it fun, enjoy the bonding, but make sure to pour into your students and continue to cast your vision for both the week and your youth group. A suggested evening schedule is as follows: after campers leave at 4pm, counselors have a half hour cleaning job, then full-staff debriefing meeting on Monday (possibly Tuesday as well), then teens could swim until dinner so they can cool off and relax, eat dinner, have an activity or low energy game, devotions around camp fire, discussions about camper groups, dealing with specific kids and praying for them, showers and bed.

**Training sessions at your location:**

**Session 1** (30 minutes) Date: ____________ Location: ________________________ Time: _________

**Trip Funding** - You will explain your support raising plan. If it is everyone on their own, give some examples of how to write a support letter. Give deadlines for when you need confirmation of participation and when money should be in. (You could have your members do one lump sum or a payment plan if you have to cover costs before the trip.) Your group will make one check to STR ($75 per each member staying on site) and bring to the Saturday Training.

Assign Bible lessons to those who will be teaching. Assign Bible verses to those who are willing and ready. If this is too great a challenge for your students, choose one or more adults. As little as one lesson or verse can be assigned to a young person in order to help him or her to prepare and do well.

**Session 2** (1 hour) Date: ____________ Location: ________________________ Time: _________

**Policy Training** - You can go over the STR rules and procedures that are provided to you (Group Training Manual), stressing camper safety and being above reproach in all aspects of camp. This is also a good time to introduce your expectations (teen interactions & attitudes), basic rules for after camp is over each day, and your evening schedule.

During the onsite training, we will only review these topics.

4/18/2019
Session 3 (2 hours) Date: __________ Location: ___________________________ Time: ________

**Bible lessons and music** - Read through the lessons and recite the memory verses as a group. This would be a good time to have anyone who will be teaching to practice the lessons and verses in front of each other. Have students provide constructive criticism (positive and negative) for teachers. Time them so they get a sense of the time they filled. (Settle on hand time signals to help them be aware of time when teaching at camp.) If students take too little or too much time, show lack of knowledge of material or other major issues, those students should have a second practice time in front of the group at a later date. They need to be prepared well. These lessons might be the only time some of the campers are hearing God’s Word. We will provide the music for your group to learn. You are welcome to add fun action and or praise/worship songs with STR approval.

Session 4 (6-8 hours): Date: Saturday before your camp week Location: STR pavilion Time: Noon-6pm

**On-site Logistics training** - STR managers will welcome volunteers, have them get to know each other, present evangelism training, information on the daily schedule, activities, and review policies and procedures. The volunteers will be arranged according to their groups or positions. We will tour the property, praying for the campers and learning to work together as a cohesive team as we run through a typical day of camp. We will have water available and a meal. Please bring your Bible, a water bottle, watch, and wear comfortable “camp” clothes (tshirt & pants/shorts) and closed toe shoes to ride in wagons, walk and participate in activities.