Short-Term Missions:

Developing an Effective and Sustainable Program in the Local Church

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ABSTRACT

Short-Term Missions: Developing an Effective and Sustainable Program in the Local Church

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Increasing numbers of churches, schools, and Christian ministries are sending out teams to foreign countries for brief trips. Without proper oversight these may become little more than sightseeing excursions. This project seeks to develop a ministry for the New Testament Baptist Church in Largo, Florida that will support its missionaries’ objectives and provide significant spiritual experiences for participants. The project focuses on determining proper objectives, training team members, raising funds, arranging logistical matters, and implementing components into a successful outreach. Research includes a thorough examination of biblical principles, contemporary resources on the topic, and at least sixty surveys from experienced missionaries and church staff members. The outcome will be an effective and sustainable short-term missionary program for the local church that will accomplish meaningful on-field ministry and provide participating members with a heightened awareness of foreign missionary work and an increased burden to support it faithfully.

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To Maribeth, my faithful and loving wife, who shares a deep passion for missions. You are God’s great gift to me for life and ministry.

To Sarah, Justin, and Aaron, our children who have served alongside us whether in Largo or on foreign soil. May you always strive to reach your world for Christ.

To my parents, who demonstrated the value of Christian education and the eternal importance of missionaries from my earliest days.

To our family at New Testament Baptist Church, who have demonstrated a genuine heart and sacrificial support for missions.

May the Lord of the harvest continue to send forth laborers into His harvest.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On any summer day, groups of teenagers and adults from churches, Christian schools, and ministry organizations leave home to travel to foreign countries for short-term missions trips. Scanning the airport lobby, many are quickly recognizable by their matching t-shirts. Some participants are going with little more than spending money and a wanderlust. Many head out with strong anticipation of being used by God in a significant way. A few have even sensed a call of God on their lives and are longing for the trip to confirm this or prepare them for the next steps.

Every year, more than a million American teenagers and adults sign up to be a part of a short-term missionary team (STM) organized by a local church or a national organization.¹ They will get shots and attempt to raise funds that will cover their expenses. Team leaders may introduce songs and skits to be used as outreach or ministry on the field. Some will learn conversational phrases in a foreign language or take their own time to read about the culture of their intended field. Eventually, they will pack clothing, spending money, and cameras and say goodbye to their family for the next ten to fourteen days.

They will fight jet lag and adjust to a foreign culture upon arrival. They will try new foods and be careful of the water they drink. Some will sing, present skits, and hand out gospel materials.

tracts. Others will paint, sweep, and repair churches or school buildings. Many will serve a meal or provide essentials to needy children or families.

Free time may include a visit to a market to purchase trinkets to remember their trip and as gifts for family and supporters at home. They will travel to forts, castles, monuments, and temples. They will hike to volcanoes, zip-line through forested jungles, swim at the base of waterfalls, and play in the surf. They will certainly take plenty of photographs.

Upon their return, participants will share cultural, spiritual, and emotional experiences with friends and family members. Often, they will have the opportunity to give a public testimony at church or school relating what they experienced and learned as a part of their team. Many will talk of the lifelong bonds they made with team members and individuals they met abroad. They will go online to post pictures of themselves playing with or holding small foreign children.

Unfortunately, many teams will leave home without understanding a clear sense of their purpose. Directors may not have properly articulated to participants what specific objectives need to be met. Perhaps they are unsure themselves. Participants may not be fully equipped to accomplish what the host missionary desires.

Perhaps equally concerning is what occurs upon their return. With the sights and sounds of a foreign culture still fresh in their minds, they return to a society greatly different from their recent experiences and are unprepared to reconcile this reality. They observe the excesses of everyday life in America and are troubled. When asked about their trip they have little to show other than a few souvenirs and dozens, if not hundreds, of photos to be posted on Facebook.
They are unsure of any enduring impact left on the ministry or field they visited. Soon, they may begin to question what lasting changes have occurred in their own lives. Churches and individuals who have provided financial support may also be left wondering whether their money was wisely invested for the cause of Christ.

However, the greater tragedy may be the lingering, negative effects observed and experienced by the host missionary, his ministry, and the community in which he serves. A lack of unified purpose often leads to unfulfilled objectives. An inconsistent understanding or expectations or poor communication of direction often lead to conflict during the trip and damaged relationships upon its completion. The demands of participants who are not fully aware of their purpose produces a selfish impression that remains long after their return to the States.

**Statement of the Problem**

In many instances, STM projects do produce positive outcomes. Increased manpower over a span of a few days can accomplish tasks that might take a missionary longer on his own. Larger projects, such as a Vacation Bible School or summer camp, can produce a substantial outreach for a smaller church on the field. An influx of temporary financial support can open doors to expanded ministry. Focusing in another direction, American teens and adults are often exposed to both cultural experiences and spiritual needs around the world. Many participants recognize for the first time the vital need for increased and consistent participation in worldwide missionary efforts.

An increasing number of articles are being written that question the efficacy, profitability,
or necessity of STM. Many missiologists, and even casual observers, note that participants often have cultural, emotional, and even spiritual experiences. However, while there are obvious potential benefits for everyone involved in STM, many times they are not realized because of a few key factors.

The ease of assembling a travel package and the convenience of direct international communication allow any church or individual to construct the logistical framework for an STM project. However, many of these projects originating within local churches are assembled with poorly defined or misguided aims. Some projects are conducted without ever establishing any specific objectives other than to travel safely, enjoy good health, and “be a blessing to the missionaries.” Further, these projects often suffer because they fail to equip volunteer leaders and properly train participants. If the lack of preliminary elements poses a threat to the success of STM projects, the failure to debrief participants and evaluate the success of a team afterward is also problematic. Without these key components, it is difficult to consistently ensure a spiritually successful program.

Finally, while extensive research has been done in the field of missiology for several generations, relatively little has been produced for the realm of short-term missionaries. This is in spite of the fact that in recent decades the amount of personnel and financial resources devoted to STM has skyrocketed, especially in comparison with LTM. Ten years ago, roughly 1.6 million

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adults were traveling overseas annually for STM projects.\(^3\) Conservative estimates place spending on STM projects from that year at $1.6 billion.\(^4\) In addition, American missionary agencies increased the number of full-time staff members dedicated to STM by almost 325% from 1996 to 2005.\(^5\)

This analysis will produce a core set of valid purposes on which the church will focus in order to best assist its missionaries. Further, it will determine ways to communicate both general purpose and specific objectives to all parties involved. This project will include effective means to prepare participants and assess a team’s productivity. It will also determine ways to leave lasting results on the field and equip team members for their return.

**Limitations**

Although there are broader implications and applications of the principles established in this project, the finished product will be limited to the New Testament Baptist Church in Largo, Florida. This is the author's home church that has regularly scheduled STM trips since 1991. As this project focuses on a local church ministry, it will not primarily address parachurch or professional STM agencies (such as Joshua Expedition, Youth With A Mission, Teen Missions International, or Adventures in Missions). While their best practices may be identified and

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examined, it will be for the purpose of adaptation to a local church ministry. Although others have assessed short-term missions according to its benefit to the overall mission work of the church at large, this project will provide a more refined focus on the local church.

Further, this author will evaluate personal research from churches and missionaries that have some degree of experience with STM projects. The author's research will be open to any respondent. However, his associations and familiarity will somewhat limit the input, as the connections will primarily be with Baptist pastors, churches, and missionaries.

**Theoretical Basis**

The basis of this project is the author’s understanding that there is a scriptural call for every believer in Christ to fulfill the Great Commission, both as an individual and within the larger context of the local church and the body of Christ around the world. The foundation is primarily biblical, as the first responsibility for any local church endeavor must be to fulfill scriptural mandates. Likewise, the best examples or models will be those provided in the Bible, especially the New Testament narratives and epistles of missionary efforts.

Foreign missions is an extremely important component of the local church’s overall ministry. It allows believers and the church to fulfill their responsibility to the Great Commission in reaching the nations with the Gospel message (Matt 28:18-20). At its core, this responsibility involves calling individuals to believe on Jesus Christ (Rom 10:13-15) and discipling them to become conformed to his image (Rom 8:29). Rather than simply committing to prayer and financial support, STM allows individuals to add a hands-on component to their personal
As with any other aspect of local church ministry, STM projects must be done to effectively advance the work of the Lord. Projects cannot simply be for the sake of filling a calendar with activities, nor simply to appease the expectations of church members. STM is not merely a social endeavor designed to provide opportunities for individuals to be active or involved. Participants must understand the spiritual importance of their efforts and work toward a biblical objective.

**Methodology**

This project is composed into the following parts:

**Introduction**

The introductory chapter establishes the primary problems evident in contemporary STM, while also maintaining its potential and vital importance for fulfilling scriptural mandates. Recognizing the necessity of individual and local church involvement in worldwide missions, the author will propose a program that will address key elements with biblical structure. It will address the limitations of the project in general, as well as special terminology used throughout the work. This section concludes with a thorough review of contemporary literature in this field, as well as biblical passages dealing with both short-term and long-term missions (LTM).

**Chapter 2: Determining Valid Purposes**

Before developing any logistical features of a project, those developing a STM program must first construct a proper foundation. This is best done by considering valid ministry
opportunities which may serve as potential objectives for projects. Potential purposes may be influenced by the age and experience of participants, their skills and abilities, the language spoken on the field, the expectation of church leaders, and the needs of the host missionaries. This chapter will examine research results gathered from individuals with prior experience concerning the main purposes of former projects. From this data and the review of literature in this area, the author will propose valid options that will produce effective STM ministry projects.

Chapter 3: Pre-Field Preparation

Any work done for the Lord should be done with adequate forethought and planning (Luke 14:28-30). This chapter will address the need for pre-field training for both leaders and volunteer participants. This will include making clear presentations of the primary objectives for the project. This factor may influence the criteria for participant selection. Further, participants must be informed of specific expectations as team members and be prepared for cultural adaptation. This chapter will examine research from former leaders and participants concerning the amount of time devoted to preliminary training. This section will also present the vital nature of communication between all who are involved in a project, both stateside and abroad.

Chapter 4: On-Field Ministry

Building on the foundation of a valid purpose, STM projects must include specific elements that build toward that goal. These elements will provide the framework from which leaders can build a travel and ministry schedule. This chapter will explore how to produce measurable objectives that correlate to the project’s primary purposes. This section will also
outline methodology by which leaders can make proper assessments throughout the course of a project and upon its completion.

Chapter 5: Post-Field Assessment and Conclusions

The author will expound on the necessity of preparing team members for their return to everyday life. As important as preliminary training is for the success of the trip, debriefing is equally vital for the long-term impact in the participants’ lives. Any temporary stirrings must be translated into legitimate changes in perspective and behavior. Further, in order for the church to maintain a successful, sustainable program of STM, reporting to leadership, financial supporters, and members will be crucial. The final chapter will also review the stated problems in contemporary STM applications. Further, it will summarize the material presented and include a justification for the author’s conclusions. The final result will be a proposed solution ready for application in the local church ministry.

Literature Review

During the last thirty years, several authors began to address the topic of short-term missionary efforts. The great majority appear to focus on the logistics of selecting, training, and sending a group to a foreign field to do ministry. Many of these works are simply “how to” workbooks that discuss fundraising, travel arrangements, and health and safety concerns. Unfortunately, an examination of this literature reinforces the position that insufficient attention is being given to developing purpose, spiritual endeavors, and effective, long-lasting results.
Books

The stated purpose of H. Leon Greene’s book, *A Guide to Short Term Missions*, is to encourage potential STM leaders and participants. The book is built around journal entries from the author’s extensive experience and addresses both advantages and disadvantages of STM. Greene holds that preparation is the key to overcoming most of the practical annoyances. Once a group has counted the cost, the author offers practical advice on fund-raising, travel plans, and safety concerns. One concept of particular importance is flexibility. Team members must be prepared to accommodate changes, especially in consideration of the missionary host. Greene acknowledges the emotional, physical, and spiritual adjustments required of participants as they return to their home culture, making debriefing an essential component. The practical nature of this book is found in a variety of helpful appendices with information for leaders assembling, equipping, and educating team members.⁶

Mathew Backholer wrote *How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission* with college students primarily in mind, directing his advice to both leaders and individual team members. The author examines typical motives and objectives that drive most STM projects. He posits that short-term missions should be open to all believers. However, potential participants should consider family and work responsibilities, especially those considering lengthier trips.⁷

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⁷ Mathew Backholer, *How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission: For*
Rather than deal strictly with the logistics of coordinating mission trips, Tim Dearborn authored *Short-term Missions Workbook* to address their underlying purpose. He encourages leaders and facilitators to intentionally select objectives that are worthy of the time and money being invested instead of merely fueling the participant’s wanderlust or thirst for adventure. Dearborn further asserts that although curiosity is a vital part of service in a foreign culture, the purpose of STM is to “protect us from being mission tourists and propel us into lives of global citizenship.”

Martha VanCise possesses a unique perspective on the topic having served as both a STM participant and host. Further, the material in her book, *Successful Mission Teams*, was compiled from correspondence and interviews with several project hosts. Because of these factors, the book is both thorough and balanced. She encourages participants to consider three vital concepts: “flexibility, openness, servanthood.” VanCise offers brief chapters that are filled with well-drawn conclusions that produce beneficial applications. In fact, this is one of the most valuable “how-to” books in its scope and practicality.

*Servicing with Eyes Wide Open* is a resource for churches, educational institutions, missionary agencies, and other parachurch ministries. David Livermore focuses on cross-cultural interactions while preparing for and participating in STM. He contends that most significant

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difficulties do not arise from travel, accommodations, or any other logistical matter. Instead, they stem from flawed communication, conflicting personalities, weak leadership, or poor or non-existent teamwork. The author offers a voice to the non-Western individuals who find themselves working alongside North American participants during STM projects. The unique element presented by this work is the CQ, which gauges the “cultural intelligence” of individuals. This component allows leaders and participants to measure one’s ability to effectively interact when placed in a different culture.10

Scott Kirby aims his work, *Equipped for Adventure*, at those attempting to lead a local church STM team, perhaps for the first time. The book consists of two primary sections. In the first, the author attempts to answer why STM is even necessary, developing at the same time a philosophy for this type of ministry. In the second part of the book, he examines how to perform the details of this work successfully. Perhaps an indication of the problems at hand is that the author advises the reader who believes he understands the importance of STM to skip the first part of the book and jump into the practical considerations in part 2. Unfortunately, just because a leader believes that STM is beneficial, it does not guarantee that he holds a proper philosophy that includes designing purpose into each trip. Instead, he may consider a trip successful if there were relatively few glitches and everyone returned home safely with stories and photos to share.11

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11 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure: A Practical Guide to Short-Term Mission Trips* (Birmingham, AL:
Mission Trips that Matter is replete with anecdotes from author Don Richter’s personal missionary experience. He writes with greater emphasis on the proper motives and objectives for STM trips than on checklists for preparation. His goal is for those who serve on STM projects to “connect their travel experience to their ongoing life of faith.”\textsuperscript{12} The inherent danger is that trips only temporarily disrupt the everyday routine of participants, without challenging them toward change or producing any lasting results. He posits that there must be a “strategy for ongoing transformation.”\textsuperscript{13} To this end, he calls for participants to observe and reflect on their experiences at every point along the way. During the preparation and performance stages of a trip, he suggests daily journals, personal and corporate Bible study, and a significant time of debriefing before returning home.

Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne have compiled a collection of valuable articles from a variety of authors. Perspectives on the World Christian Movement is a comprehensive volume that is divided into sections addressing biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic perspectives of missionary efforts around the world. Readers who are planning a STM project will appreciate the practical insights concerning people groups, poverty, and the work of students in ministry. Donald Larson offers critical advice for those who would endeavor to have viable ministry in a foreign culture. Too often the missionary is perceived by the locals as a teacher, seller, or


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 36.
accuser. He asserts that the traveler should instead endeavor to be a learner, trader, or story teller. This will enable him to be effectively received by those he seeks to serve.\textsuperscript{14} Another vital chapter addresses the importance of bonding with a foreign community in order to produce effective ministry. The authors posit that immersion into an unfamiliar setting will create a sense of belonging, assist with language acquisition, and create opportunities for ministry. While primarily aimed at long term missionaries, this premise holds considerable value for those serving on abbreviated endeavors.\textsuperscript{15}

Serving others in not always easy, yet always necessary, especially in a foreign ministry context. With that in mind, Duane Elmer authored \textit{Cross-Cultural Servanthood}, a book that is not directed primarily at STM, but is still vitally applicable. Building on Christ as the supreme example of a servant, Elmer encourages his readers to develop those qualities that will increase effective ministry. He advises to learn about others, from them, and with them.\textsuperscript{16} The primary hindrance is often an impression of superiority in those who travel abroad, especially from the United States. He identifies small problems that are often unnoticed by participants, such as using illustrations, analogies, touch points, and applications from one’s home culture. These will


mean very little, if anything, to hearers abroad. In contrast, servanthood may be demonstrated in “simple, everyday events.”

Jerry Rankin draws from decades of service on foreign missionary fields and as president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist. From this perspective, he authored *To the Ends of the Earth* in order to encourage churches to expand their influence by fulfilling the Great Commission. His primary emphasis is on planting local, indigenous churches around the world through cooperative efforts of believers and churches. He addresses the value of volunteers and short-term projects recalling his personal experiences in India many years ago. He witnessed the encouragement that American volunteers brought to national believers, as well as the lessons they learned about the work of the Lord around the world. Specifically, he asserts that visiting laymen and women can accomplish more than they may believe through evangelism of unbelievers and training of church leaders during a concentrated effort. Further, he recognizes the value of “choirs, athletic teams, medical teams, and a variety of other specialized projects” in providing opportunities for American believers to have a witness for Christ.

Rankin advocates churches becoming personally involved with foreign missionaries and ministries. The elimination of an intermediate program or group tends to streamline their efforts, as well as provide a personal connection. This tends to strengthen the relationship, increase giving, and lengthen the church’s involvement. However, he also warns against involvement that

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17 Ibid., 12.

18 Jerry Rankin, *To the Ends of the Earth: Churches Fulfilling the Great Commission* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board, SBC, 2005), 126.
is too independent. Churches that develop STM projects without receiving significant input from foreign missionaries tend to develop programs that are too narrow and limited in their strategic influence.\(^{19}\)

In his work *Striking the Match*, George Robinson seeks to validate the strengths of STM. Addressing an audience of potential participants and sending pastors, he focuses on the impact of ordinary laymen who are equipped for evangelism in tandem with others who are prepared to follow up with discipleship. Although a project may be short-term in duration, the goal is long-term in results, particularly the planting of local churches. This is accomplished only when participants understand the necessity of humble service. He posits that there is “no room for self-centeredness on the part of any of its participants…one of the greatest problems in the current STM movement and in the greater global missionary cause as a whole.”\(^{20}\)

Although David Sills’ book, *The Missionary Call*, is directed at those considering, or at least investigating, career missions (LTM), there is value for those who will be involved in some form of STM also. The author encourages those who feel a legitimate call and are waiting for God’s provision and timing in establishing a long-term ministry to consider participating in short-term trips to view the fields to which God may be calling them. He presents the missionary call as a combination of 1) awareness of needs and commands, 2) a passionate concern for the

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 127.

\(^{20}\) George G. Robinson, *Striking the Match: How God is using Ordinary People to Change the World through Short-Term Missions* (Franklin, TN: e3 Resources, 2008), 57.
lost, 3) a commitment to God, 4) the Spirit’s gifting, 5) your church’s affirmation, blessing and commissioning.\textsuperscript{21}

The authors of \textit{Maximum Impact Short-term Mission} recognize their target audience as pastors, parachurch and Christian school mission leaders, classroom educators, STM team and host leaders. In their examination of previously published literature, they express concern that most of the material is anecdotal and strictly focused on pragmatic means to conduct short-term trips.\textsuperscript{22}

They identify the weaknesses of the movement at large and offer specific advice on making it into the powerful force it can and should be. They note that STM is typically unbalanced, with greater emphasis placed on either the goer-guest, the sender, or recipient-host. Using Scripture as the platform for missionary strategy, they assert that ideally participants will recognize the value of all three and work together interdependently. The solution they propose is best understood by the elements included in their definition of STM; namely, endeavors that use non-professional missionaries in a swift, temporary, repetitive deployment as commanded by God.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Academic Papers}


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 118-122.
In 2012, Steven Curtis presented, “Educated to Equip: A Model for Educational Short-Term Missions as a Ministry of the Local Church,” as his thesis in the Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary. While recognizing several common deficiencies in contemporary short-term missionary efforts, he also posited the great benefits of a program executed with a specific purpose in mind. The author acknowledged that the majority of STM projects conducted focus on evangelism or some form of economic or social development. However, Curtis has narrowed his focus to theological training for national pastors. Structured training common in the United States is generally not available to pastors in other parts of the world because of prohibitive costs or lack of qualified national instructors. In order to address this scarcity, the author has used this project to develop the structure for laymen in American churches to travel abroad, specifically the Philippine Islands.24

More than a decade ago, Randall Friesen studied the spiritual effects of short-term missions on young adult participants as a part of his Doctor of Theology dissertation at the University of South Africa. In this work, “The Long-term Impact of Short-term Missions on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviours of Young Adults,” the author examined how involvement in a short-term project influenced 24 aspects of the spiritual growth and health among 116 young adult subjects. The most telling result of this study is that an immediate positive impact was readily noticed among respondents. However, the results were not always long-lasting. One year after returning from the field, many participants had returned to previous attitudes, thoughts, and

24 Steven Curtis, “Educate to Equip: A Model for Educational Short-Term Missions as a Ministry of the Local Church” (DMin diss., Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).
actions. Friesen posits that more attention must be given to debriefing participants before they return to their former routines. Preparing participants to return from the field provides an opportunity to identify and internalize spiritual growth, thereby making it more transformational. Another interesting result of his study is that repeat participants maintained more long-term growth after their subsequent ministry teams. Those who participated as a part of a team appreciated greater spiritual growth than those who were on individual assignments.

Gwendolyn Williams concentrated the focus of her work, “Training Short-Term Missionaries in the Local Church” on the preparation of individuals within the local church utilizing short-term projects. She identified the particular weakness of participants being poorly prepared before working as a part of a team, thereby weakening their effectiveness and diminishing long-term results. Williams recommends increasing the amount of time devoted to training and identifying topics of appropriate import, such as “cultural adaptation, missionary zeal, interest in unreached people groups, strategies and principles for preparation, and evangelism.” Her work outlined a program that included both training and first-hand experience on a foreign field. She concludes that as participants are better trained and more personally involved, they are more missions-minded in general and useful within the local church.

25 Randall Gary Friesen, “The Long-Term Effect of Short-Term Missions on the Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviors of Young Adults” (DTh diss., University of South Africa, 2004), 232.
26 Ibid., 230.
27 Gwendolyn Williams, “Training Short-Term Missionaries in the Local Church” (DMin diss., Oral Roberts University, 1996), 92.
Although many local churches participate in some form of short-term missions as a part of their outreach, most have never developed a program to adequately train their members to participate. In a project presented for her degree from Regent University, Donna Sheets identified that general weakness and developed a comprehensive program that addresses logistical matters, as well as contextualization of ministry, and preparation for re-entry. One component of practical value is the development of cross-cultural training classes for participants preparing for short-term service. These include information about a variety of topics specifically centering on the intended field of ministry.\textsuperscript{28}

Articles

In his article “Biblical Foundations for Short-Term Missions,” George Robinson acknowledges that the movement has both critics and supporters in the present day. Supporters seem ready to label any group that travels abroad as “missions,” whether they have a legitimate ministry purpose or not. Similarly, opponents of STM quickly attribute the blame for a broad range of foreign missionary problems on the ill-advised or inconsiderate behavior of American short-term volunteers. To combat these extremes, Robinson establishes a biblical mandate for STM efforts using a variety of examples in Scripture. STM should not be considered as a replacement for LTM, but as an effective supplement. He summarizes that “what is needed is a

\textsuperscript{28} Donna Leigh Sheets, “A Short-Term Mission Trip Program with an Emphasis on Cross-Cultural Training and Reentry for Covenant Church in Winterville, North Carolina” (DMin diss., Regent University, 2010).
balanced, biblical view of STM and a humble confession that God has always done extraordinary things through ordinary people – often in a very short period of time.”

Although his title, “Why Most Missions Trips Are a Waste of Time” sounds extremely negative, Noel Becchetti has actually dedicated his ministry to promoting short-term opportunities for teenagers and adults. In this article he is actually trying to draw attention to some of the most common weaknesses of contemporary STM efforts. In fact, he is one of many proponents who recognize that improvements cannot be made without first addressing the problems. Too often, American volunteers insist on defining and designing ministry in cultures and settings that are foreign to them. They devote time and precious resources to accomplishing tasks that are not important to the host ministry. Of particular interest is the author’s warning against finding and reporting spiritual “results” that do not actually exist. Ultimately, the gravest danger is that short-term visitors might inflict significant damage to the long-term work on the field. Becchetti summarizes that coordinators should strive for flexibility and surrender control to the Lord’s direction and the host’s genuine need. This requires focusing more on ministry and less on personally-developed results.


For many years those involved in STM recognized a need for some set of standard practices to guide participants and increase effectiveness. Several individuals and groups produced their own lists and guidelines. However, in 1999 the U.S. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission was organized for the purpose of establishing such a set of standards. After soliciting input from networks across the country, they codified their findings into “The 7 Standards of Excellence” which serve as a set of best practices for leaders and participants as follows:


2. Empowering Partnerships: An excellent short-term mission establishes, healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners.

3. Mutual Design: An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants.

4. Comprehensive Administration: An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants.

5. Qualified Leadership: An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants.

6. Appropriate Training: An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach.
7. Thorough Follow-up: An excellent short-term mission assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants.\textsuperscript{31}

There is a strong emphasis throughout these seven concepts and their supporting documentation on the initial structure and preparation for a STM project. Although they will be worked out during each phase of a trip, a structured purpose and strong guiding principles are necessities for projects that will produce genuine and lasting results.

In his article “Short Term Missions: A trend that is growing exponentially,” Don Fanning identifies the beginning of the movement’s popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1992 and 2005 the number of participants grew from 250,000 to more than a million a year. In fact, research from 2005 indicates that 29\% of all teenagers in America had participated in some type of religious missions or service project. The author posits that only exorbitant travel costs could significantly curb STM growth.\textsuperscript{32}

More than merely reporting the available research, Fanning also addresses the questions often asked about STM. First, “What is the objective of STM?” Is it to evangelize the world, provide social relief, produce career missionaries, or some combination of these and other goals? Second, “How are STM efforts being funded?” Does it simply draw from what was already


being given to world evangelism through LTM? Measuring the results, are STM efforts worth what is being spent each year?

The author examines several models that propose changes to the standard structure and operation of STM projects in order to improve effectiveness. First, he recommends enhanced discipleship before and after involvement. These training and debriefing sessions should highlight “cross cultural understanding, evangelism, and world mission strategies.”

Second, Fanning posits that if career missionaries are truly a desired product of STM then this must be emphasized by actions and not merely stated objectives. One of the more interesting assertions is that churches should be making it harder to participate, making the requirements more challenging.

Bill Taylor produced his article “The Place of Short-Term Missions” in 1996 to evaluate the phenomenon which was continuing to grow among American churches. As a foundation, he acknowledges the significant benefits that STM projects afford:

1. They provide hands-on, direct contact with cross-cultural missions.
2. They stimulate realistic vision for the global task.
3. They 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.

33 Ibid., 14.
5. They 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 provide the foundation for their own potential long-term commitment to career missionary service.

10. They bring glory to the Living God through their demonstrated obedience to the Sending Lord.⁴

Even though he is a strong advocate for the movement, he still is able to identify a few key weaknesses. Too often, leaders and participants exaggerate the importance of their work or consider themselves experts based on their experience. This tends to develop a false impression for those who remain at home or provide support from a distance. Projects also cost a great deal of money, sometimes redirecting it from previously supported works. At the same time, the hosts are often heavily burdened by preparing and providing for visiting volunteers.

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Rather than eliminating or restricting STM projects, Taylor proposes transparency and balance. When all involved are honest about expectations and results, the limitations are diminished. He also advocates a stronger emphasis on long-term missions and commitment. This balance between STM and LTM enables a broad and effective participation in missionary efforts.

**Biblical Context**

**Genesis 12:1-3**

The command given to Abram is unique, yet the first of many in Scripture that impart a missionary theme. God instructed him to leave his own country to go to a foreign land. The key to the nation of Israel's future blessings, as well as her position among the nations, is revealed in verse three. Abraham and his descendants were to be a blessing to the other nations of the world. God's strategy for reaching the world is to use His people to reflect His character and loving nature and to reveal His ultimate plan of redemption.

**1 Chronicles 16:23-24**

Similar to many of the Psalms, this passage calls on true believers to be active in their worship of God so that others will observe and understand His greatness. The unbelieving masses (heathen) from all nations must grasp the testimony of God’s children. The purpose of STM must be not only the formation of participating team members, but evangelistic outreach to other people groups.
Psalm 67

The Psalmist cried out for divine blessings upon the nation of Israel, not merely for selfish reasons. Rather, God’s blessings provide responsibility and opportunity for God’s children to bless others. The writer’s primary concern was “that thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations”\(^\text{35}\). The contemporary believer who has received divine blessings must understand his responsibility to share them with others among all nations.

The Prophets of Israel

Old Testament prophets from Israel often served in a manner that could be described as short-term ministry. Certainly, their calling was a lifelong endeavor. However, their particular messages were directed at particular peoples with unique spiritual objectives. When given a divine message, they were responsible to go to the intended audience and deliver it. Their success was judged simply on their faithfulness to complete the call of God on their lives. The response of the intended recipients was left in the hands of the God who had sent them.

Isaiah 6:8-9

When confronted with the holiness of God and the need for workers in His plan, Isaiah responded with a humble, obedient, and willing spirit. Shedding any self-concern, He replied, “Here am I, send me.” The Lord then provided the message and identified the intended recipients. Successful STM efforts require similar readiness on the part of participants. Rather

\(^{35}\text{Psalm 67:2, King James Version (KJV). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this thesis project will be from the King James Version of the Bible.}\)
than an opportunity to travel, experience new cultures, or even grow spiritually, STM participants should understand the responsibility of service to God and unbelievers.

**Ezekiel 3:18**

God delivered a stern warning to his prophet about failure to convey the divine message to the lost. The apathetic messenger would be held accountable for their spiritual demise. Believers have been given a wonderful privilege to proclaim the Gospel and a solemn responsibility along with it. STM allows many who have not been called into full-time foreign missionary service to fulfill their responsibility to those in far-reaching places.

**Jonah 1-4**

The ministry of Jonah was similar to many of the other Old Testament prophets as he was called to leave his homeland, travel to a foreign region, and present a specific message to the intended recipients. There are many clear parallels to effective STM in the present day. Preparation and travel are involved. A strategic location and people group (Nineveh) were targeted. Because he had been given a particular objective, Jonah knew that his mission was not complete until the message had been delivered. Every STM trip should have clearly defined objectives, so that participants will have assurance that they have accomplished their goals.

**Luke 8:1; Mark 1:39**

The Gospel writers recorded the general practices of Jesus during His earthly ministry. Although He had a hometown with which He was identified, He did not limit His ministry there.
Likewise, Jerusalem was the center of religious worship and consistently attracted numerous worshipers from other regions. However, it was not the only place in which he ministered. In fact, He set an example for His disciples by traveling to many communities in order to preach and teach. Some, such as Samaria, were actually avoided by Jews (John 4:4, 9). Further, Christ modeled by example what would be necessary for effective ministry. Contemporary evangelistic efforts, including STM, can involve many within the church and must be far-reaching in their scope in order to follow the Lord’s example.

Matthew 10

This chapter describes in detail Jesus Christ calling and sending out His disciples. The calling of twelve individuals to learn and serve together may be copied in the team mentality reflected in STM. He offered specific direction about the nature and methodology of their ministry (vss. 5-8). He addressed the necessary financial preparations that must be considered before departing on such a significant venture (vss. 9-10). Before sending them out, Jesus prepared these men for adversity and persecution (vss. 15-39). Preparation, flexibility, and perseverance are necessary components for successful ministry teams.


In similar fashion to His commission of the twelve, Christ also had a group of 70 disciples whom he sent out in pairs for ministry. He directed their efforts toward “every city and place, whither he himself would come.” They would be the advance team that would plant seeds
in preparation for further Gospel ministry. The STM participant could easily understand his role as preparatory for the long-term efforts on the field.

Additionally, the Lord acknowledged the pressing demand, a prospective, abundant harvest, and the dearth of workers in the ministry. With the multiplication of the world’s population, the powerful work of the Spirit, and the complacency of many believers, this condition is amply present today. In fact, STM should rightly be considered a vital part of complete discipleship.

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus commissioned his disciples with the task of going to all of the world to lead people to salvation and disciple them toward spiritual growth. STM does have limitations concerning the complete discipleship cycle described in the Great Commission; namely, it takes longer than the 10-14 days of the average STM trip. However, STM can and does involve church members in the process of evangelizing the world beyond simply giving to the church's missionary outreach program. It provides a unique first-hand understanding of the components of leading an individual to salvation in Christ, seeing him follow the Lord in baptism, and growing in knowledge and application of God's Word.

Luke 14:25-33

As Christ challenged his followers about the requirements of genuine discipleship, he introduced the concepts of priorities and preparations. Before endeavoring to accomplish a spiritual objective, the disciple must determine the desired outcome and what it will take to
complete it. Church leaders who are coordinating STM efforts, whether as the sending church or the host missionary, should acknowledge the considerable cost. More than just airfare or accommodations, there are significant sacrifices that may be required from participants. Rightly accounting what will be required will serve to strengthen STM efforts and prepare for lasting, spiritual results.

John 3:16-17

This passage provides believers with a clear biblical foundation for evangelistic efforts. God’s missionary burden moved Him to send His Son to be mankind’s redeemer. The verse also provides a succinct reminder that STM efforts should strive for eternal results in the lives of others.

John 15:16

Christ sent out his disciples with an understanding that their purpose was to bear spiritual fruit. However, he further qualified that fruit as the type which will remain. Their efforts were focused and intended to bring lasting results both in themselves and in those to whom they would minister. Likewise, the efforts of contemporary believers, including those attempting to do STM work must aim for lasting spiritual results that may be readily identified, if not measured.

John 20:21

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ met with his disciples to comfort them and provide additional direction for their ministry. He reinforced the commission he had previously given
(Matt 28:18-20) by likening their calling to his own. Believers today walk in a similar path, having received the gift of peace with God and being sent to others with the same message. STM allows individual believers the opportunity to experience and respond to this commission being sent beyond their own borders.

Acts 8:26-40

The account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch may stand as an extreme example of STM. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Philip left Jerusalem to go to Gaza. Under divine appointment, he met the Ethiopian who was investigating Scripture while returning to his homeland. Philip introduced him to Jesus as Messiah and baptized him before miraculously being taken away to Azotus. Even after his departure, it appears that Peter ministered at several stops before settling into a possible long-term ministry in Caesarea (Acts 8-21).

Acts 13-20

The ministry of the Apostle Paul stands as a prime example of missionary endeavors. Although he devoted the years of his life after conversion to missions, he operated somewhat as an itinerant missionary utilizing some aspects identifiable as STM. Certainly, this involved longer stays than contemporary models, but Paul did not settle into any location becoming the pastor of a local church. With a few exceptions (Corinth and Ephesus) he generally spent no more than several weeks in most locations. Perhaps his ministry could be considered a hybrid of methodology; establishing no permanent site, but investing a lifetime in foreign missions.
Acts 13:1-5

This passage describes the early missionary endeavors of the church at Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit laid a burden upon the hearts of the people to set apart Paul and Barnabas for a specific ministry. Shortly thereafter, these men left Jerusalem to travel to foreign regions, under the continued direction of the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of sharing the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus. It is the responsibility of the local church to send out missionaries, whether for long-term or short-term endeavors. However, such efforts must never be for trivial or self-centered purposes. Rather, they must be initiated with the purpose of advancing the work of God in all parts of the earth.

Acts 16:6-10

Paul intended to visit Asia in what could be considered a short-term endeavor, as were many of his journeys. However, after seeing a vision of a Macedonian man calling out an invitation, his plans were altered. His sensitivity to the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit provides a reminder to those involved in missionary efforts of the importance of flexibility. While thorough preparation is a necessity, STM leaders and participants should be cautious of establishing plans and goals based on personal desires or preferences. Further, when circumstances arise that necessitate change, participants should not be overly attached to plans and schedules when divine intervention is obviously at work.
Romans 10:13-15

As the Apostle Paul revealed the wonderful nature of God's salvation, he also presented an inherent difficulty. The Gospel is only effective in transforming the lives of individuals when it is heard and believed by intended receivers. Similarly, the message is only heard when it is proclaimed by those who have been sent to minister the Gospel to them. The purpose of contemporary believers is to reach people in all places with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The pattern established in this passage is still in effect today, and serves as a foundation for STM endeavors.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Scripture teaches that God’s method is to use the foolish, the weak, and the despised persons of the world to bring glory to him. God’s purpose is to be accomplished by ordinary people who believe in and serve an extraordinary God. Those who have not received formal theological education or missiological training may still be used to accomplish significant spiritual goals when they act in obedience to their calling. Laymen in American churches readily find opportunities for firsthand service through STM projects.

1 Corinthians 9:16

Paul expressed to the Corinthian believers his understanding of the urgent necessity to preach the Gospel. In truth, he was not deserving of any recognition or praise for preaching, because he was simply responding to the burden placed upon him by God. In fact, he recognized that he was worthy of shame if he ignored or neglected that call. While Paul felt a particular
apostolic call, every believer bears responsibility to share the Gospel as an ambassador of God’s salvation. Although those participating in STM efforts may have a variety of objectives for their ministry, evangelism must be a primary component.

1 Corinthians 3:3-17

Paul corrected the undue loyalty of his readers who had focused their devotion to individuals who were influential in their salvation and spiritual growth. Believers must be reminded consistently that the work of the ministry is of foremost importance, instead of satisfying personal needs or desires. This is invaluable counsel for those who participate on STM teams. This passage describes the wonderful interaction between those who minister the Gospel and the overarching work of God in the process. It is a solemn reminder for STM participants to dutifully fulfill their responsibilities, serve in harmony with others, and trust God for spiritual results.

1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8

These passages provide unique insight into Paul’s methodology when working for a limited time in a community. His testimony at Thessalonica was of tireless work to support himself fiscally and devoted ministry to preach to the residents. He worked so as not to be a burden on the people of each location in which he ministered and to set an example for growing believers. This serves as a pattern for the layman who supports himself and his family while reserving funds to participate on STM trips.
CHAPTER 2: DETERMINING VALID PURPOSES

Before establishing any elements of a project or determining logistical details, those leaders developing a STM program in the local church must construct a proper foundation. This is best done by examining valid ministry opportunities which might serve as potential objectives for a project. This chapter will examine research results gathered by the author from individuals with experience in the field of STM. The author will propose methodology for project coordinators to use to meet on-field needs and utilize the abilities and maximize the experiences of participants.

Considerations may include, but are not limited to, the needs of the host missionaries, the skills and abilities of participants, and the preferences of those designing and leading the team. A potential purpose may be determined as simply as having a missionary mention a particular need in one of his updates or prayer letters. It may also come as the result of church leaders initiating the conversation or inquiry with partnering missionaries or ministries. Conversely, the determination may begin with church staff evaluating the likely participants of a proposed trip and their skills and abilities. Leaders must be cautious not to focus on one of these elements to the exclusion of another. In fact, the best option may be a hybrid that prioritizes the primary needs of the host missionary, while still taking into consideration the skills and abilities of the team.
Theological Foundations

Certainly, the journeys and evangelistic efforts of the Apostle Paul stand as a primary example for missionary efforts as they were both early and extremely effective. Although it appears that Paul did not have a detailed plan for the scope and direction of each journey, they were not without divine purpose (Acts 13:2). He seems to have had only a general purpose or strategy and allowed the Holy Spirit to guide the details of where and when he would minister.

However, there are still several noticeable aspects that guided his purpose. He consistently maintained the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the core of his evangelistic message as salvation cannot be found elsewhere (1 Cor 2:2, Acts 4:12). Beyond that, he appears to strategically go to places where his ministry would most effectively and efficiently spread the message. He evangelized key centers of various regions so that they might become hubs of Christianity.\(^\text{36}\) Further, he founded churches in places that were heavily influenced by Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures and served as commercial centers.\(^\text{37}\) Contemporary STM leaders may use this example and strive to be strategic and purposeful in their project planning and execution for maximum success.

Those attempting to coordinate a STM project should do so after much prayer. Certainly, this is true of any endeavor for the local church, especially when so much time, money, and effort will be invested into the trip. One of the first formal events in the process should be a


\(^{37}\) Ibid., 14-15.
prayer meeting involving leaders to ask for divine direction. In fact, a series of prayer meetings should also be scheduled throughout the course of planning and training. This is a vital way to remind each participant of the necessity of seeking the Lord’s will and provision to accomplish his purposes. Involving the whole church in these meetings is a wise way to increase the size of “the team” to include those who will be financial and prayer partners, as well as those yet uncommitted to the cause. The STM trip then is much more a part of the overall missionary effort of the church, rather than the project of a select few.

Several who have written on the subject of STM encourage leaders and participants to be diligent in prayer beginning in the earliest of planning stages. Determining God’s will for a project, including its general purpose, is of utmost importance and can only be discerned by seeking it with prayer. The authors of Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission assert that prayer should be “step number one” of the pre-field responsibilities for the American participants (“goer-guests”) as they prepare to go. Likewise, Greene writes that “prayer is a key component covering the team during preparation, the trip itself, as well as after the trip.” He notes that not only should friends of participants and church members “extensively cover your trip in prayer,” but that leaders should diligently pray for discernment in selecting team members who are called to serve. Reminding leaders of its importance, he cautions that prayer is not simply done to solicit God’s approval of our plans, but to align our work with His divine will.

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General Categories of Focus

Although logistical considerations often take a primary position in planning projects, purpose still is apparently at the heart of the STM movement in America. Those leaders determining the purpose of a team will likely choose from a handful of standard concepts that are easily recognized and often referenced.

When missiologists and church leaders examine the value of STM, they often narrow their view to two primary realms. The first focuses on the work accomplished on behalf of the host and his ministry. The second concentrates on the benefits provided to participants from the sending church or entity. Scott Kirby identifies these “dual purposes of Short-term Missions” as ministry and mobilization.40 Ministry includes the work that a team may accomplish while on the field and is assessed as the value received by the host ministry. Mobilization is the effect that a STM project has on the participants and those who send them and is measured by their initial and continuing response to missions.

Similarly, Michael Anthony recognizes two overarching categories on which to build and evaluate a STM program. He sees it as the choice of priorities; people versus projects.41 When referencing the “people” component, he focuses on those participating as team members rather than the intended recipients in the ministry on the field. The “project” aspect is centered on the

40 Scott H. Kirby, The Short-Term Missions Adventure: How to Establish an Effective Short-Term Missions Ministry in Your Local Church (Knoxville, TN: Printing Image, 1998), 23.

programs conducted or work elements completed. Anthony further establishes a variety of pros and cons of working exclusively on construction projects or interacting with people in evangelism, outreach, or compassion-focused ministry. Specifically, he primarily evaluates the results of STM endeavors by gauging the impact made on the lives of participants, as well as the completion of a project. Ultimately, he advises leaders to seek a balance between these two components when selecting their objective.

In a hybrid of these concepts, Don Richter encourages leaders to see a “larger human story unfolding on a mission trip” so that they can help participants “connect their travel experience to their ongoing life of faith.” The inherent value of this perspective is that it will affect not only the immediate trip, but also the future endeavors of participants. Whether they go abroad as a part of formal STM projects or are simply traveling for work or leisure, they may understand the needs of different locales and consider their responsibility for evangelism and ministry.

In contrast to Anthony’s “people vs. projects” outlook, Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed provide a detailed analysis of STM in which the “intended ministry activity” of participants is divided into four sub-categories. “Evangelism” involves proclamation, church planting, spiritual warfare, and Bible translation. Next, they posit that “witnessing” includes social ministry, the arts, sports outreach, and activities with the intended recipients. “Discipleship”

42 Ibid., 55.

43 Don C. Richter, Mission Trips That Matter, 16.

centers on educational endeavors. Finally, they address “helps” as either hospitality, construction and work projects, or other support services for work being done on the field.45

Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed readily acknowledge that in their assessment of activity there is no consideration of what the participants may receive from their experience. It is strictly limited to their “giving/sowing” component. This activity is alternately labeled as “target tasks, intended projects, intended ministry activity, or the intended on-field oral-proclamation and deed-proclamation efforts.”46 The bulk of a project’s focus is therefore placed on the host missionary and the community being served.

These authors further posit that there are two possible directions that STM leaders may take to arrive at their conclusion. First, they may determine the primary purpose for their trip and later schedule activities that will help them accomplish it. Alternately, they may begin by assembling a list of intended activities which will ultimately determine what their purpose will be. The first method focuses the attention on the needs of the host missionary and ministry, while the second may more heavily favor the desires and abilities of the team’s participants or leaders. The scheduled activities for a trip thus tend to form the primary purpose. Clearly determining, defining and scheduling the intended activities “helps establish some level of understanding and sense of credibility” for a project.47

46 Ibid., 71.
47 Ibid., 72.
While coordinators may consider a variety of purposes, some objectives should be given greater consideration than others. If the desired preference of the pastor or team leader is primary, it may produce a pleasant experience for participants but have little to no value for the host missionary and his ministry. Similarly, leaders must be careful not to develop projects that will distract missionaries from meaningful ministry.48

If the focus is placed strongly on enjoyable or even rewarding experiences for participants, STM projects can be at risk of becoming “Christian tourism.” George Robinson asserts that “most trips today are more tourism and personal fulfillment than strategy and fulfillment of the Great Commission.”49 Further, he identifies a sense of “missionary hedonism” that has developed, in which the primary motive for participation is “what they might get out of it.” The research conducted for this project agrees with his assertion that “the vast majority of literature available on STM has this goer-guest orientation.”50

One potential solution is to allow the missionary to determine or have significant input into determining the purpose for a project. This is also advisable as stateside leaders and coordinators are not the best judge of significant or effective ministry in a foreign cultural setting. At the very least, communication should begin with potential missionaries at the earliest opportunity so that they are intricately involved in the selection process.

48 Noel Becchetti, “Why Most Missions Trips Are a Waste of Time.”
49 George G. Robinson, Striking the Match, 98.
50 Ibid., 59.
The experience of the foreign missionary equips him to provide invaluable insight into the formation of the STM project’s purpose. Noel Becchetti, former president of the Center for Student Missions posits that “one of the most common cultural collisions occurs between linear cultures (like ours) and nonlinear cultures (like Latin).”\(^{51}\) While Americans tend to approach projects from a task-oriented perspective, a Latin American ministry may be more people oriented. Teams may operate with a significant sensitivity to time constraints, while the missionary will be more “situation-sensitive.” This is due to both cultural background (USA vs. Latin) and the inherent nature of their ministries (STM vs. LTM).\(^{52}\)

While giving great consideration to host missionaries and ministry recipients, leaders cannot ignore the potential impact that a STM project can have on volunteer participants. One of the goals for believers is to broaden their perspective of the world. Even while considering the experience of participants, leaders must be careful that a STM project must be more than just a cultural endeavor for the believer.\(^{53}\)

Similarly, the perspective of the church at large should be altered by a consistent and effective STM program. Participants may see the encouraging growth of Christianity in places that are not expected. For instance, missionary efforts in Latin America continue to yield fruit with close to 500 million believers there. Some report that 28,000 conversions occur daily in China. Nations that are primarily or officially Islamic, such as Indonesia and Iran, see

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\(^{51}\) Noel Becchetti, “Why Most Missions Trips Are a Waste of Time.”

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) David A. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes Wide Open*, 17.
phenomenal growth in the number of people converting to Christianity. All of the fifty largest churches in the world are outside of North America. When American believers witness such results, even on a smaller scale in a localized ministry, they are both encouraged and challenged to see results continue.

Alternately, STM participants may witness the struggles of believers in other regions of the world. Certainly, persecution and suffering still continues for believers around the world. In fact, “more Christians have been martyred for their faith in this century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined.” While it is unlikely that STM participants will travel to places like China, Laos, North Korea, or parts of the Islamic world, they will still be exposed to the everyday struggles of believers living out their faith in Christ. Lengthy and difficult travel to meet as a church in substandard facilities may be expected on a foreign field. Limited resources are the norm for many missionaries and churches on the field. A handful of faithful leaders often do the great majority of the work in order to see successful results. Exposure to all of these conditions may make American visitors appreciate the many luxuries they take for granted.

One of the inherent aspects of STM projects that is acknowledged, but rarely listed as a primary purpose, is adventure. Certainly, overseas travel and exciting experiences appeal to many people in their consideration of missionary work. However, many consider adventure a lesser purpose because it does not predominantly address a spiritual element of one’s Christian

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55 David A. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes Wide Open*, 34.
walk. While confessing his love for adventurous travel, David Livermore acknowledges this as a less noble reason than other spiritual ones because of its focus on self rather than service.\textsuperscript{56}

In contrast, Scott Kirby takes a different approach titling his work, “Equipped for Adventure.” He revels in the stories of his on-field experiences and encourages others to broaden their horizons while simultaneously serving the Lord. He appeals to his readers with promises that they will “go to new places, experience new cultures, meet new friends, and have new experiences.”\textsuperscript{57}

Leaders should be cautious in promoting adventure as a primary purpose. Some individuals with a sense of wanderlust might be drawn to the idea of traveling the world while serving the Lord in a spiritual endeavor. However, excessive focus on an adventurous experience may tend to promote a more self-centered attitude in the minds of participants and detract from service elements. Further, those with more timid personalities might be intimidated by perils perceived to be associated with foreign travel and distant lands. Adventurous travel may also convey a sense of weighty sacrifices that will be expected.

Specific Considerations

If leaders focus on evangelism only, at the expense of any material aspects of life, they may neglect many opportunities for ministry. On many foreign fields, meeting physical needs is often the first open door to spiritual ministry which is the primary objective. When individuals or

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 51.

\textsuperscript{57} Scott Kirby, \textit{Equipped for Adventure}, 7.
whole communities believe that the foreign missionary truly cares for them and their families, they become more open to listening and responding to their message of a saving gospel.

Dearborn posits that such churches who seek “to convert souls while leaving the rest of people’s lives unchanged, are really only relating to ghosts, souls without bodies.” Likewise, if believers care only for “social justice and welfare,” refusing to call sinners to salvation, they care only for “corpses,” bodies without souls.58

Again, the order of determining a purpose is crucial as it affects involvement on every level. If leaders determine purpose and activity first, it may limit the fields on which they can serve or the missionaries that will host them. For example, assembling a team to complete construction or work projects may not appeal to a foreign host ministry that is not currently in this phase of ministry.

In the earliest stages of developing a STM project, church leaders must evaluate certain concepts to rightly determine where the team will minister and what they intend to accomplish. One consideration will be the target setting. This will include the region, country, or specific people group in which the team will potentially serve. For some church leaders this is the primary factor. Perhaps the church has identified a particular people group around which they are building their outreach. This might include multiple trips to complete a large construction project or ministry program. It may also correspond to long-term support of career missionaries to a

particular place. Other churches or ministries may purposely rotate their travel and outreach to a variety of fields. Still others may identify the potential fields based on the availability and cooperation of host missionaries that are currently being supported.

A second primary consideration may be the tasks that the group intends to accomplish. At this point a large number of opportunities may be evaluated. Will the team tackle a construction project for an on-field ministry or will they conduct a community outreach? Will participants lead a Vacation Bible School or camp program (sports, English language, summer camp)? Will they take primary responsibility or serve in a behind-the-scenes role?

Related to this aspect is the capability of participants to fulfill a particular purpose. Leaders must consider the talents and abilities of potential team members. Introducing questions about previous experience and training in certain areas will allow leaders to assess the team’s potential to accomplish its purpose. However, this line of questioning generally comes during the application process after a purpose has been selected. Leaders would be wise to include these types of assessments at the earliest possible stage of planning. Receiving a missionary’s request for help with a construction project requiring skilled labor may be daunting to leaders looking over their applications from eager Junior High students.

If the team will consist of primarily teenagers with a few adult leaders, certain intricate or large-scale construction projects may not seem to be appropriate or feasible. However, at least one organization has proven that this is not always true. Teen Missions International has been equipping teams of willing teenagers for the past five decades to tackle construction and maintenance projects around the world. During that time 42,000 participants have served in more
than 110 countries around the world completing both evangelistic and construction-based projects. Not surprisingly, a significant part of their training includes two weeks of instruction in block masonry, carpentry, and rudimentary construction skills at “The Lord’s Boot Camp” in Merritt Island, Florida. Most local churches and Christian schools do not have this option of providing such training for their teams. Although team members will, and should be, stretched by their experiences on the field, it is unwise to set them up for frustration or failure because the objectives were unreachable.

Age also plays a factor when considering the intended recipients of the project. Is there enough difference in age to make the team’s ministry effective? For instance, if junior high aged students will participate in a VBS that will include grade school students, what specific roles will they fill? Is there sufficient leadership both to oversee team members and work with children in attendance? In addition to age considerations, leaders should evaluate the specific maturity and experience of potential participants. Will the team include a significant number of members with prior STM experience? Seasoned veterans bring a wealth of insight and ability that is invaluable in helping first-time participants. When there is no optimal formula, solution leaders must find ways to adapt. For instance, if a foreign language presents an obstacle to effective ministry, leaders must take this into account. While there are means to counteract this hindrance (printed materials distributed in place of conversation, recorded performances for puppets, etc.) these will not fully compensate for some aspects of ministry (personal conversation, live musical

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presentations). Memorizing songs and phrases in a foreign language stretches the participants into new areas.

While many may initially question the capabilities and responsibility of teenagers in projects, the history of STM stands as a testament to their abilities as the majority of STM teams are drawn from church youth groups, Christian high schools, and teen mobilization ministries.

The selection of a primary purpose and objectives may also have a bearing on fundraising endeavors for the project and participants. Specifically, financial supporters may be more or less inclined to invest depending on the nature of the project. Some givers within every church have special areas in which they sense a burden. Typically, they give in proportion to those burdens. For example, some individuals are highly sensitive to the plight of the less fortunate around the world. When hearing of a ministry outreach that will address the basic material needs of foreign communities (food, water, clothing, or shelter), they will likely give more readily and generously. Other individuals desire to see educational needs addressed by foreign ministries. They will probably be more enthusiastic or generous toward a team that will tackle a teaching project. On the contrary, some may not give as readily if an obvious evangelistic focus is not apparent. Leaders must be aware of this when selecting purpose, but should be careful to follow the Lord’s direction and not give undue attention to the appeal to financial donors. Even potential participants may be encouraged or discouraged to join based on the intended purpose and activities.

One final factor to consider is the types of projects previously conducted by the church. Leaders should ask the question “Why were some more successful than others?” The answer will
likely be a combination of missionary need, target location, ability and attitude of participants, and quality of leadership for a particular team and project. Leaders may consider if it is wise to repeat the same types of objectives in order to maintain momentum. Similarly, they may determine that the introduction of a new purpose is necessary to spark renewed interest in STM projects among church members.

Ultimately, the determination of a primary purpose will affect all of the other aspects of assembling and equipping a team and conducting the project. The preparation of team members, scheduling daily on-field routines, measuring accomplishments and debriefing team and reporting to the home church and supporters will all require at least slightly different tactics depending on the purpose. Therefore, the order of each element of the project (as evidenced in the order of the chapters in this work) is built upon this foundation.

**Project Research Results**

Data collected from the survey completed as a part of this project revealed that participants, leaders, and hosts had all considered some sense of purpose in their STM projects. Of the 101 church staff and foreign missionaries who participated in the survey, 68% noted that their ministries “purposefully host or conduct Short-Term Missionary projects on a regular basis.” Further, 31% of these ministries conduct these trips annually. Another 24% participate in 2-3 projects each year. Combining these results with 13% who are involved in more than 3 each year (which were primarily missionaries who host teams from American churches), reveals that more than 2/3 of respondents find sufficient value to make STM a regular and recurring part of
their outreach and ministry. Whether or not they began to address STM to accomplish specific purposes for their ministry or simply joined a trend they saw developing in contemporary missionary efforts, they continue to lead or host teams on purpose.\(^60\)

Another aspect related to determining purpose in STM involves the individual projects and their potential for success. The concern is whether or not leaders target certain criteria in developing a primary purpose for their projects. Again, the focus may broadly be divided by focus on either the participants and their experience or the host missionary and ministry.

A major focus of this writer’s research was the selection of a purpose or objective by those with experience leading or hosting a team. When asked to respond to the question “What is the primary criterion you use to determine the main purpose of a trip?” a majority of respondents (56%) replied “the need of host missionary or ministry.” In fact, although the next highest option selected was “the skills or abilities of participants,” it was chosen by only 18% of respondents. In written responses, two other individuals identified their primary criteria to be a combination of the missionary’s need and the skills of the participants.\(^61\) This may be an expected response as many view STM as primarily an outreach designed to serve LTM missionaries and their ministries.

As a part of the response to this question, one individual noted that their projects were developed predominantly for the purpose of exposing church members to missions. As

\(^{60}\) See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”

\(^{61}\) See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”
mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is one of the elements several authors identify as important to influence the missionary perspective of believers. Scott Kirby asserts that the best way to attract the interest of church members who are apathetic toward foreign missions is to provide opportunities for firsthand exposure. Because “mission vision is more caught than taught,” he encourages leaders to develop STM trips for church members to increase their personal involvement.”

**Proposed Plan for New Testament Baptist Church**

For the specific application within the church being considered by this project, the genesis of projects will be from the senior pastor. His knowledge of the missionaries currently supported by the church is a valuable resource to identify urgent needs that could effectively be met by a team. This will be done through a variety of avenues including reading reports from the field, personal conversations with missionaries, and consideration of the church’s previous STM efforts.

After a few viable options have been selected, conversations will continue with other church leadership. If the prospective team will be made up of teenagers and/or college students, the youth pastor and class leaders will be consulted as they have direct understanding of the pool of potential team members. They will also be helpful in coordinating dates that will work within

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the structure of the church and individual calendars. Further, they will be vital in promoting the
trip, recruiting and training team members, and personal participation.

At this point, the pastor will introduce the project to the church’s officers. This is
necessary to not only keep them informed and involved, but to coordinate the project with the
overall outreach of the church. Any financial or budgetary factors will also require the broader
involvement of church leadership. As at every point in the process, this wider scope of
information and involvement allows more individuals to be praying for the project.

Projects will be developed around host missionaries that are already a part of the church’s
missionary program, receiving support from and reporting back to it. This provides a far deeper
knowledge of ministries and needs from the genesis of the project. It also enables the church to
see the long-term fruit of their efforts into the future. Participants can more easily stay connected
to the host and his ministry on the field. This can create a stronger involvement in missionary
efforts and increased financial commitment to missions in general.

The selection of the field will also take into consideration where former teams have
visited. There are two sides to this concept. First, it may be helpful to return to a field and host
ministry if follow-up work is warranted and welcomed. This can endear a particular ministry to
the church body. This may include participants and involved church members giving specific
financial contributions following STM projects. While this is an obvious benefit to host
missionaries and a perceived boost to the church’s missions giving, there is also the tendency for
individuals to develop a “pet project” that may siphon giving away from the overall missions
program.
Because the New Testament Baptist Church currently supports more than 80 foreign missionaries and ministries, it is crucial that the congregation should regularly hear reports from and reach out to all of them in some fashion. This will serve to keep them informed and connected to a broad section of partnering and supported missionaries.

In previous years, this church has led STM projects to several countries for a variety of primary purposes. In Athens, Greece the missionary’s primary outreach to the masses was tract distribution in public places. The STM team assisted by blanketing areas where heavy foot-traffic brought them in contact with multitudes of people. The missionaries in Valle de Paz, Belize wanted to host a Vacation Bible School as an outreach to their community, but were limited in both resources and workers. The STM team imported all of the supplies and a full team of volunteers to conduct the program under the missionary’s direction. In Mexico City a team did outdoor evangelism, as well as light construction and maintenance projects because those were the areas in which the missionary requested help.

Personal experience has reinforced the concept that determining a valid purpose prior to training and travel is crucial. On a few occasions, STM teams and projects were assembled around willing hosts and participants without specifying particular goals. Participants were exposed to ministries, experienced foreign cultures, and enjoyed travel abroad. Missionaries were able to share their ministries with those who had been supporting them for many years with both prayer and finances. Participants were given small ministry tasks to fill a number of hours. However, team members did not sense that they had accomplished meaningful ministry nor did there seem to be tangible results or outcomes. These trips were less than productive for the host
ministry and less than fulfilling for participants. The author is convinced that had particular purposes and objectives been determined using effectual communication, the spiritual benefits for hosts, leaders, and participants would have been maximized.

Although there may be one primary leader responsible for the development of the team, the determination of the team’s purpose should involve a handful of key leaders. First, the pastor must establish how the project fits into the overall ministry of the church, especially regarding its missionary endeavors. He may be the primary leader, communicating with the host in preparation and traveling with the time for ministry. Other individuals will likely be involved in coordinating and leading the team throughout its term, especially the youth pastor. Alternately, the youth pastor may become the individual leading on-field projects. He may be the one recruiting participants and leading hands-on training.

Volunteer leaders will be recruited and should become a part of the planning process as early as possible so that they sense a commitment and responsibility for the project’s successful operation. They may also add important insight into determining the project’s purpose as they represent the church membership at large.

Because of this author’s experiences and perspectives, he will give greater weight to the needs and desires of the host missionaries. Again, these are individuals and families that are generally a part of the home church’s missionary outreach. Many times, they have shared meals and fellowship during furlough visits, or in some cases, on-field visits. In some cases, he has a personal friendship that goes even beyond the ministry partnership. Further, it is the author’s
opinion that the on-field need should be the primary guiding factor for formulating a team and project.

**Conclusion**

For the program conducted at the New Testament Baptist Church, leaders will develop primary purposes for teams based on the expressed needs of the hosting missionary. From this foundation they will seek to assemble a team that will be capable of fulfilling this need with adequate communication and pre-field training. Understanding that other factors will be involved in a secondary role, there are several compelling reasons why this will be the emphasis. First, this will direct the primary focus of everyone involved toward the ongoing work of long-term missionaries and their ministries. This will tend to ensure the church’s burden for their success in fulfilling all of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Second, an outward focus will tend to promote a more selfless and sacrificial attitude among participants. This will help to motivate them in their preparation and on-field service.

Finally, a purpose built upon the missionary’s needs will provide a sense of accomplishment for the participants. Leaders will be able to produce more accurate evaluations, and participants will return with a sense of the benefit of their travel and service.
CHAPTER 3: PRE-FIELD PREPARATION

Communicating Purpose

The selection of a meaningful purpose is the first step toward implementation in the overall process of conducting a STM project. Leaders must next seek to convey that purpose consistently to all who will be involved. Part of this will be simply informing potential participants through announcements and recruitment. Beyond publishing purpose in advertising, application forms, and other documents, leaders must encourage participants to adopt the purpose of the project as their own. This is a vital component for cooperation and team success.

Primary: Participants

Some have chosen to include the purpose in the team or project name as it is applicable. For instance, “Peru VBS Team,” “Managua Orphanage Feeding Outreach,” or “Iglesia de la Gracia Auditorium Renovation” give both location and primary work objectives. While this may seem to most fully engrain the purpose into the project, there are some cautions that leaders should address. First, a specific team or project name may then exclude secondary objectives that the team is expected to accomplish. Second, it might remove a level of flexibility needed in case the circumstances change. For instance, the missionary may discover a more pressing need between the original forming of the team and their arrival. This might arouse confusion or discontent among both participants and supporters. While some broad terms such as “orphanage”
or “work project” give a sense of location and ministry purpose, they also allow for some alteration as circumstances change.

An alternative is to develop a key phrase that expresses the mission of the project in terms of its purpose or objective. The following examples convey the project’s general purpose within a specific context:

“Reaching the children of Ciudad Quetzal with the Gospel”
“Equipping leaders in Iglesia Bautista de Fe to reach their city for Christ”
“Remodel the Children’s building for future ministry at Grace Church”
“Exposing our youth to evangelistic opportunities in Nepal”

These examples provide the setting and objective while allowing for a variety of on-field activities to take place.

Secondary: Sending Church

Further, the project’s purpose must be conveyed beyond the potential participants to church members, family, and friends who will likely be supporters through prayer and finances. This will provide a sense of unity among all involved throughout the process. Supporters will be equipped with information to pray before and during the project. Additionally, many individuals will feel compelled to give financially to meet specific objectives for which they already feel a burden, such as orphanages, schools, or children’s ministries. Upon completion of the project, supporters will know how to ask about the success of the trip, and participants will have a natural foundation from which to answer.
After the initial introduction of purpose, leaders should repeat the purpose and objectives often to ensure that they have been communicated well and have been embraced. During training, leaders will explain how each component relates to the overall purpose. For instance, studying the culture of the intended field of ministry does more than help participants be more comfortable during their trip. It also helps to prepare them to accomplish their objectives efficiently. Similarly, learning key phrases in a foreign language does more than just equip participants to find their way around. It will also enable them to present songs, Scripture, and perhaps a spiritual testimony fulfilling a ministry component of the team’s purpose. Further, it will allow individuals to interact on a personal level to both learn about a foreign culture and leave behind a lasting positive impression.

Tertiary: Missionary Host

Finally, because the missionary host was directly involved in the selection of a purpose, he should naturally understand its nature already. However, throughout each phase of the project, communication between team leaders and host should remain centered on the purpose. It will be a guiding factor for other decisions that will be made during the planning stages. Team leaders should remain alert during the preparation stage for the need to alter or hone their objectives. This should be done with extreme sensitivity to the needs and desires of the host missionary and ministry.
Partnership Communication

It is crucial that every individual involved in STM remembers that ministry is relational. The big picture of being involved in a STM project is more than simply completing an on-field project. It is developing long-term partnerships. Greene, therefore, posits that the goal of good communication is the development of ministry relationships.\(^{63}\) He advises leaders to “cultivate long term relationships with the missionaries with whom you’ll be working; don’t allow the experience to be a one-time-only event.”\(^{64}\)

This concept of partnership is an attractive and effective foundation for any spiritual endeavor. It is helpful if leaders and coordinators will consider STM a partnership of all involved. This perspective tends to lessen individual personal motives and goals. Instead, it helps to develop group motives and goals centered on the team’s stated purpose.

This type of partnership models the doctrine of the church body being many members operating as a cohesive unit (1 Cor 12:12, 27). It stresses the importance of oneness and builds a feeling of team unity. Kirby posits that partnership “releases synergy” and increases efficiency as partners get more done (Eccl 4:9, 12). He states “two partnered can accomplish more than twice as much as two independent.”\(^{65}\) Partnership also offers a sense of ownership among participants. They may more easily see the big picture of their efforts and their personal responsibility for the

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\(^{64}\) Ibid., 164.

\(^{65}\) Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 49.
Great Commission around the world. This may also lead participations to a long-term connection to the missionary field.

Partnership in STM ministry should occur on several levels. First, it is the common effort of the sending agency (in this case, the local church) and the host missionary and ministry. Second, establishing a connection between leaders and team participants provides an excellent platform for successful ministry. Traveling, living, and working together allows many opportunities to learn more about each other and can produce and strengthen a long-term relationship. Finally, no STM project can be considered truly successful without the active participation of prayer and financial supporters at home who partner with team members.

This concept of partnership continues even after the on-field portion of a project concludes. It is evidenced in follow-up reports after the team has returned home. The host is able to provide updates about residual blessings that continue to arise months after the project’s completion. Sharing the joys and struggles of long-term missionaries is a vital component of a stateside church’s responsibility.

Similarly, supporters can be challenged and encouraged to remain involved with the host ministry and team members as they receive reports months after the team has returned. Church leaders may consider post-project contacts with participants at intervals of one month, three months, six months, and one year. These updates can also be considered a long-term component of participants’ debriefing. This is also a factor in considering future teams returning to serve in
the same foreign ministry. The connection loses its temporary feel with participants and is transformed into genuine ministry partnership.\textsuperscript{66}

**Recruiting Team Members**

One of the most critical elements of any STM project is the selection of its members. Moving from the prospect of a team to viable candidates to equipped and funded participants is a crucial process which will determine the level of success for a project. The aspect of a team’s purpose once again is a vital part of this process.

Searching for those who possess specific skills and abilities may be important for accomplishing tasks or fulfilling team purposes.\textsuperscript{67} However, leaders must be open to accepting those who are genuinely interested and will follow the prescribed procedure to be included. Tim Dearborn reminds his readers, “We’ve been set apart for a special purpose: to embody the fruitfulness of the kingdom of God in all we do. This is not just the calling of an extraordinary few among the faithful. Sainthood is for the commonplace Christian.”\textsuperscript{68}

First, this broader inclusion may uncover talents in individuals previously hidden. Second, it exposes hearts who are eager to serve. Third, it can stretch certain participants during training and provide opportunities for personal spiritual growth. This can also equip underutilized church members for greater future service and ministry. Conversely, it provides

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 50.

\textsuperscript{67} Michael J. Anthony, ed., *The Short-Term Missions Boom*, 63-67.

\textsuperscript{68} Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty*, 41.
opportunities to stretch and humble the experienced participant. This can accomplish the
objective of the oft-used concept of leading people “out of their comfort zone.”

Leaders must decide whether to present an open application where they will accept
everyone or whether they will make some attempt to screen applicants. Kirby warns that “a
serious health, emotional, or relational problem can utterly consume the energy of the group that
needs to be focused on accomplishing the particular ministry project.”69 Prior knowledge of
church members, a wisely developed application form, and personal interviews may alert leaders
to “disruptive personalities – people who are going to create stress, disunity, and confusion
during the project.”70

Kirby offers the following list of ten issues that can be used to screen potential participants:

1. Sense of call. Why do they believe God wants them to do this?

2. Gifts and abilities that can contribute to the team and to the project.

3. Attitudes. Are they willing to listen, to serve, and to complete any trip preparation requirements placed upon them? Do they exhibit attitudes of servanthood, flexibility, selflessness, cooperativeness, sensitivity, and respect for authority? Do they have a heart to work, or are they just looking for a free paid vacation?

4. Relationships. How well do they get along with others? Disruptive people?

5. Health. Are they physically healthy? What is their emotional health?

6. Spiritual condition. I purposefully used this word instead of spiritual

69 Scott Kirby, Equipped for Adventure, 77.

70 Ibid.
maturity. A short-term project is wonderful for a young Christian. It is important, however, that all participants be genuine Christians and have a true heart to walk in holiness and obedience to Christ.

7. Moral issues. Applicants need to be screened concerning moral issues that could compromise the ministry and testimony of the whole team. These issues might include substance abuse, alcohol, sexual immorality, etc. Some teams require participants to sign a team covenant.

8. Age issues. How old must a team member be in order to go? Do you have an upper age limit? Older people need to be screened, especially in terms of health and flexibility.

9. Team size restraints. How many people can go?

10. Church membership. Will you allow people from other churches to be a part of your team?71

Promotion

The selection of team members should begin with prayer by church and team leaders and then proceed to the promotion of the project. One of the early elements of advertising within the church will be member recruitment. Leaders must convey all the necessary information needed for potential participants to make an informed decision. Ideally, these are addressed at the earliest opportunity, including the advertisement and recruitment phase.

The following outline has been adapted from Scott Kirby’s suggestion of key steps for leaders to consider and adopt:

71 Scott Kirby, Equipped for Adventure, 78-79.
1. Identify key people that you want to participate, rather than simply waiting for
volunteers. Leadership should target individuals, but remain open to others and build from this
initial group. There is an element of credibility and persuasion in being asked personally.

2. Develop and distribute a quality brochure or flyer with important details. Include
information about the appropriate way for an individual to respond and express interest. Often
this brochure will include a portion to be completed and returned. Alternatively, it may
accompany a separate application form.

Another helpful option is for the brochure to direct interested individuals to an online site
where they can complete a registration form and apply to participate. In fact, the church’s online
presence is an excellent way to promote the project, as it allows the immediate distribution of
materials to everyone involved. When done correctly, the website adds an attractive and
professional appearance that builds credibility for the project. Further, it provides for the secure
storage of information and ongoing retrieval when needed. Finally, the website is a central
location for supporters and other interested individuals to stay informed as the project progresses.

3. Promote the project in church publications and during services using visual elements
and spoken announcements. Leaders should solicit church staff or qualified volunteers to
produce a promotional video to be shown in services and posted online. Small groups or Sunday
school classes are excellent settings in which to target individual age groups. An attractive

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72 Sample provided in Appendix C: “Promotional Flyer.”
display table containing vital information placed in a central location is effective for general promotion and team member recruitment.

4. Leaders may consider hosting a live call (Skype or other online streaming platform) with the host missionary in which he offers a personal invitation to the members of the sending church. This builds an intimate connection to the project and a general excitement within the entire church. It enables people to identify with the needs on the field and those that will work to meet them.

5. The pastor or other staff members may consider going as a part of the team, even if not serving as the primary team leader. This can be extremely helpful to demonstrate the importance of the project and the church’s commitment to it.73

**Overcoming Hindrances**

Church leaders should recognize that it is not always a simple task to assemble a qualified STM team. It is more than simply announcing a project and selecting the most qualified respondents from a large group of applicants. For every teen who eagerly awaits the announcement of the next opportunity to travel abroad, there may be several other qualified candidates who are content to watch the church’s missionary outreach from a distance. Some will need to be convinced of the need for their involvement.

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Churches are full of busy members and families. Many feel that they have so many responsibilities that adding a STM project is not an option. Without condemnation or undue pressure, leaders should seek to challenge individuals about their involvement while allowing for the Lord’s personal work in their lives. Tim Dearborn offers the following questions to compel believers to address their personal responsibility to missions:

- Are we doing enough?
- Are we sacrificing enough?
- Are we committed enough?
- Are we focused enough?
- Are we fruitful enough?\(^{74}\)

Similarly, he posits that mission involvement should be measured by its quality in the following aspects:

- Relational (Involve people in loving the Lord and loving others)
- Reciprocal (partnerships with other believers throughout the world)
- Royal (engaged in the work of God’s kingdom)
- Radical (involving every area of our lives)
- Realistic (reasonable, measurable, achievable objectives)
- Resourceful (accessing both supernatural and material resources).\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty*, 64.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 65-83
Kirby also recognizes concerns that may develop into hindrances to participation. He advises that leaders must competently answer four primary questions and concerns of potential team members.

1. How am I needed? Answering this question involves explaining the determined purpose of the project and the individual participant’s role in fulfilling it.

2. How can I pay for it? Team leaders should have developed a well-researched form letter that participants can personalize and send to family and friends. This requires accurate information regarding the tax-deductible status of contributions.

3. Is it safe? In a world which seems to grow increasingly dangerous this is a serious consideration which must be addressed. Leaders should have researched the specific challenges of the field in which they will be working. Potential participants will be more assured if they hear that leaders have already thought of and addressed their concerns. However, leaders should also be honest and transparent about potential hazards without being overly dramatic.

4. How can I find time to do this? Many individuals or families will consider their already loaded schedule and question whether they can add another event to it. Leaders can address this by reminding them that most people “find time” to do the things that they consider important or that they really want to do. They should also assure them that God will provide time as He does other tangible resources in our lives. Additionally, they should consider participation
a spiritual and eternal investment. He further proposes that participants may consider “tithing” their time as they do their money for the work of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{76}

Developing and maintaining minimum qualifications for potential participants allows the leaders to make an objective selection.\textsuperscript{77} Generally, the cost and time factors limit the number of individuals who complete and submit an application. The size of the team can be adjusted based on qualified applicants and logistical matters of travel and accommodations. Deadlines also assist in limiting prospective participants as some will procrastinate while considering their potential involvement.

Past experience and present size of this author’s church suggest a limited number of applicants that will be adequately handled with only minimal qualifications such as: church membership, faithful ministry involvement, commitment to promptly completing and mailing support letters, participation in all pre-field training, agreement to team conduct guidelines.

**Training**

The value of preparation and team training cannot be overstated. Anthony stresses the importance of leaders in creating a vision for and commitment to the project and preparing team members. He posits, “Anyone can assemble a group of people together, but it takes a leader to take them and mold them into a team.”\textsuperscript{78} Many who have comprehensively studied the

\textsuperscript{76} Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 75-76.

\textsuperscript{77} Michael J. Anthony, ed., *The Short-Term Missions Boom*, 65.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 132.
contemporary movement have concluded that STM can become “counterproductive or harmful if done ‘without knowledge.”’

Although Jesus at times seemed to send out his disciples with minimal provision (no money or extra clothing in Luke 9:1-6), he actually spent three years mentoring, training, and equipping them by instruction and example. Further, He cautioned potential disciples about the inherent cost of following him. He likened it to one considering a large building project or a king heading into battle. Both would be wise to consider what it will require of them to be successful. Leaders and participants should consider any training as an investment in the project’s success, their personal growth, and future opportunities (Luke 14:25-33).

There are a multitude of benefits for participants to be properly prepared for a trip in advance. Martha VanCise posits that preparation is the “key to a good experience for the volunteer and productive ministry on the field.” Further, she provides a compelling list of advantages for those projects that prepare participants sufficiently in advance. She asserts that adequate preparation:

- Alleviates many fears and apprehensions.
- Eliminates a lot of unnecessary “suffering for the Lord.”

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• Enables the team member to concentrate on the new culture and ministry instead of concentrating on survival.

• Unifies a team and increases efficiency.

• Enables team members to gather concrete information to communicate to the home church.

• Lightens missionary and national leader workloads.

• Helps team members avoid many problems and misunderstandings.

• Helps team members forge strong links between the home church and missionary and national leaders.\textsuperscript{81}

Training sessions should be a mandatory component of participation on the STM team. Kirby states unequivocally that those prospective participants who are unwilling to participate in training should not be allowed to go.\textsuperscript{82} While minimal absences may be allowed, members should commit to faithful attendance and participation.

In H. Leon Greene’s practical guide, he offers a “preparation timeline” as a guideline with which leaders can develop their own schedule prior to a trip.\textsuperscript{83} The following timeline has been adapted from this and serves as an ideal situation utilizing the maximum amount of preparation time prior to a team’s departure date:

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 23-24.

\textsuperscript{82} Scott Kirby, \textit{Equipped for Adventure}, 96.

\textsuperscript{83} H. Leon Greene, \textit{A Guide to Short Term Missions}, 161-163.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-15 months</td>
<td>General considerations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praying for God’s leading</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>Leaders to visit the potential ministry locations</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-14 months</td>
<td>Select ministry location and purpose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preliminary announcements in the church</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Distribute applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Finalize the roster</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plan for service projects &amp; evangelism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin training sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Distribute support letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Apply for travel documents as needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Order airline tickets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collect materials for project</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Prepare and rehearse testimonies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refine other skills needed for project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Weekend retreat with team</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 months</td>
<td>Pack major items</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Pack personal supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Obtain any missing team or personal supplies</td>
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It is generally easy to convince leaders of the importance of preparing early and training participants well. Most understand that it is a key element needed to avoid difficulties and averting conflict. Research conducted for this project reveals that more than one-third (36%) of the respondents began preparation ten to twelve months before departure. Additionally, another 29% began that process 13-24 months ahead. On the other end of the spectrum, a mere 6% had
less than 4 months to prepare for their project.\textsuperscript{84} It is likely that these few were participants who became involved in the final stages, while their leaders were actively coordinating the project and assembling a team.

The timing of certain projects will not allow an ideal amount of training. At times, missionaries encounter circumstances on short notice and invite church leaders to visit with a team. For example, relief efforts after natural disasters require relatively immediate responses. Similarly, a loss or lack of workers for a campaign or Vacation Bible School may compel the missionary to reach out with an urgent request. While an inexperienced leader may pass on the opportunity in favor of one farther in the future, the more experienced may consider it with a less than ideal amount of time to prepare. Although each opportunity is unique, leaders can become familiar with the general process of developing a project, identifying a purpose and equipping a team after repeated involvement. This may encourage experienced leaders to tackle an opportunity that arises at the last minute.

Research for this project provided further insight into the degree to which participants were trained. Of grave concern were the 7\% who reported that participants on their last STM trip received no training before leaving for the field.\textsuperscript{85} Even if all leaders and participants were adults with previous experience, there is still a need to learn the particulars of the field, the needs of the host and intended recipients, and the details of the project. Additionally, training sessions allow

\textsuperscript{84} See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”

\textsuperscript{85} See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”
participants and leaders to bond as a team and coordinate their efforts, rather than functioning as individuals.

Similarly, the largest response group (29%) reported that participants received less than five hours of training. This appears to be only a token amount of time. It would be difficult to convey sufficient information or develop cohesion as a team with such limited training and interaction. Even if this training was highly focused and efficient, it still is insufficient to equip a team for meaningful ministry.

A similar number of respondents (28%) stated that between 5 – 10 hours of training were conducted in advance of their trip. This would allow a few meetings over the course of a few months in which to impart information, as well as to ascertain and hone abilities. Another 13% reported between 11 – 15 hours, and 12% participated in 16-20 hours. These teams would have been able to meet together several times, sharing information and practicing their needed skills. This is perhaps the best formula, allowing for multiple meetings of 1 – 2 hours each. One would believe that the 9% of respondents who spent more than 20 hours of training were well-equipped to accomplish their objective fully and efficiently. 86

This element should be of particular concern to prospective leaders within the local church. The average STM team may spend between 7 – 14 days on the field. Leaders should keep several things in mind when scheduling how much time the team will spend together in training. Some, if not many, participants will have limited or no travel experience. There are

86 See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”
great demands placed on participants to adapt to a foreign culture. Accomplishing a team’s significant purpose carries great spiritual importance both in the present and into the future. Because of these and other factors, leaders should seriously evaluate the need for more lengthy and extensive training. Certainly, the demands on participants’ time are substantial. However, expecting participation in significant training also conveys a sense of seriousness and importance in the minds of all involved. The team is thereby more credible, in addition to being efficient in their efforts on the field.

More than just the group dynamic, individual participants must personally prepare themselves for their experiences. Team leaders have a responsibility to inform potential participants of what will be expected of them. This aspect of communication cannot be sacrificed without detrimental consequences. Beyond culture shock, participants should expect a number of situations that will challenge them. VanCise repeatedly stresses the key personal attitudes that individuals must possess and develop: “flexibility, openness, and servanthood.” While some challenges may never be exposed prior to arrival on the field, participants should be alert and responsive to areas of change and growth throughout the training process.

Greene encourages leaders to take a short trip to the field to see first-hand the conditions, needs, and opportunities. However, many times cost or time constraints restrict this from being a viable option. As an alternative, he exhorts leaders to develop “extremely good communication with the missionary at the destination or to meet with someone who has been there recently and

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87 Martha VanCise, Successful Mission Teams, 18, 27, 140.
can give you the lay of the land.”

Again, technology tends to “shrink the world” somewhat through communication. Programs and apps such as Facetime, Google Hangouts, and Skype allow not only one-on-one conversations, but also interaction with the whole team or an entire congregation.

Training Components

Again, the purpose of the project is at the core of training. Kirby posits, “Ministry preparation must begin by first knowing clearly what sort of ministry you are expected to do on your short-term project.” Before the team members are finalized, leaders should develop a schedule of training sessions to equip them for service. Beyond simply culture shock, there are a variety of practical and spiritual elements that should be addressed. Scott Kirby outlines the following six areas that must be addressed: ministry, spiritual, support team, administrative, cultural, and team-building. For the sake of this project, these will be further reduced to the aspects of team ministry, spiritual preparation, and administrative needs.

Michael Anthony suggests a minimum of six sessions with each having a particular theme and purpose. Using these as an outline, this project will conduct at least the following sessions:

1. Introduction.

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89 Scott H. Kirby, *The Short-Term Missions Adventure*, 53.

One of the most important concepts to introduce is the specific ministry purpose. Again, this will be a guiding factor for each subsequent training session. Participants should be reminded of the importance of cooperation as a team and remaining flexible throughout the project. One of the early goals of team-building is for all leaders and participants to get to know each other and work together. If the group is generally unfamiliar with one another, leaders may consider ice-breaker activities.

Another goal of this first meeting is to introduce some logistical requirements that may take more time to complete. Participants should begin the application process for a passport, and visas or other travel documents as necessary, as early as possible to avoid delays. Leaders should also explain any mandatory or recommended vaccinations depending on the field.

Finally, this initial meeting is an excellent opportunity to explain fundraising and distribute letters requesting prayer and financial support.

2. Bonding Exercises

To develop a cohesive team and a cooperative spirit, Anthony recommends devoting a second training session primarily to bonding exercises.\(^91\) This session may begin with a few brief exercises that encourage individuals to work together. These may begin with light-hearted games but should progress to more meaningful endeavors.

One possible component of this meeting will be to divide the teams into pairs for a period of time during which they compose a list of questions and ideas. First, they will determine what

\(^{91}\) Ibid.
questions about the field, host missionary and ministry, and team project they might have personally. After a period of time, the group should reassemble and discuss these questions. In order to discourage cliques, leaders should reassign individuals to different small groups for the second half of this project. During this phase, groups should work together to research and answer the questions determined earlier.

Leaders should take time during this meeting to update participants on travel plans that have progressed and check on the status of individual travel documents. They should also provide current information to participants regarding any funds received from their support request letters.

3. Culture

Leaders should be prepared to present an overview of the missionary, ministry, and general culture of the field on which the team will serve. Internet sources provide a wealth of visual images and videos to make this presentation interesting and informative. The group should discuss how their particular purpose may be challenged by the culture or benefit from it. If a foreign language is involved, this meeting is an excellent time to introduce basic phrases and provide practice opportunities in small groups. Other simulation games can help participants see the impact that culture and environment will have on their ministry efforts.

At the close of this meeting, leaders should assign individual participants with research assignments that will be presented at future training sessions.

4-6. Ministry Preparation
These sessions will focus on preparing for the team’s primary ministry purpose. If the team will be conducting a Vacation Bible School, all components should be gathered and distributed to the individuals responsible for them. Lessons will be prepared and practiced in front of the group. Participants will assemble materials for crafts and games that will be used.

Similarly, if the primary purpose is music ministry, programs will be arranged and songs will be selected and rehearsed. The same is true for drama ministries, evangelistic campaigns, educational programs, or construction projects. This type and degree of preparation brings the project’s purpose into the practical realm so that team members see the value of preparation for the purpose of accomplishing their objectives. Leaders should design each session to hone the skills of individuals and bond them together as a team.

Generally, participants should learn evangelism tools and methods and rehearse them with each other. Each team member should prepare a brief (2-3 minutes) testimony and have the opportunity to practice it in front of a friendly audience. This may be the first time some have ever shared their testimony, or even spoken in front of a group for this purpose. Even if there is no designated occasion inherent in the team’s purpose, opportunities may arise unexpectedly. Further, this is a learning and growing experience for team members. Language practice will continue through these sessions as applicable.\textsuperscript{92}

Throughout this preparation stage, team members should be reminded of the value of remaining responsive and adapting to change. Kirby reiterates the balance of preparation and

\textsuperscript{92} Michael J. Anthony, ed., \textit{The Short-Term Missions Boom}, 135-136.
flexibility, “It is imperative that the team leader get as detailed a picture as possible. Having said this, you can be sure that things will not be exactly as you expect. You will end up doing things you didn’t come prepared to do and not doing everything you thought you would do.”

Spiritual Training

While leaders may be tempted to jump into training for practical and logistical elements, they should build from a platform of spiritual matters. Beyond specific training for the project, these sessions are opportunities for discipleship, ministry, and accountability that will prove valuable for life. Leaders should encourage participants to consider their opportunities to minister to others throughout their involvement.

Richter encourages leaders and participants to find occasions for spiritual reflection while accomplishing practical checkpoints along the way. For instance, if vaccinations are required, a participant may contemplate the risk of physical illness or harm that he is accepting to serve on a foreign field. He may also consider the risks that every career missionary accepts when they surrender to go and serve. Further, the participant can better understand how his personal health may affect the team’s effectiveness and success, as well as its effect on other team members. Similarly, as he is raising funds, he can recognize the ongoing need of career missionaries and the biblical admonition to count the cost before entering ministry. This is also an excellent time

93 Scott H. Kirby, The Short-Term Missions Adventure, 53.

to consider material priorities, examine spending and giving habits, and evaluate necessary changes.

Leaders should develop a set of devotional materials for use during advance training and on-field ministry. They should consider directing these personal devotions for participants toward those concepts and principles that will open their eyes to the need and shape the characteristics, traits, and habits that will benefit the team. These are valuable not only in encouraging personal growth among participants, but also for uniting team members around their common spiritual endeavors. These may be studied individually and reviewed corporately.

Again, prayer is a vital component for any spiritual effort and should hold a primary place in the team’s preparation. Participants should be encouraged to recognize and be sensitive to spiritual battles that are ongoing (2 Cor 10:4). Praying for one another often makes team members more discerning, aware of needs, and concerned for one another. Worship and prayer sessions during training are an excellent tool for team bonding.95

Team members will communicate their personal and team needs with those who have committed to provide prayer support. This will enable supporters to pray intelligently and feel connected to the project and team. Leaders should develop a template96 that members can adapt to deliver online updates and prayer letters and maintain excellent communication before traveling.97

95 Mathew Backholer, *How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission*, 121.
96 See Appendix I: “Supporter Communication Samples.”
97 Scott H. Kirby, *The Short-Term Missions Adventure*, 56.
Cultural Training

Training in cultural matters seeks to eliminate or mitigate mistakes that could lead to offenses toward others on the foreign field. Team members should know the standards and practices unique to the area in which they will travel and minister. General research at online travel sites or forums (TripAdvisor, Fodor’s, Lonely Planet) can yield a wealth of information based on the experiences of others. *The World Factbook* produced by the CIA provides up-to-date statistics and information about geography, transportation, economy and society.

However, one key is to not simply rely on these books or online resources. The primary danger is that they may be dated, derived from the author’s personal opinions, or based on regional differences that a team may not encounter. For these reasons, it is best to begin with conversations with local missionary host. The missionary will also be able to add religious and spiritual considerations that travel advisors will overlook or not even understand.

Kirby advises that teams focus their attention on “history (how it impacts their lives), values, daily living, behavior, and world view.”98 One method that can be extremely effective is to assign various components of the foreign culture to individual team members. They will be responsible for researching and reporting their findings to the rest of the team. This allows for a more in-depth study and understanding by the entire team. This task also provides an opportunity for personal responsibility that trains them for future assignments as a part of the team.

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98 Ibid., 56.
Culture shock is real. While it may be limited depending on participants’ past experience and how immersed the team will be in the foreign location (accommodations, meals, etc.), teams must still acknowledge and prepare for it. Some teams purposefully try to minimize unfamiliar experiences in order to maximize ministry effectiveness, while others want to absorb as much as possible so that participants maximize their personal experiences. In some places, it is possible to live as a North American forfeiting few conveniences. Contemporary society often seeks to “insulate” individuals from difficulty and discomfort. However, genuine missionary efforts often expose participants to the very things we seek to avoid: inconvenience, risk, struggle, exertion, and poverty.\textsuperscript{99} Prospective participants must not only be made aware of this reality, but also be prepared and equipped to face it.

\textbf{Cultural Sensitivity}

Team members should be aware of basic cultural dos and don’ts. While some aspects can be learned through online research, the host missionary can provide detailed information regarding the specific ministry context. This will build on general information available in travel books and websites.

Many of these considerations will be in regard to interaction with other individuals and groups on the field. Mathew Backholer identifies several of these important issues including personal mannerisms or gestures and the appearance of prejudice or racism. He cautions

\textsuperscript{99} Tim Dearborn, \textit{Beyond Duty}, 55.
participants to be on guard for a sense of superiority. Many times, participants who encounter a different way of doing something on a foreign field adopt a “right versus wrong” perspective. The familiar way is naturally right to them, so anything different is often considered incorrect. Team members should be educated about what they will encounter and become prepared to see these differences as merely unfamiliar, instead of improper.¹⁰⁰

Of special concern, interaction with the opposite sex (including other team members and those on the field) can carry great consequence. Again, Mathew Backholer cautions about displays of affection. Some that may be an everyday occurrence at home, such as hugs or holding hands, may carry an entirely different or inappropriate meaning abroad.¹⁰¹ Conversely, in some cultures individuals of both sexes customarily greet one another with a kiss. Leaders should explain the expectations regarding the following issues. What type of physical contact is expected or appropriate? What behavior is “off limits” that may be acceptable at home?

Teens and single adult team members should be especially careful to avoid the appearance of romantic connections with individuals on the field. An often-overlooked practice related to this issue is the appropriate exchange of contact information for personal connection or correspondence after the completion of the project. If allowed or encouraged, participants should take special care to convey that this is strictly platonic and that no other impressions are given.

¹⁰⁰ Mathew Backholer, How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission, 188-192.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 189.
Ultimately, the reputation and ongoing ministry of the host missionary is of primary importance. The testimony of Christians of all nationalities must be protected for the sake of Christ.

**Language Training**

Additional training for team members should aim to provide a baseline for foreign language as needed. Key phrases should include common greetings, words of thanks, compliments for food, and how to find a toilet or telephone. If participants learn common spiritual blessings, such as “God bless you”, every brief conversation can be viewed as an opportunity to introduce a witness for Christ. There is special value in having a native speaker to accompany the group or at least the team leaders.\(^\text{102}\) Typically, this is the host missionary. However, this often requires a great deal of their time as the team may be limited without his presence. Traveling with a team member from the church who can converse in the target language is an excellent addition.

**Logistics**

For evangelistic outreach a team can take and distribute gospel tracts in the target language at the minimum. However, even while recognizing language barriers, team members should receive training in personal evangelism.\(^\text{103}\) This should include both one-on-one and speaking to small groups. Even if participants find minimal opportunity while on the trip, there is

\(^{102}\) Scott H. Kirby, *The Short-Term Missions Adventure*, 57.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 54.
lifelong value in knowing how to lead someone to salvation in Christ.

As a part of this preparation, team members should learn how to develop and present their personal testimony. Several steps should be introduced to make team members as comfortable as possible. First, assign each individual to write out their testimony including basic information such as when they were saved, the general circumstances surrounding that time, who was involved, and what God did for them. Leaders may review these with participants to encourage them and offer support and advice. There is a universal application of great value found in rehearsing what God offers sinners and how they respond to Him for salvation. When a member feels comfortable, they should practice their presentation in front of the rest of the team. This environment of support during a training session is extremely helpful for those who have not shared their testimony publicly. Further practical experience may be gained by sharing team members’ testimonies before the entire church when the team presents their objectives and appeal for support in services before the trip.

**Administration**

Although the emphasis of STM projects is largely spiritual, there are always significant logistical matters that must be addressed for every team. This requires leaders to adequately prepare to meet these practical needs before departure and administer them during the on-field portion of ministry. Throughout the pre-field training period, leaders will be responsible for developing and gathering appropriate resources. This will include team forms, such as member
applications, participation covenant, and packing lists, as well as official travel documents. During training sessions leaders should regularly check the status of team members’ paperwork and maintain a file with photocopies of passport information pages, birth certificates, and other necessary documents.

Another logistical requirement will be to gather all supplies necessary to successfully fulfill the team’s purpose. When acquiring project resources, teams should prepare materials to do more ministry than expected. It is far better to be prepared and leave unused materials with the host ministry than to run short of supplies while on the trip. Leaders may assign individual team members or small groups to gather items for VBS crafts, tools and hardware for work projects, or literature for evangelism.

Just as the team reports as a whole, (which may be the leaders’ responsibility), individuals can also easily and effectively communicate with family and supporters. This may be simply through personal email or a free service that formats attractive, professional correspondence and maintains a mailing list of recipients. Able, responsible, and experienced team members may be selected to help church and team leaders with these administrative responsibilities.

Concerning logistical matters, there will likely be shared responsibilities between the

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104 See Appendix F: “Team Member Covenant.”

105 See Appendix D: “Parental Consent Form” for examples of these documents.

106 Scott H. Kirby, The Short-Term Missions Adventure, 53-54.

107 Ibid., 55-56.
team leaders and the host missionary.\textsuperscript{108} There may be certain details that the host missionary may be able to tackle best because of his location, experience, or status as a resident. In fact, some matters may only be addressed by the missionary who is present on the field. However, team leaders should be careful not to unnecessarily burden the host. Most missionaries recognize a certain commitment of their time and resources when they agree to host a team. However, too many teams have taken for granted the time, energy, and attention of their hosts.

In a related matter, teams should be cautious about placing logistical responsibilities on only one or two leaders to the extent that they are not able to minister significantly in other ways. Backholer gives the example of those who stay at a base camp “cooking, doing the laundry, chauffeuring, buying supplies, confirming the meetings and performing many other duties.”\textsuperscript{109} Depending on the size of the team and the specifics of the projects, these types of responsibilities frequently fall to one individual or a couple. This often requires them to miss out on other avenues of public ministry. When this is necessary, it is crucial that leaders select volunteers who possess a proper mindset and heart to serve in this capacity. They should not be considered inferior, or even auxiliary, team members and should receive equal recognition for the team’s accomplishments.\textsuperscript{110} Rather, everyone involved should recognize their vital importance for meeting team objectives and fulfilling the project’s purpose.

In fact, there is biblical precedent for this type of service and recognition within a group.

\textsuperscript{108} Mathew Backholer, \textit{How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission}, 63.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 64.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
In 1 Samuel 30:9-25, King David acknowledged the valuable service offered to Israel by the 200 men who “stayed by the stuff” while the rest of the soldiers went out into battle.\textsuperscript{111} He declared that they would equally share in the spoils because they had served an important purpose and played a crucial role in securing the victory.

**Fund Raising**

Kirby suggests that there are at least four primary means of financing a STM project. First, participants may be expected or allowed to provide their personal funds to provide the entire amount required. Some potential participants may prefer this if they are concerned about asking others for financial help or support. However, if this is the only option provided by the church leaders then only the financially well off could go.\textsuperscript{112}

Second, some churches provide either full or partial funding from the church. When church leaders consider STM an integral part of their overall missionary effort or program, they will often budget a specific amount to be used for annual STM projects. This may take the form of a set amount per participant or a percentage of the total amount needed.\textsuperscript{113}

Related to this concept, some churches will provide need-based scholarships for potential participants. One of the best ways to implement this is in conjunction with team fundraising efforts. The church may require each member who desires to receive these funds first to send out

\textsuperscript{111} 1 Sam 30:9-25, KJV.

\textsuperscript{112} Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 83.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 84.
a specified number of support letters. This allows participants to put forth some effort before receiving scholarship support. This method takes into account that not every potential participant has the same number or type of contacts who will be able to provide significant financial support.

Additionally, churches will often receive special offerings after a project has been announced. All of the funds received are distributed equally among team members or on a demonstrated needs basis. In similar fashion, churches may budget the funds necessary to pay for the staff members who will participate as leaders or team members. One of the primary goals of this is to avoid requiring individuals in leadership to ask for support from others. Often church members will be approached by multiple individuals and feel compelled to choose between staff leaders and other participants.

Many churches have relied on fundraisers to support trips and projects throughout the years, especially for youth groups. However, this requires a great deal of time and effort invested by many individuals. Often this is for a minimal return on investment. Individuals simply working their jobs for a few hours can often earn more than they would have while volunteering at a church fundraiser (car wash, sales event) for an entire day. These events do serve to promote and advertise projects as funds are raised on a larger scale. It also provides an opportunity for many who might not otherwise give to make a donation to the project.

Finally, perhaps the most effective and common source for STM project funding is to ask individuals for financial support. This has several advantages over other methods. First, it gives the participants a better understanding of what career missionaries experience. A significant
portion of their ministry is involved in deputation to raise funds and reporting back to supporting churches and individuals as they are serving on the field and during furloughs. Second, soliciting support involves other individuals in the project who will not be traveling. This is an excellent way to include church members as partners in the effort through prayer and financial support. Third, as Kirby asserts, this method “encourages missionary vision in the body of Christ.”

Rather than STM being the work of a select handful of individuals (sometimes only teens and young adults), this provides a broader involvement of the whole church body. Further, it expands the pool of resources beyond the church to family members, friends, and co-workers. Participants can reach out to coworkers and neighbors, as well as family and friends that might not otherwise be involved through the local church only.

One disadvantage of soliciting support from others involves those individual participants who have limited connections. Perhaps an individual who is not financially stable or well off will feel daunted by the responsibility of raising funds. This would include those who do not have healthy relationships with extended family and would feel uncomfortable reaching out to them for financial support. Others affected may be new believers who do not have a network of Christian friends.

Leaders should recognize that some participants may express a reluctance to soliciting support. They do not feel comfortable “asking others for money.” In fact, Anthony asserts,

114 Ibid., 85.
“Many people have a strong and deep-seated fear of fundraising.”\textsuperscript{115} However, this aspect of preparation can also serve as a learning and growing experience as participants observe God’s provisions through limited resources. Many experienced leaders recommend that those who have a hesitance or resistance to fundraising learn to talk about it. Backholer advises that team members begin by simply telling others about their plans to participate. “If you don’t talk about it, then others may miss out on the opportunity to bless you.”\textsuperscript{116} Leaders can facilitate the process by explaining the context of giving to God’s work and by providing quality materials and a reliable system of receiving, recording, and distributing funds. This greatly increases accountability for participants and their financial partners.

Participants should also consider the personal financial investments that they can make to their team and project. Team members may have to provide an initial registration fee. However, beyond just the commitments of time and energy, they should also consider how their personal funds could be a help to the team. Some authors go even further, stating that it should be expected that team members make financial contributions. Backholer posits, “It is wrong to expect others to make sacrifices to send you on your STM, if you have wasted your own resources on ‘good living.’”\textsuperscript{117}

The New Testament Baptist Church will utilize a hybrid of several of these methods to finance its ongoing STM projects. First, they will include in their missionary budget funds to

\textsuperscript{115} Michael J. Anthony, ed., \textit{The Short-Term Missions Boom}, 83.

\textsuperscript{116} Mathew Backholer, \textit{How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission}, 85.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 88.
enable church staff to lead teams each year. The church will also provide approved team
members with forms used to request financial support. Each member will be required to send out
a minimum number of letters or provide the equivalent funds. Further, the church will
supplement the total amount with special offerings. These funds will provide for the general
expenses of the entire team, as well as assist team members who have sent out the required
requests but are still short of their total needed.

Developing a Support Team: Prayer and Finances

Of equal, or even greater importance, is the development of a support team to provide
prayer and financial contributions. First, leaders and participants should prayerfully develop a list
of names of those who may consider becoming a support partner. For most, this will include
those who would commit to prayer or sending a financial contribution. Kirby suggests compiling
a list of 50-100 names.118 Participants should understand that this is not limited to only believers
or church members. Non-Christians are often willing, or even enthusiastic, to cooperate with a
project that has a clearly defined purpose. They may only consider the humanitarian outreach
component, but will still gladly send financial support, especially if they have a personal
connection to the one who is soliciting their help.119

Before team members compile their lists of potential supporters, leaders should have
developed a form letter that can be adapted and personalized for individual use. Anthony

118 Scott Kirby, Equipped for Adventure, 88.
119 See Appendix H: “Support Request Letter” and Appendix I: “Support Team Communication.”
recommends that the fundraising letter developed for team members should include the following components:

- Information about the field and host missionary and ministry
- Information about the sending church
- Information about the team project and its selected purpose.\(^{120}\)

This letter should clearly state the purpose of the team, the participant’s involvement, and the way that those who are interested can respond to partner with them. Anything that is truly important for the success of the project should be accurately conveyed to those who might offer financial support. They will know how to assess this as an investment in a significant outcome. Including the team’s purpose in a somewhat detailed aspect in the letter soliciting support may separate this project from many others received by potential donors. If a potential donor can grasp the potential benefit, especially spiritual, they may be more inclined to partner with the team members. The letter and any accompanying forms should be mailed with a return envelope and information about online responses or contributions if available.

All contributions should be channeled through the local church. This provides accountability for the donor, the church, and the individual team members. The church treasurer or accounting department is involved offering further credibility for the project and assuring potential givers of the validity of the project. This process also provides ease of administration in the reception, recording, and distribution of funds.

\(^{120}\) Michael J. Anthony, ed., *The Short-Term Missions Boom*, 78-79.
Letters requesting financial support should be properly worded with qualifying statements. These inform contributors that they are giving to the church’s outreach ministry and expressing their preference that funds be directed toward an individual participant’s need. This allows contributions to be considered legitimate and qualified for a tax receipt as allowed by law. If there is an excess of funds given for a particular individual, they can be considered for team expenses, thus supplementing the total for individuals who are underfunded. However, team leaders and others developing and administering STM projects should consult their church’s current giving and accountability procedures for further guidance.

Proper procedures during the months preceding time on the foreign field provides a level of assurance for participants, leaders, hosts, church staff, and supporters. It conveys a shared understanding of purpose and how it will be achieved. No amount of training can preclude complications, but it will enable leaders and team members to face them with confidence that they have done what they can to be successful. Following proven steps of preparation enables the STM team to prepare for effective ministry as well as respond to unforeseen difficulties.

CHAPTER 4: ON-FIELD ELEMENTS, OBJECTIVES, AND ASSESSMENTS

Introduction

Building on the foundation of a valid purpose, STM projects must include specific elements that build toward achieving that goal. These elements will provide the framework from which leaders can build a travel and ministry schedule. This chapter will explore how to address on-field challenges and successfully accomplish team objectives. Specific components and practices will be implemented to provide personal and spiritual growth for individual participants and efficient functioning for the team. Finally, this section will present methodology by which leaders can produce measurable objectives that correlate to the project’s primary purposes and make proper assessments throughout the course of a project.

Most of the focus for STM projects is directed at the on-field portion of service. Both the pre-field and post-field aspects are vitally important to the long-term success of the project and its team members. Participants must be adequately prepared to enter and return from the field. However, extensive preparation and debriefing cannot replace effective ministry and interaction on the field. Martha VanCise emphasizes the truth that STM projects are not merely vacations. On the contrary, service to others is a necessary component of any valid STM endeavor. Service is to be the natural and expected response of every believer, as we worship the God of “saints

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122 Martha VanCise, *Successful Mission Teams*, 139.
who serve.” In fact, can it truly be considered short-term missions if no legitimate ministry takes place?

Just as participating team members shift responsibilities when the on-field portion of the project begins, so do others involved. The prayer supporters in the local church begin to intensify their requests for specific needs according to their awareness of the team’s travel and project schedule. The host missionary will experience extra demands on his time and attention while the team is onsite. Family and friends who remain at home endeavor to keep communication lines open throughout the trip. Leaders begin to assume responsibility for the day-to-day care and direction of the team.

One of the final acts of the sending church before departure is a commissioning service with the entire congregation. This gives an official sendoff that connects giving and praying partners who stay home with the participants that will be working as team members on the field. Team leaders and participants are publicly recognized and the project’s purpose and objectives are summarized. Church leaders conclude the service by laying hands on team members and praying for them. This demonstrates the church’s commitment to the project and team as this act replicates the commissioning and sending out of career missionaries. The New Testament Baptist Church will conduct this service for its Project Serve teams on the final Sunday before departure to mark the beginning of the on-field portion of their project.

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123 Tim Dearborn, Beyond Duty, 41.

Travel Considerations

As demonstrated in the literature review in Chapter One, there are several workbooks that provide insight into logistical matters such as airfare, travel documentation, and vehicle rentals. These resources can provide church staff and team leaders with tools needed to make appropriate travel arrangements. However, specific travel considerations will differ from team to team depending on destination fields. Additionally, elements such as travel restrictions and pricing will change on a continual basis from year to year. Therefore, this project will not attempt to offer specific procedures for coordinating travel plans.

The New Testament Baptist Church has worked successfully on previous projects with Fellowship Travel International, Inc. This organization has consistently utilized its contacts with airlines to provide competitive pricing for team airfare. Further, they have helpful online tools to assist team leaders with compiling travel documents for team members, making payments, and tracking progress throughout the project. Church leaders will continue to work with this company, while considering other providers of such services as needed.

One of the primary considerations in developing and conducting a STM project is its length. The overall length of the project should be long enough to fulfill the project’s purpose, including immersing participants in a new culture and allowing them to experience missions in a meaningful way. The results of this project’s research correlate with national statistics showing the

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125 See Backholer, Dearborn, Forward, Greene, VanCise for examples.

majority of STM trips last between one and two weeks. More specifically, the majority of research respondents (56%) noted that their last trip was between seven to ten days. Trips between eleven and fourteen days reflected the next most common time frame (27%). In contrast, only 8% of respondents participated in a trip of less than seven days on their last project. Longer trips were approximately as uncommon as the shortest trips with only 12% of responses reflecting a length of more than fourteen days.

Responses that referenced lengthier trips likely reflect some trips of a different nature. For example, Teen Missions International annually hosts teams of teenagers who spend the bulk of their summers on foreign evangelistic and work projects. These trips are seven weeks or longer and include two weeks of stateside training and a week of debriefing. Another example is the TEAM program of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, Int’l., where qualified adults are approved to spend between one and three years serving alongside long-term missionaries. Although technically short-term endeavors (as compared to career or LTM), they are not the focus of this project, nor do they reflect what is commonly understood by most people when STM is discussed.

One factor affecting project length is the total amount of time spent traveling. Closer locations (within the US, Caribbean, North & Central America) will require shorter travel times.
and offer more convenient and affordable travel plans. Trips involving travel to Europe, Africa, or Asia will demand longer flights and recovery times, adding to the total time commitment required.

Included in these travel considerations is the impact of travel fatigue on participants. Jet lag and general weariness are concerns, especially when teams undertake long distance east-west travel. Kirby humorously reminds STM travelers that “jet lag means your body arrives in worse shape than your luggage.” Team members will need time to adjust to new time zones upon arrival. Extreme examples of this are found when US travelers visit Asia and lose or gain the better part of a day after their flight. Individuals respond differently to jet lag, but all should be aware of potential physical and mental struggles upon arrival. As always, the physical health and wellbeing of team members is vital for effective ministry throughout the project. Team schedules should include time (up to a full day) for rest and recovery after travel and before addressing primary objectives.

Another factor influencing project length is the amount of time that will be devoted to sightseeing and cultural experiences apart from formal objectives. Leaders must be careful to balance the team’s official purpose and the implicit expectations of participants. Most individuals travel with at least some thought of being able to experience and record a foreign culture and bring home souvenirs to remember their trip. This will mean that work and evangelistic teams

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131 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 139.
should not have to feel like they are so focused on the job site or outreach that they cannot adequately take in the sights of a foreign field. Conversely, teams should not forfeit their objectives in favor of free time, sightseeing, or shopping. Proper balance will require times built into the team’s schedule to experience the local culture. As with most elements, this scheduling is best done with consultation of the host missionary.

Project coordinators must consider the drawbacks of scheduling an on-field stay that is too lengthy. While it may make it feasible to accomplish more, it also provides opportunity for homesick participants. On a related note, both mental and physical fatigue become real possibilities after traveling and working longer than two weeks.\(^\text{133}\) This consideration is also dependent on the age, experience, physical health, and disposition of participants. Further, teams may experience strained interactions between team members during prolonged proximity of lengthy projects.\(^\text{134}\)

Also related to trip length are the personal commitments made by team members to participate. Adult leaders and team members will likely use personal vacation time to participate in the project. Trips that take place over spring break or other holidays will have a natural restriction on their length, as some participants will have to return to school and work. Acknowledging certain exceptions regarding the makeup of a particular team and its purpose, the length of future Project Serve trips sent out from New Testament Baptist Church will not exceed


fourteen days in length.

In contrast, any project shorter than 7 days (including travel) tends to limit the scope of opportunities. Even if the objective is simply exposure or interaction, participants are less likely to experience the fullness of a foreign culture or adequately understand the host missionary’s work. A reasonable minimum length is approximately ten days in order to fulfill specific objectives. Future teams sent out from the New Testament Baptist Church will be scheduled around the general time frame of ten to fourteen days in order to maintain team effectiveness and allow sufficient time to accomplish the project’s stated purpose.

Team members should always be aware that although they are designated as a short-term project, they will likely have long-term effects among those with whom they interact. Their ongoing ministry will be seen in the testimony they leave behind. Evangelistic teams may question their effectiveness regarding the limited number or brevity of their presentations. However, participants should be reminded that salvation is often the result of several individuals who have interacted with others in a variety of ways. As the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian church, he and Apollos were simply a part of the process of planting and watering spiritual seeds. Ultimately, God was responsible for any spiritual fruit that would result (1 Cor 3:5-7).

Schedule

Considering all of the components involved in even the simplest or shortest project, a viable schedule will be of utmost value. It will be initially formed by consulting with the host
before departure. However, it should be reviewed and updated upon arrival on the field. As much as possible, the schedule should be maintained for efficiency in completing objectives and fulfilling the project’s purpose. Further, adherence to the schedule demonstrates respect for the time and resources of the host, associated co-workers and nationals, and all team members. Leaders should regularly remind the team of how each day’s work contributes to the achievement of the project’s purpose.

The project’s stated purpose will be a primary factor in determining the team’s schedule. For example, a team conducting a VBS will have hours designated for set up and preparation, conducting the program, cleaning up afterward, and resetting for the next day. Likewise, teams with evangelistic objectives will have set times for visitation, services, rallies, and outreach events. Construction and maintenance projects will focus the bulk of their schedule around daylight hours when their work will be accomplished.

In coordinating the schedule, leaders should recognize the need to set a reasonable pace. They should follow a logical process that divides all objectives into manageable sections and schedules them throughout the trip’s length. Cultural interactions and sightseeing times may be interspersed throughout or saved until the majority of objectives are met. This will be determined after consulting with the host missionary. Schedules will be in a printed format to be included in the team member’s notebook and will be reviewed verbally at daily team meetings.

Upon arrival, leaders and hosts should once again review the itinerary for clarity,

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agreement, and to address any difficulties before implementation. Individual team members should accept the schedule and recognize their personal abilities and limitations. As proper communication is always a vital component, leaders should request that members privately convey any concerns about expectations. Ultimately, team members will be expected to accomplish assigned tasks to the best of their ability.136

After the first day, leaders should examine what was accomplished and if the daily expectations are reasonable given the environment and circumstances. Schedules and goals may be adjusted as necessary, without compromising the overall purpose and objective of the project.

Depending on the leadership structure, it may be wise for teams to rely on a plurality of leaders to discuss potential changes in schedule. Rather than one individual making an arbitrary decision, this provides for diverse perspectives. After such decisions are made, leaders must communicate thoroughly what will change, how it will affect objectives, and what is expected from individual team members.

Leaders and team members must be prepared to adapt to their circumstances and improvise as needed. H. Leon Greene wisely asserts, “Flexibility is not the opposite of preparation… In fact, it is complementary to good preparation on the mission field.”137 Of particular importance, team leaders must remain sensitive to the needs of the host and be willing to make reasonable changes as requested or necessary.

136 Ibid., 209-212.
Likewise, it is vital that leaders maintain balance when administering or changing the schedule. They do not want to forfeit the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in favor of arbitrarily maintaining a daily work schedule. On the other hand, leaders should be careful not to jump from one sightseeing trip or local experience to another as a work project suffers. Travel photos and memories cannot fully overcome a sense of failure or frustration for those not achieving reasonable goals or leaving the field with objectives unfulfilled. Certainly, teams should ultimately favor profitable evangelistic opportunities over mere tourism.

Finally, all involved must recognize a spiritual aspect of change and adaptation. In fact, God allows and directs hindrances unexpectedly.\textsuperscript{138} Rather than simply viewing them as problems, participants should see how they contribute to success. For example, the team should take advantage of the rest offered by unexpected stoppages.\textsuperscript{139} Individuals can look for new sights or experiences that would have been missed while maintaining an original schedule. Work assignments that were not part of the original expectations may be precisely what God wanted to accomplish all along.

This project has emphasized the importance of a stated purpose at the core of a project. However, leaders and participants must maintain a balanced perspective in attempting to fulfill this purpose. The inability to accomplish every team objective does not equate to failure. If spiritual victories and growth are achieved, teams should consider the project as successful.

\textsuperscript{138} Jas 1:1-4, KJV.

Physical Considerations

The physical health of team members throughout every phase of the project is of vital importance. It becomes magnified exponentially during the on-field portion of their involvement. The illness of one or more participants will decrease the team’s ability to accomplish their objectives. Depending on the nature of the illness, it may also spread quickly among members due to the proximity and intimacy of their interaction. Leaders should be acutely aware of initial complaints in order to treat symptoms, limit the damage, and curtail the spread of illness within the team. Depending on the nature of an apparent illness, individuals may need to be temporarily isolated from others.

Because the nature of potential health issues differs greatly on various foreign fields, this project will not attempt to cover the prevention or treatment of specific illnesses. However, there are a few important considerations that broadly apply for physical health. First, rest is an important factor for the body to maintain its immunity, recover from strenuous travel and work, and heal itself. Leaders should be consistent in enforcing rest times and sleep hours as a part of the team’s schedule.

Dietary considerations are also important to the maintenance of the health of individuals. Again, cautions and restrictions will vary depending on the field, but participants should be aware that “pasteurization, refrigeration, and sanitary practices” are uncertain.\textsuperscript{140} If possible, travelers should avoid rare meat and fish, unwashed and raw vegetables, unpasteurized milk and

\textsuperscript{140} David Forward, \textit{The Essential Guide to the Short-Term Mission Trip}, 161.
dairy products, and foods offered by street vendors. Leaders should consult with host missionaries for specifics on these and similar matters.

Additionally, adequate hydration is an important factor in maintaining personal health. The host missionary should be able to inform the team about the safety of particular sources of water. Leaders should arrange an adequate supply so that every participant has sufficient amounts for daily intake. This may involve an effective water filtration and purification system or the purchase of bottled water. A related factor is exposure to the sun. Both work and evangelistic teams tend to spend a significant amount of time outside. Lengthy exposure will increase the amount of water needed to stay properly hydrated. Further, team members should be adequately equipped with “a wide-brimmed hat, plenty of sunblock, insect repellent, and light-colored clothing” to minimize any dangerous effects of prolonged exposure to the sun.

Finally, teams should carry a small first-aid kit with basic items if possible. These may be purchased pre-assembled with a carrying case or may be put together by placing items in a resealable plastic bag. Basic items will treat a range of illnesses or injuries and will include:

- Band-aids
- Antibacterial ointments
- Ace bandages
- Analgesics
- Heat/cold packs
- Antidiarrheal medicine
- Laxatives
- Decongestants

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141 Ibid.
• Antihistamines
• Fever reducers
• Pepto-Bismol
• Sunburn relief

Leaders should also carry a sealed envelope containing the health and medical information forms completed by each participant. This will provide vital information in the case of an emergency. Those offering more advanced treatments for illness or injury will need to know of any potential complications including current medication, allergies, pre-existing conditions, or prior incidents. This packet should also include documents granting the team leader the authority to make emergency medical decisions on behalf of participants in place of their parents or legal guardians.  

Practical Safety

As with health issues, personal safety issues may differ depending on the specific field. However, certain general guidelines apply no matter the foreign setting. Team members will be instructed to follow specific guidelines in the covenant and team notebook. Several authors offer practical advice for groups regarding their personal property and safety. First, personal safety is increased by staying together as a group. However, teams must keep a relatively low profile by not drawing unnecessary attention to themselves. A boisterous group of Americans may stand out even in large crowds, marking them as targets for criminals. Team members are advised to never leave the group without permission and proper notification of leaders. Further, teams should

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144 Ibid., 163.
145 See Appendix E: “Parental Consent Form.”
consult with the host for safety of particular places or forms of travel.\textsuperscript{146}

Often, safety is simply a matter of participants using common sense. Teams should keep track of valuable equipment and not allow it to be unaccounted for long periods of time.\textsuperscript{147} Individuals should be cautioned not to display money or valuables unnecessarily. Younger travelers may need to be reminded that not everyone who approaches has their best interest in mind.\textsuperscript{148}

Remaining alert to one’s surroundings allows individuals to notice things that are out of the ordinary. This is especially helpful when operating in foreign settings. Leaders should regularly remind participants to create an environment of awareness, looking out for one another when in public.\textsuperscript{149} Team members should stay alert without becoming fearful or paranoid. Following these guidelines will help not only safety and effectiveness, but also the enjoyment of the time spent in a foreign place.

**Financial Matters**

Raising funds is a significant part of any STM project as sending agencies, leaders, and participants spend months acquiring financial support from others. Equally important is the expenditure of those funds raised. Teams should give adequate attention to the distribution and spending of team funds during the on-field engagement. One team leader should bear the

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\item Scott H. Kirby, *The Short-Term Missions Adventure*, 81-82.
\item Martha VanCise, *Successful Mission Teams*, 118-119.
\item Ibid., 173.
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primary responsibility, but there should be strict accountability guidelines in place to protect the integrity of all involved. A team treasurer may be appointed to relieve the primary team leader of additional responsibilities.

Certain fiscal considerations should be addressed prior to arrival. Church staff and leaders first must determine if the team will be able to use US dollars for their expenses or need to convert all funds into foreign currency.¹⁵⁰ If conversion is necessary, they must decide if some or all of the funds be converted before departure. Often the exchange rate in an American financial institution will be less favorable than one in the country being visited.¹⁵¹ Likewise, leaders must consider whether some funds should sent ahead to the host to cover the team’s initial expenses or for conversion.¹⁵² This may be done to reserve accommodations or transportation, to ensure that the host is not burdened, or for general efficiency upon the team’s arrival. One consistent practice for teams is that all expenses need to be receipted for later accounting purposes.

The pastor and team leaders will also need to determine how much cash the team should take to the field. This will be done with significant input from the host missionary. There are two primary concerns regarding this amount. First, leaders carrying large amounts of cash may become a target for theft or loss. This principle also applies to personal funds carried by individual team members. Second, teams must have adequate funds to complete the trip or have a reliable alternate method to access additional funds. Depending on the particular field, leaders

may still be able to use travelers’ checks or church checks drawn from an American banking institution. More likely, the prevalent use of credit cards abroad will allow for many expenses to be paid or for cash withdrawals (in the foreign currency) to be withdrawn periodically as needed. Kirb

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Teams will have budgeted amounts for any expenses incurred by the host missionary during the project. These amounts will be determined during the planning stages of the trip and may include common expenses such as fuel, meals, or admission fees while accompanying the team. However, leaders should be constantly looking for incidental expenses that may arise. Since the missionary is unlikely to draw attention to them or make a point of requesting reimbursement, leaders should take the initiative to record these expenses and reimburse them promptly so as not to burden a gracious host. It is the express intent of every team sent out of New Testament Baptist Church to go beyond expectations and have hosts incur no financial expenses. In fact, the individual hosts and their ministries should recognize not only a spiritual blessing, but also a financial benefit from their partnership with teams sent out from the church.

**Miscellaneous Matters**

In recent years, leaders have had to consider whether team members need or will be


154 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 162.
allowed to take personal cell phones. Again, it is imperative that leaders consult with the host missionary to determine their best practices. One drawback is that individuals or teams may become targets for thieves in some settings. However, cell phones are commonplace in many parts of the world, so having one will not necessarily be a sign of affluence. Team members may find that using them for communication is difficult without a costly international plan depending on the country being visited. However, the availability of free or paid Wi-Fi in most places will allow them to be useful in at least a limited capacity. Finally, leaders must acknowledge that for many participants the phone will also serve as their camera. At present, team members will be cautioned about the potential problems, but will be allowed to travel with cellphones. Restrictions on usage will be in place as needed and determined after research of particular fields in consultation with hosts.155

As with many other issues, the availability of taking pictures and communicating with people back home presents certain liabilities. Host missionaries can advise concerning the safety and wisdom of posting locations or photos of individuals while still on the field. Further, team members eager to post pictures on social media may be drawn into lengthy responses and interactions with friends and family back home. This can easily consume unwarranted amounts of time and attention. Leaders should consistently encourage team members to absorb and appreciate every bit of on-field experience. Participants should journal extensively, photograph important events and people, and carry home volumes of stories to tell, without allowing these

155 Martha VanCise, Successful Mission Teams, 117.
things to become a distraction.

**Cultural Differences**

One of the key challenges that team members will face while on the field is responding to the cultural differences they experience. It is common for participants to experience both excitement and fear upon arriving in a foreign culture.\(^{156}\) Even the most seasoned traveler may experience a measure of culture shock during STM projects. Backholer asserts, “Culture is the norm of life, the way things are done and therefore each culture thinks that its understanding of the right, good and the true is best – if only because it has always been done that way.”\(^{157}\) Hiebert defines culture shock as “the disorientation we experience when all the cultural maps and guidelines we learned as children no longer work. Stripped of our normal ways of coping with life, we are confused, afraid, and angry. We rarely know what has gone wrong, much less what to do about it.”\(^{158}\) Factors contributing to this disruption include changes in routine, foreign language making communication difficult, and separation from loved ones. The stress levels of travelers increase and cause mental struggles and even physical illness.\(^{159}\)

David Livermore focuses much of his work on developing the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) of short-term participants. He defines Interpretive CQ as “the ability to connect our knowledge with what we’re observing in the real world.” It is “simply the degree to which we’re mindful


\(^{157}\) Mathew Backholer, *How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission*, 179.


\(^{159}\) Ibid., 66-72.
and aware when we interact cross-culturally.\textsuperscript{160} This implies that no amount of study alone can fully accomplish such knowledge and awareness of another culture. One of the goals for team members should be to grow in cultural understanding rather than simply struggling to deal with differences. Although this begins during pre-field preparation, the great majority of this understanding will be accomplished through observation and interpretation during the on-field portion of their team involvement.

Rather than relying on spontaneous circumstances, leaders should include programmed cultural interaction. This is not simply to justify excursions, but to ensure meaningful cultural experiences for team members. Peterson asserts that these “contribute significantly to the goer-guest’s on-field effectiveness.”\textsuperscript{161} Meaningful opportunities for observing and engaging will come from “local people, local shopping, local sites of interest, local points of historical significance, local community events, local rites of passage, local food and beverages, local plants and vegetation, local animals, local poverty, local wealth, local government services, local music, local language, local media, local art, local transportation, local roads, local restaurants, local parties and celebrations.”\textsuperscript{162}

Some of these interactions will be structured as a component of the team’s schedule, such as visits to a local market, museum, or historical site. At other times, engaging with the host culture will occur during the non-programmed part of the day. Chance encounters, observations,

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\textsuperscript{160}David A. Livermore, \textit{Serving With Eyes Wide Open}, 130-131.
\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 136.
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or conversations during travel or free-time occur frequently. Roger Peterson posits that “These are often cultural opportunities which God can use to sharpen skills, build deeper friendship, open doors, and create opportunities for Kingdom growth in any of the participants.” The experience of this writer is that participants often spontaneously grasp important lessons without being directed or taught by leaders. They also assimilate spiritual applications to these elements quite naturally while on a foreign field.

A common perspective revealed in many STM programs is believing that visiting team members are the only participants providing significant value to the project. This is mainly because they are the ones traveling to perform a service or ministry. The reality is that missionary hosts have something to give in return. They offer valuable insight into missionary work in general, as well as to their particular fields. They invest a significant amount of time and effort in preparation and during the STM project. Likewise, nationals provide an understanding of not only an unfamiliar culture, but also how God is at work in different ways around the world. Recognizing the valuable input of hosts and nationals will tend to increase appreciation and gratitude among team members. Healthy STM consists of the reciprocity of “give and takes.”

Tim Dearborn introduces the concept of considering nationals as a part of the team in order to do the most effective ministry possible within their culture. He posits that the natural

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163 Ibid.

164 Ibid., 176.
“us-them” distinction may be overcome by the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he encourages team members to seek out friendship with nationals by merging fellowship and “seeking support, worship and encouragement with them.” In conversations, team members should be transparent, admitting personal inadequacies and the need for growth. This allows both team members and nationals to find common ground rather than setting up the visitors as authorities in every matter. At times, team members should give preference to the decisions of nationals, realizing their position as guests. Finally, team members should always seek ways to serve according to local cultural patterns. Dearborn asserts that “one of the hardest dimensions of cross cultural service is learning to do things their way instead of demanding that they do them ours.”

Team participants will observe attitudes, behavior, and values that differ from the ones with which they are most familiar. These cultural differences primarily affect one’s time and personal space. Such differences can be readily observed regarding punctuality. A general impression exists of Latin cultures being “laid back” and less concerned with being on time. Teams that schedule their time and activity with great precision may be frustrated by an apparent lack of cooperation by their hosts or those with whom or to whom they minister.

In comparison, Americans have gained a reputation for being noisy and aggressive. Matthew Backholer advises that “regardless of nationality or cultural traits, we all need to be


166 Ibid.

careful how ‘come across’ when we interact with others, but as a STM team we must be aware that we do not present ourselves as loud and boisterous, especially on public transport and when in public places.” Genuinely understanding the local culture will help participants practice the adaptation and public testimony necessary for their team’s successful ministry.

Sharing meals is another time when cultural differences may be easily observed. Hosts will often go out of their way to provide food and drinks for visiting guests, and reluctance or refusal may be a grave insult. A Ghanaian proverb states, “Rather let your children starve than have a guest go hungry.” Similar cultural perspectives are held throughout the world. Participants should be informed of expectations regarding trying new foods and ways to minimize or hide reluctance or displeasure at what they are offered. Likewise, they should be equipped with culturally appropriate methods of expressing appreciation and gratitude.

Team members should be careful not to assume they know how individuals will speak or behave or how they should respond. Rather, leaders should consistently remind them that their hosts will be their most reliable source of information in cultural matters. Even with adequate study during pre-field preparation, there may still remain significant factors of which they are not aware. Also, within regions of a nation cultural norms will differ. Specific considerations within local communities or ministries may also exist. In order to address this, leaders should schedule an introductory meeting with hosts soon after the team arrives. This will allow a face-to-face

\[168\] Ibid., 179.

\[169\] Ibid., 192.

\[170\] Martha VanCise, Successful Mission Teams, 142-143.
introduction with reminders of standards and expectations.

As team members experience cultural differences, they may instinctively reject certain practices because they are merely unfamiliar. In contrast, some will embrace some customs as exciting and adventurous. However, they should be challenged not to reject or adopt new perspectives without first examining them through the lens of their Christian faith. Those practices that are biblical should be embraced as compatible. Other cultural expectations or traditions that are clearly unbiblical must be rejected as incompatible. Neutral norms may be retained if necessary or beneficial.\textsuperscript{171} Again, even when a cultural norm is rejected as unbiblical it must be done with tact and graciousness. The Apostle Paul reminded his readers in Corinth that they should do nothing to offend either Jews, Gentiles, or the church, even as he had selflessly conducted himself in their midst. (1 Cor 10:32-33). Practicing sensitivity in cultural matters will allow individual participants and teams to maintain a positive testimony before others.

As a matter of balance, team members should be trained to deal with requests for help or exchange from nationals.\textsuperscript{172} Team leaders will produce general guidelines for participants to follow when individuals ask them for something. These requests can include small items, such as a pen or book, or personal items, such as clothing or a sleeping bag. Needy individuals will often recognize the relative affluence of team members and make requests for financial help, either immediately through coins and currency or through promises of continued monetary gifts after

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\textsuperscript{171} Mathew Backholer, \textit{How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission}, 183.
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\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 232.
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the team has returned home. On a personal level, individuals may often request promises of ongoing contact and communication. This often begins innocuously with a request to exchange contact information or social media connections. Team members should be careful not to make unintended promises through casual conversations. Many travelers have offered the invitation, “Come visit me if you are ever in the United States.” To the recipient of such a promise it may mean far more than to the one who offered it. For these reasons, it may be advisable for teams to have church address, telephone, and email information readily available for individuals to distribute for any questionable or concerning interactions or requests.

Finally, teams must develop an environment of acceptance regarding culture, as this conveys a sense of respect and cooperation. Duane Elmer defines acceptance as “the ability to communicate value, worth and esteem to another person.” These factors are crucial for participants not only to get along with each other, but to be effective in their efforts. Further, this environment spreads outward as participants interact with nationals. A welcoming attitude allows individuals to minimize the differences that frequently separate visiting groups from their hosts. Team members should remember that they are not on the field to export their form of Western cultural Christianity. Backholer is among many experienced in cross-cultural ministry who advise that “Biblical Christianity must be allowed to blossom and flourish within its own

174 Scott Kirby, Equipped for Adventure, 165.
175 Mathew Backholer, How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission, 196.
176 Duane Elmer, Cross-Cultural Servanthood, 58.
Communication and Conduct

Parallel to the interaction with nationals in a foreign culture, successful communication and internal interaction within the team is vital for success in fulfilling the project’s purpose. STM projects are excellent opportunities to combat selfishness and shift focus onto the needs of others. However, there must be a sense of purpose to accomplish this among participants as the stresses of travel, work, and foreign culture tend to magnify selfishness in individuals and teams. Tim Dearborn advises individuals to be listener-centered and move into the world of their hosts and nationals by taking the initiative toward interaction. Team members can thus increase the effectiveness of their service and ministry by focusing on others. In contrast, team members who remain focused on self are more likely to create potential for conflict.

Perhaps the most damaging elements for a short-term project are not imposed by external circumstances, but are rather the inappropriate behavior or conduct of participants. This has the potential to cause tension between team members as well as damage the team’s testimony before hosts and observing nationals. It is extremely important that team members work within the framework of their commitments made when applying for acceptance on the team.

Teams should be prepared to properly handle contention among participants. This challenge is nothing new as evidenced among New Testament ministries and missionaries. Jesus’

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177 Mathew Backholer, How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission, 184.

178 Tim Dearborn, Beyond Duty, 76.
own disciples allowed selfishness to affect their interactions, even involving other family members (Matt 20:20-28). In response, Jesus stated that they needed to act differently than the world around them, reminding them to follow his purpose and example of service and ministry to others. Paul and Barnabas struggled with differing perspectives and standards concerning John Mark’s abrupt departure during their missionary journey. Fortunately, they were able to deal with disagreement and maintain their ministry (Acts 15:36-41; 2 Tim 4:11).

One of the key tools in shaping individual and team conduct is the covenant that each team member signed upon acceptance to the project. It will clearly establish the authority of leaders and responsibilities of individual participants. It also provides guiding principles that can be applied to a variety of potential situations. Leaders should review this document with the team before departure and keep a copy with them throughout the trip. It may also be regularly reviewed and reinforced as necessary throughout the project. This will help to ensure mutual understanding and cooperation by all individuals.

Although many who are responsible for groups do not like confrontation, leaders should deal with behavior and conduct issues promptly. Team members should be aware that overlooking violations of team policies or procedures carries consequences. Participants who conscientiously follow the rules will often be offended at any apparent neglect or inequality of enforcement. Likewise, small infractions that are overlooked often embolden individuals, and

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180 See Appendix F: “Team Covenant.”

more significant breaches often follow.

Team leaders should be aware of potential conflicts and proactively address issues before they become contentious and disruptive. Participants should be aware of their duties and responsibilities as outlined in team documents and reviewed in meetings. These will include general tasks for all team members as well as specifics for each individual. Defiance of rules cannot be tolerated or overlooked as it tends to produce distractions and foment rebellious attitudes.

Leaders should address difficulties of attitude or behavior at the earliest possible opportunity. However, it may not be in the immediate moment of offence. The timing and setting of correction should be conducive to dealing with individuals privately and thoroughly. This will avoid further damage by what has already transpired. While discretion is important, certain infractions need to be generally acknowledged as a team. For example, if there has been a public display of disrespect, rebellion, or irresponsibility, the team should know that such behavior has been observed and corrected.

When a team member behaves inappropriately, the leader(s) must first determine the reason behind the behavior. Kirby asserts that “the stress of travel, lack of sleep, hard work, and close quarters with others often brings out either the best or worst in people.” Additionally, “The misbehavior may be just the excitement of the adventure, a cultural misstep, or an

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182 See Appendix F: “Team Covenant” and Appendix G: “General Responsibilities of Participants.”

183 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 160-161.

184 Ibid.
Assessing contributing factors is not done to excuse improper behavior, but to adequately address and correct it, as well as prevent the potential for future occurrences. Leaders must also consider the potential consequences of such actions and any significant or lasting harm that could result. This will often determine the extent and nature of the response to the offending individual.

Depending on the cause and extent of the offense, a private conversation between the leaders and team member is the preferred method of correction. Hopefully, it may be all that is necessary to rectify the situation. However, if the conduct continues, leaders should consider addressing it broadly in a team meeting. This is especially true if other participants have witnessed the behavior or have been affected by it. Leaders should address the inappropriate behavior clearly, along with the reason behind the rules, the potential damage of such action, and the future consequences of continued infractions. David Forward advises that those speaking to the issue should “also say something positive about the individual whose actions they are also criticizing.” This is important to highlight “the distinction of criticizing the behavior, not the person.”

Only after repeated rebellion or disregard for authority should team leaders consider the ultimate correction of sending a participant home. This course of action must be delineated in writing at the beginning of the project. As a part of the team covenant, participants will have

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186 Ibid., 169.
been aware of such a consequence prior to their commitment or involvement. Because this action will be at the expense of the individual team member, parents or guardians must also be aware of it and agree to it from the outset. Leaders should prayerfully consider this course of action any time an individual’s conduct significantly damages the team’s testimony, compromises the project, or threatens or endangers the lives of team members. They should only do so after communicating and consulting with responsible pastoral staff at the church.

Leaders should be on guard for such signs of selfishness or lack of appreciation among team members. These attitudes and their accompanying behaviors can easily weaken team effectiveness, damage the testimony of the sending church, and hinder the long-term ministry of the host. In contrast, demonstrating gratitude and appreciation will shape the team’s on-field testimony to observing groups and individuals. This attitude may be demonstrated in the following directions:

1. To the host who will determine his likelihood of hosting future STM teams.

2. To the host ministry and congregation who are expecting a blessing from the visiting team.

3. To national leadership who are looking for support and encouragement from believing brothers and sisters.

4. To nationals in general who are forming their impressions of Americans, especially Christians.

Rather than focusing exclusively on correcting flawed behavior, teams should reinforce attitudes and actions that foster successful accomplishment of the project’s purpose and
objectives. Leaders should frequently recognize and reward admirable qualities and behavior of individual team members. This practice builds and reinforces an environment and culture that will encourage these traits to be reproduced in others. Of special importance for STM team members are examples of perseverance, selflessness, diligence, and vibrant Christian testimony.\textsuperscript{187}

Team members should be cautioned against “pairing off.” This term refers to any two (or more) members who spend the majority of their time working or fellowshipping primarily with each other to the exclusion of others. The concept covers both romantic and platonic relationships that hinder interaction between all team members equitably.\textsuperscript{188} Martha VanCise accurately asserts that interaction on missionary teams often produces lifetime friendships. However, to maximize this benefit participants should interact with as many other individuals as possible. This can be accomplished by simply eating with different people every day, sitting next to those less known during lengthy trips, or alternating roommates on a rotating basis as accommodations allow. As members share personal stories of blessings and struggles, their relationships will be strengthened.\textsuperscript{189}

Participants should maintain a proper understanding of teamwork, giving it preference in their conduct over the individualism to which they are accustomed in daily life. This is not only

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\textsuperscript{187} Martha VanCise, \textit{Successful Mission Teams}, 186.


\textsuperscript{189} Martha VanCise, \textit{Successful Mission Teams}, 148.
for the efficiency of achieving the team’s purpose and objectives, but also for the example that it offers to others. While on the field, participants must remember that every aspect of their interaction and involvement is being watched by others.190

One such aspect of their interaction that will further the team’s effectiveness is the tone, topic, and nature of conversations. Standard guidelines for Christian conduct and speech should govern both private and public discourse during the project. Although there may be additional specific practices relating to the particular field, such standards should be in place in the everyday life of the believer. Martha VanCise offers the following basic “Conversation Cues”:

- Avoid negative statements about religious organizations, doctrines, or politics.
- Avoid gossip.
- Avoid complaining.
- Avoid coarse jokes and sexual innuendo.
- Avoid probing other people’s lives with the pretense of being a counselor.
- Avoid ethnic jokes.
- Avoid telling all.191

Extending preference toward others may be practiced by actions as simple as allowing others to be first in line for meals or other events. Another opportunity will be found when selecting seating arrangements during travel. Offering desirable seats to others (in the front of the vehicle or next to windows) can demonstrate the value of individual team members. In each

190 Ibid., 139-140.
191 Ibid., 151.
aspect of travel and ministry team members should look for ways to engage in selfless behavior. When noticed, leaders should be quick to recognize and reward it.

At the heart of this concept is the biblical counsel to put the feelings and needs of others ahead of oneself, especially when seeking spiritual results. Attitude will naturally affect actions, as the Apostle Paul notes when he counsels believers: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” ¹⁹² Later, he admonishes his readers in Philippi to avoid acting in ways that would foster contention or selfish attention. Rather, he advises “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” ¹⁹³ Ultimately, the goal of believers is to “serve one another in love.” ¹⁹⁴ VanCise advises that teams accept unreached practical goals if necessary, as relationships are more important than goals. Ultimately, “it is through good relationship that you will lead people to Christ.” ¹⁹⁵

A final consideration regarding interaction and conduct involves the team members’ relationship with the host missionary. Participants should be reminded to be gracious and appreciative guests. Team members should understand that they are not called to be inspectors, even though they are to be observant. Evaluating and understanding the local ministry is done for the goal of learning. Frequently, when a team member believes he has a legitimate criticism or correction, it is only because they do not have the fuller understanding of ministering in that

¹⁹² Rom 12:10, KJV.
¹⁹³ Phil 2:3, KJV.
¹⁹⁴ Gal 5:13, KJV.
¹⁹⁵ Martha VanCise, Successful Mission Teams, 146.
culture and setting that the missionary has. Without painting a bleak picture of what it is like to serve the Lord on foreign fields, hosts and leaders can acknowledge unique challenges and difficulties that make up the everyday life on a foreign field.

**On-Field Team Meetings**

Team leaders will be responsible for ongoing assessment during the on-field portion of the project through daily observation, individual interaction with both hosts and team members, and feedback acquired. The primary tool for on-field assessment will be regular team meetings. David Forward posits that team meetings provide leaders with four significant opportunities:

1. to maintain morale and enthusiasm among the team and for the tasks to be done;
2. to update them on daily schedules, changes, news, etc.;
3. to build better disciples through devotional messages, music, and Bible readings; and
4. to discuss other matters that require team attention.

Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed assert the importance of team meetings as a form of worship. They point to the “therapy” of affinity as teams come together for a purpose, engage in group discussion, active listening, and intentional learning. This will allow experiences to settle into meaningful concepts that can be absorbed and learned for a lifetime. Sharing these lessons with others during meetings allows them to have a broader scope and impact.

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196 Ibid., 156.
The length of regular meetings should be long enough to cover topics necessary, but not draw valuable time from other experiences. As a general rule, thirty to forty minutes is preferred depending on other scheduling factors. Regular meetings may be scheduled up to twice a day. A brief morning meeting may include a group devotional thought and provide the team with a look ahead into the day’s schedule and objectives. An evening gathering of the team will allow leaders to acquire feedback from participants and assess what was accomplished and what remains to be done. However, these evening meetings should be as brief as possible, as physical rest is vital. The combination of travel, work, and intensity of adjusting to a foreign culture take a toll on both the mind and body. Teenagers and young adults may be especially vulnerable. Although their bodies can bear up with the stresses and demands, they are not always good at judging how much rest or sleep is necessary. Trying to squeeze the most out of their experience, or simply not being personally disciplined, they are often tempted to stay up too late. Unnecessarily lengthy meetings can become counterproductive as they drain the mental and physical resources of team members.

These regular meeting times might include devotions, singing, prayer, Bible study, problem solving, mutual encouragement and support (recognizing and rewarding positive behavior), announcements, additional ongoing training, missions teaching, and making or amending plans. However, meetings need to be limited in time and scope so each session need not include every aspect. They can be effectively rotated as necessary from day to day. While these meetings are an excellent time for interaction and bonding, leaders should be careful about

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199 Ibid.
open discussion times as a part of daily meetings. They should watch for individuals who monopolize discussion times or introduce subjects that could be problematic. Allowing individuals to volunteer to share on different days helps to ensure that all members have the opportunity to speak, rather than only the bold and assertive speakers.

While each team will shape the nature, timing, and frequency of their own team meetings, one factor is universal; attendance is mandatory. Except for cases of recognized illness or other distress, each participant will be expected to participate. These should not be treated as extra opportunities to catch up on sleep, personal correspondence or journaling, or recovery times.200

**Spiritual Considerations**

Ironically, the spiritual life of team members can be easily overlooked while on a missions project because of the busyness of the schedule and the unfamiliar environment. The expectation that spiritual growth will naturally take place while “doing missions” often causes participants to shift their focus and efforts onto other practical concerns. Team members should be regularly challenged to stay focused on spiritual matters amid the routine matters of their project. Considering the strong emphasis on project purpose, teams must still strive to achieve a tenable balance between achieving their stated goals and establishing relationships that will foster evangelism and spiritual growth.201

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Both personal and group devotions will be treated as a priority by the team, and the schedule will include specific times for both. This will reinforce the position that spiritual health and growth is of primary importance during the project. Personal time for prayer and Bible study will be allotted prior to any morning team meetings. This scheduled time will be coordinated with wake-up hours, personal hygiene, breakfast, and travel schedules. Group devotions may be led by different individuals as a part of regular team meetings.

A vital component of both personal and team devotions will be prayer. Prayer times will be scheduled as part of regular team meetings. Requests and answered prayer may be shared by team members during team meetings, and this information can be recorded in team members’ journals. Participants should be encouraged to look for needs outside of the immediate team, especially concerning the host missionary, nationals, and the local ministry. Likewise, teams may maintain a vital connection with their sending church and partners by praying for needs back home, even as their own needs are being remembered by prayer supporters. Every participant in a STM project must be acutely aware that very little is accomplished without prayer, especially during organized ministry and outreach.202

An integral component of the handbook assembled for team members will be a devotional thought and passage of Scripture for each day of the project. These will be developed during the pre-field preparation by team leaders and centered on a theme for that year’s project.

Each day’s notes should include questions for team members to answer personally. This serves as an excellent tool to maintain the team’s spiritual focus, strengthen individual lives, and build a sense of unity. These may be discussed as a group during team meetings as time allows.

Individual team members should be stretched in their faith and practice as the result of participating on STM team. Having assessed individuals during pre-field training, leaders will naturally assign responsibilities based on personal strengths and weaknesses. These opportunities may range from musical specials, public speaking, work assignments, driving vehicles, operating specific equipment or directing small groups of team members. However, leaders should also encourage members to leave their comfort zone to take on new areas of responsibility. This must be done only after consulting with the individual members about what they would be willing and comfortable to do. For instance, no one should be compelled to stand alone to speak in front of a congregation who has not first given their approval to do so. This practice of challenging individuals may not only benefit the team’s objectives, but also foster personal spiritual growth.

While certain components must be purposefully added to the project schedule, ordinary events provide excellent opportunities to make spiritual points of emphasis. The personal experience of this writer has demonstrated that team members will often recognize spiritual applications naturally without being led to them. For example, obstacles and setbacks with which a team deals reinforce the truth that patient endurance is required for spiritual success.  

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203 See Appendix J: “Team Member Journal - Sample Pages” for examples.

204 See Heb 10:36.
Similarly, small personal or team victories evidence the providence and power of God.\textsuperscript{205}

Recognizing God’s hand at work in the mundane affairs of a project may be as powerful a reminder as any devotional lesson provided.

Journaling is a helpful tool for heightening one’s focus on spiritual matters. Journals may effectively be used as a part of personal devotions. Tim Dearborn offers a few basic guidelines on missions journaling, including not approaching it as a duty or trying to be too profound in what is recorded.\textsuperscript{206} Since this practice is highly valued, the team schedule will include regular time to allow team members to journal.

A small, personal notepad may be all that is necessary. However, Project Serve teams will produce a notebook of helpful material that will include dated pages left blank for personal journaling.\textsuperscript{207} The notebook will include space for daily journaling, team devotions and Scripture readings, and common foreign words and phrases. It can also include a summary of the team covenant, guidelines, and schedule. Although a digital format may be made available to participants, the focus will be on keeping a hard copy available. This is preferable to ensure accessibility as there will be no concern for limited electronic connectivity or low batteries on a device. Likewise, in order to make personal notes, a pen or pencil will be sufficient.

Team members will be encouraged to keep an accurate account of names, places, events and emotions. Certainly, team members learn valuable spiritual lessons during every phase of a

\textsuperscript{205} See Eph 2:10 and 1 Pet 4:11 for examples.

\textsuperscript{206} Tim Dearborn, \textit{Beyond Duty}, 88.

\textsuperscript{207} See Appendix J: “Team Member Journal - Sample Pages” for examples.
project. Therefore, journaling should begin before departure. This not only establishes it as a practice to be maintained, but also may record some insightful information about the overall experience of STM, as memorable moments can occur before and after on-field times. The journal can become a helpful tool to recap and relate to others after the conclusion of the project.

Scott Kirby provides a list of suggested questions and topics including:

- High points of the day
- Interesting people met
- Work accomplished
- Problems or frustrations faced
- Prayer and praise items
- Spiritual lessons learned or commitments made.\(^{208}\)

**Conclusion**

There is no way for leaders to prepare teams for every contingency on the field. Obstacles will likely arise that will threaten to disrupt schedules, distract team members, hinder objectives, and obscure the team’s purpose. However, teams can implement key components to avoid, overcome, or properly respond to hindrances. First, proper planning and regular communication will keep each participant focused on common objectives. This includes maintaining a biblical perspective of missions and ministry. Second, prayer will connect the team with the divine source of power and direction necessary for successfully fulfilling their purpose. Finally, ongoing

\(^{208}\) Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 173.
assessment will allow proper evaluations and interaction, as well as provide opportunities to respond and adjust as the project develops. Acknowledging God’s work in both challenges and blessings will enable the team to focus on their purpose, accomplish all that God allows, and consider their time and efforts as eternal investments.
CHAPTER 5: POST-FIELD ELEMENTS, DEBRIEFING, AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

At the conclusion of the on-field involvement, the responsibilities of each category of participants changes once more. Supporters now shift the focus of their prayers and seek to connect with returning team members for a report. The sending church focuses its attention on following up with both team members and the host missionary. The participants look for ways to successfully report their experiences and transition back into their home culture and ongoing ministry.\(^{209}\) The author will expound on the necessity of preparing team members for their return to everyday life. As important as preliminary training is for the success of the trip, debriefing is equally vital for the long-term impact in the participants’ lives. Any temporary stirrings must be translated into legitimate changes in perspective and behavior. Further, in order for the church to maintain a successful, sustainable program of STM, reporting to leadership, financial supporters, and members will be crucial. Ultimately, the local church will work to continue to develop each project and team into a successful and sustainable short-term ministry that will benefit both individual members as well as the overall long-term missionary program of the church.

Many “short-term practitioners and theorists” assert that “what happens after the STM is the most important ingredient in the entire practice.”\textsuperscript{210} The consensus is that simple exposure to something positive is no guarantee of a proper response or application. In fact, they posit that “many short-termers have experienced just enough to be dangerous.” They urge project leaders to develop “a thoughtful and intentional follow-through plan to help students fit the pieces of the experiential puzzle together.”\textsuperscript{211} Concerning his observations, Peterson laments, “It’s unfortunate that many churches don’t provide adequate follow up and integration opportunities for returning short-termers.”\textsuperscript{212} This process is not merely to address potential struggles, but to help cement spiritual lessons that individuals learn as a part of their STM involvement. Finally, it allows the church itself to build a healthy program that will continue into the future.\textsuperscript{213}

Too many individuals consider the STM project as an end rather than a means. For this reason, some prefer the term “follow through” rather than “follow up” to describe the post-field assessments and counsel. The first implies an ongoing process to incorporate lessons in to life. The latter represents merely a singular activity that caps off an event.\textsuperscript{214}

The element of STM projects designed to transition team members from the field back to home is commonly referred to as debriefing. Many consider this a singular event or limited

\textsuperscript{210} Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, \textit{TransforMission: Making Disciples Through Short-Term Missions}, 222.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{212} Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, \textit{Maximum Impact Short-term Mission}, 143.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 144.

\textsuperscript{214} Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, \textit{TransforMission}, 229.
process done before leaving the project or immediately upon return. However, in order to adequately fulfill the purpose of STM for both the individual and the sending church, it must be a more comprehensive plan involving at least the components discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Completion of On-Field Project

Part of the responsibility of team leaders is to help participants frame their experience into a bigger perspective of missions involvement. This may begin with a closing team meeting and continue through several months of follow-up interactions.215 In their zeal to “close up shop” and return home, some teams overlook the wonderful opportunity to leave a lingering sweet spirit with their hosts and nationals and prepare for their return to everyday life at home. As noted in the previous chapter, team meetings allow all participants to understand their experiences and find ways to practically apply the lessons they are learning. An anonymous individual who participated in this project’s research indicated that “the God Moments as the workers are doing their tasks are presented every evening as we debrief and prepare for the next day.”216 This type of recollection and evaluation is a valuable element of the team’s closing meeting as well.

A final meeting while on the field will certainly deal with logistical matters such as packing, completing necessary documents, and the team’s travel schedule and procedures.

215 Ibid., 206.

216 See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”
However, it should also include time for reflection on team members’ experiences. This is an excellent opportunity for teams to consider what they leave behind with their host and the ministry in which they have served. This time of sharing allows participants to solidify their memories, as well as frame them in relation to the perspectives of other team members.

During the end-of-project team meeting, each participant is given the opportunity to share thoughts, highlights, low moments, and general experiences and impressions. Most teams will experience some negative incidents. These may include misbehavior of team members, language or cultural miscues, or tension within the team. Special care must be taken to properly address difficulties without placing too much emphasis on them. Team leaders should emphasize positive aspects so that the meeting does not become a time to complain or vent. However, they should also note negative elements, especially if mentioned by multiple participants. This will allow for effective evaluation and correction for future projects and teams. Leaders will reinforce those general lessons that the Lord taught throughout the project, enabling participants to retain and build on these foundations.

Leaders can further assist this time of reflection by suggesting particular questions that are answered simply, yet can significantly deepen their interpretation. For example, David Johnstone offers the following structure for post-project reflection and perception.

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Ultimately, this assessment enables participants to understand the lessons learned and apply them into their spiritual lives.

David Forward offers one more usage for these remembrances. As individuals reveal their most rewarding experiences, team leaders will take notes of what is shared. These thoughts will be included in a personal thank you note which will be mailed to each team member at their home a few weeks after their return. This can be an excellent tool to spark participants’ memory, challenge them about ongoing application, and prepare them for future growth and service opportunities.

**Evaluation**

The final team meeting will be an initial step for the ongoing process of evaluation and assessment. Evaluation occurs at two levels: the individual and the local church. At the core of evaluation for both in the spiritual context is the question: “Why did God allow me (us) to have this experience?” Although evaluations will begin at the earliest opportunity, they must continue,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Reflection and Perception</th>
<th>Foundational Question</th>
<th>Example Questions After Dinner in a Host Culture</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>What is happening?</td>
<td>What did I hear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What did I see?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>What did I feel?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What did I eat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Why is it happening?</td>
<td>Why were our hosts hospitable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>What do I need to do because it is happening?</td>
<td>Am I as generous and hospitable to my guests?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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perhaps even for several months, as individual participants and church leaders adjust to changes and adequately examine responses.

The research conducted for this project reveals that the primary means used to evaluate the success of a project was through written surveys or personal interviews with individuals involved in various capacities. As expected, the majority (60%) conducted these surveys or interviews with participating team members. A smaller number of responses indicated that hosts (36%) and/or team leaders (38%) were surveyed to measure achievements of the project.\textsuperscript{220}

Part of the requirements for participation on the team will include producing a written report after returning. This may be used for project evaluation or inclusion in materials the church produces. These personal records should include what God taught during the project, what unique things they saw and did, and how their experiences will make them a more effective Christian and minister. The exit interview of participants is another essential element for evaluation and improvement. Upon returning home, individuals should have the opportunity to privately share their impressions. An anonymous survey provides a way to receive honest, firsthand critiques.\textsuperscript{221} Alternately, participants may be scheduled for a private meeting with team leaders to discuss their experiences and offer suggestions for future projects.\textsuperscript{222}

Evaluations cannot be limited to questions that can be addressed with simple “yes” and “no” answers. Rather they should utilize scaled ratings, narrative responses, or individual

\textsuperscript{220} See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”

\textsuperscript{221} Appendix K: “Debrief Survey.”

\textsuperscript{222} Mathew Backholer, \textit{How to Plan, Prepare and Successfully Complete Your Short-Term Mission}, 253.
opinions. Evaluations from individual team members will provide insights that leaders will not gain otherwise. Leaders may be tempted to allow for anonymous evaluations so that team members will feel free to share honestly. However, most teams will have a limited number of participants, making it easy to determine respondents by the process of elimination. Instead, participants should be encouraged to respond thoroughly and honestly, even if providing answers that appear critical. After all, the goal is not only to assess, but to correct and adapt for future teams. Leaders who review the forms should “be aware that seemingly negative comments are not directed personally at you.” Further, those concerns or criticisms that are personally directed are hopefully offered in a proper biblical spirit.223 The apostle Paul encourages believers to speak the truth in love and grow together into maturity.224

Personal evaluations should be conducted with certain general considerations in mind. First, they are to assess the spiritual commitment of the participant based on their project involvement. Next, they should challenge the team member to continue the spiritual disciplines that were developed while on the team. This includes helping them commit to practice a “world-Christian lifestyle” upon their return. Such a perspective involves redirecting any frustration with the shallowness of society by developing and honing wise and sacrificial practices. During the period of reflection and assessment, individuals must learn to serve where they are. At the conclusion of a successful project, many STM participants express their longing to stay on the


224 Eph 2:21; 4:15, KJV.
field because of their positive experiences. However, they fail to serve in the local church in any meaningful way once they return. The key is to focus on the nature of service rather than the location of it. Finally, as a part of their personal introspection, individuals should be encouraged to consider their service as a “missions mobilizer,” seeking to influence others to be actively involved in missions. This practice alone can maximize one’s impact exponentially.

The pastor and church leadership should strive to establish STM projects within the framework of a larger missionary program. They should be aware that some returning participants will define missions engagement in terms of their personal STM experience only. Proper and adequate follow-up encourages them to see STM as the first step in ongoing participation. As Kirby appropriately notes, “God’s intention is that the impact of this short-term trip last for a lifetime.” Similar to the servant in the parable of the talents (Mat 25:4-13), the Lord expects believers to leverage such experiences for His purposes.

**Re-Entry Issues**

Part of the debriefing process for participants will be to equip them to deal with “reverse culture shock.” Martha VanCise posits that this response “can be more emotionally distressing than the shock of entering a new culture.” Tim Dearborn actually refers to this as “culture

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227 Scott H. Kirby, *The Short-Term Missions Adventure*, 97.

228 Martha VanCise, *Successful Mission Teams*, 201.
grief” because of the intense emotions associated with it. Team members should be aware of the natural responses and feelings of confusion, sadness, detachment, and grief. They discover that life went on without them and their team during their deployment. Team members will require time and attention for readjustment and reentry.

Peter Jordan delineates some of the most common challenges that retiring missionaries face as they transition from the foreign field and ministry to life in their home country. These include shifting one’s primary focus from spiritual to practical concerns, being surrounded by affluence instead of poverty, and adjusting from “daily Christian encouragement and fellowship” to “Wednesday evening and Sunday morning services.” While most notable among retiring long-term missionaries, STM participants should expect to encounter these and other similar issues when returning from their project.

If not properly addressed, such hindrances can lead team members toward a critical attitude regarding their own culture, family, and friends. Perhaps less noticeable, but more common and equally troubling, are participants who simply return to their normal routine without any noticeable growth or desire to change. In effect, the STM project makes little

229 Tim Dearborn, Beyond Duty, 92.


231 Tim Dearborn, Beyond Duty, 92.

appreciable difference in their Christian life.\textsuperscript{233} This is one reason that many have begun to question the validity, usefulness, and necessity of contemporary STM programs in America.\textsuperscript{234}

Some reentry struggles center on physical issues, while others affect the mental or spiritual condition of team members. First, team members may be physically exhausted at the conclusion of their project. Long days of effort followed by taxing travel schedules take a toll on both the body and mind. Often school or work is waiting immediately upon return, when all they want to do is rest and recover. This may also lead to the disappointing reality that what one has anticipated and worked toward for many months has come to its expected conclusion. This feeling of “let down” can affect the team members’ outlook on life in general. Further, team members often face an uncomfortable reality that cultural norms at home are not at all like the things they experienced on the field.\textsuperscript{235}

A related internal conflict takes place when some team members return and realize that they actually enjoy everyday luxuries such as “smooth roads, the abundance of food, hot showers, and [a] climate-controlled home.”\textsuperscript{236} The affluence, excess, waste, and ingratitude back home often produce a sense of shame and guilt in participants who have seen the neediness of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{233} Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, \textit{TransforMission}, 225.


\textsuperscript{235} Scott Kirby, \textit{Equipped for Adventure}, 179-181.

\textsuperscript{236} Martha VanCise, \textit{Successful Mission Teams}, 201.
\end{footnotesize}
another place. At the same time, they may feel resentment toward the materialistic attitudes of friends and loved ones. They begin to notice the frivolous, irresponsible, wasteful elements of their own culture. Financial matters are especially troubling as they expose what people consider to be the most important things. Participants may naturally make comparisons to the simplicity of life they experienced in a foreign culture. A familiar comparison made by returning participants declares, “What some are spending for a cup of coffee could support a family for a day on the field.”

Another factor is the struggle to adjust to the pace and focus of their society. For perhaps two weeks, team members may have served in a simpler culture that operated at a slower pace and seemed to focus more on people than on things. Immediately upon return, there will be a list of practical actions including unpacking, cleaning up, and catching up on sleep. They are then rather quickly thrust into the brisk-paced environment that seems concerned with tasks and accomplishments at the expense of others. Returning participants find no time for reflection.

However, team members should be encouraged to be continually grateful for the Lord’s provision of resources, protection, and guidance. As they are washing laundry, they can be thankful that the Lord allowed their luggage to return home with them. Not everyone has that experience. Further, they can remember those they served who have fewer possessions.

A further struggle for many is the concentration of their daily efforts. While on the field, they have been able to primarily focus their attention and labors on ministry-related

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237 Ibid., 202.
responsibilities. Although taxing, this provides a satisfying sense of fulfillment. Participants are focused on fulfilling their team’s expressed purpose. Therefore, they can not only measure their daily success, but also believe that their work has been worthwhile, bearing long-lasting, even eternal, value. Suddenly, they return to tasks that seem mundane and material at best.

Participants often recognize that their lives seemed to be more meaningful during their engagement as a part of an STM project. This may be especially true if family and friends do not appear to show adequate interest and agreement with the participant’s new perspective.  

The alternative difficulty that almost all STM participants face upon their return is the regression to the perceptions and behavior they held prior to their involvement. The strong impressions soon fade into mild memories and former practices soon return. Roger Randall cautions individuals about “compartmentalizing” their lives. Instead of segregating various aspects of one’s life, team members should seek to integrate their experiences into every facet of their lives.  

This is often best facilitated by immediate involvement in some form of ministry which allows the participant to transition into ongoing, meaningful ministry.

Team members must be equipped to biblically address apparent inequities, to reconcile the sharp contrasts, and discover what significant personal changes God is calling them to apply. As Kirby posits, “You can’t change America, but you can change you.” Rather than chafe at the weaknesses and failings of the surrounding society, returning participants should look inward for

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ways to change based on what they have experienced and learned. Leaders can help with this adjustment period by prescribing a course of action for returning participants. They will not be able to enforce or direct it as they did during the on-field portion of their interaction. However, they can offer helpful suggestions and guidelines that team members can utilize.

While there are particular difficulties to be faced upon return, the spiritual benefits for individual participants are significant. The results of a 1991 study by Roger Peterson and Timothy Peterson revealed “substantial changes in prayer financial giving, commitment to world mission, mission-related activities and education, and in feelings about returning to the mission field” among those who had been involved in STM projects.

**Debrief**

Just as a SCUBA diver must carefully decompress when ascending back to the water’s surface, project team members must be re-acclimated to their home environment after being immersed in STM ministry. Dealing with re-entry issues requires a concentrated, directed response. As mentioned earlier, it is important to begin inspection and evaluation as soon as possible at the conclusion of a project. David Forward asserts “Never will their experiences be fresher in their minds than” during their journey home. Scott Kirby emphasizes that “if people don’t do something in response to the volunteer experience in the first 60 days home, then they

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will lose what they have gained.” Most team members will return rather quickly to their normal routines following their on-field involvement. Those taking vacation or personal time for the project may go back to the office the day after they return. Perhaps only teenagers traveling during their summer vacations will have the luxury of sleeping in and taking a few days to a week to “recover.” However, to experience successful long-term results, participants must be properly equipped to absorb, interpret, and apply their on-field experiences. This begins with an organized debriefing process.

Team members should be adequately prepared for what they face when they return home, just as they were equipped before the project for cultural differences. They will be expected to adjust to a new normality. No matter their length of service, team members will likely have made significant adjustments in their daily practices. Further, they will have seen and experienced things that have shaped their outlook on their lives and the world. Many of these perspectives and practices will be used by God for Christian growth and maturity. Therefore, returning participants should not seek to adjust back to their pre-field ways, but rather integrate changes into their normal life. Debriefing is a vital tool to help participants do this effectively.

The results of the research conducted for this project indicate that the strong majority of participants (77%) were involved in some form of debriefing as a part of their last STM involvement. Of those who did undergo debriefing, 75% did so while still on the field. A further

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243 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 175.

244 Martha VanCise, *Successful Mission Teams*, 200.
21% underwent debriefing within seven days of returning from the field. A minority of respondents (4%) indicated that their debriefing took place more than a week after the project concluded. These results appear to support the understanding of both the importance of preparing team members for their return to their home culture, as well as its prompt timing.  

Debriefing is crucial for team leaders, not only personally, but for the longevity of the church’s STM program and the success of future teams. The insight gained through inspection allows areas of success to be reinforced and repeated and for negative aspects to be addressed and corrected for subsequent teams. Wilder and Parker recommend both team and individual debrief meetings upon returning from the field. These sessions allow leaders to address common issues as a group, while formulating specific plans for application and continuing growth for individual participants. The team meeting will involve leaders, team members, and the pastor. Although facilitated by staff and leadership, the bulk of interaction should come from team members. They will be encouraged to talk about their experiences, what they have learned, and how they have and will apply this to their daily lives. Leaders will have distributed evaluation forms for each individual to complete. They will be returned for review at this official debrief meeting.

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245 See Appendix A: “Short-Term Missions Survey Results.”


248 See Appendix K: “Debrief Survey.”
Debriefing does not need to be merely an academic process. A team reunion is an enjoyable time for all participants to fellowship and reminisce. This reunion will also serve as closure for the project, as well as establish a look forward and perhaps prepare for involvement in future projects. David Forward posits that a fellowship time for team members scheduled several weeks after their return can be a highlight of the STM project. This gives enough time for participants to adjust to their routine, while still allowing memories to be fresh and easily recalled. He encourages team members to be responsible for planning, while allowing the leaders to simply attend and enjoy. The evening can include opportunities for each team member to:

- Share one entry from his journal.
- Describe what was the most meaningful part of the trip.
- Illustrate how her life will be changed because of the experience.
- Tell about something God enabled him to do that he did not think he could do.
- Describe her relationship with Jesus Christ before and after the trip.\(^\text{249}\)

This may also be the occasion in which team members can rehearse some of the lighter difficulties they encountered. The combination of shared experience and the passing of time can allow individuals to laugh about what transpired. While maintaining transparency and honesty in reporting, not all experiences can be shared widely or freely after returning home.\(^\text{250}\)

The spiritual capstone of the event will be a final challenge for team members to tackle as a journal entry: “What is next? Where do I go from here to better support mission work?”\(^\text{251}\)


\(^{250}\) Ibid., 182.

Dearborn further expounds on this evaluative assignment by proffering eight sets of questions to be considered:

- **Who am I?** What have I learned about myself?
- **Who is God?** How has my understanding of God changed?
- **Who are we?** What have I learned about my community?
- **What is the impact of culture on faith?** How do I see life and the gospel differently because of what I’ve experienced?
- **What’s wrong with the world?** Why is there such suffering and injustice in it?
- **What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?** What have I learned about discipleship?
- **What’s of value?** How do I live here in light of what I’ve seen there?
- **Where am I going?** What is God calling me to be and to do as a result of this experience?²⁵²

In fact, since participants have begun the practice of regularly journaling, they should be encouraged to see the practical and spiritual benefits of this discipline and continue it as a tool for spiritual health and growth.²⁵³

### Reporting

Once team members have returned from the field, had time to acclimate themselves, and begun the follow-through process with church leaders, they should prepare to communicate with

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²⁵³ Ibid., 97.
their sending church and personal supporters. Even though the project appears to be officially ended, this time of reporting is a crucial element of STM ministry for both the individual’s spiritual benefit and the establishment of an ongoing program of the local church. More than just sharing a travel log or vacation pictures, the report to supporters and the local church has a strong biblical precedent. When Paul and Barnabas completed their harrowing, yet productive, first missionary endeavor, they returned to those who had sent them from Antioch. They understood the importance of fully communicating with all parties who had been involved with the project. After assembling that church which had sent them, “they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

Presentation

The New Testament Baptist Church will set aside an entire evening service for their Project Serve STM teams to report on their project upon their return. This official team presentation will be scheduled with the church calendar to allow for the earliest possible opportunity that will allow for sufficient preparation time. However, it should not be rushed. Scott Kirby cautions that, “poorly organized, rambling, lengthy, travelogue presentations will do more harm for the cause of missions in your church than good.” This event an excellent opportunity to invite supporters, family members, and interested friends to see and hear firsthand

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254 Acts 14:27, KJV.

255 Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 178.
testimonies about the project. Teams which have used evangelistic presentations such as skits, puppet shows, or musical packages will have the opportunity to present them in this service.

This presentation will obviously include more than just images of people and places. The team should report on spiritual aspects of the project and specific prayers that were answered. This will allow individuals who supported the team with financial contributions and prayer to see firsthand the rewards of their involvement.

As much as possible, each team member will prepare a brief testimony of their experience with this team. While attempting to provide insight beyond just travel experiences, team members should also be careful to present the project in a positive light as much as possible. Individuals should strive for honesty and transparency, while not overemphasizing the details of personal conflicts that team members faced during their involvement. Rather, they should be encouraged to search for aspects of their efforts that provided a particular sense of fulfillment. While some of the troubling events may eventually be viewed as mildly humorous by those who experienced them, these “inside jokes” were not shared by everyone. Family members, church members, and supporters will not likely be able to interpret them without lingering questions or concerns. However, discussing certain obstacles faced as a team can give a more complete view of missionary endeavors and challenge church members toward consistent prayer. This is especially true if hindrances were overcome while on the field as the result of directed prayers.

Ron Blue offers the following list of advice for those standing before a congregation to share their experiences most efficiently and effectively:

- Record stories. Write down details during the trip to remember later.
- Be ready. Have a brief story to share with individuals when asked.
- Take initiative.
- Speak up. Project your voice clearly with volume and proper diction.
- Start strong. Include a “hook” in the opening sentence to capture the audience’s attention.
- Paint verbal pictures. Select descriptions that enable the audience to visualize the event.
- Illustrate your story. Include high-quality photos or video. Use appropriate hand gestures, facial expressions, and verbal modulation.
- Focus on people. As missions focuses on people encountering the Gospel, be sure to include stories that are centered on individuals. This is the most effective way to “touch the hearts of listeners and move them to a deeper commitment to missions.”
- Convey important lessons. Beyond merely entertaining the listeners, one’s presentation should reinforce a biblical principle.
- Accentuate the positive. An honest and transparent presentation will not ignore the struggles, but it will also not focus on them.
- Encourage interaction. Questions may be answered by team leaders or the individual team member best equipped to respond.
- Stop on time. Respect the team and the listeners by staying within the boundaries of the time allotted.257

Correspondence

Another important component of post-field reporting is correspondence involving the church, individual team members, and supporters. This element should begin before the team departs the field. During one of the last on-field team meetings, each team member should share at least one meaningful experience. Leaders will take brief notes and include a summary as a part of a personal note sent to participants upon their return from the field. Encouraging words and a challenge for application will accompany personal thanks from the leaders.258 This note is an excellent foundation for follow-through interaction between leaders and team members. Additionally, the pastor and appropriate church staff (youth pastor, Sunday school teacher, or small group leader) will prepare a brief, personal note of thanks to team members. This can underpin the important role that STM participants have in the overall outreach of the church.

The church bears a responsibility to provide financial supporters with a contemporary receipt of charitable gifts for the purpose of accounting and taxes.259 Rather than simply providing a receipt that acknowledges the amount of financial donations given toward the cost of the project, the church will send a letter thanking individuals for their support of the project, recognizing also the impact of their gift in the life of the participant and the success of the project. The letter should also briefly explain the role that STM projects have in the church’s missionary outreach. This emphasizes the sense of partnership that individual contributors have


in the overall missions program. As many supporters may come from outside the church family, this letter has the potential to not only introduce them to, but also involve them in, future projects or ministries. At the bottom of the letter (or on a separate, included form) the church will provide the official receipt of contributions in compliance with IRS standards.²⁶⁰

Team members will also craft a personal letter to be sent to each financial and prayer supporter. This contact should be made as early as possible, ideally within the first two weeks. Rather than simply reporting on the trip, the letter should be built around a framework of gratitude, acknowledging the necessity of those who provide finances and intercession through the STM program. The letter should include a summary of the project’s purpose and the specific ways the team successfully fulfilled it. This supports the endeavor as being more than simply travel experiences and a safe and enjoyable trip. Team members may also share new requests for the re-entry and follow up period.²⁶¹

Although email is appropriate for this report, as it easily allows the inclusion of photographs as attachments, team members might also consider delivering a small souvenir from the field as an appropriate gift for their supporters. Whether supporters are a part of the local sending church or not, team members should include a personal invitation to the public event held at church.²⁶² Just as leaders must verify that support letters are completed and sent out, so

²⁶⁰ See Appendix L: “Supporter Post-field Letter.”
²⁶¹ Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, Maximum Impact Short-term Mission, 139.
²⁶² Ibid., 146.
team leaders must consider it a post-field responsibility to ensure that individual participants send these letters to supporters.\(^{263}\)

Team presentation and reporting is vital for sustaining an ongoing STM program. First, teams and individual members have a responsibility to report to their financial and prayer supporters. However, this element also allows the sending church to be invigorated, specifically concerning the evangelistic and missionary program of the church. This excitement is especially meaningful for those unable to travel, as they experience a stronger connection to foreign missions and specific missionaries.\(^ {264}\) The team presentation also serves as an effective recruiting tool for exposing future participants to the concept and program. Reporting can also “strengthen students’ post-decision commitments.”\(^ {265}\) Encouraging responses from supporters can be an invaluable “reassurance” necessary for maintaining long-term commitments.\(^ {266}\)

**Long-Term Ministry**

**Individual Participant Evaluation**

As personal evaluations are conducted and completed, specific goals, both spiritual and practical, should be determined by each team member. As in most areas, the goals are most effective when they are “public, specific, and demanding – yet attainable.”\(^ {267}\) Depending on the

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\(^{263}\) Scott Kirby, *Equipped for Adventure*, 179.


\(^{265}\) Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, *TransformMission*, 207.

\(^{266}\) Ibid.

\(^{267}\) Ibid., 232.
level of interest and involvement of the individual participant, goals may be as simple as signing up to receive future prayer letters from the host ministry and pledging to pray for their missionary host. Others may commit to reading, watching, or listening to resources about missions. Some may set a goal to attend upcoming missions conferences and events at the church. All team members should be encouraged to prayerfully consider a place of significant, ongoing service in the local church. Additionally, during the debrief process, leaders will give each participant a questionnaire to gauge their personal responsiveness to long-term missionary involvement. The primary purpose of this survey is to cultivate an awareness of long-term missions and how to sense the Lord’s direction in the matter.

David Bryant offers suggested applications and goals for returning team members after they have undergone personal evaluation and identified levels of long-term commitment. These include increasing time in personal devotions in order to continue spiritual growth. Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of determining direction is to simply wait quietly for God to speak and move in one’s life. To maximize exposure and understanding, read literature regarding current conditions around the world, especially as it may relate to the Gospel. This allows the Lord to deepen one’s burden for nations and people groups. Without leaving home, individuals can support missionaries on the field through intercessory prayer. Team members will have a new awareness of the value of this type of ministry, having been the focus and recipient of it during their on-field involvement. Finally, Bryant advises team members to share often with

268 Ibid., 231.

269 See Appendix M: “Long-Term Missions Evaluation.”
others what one is learning through reading and prayer. This helps solidify their decisions and the Lord’s direction in their minds. It also provides opportunities to practice the presentation of their burden to others. This will be a necessity during the reporting phase of the project and prove to be a valuable resource for future ministry opportunities.  

These goals may be formulated with assistance from team leaders during the conclusion of their project and by church staff and leadership after returning from the field. Leaders must take an active role in helping team members (especially teens and young adults) apply what they have learned in moving forward toward spiritual growth. They should actively provide insights to guide and challenge participants to increase their prayer, giving, and involvement in the church and its missionary efforts. Team members should be offered the opportunity to serve their local church, communicate with the missionary hosts, be involved in future teams, or consider prolonged or full-time missionary service.

Building upon a theory of goal-setting and motivation, Kurt Ver Beek posits that in order for participants to make permanent changes in attitudes and behavior, they must be surrounded by an environment of accountability that includes goal setting and feedback. He states, “Short-term missions participants are much more likely to successfully experience lasting positive change in their lives if they set specific, public, demanding goals and then are regularly held accountable for their progress.”  

This consistent accountability and encouragement from

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leaders will help transform the positive intentions developed on the field into actual daily practices that carry forward into the future.

Leaders may feel daunted or overwhelmed by the prospect of ongoing meetings, counseling, and mentoring taking up considerable amounts of their time. After all, many are volunteers themselves, who have committed personal time to the project. However, no one needs to be overwhelmed by the continuing counsel of debriefing. First, not all returning team members require the same measure of interaction after their return from the field. Returning participants may be generally separated into three levels. The first group consists of 60% of STM participants who are not likely to participate in a future STM project. Another 30% are likely to participate at some point in the future. A final 10% are likely to progress to another level of involvement, such as mid-term or career missions.272

Further, some returning team members will have a desire to apply the elements they experienced or learned in future service, but will already have an existing supportive environment of family, teachers, and mentors. These will require less intensive involvement from team leaders. However, none of these general principles or statistics should deter leaders from investing their time and attention for returning team members. This is “fertile soil” into which God desires the seed is planted in timely fashion.

272 Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, TransformMission, 230.
One of the most difficult tasks for church and team leaders is to assist their team members in determining their next steps for growth and how to accomplish them. They have returned “challenged and energized for missions” and need to know how to convert that into ongoing opportunities.273 One key way to build upon what God has accomplished during a STM project is to identify or develop ongoing ministries from within the local church. This provides a place for team members to continue to develop their ministry skills, encourages other church members to begin to serve, and fulfills legitimate needs in the surrounding community. While many do not sense the same “glamor and excitement” of overseas service, the Great Commission identifies service at home as the foundation of all evangelistic efforts.274 One helpful perspective is to lessen the dichotomy between the foreign land and one’s home environment when considering fields of service. To this end, Tim Dearborn argues for the eradication of the term “mission field,” instead acknowledging that “every place is a field requiring the missionary activity of our Lord.”275

The local church can help to integrate returning team members into its larger missions outreach by creating service opportunities for them. Beyond plugging participants into volunteer positions within the children’s, youth, or adult classes and outreach ministries, there are avenues that more closely resemble or replicate the foreign field experience. These settings tend to stretch

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273 Ibid., 233.


275 Tim Dearborn, Beyond Duty, 69.
and challenge individuals. The New Testament Baptist Church of Largo has a vital ministry to Spanish-speaking people which includes a complete schedule of worship services, Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, and special events. This is a natural cross-cultural opportunity in which former team members can be actively involved and provide much-needed continuity. This type of service also places proper emphasis on relationships rather than location.\textsuperscript{276}

Church Level Evaluation

As team members and leaders must evaluate their responses to service and formulate applications and goals, so the church must assess its STM program on a larger scale. Every project and trip will be reviewed for both difficulties and successes each year. Just as individuals must answer the question, “What does God want me to do next?”, so too the sending church must examine how it will move forward in its STM endeavors.

These reviews must address any promises made to the host missionary or ministry at any point during the project. This may include verbal commitments or generally understood assurances.\textsuperscript{277} Church leaders should respond appropriately to these promises promptly in order to maintain a proper testimony with hosts, nationals, and other churches or ministries.

On a related note, team leaders can relay any financial opportunities that they observed while on the field. Even if nothing was promised, a special offering received by the church and

\textsuperscript{276} Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, \textit{TransforMission}, 212.

\textsuperscript{277} Scott Kirby, \textit{Equipped for Adventure}, 185.
delivered after the team’s return would be extremely valuable in conveying the message that STM goes well beyond a ten-day travel period. Indeed, every team and project should establish or maintain some longer-term relationship between the sending church and host missionary. STM is always best understood as a component of LTM. The church must examine how it can continue to develop a relationship with a host missionary. It must consider what projects were started or furthered during the course of the STM project that can be further developed or aided with support and involvement by the local church.278

Part of the responsibility and privilege of STM participants is to help their sending church as a whole to understand and work towards its missionary outreach vision.279 Pastors and staff will identify and develop areas of potential service within the local church into which returning participants can most easily assume responsibility, helping them to continue healthy patterns they began on the field.280 Wilder and Parker assert that “the notion that you have to take your students ‘overseas’ to get them engaged in cross-cultural ministry is outdated.”281 In many communities across the United States there are specific neighborhoods composed of people with “customs and worldviews” that are foreign to those born and raised in America.282 Specifically, the population of Pinellas County, Florida has experienced a significant influx of Spanish-

278 Ibid., 101.
279 Ibid., 185.
280 Scott H. Kirby, Short-Term Mission Adventure, 101.
281 Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, TransforMission, 210.
282 Ibid.
speaking people over the last twenty years. In fact, this was a primary motivation for the New Testament Baptist Church to begin a ministry in 2003 devoted to Spanish-speakers. Census reports show that one in five Tampa Bay area residents speak Spanish in their home.\footnote{Caitlin Johnston, “Spanish heard more and more in Tampa Bay, according to U.S. Census,” Tampa Bay Times, January 1, 2016, \url{https://www.tampabay.com/news/spanish-heard-more-and-more-in-tampa-bay-according-to-us-census/2259673} (accessed February 23, 2019).} Recent statistics reveal that 8% of the population of Pinellas County are originally from or identify with Mexico or other Latin American countries.\footnote{Mike Vogel, “Hispanic Diversity in Florida,” Florida Trend, May 1, 2013, \url{https://www.floridatrend.com/article/15517/hispanic-diversity-in-florida-map} (accessed February 23, 2019).} The most common nation of origin for foreign-born residents of Florida is Cuba, with more than 930,000 individuals born there according to 2016 census data.\footnote{DataUsa: Pinellas County, FL, \url{https://datausa.io/profile/geo/pinellas-county-fl/#demographics} (accessed February 23, 2019).} In the providence of God, the influx of immigrants has created an environment in which church members can serve a global community without ever leaving home.\footnote{Michael S. Wilder and Shane W. Parker, TransforMission, 210.}

One of the goals of the church is to maintain a sustainable short-term missionary program that will be an integral part of its long-term missionary outreach. Robinson posits, “In order for STM to be strategic, it must be tied into a long-term strategy with its primary purpose being to help its national hosts to reach their own people and beyond through reproductive church planting.”\footnote{George G. Robinson, Striking the Match: How God is using Ordinary People to Change the World through Short-Term Missions (Franklin, TN: e3 Resources, 2008), 131.} This premise is built upon a repetitive deployment of teams, sometimes even
returning to work on the same foreign field or with the same host missionary. This repetition reflects the pattern of the Apostle Paul’s methodology of mission. He undertook several separate journeys involving a variety of components including, but not limited to, evangelism, preaching to both unbelievers and converts, and discipling and encouraging new believers (Acts 13-28). Roger Peterson notes that for the local church “repetitive deployment contains two elements. The first element is doing more than just one short-term mission. The second element refers to the field location. Some repeat short-termers go back to the same location; others return to new fields they have yet to visit. The Apostle Paul did both.”

The New Testament Baptist Church of Largo will seek to send out teams as part of its Project Serve ministry at least once each year to both familiar fields and new ones where supported missionaries are serving.

Teams that go each year to the same field or the same host ministry are often more effective as the church is able to develop long-term relationships with the missionary and nationals. This allows a continuity that does not happen in other situations. Kurt Ver Beek asserts that “it is the long-term excellent relationships which will contribute most to lasting positive change.” Michael Anthony asserts that one of the key elements to long-term success in any ministry is building relationships. Further, there are two primary ways to foster these types of interaction and relationships: work and play. Both of these types of activities help to

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289 Scott Kirby, Equipped for Adventure, 50.
build a sense of community among participants. This is especially relevant to STM as most projects contain both elements. Team members and nationals will work side-by-side, as well as spending time together in leisure travel and sightseeing excursions. This enables teams and sending churches to sense a strong connection with ministries and individuals on the foreign field. Similarly, repetitive deployments to work with missionaries already supported by the church will deepen those relationships already in place.

**Conclusion**

In his anthropological consideration of missions, Paul Hiebert asserts that the Book of Acts is unfinished in one sense. It begins with Luke’s reference to his earlier record of Jesus’ ministry and teaching but abruptly concludes with the Apostle Paul imprisoned yet still preaching the message of Jesus Christ. The record carries no sense of completion. Rather, the missionary work of bringing that message to the uttermost part of the earth continued on after the book concluded. That work endures to this day, and short-term missionary projects allow many believers to directly participate in foreign efforts.

Ultimately, the church still has a commission that was first delivered by the Lord to His disciples:

> “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20Teaching them to observe all things

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whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, \textit{even} unto the end of the world. Amen.”\textsuperscript{293}

Although para-church organizations can be a great help in facilitating missionary efforts, it remains the responsibility of the local congregation of believers to be the sending and supporting body.

A crucial consideration for the New Testament Baptist Church of Largo must be how to ensure that its STM projects complement its LTM program. Robert Coote posits:

In a world where hundreds of millions have yet to hear the name of Christ and additional millions have never heard the gospel presented effectively in their cultured context, there is no substitute for the career missionary. One can take only limited satisfaction in reports of uncounted thousands of short-termers engaged in missions...[but they] cannot balance a real decline in long-term commitments by men and women who are prepared to take a profoundly incarnational approach to communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to people of other cultures.\textsuperscript{294}

However, as George Robinson suggests, “strategic STM may in fact be the best recruiting tool available to attract and identify potential full-time missionaries, or it may act as a filter to deter those who might otherwise have joined a mission only to come home soon after.”\textsuperscript{295} The desire of New Testament Baptist Church is to continue to be a sending church for career missionaries.\textsuperscript{296}

\textsuperscript{293} Matthew 28:18–20, KJV.


\textsuperscript{295} George G. Robinson, \textit{Striking the Match}, 51.

\textsuperscript{296} The New Testament Baptist Church currently serves as a sending church for four full-time individuals and families. Frank & Marge Thompson (England), Greg & Mary Albert (Wales), Kaitlynne Dixon (Guatemala), and Justin & Becka Trill (Thailand).
As noted earlier, many contemporary missiologists are questioning the validity and efficacy of short-term missions. The large number of agencies, institutions, and churches that are sending out STM teams each year has brought increased focus, and even scrutiny, on the projects and the concept itself. Many are asking if the money donated for young people to travel each summer could be better spent on support for career missionaries and established ministries. Academic and practical missiologists lament the cultural insensitivity displayed by STM teams that damage or hinder the host ministry.  

However, there are numerous benefits to individuals as well as the local churches who send them and their worldwide missionary efforts. Increased personal exposure and involvement tends to spark long-term investments of time, money, and effort. The necessity of prayer warriors who remain behind but are uniquely involved is emphasized and their efforts fortified by STM involvement.

Elizabeth Lightbody, a former STM coordinator with SEND International and missions professor at Moody Bible Institute, asserts, “Short-term ministry is a problem only when people go unprepared.” Developing a stable and successful STM program such as Project Serve enables the local church to prepare its people for engagement, whether that means staying at home and offering prayer and financial support, or going to the field as a team member. It mobilizes the entire church to be intimately involved in the Great Commission.

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297 Robinson, *Striking the Match*, 165.

The Project Serve STM ministry is effective in introducing church members to the work on foreign fields and inspiring them to participate in the greater program of missionary efforts. It challenges individuals, especially young people, to consider how they might serve in missions throughout their life. It provides an avenue for financial involvement from all of its members. The program increases the church’s firsthand outreach to missionaries and long-term ministry. Because of these factors, it will continue to be a vital component of the long-term missionary program of the New Testament Baptist Church of Largo when properly implemented.
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Appendix A

Short-Term Missions Survey Results

1. Has your church or ministry conducted or hosted a Short-Term Missionary project?

- Yes 93% (104)
- No 7% (8)

If not, would you share any specific reasons?

- Could not get anyone.
- We had one church come to do a specific project for us. They also helped with costs for accommodation and assisted in the purchase of material for the build of a cabin.
- We have not been the host but we have helped other Missionaries host work teams for building a youth camp.
- No specific reason. Our ministry here in Portugal is still very small. We have had no real opportunity to host one. We have had one High school student here for a month to help with camp, but that is the extent of our hosting.
- In my opinion, there might be a few reasons:
  2. How to benefit both sides of the trip. The people coming and our church.
• We have hosted a lot of church members and pastors who come for vacation. We are able to show them what we do. They attend bible studies, church service, etc.
• I will say I have struggled as a missionary seeing some of the purposes of trips. Often times if you fly a small group to build a building all the funds that were spent could to get the team there could have built 2 buildings. On the other side the experience of the team can change him for jump deeper into missions. Also knowing the language and culture is essential for true communication. With a missions team that can't take place. So most of the benefits I see is for the team coming. With that being said I encourage every Christian to take a trip, whether it is an organized trip or simply a short vacation to experience How God can move. I have seen to many people think the only way God moves is through our western idea of giving more money. But when you see a man whose parents have had a funeral for him just because he was saved and baptized that challenges your presets on "Who God Is."
• I was a teen in the 60's, such ministries were not common at that time.
• No one contacted me about a Short-Term missionary.
• I have a new missionary with me now but He and his wife came to stay on the field.
• I have been on them as an attendant and member of the church, but no church I have been in leadership with has been on one yet. As a missionary myself, our ministry is not at the point in which we could host a short-term missionary group.
• My husband pastored a church where he and the youth minister hosted a trip to Belgium and France. Now has a missionary we are the host missionaries of short term missions trips.
• Being in South America has always made this very difficult. Since most of these trips are done in the Summer when it is winter in Uruguay.
• We did have a group come for a visit more than fifteen years ago but not for a specific project.
2. Do you purposefully host or conduct Short-Term Missionary projects on a regular basis?

Do you purposefully host or conduct Short-Term Missionary projects on a regular basis?

- Yes 68% (75)
- No 32% (35)

If so, what is the frequency of these projects?

- More than 3 each year 13% (11)
- 2-3 each year 24% (21)
- Annually 30% (26)
- Every other year 8% (7)
- Less frequently 24% (21)
3. In what capacity have you personally participated in Short-Term Missionary projects? Check all that apply:

- Missionary helping other missionaries with the project.
- I have personally participated in the short-term missionary program for the BBFI. I completed 20 months of internship on the field of Portugal.
- I was a short-term missionary with the BBFI International in both Slovakia and Great Britain.
4. In how many projects / trips have you participated?

![Bar chart showing distribution of number of projects/trips participated.]

- 1-2 trips: 15% (16 responses)
- 3-4 trips: 28% (30 responses)
- 5-6 trips: 13% (14 responses)
- 7-10 trips: 12% (13 responses)
- More than 10: 32% (35 responses)
5. What is the primary criterion you use to determine the main purpose of a trip?

![Pie chart showing the distribution of preferences for trip purposes.]

- Expressed preference of participants 8% (9)
- Skills or abilities of participants 18% (19)
- Preference of pastor or leader 10% (11)
- Need of host missionary or ministry 55% (59)
- Ability to measure results 3% (3)
- Other (please specify) 6% (6)

Specified responses to “Other”:

- We use the available skills but the purpose is always evangelism and discipleship.
- Needs of host and experience for participants.
- All the above. I believe each trip should have a purpose/goal and it depends on that specific trip.
- I went to assist other missionaries over the period of six years on foreign fields.
- Exposure of missions to church members.
- A combination of 2, 3, and 4 (Skills or abilities of participants, Preference of pastor or leader, need of host missionary or ministry).
6. How far in advance did you begin the planning process for the project?

![Pie chart showing the distribution of planning lead times for the project.]

- More than 24 months: 4% (4)
- Between 16-24 months: 12% (13)
- Between 13-15 months: 17% (18)
- Between 10-12 months: 35% (38)
- Between 7-9 months: 14% (15)
- Between 4-6 months: 13% (14)
- Less than 4 months: 6% (6)
7. How many hours of training did participants receive before the trip?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of Training</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 hours</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5-10 hours</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 11-15 hours</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 16-20 hours</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 hours</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
8. What was the length of the trip including travel time?

- More than 18 days 7% (8)
- Between 15-18 days 5% (5)
- Between 11-14 days 28% (30)
- Between 7-10 days 52% (56)
- Less than 7 days 8% (9)
9. Including leaders, what was the total number of participants?

Including leaders, what was the total number of participants?

- 1-5 participants 6% (6)
- 6-10 participants 27% (27)
- 11-15 participants 23% (23)
- 16-20 participants 12% (12)
- 21-25 participants 14% (14)
- 26-30 participants 2% (2)
- 31-40 participants 5% (5)
- 41-50 participants 3% (3)
- More than 50 participants 3% (3)
10. What was the ratio of leaders to team members?

- Between 1:2 and 1:3 - 13% (13)
- Between 1:4-1:5 - 28% (29)
- Between 1:6 and 1:7 - 31% (32)
- Between 1:8 and 1:9 - 12% (12)
- 1:10 or greater - 17% (17)
11. What was the primary purpose of the project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture or literature distribution</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBS or camp</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational (teaching English, etc.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian needs (orphanage, feeding center)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical education (Biblic institute, seminary classes)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure of team members to foreign culture</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please Specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific responses to “Other”:

- Encourage missionaries and national pastors.
- Each week had a different goal. 1. Biblical Education. 2. Exposure to a foreign culture. 3. Seeing how God can move in a way that would challenge presets.
- Since we have had many groups, almost all of the categories apply at one time or another.
- Encourage the national church and pastor.
- Relationship for mutual service.
- Retreats for missionaries.
- Combination of all of them.
- Music ministry team.
• A combination of evangelism, tract distribution, Biblical education, and exposure of team members to foreign culture (allowing the team members to see the vast spiritual need on the mission field and experience a week of meeting that need as a missionary would).
• Evangelism, Scripture distribution, VBS, exposure to culture.

Do you consider one of these primary purposes to be of greater importance than others?

- Yes (If so, which one?) 59% (60)
- No 41% (42)
Specific responses other than the categories listed:

- Many times there are multiple things going on, so one answer does not apply to the question.
- Any purpose above can achieve moving the Gospel forward.
- Doing whatever helps our missionaries plant churches.
- Casting vision for missions is one of the things that everyone can achieve. Work can and probably should be done by locals, better for less.
- Those that meet spiritual rather than physical needs.
12. Did you conduct debriefing for participants?

Did you conduct debriefing for participants?

- Yes 78% (80)
- No 22% (23)

If so, when did it take place?

If so, when did it take place?

- On the field 76% (62)
- Within 7 days of returning from the field 21% (17)
- More than 7 days after returning 4% (3)
13. What methods did you use to evaluate the success of a project after completion? Check all that apply:

- Interview or survey participants 60% (59)
- Interview or survey hosts 36% (35)
- Interview or survey leaders 38% (37)
- Measure evangelistic results (attendance at meetings, spiritual decisions, etc.) 28% (27)
- Evaluate other criteria (please list) 21% (21)

Specific responses to “Evaluate other criteria”:

- What was completed.
- Work completed.
- Listen to the feedback from those who interacted with the team.
- Amount of work accomplished, quality of work done, participation of participants, interaction with nationals.
- The spirit of both host & participants.
- Some would be willing if God called to return as missionaries.
- Building removal was completed.
- Every project has its elements of success and failure. But the relationships that are built and how we glorified God is the way we measure success.
• How much building was completed.
• Enthusiasm towards missions.
• If souls were reached and work accomplished.
• What the leaders and participants thought.
• We would follow up with participants. When participants came back they were usually on a "spiritual roller coaster" (They saw how God could use them on the field). We wanted to make sure that we nurtured that experience so that they will desire to serve the Lord full time ministry.
• We like to interview national people involved too. Evangelistic results are quantified but are difficult to put into metrics as long term life change is the final indicator of success.
• All of the above.
• The work that work that was accomplished.
• Reception at orphanages.
• During the debriefing we tried to evaluate the impact on the visitors and used numbers to measure the evangelistic results.
• We have to keep medical records for the health department. The God Moments as the workers are doing their tasks are presented every evening as we de brief and prepare for the next day.
14. How would you rate the following statement?

Determining a specific primary purpose for a Short-Term Missionary project is a necessity.

How would you rate the following statement?
Determining a specific primary purpose for a Short-Term Missionary project is a necessity.

- Very Important 85% (94)
- Somewhat Important 13% (14)
- Neither important nor unimportant 2% (2)
- Somewhat unimportant 0%
- Unimportant 0%
Appendix B

Potential Host Missionary Questionnaire

A Missions Outreach of New Testament Baptist Church

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE
POTENTIAL HOST MISSIONARY

1. Do you have any interest in hosting a Short-term Missions Team in your ministry at this time?

2. If not, is there the potential for a team to visit in the future? When?

3. What time of year best fits your schedule for a team to visit?

4. What financial needs are you currently facing or anticipating in the near future?

5. What work projects are you currently undertaking or anticipating?

6. Are there evangelistic outreaches in which a team could be involved?

7. Are there programs or projects (VBS, camps, evangelism, education, etc.) with which a team could help?

8. What is the best age for participants (teens, young adults, adults, blend)?

9. How many total participants would be an acceptable team size?
   How many would be ideal in your opinion?

10. Have you hosted any Short-Term Missions teams in your ministry?

11. What size group would be acceptable? What size group would be ideal?

12. Are there any special considerations or difficulties for housing a team?

13. Are there any special considerations or difficulties for transportation of a team while on the field?

14. Are there any special health or safety considerations for team members at this time?

15. Do you have any concerns or reservations about hosting a team based on previous experiences with STM teams?

16. What is the best means of communication with you during the planning stages of a project?

Please reply at your earliest convenience to ntbclargo@gmail.com

2050 S. Belcher Rd  •  Largo, FL  33771-4004
(727) 536-0481  •  (727) 536-3561 fax
Appendix C

Promotional Flyer

Teens aged 15+ are invited to apply for our next team to serve our missionaries in Peru this summer.

July 21 - 31

We will assist the national pastors and churches in Arequipa in a city-wide VBS program held in the public parks.

You will get hands-on experience ministering to children and their families as we create crafts, teach lessons, and lead activity times.

Travel will include an international flight from Orlando to Lima, Peru where the team will sing and give testimonies in a local church on Sunday. The next day will include a domestic flight to Arequipa, where we will meet local church leaders and volunteers to coordinate our outreach and ministry. The rest of the week will be a fantastic outreach to the local community through an exciting Vacation Bible School.

Spanish language is helpful, but not necessary. Team members will be given the tools to raise their personal financial support (approximately $1,175), as well as a team of prayer supporters. More details are available by contacting Pastor Matt.

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE NOW IN REALIFETEENS
Appendix D

Participant Application Form

A Missions Outreach of
New Testament Baptist Church
PERU - VBS
July 21 - 31

PARTICIPANT APPLICATION FORM

Please return to Pastor Trill. Answers will remain confidential.

NAME ________________________________ ________________________________

ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________

CITY __________________ ZIP ______________

PHONE ___________________________ BIRTHDATE __________

Please answer each question honestly.

On the back of this page (or a separate piece of paper) write your testimony of salvation. Include when you became a Christian and what the Lord has done in your life since then.

What are your expectations for this missions project?

What do you expect God to teach you through this project?

What do you think you can contribute, with God's help, to the project?

Of the activities below, check those in which you have had experience:
(No one of these are requirements)

___ Working with children ___ Drama/skits ___ Sunday School classes
___ Singing ___ Painting ___ Carpentry
___ Speaking to groups ___ Visitation ___ Puppets
___ Musical instrument ___ Other (list)

On a scale of one (poor) to ten (excellent) please rate yourself in the following characteristics:

___ Follow directions ___ Personal devotions ___ Take correction
___ Being on time ___ Respect for others ___ Leadership skills
___ Taking initiative ___ Completing tasks ___ Example for others
___ Church attendance ___ Listening skills ___ Adapt to changes

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(727) 536-0481 • (727) 536-3561 fax
Appendix E

Parental Consent Form

PROJECT SERVE
New Testament Baptist Church – Largo, FL
Short-Term Mission Trip Parental Consent Form

Full Name of Participant: ____________________________ Date of Birth: _____________
U.S. Passport Number: ____________________________ Date of Issuance: _____________

FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN:
As the parent/guardian of participant named above, I/We give my/our permission for my/our child to participate in the NTBC Project Serve trip to Lima and Arequipa, Peru.

My/Our child has my/our consent to travel with Matthew Alan Trill to Lima and Arequipa, Peru from July 21 to August 1, 2017.

In case of an emergency, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by the NTBC’s representative to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for and order injection, anesthesia, or surgery for my child as named above. I also hereby give permission for my child to participate in all activities, travel, projects, and other activities.

I, agree to assume any and all risks, including, but not limited to these enumerated above. I agree to hold NTBC and its representatives harmless from any and all liabilities, claims, demands, and causes of action whatever which may arise due to the participation of my child. I realize, also, that in the event of illness or injury while participating in its activities, medical treatment may be required. I hereby give permission for any such treatment to be rendered, and I agree to bear the cost of such treatment.

I, the parent, understand the importance of my child’s behavior and commitment on this mission trip with NTBC. In the case of behavior deemed harmful to himself or others or behavior contrary to our agreed mission covenant I agree to pay any additional expense of having my child sent home on a commercial passenger carrier. I am also aware that I will be informed before any such action takes place.

Full Name: ____________________________ Signature: ____________________________
Relationship: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Full Name: ____________________________ Signature: ____________________________
Relationship: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

STATE OF FLORIDA / COUNTY OF PINELLAS
Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this _______ day of __________, 20____

________________________________________
Signature of Notary Public-State of Florida

NOTARY SEAL

Name of Notary Printed or Stamped

Personally Known ______ OR Produced Identification ______
Type of Identification Produced ____________________________________________
Appendix F

Team Member Covenant

A Missionary Outreach of New Testament Baptist Church of Largo, FL

PERSONAL COVENANT

I recognize and accept the following conditions which will further the usefulness and safety of our short-term missions trip. As a member of this Project Serve team, I agree to:

Go as a servant and disciple of Jesus Christ and will adopt that attitude when dealing with my fellow team members and the people I meet during the trip.

Understand that travel, especially to foreign locations, can be difficult, and I promise to adopt a flexible attitude and be supportive as plans may need to be changed. I understand that I must travel with the rest of the team, unless other prior arrangements are made.

Adopt an attitude that I am on this team to try to understand the host culture, not to convince them of my own viewpoint or style. I go knowing that there are different ways to accomplish the same objective, and know that my way is not necessarily the best.

Accept and submit to the leadership role and authority of team leaders and the missionaries and promise to abide by his or her decisions as they concern this mission trip.

Receive correction or direction with a humble spirit and make necessary corrections in my conduct.

Act as a servant of the local missionaries. I will respect the advice I am given concerning attire, eating and drinking, and other such traditions which will help me to assimilate into the local community.

Understand that our team’s work is a small part of the efforts of our missionaries. I promise not to be overly demanding, to do my best not to offend or cause embarrassment for the local mission host, and to do my best to help them attain their long-term goals.

Abstain from making derogatory comments or arguments regarding people, sports, race or traditions.

Refrain from meddling, complaining, and obscene or insensitive humor. I realize that others on my team will look at me for an example of how a Christian acts, and will not treat that responsibility lightly.

If a loved one or close friend is traveling with me, we agree to interact with all members of the team, not just one another. I will avoid any actions which might be perceived as amorous attentions toward indigenous people I meet.

Refrain from using tobacco, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or prohibited activity during the trip.

I agree that in the event my conduct is considered so unsatisfactory that it jeopardizes the safety or success of the trip, and that mediation during the trip has failed to correct my behavior, that my services in connection with this mission trip shall end and I shall return home at my own expense.

Participant ____________________________ Date __________

Parent or legal guardian ____________________________ Date __________

New Testament Baptist Church
2050 S Belcher Rd • Largo, FL 33771 • (727) 536-0481
Appendix G

General Responsibilities of Participants

What to Do
- Be considerate of others (especially concerning bed times and morning rising).
- Be punctual and prepared.
- Serve others.
- Look out for any lonely (befriend them) or weaker members of the team (assist them).
- Be kind and gentle.
- Honor people and walk in humility.
- Learn a few local phrases.
- Be ready to share the Good News.
- Be culturally, economically and politically sensitive.

What Not to Do
- Don’t be selfish or lazy.
- Don’t moan, murmur, criticize or grumble.
- Don’t treat your host like a maid or servant.
- Don’t hog the shower or use all the hot water. There may be ten people behind you.
- Don’t keep the team waiting.
- Don’t be the group joker, attention seeker or boisterous.
- Don’t compare your hosts’ house/car/food/clothes/possessions/etc. to yours.
- Do not flaunt your wealth or brag about your possessions at home.
- Do not speak negatively about your host, leader or other team members.
- Do not give you advice on the church’s problems of which you know nothing about, unless the leader himself has asked you.
- Do not demand better food, accommodation or privacy.

Remember
- You have come to serve.
- Serve wholeheartedly, joyfully and wear a smile.
- Love is a universal language.
- Be flexible. The best of plans often do not work out.
- Beware of cultural faux pas (a socially awkward or tactless act).
- Misunderstanding will arise because of difference.
- Laugh at yourself, but be cautious of laughing at others.
- Don’t dishonor your teammates, leaders, hosts or Jesus Christ.

299 Mathew Backholer, 213-214.
Appendix H

Support Request Letter

A Missionary Outreach of New Testament Baptist Church of Largo, FL

June 21, 2017

Dear

The Lord has given me a great opportunity to serve Him this year! I will be a part of a team of church members that will be traveling to Peru to serve as short-term missionaries. We will have the privilege to work along with a national pastor and church as they minister in Arequipa. I will be able to witness the dedication and efforts of our missionaries and personally participate in foreign ministry. I am trusting God to do great things in my life through this missions trip.

The project will be packed with opportunities. Our primary purpose will be to work with local churches in their evangelistic outreach as we help them conduct a Vacation Bible School for children throughout the city. While we are working alongside these faithful church members in the VBS, we will be equipping them for future ministry to children and youth. Our ministry will also include visiting on behalf of the churches, as well as participating in worship services.

This letter is to let you know what will be happening and to ask for your support. First, please pray that God will use this experience in my life. Nothing significant will be accomplished unless prayer is a vital part of our effort. Also, each team member is asking God to provide fifteen friends who will give a gift of $100 towards this project. Gifts to the church, with an expression of a preference for my trip expenses, are tax deductible as allowed by law. Could I count on you to be one of my fifteen? Please complete the lower portion of this letter with the necessary information and return it to the church in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your interest in me and in this project.

Serving together,

We want to support the missions outreach of New Testament Baptist Church and are sending our gift of: ☐$100 ☐$75 ☐$50 ☐$____ other amount. Please find it enclosed.
Our preference is that this gift be used to support the short-term mission trip of Aaron Trill.

Name_________________________________ Address __________________________________________

City_________________________________ State_________ Zip_________

Please make checks payable to New Testament Baptist Church or give online at www.ntbc.net

Your gift to this ministry is tax deductible.

New Testament Baptist Church
2050 S Belcher Rd • Largo, FL 33771 • (727) 536-0481
Appendix I

Supporter Communication Samples

A Missionary Outreach of
New Testament Baptist Church of Largo, FL

SAMPLE UPDATES TO SUPPORTERS

These are provided simply as examples. Please adapt as necessary to personalize and provide specific details. Remember that some supporters will receive updates from multiple team members. We do not want these to look like form letters.

Dear Supporting Partners:

Thank you for your prayers as we continue to train the process before this summer’s project. Our team has come together a few times already to familiarize ourselves with our objectives and how we plan to meet them. We are learning a few Spanish phrases, assembling the items needed for the VBS, and assigning responsibilities. It is fun to see how things are falling into place. I will keep send along updates during the next several weeks.

Dear Partners:

It seems difficult to believe that we will be leaving for the field next week. Please pray for our safety in travel as we leave on Friday morning from the Orlando International Airport. We hope to hit the ground running as we will be ministering in a church on Sunday morning. Remember to go to our team’s Facebook page at the church’s account - NTBC Largo. You will be able to keep up with our travel and ministry as our leaders post photos. We are looking forward to the Lord working through each of us.

Dear Supporters:

This will be brief as our schedule is full of activity. We enjoyed getting to meet the people of Iglesia Bautista Miraflores this weekend and are excited about working alongside them in the VBS. The Lord has blessed already as we saw 148 children in attendance on our first day. This doesn’t even count the parents and other family members that stayed around. Keep praying!

Dear Praying Partners:

Thank you once again for your consistent prayers for me and our team. It was obvious that people were praying for us throughout the project. We were able to fulfill our team’s purpose and specific objectives. Now we are looking forward to presenting all that God did during our trip. I am looking forward to seeing you at the service on Sunday night, August 13. We have a great video recapping all that happened and we will also be singing two songs in Spanish. Pray especially for me as I will be giving a brief testimony.
## Missions Journal

**What is a journal?**

- A diary of daily thoughts and events
- A record of my prayers
- A way of preserving joy for the future
- A list of daily priorities
- A place for favorite sayings and quotes
- A book for creative writing
- My own history book
- A place to review my day with God
- An exercise in self-discipline
- A blueprint for an improved Christian life

**Use these questions to stimulate your thoughts:**

- What am I praying about?
- Who did I meet today?
- What is God dealing with in my life?
- What different things did I see today?
- What work did I do today?
- What interaction with my team did I have?
- What did I learn about this place?
- What did I learn about serving Him?

---

**Missions Journal**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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### Language Helps

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Phonetic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Hola</td>
<td>OH-lah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning</td>
<td>Buenos dias</td>
<td>Bveh-nohs DEE-ahs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good afternoon</td>
<td>Buenas tardes</td>
<td>Bveh-nohs TAH-ree-dehs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good night</td>
<td>Buenas noches</td>
<td>Bveh-nohs NOH-neh-ehs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>Adios</td>
<td>Ah-dee-ohs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes / No</td>
<td>Si / No</td>
<td>See / Noh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is...</td>
<td>Me llamo...</td>
<td>May yah-moh ahs...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>Por favor</td>
<td>Por fah-voehr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Gracias</td>
<td>Grah-see-ahs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re welcome</td>
<td>De nada</td>
<td>Day noh-dah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am American</td>
<td>Soy estadounidense</td>
<td>Soy ehs-tah-dohn-dohn-sohn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a Christian</td>
<td>Soy cristiano/a</td>
<td>Soy kree-stee-ah-noh-nah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stay Healthy

**Take the following precautions while traveling:**
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Always use seat belts.
- Don’t eat or drink dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems.

**To stay healthy, do...**
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice-cubes.
- When you shower do not let the tap water run into your mouth, and when you brush your teeth it’s best to use bottled water.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals), and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into boots or socks as a deterrent to ticks.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.

**To avoid getting sick...**
- Don’t eat food purchased from street vendors. Do not drink beverages with ice (many companies that produce ice use tap water.)
- Don’t handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague).

**What you need to bring with you:**
- Insect repellent containing DEET, in 30%–35% strength for adults and 6%–10% for children. The insecticide permethrin applied to clothing is an effective deterrent to ticks.
- Over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

**After you return home:**
If you become ill after your trip—even as long as a year after you return—tell your doctor where you have traveled.
Devotions

VIEW FROM THE TOP

There's something grand and majestic about mountains. They place landscape and people in perspective. From the top, we can survey the natural grandeur and reflect on our Creator. Something about the majesty of the mountain invokes the majesty of God.

Isaiah 55:12 "...the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing."

Psalm 125:1-2 "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

Many things in Scripture happened on mountain tops:
- Sacrifice of Isaac on Mt. Moriah
- Giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai
- Elijah's miracles on Mt. Carmel
- Transfiguration of Christ
- Jesus' crucifixion on Mt. Calvary

The mountain top provides a 360-degree panorama of the beauty of God's creation. We are blessed with the opportunity to meditate on Who God is and what He has done for us. Psalm 77:12 - David never grew weary of meditating on God. What intimacy with God! Whether we are a seasoned saint or a baby believer, a personal daily relationship with our Lord produces growth in the heart and life of the believer.

A proven way to grow closer to God is to grow closer to God's Word. Satan will seek to attack us in our attempt to walk with God. He makes us too busy, sends us temptations, exploits an unforgiving spirit, or bitter attitude. He zeros in on personal weaknesses.

For a close-to-heaven experience:
- Watch our steps over rocks and crevices — Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Daily read God's Word.
- Look up for directions when the choices are confusing — 2 Tim. 3:16,17. God has so many blessing for those who will seek Him; blessings discovered only in His Word.
- Companionship with other believers is an effective way to have victory over discouragement.
- Millions of memories — Write the blessings you experience. In the future days of discouragement, it is a comfort to reflect on God's provision.

Lord, help us to marvel in your creation around us and remember that we are made in your image. Thank you for eyes to behold the beauty around us and hearts to love you. — Mrs. Nila DeWeese

Devotions

SERVING THE LORD

John 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Song: "I Will Serve Thee"

I will serve Thee, because I love thee
You have given life to me.
I was nothing before you found me
You have given life to me.
Heartaches, broken pieces, ruined lives
Are why you died on Calvary
Your touch is what I longed for
You have given life to me.

What are the reasons that we serve our Lord Jesus? Is it out of obligation? Is it for eye service? Is it out of guilt? Is it for what He can do for us, or maybe because it is what we are told to do.

There are many reasons why people serve the Lord, but the most honoring reason is because we love Him. He also promises that He will be with us wherever we are serving Him. As we go about His work this week, pray that you will have a servant's heart. You may have to sacrifice something, but it will pale in comparison to dying on a cross.

Lord, thank you for dying for me and giving me life. Help me to know the fulfillment that comes from You, the satisfaction of serving You completely. And Lord if there is anything that I am asked to "sacrifice" for you, help me to do it with any murmuring and to be able to give you the glory for the victory. — Mrs. Nita Brochu
Appendix K

Debrief Survey

1. Describe your most important objectives during the pre-trip planning stage.

2. What were your greatest concerns during the pre-field planning stage?

3. What was the greatest lesson you learned during this mission trip?

4. What helped you learn this lesson? (Describe the experience, people involved, etc.)

5. What were the best parts of the overall experience?

6. How was the balance of work, fellowship, evangelism for you?

7. What tasks were the most fulfilling for you?

8. How would you describe the effect this trip had on your personal:

   Self-image?
   Spiritual life?
   Interest in future missions?
   God’s overall plan for your life?

9. Will you covenant to pray for any of the people with whom you worked?
10. Do you plan to maintain contact with any of the people you met?

11. Where do you rate yourself regarding missions service?
   □ I am definitely going to be a missionary or tentmaker.
   □ I definitely want to return on another short-term missions trip.
   □ I am open to being a missionary, but I am unsure where.
   □ I just started thinking about being a missionary, and I am unsure where.
   □ I am going to be a supporter of other missionaries.
   □ I am opposed to the idea of missionary work.
   □ I have never really thought about missionary work.

12. What would be your biggest piece of advice concerning improving our teams in the future?

13. Do you have any general comments that might be helpful?

14. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being “Very Bad” and 5 being “Excellent,” please rate the following and offer details for any experiences rated 2 or below:

   Pre-trip training 1 2 3 4 5
   Help in raising support 1 2 3 4 5
   Travel arrangements 1 2 3 4 5
   Accommodations 1 2 3 4 5
   On-Field meetings 1 2 3 4 5
   Debriefing upon return 1 2 3 4 5
   Team leadership 1 2 3 4 5
   Pastoral support 1 2 3 4 5

   Thank you for your participation and response.
Appendix L

Supporter Post-Field Letter

A Missionary Outreach of New Testament Baptist Church of Largo, FL

August 21, 2017

Dear:

Let me express my sincere appreciation for your concern and support of our missionary project. The opportunity that we had to serve the Lord in Peru was both unique and important. The trip itself was unique because this group had never traveled together before. Many of our team members had never experienced a foreign language and culture. However, God granted us safety throughout the entire trip.

Our work was important as we ministered in Lima and Arequipa. We interacted with church members, presented special music, and preached in worship services in a few churches. The entire team was involved in a Vacation Bible School in Arequipa that combined the efforts of several different churches in the region. We had access to an immense community park that gave us plenty of space for registration, opening and closing sessions, music, Bible lessons, crafts & snacks, and games.

We were privileged to work alongside national pastors and church volunteers, exchanging ideas and ministry strategies. The pastors were not sure how many children to expect as we met in planning sessions. However, on the very first day more than 120 children came to be a part of the program. Returning children brought friends with them and we had great crowds each day. It was great to see the smiling faces singing familiar songs, cheering on their teams, and listening intently to God’s Word presented in a variety of ways. Those who faithfully minister in local churches were encouraged about their opportunities to continue children’s ministries and introduce new events and activities to their communities.

Project Serve is also important for the impact it has on the lives of our team members. We saw first-hand how missionaries and national pastors work on foreign fields every day of their lives. We saw God greatly stir our hearts with the burden of mission work. There is great potential within the group of teenagers and adults that were a part of our team. God may call many of these young people into His service as pastors, missionaries and teachers.

Whatever God may choose to do with each team member, you have had an important part through your faithful support. Thank you for your gift of $100.00. It was used wisely as an eternal investment in the spiritual life of a team member. May I ask you to continue praying for them as they recall their experience and look toward the future. Pray that they will continue to have open minds and willing hearts to learn and obey the Lord. Thank you again for your generous support. It is greatly appreciated.

In Christ,

Matthew Trill
Pastor

No goods or services have been provided in exchange for your contribution. The benefit to you consists solely of what the IRS considers “intangible religious benefits.”
Appendix M

Long-Term Missions Evaluation

1. I am ____________ pursuing long-term missionary service.
   - open to the idea of
   - feeling guilty about not
   - avoiding the issue of
   - already committed to
   - already making specific plans about

2. The best model for me in becoming a long-term missionary is probably…
   - my grandparents
   - the missionary that I served with on this project
   - another missionary I know.
   - Unsure. I do not know of a missionary model that fits.
   - Other:

3. My life plans are mostly shaped by…
   - a desire for material things and security.
   - a desire to glorify God.
   - my college major or career plans.
   - the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

4. My inventory of life goals includes…
   - people coming to salvation in Christ through my ministry.
   - a good education, salary, and home.
   - popularity or fame.
   - having a great family.
   - leaving a mark on the world.
   - Other:

5. I am undecided about long-term missions because …
   - I experienced struggles on this project.
   - I do not sense God’s call yet.
   - I am not sure how to proceed.
   - I do not believe I am qualified.
   - I want to experience other things in life first.
6. Something that might stop me from becoming a long-term missionary is…
   - my parents or family members.
   - a relationship.
   - the thought of raising funds.
   - that I am single.
   - personal debt.
   - poor health.

7. If I say that God is directing me to be or not to be a long-term missionary, I mean that…
   - I experience a general impression.
   - I sense an inward spiritual direction.
   - He has spoken to me directly.
   - I hear it in the comments that others make.

8. If God let me do anything for His sake, I would…
   - work in my home church.
   - become a long-term foreign missionary.
   - serve full-time in a stateside ministry.
   - work in a secular field and use it as a platform for ministry.

9. On the mission field, I could picture myself…
   - doing evangelistic work.
   - serving as support staff in a ministry.
   - teaching in a Bible school or institute.
   - teaching in a Christian school.
   - serving in a humanitarian outreach.
   - serving in a medical ministry.
   - serving in a “tentmaking” capacity.

10. If I was sure of God’s calling to career missions, the first thing I would do is…
   - pay off school loans or personal debt.
   - complete or further my education.
   - undertake biblical training.
   - speak to others (parents or other relationship) about my goals and intentions.
   - speak to my pastor.
   - become more active in ministry in my local church.

*Survey adapted from questionnaire in *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short-Term Missions*, Tim Gibson and others, ed. 253-254.
### Appendix N

**Project Serve Model Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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| 12-15 months before project | Prayer meetings with church leadership  
Discuss general considerations  
Contact potential missionary hosts with questionnaire |
| 14 months before project    | Leaders travel to visit field as necessary  
Select host and field  
Determine purpose of project |
| 12 months before project    | Announce project and distribute promotional flyers  
Distribute and receive team member applications  
Interview potential team members |
| 10 months before project    | Approve team members and complete roster  
Plan specific goals to reach objectives  
Begin preliminary training  
Training session #1 – Introduce project purpose and familiarize team members |
| 9 months before project     | Distribute support request letters to team members  
Must be returned to leaders for mailing within 14 days |
| 8 months before project     | Receive Parental Consent form for minor participants  
Apply for travel documents as needed  
Passports & Visas (if necessary)  
Expiration date must extend 6 months beyond travel dates |
| 6 months before project     | Reserve airline tickets  
Arrange or reserve vehicles for in country travel  
Arrange or reserve housing and accommodations |
| 4 months before project     | Training session #2 – team members prepare testimonies  
Develop specific work or evangelistic skills to meet objectives and team purpose |
3 months before project  Training session #3 – cultural considerations and language

2 months before project  Training session #4 – financial matters discussed

1 month before project  Training sessions #5
                      Pack major items

2 weeks before project  Pack personal supplies
                      Training session #6 – review Team Member Covenant

1 week before project  Commissioning service (Sunday before departure)

**Project On-Field Dates**

Upon arrival  Initial meeting with hosts

Daily as needed  Morning preparation meeting
                Evening reviews
                Ongoing assessments
                Re-evaluation of goals and objectives

Before return  On-Field closing meeting

**Return From Field**

1 week after project  Debrief team meeting
                       Surveys distributed and returned – team members, hosts, leaders

2-3 weeks after project  Presentation service at church
                       Send “Thank You” letter & giving receipts to supporters

1 month after project  Leaders follow up on evaluation results with individual participants

2 months after project  Final financial audit / accounting

Up to 6 months after  Leaders follow up with team members as necessary
Appendix O

IRB Exemption

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 3, 2016

Matthew Trill
IRB Exemption 2453.030316: Survey of Short-Term Missions Experience

Dear Matthew,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
   (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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