

Servant Learners: Short-Term Missions as an Effective Strategy

Abigail K. Chennells

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2018

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

Melody Harper, M.S.W., M.A.
Thesis Chair

Frampton F. Fox, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Jared Barber, M.A.
Committee Member

Tess R. Stockslager, Ph.D.
Assistant Honors Director

Date

Abstract

Short-term missions (STM) is a phenomenon that is quickly growing; each year more and more teams are sent out from North America to locations across the globe to share the gospel and do work projects in another culture. However, there are some significant issues with the current execution of STM, ranging from its ineffectiveness in accomplishing helpful projects to its heavy financial cost to the potential negative impact on host communities. In order to push the impact of STM in a positive direction, there are two major shifts in the way it is carried out that must take place. First, the focus of STM must shift so that it is focused on serving host communities and learning from national believers and long-term workers. Secondly, short-term teams must receive careful preparation from sending entities in three significant areas: practical preparation, cultural preparation, and spiritual preparation. If these adjustments are made to the way STM is implemented, it will begin to lead to long-term impact in powerful ways.

Introduction

The world is rapidly becoming more and more connected every day. Through social media and the internet, it is possible to have friends around the world without ever having left home. The relative ease of travel in the present day compared to the difficulty of past centuries makes global connectedness a nearly effortless reality. This has become evident not just in the realms of business or leisure, but also in the way that churches interact with the world. While some people still give up everything to move across the world and settle into another culture to share the truth of the gospel with those who have not yet heard, it is becoming increasingly common to take one or two weeks and travel to another culture for a short time for this purpose. There are both positive and negative results from this kind of short-term mission work. With a few changes in the execution of short-term missions (STM), it could be made more effective than it is today.

This thesis will begin by clarifying the terms that will be used throughout the study, and from there will proceed to examine some of the reasons for the growth of STM, as well as acknowledge some of the criticisms of the phenomenon. The thesis will then put forth suggestions for how to improve the effectiveness of STM based on current research, including practical, cultural, and spiritual preparation. Lastly, there is a fictional case study that represents what a team could be like if it put into practice all the suggestions offered in the research.

Defining the Terms

Before beginning a discussion on whether STM is helpful or harmful, it is important to define the term and come to a clear understanding of what the phenomenon known as “short-term missions” means. It is particularly important to set a definition for

the purposes of this research, as the phenomenon of STM can be very broad. Some literature chooses to skip over this issue entirely and avoid defining the term; other literature spends much time and thought deciding what exactly it means to be on “short-term mission.” One group of researchers comes to the conclusion that a succinct and helpful definition is “the God-commanded, repetitive deployment of swift, temporary non-professional missionaries.”¹ Another scholar chooses several traits of short-term mission trips by which to define them: they “involve leaving one’s local community,” often “involve some kind of service project in an impoverished community,” and usually “last less than two weeks.”² For the purposes of this research, “short-term missions” will refer to those groups of individuals sent by a church in North America to another culture to work alongside a group of believers in that culture for a short period of time, usually one to two weeks.

Another important term to note is “culture.” It is important to define what exactly it means to send STM teams to “another culture” in order to effectively understand why it is necessary to equip and train them. As one researcher points out, it is nearly impossible to come up with an exact definition of the term “culture,” and it is used in many different ways.³ For the purposes of this research, when discussing the idea of sending STM teams to “another culture,” it will refer to another ethnolinguistic group in a political state

¹ Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis: STEMPress, 2003), 110.

² LiErin Probasco, “Giving Time, Not Money: Long-term Impacts of Short-term Mission Trips,” *Missiology* 41, no. 2 (March 2013): 202-224, accessed January 18, 2018, Sage Journals.

³ Gustav Jahoda, “Critical Reflections on Some Recent Definitions of ‘Culture,’” *Culture & Psychology* 18, no. 3 (Sep 2012): 289-303, accessed March 1, 2018, Sage Journals.

outside of the United States or Canada. For this reason, this research does not discuss STM teams going to locations within the United States or Canada, even though there are many teams from these countries that go to other cultural settings within their own country, state, or city. The research will be aimed primarily at teams that leave their home country and travel across political borders as well as ethnic, social, and cultural borders.

The Growth of Short-Term Missions

Reasons for Popularity

STM is enormously popular within North America (and becoming so beyond⁴). Robert J. Priest and Joseph Paul Priest propose several reasons for the growing enthusiasm about STM. They point out, “Short-term mission trips do not require giving up jobs or leaving family for long periods of time. Furthermore, short-term mission trips cost less than study abroad, which tends to be affordable only to students whose families have resources.”⁵ They also say, “Short-term missions are practiced in ways which are notably inclusive.”⁶ Again, Priest and Priest note that “Short-term missions involve a temporal reorganization of voluntary service to fit extended blocks of vacation time

⁴ In his very interesting article entitled “The Role of Short-Term Mission Teams in the New Centers of Global Christianity,” Stephen Offutt proposes the idea that STM is a sociological construct, and that other cultures are beginning to mimic it. Stephen Offutt, “The Role of Short-Term Mission Teams in the New Centers of Global Christianity,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 4 (December 2011): 796-811. Accessed January 18, 2018. Wiley Online Library.

⁵ Robert J. Priest and Joseph Paul Priest, “They See Everything and Understand Nothing: Short-term Mission and Service Learning,” *Missiology* 36, no. 1 (January 2008): 53-73, accessed January 18, 2018, EBSCOhost.

⁶ Priest and Priest, “They See Everything and Understand Nothing,” 58.

rather than weekly or daily service commitments.”⁷ These are some of the logistical aspects of STM that make it more practical for an average church member to participate.

Another potential reason for the popularity of STM is the reality that it is often easier to verbally share stories of Jesus with people whom team members only know for a week. One researcher quoted a STM trip leader saying, “I can easily get a group of Christians to go across the country or to another country to share their faith in Christ. But getting them to share their faith where they live is tough.”⁸ Sometimes it can be difficult for people to share about their faith with friends and family who know and love them, or even classmates or coworkers who live in close proximity to them every day. But it becomes easier to share with others when people are in an environment where they may not encounter the people with whom they share ever again. It feels like there is less risk in these interactions. For better or for worse, this is likely one of the reasons for the increase in STM’s popularity.

STM is sometimes seen as an opportunity for “personal growth” in that it may help provide direction for individuals struggling to know what to do with their lives.⁹ Perhaps because of the staggering number of young participants in STM (according to one researcher, 41% of youths in the United States say that they have participated in some sort of religious service project¹⁰), this is likely another reason behind the growing

⁷ Priest and Priest, “They See Everything and Understand Nothing,” 58-59.

⁸ Stan May, “The Priority of Incarnational Missions: Or ‘Is the Tail of Volunteerism Wagging the Dog?’” *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 95, accessed January 25, 2018, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jbtm/05-1_095.pdf.

⁹ Brian M. Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Experience* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012), 88.

¹⁰ Probasco, “Giving Time, Not Money,” 203.

popularity of the phenomenon. It is an attractive option to be able to explore another culture, help people in need, and also come away with a better sense of where one might be headed in life.

Statistics

It is difficult to find up-to-date statistics about STM in the United States. As such, it is wise to consider when looking at statistics that the numbers have likely grown in the years since they were published. One scholar says, “Approximately 32% of US congregations sponsor international mission trips each year.”¹¹ Studies also show that around 1.6 million adult church members are a part of international STM trips from the United States every year.¹² Almost certainly, these numbers have grown. These statistics are from 2009; other numbers from 2004 show around a million short-termers per year,¹³ which provides a clear example of the increase that has been happening in the last few decades. The amount of research about the process of STM and its effects has increased dramatically in this century as well; while research from before the year 2000 certainly exists, many more people have recognized the importance of examining STM to better understand the phenomenon, and perhaps even improve it.

Biblical Principles

STM, when done well, matches biblical principles. It helps the church carry out the Great Commission that Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, when He

¹¹ Probasco, “Giving Time, Not Money,” 203.

¹² Ibid., 204.

¹³ Don Fanning, “Short Term Missions: A Trend That Is Growing Exponentially,” Liberty University, Center for Global Ministries, 2009, accessed January 18, 2018, Liberty University Digital Commons.

told them to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”¹⁴ It fits the principles found in Acts, where small groups of people like Paul and Silas or Barnabas and John Mark went and visited and encouraged the churches they had established or connected with in other parts of the world (Acts 15:36-41). In Romans 1:11-12, Paul talks about his wishes to make a visit to the church at Rome to encourage them: “For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.” Paul did not relocate permanently for these trips of encouragement; he spent short amounts of time with the churches he went to visit, making the trips very similar to STM today.

Criticisms of Short-Term Missions

Despite the fact that STM is more logistically practical for the average North American church member and that there are benefits to the practice, criticisms of STM are easy to find and difficult to refute. There are articles upon articles of scholarly research pointing out the downsides of STM, both for those who go and those who receive the teams.¹⁵ These issues, which are legitimate concerns that must be considered when studying or participating in short-term trips, range from the effectiveness of STM to

¹⁴ All Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the English Standard Version, 2016 version.

¹⁵ See Laurie Occhipinti, “Not Just Tourists: Short-Term Missionaries and Voluntourism,” *Human Organization* 75, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 258-268, accessed January 22, 2018, ProQuest; Bob Garrett, “Towards Best Practice in Short-Term Missions,” *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 103, accessed January 25, 2018, http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_5-1_Spring_2008.pdf#page=104; Jo Ann Van Engen, “The Cost of Short-term Missions,” *The Other Side* 36, no. 1 (Jan 2000): 20, accessed January 23, 2018, General OneFile; David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 14, Kindle Edition, among other sources that point out the shortcomings of STM.

financial considerations to the impact on host cultures to the more fundamental question of the very purpose behind the trips.

Effectiveness of STM

One researcher points out that the “actual work [of STM teams] on such trips may have little sustainable impact on communities and individuals living in poverty.”¹⁶ She also points out that short-term team members can have a tendency to romanticize any underlying issues within host cultures, such as poverty or political problems, and not come to any real understanding of how to truly help.¹⁷ In the end, often short-term teams do not accomplish any measurable benefits for either the host community or even their own growth. One researcher discovered that participation in an international STM trip during high school did not seem to affect the giving habits of people when they became adults.¹⁸ In other situations, the work of some STM teams actually conflicted with the work of other STM teams.¹⁹ These dubious results call into question the next major issue in STM, which is the financial considerations.

Financial Considerations

Jo Ann Van Engen tells a story of finances that is all too familiar in the world of STM. She talks about a group of students who raised \$25,000 to go to Honduras over their spring break; they spent time at an orphanage playing with the children, painting

¹⁶ Occhipinti, “Not Just Tourists: Short-Term Missionaries and Voluntourism,” 258.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁸ Probasco, “Giving Time, Not Money,” 216.

¹⁹ Garrett, “Towards Best Practice in Short-Term Missions,” 110.

some buildings, and cleaning up the playground.²⁰ However, the yearly operating budget of the orphanage is only \$45,000, meaning that the students raised over half of what the orphanage would need for a year to come for a single week.²¹ Van Engen goes on to say, “That money could have paid two Honduran painters who desperately needed the work, with enough left over to hire four new teachers, build a new dormitory, and provide each child with new clothes.”²² Another researcher points out that the money currently being used for STM could also be diverted toward long-term work: “The recent devaluing of the US dollar strains every mission agency. Volunteer teams exacerbate this strain by siphoning off dollars that could be used for career missions.”²³ In light of the startling realizations above regarding the often-doubtful results of STM, these financial statistics are staggering. Is it worth the enormous investment of money into short-term trips when money is desperately needed for many long-term areas of work?

Impact on Host Cultures

A further problem with STM lies in the way that team members have a tendency to interact with host cultures. Despite best intentions, as David Livermore points out, “Much of the way we interact cross-culturally continues to be filled with an ‘our way is best’ mentality.”²⁴ Another researcher noted the way that many STM participants have little to no idea of what to expect of cultures outside the United States. She talks about

²⁰ Van Engen, “The Cost of Short-term Missions,” 20.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ May, “The Priority of Incarnational Missions,” 100.

²⁴ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 14.

encountering people who expected a tribal setting as soon as they got off the plane, or another couple who described the host culture as being like an *Indiana Jones* movie.²⁵

These limitations in cultural understanding and awareness can create awkward or embarrassing moments for long-term workers, or even unintentionally cause lasting damage to long-term ministry. Relationships with national friends and partners can be strained because of STM teams and their lack of cultural awareness; as one researcher says, “STM teams need to be prepared for the cross-cultural aspect of their ministry so that they do not leave behind a trail of offended [nationals] and embarrassed hosts.”²⁶

STM trips step into the lives of others for a short period of time, but the time they spend with their hosts can have significant long-term impact, for better or for worse.

Purpose

Lastly, sometimes even the motivations and purposes behind STM can be unconsciously hurtful. Short-term teams often go with their own purposes in mind, without considering where God may already be at work in their host culture.²⁷ Although it can be unconscious, team members sometimes use participation in STM to give the appearance of being a “good person,” either so that others will perceive them as such or to appease their own conscience. Other times their goal is to grow as a person, which is an excellent side effect of cross-cultural experience but should not be the primary

²⁵ Occhipinti, “Not Just Tourists,” 261.

²⁶ Ron Barber, Jr., “Host-directed Short-term Missions: Interviews with Japanese Liaisons,” *Missiology* 43, no. 3 (April 2015): 309-323, accessed January 25, 2018, Sage Publications.

²⁷ Roger Peterson, “Missio Dei or ‘Missio Me?’ Using Short-term Missions to Contribute Toward the Fulfillment of God’s Global Purpose,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Stephen C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009): 752-756.

purpose of STM.²⁸ David Livermore also points out that some STM trips have overemphasized the adventurous side of going – he says, “If adventure is most what you’re after— go for it. Take a trip there! Explore the culture. Soak it in. Experience it fully. Just don’t put a ‘mission trip’ label on it and ask other people to fund it.”²⁹ As Roger Peterson notes, “Many STMs have been designed and led in ways that result in STMs being done poorly.”³⁰ A primary problem behind this is a lack of understanding of what the motivations and purposes behind STM ought to be.

Addressing the Issues

When considering all of these potential limitations to STM, it is easy to come to the conclusion that because it is often not done well, churches and organizations should stop sending teams. However, STM that is intentionally carried out fits well with biblical principles, and there is enormous potential for well-sent, well-equipped teams to have a very positive impact on long-term work. Because of this, one approach to STM is to seek to invest in the biblical motivations and seek to neutralize or reverse the potential disadvantages.

Effective Short-Term Missions

One of the primary ways to make STM more effective, both in purpose and in methodology, is to invest time into training the leaders and members of these teams before sending them out. As such, a plethora of resources currently exist for training

²⁸ Ibid.; Occhipinti, “Not Just Tourists,” 263.

²⁹ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 52.

³⁰ Peterson, “Missio Dei or ‘Missio Me?’,” 754.

short-term teams.³¹ It can become overwhelming to sort through these resources and determine what can practically be used to equip a team that is only going to serve for one to two weeks in another culture. Due to the wealth of resources and the usually limited amount of time available to work with STM team members before they depart for their trip, it is crucial to evaluate which areas of training are most important.

There are two parts of pre-trip training that should be the priority of every STM: their purpose and their preparation. In order to be most effective, STM trips need to have a clear purpose centered on how they can best help their hosts in the ongoing ministry and how they can learn from the long-term workers, national believers, and host culture.³² As they prepare, they must be aware of practical considerations,³³ cultural values and customs,³⁴ and their own spiritual readiness.³⁵

Purpose and Focus

While the intentions behind STM are often good and the goers are well-meaning, the purpose or focus of these trips can become something that is not practical or helpful. Often teams go with the idea that they are going to change people's hearts for the gospel,

³¹ See Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*; Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Missions*; H. Leon Green, *A Guide to Short-Term Missions: A Comprehensive Manual for Planning an Effective Mission Trip* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), ProQuest Ebook; Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, *Transformission: Making Disciples Through Short-term Missions* (Nashville: B&H, 2010). These are but a few of the many available books written with the goal of preparing people for STM experiences.

³² Barber, Jr., "Host-directed Short-term Missions," 318.

³³ Martha E. F. Highfield, "Prepare, Flex, Serve: Short-term Mission," *Journal of Christian Nursing* 26, no. 4 (Oct/Nov/Dec 2009): 226-231, accessed February 1, 2018, Ovid.

³⁴ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 110-112.

³⁵ Jerry Rankin, "Spiritual Warfare and the Mission of God," in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices of the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012): 342, ProQuest Ebook.

and in many contexts it is simply not practical to expect this sort of reaction in a short time. Others go with particular work projects they wish to complete or relationships they hope to build. In the most difficult of scenarios, these teams end up becoming a burden full of unrealistic expectations to their hosts. These problems can be solved if teams change their purpose to meet the needs of their hosts, whatever they may be, and come in a posture of learning from the culture, the national believers, and the long-term workers.

Host-Focused STM

There are many recommendations in current literature about how to fit STM into long-term work. One resource recommends, “Ask the local missionaries or a local church to help your group develop a project that will fit into an existing strategy of work, so that your efforts will not be a one-time shot. That way there will be people on the ground to follow up with what you achieve.”³⁶ Another says, “Make sure nationals are fully involved in your visit and follow their lead.”³⁷ Yet another suggests, “Churches must work in partnership with missionaries on the ground, fit into their agenda, and insist that team members follow the rules or be sent home.”³⁸ These are all well-intentioned suggestions, but perhaps could use even a stronger push toward host perspectives. Instead of trying to “fit in” a project to the long-term agenda, it would be better to simply ask hosts what could be done to help. Instead of “involving” nationals, they should be leading and supervising every project. Every effort should be made to serve the hosts and promote the long-term work as opposed to going in with one’s own ideas about what

³⁶ Bob Garrett, “Towards Best Practice in Short-Term Missions,” 111.

³⁷ Van Engen, “The Cost of Short-term Missions,” 22.

³⁸ May, “The Priority of Incarnational Missions,” 95.

ought to be done on the field. Sometimes this might mean completing tasks that seem mundane or unimportant to the team members. Sometimes it might mean spending large amounts of time “being” with people as opposed to “doing” a project. Whatever the case, the emphasis ought always to be toward the hosts and ongoing long-term work. As Roger Peterson exhorts, “Let’s get our STMs vitally linked with national churches and mission agencies that have been locked in the ongoing work for generations within a particular culture and people.”³⁹

Ron Barber, Jr., who was a church planter in Japan for many years, has many suggestions for how to help STM become more host-focused. He says, “I suggest that if STM is to be practiced in a missiologically responsible manner, it must become a host-directed movement: *A call from Macedonia* rather than a *visit to Macedonia*.”⁴⁰ He is referencing a passage in Acts 16 in which the apostle Paul is intending to go to Troas but gets called into Macedonia by a Macedonian person instead in a vision from God (Acts 16:6-10). The principle he is suggesting is that instead of planning a trip from the sending side and choosing a location based on the goers’ desires, STM should be a response to the needs of those on the field.

Barber also has some specific suggestions about how to make STM more host-focused. He says that “Host-directed STM starts with asking questions rather than proposing solutions . . . Host-directed STM asks the host when it is best to come, what type of work needs to be done, and what kind of people best fit the context.”⁴¹ His

³⁹ Peterson, “Missio Dei or ‘Missio Me?’,” 755.

⁴⁰ Ron Barber, Jr., “Host-directed Short-term Missions,” 318.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 319.

argument is that short-term teams ought to come in humility, ready to serve the long-term workers in whatever capacity they might need or desire.⁴² Jesus Himself said to His disciples that “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). This principle is one that would serve STM well, not just in the idea of “going to serve” but in truly listening well to hosts and serving in the way that the hosts need as opposed to the way that the team members want.

Another one of the concrete action points that Barber gives for helping STM be more host-focused is to make sure that teams remember to think long-term. He points out that short-term teams must remember that all of their actions have long-term impact even though their stay in the host culture may be relatively short.⁴³ He advises tactics like taking multiple trips to the same location, having returning team members act as advisors or leaders, and having team members remember that it is likely they will see the people they meet again to avoid unfortunate behaviors.⁴⁴ It is critical that short-termers keep in mind that the impact of their interactions, service, and behavior will last far beyond their visit, whether for good or for harm. The long-term workers, national believers, and community at large will remember the team of foreigners who came and either represented Christ well or did not.

⁴² Barber, “Host-directed Short-term Missions,” 319.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Another researcher, Edwin Zehner, notes several ways that teams tend to misunderstand how to be helpful to long-term workers. He says, “Many of the activities favored by the teams were a drain on the local church’s resources due to the need for translation and for help with local arrangements . . . there were issues of inefficient use of funds and personnel, as air fare is not cheap, and few short-termers speak Thai.”⁴⁵ Short-term teams must be careful to listen to hosts in order to avoid financial and logistical issues like the teams Zehner described. However, Zehner also talks about the way that STM has benefitted the Thai churches: “Those Thai pastors who most valued STM contacts did so particularly for their potential to strengthen church ministry and internal church life.”⁴⁶ STM has great potential for encouraging the global church and bringing the gifts and abilities of different believers to other parts of the world; it would be a shame to miss out on these potential blessings because of a team’s inability to listen to and serve the host communities.

Enoch Wan and Geoffrey Hart, quoting Mike Jorgensen, sum up the reason that STM must be host-directed and host-supporting: “The Body of Christ in a country is the primary tool God is going to use to take that country for Christ. So we must serve them in their vision and strategy to reach their country.”⁴⁷ The local body of believers in a country are the ones who remain behind to continue the work when the week or ten days

⁴⁵ Edwin Zehner, “Short-Term Missions: Some Perspectives from Thailand,” *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 2 (April 2013): 130-145, accessed January 25, 2018, Sage Publications.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁷ Enoch Wan and Geoffrey Hart, “Complementary Aspects of Short-Term Missions and Long-Term Missions: Case Studies for a Win-Win Situation,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right!*, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008), 79.

or month of short-term work is over. For this reason, it is absolutely critical for making lasting impact to plug into the work that they have already started.

One implication of the idea of “host-based” STM is that if there is no one to host the team, there should not be a team that goes. STM is best utilized to support and strengthen ongoing long-term work; it is a far less effective strategy when it is used for sporadic influence in a community with no body of believers. Part of thinking long-term is, as Barber notes, being “an integrated part of the ongoing ministry of the local church.”⁴⁸ In places where there is no local church, sending long-term workers or national believers to establish one is a much more effective method of ministry than sending STM teams whose work will be limited to one or two weeks.

Learning from the Experts

Though it is crucial for short-term teams to make sure that their emphasis is on the hosts’ needs and ministry efforts, there are benefits to the team members themselves that cannot be overlooked and are indeed important to the positive impact of STM. One of the biggest ways that the focus of STM needs to change is to shift the perspective of the goers from “going to help” to “going to learn.” This is connected to the idea of a host focus in that teams need to learn what are the best ways to help from the hosts, but it also ought to be a separate idea. A significant way that team members can themselves experience growth through STM is by going as learners to better understand the culture, sit under the national believers, and hear more about the long-term workers and their lives.

⁴⁸ Barber, “Host-directed Short-term Missions,” 319.

One researcher notes that “STM participants should go primarily as learners rather than as ministers, servers rather than receivers.”⁴⁹ There are many benefits both to the people who are part of STM teams and the people in the communities receiving the STM teams when this dynamic is carefully integrated into trips. Karla Ann Koll offers one perspective on why this is true when she talks about the way that learning impacts STM participants; as they learn from national people about the host culture and the root issues of the problems they see (poverty, for example), they come to a better understanding of how to effect actual change based on fixing the root of the problem.⁵⁰ She says that the purpose of STM should perhaps shift in the direction of going “primarily to listen.”⁵¹ While this is perhaps a less balanced perspective, her point is well taken that taking the time to learn from a culture benefits not only the goers/learners, but also those who are teaching them.

Another important aspect of being learners as participants in STM is that of spreading an effective message. Duane Elmer says, “We ignore what could be learned from non-Christians. Later, when we try to witness to them about God’s love and Christ’s forgiveness, it sounds foreign, very Western.”⁵² All cross-cultural workers struggle with this desire to share the gospel before learning the appropriate and necessary cultural

⁴⁹ Alex G. Smith, “Evaluating Short-Term Missions: Missiological Questions,” in *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right!*, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008), 37.

⁵⁰ Karla Ann Koll, “Taking Wolves Among Lambs: Some Thoughts on Training for Short-Term Mission Facilitation,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (April 2010): 93-96, accessed January 29, 2018, ProQuest.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵² Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 109.

things first, but for short-termers this must be kept in mind with the knowledge that perhaps they will not actually have the opportunity to share. In many places around the world, it is important to have a good grasp on culture and build deeper relationships with people before it is appropriate to share the gospel. Otherwise, as Elmer points out, it can come across as an attempt to “Westernize” someone. When STM teams travel to other cultures, they must go in a posture of learning from all the people around them, believers and non-believers alike.

One of the most beautiful ways to represent Christ’s love for people is to be intentional to learn about their way of life, and one of the best ways to do that is to try to learn a few words of the language. One researcher writes of this when he says, “When I try to learn it [language], they know that I mean business – that they are worth something to me because I make an effort to communicate on their terms.”⁵³ This concept applies to many aspects of STM. When short-term team members take the time to learn something about the culture of their host community, it communicates care and respect in a way that goes beyond simply words. This is a tangible gesture of love, the kind of love that Jesus shows.

Another important area of learning in STM is, as Brian Howell says, “time spent listening to those in the field, including long-term missionaries.”⁵⁴ Not only is it important to listen to nationals to better understand the host culture, but also it is crucial

⁵³ Donald N. Larson, “The Viable Missionary: Learner, Trader, Storyteller,” *Missiology: An International Review* 6, no. 2 (April 1978): 155-163.

⁵⁴ Brian M. Howell, “Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (October 2009): 206-211, accessed February 1, 2018, ProQuest.

that STM teams not overlook the long-term expatriate workers as a resource for learning what it is like to experience culture shock, minister in another culture, live in a different country than one's own family, and many other parts of their lives. As noted earlier, listening to hosts is very important prior to and during the trip in terms of making sure that the teams are doing and being what the hosts need them to do and be, but there is also much value in spending time listening to them to hear their life stories and experiences. Long-term workers and national believers have a different perspective on faith and life than many short-term volunteers, and hearing this can be a great way to stretch one's own worldview and begin to see God in a bigger light.

One unfortunate tendency of some teams is to put the idea of learning at odds with other purposes of the trip. Brian Howell notes the tendency of some sending churches to juxtapose the ideas of "learning" and "serving."⁵⁵ He records a quote from one sender who said, "This isn't just travel. I mean, it's important that the kids are learning, right? But they're doing real missions . . . there is real benefit; these are real missions."⁵⁶ This contrast between "real missions" and learning while spending time in another culture is an unfortunate perspective that leads to trips that may not be as effective because they have learned nothing about the culture or the long-term work and are spending their time simply "doing" as much as possible.

Duane Elmer sums up several reasons to listen and learn very effectively:

Learning *from* and *with* are not simply good strategies, they are resident in Scripture and touch every part of our relational lives. Common grace tells us we can learn from believers as well as those who do not believe in Christ. We learn

⁵⁵ Howell, "Mission to Nowhere," 208.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

from and *with* because such activity honors the God who made us brothers and sisters, priests and members of the same body. God in his wisdom placed us together in healthy interdependence so that we will best reflect his glory and accomplish his work.⁵⁷

Having the attitude of humble learners as STM volunteers will do much for the effectiveness of STM in a long-term context.

Intentional Preparation

While it is true that STM volunteers are just that – volunteers – it is also true that a certain amount of training and preparation is necessary for anyone planning to travel overseas. Even those planning vacations in another country should take the time to search the internet for what they might expect to find upon arriving, and when the goers are traveling not for a vacation experience, but to represent the love of Christ to people in another culture, the importance of preparing becomes exponentially higher. It is crucial for the success of STM that teams be carefully prepared in three main areas prior to their trip: practical preparation, cultural preparation, and spiritual preparation are all necessary.

Practical Preparation

Though it may seem unspiritual to some, there are many practical areas in which knowledge and preparation are important before leaving on a short-term mission trip. One of these is knowing what to pack. Too many STM participants spend little time thinking about this and end up with the wrong clothing, toiletries, or other items during the trip. One STM participant wrote an article detailing her preparation and noted the importance of gathering information about what to pack beforehand; she was going to an African country and expected it to be warm, but found during her trip that she wished she

⁵⁷ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 124.

had more warm sweaters because she was serving at a higher altitude than she had expected.⁵⁸ Careful research and questions to the hosts before STM teams depart will make this mistake easily fixable. If STM participants do not have the necessities for the culture or climate into which they are headed, it can create inconvenience for the hosts as well and make the team more difficult to host. However, it is just as inconvenient if STM team members bring far too many “necessities” and have too much baggage to be convenient or culturally appropriate. One participant notes that she chose to bring just three outfits for her trip to more closely match the wardrobe size of her new national friends.⁵⁹ Other practical considerations along the same lines as packing include medical issues such as medication and vaccines, or legal documents like visas and passports that are required for entering other countries.

One of the most desirable traits of STM volunteers is flexibility. When walking into a cross-cultural situation, flexibility is key; almost certainly something about the situation will differ from the team’s expectations, and being able to adapt and be ready for whatever may come is a gift to the team’s hosts. One researcher says, “STM participants must come with a view to serve, and have attitudes of flexibility on the field...the best teams trained together before they came . . . coming to serve, they were ready to do anything the churches and missionaries asked.”⁶⁰ Spending time before leaving talking about the importance of flexibility and even discussing different possible

⁵⁸ Debra Nash-Cahill, “You Can Get from Here to There: Preparing for a Short-Term Mission,” *Journal of Christian Nursing* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 11-15, accessed February 1, 2018, Ovid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Smith, “Evaluating Short-Term Missions: Missiological Questions,” 53.

scenarios in which flexibility would be required is a very important part of pre-trip training.

Another very important area of practical preparation before a team leaves is that of readying for the actual work that will be done. Sometimes this may mean preparing a traditional work project such as painting or building or fixing something. It may also involve preparing some sort of lesson, whether English or Bible or craft-related. Some teams will be doing mostly relational activities, getting to know people and spending time in the community. In that case, a little bit of language preparation would be helpful. A nurse who went on a short-term trip to Nigeria wrote about the careful preparation that she did prior to her trip; she spent time reading about how medical work would be different in that context than in the one she was used to, and gathered supplies to take with her to help.⁶¹ Even a small amount of preparation for the work to be done will help teams be more ready for what is to come.

Cultural Preparation

As much as preparation is important for STM success, there is only so much preparation that can be done before a one- or two-week trip. David Livermore notes, “As much as I’d love to see every short-term missionary become fluent in the language and customs of the culture they visit, it’s simply unrealistic.”⁶² As such, a different kind of cultural preparation is necessary when participating in STM trips. Livermore’s research is all about implementing Cultural Intelligence, or CQ, into the training and equipping of

⁶¹ Martha E. F. Highfield, “Prepare, Flex, Serve: Short-term Mission,” 226-227.

⁶² Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 110.

STM teams to help them become more effective.⁶³ Cultural Intelligence is “a way of measuring and improving the way we interact in different cultures.”⁶⁴ Essentially, it quantifies a person’s ability to function well in another culture, and once the person is aware of his or her CQ, he or she can begin to intentionally improve it by working on the specific areas where he or she has the most difficulty. Helping STM participants understand and increase their CQ even a little bit prior to participating in a trip will help teams with their overall effectiveness in functioning well in another culture.

There are four aspects, or capabilities, of CQ: CQ Drive is one’s “level of interest, drive, and motivation to adapt cross-culturally,” CQ Knowledge is a person’s “understanding about how cultures are similar and different,” CQ Strategy is the “ability to interpret cues and plan in light of your cultural understanding,” and CQ Action is a person’s “ability to behave appropriately when relating and serving cross-culturally.”⁶⁵ All four dimensions of CQ are important to helping a person cope with cross-cultural interaction in a healthy way. Livermore points out that most current material for helping STM teams prepare for their trips focus on CQ Knowledge and CQ Action alone, but it is important to be aware of all four capabilities in order to truly improve one’s ability to interact in cross-cultural situations.⁶⁶

There is an official CQ Assessment that can be taken to measure a person’s Cultural Intelligence; however, not every STM team is going to have the resources or

⁶³ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

time to find and take this test. It is valuable to simply be aware of CQ and the four capabilities of this model. Participants in STM should have honest conversations before departing about CQ and should evaluate their own CQ. Taking the time to acknowledge that perhaps one person struggles more with having the motivation to do well in cross-cultural situations (CQ Drive), while another has trouble putting the understanding of the culture into practice (CQ Action) will help team members be able to better support one another in cross-cultural interactions. David Livermore has many resources that are readily available on this topic, including a website full of free information that would benefit many STM participants.⁶⁷

Another important area of cultural preparation is that of language. Some short-term teams arrive without even the ability to say hello; others may know some vocabulary but are not willing to step out of their comfort zone to use it. In either scenario, the lack of communication with nationals has the potential to hurt the ongoing ministry, and it certainly does not help it. One researcher points out, “Where local folk observe the STMers trying to learn and use their language, this produces mutual respect and opens opportunities . . . taking an active role advances communication and effectiveness.”⁶⁸ There are some basic phrases that every STM volunteer should make an effort to learn in their host culture’s language; being able to say “thank you,” “hello,” “please,” and “goodbye” is an excellent start. Even having just a few words or phrases

⁶⁷ The website contains free information about CQ and its four capabilities, though the test is not free to take. “What is CQ,” CulturalQ.com, accessed February 2, 2018, <https://culturalq.com/what-is-cq/>.

⁶⁸ Smith, “Evaluating Short-Term Missions,” 49-50.

before the trip makes it more likely that the short-termer will be able to pick up a little bit more during their stay.

One last important area of cultural preparation is that of the specifics for each team's destination. While CQ as a whole is very important and an awareness of it can help improve a person's ability to function well in any cross-cultural situation, it is still very important to take the time to learn the specifics of whichever culture is the destination for a particular STM (this is the element of CQ Knowledge). One researcher suggests, "Do careful orientation with your group. This allows you to do homework on the culture collectively in a shared way."⁶⁹ It is valuable to spend time as a group discussing different aspects of the host culture so that everyone can be prepared for the similarities and differences they will find. One nurse who was preparing for a short-term trip spent time searching the internet, talking to long-term workers in the host community, reading books, and contacting the American embassy in the host country to discover as much as she could about the culture before she left.⁷⁰ Such extensive preparation may not be realistic for every STM volunteer; however, even a small amount of research is better than nothing and will prepare STM teams to be more effective during their stay.

Spiritual Preparation

In the midst of practical and cultural preparation, excitement for what is to come, and making sure that every detail is accounted for, it can be easy to lose track of the purpose for STM. As Karla Ann Koll says, "The call to mission is the invitation to

⁶⁹ Garrett, "Toward Best Practice in Short-Term Missions," 103.

⁷⁰ Highfield, "Prepare, Flex, Serve," 227.

participate in God's liberating and redeeming action, together with all who are called by Christ."⁷¹ True, the purpose of a particular trip may be to go and learn, or to serve the host community, but the underlying reason for all STM is to help in the work of sharing the gospel around the world. For believers, every day ought to be lived for that purpose, but in cross-cultural situations, there is an extra tension that sometimes makes it more difficult to remember how to do this. Because of this, it is critical that volunteers take the time to spiritually prepare for STM.

Spiritual warfare is a topic that is important for both long-term mission work and STM. Chuck Lawless says in his proposal about spiritual warfare methodology that it will be beneficial in "helping to prepare missionaries for spiritual warfare—whether they be candidates for career service or laypersons preparing for a short-term trip."⁷² He says that many people who enter another culture are unprepared for the different theological questions that may arise because of spiritual warfare or other issues.⁷³ Because of this, even a basic level of preparation for what a team may encounter will help them be more effective during their time overseas.

The North American church has a tendency either to largely ignore the topic of spiritual warfare, or to make much of it and attribute everything that may go wrong to the work of Satan. When preparing for STM, it is critical to find a balance between these two

⁷¹ Koll, "Taking Wolves Among Lambs," 96.

⁷² Chuck Lawless, "Spiritual Warfare and Missions," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 34-45, accessed March 31, 2018, Galaxie.

⁷³ Ibid.

extremes. The Bible clearly states that spiritual warfare is a reality confronting every believer:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:10-12).

However, the way that the enemy works may vary from culture to culture. Often, the seeming overttness of the demonic in other cultures is shocking to STM participants.

Regarding spiritual warfare, it is important for team members to understand both the fact that the spiritual warfare they encounter during their trip may be difficult to recognize or it may be very apparent, and also the fact that often before, during, and after STM, spiritual warfare increases in many ways.

Jerry Rankin points out an important facet of spiritual warfare that STM members would benefit from remembering: “Believers in the West also encounter Satan’s activity in their lives and society every day. But we seldom recognize it, because it is cleverly disguised and is discounted by our rational worldview.”⁷⁴ It is often easier to notice spiritual warfare in another culture because the enemy works in a different way there than in the home culture of the STM team, but that does not mean that spiritual warfare only takes the form of “outward manifestations of Satan’s power and dominion in a world without Christ.”⁷⁵ Rankin says, “It is the lies, deception, and attacks of the enemy to

⁷⁴ Jerry Rankin, “Spiritual Warfare and the Mission of God,” in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices of the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012): 342, ProQuest Ebook.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 343.

which we are subjected daily.”⁷⁶ STM trip participants need to ready themselves for an increase in these covert attacks of Satan as they prepare to head overseas for their time spent in another culture intentionally representing Christ.

One case study looked at the ways that American missionaries and African national believers understood spiritual warfare differently. The American missionaries saw animism and ethnic violence in the African nation where they lived and worked as evidence of spiritual warfare in the Africans’ lives, while the African nationals looked at the Americans’ tendency toward ethnocentrism and xenophobia as evidence of spiritual warfare in their lives.⁷⁷ Likely, both perspectives had truth in them. It is important for short-term volunteers to listen well to the people around them and understand the ways that the enemy may be at work in their own lives, and also that the struggles and spiritual warfare in their destination may look much different than their own experience.

Sometimes it is easier to be excited about sharing the gospel or representing the love of Christ in an overseas context than it is on a regular basis in everyday life. Often, experiencing STM helps believers remember how important it is to be doing those things all the time, not just in a cross-cultural context. It is usually in the forefront of a person’s mind when he is preparing for a trip that he is going to another country to represent the gospel – his purpose is clear, unlike oftentimes when the routines and busyness of everyday life can distract him from this calling. Because of this, spiritual warfare often increases in the time surrounding STM. As one researcher notes, “[Satan] will work

⁷⁶ Rankin, “Spiritual Warfare and the Mission of God,” 343.

⁷⁷ Amy Stambach, “Spiritual Warfare 101: Preparing the Student for Christian Battle,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 2 (2009): 137-157, accessed February 2, 2018, JSTOR.

overtime to divide, discourage, distract, and destroy followers of Christ so their commitment to sharing the gospel is diluted or abandoned. Christians should, therefore, expect demonic opposition to evangelism.”⁷⁸

There are several passages of Scripture that make clear the ways that the enemy works in the lives of believers.⁷⁹ From the story of the Fall in Genesis 3 and the account of Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4, it is clear that Satan is a tempter. In Revelation 12:10, he is portrayed as an accuser. John 8:44 explains that he is a liar and “the father of lies.”¹ Thessalonians 2:18 and Hebrews 12:1 speak of his work to hinder believers. It is obvious from reading Job 1 and 2 and looking at Jesus’ words to Peter in Luke 22:31 that Satan tests believers. However, it is not enough to recognize the ways that the enemy works in believers’ lives. The next step is knowing how to effectively fight the spiritual battle.

The most important step in fighting the tactics of Satan and waging effective spiritual warfare is to “saturate your mind, your heart, and your life with the living and powerful Word of God.”⁸⁰ The Bible refers to Scripture as “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17) and it is crucial to immerse oneself in the truth it contains. Memorizing Scripture, meditating on different passages, and having visual reminders of Scripture are all excellent ways to do this. Another important part of battling Satan is to “look at the enemy no more than is necessary to understand what you are facing. Fix your gaze upon Jesus Christ.”⁸¹ There can be a temptation when talking about spiritual warfare to dwell

⁷⁸ Gary Dennis, “Spiritual Warfare and Evangelism,” *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 73-79, accessed February 3, 2018, Galaxie.

⁷⁹ Chesed Dent, “Spiritual Warfare,” unpublished class notes, GLST 499, Spring 2017.

⁸⁰ Dennis, “Spiritual Warfare and Evangelism,” 78.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

on stories of the enemy and his tactics, when believers ought to be, as Hebrews 12:2 entreats, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.” Jesus is triumphant, and He has already won the victory over Satan: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

In order to effectively prepare for the spiritual warfare that they may experience around the time of their STM, trip participants should be especially intentional about spending time reading and meditating on Scripture, praying with and for one another and the people they will be serving, and keeping their thoughts and hearts focused on Jesus. This aspect of preparation can be easy to neglect in the midst of the busyness of getting ready for a cross-cultural experience, but it is one of the most important parts of effective STM.

Aside from being intentional to ready oneself for spiritual warfare and to spend time immersed in the Word and prayer, there is another important area of spiritual preparation. Not every STM will be the right time and place for the trip participants to be actively sharing the gospel with people, but there are few situations in which it is not appropriate to share pieces of one’s own story with others. Before leaving for a short-term trip, one way to spiritually prepare for the trip is to have each participant spend time thinking through his or her own faith story, and be able to tell part or all of it in a simple, easy-to-understand way. As one researcher says, “A story has a unique way of finding its way into a conversation. Stories can be heard anywhere.”⁸² Being able to share parts of

⁸² Tom A. Steffen, “Why Communicate the Gospel through Stories?” *Mission Frontiers* (Nov/Dec 2013): 6-9.

one's personal story that in turn point to the way Christ has worked in one's life is an excellent way to point to Him not only in actions but also in words.

Application: A Long-Term Vision of Impact

Following is a fictional case study which illustrates the ways that the research could be implemented in STM sent by North American churches. It is not intended to show the only way that STM teams can be effectively trained and sent, but simply one example of how the research could be practically used.

A team of long-term American missionaries live and work in a large city in Central America.⁸³ They have planted a church, which is slowly growing and has around 50 members, and they also have a small bookstore that carries both Christian and secular books as a place to start conversations about faith. One of the churches in the United States that supports them sends an email one December, hoping to send a short-term team of church members to come visit and help them with their ministries sometime in the upcoming summer. After discussing it and praying about it for a few days, the missionaries decide that there is time in their schedule that summer to allow the team to come for a week. They respond accordingly to the sending church with the week that will work best for them and then begin their preparations.

Back in the U.S., the sending church begins to advertise their trip to Central America that summer. Soon, they have gathered a team of fifteen people of varying ages who will be taking part in this STM. They email the missionaries and ask what kind of projects would be most helpful for them to complete that summer, as well as asking for a

⁸³ The author would like to acknowledge her limited experience in STM; however, the following model of what STM could someday be is based on the research previously discussed, the author's experiences, and recommendations from others in the field of STM.

list of important cultural customs of the community they will be visiting. They begin to make a list of basic Spanish phrases for all the team members to learn, and practice greeting one another with a kiss on the cheek, as they will be expected to do during their week in Central America.

The missionaries email them back and explain that because of the nature of their ministry, they really would love for the team to come and spend time in fellowship with the members of the church in Central America, as well as spending time at the bookstore practicing conversational English with members of the community who may drop by. They do not have any work projects to complete, and because of previous unfortunate experiences with street preachers who came across as offensive, the community in their city does not respond well to any form of public outreach. The STM team begins to learn some worship songs in Spanish to share with their brothers and sisters from Central America and puts aside their plans to paint the inside of the Central American church.

As it gets closer to the summer, the U.S. church members again email the missionaries, asking if there is anything they can bring along with them that would be useful to the missionaries in their personal lives or ministry. One of the mothers asks if they might be able to bring the next math book for her son, whom she is homeschooling, and all the missionaries request a few bags of Dunkin' Donuts coffee, an American staple that they miss. They also ask if the team can bring a few new books for their bookstore, as shipping to Central America can be unreliable. The STM members begin planning to pack their own necessities only in carry-on luggage and save their checked bags for supplies for the missionaries.

A few weeks before they leave, the team begins meeting twice a week to pray together, practice Spanish, and talk about the culture and what they will be doing during their stay. They collaborate about what kind of clothing to pack and remind each other to get the necessary vaccines. The team leader makes copies of everyone's passports for them to keep in their carry-ons.

Finally, the week arrives and the team flies to Central America. The missionaries are delighted to see them and inform them that some slight changes have been made to their housing arrangements: they will be staying in the homes of church members in groups of two as opposed to all staying together at the church as originally planned. A few of the team members are a little uncomfortable with this change, but they all know at least a few basic Spanish phrases and were prepared for potential shifts in the plan, so they go along with it without a fuss.

During the week, they are able to spend time with the church members, encouraging them, laughing together, and singing songs. They get to know their host families especially well, and some of the host mothers begin teaching team members how to cook some traditional dishes. Other days they spend in the bookstore, practicing English with some of the college students from the city who need to know English to pass their examinations. There are other times where they simply all gather in the home of one of the missionaries, speaking English together and laughing about American culture, giving the missionaries a taste of their home culture. Everyone learns a few more Spanish phrases. By the time their departure day comes around, everyone is sad to see them go and they are very sad at the thought of leaving.

When they leave, the long-term missionaries are left with the gifts they brought, opportunities to connect in new ways with the families that hosted the short-termers, and a few new customers at the bookstore who were initially attracted by the thought of English conversation with Americans. They also have a little bit of extra money left over from what the team raised and brought with them. Their ministry has been blessed and moved forward by the visit from the short-termers, and they are encouraged from their time spent with people who understand their home culture. They feel as though their supporting church will have a better understanding of their ministry now that a short-term team has come and spent time with them.

Every short-term team has the potential to have the impact of this imagined team. They could advance the long-term work in a way unique to the phenomenon of STM. They could encourage the long-term workers, make new connections with community members, encourage the local church, and bring gifts to support the ministry. Through being intentional to focus on the needs of the hosts and to learn from the missionaries and nationals as much as possible, both sides could benefit from the trip. Through spending much time intentionally preparing, they could be ready for unexpected changes, unconventional ministry, and cultural immersion. If STM made a shift in implementation toward these important issues, the long-term impact could be incredible.

Conclusion

Implications for Further Research

There are many research gaps in the field of STM; some of the most glaring empty spaces include the areas of host perspectives and spiritual warfare during STM trips. Were more research to be done in these areas, it would greatly improve the ability

of those sending STM teams to do so with maximum effect. Ethnographic interviews conducted with the long-term workers and national believers who host STM teams would do much to supplement the research in this area; the work of Edwin Zehner and Ron Barber, Jr. are excellent beginnings to this research.⁸⁴ It is perhaps more difficult to carry out research regarding spiritual warfare, but listening to the stories of short-term and long-term workers and drawing conclusions would be a good beginning.

Effective STM

If STM even begins to gradually implement some changes in the way trips are carried out, they will be far more equipped to serve long-term ministries in a way that leads to changed lives. Currently, the benefits of short-term work do not always seem to outweigh the difficulties, but there are ways to overcome this. Imagine the expansion of the Kingdom that could happen in a matter of years if all STM teams began to focus more on how they could connect with the long-term ministry in a way that would be helpful to their hosts and began to go in an attitude of humble learning from all the people around them. STM could have a greater impact on the places they go and people they meet if they spent more time preparing beforehand – practically, culturally, and spiritually. This is a strategy that cannot be taken lightly, as Kingdom work has eternal ramifications. As an important part of Kingdom strategy, STM must be carried out carefully and intentionally, effectively advancing the gospel to all nations so that the name of Jesus may be known throughout the world.

⁸⁴ See Zehner, “Perspectives from Thailand,” and Barber, “Host-directed Short-term Missions.”

Bibliography

- Barber, Jr., Ron. "Host-directed Short-term Missions: Interviews with Japanese Liaisons." *Missiology* 43, no. 3 (April 2015): 309-323. Accessed January 25, 2018. Sage Publications.
- The Cultural Intelligence Center. "What is CQ." CulturalQ.com. Accessed February 2, 2018. <https://culturalq.com/what-is-cq/>.
- Dennis, Gary. "Spiritual Warfare and Evangelism." *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 73-79. Accessed February 3, 2018. Galaxie.
- Dent, Chesed. "Spiritual Warfare." Unpublished class notes. GLST 499. Spring 2017.
- Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Fanning, Don. "Short Term Missions: A Trend That Is Growing Exponentially." Liberty University, Center for Global Ministries, 2009. Accessed January 18, 2018. Liberty University Digital Commons.
- Garrett, Bob. "Towards Best Practice in Short-Term Missions." *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 103. Accessed January 25, 2018. http://baptistcenter.net/journals/JBTM_5-1_Spring_2008.pdf#page=104.
- Green, H. Leon. *A Guide to Short-Term Missions: A Comprehensive Manual for Planning an Effective Mission Trip*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012. ProQuest Ebook.
- Highfield, Martha E. F. "Prepare, Flex, Serve: Short-term Mission." *Journal of Christian Nursing* 26, no. 4 (Oct/Nov/Dec 2009): 226-231. Accessed February 1, 2018. Ovid.
- Howell, Brian M. "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (October 2009): 206-211. Accessed February 1, 2018. ProQuest.
- Jahoda, Gustav. "Critical Reflections on Some Recent Definitions of 'Culture.'" *Culture & Psychology* 18, no. 3 (September 2012): 289-303. Accessed March 1, 2018. Sage Journals.
- Koll, Karla Ann. "Taking Wolves Among Lambs: Some Thoughts on Training for Short-Term Mission Facilitation." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (April 2010): 93-96. Accessed January 29, 2018. ProQuest.
- Larson, Donald N. "The Viable Missionary: Learner, Trader, Storyteller." *Missiology: An International Review* 6, no. 2 (April 1978): 155-163.

- Lawless, Chuck. "Spiritual Warfare and Missions." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 34-45. Accessed March 31, 2018. Galaxie.
- Livermore, David. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. Kindle Edition.
- May, Stan. "The Priority of Incarnational Missions: Or 'Is the Tail of Volunteerism Wagging the Dog?'" *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 95. Accessed January 25, 2018. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jbtm/05-1_095.pdf.
- Nash-Cahill, Debra. "You Can Get from Here to There: Preparing for a Short-Term Mission." *Journal of Christian Nursing* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 11-15. Accessed February 1, 2018. Ovid.
- Occhipinti, Laurie. "Not Just Tourists: Short-Term Missionaries and Voluntourism." *Human Organization* 75, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 258-268. Accessed January 22, 2018. ProQuest.
- Offut, Stephen. "The Role of Short-Term Mission Teams in the New Centers of Global Christianity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 4 (December 2011): 796-811. Accessed January 18, 2018. Wiley Online Library.
- Peterson, Roger, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed. *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries*. Minneapolis: STEMPress, 2003.
- Peterson, Roger. "Missio Dei or 'Missio Me?'" Using Short-term Missions to Contribute Toward the Fulfillment of God's Global Purpose." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Stephen C. Hawthorne, 752-756. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009.
- Priest, Robert J. and Joseph Paul Priest. "They See Everything and Understand Nothing: Short-term Mission and Service Learning." *Missiology* 36, no. 1 (January 2008): 53-73. Accessed January 18, 2018. EBSCOhost.
- Probasco, LiErin. "Giving Time, Not Money: Long-term Impacts of Short-term Mission Trips." *Missiology* 41, no. 2 (March 2013): 202-224. Accessed January 18, 2018. Sage Journals.
- Rankin, Jerry. "Spiritual Warfare and the Mission of God." In *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices of the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012. ProQuest Ebook.
- Smith, Alex G. "Evaluating Short-Term Missions: Missiological Questions." In *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right!*, edited by Robert J. Priest, 35-61. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008.

- Stambach, Amy. "Spiritual Warfare 101: Preparing the Student for Christian Battle." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 2 (2009): 137-157. Accessed February 2, 2018. JSTOR.
- Steffen, Tom A. "Why Communicate the Gospel through Stories?" *Mission Frontiers* (Nov/Dec 2013): 6-9.
- Van Engen, Jo Ann. "The Cost of Short-term Missions." *The Other Side* 36, no. 1 (Jan 2000): 20. Accessed January 23, 2018. General OneFile.
- Wan, Enoch and Geoffrey Hart. "Complementary Aspects of Short-Term Missions and Long-Term Missions: Case Studies for a Win-Win Situation." In *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right!*, edited by Robert J. Priest, 63-98. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008.
- Wilder, Michael and Shane Parker. *Transformission: Making Disciples Through Short-term Missions*. Nashville: B&H, 2010.
- Zehner, Edwin. "Short-Term Missions: Some Perspectives from Thailand." *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 2 (April 2013): 130-145. Accessed January 25, 2018. Sage Publications.