Trends and Issues in Missions   Center for Global Ministries

2009

Short Term Missions: A trend that is growing exponentially

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Short Term Missions
A trend that is growing exponentially

The growing phenomenon of allowing American believers the opportunity to experience life and ministry in a foreign culture for a short period of time (from one week to two years) is called Short Term Missions (hence STM). From its beginning in the 60's and 70's in the youth ministries of Operation Mobilization and Youth With A Mission (YWAM) the trend has accelerated exponentially every year and there does not appear to be any peaking of this trend in sight.

Researcher Margaret Lyman of Fuller Theological Seminary reports, "The short-term mission phenomenon has grown from approximately 250,000 to one million per year since 1992 (Lyman, 2004, p. 9). Other estimates go considerably higher.

Just how big is short-term missions (STM)? As a grass-roots, decentralized movement, its scope is difficult to determine. And yet your own estimate of between 1 million and 4 million North American short-term missionaries every year may well be a conservative estimate. The sociologist Christian Smith, based on national random survey data, reports that 29 percent of all 13- to 17-year-olds in the U.S. have "gone on a religious missions team or religious service project," with 10 percent having gone on such trips three or more times. That is, his data indicates that far more than 2 million 13- to 17-year-olds go on such trips every year (Priest, 2005).

Researchers Robert Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen and C. M. Brown estimate that the number of annual STMers to be well over a million a year. This is derived from the national survey taken which shows that 2.1% have gone on an STM trip during the past year (2005) and 3.6% claimed to have gone on one when they were a teenager. These numbers indicate more than 1.5 million US Christians annually go on STM trips (Priest, 2006, p. 432).

Movements are usually not planned. Trends start in isolated areas then become generalized as the norm and a movement is born. The consequences are often not planned, but they must be analyzed and dealt with by leadership. In reference to STM, Dr. Sherwood Lingenfelter, dean of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission said, "It's the biggest change in missions in America." Later he added, "We have declining numbers in career recruits and an increased number of short-termers" (Allen, 2002).

Stan Guthrie describes one of the prime reasons for this phenomenon as a characteristic of this generation: "Baby boomers and busters are less likely to support an enterprise, either financially or personally, without firsthand knowledge of it. Many are interested in projects - the more tangible the better. And that most emphatically includes missions. Putting up a new school or showing the Jesus film to some refugees sounds a
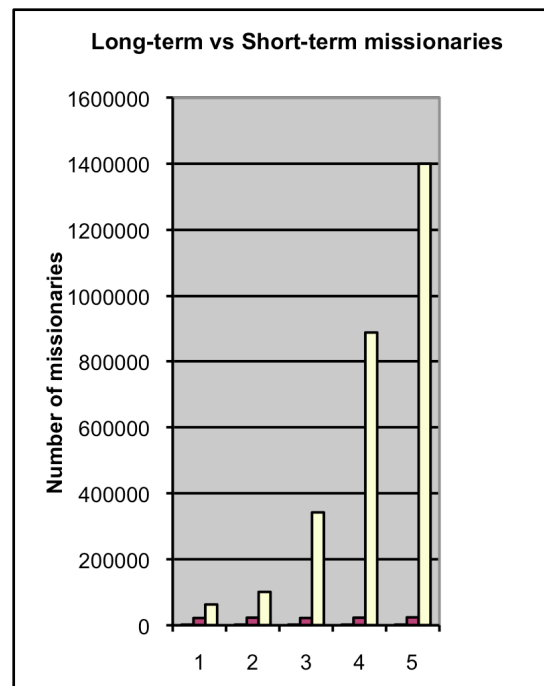
lot more doable to them than painstakingly learning the language, religion, and culture of a people" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 86).

As is the case with most trends there are two sides to the story. This chapter will introduce the issues, research and arguments from various points of view. Whatever one concludes, STMs are here to stay unless global transportation costs make it prohibitive for the large numbers of participants. Our conclusions must draw us to wisdom about how to maximize this trend for kingdom purposes that honor our Lord.

> "As the twentieth century closed, a dramatic shift had taken place. Missionary service was no longer restricted to a career option. Mission trips often were short-term experiences. In the midst of this shift, traditional agencies and churches on the mission fields of the world scrambled to integrate the new wave of volunteers. Simultaneously, majority world missionary movements emerged as a significant force for the global spread of the gospel (McConnell, 2005).

STM's have become the chief competitor of domestic summer camp programs. Many youth leaders affirm that their summer missions projects have greater impact than any other single event they schedule (Barns, 2000). "For numerous youth ministry leaders, short-term cross-cultural service trips offer a brief moment for students to experience faith with a new passion and purpose that counters a consumeristic culture's influence" (Linhart, 2006, p. 453).

Testimonies of how STM has affected people's lives are easily found. Warren Day, director of personnel for AIM International, said that he and his wife had three short-term experiences before committing themselves to a career in missionary service. "We had a definite interest in long-term service, but we wanted to know the mission better. We wanted to understand more about the ministry and our ability to effectively function in a cross-cultural setting" (Holzmann, 1988).

Monroe Brewer, mission pastor and has developed a ten-step program for transitioning STM participants into full-time career missionaries (Appendix 3). Brewer declares, "The short-term missionary, the cornerstone-feature of the missions-as-project approach, becomes the single greatest driving force in mobilizing the local church for world missions. At the same time, the short-termers stream becomes the single greatest conduit for flooding the world with field-tested, strategic thinking, and adequately supported long-term missionaries, the hallmark of the missions-as-process approach" (Brewer, 2000).

What we have is a grassroots movement in which, for example, youth pastors as a normal and expected part of their job take their youth groups to Mexico, West Virginia, Guatemala or Haiti on mission trips. Many congregations now routinely organize mission trips for all ages planned to fit around school and work schedules (Priest, 2006, p. 433).

James Engel, one of the most astute watchers of missions trends in the North American church, asserts in his 1989 book *Baby Boomers and the Future o f World Missions*, "A short term missionary service program is a must. Organizations not providing this option will face a manpower crisis" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 88).

Objective of STM

What is the purpose or objective of all this incredible activity? Is it to give a "quick fix" to world evangelism? Is it to help the poor under-developed and under-privileged people of the world in a philanthropic or altruistic desire to help improve the world? Is

this a calculated recruiting effort to get more full-time missionaries on the field to reach the world for Christ? LAM's appointee coordinator, Kathy Clark reports, "I would say that almost 99% of our applicants today have had some sort of cross-cultural experience (Loobi, 2000). Can we deduce from this last statement that STM experiences are producing more career missionaries?

Who is responsible for evangelizing the world and how does God expect us to accomplish the task? Before the STM trend missionary John Holzmann wrote that "people are expected to arrive automatically at life commitment" with nothing more to urge them in that direction than the testimony of missionaries from some remote location. Holzmann declares that "Short-term missions rectify that situation. They give the needed opportunity for first-hand evaluation."

"People on the inside of the mission industry point out that short-term experiences not only give missionary candidates the opportunity to discover what to expect if they join the agency and team with whom they work, but they allow the agencies and teams to see what kinds of people are applying to work with them" (Holzmann, 1988). This dual objective can be extremely important when the STM is at least several months in duration.

Proponents for STMs argue that North American participants change the lives of those they serve by providing needed goods and services and sharing the gospel. In addition, proponents say STMs open North Americans' eyes to needs around the world and make them more faithful long-term supporters of the STM beneficiaries. They also say STMs strengthen participants' faith and act as stepping-stones for young people considering long-term mission careers (Ver Beek, 2006, p. 478).

The ethical hope for many who facilitate STM is that the encounter will raise awareness, foster a deeper faith, improve Godly character, and foster deeper compassion toward others. The problem comes when the "raising of awareness" results in no action and people only "feel" connected to missions, or that they have performed their duty but continue in normal cultural patterns without a nod toward new directions for service and mission (Linhart, 2006, p. 454).

Paul Borthwick, missions professor at Gordon College, writes of his church's reaction to STMs: "God uses short-term, cross-cultural experiences today to transform people's theological world-view. One church explained the effect of short-term missions this way: "We now have a commitment to cross-cultural ministry, which came from our short-term mission experiences. Participants returned with a much larger view of God because they saw Him working through multiple cultures. Our church decided we could no longer be concerned with our church affairs only. Short-term missions made the mandates of Scripture come alive. The Lord of all nations commands our church's involvement across cultures and around the world. Short-term missions helped us take the imperative to 'Declare his glory among the nations' personally (Psalm 96:3)" (Borthwick, 2001).

In the journal *Mission Today*, Bill Taylor gives a ten-fold list of objectives for STMs that become the goals of every short termer. However, sometimes there is a big difference between the "can" and "will" in these statements.

1. They provide hands-on, direct contact with cross-cultural missions.
2. They can stimulate realistic vision for the global task.
3. They can provide an opportunity to see God at work (in one's personal life and on the mission field).

4. They can stimulate significant intercession by driving home the fact that without prayer, little is accomplished.
5. They can offer reality therapy for those who see missions with fuzzy, rose-tinted glasses.
6. They can convert a person into a lifelong intercessor or missions mobilizer back home.
7. They can create within those who go a desire to serve more significantly in their home churches - perhaps using newly acquired skills, and generally with a more global perspective.
8. Short-termers can witness the impact they can make through their example, evangelism, discipleship, or the use or transfer of their specific skills. Through their service they strengthen the on-site, long-term ministry.
9. They can provide the foundation for their own potential long-term commitment to career missionary service.
10. They can bring glory to the Living God through their demonstrated obedience to the Sending Lord (Taylor, 1996).

One explanation for the surge in short-term missionaries is that the definition of "missionary" is being stretched in what one might call the *democratization of missions*. (Ralph Winter of the US Center for World Mission, however, calls it the *amateurization* of missions.) Seth Barnes, executive director of the short-term agency Adventures in Missions, writes, "These changes are forcing a redefinition of our concept of a missionary. No longer is the mission field viewed as the province of an elite few. Increasingly, ordinary lay people are finding that they can be empowered to contribute to the mission enterprise with their time and talent." (Guthrie, 2001, p. 87)

Realistic prefield training must include serious self-analysis of why do so many want to participate in STMs in the first place. "Lacking the insight into cultural sins that can come from mutual partnerships across cultures, short-term missionaries commit not just errors from lack of training, or mistakes due to inexperience, but sins for which God and their national brothers in Christ must forgive them.

"For America, sins associated with wealth and consumerism comes readily to mind. Wealth puts one on a slippery slope to many sins, including greed, injustice, pride, selfishness, and laziness. These types of sins tend to involve motivations for short-term mission. Americans may draw to short-term mission because it is adventurous, glamorous, exotic, the 'latest and greatest,' that is, something to be consumed, especially if one wants to 'keep up with the Joneses.' Or they may be attracted to it because they are lazy and it seems easy and pleasurable, particularly by contrast with long-term mission, which would require a greater sacrifice. Or they may decide to do short-term mission out of a selfish desire to feel good about helping others, or to become sensitized to poverty and lostness. The list of sinful motives for short-term mission can seem limitless, and the remedy is nothing less than the transformation that comes when we repent of our sins and seek forgiveness (Lyman, 2004, pp. 19-20).

Often this is an unconscious motivation that the short termer is not even aware of, but inevitably surfaces in the pressure of a strange environment. This common experience makes the team leadership critical to the spiritual success of any STM.

Criticism

With such a vast trend that incorporates over a million young people a year there are unavoidable criticisms. Some of them need to be dealt with and some ignored. This section is not meant to be critical or negative, but, hopefully, realistic. Obviously, the criticism leveled against STMs does not come from the immobilizers of the movement, but from two sources: researchers and those on the receiving end.

If we state that the objective of STMs is to see an increase in the number of career missionaries who can plant and nurture new churches to maturity, then we have a significant criteria to measure against. Stan Guthrie, in his concise yet classic *Missions in the Third Millennium,* wrote "While the number of short-termers has increased the number of career workers has leveled off or declined. Even financial giving to agencies, which one might reasonably expect to grow with the bulging ranks of those who have gone on overseas ministry projects, has remained static" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 88).

Missionary Bill Taylor wrote in *Mission Today*, seven of the short-term mission's short-comings, some of which can be dealt with in pre-trip training and some are inherent in the STM structure and can only be accepted as inevitable.

1. Overstated importance.
2. Self-aggrandizement
3. Ignored national ministries.
4. Too short, too expensive.
5. Exhausted full-timers.
6. Limited results.
7. False impressions (Taylor, 1996).

Why are there some negative experiences on STMs? Glen Schwartz, called the *guru of dependency*[1] gives some possible explanations:

"One is that the anticipation of doing good for someone else is sometimes overplayed. Americans have a penchant for helping 'poor benighted natives' wherever they exist. Sometimes these Americans are seeking to fulfill a felt need for cleanliness or maybe a certain kind of shelter based on their own idea of the same. That felt need is not always shared by those they perceive to be "benighted." Secondly, the attitude that an "outsider" can do the job better is simply American (or European). This bit of arrogance has been taught to us ever since we can remember. ...

 A third reason for the often negative response is that it is assumed that when we as westerners go somewhere, such as a mission field, we must do something. The world has so many needs that we just must help by "doing" (Schwartz, 1986).

It is true that we must help in any way we can with the tremendous needs of a hungry, dying world. What has not struck us is that we must find a way to help that does not leave others feeling that they are too weak, helpless and uninformed to help themselves.

In an article written by Ralph Winters, "The Gravest Danger: The Re-Amateurization of Missions," he notes that popular interest in missions is at an ebb, so "we mission professionals are inclined to accept 'interest' -- warts and all." The short-term phenomenon has had little careful scrutiny. Missions, he concludes, "has become any Christian volunteering to be sent anywhere in the world at any expense to do anything for any time period" (Winter, 1996a, p. 6).

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[1] From a conversation with Steve Saint who has worked with Glenn Schwartz on a number of mission projects.

Critics say North American short-term missionaries often lack necessary training and respect for "nationals." They do not speak the local language, often are culturally inappropriate and insensitive, and focus on short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions and meaningful learning experiences (Ver Beek, 2006, p. 478).

Ajith Fernando, national director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka, comments that many of today's missionaries seem to have an aversion to struggle. "Unfortunately, they don't try to radically identify with the people," he said. "Coming only for short terms, they live as foreigners in Sri Lanka - quite removed from the people and ignorant of their struggles. Often those who join them hope that some of the missionary riches will trickle down. They are taken for a ride by the people who joined with them in the hope of exploiting their wealth. One of the biggest problems in missions today is the `softness' of the missionaries going out from affluent countries" (Guthrie, 2001, pp. 88-89).

Leaders of the STM movement have consistently repeated the claim that STMs adds to the pool of individuals willing to serve as career missionaries and increases people's financial giving in support of career missionaries (Priest, 2006, p. 435). Furthermore, research "indicates that involvement in STMs increases openness to serving as a career missionary" but to prove the increase in giving is more difficult. The majority going on trips are at a stage in life when their income is minimal. After graduation from college their income increases, so naturally there would be a proportionate increase in giving to missions (Priest, 2006, pp. 435-36). The question continues, how long does the openness to becoming a career missionary remain an option in the minds of STM participants?

Others argue that these trips too often become expensive efforts that quench North American Christian's guilt and satisfy their curiosity but do little lasting good. They point out that short-termers for one trip can easily spend $30,000 in travel costs to build a $2,000 house with "less spiritual benefit than if the work were done by local Christians who would follow-up on their efforts." Short-term missions, they argue also "distract full-time missionaries while leaving the local population dependent and misunderstood. The millions (probably billions) of dollars spent could be better invested in long-term efforts" (Ver Beek, 2006, p. 478).

In addition to short-term missions' tendency toward self-focus, short-term trips, even multiple trips, don't necessarily enhance true cross-cultural understanding. Lingerfelter says that a "short-term missionary never goes through what missiologists call a paradigm shift. Thus cross-cultural situations continue to be interpreted through the missionary's own cultural framework, instead of the missionary learning over time to identify with another framework (culture)" (Allen, 2002).

Other critics note that STMers too often constitute "religious tourism" and can be a burden to local missionaries, organizations, and church workers.

> Critics note that many participants lack language skills and the cultural and ministerial training needed for cross-cultural work. ..There is also concern that short-termers may engage in activities that displace local laborers and professionals. ..and that they may encourage economic and ministerial dependency....In addition there is concern about the cultural imperialist assumptions underlying many short-term projects, and criticism that short-termers (and those who organize and support the missions) tend to be overly goal-focused..., overly confident about the overseas applicability of ministry models used at home...and unrealistically positive about the effectiveness of their mission... As for the supposed transformative effects on

participants, while these may appear significant in the short run ..., they tend not to be enduring" (Zehner, 2006, p. 510).

Schwartz reports an incident in Guyana that taught him a significant lesson about how some nationals respond to help given by an STM construction team.

A missionary said in his earlier years (presumably before he knew any better) that he took a large group of young people out to Guyana to build a church building. After three weeks of concentrated effort, the building was completed and presented to the local people. The Americans returned convinced that they had made a solid contribution to needy people.

Two years later the missionary who no longer lived in Guyana got a letter from the church people. It read, "The roof on your church building is leaking. Please come and fix it." (Schwartz, 1986)

When there is perceived benefits from the wealthy American benefactors it does not take long before the nationals know what the visitors want to see. Personal benefit does strange things to people. In an article called "Loving your neighbor while using her," Miriam Adeney reports in *Missiology*, the following truth:

"Tourism threatens peoples' cultural heritages. Those who serve tourists must ask: What parts of our daily life or history are we going to package for alien consumption? How much of our story are we going to tell? How much will we open to public view? How much will outsiders even be able to understand? How authentic will our dances and music be? ... Over time this selectivity can skew the way the culture as a whole is portrayed. Given enough time, the locals themselves may come to believe this skewed picture (Adeney, 2006, p. 466).

For those who are long-term after the visitors depart and know the reality of daily life, the harm that crept into the minds of local nationals to secure a "hand out" is one of the most devastating damage done by foreigners. While only trying to help the local situation, outsiders inadvertently teach residents how to manipulate the visitors to give resources and finances. Once this is learned, dependency is created and self-initiative dies. The ability to unlearn this characteristic is next to impossible and the harm that is done has many more negative ripple effects.

Funding issues

It does not take a genius to calculate the funds that are expended for STMs that come from the available funds that could be available for the work of world evangelism. If the number of STMs per year (2006) was 1 million (all estimates are higher, but for the sake of argument) and the average cost per trip was $1,500 (probably very low estimate), that total expenditure from God's people was $1,500,000,000. Someone should be asking the hard questions about what are we really getting for our money! Much of this giving was sympathetic giving (family member going on a trip and how could I say "no"), which probably would not have been given to other mission projects.

Just how big is short-term missions (STM)? The above numbers are probably very conservative and underestimated. STM is such a decentralized movement, its scope is difficult to determine. Researchers estimate between 1 million and 4 million North American short-term missionaries every year and this may well be a conservative estimate. "The sociologist Christian Smith, based on national random survey data, reports that 29 percent of all 13- to 17-year-olds in the U.S. have "gone on a religious missions team or religious service project," with 10 percent having gone on such trips three or

more times. That is, his data indicates that far more than 2 million 13- to 17-year-olds go on such trips every year" (Priest, 2005).

Two sides to the financial issue: first is the tendency to "help" the poor nationals often creating dependency and the second is to deplete the pool of available funds from wiser long-term projects.

> The more short-termers try to "help" the nationals the more dependency is generated. "Rather than being encouraged toward a self-sustaining mode of existence, the church in many parts of the world was 'helped' by the provision of workers, supplies, and especially money from the Western church. This well-intended but misguided short-termers come into this type of situation and say, "Let us 'help' you," problems result. Without mutual partnerships to discern whether and what kinds of help may be needed, short-term mission can dampen initiative and reinforce dependence, thereby weakening, instead of strengthening, the local church" (Lyman, 2004, p. 18).

The second issue of funding is that of the depletion of "available" funds. As evidenced above, this is an enormous pool of funds floating around in the pockets of Christian people above and beyond what is given through their local church tithes and offerings. The question is, how available would those funds be for more worthwhile, long-range, productive financial assistance to the global missionary task?

Guthrie points out that baby boomers and busters are less likely to support an enterprise, either financially or personally, without firsthand knowledge of it. "Many are interested in projects - the more tangible the better. And that most emphatically includes missions. Putting up a new school or showing the Jesus film to some refugees sounds a lot more doable to them than painstakingly learning the language, religion, and culture of a people" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 86).

Robert Priest raised the financial issue in his article, "Are Short-term Missions Good Stewardship?" He asked the hypothetical question that "if it could be proved that STMs increase the number of individuals willing to serve as career missionaries but does not contribute to a comparable increase in financial support for career service, then the total number of career missionaries is not likely to increase" (Priest, 2006, p. 435). The question remains: has the depletion of available funds for missions by STMs reduced the available funds for supporting career missionaries?

> "What if ...[the] cure for the funding problem faced by career missions -- more STM... is actually a cause of the funding problem, part of the very reason it now takes so much longer for a career missionary to raise support." In any given church the financial support base for missions is fragile. When church groups discovered that they could appeal to this spirit of missions giving for STM, with the innate sympathy of their own young people becoming a "missionary," even if for a week, the motivation to give this discretionary mission giving easily was siphoned off to a STM project, leaving little or none for a long-term career missionary candidate (Priest, 2006, p. 438).

Using a metaphor Priest compares the local churches to prairie grasslands where cattle grazed freely but now has been invaded by sheep (a real problem in the old west). "Just as cows, who formerly had the pasture to themselves, face a competitive disadvantage when rapidly growing numbers of sheep graze the same pasture, so as, would-be career missionaries hoping to graze in pastures filled with flocks of short-termers face a radically different ecological setting than that of missionaries 30 years ago" (Priest, 2006, p. 438).

All of this would not be a problem if the churches could absorb the enormous financial commitment that yearly is increasingly being placed upon her. Research by various studies has indicated that STM participation "did not appreciably increase their giving. No methologically sound research we have discovered has yet demonstrated a significant average increase in giving by participants caused by STM experience" (Priest, 2006, p. 439).

Research on STM

Any enterprise as large as the STMs should immediately raise questions and force an evaluation on the part of those responsible for the leadership of the churches and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Are we accomplishing our purpose for being? In the research done by Priest-Dischinger-Rasmussen and Brown of 690 evangelical missions analyzed STMers who were staying for two weeks or more (although 67% of all STMs are less than 14 days) (Priest, 2006, pp. 431-432).

Often global statements are made, especially early in the genesis of a movement that has relatively little statistical data as a foundation, but are "seems-to-me" kind of data. Nancy Bridgeman, director of Student Mission Advance of Hamilton, Ontario, made this early claim that "only two or three out of every 100 who undertake to go to the mission field actually set out, whereas 25 out of every 100 involved in short-term service become life-long missionaries" (Holzmann, 1988).

Effects on Christian Disciplines

Honest evaluations and credible research in the area of STM is limited and is a relatively new field of investigation. What about how STM affects areas of Christian discipline? Randall G. Friesen completed a pioneer investigation of a number of STMs, though limited in scope, pointed out a number of revealing concepts that need to be further validated in different contexts. He compared two groups in his study: first was the group of students who were already committed to a career mission future and those who were merely curious about missions. He stated that in every category studied those interested in full time mission ministry increased in their responses to the areas under investigation, whereas in every area those not interested in full time missionary ministry declined in comparison with their zeal while in the preparation and participation of the short term mission. The areas under investigation included:
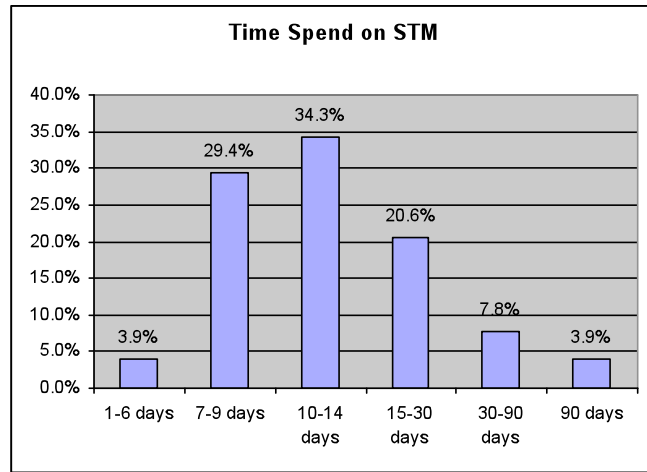
- Interest in full time missions
- Personal worship through music
- Identity in Christ
- Attitude toward family
- Teamwork in ministry
- Evangelism
- Compassion for Human needs
- Concern for Global Issues (Friesen, 2004, pp. 226-230)

Typical response to each of the items under question was the following conclusion to the statistical data collected:

"While both groups experienced positive growth related to this concept [evangelism] during their assignments, those with limited interest in future full time mission work had significantly lower post-follow-up changes scores related to evangelism in the year following their return home. Participants with a limited

interest in future full time mission work experienced significant regression in their experience of evangelism, in the year following their return from missions, as compared to those strongly interested in future full time mission work (Friesen, 2004, p. 229).

Friesen led over 116 STMs while doing extensive research of all the participants. The STMs ranged from one month to a year over a course of two years which included three stages: pre-trip, post-trip and a follow up stage (one year after they returned from their STM). "First time STM participants experienced the broadest positive change while on assignment, but also the most significant decline in beliefs, attitudes and behaviors a year later. Repeat STM participants were better able to retain their positive changes over a wider number of concepts during the year following their return from missions" (Friesen, 2005, p. 451).

Time Spend on STM

- 1-6 days: 3.9%
- 7-9 days: 29.4%
- 10-14 days: 34.3%
- 15-30 days: 20.6%
- 30-90 days: 7.8%
- 90 days: 3.9%

His study concluded with the following implications:

1. Discipleship training before and after STM is critical. Those who lack either the pre- or post- discipleship were far inferior in the results. "The anticipation of an STM experience provides a unique teachable moment in the life of a participant. To miss this discipleship training window is an irresponsible use of the STM experience.

2. We must do more to debrief and follow up with STM participants.

3. Supportive families and churches can make a significant positive contribution. Mentors for STM participants should be arranged before the young people depart on the STM to be ready to proceed with the positive growth steps that were experienced on missions.

4. Multiple STM experiences are moving young adults deeper into missional life (Friesen, 2005, p. 454).

Benefits of Construction Teams

Kurt Alan Ver Beek, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Calvin College, reported on a house building project in Honduras where STMs joined with a national ministry to build 100 homes. The analysis of the project was whether there was more benefit by the American STM participants as compared to those built by the national Honduran mission groups. The results were (1) there was no difference in the level of spiritual impact on the recipients of the houses, (2) there was no difference in the level of satisfaction of the recipients whether it was built by American STMs or a national Christian group, and (3) There was no other long-term difference, that is there was no difference in the motivation to participate in local Christian ministries (Ver Beek, 2006, pp. 478-79).

When the six national Honduran agencies that worked with STMs were asked whether it would be more beneficial if the Americans stayed home and sent the money they spent on travel expenses for the project (for every 2 homes built they could have

built 10), or repeat the project with the American STMs, five out of the six agencies reluctantly said it would be better to have stayed home and sent the funds. This would have resulted in two benefits:

> (1) More poor people would have been benefited
> (2) More jobs for Hondurans would have been created. The STMs supplanted the Hondurans in the work (Ver Beek, 2006, p. 482).

It should not be concluded that all building projects will have the same consequences, but this data should certainly be taken into consideration. Usually it is impossible to raise this amount of finances unless we have personal interest in participating in the project. The idea of raising $20,000 and giving it away to an organization overseas is sometimes more difficult than raising the money in the first place.

Giving to Missions

What about the claim that participation in an STM will result in more generous giving to missions? If they do not become a *go-er*, then an STM will produce more generous *senders*, is claimed. Robert Priest, professor of mission and intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, reports, "In my own survey of 120 Trinity M.Div. students, 56 percent of whom had been on short-term mission trips outside the U.S., the amount of short-term experience was not positively correlated with giving to missions. This result was unexpected and unwanted: It suggested that for these M.Div. students, STM as currently practiced was as likely to lower financial giving as to raise it. … We probably need to stop making the claim that STM in general leads to greater financial giving." (Priest, 2005)

Career Mission Objective

Another area of investigation helps determine if STM facilitates the increase of future career missionaries in any significant way.

> "A year after they returned from their short-term mission assignment, participants' interest in future full time mission work became more polarized. Participants either became more committed to future full time mission work or less committed to it. With significantly less (ten percent less) indicating an "average" response to future full time mission work. Some 30.3% of participants indicated a stronger interest in future full time missions, while 30.2% indicated a weaker interest in future full time missions. Overall, a year after they had returned from missions, 60.5% of participants indicated that they were interested in future full time missions either to a "greater extent" or a "very great extent." (Friesen, 2004, p. 225)

It appears that the commitment before going on an STM is more important to the long-range results than the trip itself. Once started in a positive direction for serving overseas, the more exposure to such service the deeper the convictions to fulfill it. Friesen proposed the hypothesis that the more often participants served on short-term mission trips would not effect their interest in full time missions; however, the evidence indicated the opposite. "The more the participants served on short-term mission assignments, the more interested they were in future full time mission work (Friesen, 2004, p. 230).

Further more, "the longer the overseas experience (10 months or more) the more positive change in mission concepts became permanent characteristics especially in the

values of service in the church, teamwork in ministry, concern for global issues and social justice" (Friesen, 2004, p. 232).

Real Objective of STM

So what, then, is the purpose of a short-term mission? There is an ideal objective, and then there is a real objective. The ideal objective is that genuine evangelism and missionary work can be accomplished on a short trip. However, in nearly all of the descriptions of why STMs are so highly regarded, the real objectives have to do with the changes that take place in the short termer himself. Each of the following quotes from major mobilizers and leaders of STM confirm this objective.

Paul Cull, missionary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, wrote, "My belief is that the primary benefit of a short-term trip is to expose the team members to something a little like the reality of the mission field, to give them a taste (albeit, often sugar-laden) of the reality of the call, and to perhaps motivate them for later involvement in world missions" (Cull, 1999).

The positive side of short term Sam Metcalf, CEO of Church Resource Ministries, in his FSTML paper says, "The primary beneficiaries of short-term efforts are those who go on such trips. What such an experience does for participants-clarifying vision, molding character, and providing a context for the Spirit of God to do significant work in lives-usually outweighs any real accomplishments or lasting results in the ministry context. Throwing people into the insecurity and turmoil of another culture does wonders in the process of sanctification (Loobi, 2000).

John Holzmann, Director of Mobilization Media Department for the Caleb Project and former editor of Mission Frontiers, wrote, "Beyond the strategic service they can provide, short terms have long been recognized as great vehicles for the personal growth of those who participate" (Holzmann, 1988). Holzmann added "Short terms reshape participants' lives by, among other things, opening their eyes to a world that's bigger than they ever imagined, exposing them to the needs of that world, and helping them to see that their mono-cultural concept of life and reality is much too narrow" (Holzmann, 1988).

Robert Bland, director of Teen Missions International, is much more blunt about it. "We tell our people who are leading our teams that we're building kids, not buildings," says Bland. "The purpose isn't just what we'll do for these people, but what these people will do for us….There is not a single purpose in missionary work…but to us this is the first purpose." (Allen, 2001)

Edwin Zehner, Ph.D. in anthropology and professor at Central College, Pella, Iowa, and writer, described the major benefit of STM, "In addition to potentially doing practical good, short-term missions are widely thought to transform participants, especially younger ones, by fostering increased cultural sensitivity, spiritual depth, and greater commitment to the cause of world missions" (Zehner, 2006, p. 509).

In David Johnstone's *Missiology* article, "Debriefing and the Short-Term College Mission Trip" he wrote, "Without getting into the conflicting opinions of the value of STMs Johnston "suggest that, while the impact may be varied for those at the receiving end of a short-term mission/service [or even study] trip, the impact is potentially enormous for the student who is traveling and volunteering....This fact alone is worth the journey. The educational significance of these experiences is vast. The challenges to their world view, their heightened cultural sensitivity, and increased self-awareness

brought about by these trips cannot be easily replicated by other experiences" (Johnstone, 2006, p. 525).

He later adds, "Each trip varies in its accomplishment of ... goals; and in its success and impact on the host community. In spite of these differences, the most significant and enduring impact of each trip is upon the individual team members. For college students, short-term cross-cultural experiences have the potential for being one of the most formative and 'worldview shaping' pedagogical experiences of their college career" (Johnstone, 2006, p. 528).

Marshall Allen, researcher at Fuller Theological Seminary after extensive investigation of STM wrote, "This may be the first missions movement in church history that's largely based on the needs of the missionary" (Allen, 2002). In another article he describes advertisements for STM, "It will change both you and your church," says the Web site for Adventures in Missions, which has taken more than 30,000 youth and adults overseas for short-term mission trips in its 12-year history. "It will deeply enrich your faith and drive home the teachings of Christ" (Allen, 2001). He describes the emphasis many short-termer trip leaders place on the life change of the missionary—"as more important than the effect on the person being ministered to--is a fundamental shift of philosophy that many think is problematic" (Allen, 2002).

Ray Howard, Rocky Mountain regional representative for ACMC, former short-term trainer with Inter-Varsity's Short-Term In Missions (STIM) program, and the current short-term coordinator at South Evangelical Presbyterian Fellowship, Inglewood, Colorado, said his church's concern is "for the short term to be a learning experience for the individual, . . . a reshaping of a life."

The goal of biblical missions is to evangelize the world and build disciples of Christ. But frequently short-term mission projects are billed as tools for personal growth.

In their extensive research on short term trips, Robert Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasmussen and C. M. Brown concluded, "As currently practiced, STM does not appear to be producing lives of sacrificial stewardship. This is not likely to change unless we become very intentional about the stewardship outcomes we intend, and unless we place the challenge of stewardship at the center of our missiological reflections on STM" (Priest, 2006, p. 441).

> "Like pilgrimages, these trips are rituals of intensification, where one temporarily leaves the ordinary, compulsory, workaday life 'at home' and experience 'away from home' in a liminal space where sacred goals are pursued, physical and spiritual tests are faced, normal structures are dissolved, 'communitas' is experienced and personal transformation occurs. This transformation ideally produces new selves to be reintegrated back into everyday life 'at home,' new selves which in turn help to spiritually rejuvenate the churches they come from, and inspire new mission vision at home." (Priest, 2006, pp. 433-34)

Representatives from all three of these short-term mission agencies (Teen Missions, TeenMania, Youth With A Mission) said that the life change of the students who go on the trips is a high motivation for taking the trips. Allen concludes,

> "But this emphasis on using mission trips to grow and develop the missionary is a drastic divergence from past mission paradigms. Most mission paradigms were based on the Great Commission--the goal being to spread the Gospel to others, not use an overseas experience to grow personally and become better disciples ourselves. Effective discipleship calls for prioritizing culturally appropriate methods

of ministry, often requiring long-term missionaries to sacrifice themselves in order
to minister within the context of the culture" (Allen, 2002).
Ultimately, each organization and team that takes international short-term mission trips
must honestly evaluate their motivation, be honest about their goals, and be culturally
informed about the effect of their methodology. While it's true that one of the fruits of a
short-term trip is a life change for the missionaries, this should be viewed as a result and
not the motivation for the enterprise. The more the motivation for STM is to create a
world Christian, a better disciple, a ethically eclectic believer, or even a world prayer
warrior, as good as these goals are, they have a major fallacy: they do not produce career
missionaries willing to sacrifice their lives, gain the skills and tools necessary to reach a
people group long-term.

As Hanciles puts it, "If people are going for their own benefit, then why call it
missions?" (Allen, 2002)

Recommendations to make STM more effective

The research being done in the area of STM does not lack recommendations for
improving and focusing the purpose of STM. As more and more culturally untrained and
inexperienced leaders take monocultural American believers into non-Western, animistic
or other religious cultural people groups, numerous problems can occur. When the group
is led by someone who is honestly not willing himself to give up his lifestyle and go to
win a given people group to Christ, it is difficult to imagine how he could challenge his
short termers to make such a commitment.

"Short-term mission trip leaders who've never gone through this cultural paradigm
shift need to be humble and cautious about their level of cultural understanding, lest they
lead trips that are irrelevant to the mission field" (Allen, 2002).

If STMs are merely an effective discipling tool for churches or an exotic substitute
for a fun-filled summer camp program (with the same transitory results), then a
reevaluation is in order. Many of the recommendations given for STM deal with how to
make STMs more of a life-changing discipling experience with focus on personal
Christian disciplines and little one ministry skills, cultural understanding and how to
learn practical skills and tools for a return to and more effective ministry with the target
people group. If a long-term missionary is not the objective of STM, then it will not
happen. Since it is not happening, it must not be the objective. "We get what we
emphasize" is a true slogan.

Better Discipleship Pre-field and Follow-up

If we are going to target the development of international career missionaries
(remember 95% of the world lives outside of the USA), then leaders must be trained in
cross cultural understanding, evangelism, and world mission strategies. Randal Friesen
said, "Cross-cultural short-term mission assignments have a significant lasting positive
impact on participants' value of the global Church when compared to the impact of
domestic assignments... 'World Christians' do no emerge within the North American
Church without some level of intentionality focused on discipleship in cross cultural
mission" (Friesen, 2004, p. 239). We cannot expect foreign missionaries to erupt from a
domestic focus. The world must be seen as the "field," not merely our neighborhood.

Jim Reapsome, former editor-at-large for Evangelical Missions Quarterly and World Pulse newsletter, says in his FSTML paper, "The primary cause of failure often is lack of pre-field preparation. The whole episode becomes a colossal waste of time, and a drain on the missionaries. To this we have to add the high cost of teams junketing off to exotic places. But we have to examine our total investment in light of the returns, as well as the problems we create. One reason for not converting more short termers to career workers is simply that some agencies do not adequately follow up their short-term people" (Loobi, 2000).

Zehner followed up on a number of STM in Africa and came to some conclusions that would help build closer ties to the nationals. Perhaps this is not only a way to leave a deeper impression on the nationals, it likewise might leave an indelible impression on the STMer. During interviews of the local church leaders after a short-term mission trip to Ghana and Rwanda, Zehner found that the American STMs "were good construction workers and that they drew lots of extra attention to local ministries because of their white skin. On the other hand, they felt that the short-termers should not focus on evangelism (due to lack of time to do it well), they wished the short-term missionaries had learned more about the host cultures, and they wished the short-termers would spend more time with the locals rather than just with each other" (Zehner, 2006, p. 511).

Howard Culbertson, renowned professor of missions at Southern Nazarene University, gave the following checklist of what NOT TO DO to help maximize your short-term experience. Please enjoy the sarcasm!

1. Keep narrowly focused on spiritual activities. You want to win that country to Christ. So, focus on your loftiest expectations. Avoid doing such menial work as data entry, loading trucks, or working on buildings. Such things will only distract you from your primary task.

2. To tighten up your schedule, eliminate personal prayer and Bible study. Likely, you will be so rushed that you really won't have time anyway. Besides, can't you get all the spiritual food you need from church services and from group devotions?

3. Stay organized. Set goals before you go. Establish a detailed schedule. Do not deviate from that schedule. Refuse to accept delays, last-time changes, and impromptu visits and invitations. Those things will just keep you from getting things done for God.

4. Help the missionaries by pointing out their mistakes. Bring them up to date on what you've heard are the latest missions trends. Missionaries can sometimes be stubborn. So, you may need to enlist some support among the nationals for your views about how the mission should be running.

5. Get involved romantically with someone. Being away from family and friends make this the perfect time to get involved in a romantic relationship. While it may distract you slightly from the work, you will be able to expose national Christians to America's progressive dating customs.

6. Don't embarrass yourself by trying to pick up the local language. People are always saying that English is spoken all over the world. So, insist that those people use it with you.

7. Immediately begin pointing out your team members' faults. Time is short. It may be difficult for people to make the needed changes in their lives if you don't help them from the start. Especially focus your criticism on team leaders.

8. Make hygiene a top priority. Don't eat any of the local food. To be sure, you may miss some friendly opportunities with "the natives," but you'll avoid all those germs!

9. Keep your distance from team members who couldn't raise their full support. They may try to mooch off you. Don't give in. Letting them sweat out their finances will build their faith.

10. When you return home, castigate your home church and friends for their lack of commitment, for their weak prayers, and for their inadequate giving to missions. This may be one of the few times you will have their deferential respect; so make the most of it (Culbertson, 2001).

Preparation for Long-Term. Hesselgrave warns STMs to avoid amateurism:
> "The Student Volunteer Movement was borne on a wave of enthusiasm and commitment. However, in their enthusiasm, the volunteers tended to ignore the insights of earlier missions workers. They made serious mistakes that resulted in many unnecessary deaths among the missionaries and a demoralization and spiritual decline among national pastors. Their amateurism set missions back instead of propelling the work forward. It took missions educators and institutions forty years to relearn the lessons that had been so quickly forgotten" (Hesselgrave, 2006, p. 204).

Friesen's research showed that "short-term mission participants with extensive pre-trip discipleship training experienced significantly higher change scores during their assignments in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors related to personal communication with God (prayer), the Bible as a guide for life, the value of Christian community, and relationship with the local church and evangelism, when compared to participants who did not receive extensive pre-trip discipleship training" (Friesen, 2004, p. 237).

Cultural training. Admittedly, it would be extremely difficult to prepare everyone beforehand to fit into a new and complex culture. This can take years of understanding and adaptation. However, the more specific cultural training and general cross cultural skills learned before the trip, the more "hooks" the STMer will have to "hang" his experiences on when they are encountered. Kevin Birth, Associate Professor at Queens College, wrote,
> "From my own experience as an ethnographer, I know that training and reading about Trinidadian history, culture and society can only convey the significance of issues of race, class, and religion throughout the country, but not the local manifestation and complex interaction of these issues [voodoo, charismatic extremes, Catholicism, visions, Hinduism]. There is not a former sadhu or a Brother Thomas in every congregation. Instead, every community is slightly different, and every congregation is different (Birth, 2006, p. 501).

Face-to-face with career missionaries. There is nothing like observing a model person to learn a new skill. Ideally, any trip should be centered around the learning experience of watching a mature, experienced missionary minister in another culture. Holzmann observed that "while it is generally conceded that the best short term is one in which you can observe long-term missionaries doing their work, long-term missionaries are not necessarily equipped to meet the special needs that short-termers bring with them" (Holzmann, 1988). For this reason the missionary to be visited and assisted, should be

selected with great care that they will have the impact on the STMers that will encourage them to an effective long-term ministry.

More time overseas means greater impact. Friesen point out, "The longer an STM experience, the deeper and more lasting its impact on participants' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors" (Friesen, 2005, p. 450).

Repeated STM to the same area for long-term exposure: Terence Linhart, dean of the School of Religion and Philosophy, Bethel College in Mishawaka, IN, writes "At best, what a short-term team can accomplish is limited. It takes time to see how local patterns work. What is the right way to plan a schedule? To expend money and account for it? To exercise authority? To take initiative? To settle quarrels? God in Christ took thirty-three years in one place. It takes time to be a friend, to listen and to fall to the ground as a seed, only to find fresh life among brothers and sisters very different from ourselves. Short-term teams do best when they work under long-term missionaries or locals, and when they are part of a multi-year series of exchanges (Linhart, 2006, p. 468).

Writing in the Ask-a-missionary e-mail newsletter, Jim Hogrefe of OMS .International, says, "Determine whether or not the short-term trip will stimulate career missionary work or if it is mostly just a one-time project." (Guthrie, 2001, p. 91)

Make the STM a reciprocal encounter. Another model for STM is to make the 'missionaries' as trainee-subordinates to the local church' or local believers instead of the foreigner who has all the answers. Zehner suggest that this would make the primary beneficiary of this focus the STMer who would "be stretched in the following three areas: (a) experiencing God, (b) experiencing the Worldwide Body of Christ, and (c) experiencing Ministry in a different context." It would be designed to "make the sojourner more spiritually minded, less self-sufficient, and less certain of the prospective brought to the field, while perhaps sharing some of the experiential risks faced by the locals. It was hoped that the foreign visitors would thereby develop attitudes that would make better partnering possible, and the process simply required recognizing the local church's ministry leadership even when deploying foreign personnel" (Zehner, 2006, p. 512).

Following in a similar approach, Mike Pocock, of Dallas Theological Seminary, suggest that when an STM is planned in another culture there should be time allocated "simply to listen to local believers tell how God helps them cope with their circumstances." He challenges STMs to let the Nationals be your teachers. "You will learn a great deal bout God and also about the kind of faith it takes to live where they are." He then gives three suggested questions to ask in these settings: (1) How did God convince you to accept and believe the gospel? (2) What have been your greatest trials as a Christian, and how did God help you face them? (3) What are the greatest needs your community and country face? (Pocock, 2005, p. 155)

Don't get involved in "Lone Ranger" mission projects. There is no shortage of needs to be met around the world. Admittedly, many areas are not covered by existing mission agencies. Being motivated by compassion many get involved in a one-time project that looks great back home, but often creates disillusionment and frustration on the field, because the STMers have moved on to greater things. Strategic long-term thinking must

be part of the plans of STMs.   In his chapter on "Amateurization and Professionalization" Hesselgrave gave the following case study:

> "Some ten years or so ago, the missions-minded First Evangelical Free Church in St. Louis, Missouri, decided to "jump-start" a church-planting movement in Tatarstan, Russia. Their strategy was both simple and bold. They would send missionary teams on two-week mission strips to assist a national church planter by witnessing and presenting the gospel in a variety of ways. Over time, converts would be organized into small groups for fellowship and Bible study. Out of these groups, one church, or perhaps several, would be organized.
> Over a two-year period, the church sent more than one hundred short-termers (mostly laypersons) to Tatarstan with disappointing results.
> Providentially, a seminary mission student from another church by the name of Carl Brown was in Tatarstan on a two-month assignment at the time. Aware of the arrangement and its lack of progress, he informed his seminary mentors of the situation. Meanwhile, back in St. Louis, Christians made two decisions. First, they decided to pray that the Lord would raise up a church-planting career missionary with whom they could work. Second, they decided to suspend the short-term program in Russia until the Lord supplied such a missionary (Hesselgrave, 2006, pp. 203-204).

Don't go overseas with the notion that American success means international success. Zehner points out successful American ministries are often assured that they know exactly why they have grown and can transmit their success formula into another culture and economic structure. He comments "In cross-cultural leadership training seminars taught overseas by American church leaders often did not take into consideration the long-term effects on local churches....They were also offended by the assumption of many trainers that recently successful American churches had the best, most trend-setting models for the church world-wide, when there were actually larger churches elsewhere with successful alternative models" (Zehner, 2006, p. 510).

Make it difficult. In striving for the goal of culturally relevant short-term missions with long-term impact, Sherwood Lingenfelter, Dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, has a radical suggestion: "The best thing to do would be to make it more difficult for people to go," he says. "Instead of trying to get everybody to go, lay out a challenge and see who'll commit to a longer time of prayer and preparation to go."
Lingenfelter points to a short-term trip he led to Chad. When he initially announced the trip, 45 students showed interest. He invited the group to come pray with him weekly for a semester. By the end of the semester, eight kids remained. Lingenfelter says "a small group is better because he can train them beforehand and coach them throughout the trip." In addition, because Lingenfelter's team worked in partnership with the local church in Chad, the trip has had a long-term impact (Allen, 2002).
Friesen's evidence agrees with Lingenfelter when he showed the need for "longer and deeper" assignments in order to produce a paradigm shift on the part of the missionaries in their relationship to the host culture. "Without a paradigm shift, short-term missionaries interpret cross-cultural situation through the missionary's own cultural framework rather than learning to identify with the framework of the host culture. The keys to a paradigm shift include learning the local language and living with the local people." (Friesen, 2004, p. 239)

Debriefing and Follow-up on STM

The experiences on the field can be varied and multiple, smooth and rough, flawless or chaotic, exotic or urban, comfortable or uncomfortable, exhilarating or frustrating, but it really doesn't matter that much as far as lasting desired effects. "An STM provides a fertile setting for Christians to reflect on such things as witness, service, community, sacrifice, spirituality, poverty, materialism, suffering, hedonism, self-denial, justice, racism, ethnocentrism, inter-ethnic relations, globalization, stewardship, and vocation. The context is valuable, even if STM leaders do not foster these reflections among participants" (Priest, 2005). People need to be lead through these experiences to consciously understand the meaning and impact on their lives.

"The data indicates that approximately fifty percent of the short-term mission alumni in the study became *more interested* [italics mine] in future full time mission work during the year following their return from missions. Discovering and following up with those short-term mission alumni, who were moving toward stronger interest in future full time mission work, would be a critical task for mission agencies and local churches." (Friesen, 2004, p. 243)

The less importance that the leaders place on the interpretation of the data gleaned while on this trip, the less importance the STMers will as well. They will remember the fun and adventure like a trip to Disneyworld, but not the pathos of a dying world without Christ. "While good preparation is essential, for a trip of this nature to have lasting impact, there must be an opportunity for the student to reflect and internalize the situations they have encountered. This reflection must be intentional and facilitated for it to have any enduring significance" (Johnstone, 2006, p. 524).

Friesen reports from Tuttle study that the impact of short-term missions on faith and maturity growth in college students identified "the quality of pre-trip and post-trip discipleship training as the most significant factor in the faith development of short-term missions participants" (Friesen, 2004, p. 237).

> To use your vivid image, if one bends a sapling for two weeks, then releases it, one can measure a change in its position. But three months later it may be back to where it started. That is, when these high school students return to the settings that originally shaped their ethnocentrism and negative attitudes towards Mexicans, they may eventually revert to the original pattern (Priest, 2005).

Studies show that STMs "tend to produce temporary changes only" in ethnocentrism, except when STMs were "accompanied by cultural orientation and field-based culture-learning exercises, there was a marked drop in rates of ethnocentrism." Some of these training topics included the culture they will be working with and God's perspective on race. Simply the exposure to another culture may or may not change the ethnocentrism of an individual, but when the "immersion experience is connected with the right sorts of orientation and coaching, significant change is possible" (Priest, 2006, p. 444).

> "Short-term mission participants require a new understanding of the challenges they face following their return from missions. They need a new awareness of the dangers of re-entry culture stress, temptation and loss of spiritual vitality. They need to be prepared for a new level of isolation and lack of accountability once they return home. They need to see the benefits of a life coach who can help them navigate some of the potential re-entry minefields." (Friesen, 2004, p. 262)

Seth Barns, youth writer, has proposed that to reap the dividends of a changed lifestyle on an STM, youth groups must carry forward the momentum which a summer project can generate. "In order for the principles of sharing Christ's love and helping others selflessly to become a foundational part of students' lives," they must be reinforced through a regular long-range program of ministry back home. As Faith Bible's Missel notes, "We're selling our students short if we don't give them continuity. For us this takes the form of evangelism training, evangelism outreach to students, and support of local projects" (Barns, 2000).

The naive are unwilling to seriously face the issues of STMs because the fun and positive feedback from participants blind the leadership ("Success always blinds"), but the career missionary knows the difference. These become the major areas that need to be clarified during and especially following the STM experience.   Holzmann identifies several challenges or problems for STM trips:

- Exposure to Need but not to God's Call.
- Exposure to Physical rather than Spiritual Needs
- Exposure to Reached rather than Unreached People
- Exposure on the Part of the Individual and Not His Congregation (in fact, few are interested in their experiences)
- Event Rather than Process Orientation.   When it comes to short-term missions, most people focus exclusively on the experience of being overseas, of being in another culture. Yet as natural as this focus may seem, if a person is not adequately prepared for and debriefed from the experience, he's in for trouble.

The leadership is the key for the solution to these issues. How they are interpreted and what significance is derived from these circumstances must be brought out in open discussions. "The short-term experience is a very unnatural, critical event in the life of the person, his family, and the life of the whole church," said Hawthorne. "Too often it is shrugged off as of little significance. But there has to be facilitation (mentoring) before, during, and after the field experience" (Holzmann, 1988).

Warren Day notes that Adventures in Missions (AIM) brings out a number of key issues that apply to all STMs.

- We can't go simply to make ourselves feel good, or in order to say, "Now we've done our part, we've fulfilled our obligation"
- Agencies and churches may be deluding themselves when they think short-term programs increase the likelihood of short-termers becoming long-term missionaries

Numbers of STMers that become career missionaries and testimonies of missionaries are often inserted in publications or web pages that lack serious statistics. It is often wishful thinking or emotional "wanta be…" responses that are never followed up on, "I want to be a full-time missionary." It is fashionable to point out the supposed high percentage of short-termers who end up as career missionaries. Brent Lindquist (executive director of LINK Care Center, a missionary counseling center in Fresno, California) wasn't about to question those figures. He did point out, however, that "we don't know how many of those who went on a short term and later became long-term missionaries were already convinced they should become long-termers before they went" (Holzmann, 1988).

The encouraging thing is that we know how to make these commitments last. It's not about how good the orientation is before they go, and it's only somewhat about the experience itself. The key to long-lasting change is having structures in place to help us stay motivated and excited about our goals. What we need to keep us on

track in meeting our goals—to do devotions daily or exercise four times a week—is accountability and encouragement. Monthly meetings with our groups after returning to the U.S., newsletters about the progress and needs of the people we visited, and Bible studies on the country or theme of our trip are just a few of the ideas that can translate a one-week experience into life-lasting changes in prayer, giving, and lifestyle. Sadly, very few STM experiences are currently emphasizing this sort of follow up. This is where I believe we should begin experimenting and see how STM participants are changed (Priest, 2005)

The study by Borthwick of the nature and value of the debriefing was confirmed by Friesen where there was an immediate team debriefing "where participants share their experiences, reflect on the application of lessons learned to their home community, and a verbal report for the youth group and church. Their longer term follow-up program includes a mission reading program, weekly discipleship groups focused on reaching out, regular exposure to visiting missionaries, prayer for the people they got to know on their mission assignments, and a reunion six months after returning to further reflect and share how their lives have changed since returning" (Friesen, 2004, p. 261).

Recruiting

A positive response to an STM is the goal of every organizer of such trips. The unwritten dream of every STM leader is to hear a testimony like this: "We felt a call first, and that's why we pursued missions, including short-term missions, as part of our preparation time. However, it did influence how we ended up with LAM [Latin American Mission] and in Latin America. We were so totally impressed with absolutely every LAMer we met during our short-term experience, that we decided, 'that's the kind of Mission we want to work with,'" said Paul and Nancy Mauger, LAM missionaries in Costa Rica (Loobi, 2000).

Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission, is concerned that contemporary mission candidates tend to be steered in one of two directions. "First they go over prepared, or second, they go with little preparation at all. Either situation places them and their ministries at a decided disadvantage."

The first situation results from the idea that if a little education is a good thing, more education must be better. ... Today, many candidates' ministries have had "sixteen to twenty years of education" with the unavoidable accumulation of debt to be paid off before acceptance with a mission agency. This typically results in candidates in their mid-thirties, too old to master either the language or the culture very well.

In the second situation, to avoid the debt-cycle and get to the field as quickly as possible, the candidates seek to avoid college and seminary (including the study of missiology). They may get to the field young enough to learn the language, if they knew how, but their lack of serious education makes them ineffective and limited (Winter, 1996b, p. 6).

STMers that show any interest in pursuing a career in international ministries should seriously be encouraged to get all the cross cultural training, specialized tools (TESL, Chronological Bible teaching, Bible training, language learning skills, world religions and history and methods courses from experienced missionaries before attempting to "reinvent the wheel" by having to learn these skills and others on their own.

For the most effective long range results Friesen recommends that short term alumni be encouraged to continue serving in "longer assignments and to continue serving with greater responsibility.... Repeat participants are also more interested in future full time mission work" (Friesen, 2004, p. 249). Opportunities to share in the leadership of future trips or mission strategy teams in their local churches can be extremely beneficial.

One of the most interesting suggestions was made by Ralph Winter who suggested an "earlier candidacy (perhaps even before the end of college) and earlier training in language and other needed tools. Deficiencies would have to be met through continuing educational opportunities after candidates are on the field" (Winter, 1996b, p. 6).

Today it is hard to image anyone seriously considering a career in missions without first getting some exposure to a potential or similar culture to which they would be willing to dedicate their lives. "Diving into the deep end of world missions without putting at least a toe in the water is unthinkable to most boomers, however. Gone are the days when a missionary speaker would make an appeal from a pulpit and his hearers would jump up and volunteer for 'the field'" (Guthrie, 2001, p. 86).

Scott Olson, Director of Mobilization, Wesleyan World Mission, said "I'm convinced that if we want long-term missionaries, we have to be totally committed to a short-term program. That has been proven by the fact that fields who have an aggressive short-term program are the ones getting career missionaries right now. We have to look at short-term experiences as part of the "funnel" that intentionally directs people to the needs of the world and what they can do to make a difference" (Olson, 2000).

> "Larry D. Reesor founded Global Focus [a ministry that trains local churches to structure an effective international ministry] on March 27, 1995. Larry served as an evangelist, pastor and missions agency executive for many years. After studying the scriptures, church history and the mission movement, combined with years of practical experience, Larry became convinced of two things which comprise the cornerstones of the ministry. He believes that the local church is God's primary instrument to evangelize the world. He also believes that the pastor and church leaders are the ones whom God has ordained to lead the local church to gain a vision for the world and develop a personalized, prioritized, integrated and strategic involvement in global evangelization.
>
> As we help churches to emulate the New Testament church, we believe the byproduct will be that the local church will impact the world for Christ" (Reesor, 2007).

Short-term work, whether two weeks or two years, can indeed be effective and pleasing to God. Yes, it can cost a lot of money, disrupt nationals and missionaries, encourage short-term thinking, and inoculate some against career missions involvement. But done well, it can open participants' eyes to the sometimes gritty realities of the world, make them aware of their own ethno-centrism and the gifts and courage of non-Western believers, and spark a lifelong commitment to missions. In the best cases, some real kingdom work gets done, too (Guthrie, 2001, p. 89).

May presents the following rules if STM is to be effective:

1. Short-term missions are great if volunteers remember that the career missionary knows the field better than they ever will.
2. Short-term missions are great if participants remember that their primary responsibility is to be servants to the missionaries and national partners.
3. Short-term missions are great if they increase the mission's spirit in the church back home.

4. Short-term missions are great if they call people into career service.
5. Short-term missions are great if volunteers remember to give God all the glory and the missionary the credit for the planning, preparation, and labor that made their trip a success.
6. Short-term missions are great if they are never viewed as substitutes for career missions (May, 2000).

Appendix 1

In a *Christianity Today* article, "Agencies Announce Short-Term Missions Standards," by Ken Walker, the announcement is set forth of an attempt to set some guidelines for the 40,000 churches, agencies and schools that are sending more than a million Short-Term missionaries.

1. God-Centeredness
    An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom, and is expressed through our:

1.1 Purpose - Centering on God's glory and his ends throughout our entire STM process
1.2 Lives - Sound biblical doctrine, persistent prayer, and godliness in all our thoughts, words, and deeds
1.3 Methods - Wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate methods which bear spiritual fruit
2. Empowering Partnerships
    An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners, and is expressed by:
2.1 Primary focus on intended receptors
2.2 Plans which benefit all participants
2.3 Mutual trust and accountability
3. Mutual Design
    An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants, and is expressed by:
3.1 On-field methods and activities aligned to long-term strategies of the partnership
3.2 Go-er-guests' ability to implement their part of the plan
3.3 Host receivers' ability to implement their part of the plan
4. Comprehensive Administration
    An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants, and is expressed by:
4.1 Truthfulness in promotion, finances, and reporting results
4.2 Appropriate risk management
4.3 Quality program delivery and support logistics
5. Qualified Leadership
    An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants, and is expressed by:
5.1 Character - Spiritually mature servant leadership
5.2 Skills - Prepared, competent, organized and accountable leadership
5.3 Values - Empowering and equipping leadership
6. Appropriate Training
    An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by:
6.1 Biblical, appropriate, and timely training
6.2 On-going training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
6.3 Qualified trainers
7. Thorough Follow-Up

An excellent short-term mission assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants, and is expressed by:

7.1   Comprehensive debriefing (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
7.2   On-field re-entry preparation
7.3   Post-field follow-up and evaluation (Walker, 2003)

Appendix 2

The principles of Global Focus that are keys to the mobilization of a local church are the following:

"Christ's command to Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations is the defining call and commission He gave to the Church. Yet, in order for this mission to be completed, we believe the local church must understand and fulfill its God-given role as His primary instrument. So how do you mobilize the local church for the Great Commission? How do you motivate and equip pastors and church leaders to lead their churches to reach the world both locally and globally with the message of Christ? We believe there are eight key principles and paradigms that must be embraced and implemented in order for the local church to maximize its global impact."

1. Worship must be the primary motivation for missions.
2. The local church must be seen as God's primary instrument to fulfill the Great Commission
3. The pastor must be the key influencer for the cause of global missions and must work in cooperation with church leaders to mobilize the local church.
4. The church must intentionally develop a corporate purpose, strategy and personality related to God's global cause.
5. The church must understand that mobilization is a process, not a "quick fix."
6. Global missions must be approached from appropriate generational perspectives.
7. Personalization must be seen as the key principle that will unleash the local church for global missions.
8. The "partnership paradigm" must be an essential element in mission strategy linking the local church with missionaries, nationals and other Great Commission people and organizations." (Reesor, 2007)

Appendix 3

Monroe Brewer, Director for the Center for Church Based Training in Dallas, Texas, has developed a strategy that "synthesizes" the benefits of both approaches to missions. "This strategy makes the short-termers (one who serves for one to two years) the cornerstone of its "game plan," satisfying the missions-as-project crowd, while at the same time having as its most obvious long-term feature the placement of career workers (those who serve for two to four terms) in the most strategic overseas assignments, satisfying the missions-as-process crowd" (Brewer, 2000)

Ten steps to implement the eclectic approach to missions:

1. Make the short-term experience the centerpiece of your church's missions program.
2. Establish a clear vision statement and work out a strategic and tactical plan for your church's missions program.
3. Infuse your missions budget (whether it is "faith promise" or "unified") with a onetime cash allocation. (It only needs to be large enough to fully support at least one missionary unit for one year).
4. Set up a candidate training program that begins to sort your potential candidates into your "class of '98," your "class of '99," and so on.
5. In sending out your first short-termers, (assuming he/she is fully prepared for the assignment), pick up everything that that missionary unit lacks in support to get to the field. The figure could be 30 percent, 60, or even 100 percent of the total support needed.
6. Send your short-termer to an area that is at least compatible with your long-term strategic plan or even a direct extension of it. Try to send him to the place and with the organization he might go with long-term. That way, whether your short-termers go long-term or not, they still will be forwarding key ministries that your church feels very strongly about.
7. When your short-termers return home, use their experiences to assess their call to the ministry, their personal vision, ministry skills, theological depth, language-learning aptitudes, organizational compatibility, and cross-cultural adjustments. Only a short-term experience can provide you with that kind of assessment. Vision trips and summer ministries don't allow the participants to experience culture shock--they don't have to set up house, learn a language, shop, renew visas--like short-termers do, since the shock doesn't hit until 6 months to 18 months into the experience.
8. Some short-termers will not go back to the field as long-term missionaries. Put their annual budget allocation back into next year's budget. Others will want to go back, but not immediately. They first may need to get more schooling, pay off debts, get married, or get more ministry experience or training.
9. Those short-termers who desire to return long-term immediately (within the next six months) now have fire in their belly. They can speak articulately and with passion. They have the war stories and the video footage. They now don't mind so much raising support, and others view them as returning veterans, not untried rookies. They can now go to other churches to raise support and can raise it relatively easily. Your church can now reduce the monthly allotment you were giving them, since other support is coming in. Put the unneeded funds back into your "starter fund" for next year's short-termers.

10. About half of your short-termers will not go back long-term; about a fourth will go back long-term, but not immediately; and about a fourth will go back long-term immediately. You will be able to use most of the funds from last year's short-term account to send out new candidates next year. You may need to add $5,000 or $10,000 more each year, but not much (this could be viewed as your budget's inflation-adjusted 5% annual increase). Every year those same funds are there to keep your church's missions vision expanding and maturing (Brewer, 2000).

Appendix 4   ---Sanctified Sarcasm---

Seven Reasons Why You Should Never Go on a Short-Term Mission Trip

David Armstrong was a missionary and short-term mission coordinator at OC International [One Challenge] and is now the Director of Agency Services at Mission Data International.

1. It will distort your perception of the world! Seeing it through the plastic lenses of our society is sufficient. They may be distorted, but you are used to them! Don't needlessly mess yourself up.
2. You could get sick or robbed! It's dangerous out there! Some places have a crime rate almost as high as our inner cities.
3. It will make you harder to live with! The way you view life and even your likes and dislikes are liable to change. Your friends and family probably won't understand or appreciate your sudden changes.
4. Afterwards you will feel awkward at some of the jokes and comments you currently enjoy. They will not seem as funny when you have seen life from the other side.
5. You will experience sadness you haven't felt before. After you see real suffering, you won't pay much attention to your complaining about how hard you've got it. You are even liable to feel guilty and uncomfortable about the nice things in your house and the food on your table. Stay home and stay comfortable!
6. You might lead someone to the Lord. I know that is a laudable goal, but it tends to cause excitement and further interest in Christian Service.
7. You could feel a pull towards going overseas again—for the adventure, of course. The problem is that you could slowly, subtly get sucked into thinking about being a missionary!

My advice? Stay home and stay comfortable!

It is too late for me (Armstrong)

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