

The Value of Short-Term Mission Trips

Every church that belongs to Jesus is supposed to have a missionary zeal (Matt. 28:18-20). Mission work comes in many shapes and sizes. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months (Acts 18:11), and he worked in Ephesus for two years (Acts 19:10). On the other hand, Paul once spent merely a week with the church in Troas (Acts 20:6), and just over three weeks on his first trip to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). There is value in short-term mission efforts, provided our motives are to respect God's authority, love the lost, bless the church and glorify God alone. Consider the potential benefits.

The Gospel is preached – “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). If we truly believe that God's word is a seed that produces good fruit, then we need to be serious about scattering that seed wherever we can (Rom. 10:14; Luke 8:11). Thessalonica might never have heard the Gospel unless the church had sent Paul. One wonders how many distant lands and unreached areas have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ today. What would happen if we as a congregation really loved the lost as much as God does?

Perspectives change – It is one thing to read about a foreign land in a book; it is another thing altogether to travel there, meet the people, eat the food, and breathe the air. The brethren in Jerusalem once became concerned about what was happening at Antioch so they sent Barnabas on a short-term mission to investigate. When Barnabas arrived, the Scripture says that he: “Saw the grace of God and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (Acts 11:23). Where foreign mission work is concerned, the statement, “Behold, I thought...” often becomes, “Now, I know...” (2 Kings 5:11, 15).

Needs become apparent – When God's people open their eyes, many wonderful opportunities can be readily observed. Barnabas could see that the church in Antioch was growing extremely rapidly and that they needed good teachers, so he went to Tarsus and found Saul (Acts 11:24-26). What started out as a short-term effort to see what was happening in Antioch became a year-long endeavor to teach, “A great many people” (Acts 11:26). Short-term mission efforts can help local congregations to see open doors for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Fellowship is enriched – The church at Philippi had repeatedly helped Paul by supporting him financially and praying for him (Phil. 4:14-17). Paul wrote the Book of Philippians in part to thank the church at Philippi, “For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:5). When brethren work together by God's authority for the sake of the Gospel, that's real fellowship! One of the most wonderful things about genuine fellowship is that it always blesses everyone who is involved. Fellowship blesses those who give, pray and send (Prov. 3:9-10; Phil. 4:17). Fellowship blesses

those who are sent (Phil. 4:10), and fellowship blesses those who are taught (Rom. 10:14-15).

May God bless every congregation with the vision to support, encourage and send more workers into His fields (Luke 10:1-2). **--JB**