

Editor's Note: This handout represents the teaching notes from Aaron's talk on Short-Term Missions Trips for Youth Ministries. It is provided as a supplement to the slide presentation because no audio or video recording of the luncheon is available.

“Rethinking Short-Term Missions”

Equipping Luncheon - Fall 2009 with Speaker Aaron Brown

My First Short-Term Missions Experience

- Haiti with Rick Rhoads; First time in an airplane, over seas, on any kind of missions trip
- God taught me that my unique history, experience, talents, and abilities can be used in incredible ways
- I was confronted at my own materialism and selfishness
- I discovered the beauty and creativity of God expressed in the global church
- **[DISCUSS]**
 - How many of you have been on a short-term missions trip?
 - How old were you and where did you go?
 - Has anyone here led a trip? Where did you go and what age was your team?

What defines a successful Missions trip?

- **[DISCUSS] (in groups of 2 or 3)**
 - What are 2 or 3 things that you would want your students to take away from their short-term missions experience?
 - What impact should your trip have on the local ministry that you worked with?
- **Some Ideas**
 - Challenge American cultural assumptions
 - Service/Humility – reflecting Christ's taking up the towel
 - Calling/Gifting – a greater understanding of my purpose
 - “What I've just done for a week, I can continue to do for a lifetime”
 - Heart for missions and other people groups
 - Unity with the global church, appreciate diversity
 - Tangible blessing to the local church/missions
- **Living Word defines a successful missions trip as one that...**
 - Builds world Christians
 - Causes someone to discover/use their gifts
 - Fosters the development of future missionaries
 - Encourages the local ministry
 - **[BONUS]** and if you're given a free goat to take home, that's just bonus!
- **TRANSITION:** If that's what we want to go right on a trip, it's probably important to be aware of what can go wrong. ...

What can go wrong?

- Short-Term missions can get a very bad wrap at times

- They can do a lot of damage both at home and on the mission fields –bad planning, poor execution, or just faulty assumptions, we need to be thoughtful as we plan these kind of trips.
- **“God only works overseas.”**
 - I have a powerful spiritual experience in a foreign culture/environment that I cannot connect with my home culture/environment.
 - We compartmentalize missions – it is only a trip not a lifestyle
- **“If I’m going to be used by God, I need to become a missionary or youth pastor.”**
 - I do not see, understand, or appreciate the immediate missional opportunities around me.
 - Overly focused on “doing for God” instead of “Being with God”
 - They equate short-term missions with a missionary’s actual work.
 - Ex. Going on a cruise is like working on a cruise ship.
 - God’s calls us to live missionally more than He calls us to become overseas missionaries.
- **“We made a huge impact”... I think**
 - How effective were we, really?
 - Trying to do spiritual surveys at the Sports University in Prague, Czech Republic – what was I really doing there? What was the point?
 - VBS in Tijuana, Mexico. So many SoCal youth groups go to the same area and do the same thing every other weekend, that the local kids figured out that they’d get more attention, affection, and candy if they kept getting saved week after week.
 - A burned-out missionary, host family, or local church
 - I’ve hurt the local ministry’s effectiveness at reaching out; I’ve reinforced negative stereotypes of Americans (and Christians)
 - Sometimes our impact is just a huge crater.
 - Result:
 - I’ve not changed at all; I’ve remained entrenched in my cultural presuppositions and not truly loved God or others.
 - I’ve hurt the cause of Christ and reinforced negative stereotypes of Christians.
 - I went on a Christian vacation.

Holistic Short-Term Missions

- **Holistic Missions** is the idea of going beyond a set trip with a set team for a set period of time. It’s how our church as a whole partners with what God’s doing in a given area with all that we are (heart, mind, body, and soul... money, time, resources, and relationship). It doesn’t stop when you come home.
- **On-going, long term investments**
 - Where are we as a church already connected/invested? Where is our church as a whole already investing (financially, time, relationships, etc.)
 - Is what we’re doing being sustained and multiplied?
- **Highly-Relational**
 - How closely are we working with nationals?
 - Are we listening more than we’re talking?
 - Are we building personal connections that last longer than the trip?
 - Don’t put programs in front of people – Old Lady and Evangelism
 - We want to be good stewards, successful, productive... its more a product of our American culture than it is Kingdom-minded missional living.
- **Utilize unique abilities and resources**
 - Are there resources within our church body that are going untapped?
 - Doctors and Nurses

- CPA's, Lawyers, Businessmen
 - Photographers, Artists, Storytellers
 - Do we have unique connections/access to resources that would make an impact?
 - Sending a 20ft shipping container on a cargo ship filled with donated library books.
 - Drills, Water Pumps, and Filtration Systems
 - Medicine and Medical Equipment
 - Saying no to youth construction projects
 - Is it good stewardship to raise support (let's say \$20,000) for a team of students to go and paint a fence, when you could send \$1000, employ 10 nationals, and pay them double their normal pay?
 - What can we bring/do that no one else can?
 - Story of painting the fence vs. digging the ditch
 - When you've got to do construction, make it a relational experience
- **Intergenerational Opportunities**
 - Don't underestimate uncles and grandmas
 - Barry and Kathy Gay brought their two sons and Kathy's mother on a trip to India, twice.
 - Tom Berridge, who grew up in Boston without a dad, has a passion for the fatherless boys of India, any chance he gets he is recruiting people to go to India and meet his boys
 - Opportunities for parents and teens to be stretched together
 - Shared experiences overseas leads to shared transformation at home.

Three Pictures of Holistic Missions

- **Bethel in Southern India**
 - Long-Term Investing (building Seminary and funding national students, buying vehicles, bringing in hospital equipment and medicines, mobilizing training for local pastors, investing in the orphans)
 - Utilizing Unique Gifts, Resources, and Abilities
 - The Value of Relationship (orphans who have so very little one-on-one contact, "what's my name? you remember my name?")
 - Intergenerational Teams (We had 10 teens go, all of whom went with their parents)
- **Sendafa, Ethiopia**
 - Long-Term Investing
 - Whole Gospel (medicine, education, infrastructure)
 - The Value of Relationships
 - Intergenerational Teams
- **Santiago, Chile**
 - Jeff Phillips – IberAmerican Ministries – mobilizing Latinos to plant churches and send out missionaries to Muslim countries
 - A Latino missionary needs about 1/5th the support of a North American Missionary
 - Latinos are widely accepted in the Middle East, not so much with Americans ("You must be CIA")
 - Other Living Word Connections
 - English Bridge – helping Latinos learn the English skills necessary to work on international ministry teams

- Business as Missions – developing self-supporting ministries, church planters and tent makers
- Leadership Development and Training
- **Youth Missions**
 - Children’s Village – students using gifts in arts, music, sports, and drama to invest in the most rejected people of Santiago
 - Highly-Relational, focused on helping build momentum for a new ministry, partnering with church members who would continue these relationships long after we left.
 - Our entire youth group got involved to help raise support, collect supplies for the Children’s village, pray for local church leaders, etc.
 - We get there and the building isn’t done. The trip has now turned into a construction project
 - Be flexible, Be relational, Show love in everything
 - Construction became an opportunity to make friendships, for the children to take ownership, a huge win-win
 - Stayed with host families
 - Huge language barrier, but incredible relationships
 - Opportunity to serve and be served, to know the people of the church better, opportunity for people of the church to serve as well.

Finding a Missions Trip

- **[DISCUSS] (in groups of 2 or 3)**
 - You’re starting a brand new short-term missions trip for your youth group, we’ll say high schoolers in grades 9-12
 - What are some factors that you want to think through as find the right trip for your group?
- **What relationships/partnerships already exist in your church?**
- **Always aim local.**
 - Partnering directly with people in the area (Nationals are even better). They know the culture, the church, the neighborhood
 - Avoid “Missions Trip” factories
- **Big questions to ask...**
 - What’s the mission’s purpose and philosophy of ministry? Are they sending a healthy message about missional living? Do you want your students to look more like these people at the end of the trip?
 - Finances – how do they spend the money? If there’s overhead charged, how much and to what purpose? Who covers incidental fees?
 - What will your role be on the field? What are you bringing that no one else could bring?
 - Track record with other short-term trips?
 - Practically speaking – what will interpretation look like? This will have a HUGE impact on people’s experience
 - What happens in a crisis moment?

Odds and Ends – some common themes from our trips

- **“It’s not weird, it’s different.”**
 - When you go to the bathroom on the train and see the train tracks at the bottom of the toilet bowl, that’s not weird, or wrong, it’s just different.
 - If your host family serves you guacamole for breakfast, that’s not weird or disgusting, it’s just different.

- **Stay flexible. Be relational.**
 - Grace, grace, grace. Grace for yourself, for your team, for your host family, for the people you come in contact with.
- **Daily opportunities to debrief and pray**
 - Doesn't need to be overly lengthy or insightful; keep it simple.
 - Just an opportunity to share and be heard, to unite the team, express struggles and celebrate victories.
 - God's going to be showing us more than we could ever process in one day, we're just getting used to the dialogue
- **On your day off, don't just shop.**
 - American's are materialistic, if our day off is spent buying a bunch of trinkets, spending hundreds of dollars, we're just reinforcing that idea
 - Take time to appreciate the beauty or culture of the area; learn about the history. Half day shopping, half day doing something more restful/sabbatical

Q+A



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