

SPECIAL MISSIONS EDITION // LIPSCOMB NOW:

INTERSECTIONS

OF FAITH & CULTURE

RE-THINKING
short-term
MISSIONS

A RESOURCE FOR CHURCH LEADERS



Through a partnership with the Sarah Walker Foundation, Lipscomb University nursing students travel to Malawi, Africa, each year to work with the Blessings Hospital, including entertaining the patients' children.

INTERSECTIONS

OF FAITH & CULTURE

Volume 5 Number 1

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A few days can open up a lifetime of service

Every year when I ask our freshmen what they want to get out of their college experience, almost everyone will tell me they want to go on a mission trip. Young people today want experiences that will strengthen their knowledge, faith and practices so they are equipped to go out and make a difference in the world. As we become more of a global society, there is an increased awareness of the need—and benefits—of mission work.

Over spring break 2017, 19 teams of nearly 400 Lipscomb students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends traveled to 11 countries and four U.S. cities. The teams worked with schools, orphanages, hospitals and communities across the globe to address material needs and to demonstrate the love of

Christ through service and ministry.

Such short-term missions can satisfy those who want to serve but are unable to devote extended time away from obligations at home. Brief trips can provide the unique experiences many are looking for—crossing cultures and making immediate, tangible differences in someone's life—through a relatively small commitment of time or money. Whether with a university, a church or missionary organization, there are many places to serve. Lipscomb Missions alone will send nearly 1,000 individuals on 60 short-term mission trips this year.

Sponsoring organizations must be intentional in coupling short-term mission opportunities with long-term vision and partnerships. By returning to the same communities year-after-year, it is possible to make a greater investment and nurture planted seeds that grow from what God is already doing in these locations. A secondary, yet significant effect of these returning trips is the aid provided to long-term missionaries who occasionally need to be physically and spiritually refreshed. As Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses at the

battle with the Amalekites, providing relief to those dedicated to the work of the Kingdom is a powerful way to demonstrate shared faith and love for one another.

In just a few days, short-term mission trips can begin a lifetime of service. With experience in using their unique gifts and faith to positively impact the lives of others, young Christians grow confident in their calling to share the Gospel through service and ministry for the good of all—in communities around the globe and locally.

L. Randolph Lowry
President
Lipscomb University



P.S. If you find this publication helpful, please do two things: email comments and suggestions to jenna.schrader@lipscomb.edu and pass it on to a ministry friend!

Finding the long-term in short-term missions

A comprehensive strategy for making a lasting missional impact

Mark Jent

*Director of Missions Outreach
Lipscomb University*



“Short-term missions” is not a term we use a lot around Lipscomb Missions. It’s not because we are against it; rather, our vision for missions is so much larger than can be defined by a one-week trip. It is challenging to encapsulate a comprehensive strategy for short-term missions in an article, because the experience of being a participant is usually the most effective way to understand the “long-term” in the perceived “short-term.”

As I consider what has helped shape the vision and strategy of the past 15 years for Lipscomb Missions, there are four groups of people who have made it happen. Some carry more weight than others, but all are vital to the execution and ultimate end goal.

Students

Effectively ministering through our program requires passionate students. For years now it has been said that this current generation of students has a deep passion to serve through short-term missions. This statement implies that either the previous generation did not have that same burning passion or the next generation may not have the same drive.

Yet what I have witnessed through our program is that we’re not in the midst of a generational trend; rather, each generation is continually acting upon the belief that they can make a significant difference in the world by serving others. While we reap the benefits of this on a college campus, local churches should be applauded for their preparation of these college-bound students for this journey.

When the students reach our doorstep at Lipscomb, they are entering the most spiritually transformative years of their lives. For the nearly 50 percent of students who engage with us, I can assure you there is nothing short-term about their commitment to their mission trips. On the surface it may seem like just another week-long trip. But looking down the road, you can see most are still engaged in the relationships built on that one mission trip.

Host Partners

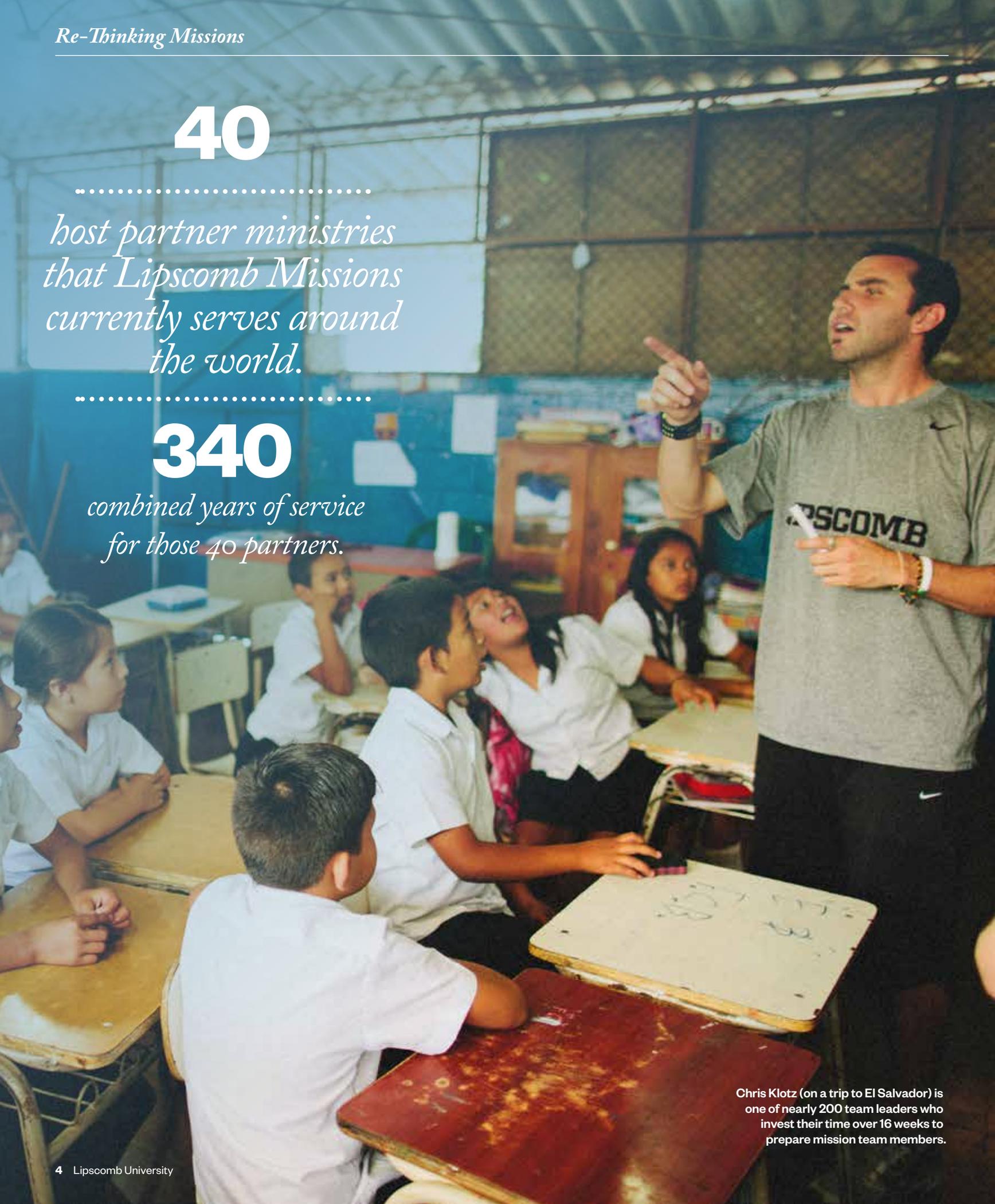
Effective missions requires dedicated host partners. I often tell our staff that when we identify the right host partner, everything else generally falls in place. The host partner ministries are the ones who are in the trenches day in and day out, week after week, year-round. They are the director at the orphanage who decides which kids to accept and which to leave behind. They are the principal in the public school

40

.....
*host partner ministries
that Lipscomb Missions
currently serves around
the world.*
.....

340

*combined years of service
for those 40 partners.*



Chris Klotz (on a trip to El Salvador) is one of nearly 200 team leaders who invest their time over 16 weeks to prepare mission team members.

who feels burdened to do what's right to provide that kid a better future. They are the minister at a local church who pours countless hours into a couple's marriage, only to see it dissolve anyway.

Host partners have a lot more to their jobs than just hosting mission teams, yet they know the value that a mission team provides. When done well, mission teams can provide vibrancy and long-term sustainability for their ministry. The impact can be felt in a variety of ways; relationally, spiritually and financially.

After nearly two decades of following our model of short-term missions with a long-term vision, we can look at our list of nearly 45 host partners today and see where we have been sending teams for five years, 10 years, sometimes even 15 to 20 years!

Team Leaders

Effective execution of trips requires selfless team leaders. At Lipscomb Missions, we are blessed with nearly 175 team leaders who pour countless hours of boundless energy into their mission trips each year.

They give up two hours of their Sunday nights for 16 weeks to prepare our students for ministry. They take time off work to attend an overnight team retreat where they will get very little sleep and eat junk food with students one-third their age.

Team leaders participate year after year; not because they have to, but because they want to. They are our most valuable asset. Without them, our program would not exist. They serve, they lead, they pray, they cry, they listen and they laugh with our students. Yet this special relationship does not stop once the student's diploma is received. They get wedding invitations. They get a phone call in the middle of the night and drive to the hospital. They get photos of the first child.

Most students choose the trip because of the location or the ministry. Rarely do they realize that God is choosing that trip for them because of who will be leading it.

Donors

Effective fundraising requires not only leaders who know how to ask; it requires generous donors with a heart for the mission presented to them. Oftentimes money is the primary reason that students never knock on our door. The second reason is parents.

Some students struggle with understanding that there are people who would love nothing more than to give their money to charitable causes. They are faced with an uphill battle as voices from back home tell them: *Don't go begging for charity.*

There are people who can **go** and there are people who can **give**. If you are at a time in your life where you can go, be confident that there are all kinds of people who would find it sheer joy to help make it happen. Nearly 70 percent of all new donors to Lipscomb University are directly attributable to supporting students on mission trips.

Donors are doing more than simply writing a check—they are financially investing in ways that will reap greater dividends than they will ever imagine. The student is grateful, but so is the kid on the receiving end of the trip who came to know Jesus because that Lipscomb student came to serve his community. So is the family who now has a roof over their head thanks to the team who picked up a hammer and a nail.

Examples are countless, but I want to share a few: a recent alum contacted me unsolicited and gave \$850 towards the spring break trip he went on all four years of his college career; one woman sent in a \$25 check to support a student she used to babysit as an infant; a high school coach gladly offered \$100 to encourage a former ballplayer at his school; an aunt donated \$500 to get her niece across the fundraising finish line. Just like the 1,000 people who go on our trips have stories, so do the 10,000 or more people who give to make it happen. ☪

For more information on Lipscomb Missions, contact Mark Jent at mark.jent@lipscomb.edu or 615.966.6261.

Lipscomb Missions' goal is to provide short-term mission opportunities with long-term vision and partnerships for the Lipscomb community and beyond. It's our hope that those involved learn to utilize their unique gifts and passions as they share the Gospel through service and ministry in countless ways.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Lipscomb, Shiloh connection has long-term impacts on Northeast teens and university students

When **Lori Bumpas** ('86) became the executive director of Shiloh NYC in 1997, the Church of Christ-ministry was in the early stages of a renaissance that began in 1994. The summer camp facilities were still in desperate need of repair and the organization was in debt.

Bumpas arrived to lead a resurgence that had already begun with the previous director, but a key event in that renaissance was in 1999 when Bumpas stopped by Lipscomb University to spread the word about her ministry in chapel.

Laura Beth (Thomas) High ('99), now a teacher at Nashville's Otter Creek School, was in Collins Alumni Auditorium that day and was so inspired by Bumpas' talk that she volunteered to be the Camp Shiloh activities director that summer. The next year, she convinced her friend, now her husband, **Chad High** ('00), to join her up at the camp.

Today Chad High is a Nashville elementary school principal and a member of the board of directors for Shiloh NYC which has revitalized the camp facilities, grown to serve 350 campers each summer and has repaid all of its operating debt. Due in part to his persuasion, High's hometown congregation, Brentwood Hills Church of Christ, has sent mission teams every summer since 2003 to help renovate the camp facilities.

"It's amazing what that one event in 1999 has led to," said High. "The transformation of the camp has been tremendous to watch over the past 17 years."

And at Lipscomb, student interest in Camp Shiloh has consistently grown since that first speech in 1999 with 25 to 30 students each year involved in mission trips to tutor students in NYC, to maintain and repair camp facilities or to hold retreats for teens involved in the Hi Def mentoring program. Many students also apply to be summer camp counselors.



Katelynn Algarin (far left), a Camp Shiloh success story, with fellow campers.

The Shiloh/Lipscomb connection has not only benefitted the buildings, it is having a long-term impact on the lives of the youth who participate in Shiloh's programs, as some of them have chosen Lipscomb as their college destination.

Katelynn Algarin of Bridgeport, Connecticut, came from a broken home and a troublesome childhood to attend Camp Shiloh in 2009. The theme that year was "God only knows," and Camp Shiloh served the same purpose for her that it does for so many other at-risk children: "It was a safe haven," Algarin said.

Many teens who experience stress in their home lives and their communities find it difficult to open up emotionally and be authentic, Algarin said. Camp Shiloh helps teens, "unite and build a healthy community," she said. "It helps you learn to open up and share who you are to other people and experience a different way of living."

Algarin attended Camp Shiloh three times as a camper, she then became a counselor-in-training in 2013. She was baptized at the camp, and due to her friendships with Shiloh counselors from Lipscomb, she chose to go there for college in 2015. She is now a sophomore majoring in social work and was a leader of Lipscomb's May mission trip to the camp.

When she attended Shiloh as a camper, Algarin associated Lipscomb with faith, she said. "Lipscomb brought a different culture to me (as a camper)," she said. "Living in the inner city, you are often insulated, but meeting counselors from universities all over the country really expanded my horizons." [🔗](#)

An integrated vision for short-term missions

The university years for any individual are unique and transformative. It is often the period when one tackles the major questions of life: “Why am I here?” “What will I choose as a life vocation?” “What ultimately brings meaning to my life?” For this reason, I am a strong proponent of the liberal arts approach to higher learning. It provides exposure to subjects a student might not otherwise encounter. It also provides a helpful, holistic context in which a student can place the discipline of study she or he chooses in the pursuit of a particular vocation.

Lipscomb is blessed to be a *Christian* liberal arts university. This gives us the incredible possibility of helping a student to not only find and prepare for their calling or vocation, but to also explore the purpose of that calling to God’s glory. David Lipscomb’s original vision was to establish a college that prepared all people for their vocations in the context of God’s kingdom. Bible was to be studied along with every other subject to that end.

While recognizing the limits of short-term missions, they are an essential component of the Lipscomb life-shaping adventure in higher learning. If the purpose of our lives is to glorify God through the gifts and abilities entrusted to us, we need exposure to the needs of the world and a laboratory in which to explore our place in God’s purposes. Our missions program is designed to fill that need in the lives of all our students—not just a select few.

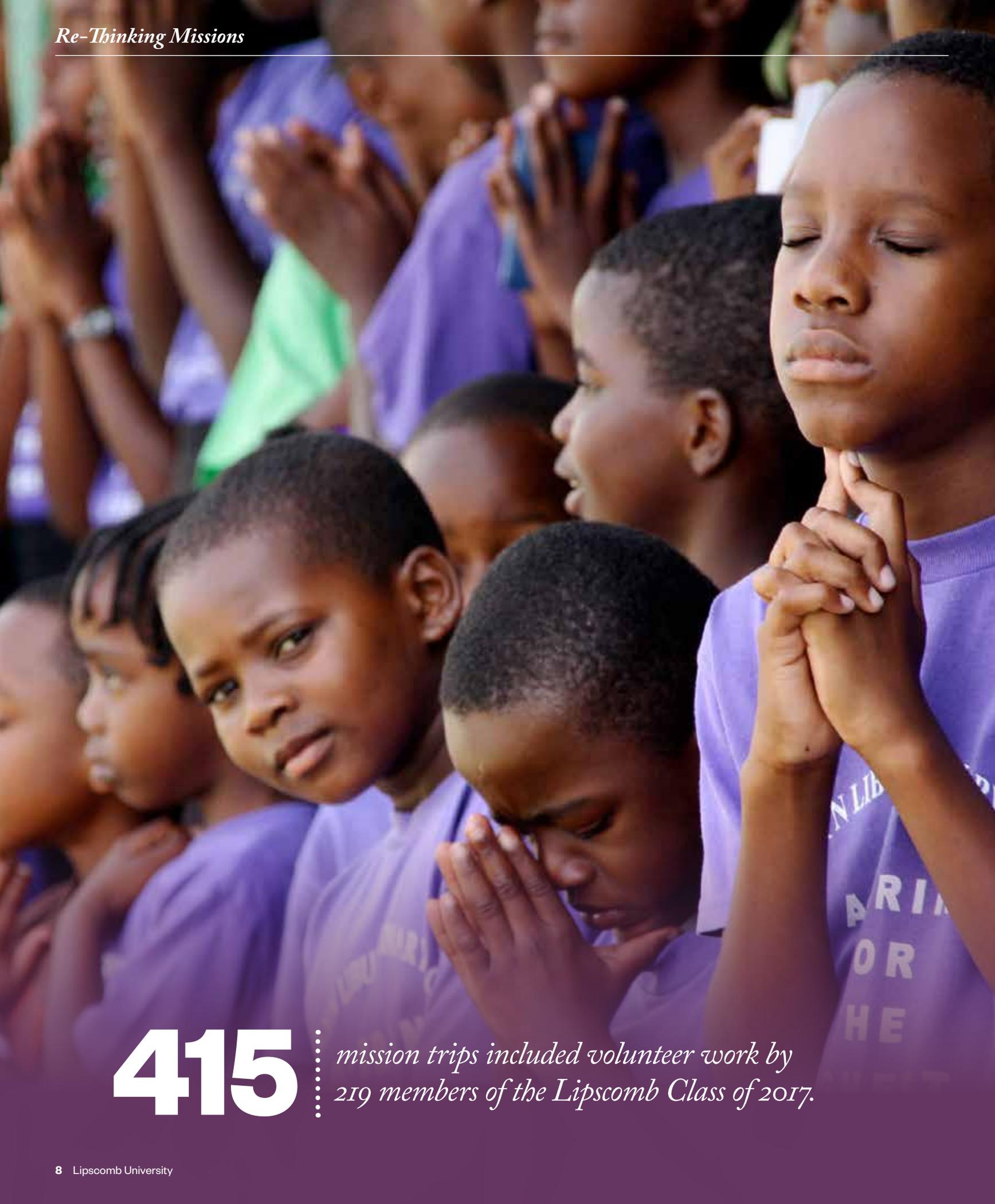
When the Lipscomb administration invited me to lead the Lipscomb Missions program in 1999,

I accepted on the condition I could dismantle it. I was convinced missions had to be moved out of its place as a specialization in the College of Bible & Ministry. It needed to be the heartbeat of the university. God’s intent is for all of us who believe in Jesus as Lord to carry the Good News of the kingdom with us as we go. The Great Commission to “go” (Matthew 28:18-20) is too often limited to a specialized few going to foreign lands. The original language of Jesus’ sending message calls all “as they go” to “make disciples.” The command is for all believers to share their amazing news of living under the rule of God in the context of their daily lives, leading to making more disciples of Jesus. The news of life in Jesus is too wonderful to keep to ourselves!

I am concerned that many define “evangelism” too narrowly. It is not an activity we are called to pursue—it should be the essence of who we are in Christ. Paul explains we are to be “the aroma” of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). We have no choice—we smell like something or someone. Is it the sweet aroma of a life of self-sacrifice for the ultimate good of others? Until our sharing of the Gospel is as natural as talking about the weather, the stock market and the latest major sporting event (for those who enjoy sports), it will not be effective. All of us are called to proclaim Jesus as Lord through every action and word. Our deep faith in Jesus must be integrated into our daily lives so that we are “walking with the Spirit” and not “according to the flesh” (see



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 Director of Missional Studies
 Professor, College of Theology &
 Ministry
 Lipscomb University



415

*mission trips included volunteer work by
219 members of the Lipscomb Class of 2017.*

Romans 8). I believe we need intentional training to this end.

Lipscomb mission's program is designed to help students integrate their life of faith into their everyday lives. Mark Jent and his crew have developed amazing tools for this purpose. Mission efforts are vetted carefully to make sure they involve purposeful Kingdom activity. Host partners must be ready to follow up on the work done. Team leaders are trained to help the student reflect on the mission experience as living in the purposes of God daily. Devotional guides, given to every student on a mission, are crafted to help all meditate on their God-focused activities. We offer many vocation-specific mission efforts, providing the student with a vision of what their life could be if dedicated to God's mission. Whether the student chooses to explore working in foreign lands or Nashville, Tennessee, we want them to know their calling is no different. "As you go" puts us all on mission. In God's calling, being a missionary is not an option. The question is: "Where and how will I spend my life in God's mission?"

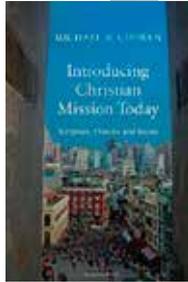
Christopher Wright's compelling book *The Mission of God* invites us to consider the Bible as God's grand narrative of redemption—from creation to new creation. Wright's purpose is to challenge the reader to accept God's invitation to participate in this great story. It is the only story worth living in and for. He concludes with a series of comparative thoughts that are very helpful, such as "We ask, 'Where does God fit into the story of my life?' when the real question is, 'Where does my little life fit into this great story of God's mission?'"¹ The most challenging in this series of questions is: "I may wonder what kind of mission God has for *me*, when I should ask what kind of person God wants me to become for *His* mission."

This is what we want our students to consider through Lipscomb Missions. God's mission is everywhere. What kind of me does God need to pursue it? Short-term missions provide an amazing research laboratory for students to explore that essential question in ways the classroom could never offer. 🌐

INTERSECTIONS Recommends...

Helpful texts on the theology of mission

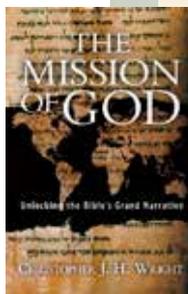
Recommended by Earl Lavender



Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues

By Michael W. Goheen

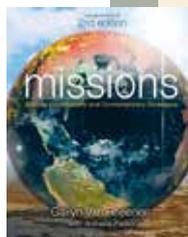
Goheen, one of the leading writers and thinkers concerning missions and missional thinking, provides an excellent comprehensive study of missions. With a strong emphasis on the biblical story, Goheen provides the history of Christian missions, as well as very helpful treatments of current issues facing the church. His section on urban missions is excellent. I would recommend this text to any church wanting to revisit their approach and theology of mission. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).



The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative

By Christopher J.H. Wright

There is no better study available for considering the comprehensive story of God and mission as revealed in the Bible. Wright, a deeply respected Old Testament theologian, presents a highly readable and convincing approach to reading the Bible "missionally." One of the greatest needs in churches today is a deeper theology of mission. While it is an extensive study (more than 500 pages), it is well worth the time it takes to read it and allow it to soak in. The epilogue alone—an incredibly convincing and compelling finish—is worth the cost of the book itself. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).



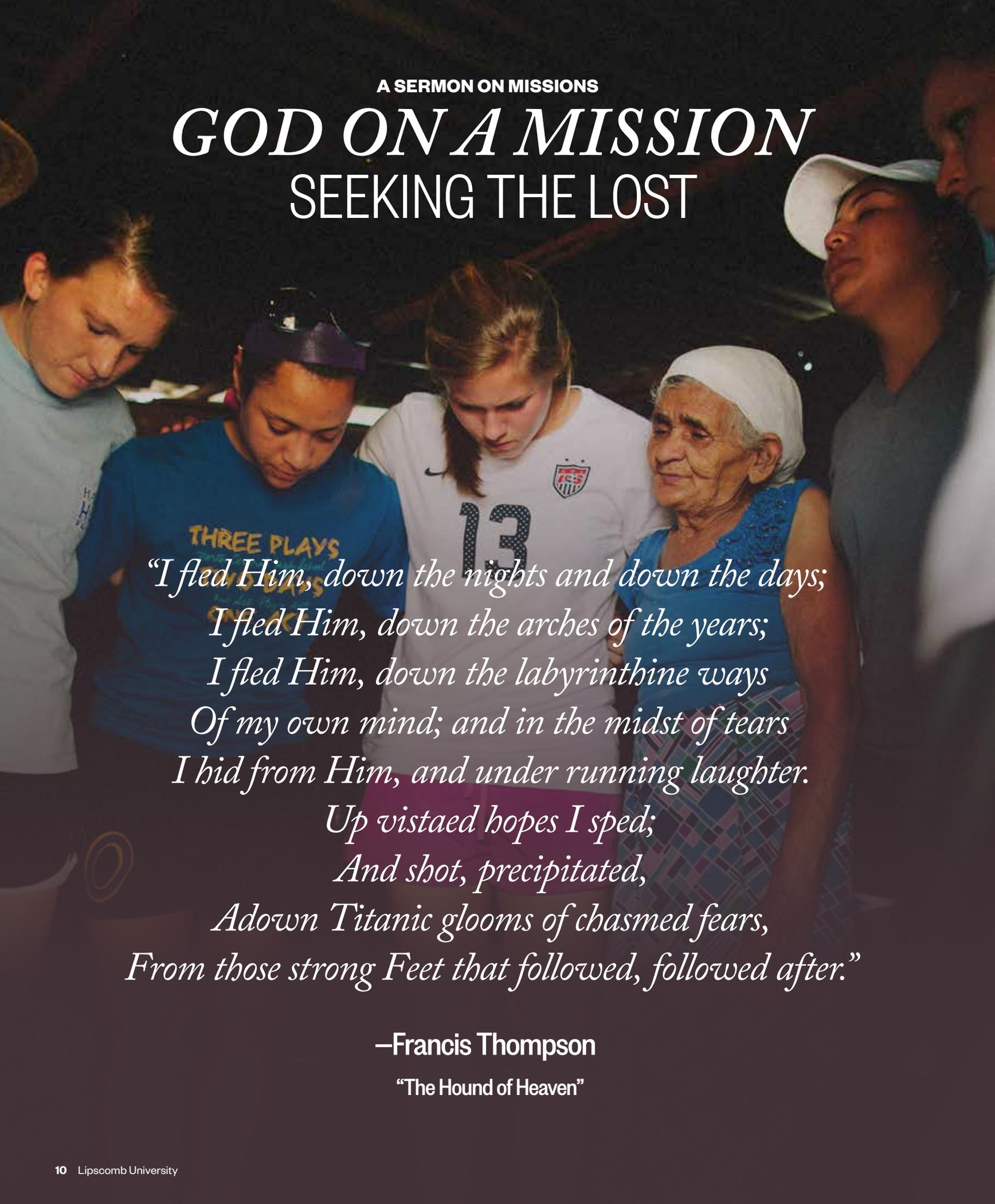
Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies

By Gailyn Van Rheenen

A great study for any church, Van Rheenen takes his readers into the heart of the mission of God. This second edition of an already well-acclaimed work is greatly improved and updated. Added chapters on church planting and short-term missions are invaluable. Highly recommended for all who have an interest in missions! (Grand Rapids, MI: 2014).

A SERMON ON MISSIONS

GOD ON A MISSION SEEKING THE LOST



*“I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.”*

—Francis Thompson

“The Hound of Heaven”

GOD IS ON A MISSION...FROM GOD. HE IS LOOKING FOR US.

The church calls this the *Missio Dei*, the very mission and purpose of God. John 3:16 announces the good news of a loving God whose affection is so deep and wide and high and long that he sent his “one and only,” that all who put their trust in him might live eternally with them. The next verse tells us why: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (v. 17).

GOD IS IN THE SAVING BUSINESS!

Religious people often forget God’s abounding affection for those not yet part of a church family. As insiders, a myopic vision of the mission often turns us toward pleasing the partisan rather than conducting a search for the lost people who walk this world, often right next to us! No one modeled our present attitude toward the lost quite like the Pharisees and the teachers of Torah in Luke 15.

Jesus was hanging around with the riff-raff and the shady-business crowd, telling them stories and speaking of the Kingdom. The insiders didn’t like seeing Jesus rubbing shoulders with sinners and modeled a disdain even the Saturday Night Live church lady couldn’t replicate. So Jesus told three stories with the same central point:

1. *The Parable of the Lost Sheep: Luke 15:1–7*
2. *The Parable of the Lost Coin: Luke 15:8–10*
3. *The Parable of the Lost Son: Luke 15:11–32*

Jesus’ stories demonstrated the unfolding biblical narrative of a missionary God seeking to save all who are lost. This God leaves no stone unturned in his relentless pursuit and models for all an evangelistic heart:

- *When something is lost, God notices...because the lost in every city, much like Zacchaeus, matter to Him.*
- *When something is lost, God actively searches...because a good shepherd cannot imagine abandoning his sheep.*
- *When He searches, God goes all-out...even boldly risking ninety-nine sheep by leaving them in open country to find the wayward one.*
- *When God has an all-out search, lost things are found...because results matter when something is important.*
- *When God finds the lost, God greatly rejoices...because Lost & Found is his favorite spot in the building.*

The long and the short of it is this: God has a preferential concern for those who are lost. Red, yellow, black, white; rich, poor, wrong or right; all are precious in his sight. And God models for all those who join

Him on short-term missions what an all-out, spare-no-expense search might look like as well.

WHY DO LOST PEOPLE MATTER SO MUCH?

Because all of the Godhead actively, eagerly and earnestly longs to see the lost join the great family of God. There the Trinitarian love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit rejoices as a family over the adoption of another precious child. God loves to adopt—and all of the Godhead is engaged in adoption.

Look at Jesus’ three stories again....

The good shepherd who notices a missing sheep and risks the herd to find the fallen is God the **Son** (Jesus). The woman who uses the fire of a candle and the wind of a broom to find the lost coin hidden on the dirt floor is God the **Spirit**. The father who runs to greet a wayward child and welcomes him back into the family with gifts and a party is God the **Father**. All of the Trinity is engaged in this mission, because God is on a mission *from* God.

Always remember God himself has already started the short-term missions we venture upon. Wherever we go, we join Him there. We are advised to arrive with a strategy—to model the triune God in our mission work, by

...looking for the lost, the least and the lowest, just like Jesus did, because they are most receptive to the good news and in greatest need of a rescue.

...trusting in the Holy Spirit to light the way to those who are lost and to clear the path so that those so valuable to God may be found.

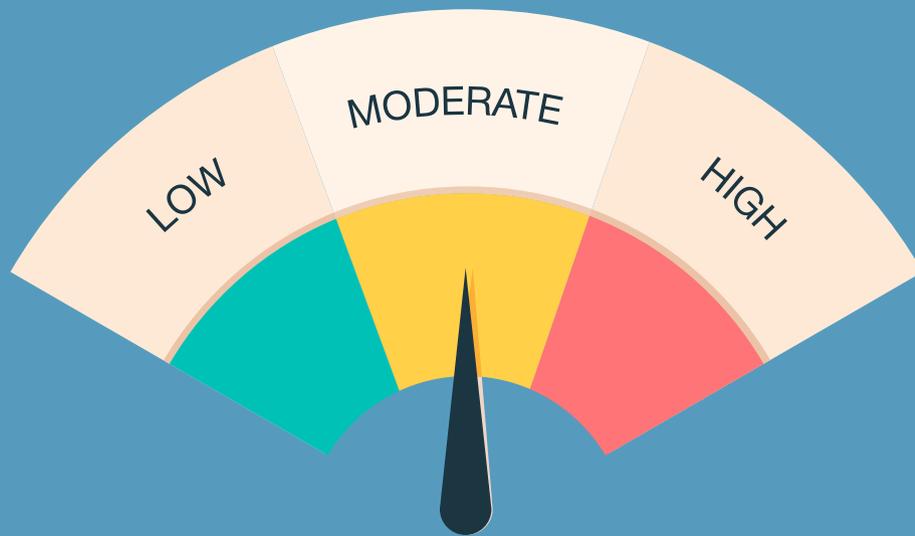
...welcoming the weary, beaten-down and broken with open arms—just as our Father did for us when we as prodigals found our way home.

In the TV show “Mission Impossible,” the assignment always ended with the words: “This message will self-destruct in five seconds.” The marching orders for our mission come from God and will never destruct. But all around us people have destructed, and soon the world will too. Our time here is short. God is on a mission, and he bids us to join as well. 

Scott Sager

*Vice President for Church Services,
Lipscomb University
Preaching Minister,
Granny White Church of Christ*





Taking the risk out of international missions

Short-term mission work continues to grow in popularity among the students of Lipscomb University; however, today's world can sometimes make it difficult to carry out overseas evangelism in complete safety. Terrorism, crime, health issues and political unrest are all concerns around the globe in 2017. But through proactive risk management before a mission trip, these hurdles can certainly be overcome, allowing mission work to be successful and productive.

One of the areas of oversight within my office, the Office of Risk Management, is student safety while traveling outside the country. My responsibility includes the hundreds of Lipscomb students who travel to remote corners of the globe for mission work and humanitarian relief each year. There are many additional risks associated with travel to third-world and emerging countries that must be considered prior to embarking on these worthwhile journeys. Over the past 12 years, I have worked to develop a crisis and risk management plan for our university's mission teams. During this time, we have encountered a number of situations—the death of a trip leader, injuries, robberies and the presence of students in European cities during terrorist attacks, to name a few—and in each situation the university's crisis and risk management plan and resources have minimized the risks and successfully kept everyone safe and families informed. Pre-planning certainly pays off.

In considering the risks associated with missions trips, here are some steps we have incorporated into our planning efforts:

- 1. Identify the risk exposures for the area(s) in which you are traveling.** Different countries and cultures present a wide range of risks that must be considered. This may include health concerns and required vaccinations, infectious diseases, political unrest, natural disasters, terrorist activities, cultural norms and etiquette, different laws per country, driving and road conditions and local criminal activities. It is key to the success of your trip to identify what the potential risks are that might impact the safety and security of your group.
- 2. Develop a crisis plan for your risk exposures.** Once the risks have been identified, developing a crisis management plan for each should be a key part of your overall risk management process. Your plan should encompass the major local risks, threats and dangers that are known in the city, state or region in which you are traveling and address each of them individually.

Make sure to incorporate in your plan a primary and secondary meeting location for your group. In the event of a crisis, communication such as cell service and text messaging may be unavailable. Providing a pre-determined location for your group to meet and communicating this upon arrival within the country can eliminate confusion in a crisis situation.

There are numerous resources to help your organization obtain up-to-date and pertinent information on specific risks for each location. The United States State Department has a website with country-specific information. OSAC, the Overseas Security Advisory Council, also has excellent information. In addition to these free resources, there are many travel assistance providers who can help with pre-departure security and safety advice. It is important to know the location and contact information for the U.S. Embassy as well as registering each traveler through the STEP program on the U.S. Department of State website.

3. Develop a comprehensive communication plan.

As part of your trip registration process, obtain key contact information for each participant. Each team member should provide an emergency contact name, address, cell number and email. This information should be made available to the trip leaders as well as the person or persons in the U.S. responsible for being on-call 24/7 should an emergency situation occur. In a crisis situation, it is extremely important for all parties to have this contact information readily available and easily accessible.

4. Establish good relationships with in-country host partners and third parties. Churches usually rely heavily on the relationships they establish with their host partners. In a crisis, it is important to know what resources these partners are able to provide to your group as well as what resources are outside their scope. Your leadership team should have an honest conversation about these issues early in the process.

If your group is entering into agreements with third-party vendors for transportation or lodging, make sure to vet these properly as part of your due diligence process. Asking for referrals as well as their safety and security protocols is a good best practice.

5. Train those leading the mission trip as well as those traveling as part of the group. Investing in pre-departure training for your mission team leaders is a critical component of your crisis management plan. Everyone must understand their roles and responsibilities and be familiar with what they are expected to do in any given situation. In addition to training your leadership team, sharing relevant information with the larger group on health, safety and security issues is also recommended. The more information your church or organization can provide, the more prepared everyone will be once the trip is underway.

6. Consider partnering with a travel assistance firm as well as recommending accident and health insurance for all travelers.

There are many excellent travel assistance firms that can offer detailed safety and security information for any country. They have personnel on staff 24/7 to assist with medical and security questions. These services can offer a huge benefit to mission teams, particularly when traveling to high-risk locations or third world countries where the infrastructure and available resources are limited.

It is important to have accident and health insurance coverage for your group. Sickness and injuries are the most common risk to occur when traveling abroad. Many of the U.S. health care plans do not apply once you leave the continental U.S.; therefore it is important to notify your group to check their personal policy to verify coverage. If they do not have coverage, it is recommended that you either purchase accident and health coverage as part of your registration package or ask each participant to obtain their own global coverage and provide you with a copy.

7. Practice your crisis plan. A good crisis plan that sits on a shelf and is not practiced is considered a failed plan. For those who are responsible for overseeing and implementing your crisis plan, training is crucial for everyone's success. At a minimum, an annual tabletop exercise is a recommended best practice. There are many exercises that are available and it is advisable to practice a different scenario each year to fully prepare your team for success.

For every Christian faith group, spreading the gospel, modeling selfless love and generosity, and enriching Christian relationships are the top priorities for any mission trip. But these priority goals cannot be implemented effectively if steps are not taken beforehand to keep everyone safe and healthy during the scope of the mission trip. Becoming good stewards of resources and thus managing risks is a crucial aspect of successfully bringing the love of Christ to the world. 

Kathy Hargis
Associate Vice-President, Risk Management
Lipscomb University



Computers, IT *and the* Future of Missions

How many decisions do you make in a day?

According to a study by Columbia University professor Sheena Iyengar, the average individual makes approximately 70 decisions each day. Another study concluded that individuals make as many as 35,000 “remotely conscious” decisions each day!** Yet all share one common thread: information, or processed data. We are surrounded by immense amounts of data containing valuable insights, which can lead to improved decision making and efficiency – even when it comes to missions, no matter the scale.*

Why are computer information systems important to missions programs? Before considering this question, it's important to realize that you're likely already laying the foundation for information systems, whether digital or otherwise. You probably collect data about your ministry partners, participants, financial management, fundraising, safety details and other logistics. If not, now's a good time to start! When this data is organized and analyzed through the lens of past, present and future insights, it leads to decision making that is both reactive and proactive. Information systems can provide you with greater overall efficiency and streamlined processes, potential for scalability and the ability to manage risk quickly and more effectively.

While the benefits sound appealing, the implementation of such systems can undoubtedly feel daunting, and even unattainable. So, how can you start utilizing information systems to improve your missions programs?

To begin, let me assure you that you can do so without spending thousands of dollars for off-the-shelf, pre-packaged options that are often cost prohibitive and include functions unnecessary for your efforts. Customization and simplicity are paramount. So, how can you bring the two together in the form of an information system? Build your own! A great place to start is to identify your program's specific needs and goals. What sorts of processes are needed? As mentioned earlier, some basic elements include fundraising, financial management, partnership info (similar to customer relationship management in business), participant info and safety details.

Implementation of information systems doesn't come without caveats. There are critical topics to examine in the early phases prior to development. Data security and privacy are at the forefront of this

conversation, as you'll be dealing with passport and other personally identifiable information, and possibly even HIPAA-related information, depending on the depth. Other considerations include but are not limited to: maintenance and oversight, access points and permission levels, storage location (cloud, shared network, local, et al.), and backup and recoverability.

After you've reviewed and determined goals, basic functions and other requirements, move on to the development phase. Use the physical resources within your church family or organization – the people around you! Due to the continued rapid growth of the tech industry and corresponding increase in tech careers, there's a strong likelihood of finding someone with whom you're already connected who possesses the necessary skill set to create a system that caters to your needs. Projects like this can serve as an indirect way for people to become more involved in your outreach and ministry efforts while using their specific gifts and passions. (Keep in mind that these individuals can also play a valuable role in the early phases of determining needs, goals, and basic functionality.)

In Lipscomb Missions, the value of our information system, custom-built and managed in-house, can't be understated. Without the system we have in place, the aggressive growth over the past nine years to reach 60 teams and nearly 1,000 people serving worldwide would simply not have been possible. Some of the specific benefits our information system provides include:

Comprehensive Risk Management:

Quick access to information required for insurance audits, reviews and claims, compilation of necessary travel information for team leaders, the U.S. Embassy and Lipscomb's Incident Management Team;

Dynamic Reporting: Dashboards and reports on participants and teams, allowing for ease of access to relevant information for staff and team leaders;

Enhanced Alumni Relations: Customer relationship management - for continued involvement of past participants through leadership, financial support, et al.

Financial Transparency: Fundraising platform for online and offline gifts, near real-time financial updates, basic accounting functions, participant access to track fundraising progress; and

Predictive Analytics: Forecasting growth and future needs related to staffing, leadership, trip offerings and strategic recruiting.

As complex as that all may sound, our information system is intentionally designed for ease of use for the entire staff, regardless of level of technical experience. In its simplest description, our system is essentially a large number of Excel files, online forms and web pages interacting with one another on many levels.

With vast amounts of data at our fingertips, why choose to ignore it? Leveraging decisions with readily available data around us means we can "work smarter, not harder," and better allocate time to another of the many areas of responsibility which ministry entails. [🔗](#)

If you'd like more information about how to incorporate information systems into your missions program, please contact Lipscomb Missions directly at 615.966.2015.

Paul Stevens
Senior Missions Coordinator
Lipscomb University



Lipscomb engineering students manufactured and sold leather bracelets to help pay the cost of a recent mission trip.

FUNDRAISING

An invitation to practice, partner and trust

Mission work usually requires money. Certain projects—such as travelling to a third world country—require larger sums. Other projects—such as a day project in a local community—can be done on a small budget. But the “ask” is still there. God is not limited to our resources, though. Often we think we must plan every detail along the way, which doesn’t leave room for God to provide out-of-the-box solutions to the venture to which we are called.

Within Lipscomb Missions, we encourage participants to view this reality as part of the whole short-term missions process. We view fundraising as an invitation to practice ministry, an invitation to partner with people in ministry and an invitation to trust God to provide. Each of these exercises will stretch the participant and comes with its own set of challenges.

Invitation to... practice.

“Then Jesus, came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

—Matthew 28:18-20

Humans are notorious for complicating things. We want to bless others through service, yet we often end up agonizing over the financials and letting anxiety creep into our hearts, diminishing our gusto for the project.

When my focus gets skewed, I reread the Great Commission. Its simplicity is stellar. If the Creator of the universe is in charge of clearing our paths, what is there to be concerned with? A faithful surrender to His plan allows us to practice ministry without constraint—to go into people’s homes, to walk among strangers, to shake hands and provide a meal. Our only responsibility in this partnership is to listen and love well, depending on God to be our guide.

God certainly doesn’t need us to reach the world, but He wants us to participate. God knows that we long for a sense of purpose, and He gives us the gift of ministry as an answer to that desire.

Invitation to... partner.

“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your love for all His holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people... So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.”

—Philemon 1:4-7, 17

Not everyone is blessed with the physical ability or personal time to travel. Yet even people who don't pack up their bags can still be involved in mission work. Fundraising is about more than asking for donations; it is about asking for financial partners within a ministry—people who will financially and spiritually invest in the journey. If your heart is pulled toward mission efforts and you can't go, you can be a part of sending someone else.

Partnerships, by nature, have requirements. If a mission team member has chosen to pursue partnerships through letter writing, for example, the letter should include more than an “ask.” It should be well written and clearly state the mission's goals. It should include information about the ministries or organizations the team is going to serve and why the team member has chosen to be a part of the process. Next, it needs to be personalized per donor, because no one likes to receive generic requests for money. Finally, ask for prayers for the efforts of the team, which will hopefully continue the partnership between the donor and the team.

Once a partnership is secured, then the initiator of the relationship needs to provide updates during the planning and implementation process. Let the host partner know how team meetings are going. Ask for prayer requests for specific issues that arise. Once the team returns from a mission trip or completes a missions project, a full report is due.

What did the donors' generosity help the team contribute to the host partner? What has this process taught the team member? How can donors stay plugged in with the ministries?

If we reframe raising money into forming partnerships, we allow God to fuel our passion for the mission by welcoming others to be a part of it. Faith is a communal effort.

Invitation to... trust.

“Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

—Mark 10:15

Mark 10 provides a beautiful example of how God wants us to interact with Him through Jesus' interactions with a group of children. In this story, we're told that children were being brought to Him so that He could bless them. One can imagine that the children probably didn't sit quietly but instead caused some general, joyful chaos. The disciples worried about the reckless abandon the children displayed. Jesus did not agree with their assessment. Instead, He encouraged the 12 men to be more like the crowd of rambunctious kids that caused them such annoyance.



Using their ingenuity to their advantage, the students put the GPS coordinates of their mission trip location, the Village of Hope in Ghana, as the bracelet design.

This shows us how Jesus wants us to approach our faith in terms of ministry to others. Don't forget to play. Laughter can often connect you with someone quicker than a lecture. Second, don't be afraid to approach Him. He will embrace you, dirty hands and all. Third, trust Him. I believe Jesus is showing us through a child's natural ability to trust that we have no reason to worry about where our provisions will come from.

We are designed to be trusting. Unfortunately, we're often taught through life to guard our trust and be frugal when deciding whom to believe. Jesus invites us back to our natural tendencies of vulnerability. Raising money is no exception to this invitation.

There seems to be a disconnect between wanting to serve and actually getting to a place of service. The desire to serve is there, but the trust that provisions will be available is missing. When we choose to limit our trust, we miss a unique opportunity to learn more about Jesus. Matthew 7:1 tells us that God delights in gifting us with good things. Our Father takes joy in providing for us. Our awareness of His provision can certainly be limited by how much we trust Him. And don't you want to be a firsthand witness to the ways God is working in your life?

Next time you engage in fundraising, use the process as a practice in trusting our good Father. Teach your team members to view writing letters or hosting a bake sale or selling t-shirts as a way to hand their ministry over to God, and say, "Take us where You want. Do with us what You want. We trust You." Embrace the process; don't run from it or fear it. Then, confidently watch as God orchestrates His will. 

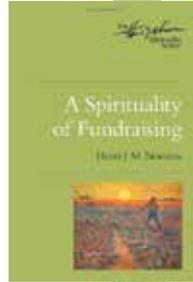
To contact Erin Gupton at Lipscomb Missions, email her at erin.gupton@lipscomb.edu or call her at 615.966.1014.

Erin Gupton
Missions Coordinator
Lipscomb University



INTERSECTIONS *Recommends...*

A Spirituality of Fundraising *Henri Nouwen*



"Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. Fundraising is precisely the opposite of begging. When we seek to raise funds we are not saying, 'Please, could you help us out because lately it's been hard.' Rather, we are declaring, 'We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you—your energy, your prayers, and your money—in this work to which God has called us.'" (Nouwen)

Henri Nouwen's *A Spirituality of Fundraising* is a short read (64 pages) packed with inspirational perspectives on how to live in God's abundance as a fundamental personal experience by encouraging us to approach others with openness, gratitude and joyful confidence.

Nouwen opposes the awkward timidity with which most fundraisers approach their tasks. Instead, he suggests adopting a confident spirit to lead one forth into effective communication with people who are led to give. His entire methodology is centered around the belief that fundraising is itself a ministry through which we "announce our vision and invite other people into our mission." To ask someone for their financial generosity and sacrificial stewardship is to offer them the gift of conversion. Accepting a fundraising request can work within the giver's heart to bring forth a conversion experience if they believe in the mission and embrace the potential for positive change that can occur as a result of their act of faith-based giving.

Experiencing the freedom to ask for funds is based on the confidence within your spirit to trust God with the needs of the situation. Asking is offering an invitation to others. The invitation you extend is to join a community based on God's Kingdom work. Fundraising is far from being a shallow endeavor; its depth lends to things far more important than the money itself, making it, "a very rich and beautiful activity."

STUDENT VIEWPOINT

Living their best selves

As you read this magazine, Lipscomb Missions has already sent out 585 Lipscomb students on missions trips in 2017. Coordinators expect to send almost 900 individuals on 60 short-term missions trips by year's end.

Lipscomb Missions exists to equip students with a hands-on understanding of God's worldwide mission. Each year students are highly impacted by their participation, growing in their faith and their godly behavior as they participate in selfless acts for those in need.

Macon Overcast

Cincinnati, Ohio—Senior with four trips to Arizona

Macon Overcast, a biology and English double major, embarks on his fourth mission trip to Arizona this month to serve the Navajo nation, the United States' largest Native American reservation. He notes that his experiences with short-term missions have helped redefine his notion of church by developing a broader understanding of the church's identity.

"I've grown in my general perspectives of church. The Navajo are a totally different people with a totally different culture from my own. Learning how to navigate those cultural differences while helping them, whether through encouragement or physical labor, has shown me that the church has this missional identity. I had to learn to let the Navajo have their own agency with the way they do church and religion. I learned how to mediate and resolve the tension between two people with different religions and perspectives. In the end, they are Christians, we are Christians, and we are in this together."



Macon Overcast

Overcast's experiences in Arizona have given him a new understanding of God and of love.

"A lot of times, when people say they see God working, it kind of seems like God is grasping and maneuvering things. My perspective is a little different because I always feel like God is letting go of things. His letting go opens your eyes to the beauty of other people. I think that's how God works on this trip, and for me in general. He helps me let go of presuppositions about people, about religion, about anything that hinders me from actually loving people. I've seen God in getting rid of those boundaries. And I've seen that in other people on the trip as well."



Katie Scholl

Katie Scholl

Franklin, Tennessee—Senior with five trips to Scotland

Katie Scholl, a social entrepreneurship major in the College of Business, participated on a mission trip for the fifth time to Dundee, Scotland, this past spring. The trip was conducted in partnership with the Dundee Church of Christ.

“It’s been really cool returning repeatedly. We work with their equivalent to eighth and ninth graders and last year, we had officially shared with every student in the school. Dundee is different from a lot of mission trips because it is completely relational. A lot of people in Scotland have these false perceptions of Christianity, so we get to go in and give them a real-life perspective of a Christian. We get to tell them the ways the Christian story gives us purpose and hope. We tell them that they have worth and potential and the opportunity to be whoever they want to be.”

Spring break is a busy season for Lipscomb Missions, with servants spreading throughout the world for one week.

“It’s a crazy thought to me that God is working all over the world, all at once, and giving equal care to everyone. Spring break is such a cool week for that because He’s working in Scotland, but He’s also working in Nashville and in all of the other countries where students have gone

to serve.” Scholl said her mission experiences have had significant effects on her faith.

“I’ve learned to be comfortable not having all the answers. My experiences have caused me to trust more. I’ve seen growth in the people of Dundee, and I know that the Lord is working. I have to trust that He will finish the job. I’m coming in for a week, and I have to surrender the rest of the work to the Lord. It’s not me going and teaching these kids about Jesus. It’s the Lord working through me. We are not bringing the Lord to Dundee; He is there and He is working, and we are just watering the seeds that are already planted. It’s really humbled me in my faith.”

Mark Naguib

Nashville, Tennessee—Senior with two trips to Nicaragua

Mark Naguib, a senior molecular biology and philosophy double major, has an incredible story about the transformative nature of short-term missions. Originally a skeptic of the process, Naguib changed his mind after serving on two medical mission trips in Nicaragua. He told me about Loren Eisely’s story, “The Star Thrower.”

In paraphrase: An old man was walking along the beach the day after a storm. The beach was covered with starfish. In the distance, the old man saw a boy on the shore, throwing starfish into the sea. As the man approached him, he asked the boy, “What are you doing with those starfish?” The boy explained, “I’m throwing starfish into the ocean. They can’t get back to



Mark Naguib
(far right)

the sea by themselves and when the sun gets high, all of the starfish will die unless I throw them back into the water.” The old man said, “There are thousands of starfish on this beach. You couldn’t possibly make a difference.” The boy looked at the old man, bent down, and picked up another starfish. He threw it into the water as far as possible, turned to smile at the old man, and said, “I made a difference to that one, didn’t I?”

“When I went to Nicaragua for the first time, I was the old man in the story. But as the trip went on, I realized that maybe I’m supposed to be the boy in the story, to try to make a difference by being intentional about the way I interact with people. It wasn’t until I was coming home from my second trip to Nicaragua, recognizing how much I had learned from my experiences, that I realized I’m actually the starfish in the story and Nicaragua is the one that picked me up and threw me back into the water. If it wasn’t for my experiences there, I wouldn’t be where I am now. I am a more humble person and am aware of how much work God is doing in the world, how much work God is doing in me.”

Brooke Foster

Prosper, Texas—Junior with three trips to the Philippines

Brooke Foster, a junior English major, has been to the Philippines twice and returned as a student leader for her third trip in May. The trip to the Philippines is only three years old, so Foster has had the unique perspective of serving on a short-term mission trip during its initial formation. The team has partnered with several different ministries, including On the Rock Ministries, Hope for Tomorrow and the Jesan Center. After her first trip, Brooke expressed doubts about the purpose and effectiveness of short-term missions. However, she has come to a broader understanding of the merit of short-term mission teams.

“I think that for long-term missionaries to do their work, short-term missionaries have to exist. We need to go in and revitalize them and bring them gifts from America and remind them that their ministry is doing good things. We need to get down in the trenches with them.”

Foster referenced the biblical story from Exodus 17, where Moses is in the middle of a battle and God tells him that as long as his arms are in the air, his army will win. Obviously, Moses’ arms got tired and Aaron and Hur physically came and held Moses’ arms up for him.

“That’s what we need to do for long-term missionaries. We need to come in and physically be that revitalization. I think that helping to bring that energy is a really important part of short-term missions.”



Brooke Foster

Foster also noted the effect of these trips on her team members.

“When people are on mission trips, they are living their best self. They really come into their own. They are surrounded by the environment of doing God’s work, and everything is really steeped in spirituality. There’s not a lot of room to stray from that. It’s a really good environment, and I feel like it’s really cool to get to know people in that environment because then, when you come back to campus, you get to encourage them to continue living their best self.” 

Mary Ashley Arendsee
Lipscomb Missions Student
Journalism Intern
Lipscomb University





ATHLETICS VIEWPOINT

Sports is a bridge to connect people and cultures

Sports have become a substitute for religion for many around the world. Daniel Wann, a leading sport psychologist at Murray State University, wrote:

“The similarities between sport fandom and organized religion are striking. Consider the vocabulary associated with both: faith, devotion, worship, ritual, dedication, sacrifice, commitment, spirit, prayer, suffering, festival and celebration” (Huffington Post, 2011).

Throughout my childhood, my “religion” was soccer; all of my time, energy and emotions were consumed by the sport. I knew that the Lord had given me the passion and ability to play soccer. Unfortunately, I thought that gift was only for me to enjoy.

As I’ve matured, I now realize that everything was created through Jesus and for Jesus (Colossians 1:15-16). A healthy, holy dedication to sports serves as a metaphorical bridge that connects people and foreign cultures. When these relationships are established, the love and grace of Jesus have the power to change lives. Using sports as a vehicle of ministry helps take the focus off oneself and place it where it belongs: on Jesus.

In Lipscomb Athletics, we believe our program is incomplete without nurturing the spiritual development of each athlete and person involved. For many athletes, because of their unwavering commitment to their sport, they have never had the opportunity to combine their passion and gifting beyond themselves. The idea of athletes using their sport for the glory of God and to positively influence others is revolutionary. Our initiative within Lipscomb Athletic Missions allows this dream to fully come alive. What started as nine student-athletes serving in Honduras in 2012 has exploded into a pillar for Lipscomb Athletics. Over the past five years, Athletic Missions has mobilized 31 teams and 494 student athletes and coaches on the mission field. Having personally been involved in athletic mission trips for more than 12 years, I am convinced that the youth of today will discover Jesus through sports ministry.

Host Partnerships are Key

The first step beginning each mission is prayer. As we pray, the key focus we bring to the Lord is to establish the right host partnership for each trip.

Once we establish a host partner, our goal and desire is to stay actively connected to that ministry, continuing to build on those relationships year after year. Lipscomb Athletic Missions works with nine host partners domestically and internationally. These strategic partnerships allow short-term teams to return to the same communities and invest in the same people. This results in long-term relationships with an eternal impact.

One example of this is our partnership with Marte Missions in the Dominican Republic. In July 2014, the Lipscomb women's basketball team had the opportunity to help Marte Missions build a basketball court and work alongside a local church. In December 2014, the baseball team returned to this same community to help build a baseball field and invest deeper in the lives of the locals. In August 2016, the men's basketball team also helped Marte Missions build a playground and share the love of Jesus with the children and families throughout the community.

Shift in Culture

The athletic missions team works hard to provide opportunities for our athletes and coaches to participate in the Kingdom of God. We believe that by embodying the character of Jesus and participating in God's unfolding plot, each person has the ability to flourish. By implementing this model, the number of yearly trips and participants have grown exponentially, and the entire culture of athletics has been affected.

"I've always heard people saying how they see God working through something or someone, but in those moments it often doesn't even

cross my mind that God is present," said Cam Miller, a member of the Lipscomb men's basketball team. "After a week in the Dominican Republic, I can say with full confidence that I was able to see God working in their community, in my life and in this team."

Our student athletes and coaches are becoming more aware of God through the opportunities of service that arise. As a result, lives are being positively changed. We have seen this play out as our cross-country and track program have been serving together for the past seven years in a row, and our women's soccer program has returned to El Salvador the last five consecutive years. As prospective players are being recruited into the program, the opportunity to serve on mission trips with teammates and coaches is one reason they are choosing to attend Lipscomb University over other schools.

Heartbeat of Lipscomb Athletic Missions

Since the inception of Lipscomb Athletic Missions, an extraordinary number of athletes have given their lives to Christ in baptism, many of whom have chosen to do so in direct response to an experience on a mission trip. We are not interested in providing a "great experience" in the short term. We are interested in long-term soul development as the storylines beautifully play out across the globe.

Alex Tate, former cross-country runner, reflected on the service work with host partner Project 658 in Charlotte, North Carolina:

"When our trip had come to an end and we arrived back at Lipscomb, we came together to reflect and pray. Klotz left us with some great last words. He said, 'The way you feel right now, the way we have been living this past weekend, is how God intended it to be.' I love these words. I can't help but ask myself how euphoric it would feel to commit myself to living my entire life like this. What a perfect note to end on." 

Christopher Klotz, a.k.a. "Klotzy," has been at Lipscomb for five years. He coordinates all athletic missions programs, mentors young men, leads mission trips, leads all local outreach programs, leads the athletes' breakout chapel on campus, organizes weekly coach's devotionals, and speaks at numerous chapels and Fellowship of Christian Athletes events. If you would like more information about ways to get young athletes involve in missions, contact Klotz at 615.966.5066.

Christopher Klotz
Athletics Director of Spiritual Formation
Lipscomb University



HOST PARTNER VIEWPOINT

Walls will always need paint, invest in the people

There has been a significant amount of open dialogue lately concerning the efficiency of short-term missions. Some say they are helpful, while others not so much. As for me, I teeter the fence. I am a product of short-term missions, after all. If it wasn't for my time traveling to Haiti under Lipscomb Missions, I may have never had the courage to live in Haiti full time. May have never met my two oldest children. May have never started Emmaus House.

On the other hand, I have also seen a lot of harm done in Haiti by the constant coming and going of various mission teams. Haiti is a country now deeply rooted in dependency, which goes to the heart of the highly debated issue of short-term missions. Teams come to work hard and open their hearts, then leave as quickly as they came. The Haitians take what is offered and then wait for the next team to arrive. Over and over again, the cycle continues on.

Years ago as a student at Lipscomb University, I remember someone saying that short-term missions should be designed to make long-term impacts. Long-term impacts should empower growth and (eventual) independence instead of dependency. As a young college student, I wasn't quite sure what this statement meant, or how the overall goal was possible, yet the ideal stuck with me.

I wish I could say that I followed that advice to host teams with the sole purpose of making long-term impacts when I moved to Haiti a few years after graduation. But, I confess, it wasn't always my top priority. I was a bit over-ambitious my first few years here and willingly hosted a surplus of teams—from youth groups to medical doctors to people only wanting to explore the Caribbean country. I hosted them all and everyone else in between.

Eventually, I found myself completely burned out. I realized I had forgotten the basics: Short-term missions are supposed to make long-term impacts. There I was hosting dozens of teams a year, each one came intending to do good work. But overall, the many in-and-out groups left me to play catch-up (or sometimes clean-up) once they left. I was exhausted and often irritable.

When co-founding Emmaus House in 2013, I knew I needed to start over and be very intentional when it came to deciding which

teams would make the most positive, long-lasting changes for the community. In order to avoid another burn-out, I decided to partner only with those willing to use their time and funds to impact the ministry for the long-term. No more inviting teams to do what the locals could do for themselves. No more one-time handouts. No more hosting a team for the “experience.”

In making the decision to set parameters around what types of teams I host, do you know what I found to be true? The number of people interested in coming to Haiti for missions drastically lessened. I understand why: Many people (not all) go on mission trips wanting to experience the fruits of their labor while they are present on the trip. And most of the time, the only way to achieve this is to create short work assignments. Long-term impacts, however, require...a long time in order to see a dramatic, community-changing result!

Knowing this information, what are short-term teams to do? How can mission teams serve in sustainable ways and not burn out their host partner all at the same time? As someone who has been on the receiving end of teams for more than six years now, let me offer a couple of suggestions:

Focus on people not projects

Missions are about people, not projects. I don't think this is something anyone would argue. Still, so many short-term missions are project-based, focused more on going to do something rather than going to be with the people.

I don't believe teams should rule out projects. Rather, with the focus on the people, teams should find ways to work with the people instead of for them. The last thing I want is to invite people to visit Emmaus House simply to complete a project for us and then leave us. Instead, I want people to come to encourage our youth, empower our staff, work alongside us, and provide us with the tools and resources needed to continue development once they leave.

Go to invest not just visit

To travel to Haiti and stay for a week costs around \$1,350. Bring a team of 10 and that is \$13,500. With that kind of money I could send two of our students to college for a year, have the





Photos by Hunter Kittrell

yearly rent covered for our youth homes or finally purchase the property we have been saving for. As a host partner of an organization that relies completely on the donations of others, it is my responsibility to make sure every dollar is put to best use. And that includes teams.

If I am going to host mission teams spending this kind of money, I need to make sure their time and cost is justified. To me, welcoming teams who will only come visit once and never be involved again is just not worth it. Instead, I need people willing to come and then invest. While financial investments are always appreciated, I also need people willing to invest their knowledge and expertise with us on the ground, as well as people to invest their time to advocate for us in the States. For me, teams are absolutely worth the investment if they lead to a long-lasting partnership that will advance the vision of the ministry.

Following this standard to only host/send teams who will invest in people rather than just visit to complete work projects can be tricky, but I believe it is the best way for short-term missions to make sustainable impacts in the places they serve. Projects will come and go. There will always be walls in need of fresh paint. There is always a house that needs to be built. Most of these tasks could be completed by the locals if resources were available. But it is the people who will remain, and they should be the focus of every short-term team.

I truly believe short-term missions are a way to build up God's kingdom around the world. So together, let's make sure we are all focused on the bigger picture, the most important long-term impact of all: loving others and inviting them into God's family destined for Heaven.

ABOUT EMMAUS HOUSE

Lipscomb University alumni **Hunter** ('08) and **Jillian (Cromie) Kittrell** ('08) have lived in Haiti since 2010. Initially serving as directors of Cap Haitien Children's Home, Hunter and Jillian are now administrators for Emmaus House, a transition house for young adults. They have three children, two adopted in Haiti. Jillian is a blogger and Hunter a photographer, but together they are so much more to the youth of Haiti. They are founders; they are friends; they are neighbors; they are visionaries; they are missionaries; they are His hands and they are His feet. [🔗](#)

Jillian Kittrell
Founder and Administrator
Emmaus House



TEAM LEADER VIEWPOINT

God, show me your glory

As a faculty member in Lipscomb's Department of Physics, I often get puzzled expressions that beg the question: "Tell me...how did you end up leading a pre-med spring break mission team?"

My journey with mission work began in 2007. I was 39 when I traveled to Clinica Ezell in Guatemala with a team from Lipscomb's then-Raymond B. Jones School of Engineering. The team consisted primarily of junior and senior mechanical engineering students, some of whom were going on their tenth or eleventh foreign mission trip! It was my first trip. I was a rookie.

We traveled to Clinica Ezell to replace a pedestrian bridge in a community near the clinic. The bridge had been washed away six months earlier by a hurricane. The students expertly assembled the bridge panels. They operated machinery I didn't even recognize: angle irons, come-alongs and welders. I operated a wire brush and scraped rust off the bridge panels

to prepare them for paint. I was humbled by the experience to offer my "handy-man" skills. My "comfortable" work skills are (1) acting as principal investigator on a research project funded by the National Institutes of Health and (2) serving as chair of the physics department at Lipscomb. Yet none of that proved particularly useful as I worked on the bridge in Guatemala. Physical labor, muscle use and determination proved most useful for this project. I had to make a shift in how I viewed my usefulness during that moment and leave my ego back in the US.

The close-knit group of college students I was surrounded by (**Kris Hatchell, Caleb Rucker** and **Amy Lucas Gilfilen**) were each so heart-centered and deeply engaged with reaching out to others on the location site. Their Christ-essence on the trip brought forth two strong emotions within me: awe and shame. Awe at their passion for service and their expertise in engineering (of which I had none). Awe at how natural service work poured out of them—from traveling to a third world country with cultural differences to loving the people they engaged with like family. My shame surfaced out of the realization that I had just begun my mission experience...at twice their age.

As a physics professor on a medical mission trip, Alan Bradshaw spends most of his time at Clinica Ezell in Guatemala working with the children of patients. But as a team leader, he coordinates, evaluates and inspires.



That first trip was emotionally impactful. Some memories stay with me to this day: I remember with clarity the smell of the panaderia next to the bridge site where Ms. Juana daily made her delicious bread, which she kindly delivered to us while we worked. She lived in a house not much bigger than my bedroom, with her husband and her 14 children. I also fondly recall the night a storm rolled through during our nightly devotional, and the words to the song “How Great Thou Art” took on an entirely new meaning in my life. After that first mission experience, my heart was prepped for more humanitarian work that would stretch my comfort zone.

It is incredibly rewarding...to watch as students put into practice their faith and their vocation. I have to admit, that’s why I keep coming back...for the reward.

I returned again to Clinica Ezell in 2008, and “helped” build another bridge. I skipped 2009, but at the end of that year, I told Kris Hatchell—who was now on staff with Lipscomb Missions—that I might be ready for another assignment. Turns out there was an opening on the pre-med trip to the same clinic. Of course, I had no medical experience, but then again, I also had no engineering experience, so apparently I was perfect for the job! There was one slight difference though. I had started teaching the physics course that most pre-med students take; therefore this trip would give me an opportunity to interact with those students in a deeper context than the classroom affords.

March 2010 was my first time at Clinica Ezell with a group of pre-medical, pre-dental and pre-pharmacy students. There were also several other students who, like me, were not medically oriented, with majors in things like psychology or education. In addition to assisting with the surgical and dental clinic, we helped on mobile medical and dental check-ups, assisted with distributing supplies and well-child checkups as part of HTI’s child sponsorship program (the ABC program), and we did some educational programs in local schools.

In both types of trips I’ve attended, it is incredibly rewarding for someone who has devoted his professional life to Christian education to watch as students put into practice (1) their faith and (2) their vocation. I have to admit, that’s why I keep coming back...for the reward. To have a front-row seat as God uses a Guatemalan child to remind a college

student struggling with her faith that His love is faithful. To watch that student renew or establish their commitment to Christ in baptism as a result of what they experienced. To practice the brand of community that recognizes evangelism as a natural consequence of our love for each other. To operate in a profession that encourages skepticism and doubt and to stand without question in the presence of God.

Every year, there comes a point during the week in Guatemala that I ask myself if it’s time to quit. Maybe I’m too old or too busy or too tired to do this another year. During a journaling session on the 2014 trip, I prayed, “God, tomorrow I need a sign. Show me your glory.” The next morning, I was on a mobile trip to a community not too far from the clinic called Las Margaritas. The medical professionals were doctoring, the students were making themselves useful in various ways, and I was doing what every Ph.D. physicist would be doing—coloring and playing with the local children to keep them entertained while their parents waited for the doctor.

One little girl shyly watched the kids play, reluctant to engage. But it didn’t take long for her to warm up. Her name was Yoya, and I learned that they called her this because she couldn’t really form words—most of what she said came out sounding like “yo” or “ya.” Regardless, she was very effective at communicating exactly what she wanted you to do. Before long, Yoya had the entire Lipscomb team laughing riotously as she led us in a game similar to “Ring Around the Rosie.”

I assumed Yoya was eight years old, but after interacting with her and then later inquiring from the clinic staff, I learned that she was fourteen. Up to the age of three she was unable to walk; instead, she used her arms to pull herself around on the ground throughout the village. I stared in amazement (and held back tears) at this incredibly brave little girl, full of joy, unaware of her own special needs, walking in defiance of everyone’s expectations, and even able to lead a competitive game of “Ring Around the Rosie.”

“You know,” quipped one of the workers, “Yoya’s not her real name. That’s just what they call her.” “Oh? What is her real name?”

“Gloria.” 🗨️

Alan Bradshaw
*Associate Professor and Academic
Chair of Physics
Lipscomb University*





THE ROLE OF A LIPSCOMB MISSION TEAM LEADER

At Lipscomb Missions we feel that serving as a mission team leader is a God-given honor, one that comes as an incredible blessing, yet one that is not to be taken lightly. Team leaders have the tremendous opportunity to lead others into service for the Kingdom, to lead others to explore and use their spiritual gifts and to help others experience Jesus like never before.

Primary team leaders are trained to decipher and delegate tasks amongst the entire team while also engaging in regular communication with the missions program's sponsor. It is imperative for the mission team leader to know the vision and purpose of the mission trip, both in the short-term and long-term. The team will look to their leader to receive spiritual

leadership before, during and after the journey and to obtain information regarding all aspects of the trip.

Team leaders should be prepared to take on the tasks of team formation, budgeting, fundraising, spiritual prep of the team, logistics of the trip, incident management and a post-trip debriefing. So it should be obvious that serving as a mission team leader requires year-round involvement. Each year it is important to review every aspect of your trip; from the daily schedule to the type of work you do, from the long term vision to the team leadership, from the budget to your team's relationship with the host.

A SMALL GROUP STUDY

Explaining conversion to a potential new Christian

The Great Debate

The sinner's prayer and believer's baptism

By Scott Sager

The goal of every short-term mission is to introduce those who do not know Jesus to a life-changing relationship with him. We go, because we want every person to surrender to Jesus and experience the joy that has so changed our lives. Yet many Christian mission groups differ on the best way to do this. Should someone simply utter the Sinner's Prayer—or is there more to the process than that?

What makes for a healthy birth?

It happened in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Life was warm and cozy. Then the unexpected occurred. Your mother gave a final push and you entered into a whole new world. The doctor announced your arrival: “Here she is!” and then began the time sensitive tasks to make certain your arrival was a healthy one.

Immediately, the doctor began clearing your nostrils for that first breath of air. As soon as you could breathe, the doctor looked at the clock on the wall announcing the exact time of arrival. The delivery team began cleaning all the residue of birth off you. One cleared your eyes so you could see. The doctor then clipped the umbilical cord, and the nine-month attachment to Mom officially came to an end.

Nurses rushed in and wrapped you in a white blanket, placing you under the heat lamp where you were quickly weighed. The lights, lamps and all the personnel were too much for you, and by now you were screaming at the top of your lungs. (That in itself was good for your development!) The nurses then began performing a simple test on you to determine how healthy a birth you had just experienced.

The Apgar Test

The test is explained to parents in childbirth classes as the Apgar Test; a tool that helps predict which infants might need closer observation or more intense care after birth. A baby is given zero, one or two points on each of five variables as determined by the nurses: appearance (specifically color), pulse rate, response to stimulation, activity (including muscle tone) and respirations. This test was administered to you at both one and five minutes after your arrival. For most of you, the process went pretty well, and soon the nurses handed you over as a beautiful bundle to your mom and dad.

Why all the concern and special care surrounding your birth? What was it about that process that demanded so much attention and care? It is simple actually; new birth is a crucial time in your human development and must be taken seriously. Doctors, nurses, mom and dad all knew that how you arrived would dramatically influence how you lived. Complications at birth tend to create problems in life that often take huge amounts of time, money and effort to correct. Sometime when you are in a hospital, stop by the neonatal intensive care unit for a glimpse at the incredibly sophisticated care these precious little ones receive.

What does any of this have to do with evangelism, salvation or the evangelical debate regarding the sinner's prayer and believer's baptism? Simply put: How we are born affects our living. This is certainly true of physical birth, but isn't it true of spiritual birth as well? A complicated, protracted and painful delivery can have a harmful effect upon maturity—physically or spiritually.

Many Christians today are poorly delivered at birth. Because of an incomplete delivery, lack of proper cleansing or a misunderstanding about spiritual breath, some Christians are barely alive and are soon abandoned. If Jesus sends us into the world with a two-fold mission to make disciples by baptizing and teaching, we must acknowledge that the beginning point of new birth dramatically shapes the future life of the disciple. This issue is important not so much to be right, but to be healthy. Future development of a soul is certainly at stake.

Salvation is a process

Salvation can be understood this way: We are saved by coming into contact through the person of Jesus (a holy Jesus for a sinful me) with Jesus' blood offered on our behalf, and by entering into a covenant relationship with God that radically alters our identity and commitments. Just like physical birth was a process taking around nine months, spiritual birth is a process as well. New birth may be realized in an instant, but it occurs over a period of time. We call this process “atonement,” and it speaks of how God saves us.

There are several key words and ideas that are mentioned with regards to salvation: grace, faith, repentance, confession, baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit. These concepts are sometimes mentioned in isolation, at other times in harmony with each other. Due to this, salvation must be seen either as an emphasis of one concept above all the others, or a compilation of the group together in a process. In other words, do I pick grace over faith?

Repentance over confession? Or baptism over the Holy Spirit? If not, then I see salvation as a process involving them all.

Notice how the New Testament writers spoke of these important concepts. Each one is mentioned somewhere in the New Testament as bringing a person to salvation in Jesus Christ:

Salvation comes by repentance.

“Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing might come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Salvation comes by faith.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Salvation comes by confession of faith.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

Salvation comes by baptism.

“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Salvation comes through receiving the Holy Spirit.

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, who he poured out on us generously through Jesus our Savior” (Titus 3:5-6).

In addition to these verses, there are at least 50 more that speak of some combination of these five bringing about the process of salvation. You can even find all five together in Acts 2:37-39 and Acts 19:1-6. You might question, “So salvation in the Bible is a process of coming to God...but so what?” “Why are you trying to tell me to look again at the sinner’s prayer and believer’s baptism?”

Answer: Consider them for the sake of health. Healthy births are at stake, and future complications need to be avoided, if possible.

Let’s pretend for a moment we are the nurses administering a “spiritual Apgar” to those coming to salvation. When the process of becoming “born again” reaches the stage of “new birth,” we will

How do new Christians score on the Spiritual Apgar Test

0 1 2 **Repentance**

0 1 2 **Faith**

0 1 2 **Baptism**

0 1 2 **Forgiveness of sin**

0 1 2 **Receiving the Holy Spirit**

out of 10

stop and look at the health of the new child in Christ. We will begin by looking at the sinner’s prayer, and then take a look at baptismal conversion. Afterward, let’s assess what the healthiest newborns might look like.

Get your pencils out, and write your score for each in the margin. We can assign zero, one or two points to new Christians based upon the following five New Testament categories: repentance, faith, baptism, forgiveness of sin and receiving the Holy Spirit. Let’s get started...

The Sinner’s Prayer: *In How to Be Born Again*, Billy Graham writes of the dramatic, heartfelt conversion experience he both received and teaches. He leads his readers in a simple method to make it happen: If we are willing to repent for our sins and to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we can do it now and say a little prayer. The prayer suggested goes like this:

O God, I acknowledge that I have sinned against you. I am sorry for my sins. I am willing to turn from my sins. I openly receive and acknowledge Jesus Christ as my Savior. I confess him as Lord. From this moment on I want to live for him and serve him. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

As a spiritual nurse, look at the conversion prayer and search for our five categories; circle each one you find. Assign your own score: zero, one or two for each piece of the salvation process mentioned in the New Testament.

Believer’s Baptism: On a Sunday morning at the end of a church service, a young girl walks to the front and tells the minister she wants to be baptized. The minister stands before

the congregation and announces her intentions. The young lady is then asked to come to the microphone, where she is asked to repeat, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." After this, older women from the congregation escort her to the baptistery area where she changes clothes. She joins the preacher in the water, and he pronounces: "I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the forgiveness of sins, so that you may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The young woman is immersed and arises from the water to hugs and a song from the congregation.

Now again, as a spiritual nurse, look at the baptismal conversion and search for our five categories, circling those you see. Assign your own score: zero, one or two, for each piece of the salvation process mentioned in the New Testament.

The Results: If you took this exercise seriously, I would suspect neither Christian described above scored a possible high score of ten. The sinner's prayer omits baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit (and may only score a one in other areas in your estimation). The baptismal conversion mentioned above basically omits repentance and has little emphasis in the areas of confession (it is forced) and receiving the Holy Spirit (mentioned in formula). If spiritual health is at stake, perhaps we all need to look again at the New Testament example.

What would true repentance look like, the kind to which you would give a score of two? Maybe like Zacchaeus (Luke 9:19)? What kind of faith do you see as serious faith? How about the faith of the paralytic (Mark 2:5)? What is a true confession supposed to sound like? What do you think of Peter's (John 6:66-69)? Might the Ethiopian provide a standard for baptism (Acts 8:36-39)? Do we need to take receiving the Holy Spirit more seriously, as Paul reminded Titus (Titus 3:5-6)? Remember, it's not a matter of being right. The issue comes down to this: Is there a healthier, more obedient way?

Salvation is a process for everyone born again, so let's quit arguing about being right, and concern ourselves with being more healthy. Let's be more concerned about winning a brother or sister to Christ than winning an argument. Let's admit the areas where we need more emphasis. Let's learn from others who seem to be healthier in an area than we. Let's celebrate the areas on which we agree—building bridges wherever possible while holding distinctions only where necessary. A healthy birth is the launching pad to a healthy life. 🕊

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it fair to say that faith in Jesus is the key? In what ways do repentance, confession, baptism and the Holy Spirit all relate to faith in Jesus Christ? Does saying, "faith is primary" nullify the importance of the others in a healthy birth?
2. Do you agree that salvation is a process? If so, what is lost in a new birth where there is no repentance, confession, baptism or knowledge of the Holy Spirit? Is there a spiritual difference between not realizing the need for a particular concept and denying the importance of a concept specifically mentioned in the Bible?
3. How should we treat others who have not known about a need to further complete the salvation process into Christianity? Do you agree some paths to salvation are more obedient to God's word than others? How do you think we should view those who haven't experienced a full and complete new birth?
4. What is gained by talking to others in terms of spiritual health, rather than whether his or her salvation is valid? Which strategy is more effective: a) showing another how we are right and they are wrong, or b) showing another how she or he could be more healthy?
5. Ultimately, who decides our salvation? If our role is ambassadors for God (2 Cor. 5:16-21), then what should be our posture? Can we speak anything other than what we see in the Bible as the desires of God? Does being an ambassador make us a judge or a spokesperson?



ALUMNI VIEWPOINT

When are they coming back?

“When are they coming back?”

As I sit in my favorite coffee shop in Broughty Ferry (a beautiful former fishing village near my home), a teenage boy with an atrocious memory but even bigger heart asks me this question yet again. I reply with a cheeky smile: “The same time they come every year, mid-March.” It’s a question that I have been asked fairly regularly over the last thirteen years living in Dundee, Scotland. And while there is no doubt that some ask just because a group of Americans students running around the Scottish countryside is a funny image, others I know ask for different reasons. They know that these spring break students are different, and the school they are visiting from is different. And many locals want to know, and some have already discovered, why.

In 2004, only two-and-a-half years after graduating Lipscomb, I stepped off of a plane into a new ministry post, into a small church, and into a culture that while extremely friendly, had not necessarily been known for receiving ‘outreach’ very favorably. Still, I already had a strange idea. What would a trip from Lipscomb University to Dundee, Scotland, look like? I didn’t know the answer yet, but I did know one thing. Without my own experiences with missions at Lipscomb, I would not be in this country at all.

Over the years of working here in Scotland, one thing became fairly clear. People here can smell an agenda. After a few more years, I realized that this wasn’t a trait of just British folk... though my wife (Scottish) can smell any agenda I have a week before I ask! People in many parts of the world don’t want something done to them. I remember discussing this point with Lipscomb Missions staff. And we came to a very clear conclusion.

As Christians, one of our main calls is to witness, not force; invite not coerce. So what would a mission trip look like where the students’ only agenda was to be themselves (followers of Jesus) and also be excited by the stories of anyone and everyone they meet in this post-Christian culture? Because of this question, what has been dubbed the Lipscomb “Identity” program was born about seven years ago. Without boring you with details... This program and this focus have spawned a growing relationship between local schools, local churches and Lipscomb University. The Nashville group (as they are often called) are no longer just a group of visiting Americans. They are an indispensable resource of education, encouragement and faith that locals don’t want to do without.

How did this all happen? One could argue it boils down to just having people to send and a place willing to receive them. I take a slightly different view. Over the years, I’ve watched as Lipscomb

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••• The average number of Lipscomb alumni who return each year to help lead and mentor students on mission trips they once participated in as a student.

transformed in many ways. As the years marched on, so did it's desire to serve internationally and locally. However, this missional growth was not dedicated to mere increase in numbers (of trips or students going), but a desire to have a transforming impact on any point at which their light had opportunity to shine. The students we received were open. Open to what God might use them for verses what we all planned for God to use them for. It was missional transformation from the beginning, during and after the experience. Students where transforming how they allowed God to use them, and as they did, they in turn began to transform lives, build stronger relationships and help influence just a small corner of our world, and a big part of many lives.

For me, the joy of receiving Lipscomb students every year involves two ways to achieve such transformations: collaboration and relationships. Every year, I get to work with local Christians, teachers, community leaders, Lipscomb students and staff. I ask them these two questions: What might God do this year? Are we ready for all the amazing things we can't even think of? These questions are almost always answered through the relationships, old and new, that the students and faculty have built here. My Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (as much as I can bear to use them) are almost always alight with conversations between current or former Lipscomb students and friends they have made halfway around the globe. Long after the trips finish, either

through this communication or the powerful memories forged at the time, Lipscomb representatives continue to have a long-lasting and powerfully shaping impact on the lives of people here.

Almost 20 years ago I was preparing for my first mission trip as a student. Had God revealed to me the people, experiences and transformations I would witness because of this partnership between Lipscomb and the people of God in Dundee, Scotland, I like Thomas, probably would have asked to touch the holes in his hands... just to be certain that this fantastic thing I was hearing was true. However, from my current vantage point I have already seen, and I can thank Him. I thank Him for his servants: the Lipscomb students, faculty and mission staff... and I thank Him (as always) for having a much more exciting vision of the future than I do.

“When are they coming back?”

I know, because of what God has done through them, and how Jesus shines in them, that they never truly left. [📍](#)

Patrick Sullivan
*Missionary
Dundee, Scotland*



VOCATIONAL MISSIONS VIEWPOINT

Making disciples as they go

Truth is held in tension, I remind myself. Technology is not the answer, but technology CAN be a tool for good. These thoughts wrestle with each other in the back of my mind as I bump over the dusty African road after a long flight and little sleep.

Our vehicle's headlights slice through the dark, providing an occasional vision of this foreign world: a tiny solar-powered shop with hand-painted advertisements...a mosque with speakers wired near the door for prayers...a fenced-in church with open doors... hand-cultivated fields...a mother throwing out her family's evening wash water with a baby strapped to her back.

My eyes linger on an elderly man riding a rickety bicycle that totters along the edge of the road. We roar by him in a cloud of dust and exhaust. The man struggles to keep his focus and involuntarily shakes the handlebars, furiously trying to keep his balance. The image of the elderly bicyclist stays with me as we rush on into the night. I feel my life symbolically represents the man on the bike: furiously riding the line between the hubris of powerful technology and the humility of partnering, listening, investing and often submitting to the communities we design for.

Having just arrived in Ghana, we are on our way to an orphanage compound where we plan to build a septic system upgrade for the hospital and a solar-powered lighting system so students can study with adequate lighting. Francis, our driver, threads an impossibly smooth path through potholes and speed bumps with the skills of a Jedi Master. Suddenly, though, the Force leaves him! The vehicle encounters a hard bump, causing us to jostle and thump in our seats. The sudden synchronization of our bobbing and flailing heads brings a smile to my lips, and I'm struck by the comedy of the situation. Everyone takes it in stride.

So much of our work as a team for the last two semesters has been a dizzying array of design challenges, synchronizing of schedules

and handling the awareness of our cultural blind spots in stride. Finally, we are here in Ghana, holding our carefully laid plans with open hands, trusting God to enable us to pull off these crazy-ambitious faith projects in partnership with the community.

We have planned meticulously, and our designs have been directed and approved by both the host partner and professional engineers. I do not expect our project to fail from a technical standpoint. Instead, my fear is that our project would succeed technically but fail from a heart-centered viewpoint. I have often thought, “What if, because of some unforeseen cultural or social dynamic, that it would be the right project with the wrong group of people serving and being served?”

Under the engine’s rumble I murmur a prayer: “Father, have grace on us. Lead us, and give us humility to listen to your leading and to our brothers and sisters here in Ghana.” Looking out my rattling window, I see a low golden moon hovering under power lines and palm trees as it follows faithfully beside us. I wonder if our other teams can see the moon from where they are. I silently pray, God, help them and guide them. Their projects are also critical: a bridge in the mountains of Guatemala, a bridge and handicap accessible playground in Honduras, another bridge on the coast of Haiti, a robotics camp in inner city Nashville. Resting my back against the bench seat, I reassure myself: They are in good hands. Their host partners will take good care of them. “Thank you, God, for our host partners!”

We have been incredibly blessed with Godly and diligent organizations to work with. These host partners are well-established, locally based organizations that help direct, enable and follow up on our engineering projects. Our host partner in Ghana sent Francis, who has made everything so easy for us. When he picked us up at the airport, there was some confusion about our baggage, and he handled the issue with ease. In addition to providing logistics support for the engineering projects, our host partners help us understand and interface appropriately with the community and culture we are engaging. Often, they end up ministering to our own team members and always inspire us toward selfless giving, service and knowing God in practical ways.

In Ghana in 2015, three of our students were invited to stay in one of the orphanages. One student, John, recalled to me his time in that home:

“The house parent, Da Felix, took us in just like the 18 orphan boys living with his family. He invited us over for melons and lime and asked us questions about America. He got us talking about God and our lives. The melons just kept coming because he knew he could keep us talking! Pretty soon we realized that his genuine care and interest for us was exactly the kind of selfless love he was showing to each of his own boys. Suddenly, we transformed from strangers and foreigners to family.

Being cared for and included in that way inspired me to open up space in my life to love others selflessly.”

I smile warmly at the memory of John’s words. He recently graduated and is currently preparing to spend the next two years working as a structural engineer with a bridge-building ministry in Kenya, East Africa.

My thoughts are brought back to the present as we turn through wide gates into the orphanage compound. White and blue concrete buildings are illuminated by the van’s headlights, then fade again into the sleepy African night as our van rolls up to the guesthouse. In each of those buildings are people God loves...Da Felix and his family as well as hundreds of others. I wonder if our two weeks here will make any real mark on their lives. Will it be positive or negative? I listen for any response from God. Suddenly, this scripture comes to mind:

“You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your bondservant—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28

As I fall asleep, the understanding that I am both being served and serving quiets my overactive mind. I realize that truth is held in tension. I embrace sleep with the promise of good work in the morning and the hopeful knowledge that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. [🔗](#)

Caleb Meeks

*Coordinator of Engineering Mission Projects
Peugeot Center for Engineering Service
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Peugeot Center for Engineering Service in Developing Communities

The Peugeot Center equips Lipscomb engineering students and professionals in applying faith-motivated, sustainable engineering solutions in developing communities. Since 2004, Lipscomb’s Raymond B. Jones College of Engineering has created unique mission trips based on engineering needs. From water towers in Honduras to solar power systems in the Dominican Republic to bridges in Guatemala, engineering students, faculty and corporate supporters have ventured off the traditional blueprints to touch the lives of families and communities thousands of miles away.

Going there and changing here

Sparking the imagination of those who stay at home

As our American culture seems to be increasingly post-Christian, churches must learn to think like missionaries in our own settings. The bad news is that this will probably require significant change. The good news is that with God's help, such change is possible!

As the research has developed on short-term missions, the early focus has been in areas such as good logistical coordination for overseas group travel, increased sensitivity to the needs of the receiving people and, more recently, some long-term studies of the gradual effects that continued short-term efforts can have on the churches and communities who receive them. An area of research not often considered is the way in which the sending congregation itself can be affected by its members' participation in short-term mission trips.

I had the opportunity to study this in my own congregation. I learned about various ways that mission trips shape our churches, and what we can do to maximize the impact of the trip for those who cannot go but who are part of the group who sends. Surrounding a trip that I led to Costa Rica in 2015, I conducted interviews with 23 demographically diverse members of my church both before and after our trip, 75 percent of which did not go on the mission trip.

I learned that the trip had sparked a fresh missional imagination among my members. Of my interview participants who did not go on the trip, 68 percent of them claimed the trip had inspired new ideas for them about how our church could increase the mission work we are doing locally. Specifically, they had begun thinking from a higher perspective of what God might be working on in our own setting, inviting us to do more, and they were eager to share their ideas with me. External future-thinking imagination is a healthy thing for churches. Another significant effect was in our relationships. Seventy-eight percent of interviewees made strong statements about how they saw God strengthening our church's relationships through events connected to the mission trip, and many of them spoke similarly of how God was helping us to love others "different" than us.

It is to be expected that those who physically go on mission trips would believe the experience shaped them. But I learned that for people who did not go on the mission trip, the events surrounding the trip could still be of great significance in their lives when they had opportunity to participate. There are three main areas where impact occurred for those who did not go on the trip: preparation for the trip, communication during the trip and follow up after the trip. Let me suggest their ideas for how to get the most out of these three areas.

5,637

donors provided a total of \$1.47 million in 2016 for specific students' mission ventures.

FIRST, It is important to involve as much of the church as possible in preparations for short-term missions. Allow people to help create visuals and crafts you will bring on the trip and use while you are there. Fundraising events with a fun element, such as chili cook-offs, silent auctions or faith nights at restaurants can create a sense of community and anticipation. Involve the church in praying for the trip. Bring the team before the church and give them a loving send off on the Sunday before they go. Preparatory events help get us thinking about God's mission and what God might be about to do.

SECOND, During the trip, make an effort to keep the trip in front of the congregation. When available, technology can help with this. Daily trip blogs, pictures on social media or even online streaming of events can keep people connected. With a little effort in advance, the leader can provide the sending congregation with a suggested calendar of things for members to pray about, such as the specific people on the trip and the work scheduled for each day.

THIRD, Following the trip, the team should make a concerted effort to say "thank you" to those who helped make the trip possible. Send a letter to everyone who was involved in any way, and tell them about how God helped and opened doors

in response to their faithfulness and support. Allow for a full mission report Sunday, where people have a time of questions and answers with the team, and can see pictures and hear stories of lives that were changed because of their efforts.

Mission trips provide a healthy disruption to the norm, and an opportunity for us to take a fresh look at our churches and the missional opportunities God is giving us. The more ways you help your congregation to be connected to your mission trip, the more they will grow from the experience, even if they do not physically go. 🌐

Mark Adams
Preaching Minister
Kings Crossing Church of Christ



Mark and Carolina Adams live in Corpus Christi, Texas. They co-lead a biennial mission trip to Costa Rica. Mark completed his Doctor of Ministry at Lipscomb University, where his research emphasis was in short-term missions.

Stories of **BAPTISM**

The words of the Great Commission, spoken by Jesus after He has risen from the grave and before He ascends into Heaven, are the words that we live by in Lipscomb Missions. We send people out to nooks and crannies all over the world because Jesus commanded it. When a person steps into the role of doing what Jesus commands, Jesus steps in as well and does things that take our breath away. He manifests Himself on these trips through miracles, connections and love, but the most powerful way that we have seen the Holy Spirit work is through the literal act of baptism



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May 2016 graduates participated in at least two or more trips during their college career at Lipscomb. (Six graduates went on five or more trips.)

JORDAN*Saba, Caribbean Sea*

Saba is an island made up of only five square miles and less than 2,000 inhabitants. Over the past 15 years, teams from Lipscomb, led by Michael and Aletha Thomas, have done various forms of outreach work—teaching and assisting in the schools and leading nightly devotionals. Many students who have returned again and again to Saba and members of the community consider each other family.

Jordan, a quiet, 14-year-old Saban girl, has remained close to Lipscomb students since she was just a child. “Her relationship with a few girls on our team began to develop and grow deeper over the years,” Aletha says. “She asked questions and was pretty impressed by this fella named Jesus.”

One night, Jordan began a conversation with Sarah Gregory, a veteran of the trip. They spent several hours exploring the book of Luke. At 2 a.m., Jordan said she knew what she wanted to do and couldn’t wait any longer. A team of girls took her down to Cove Bay and baptized her in the Caribbean Sea.

“It was one of the most joyous experiences I have ever had,” Aletha says. “She came out of the water and began to smile and laugh uncontrollably as she danced and fell back into the water with the other girls.”

Jordan continued to help the Lipscomb team each year when they came to serve, including assisting in bringing two other girls and a boy to Christ as well, and she now attends a university in Holland.

KENDRA LEWIS*Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic*

Last year, a group of students from the Lipscomb College of Pharmacy arrived in the Dominican Republic to set up a clinic and provide medical services to the people of Santo Domingo. Kendra Lewis, who at the time was a second-year pharmacy student, was serving as a student leader on this trip alongside Dr. David Ayes, one of the primary leaders.

This was Kendra’s second time to the DR, after serving the year before on a trip that she says completely opened her eyes. As the trip was coming to a close, Kendra felt the Lord pulling her closer to Him through a conversation she had with another teammate.

“We were talking about our relationships with the Lord,” she says, “and how we felt inspired by the faith of the people of Santo Domingo that we worked with in the clinic. It was a very spur of the moment

decision, but I knew that I needed to rededicate my life to Christ through baptism.”

The next morning, the team stopped at the beach on the way home where Kendra was baptized by David. “The moment that she came out of the water, crying, saying thank you, was absolutely priceless. There is nothing like it,” said Ayez.

NIAMH RAWLINS*El Salvador*

Soccer player Niamh Rawlins came to Lipscomb from Swindon Wiltshire, England, in 2013 to study psychology and play collegiate Division 1 soccer. She grew up in a place where spirituality was an antiquated notion, and she looked to soccer as the her source of comfort and identity.

This changed abruptly after tearing her ACL in the first game of her freshman year, leaving her with no place to turn in a foreign country where she knew hardly anyone. But soon she began to find her place amongst her teammates, and in the spring, she ventured out of her comfort zone and into the land of El Salvador.

“I have never experienced anything quite like it before,” she says. “The joy that the people there have is absolutely unreal.” Her interactions with the people in El Salvador, reading John Ortberg’s *Who Is This Man?*, and her coaches and teammates pointing her in the direction of Christ throughout the year, stirred something deep in her heart.

“As I grew to believe that Jesus is true and real, I still had trouble feeling like I was worthy of His grace and salvation. But I came to realize that it was not about my worthiness; it was about His worthiness,” she says. “So on the last day of our trip to El Salvador, I was baptized in the ocean with my team and coaches all around me in support of me.”

In the book Niamh was reading at the time, the last three chapters are titled “Friday,” “Saturday,” and “Sunday,” referencing the crucifixion and resurrection. “Previously, I had been living in Friday,” Niamh says. “Yet as I was growing, I was moving more into Saturday, learning through the people around me. But the moment I came up out of the water, I thought to myself, ‘This is Sunday. This is new life.’” 

Erin King
Executive Intern
Lipscomb University



An accidental missionary

Mission is in my blood. I grew up on the mission field, in a land far away from Nashville, the buckle of the Bible belt, where I now reside. My childhood was not so exotic as Kenya or New Guinea, but it was cross-cultural. I grew up in Minnesota, and it was the mission field—at least for the Church of Christ fellowship in which I grew up. Since there are more members of the Church of Christ attending worship services on Franklin Road near my office on a given Sunday than in the entire state of Minnesota in a given month, Minnesota is as much a “mission field” as it gets.

Over the years, large Southern churches had planted and supported fledgling Midwestern churches, which largely held services in elementary school gyms. The church members wondered if and when they would ever have their own church building. They often questioned if they could find three qualified men to elect as elders. There was often little certainty that funds would be available to pay their preachers. Summer mission campaigns brought in Christians from the supporting churches who invested a week or two knocking on doors, campaigning by phone, and making certain that Vacation Bible School was a huge success.

Yes, the mission impulse was in the blood of every member of the Church of Christ in Minnesota. As a kid, I felt that mission impulse thumping in my spirit. The baby pioneer in me felt excitement at the thought of one day going “out there” to serve. Would missions lead me to some far-away place like Africa...or International Falls (county seat of Koochiching County, Minnesota)?

The Fork in the Road

I never made it to Africa as a full-time missionary. Instead, I chose a more conventional route and became a teacher. The mission impulse, though, lingered under the surface. Even with my busyness, the pull toward service through missions still gnawed at me. After graduating with an English education degree from Harding University, I taught in the inner city public school system in Houston for two years. It almost felt like a mission, but it also felt like something was off kilter in my spirit. I even discounted the time I spent volunteering at the Impact Church of Christ in inner city Houston because I still didn't see myself as a real missionary. Those front-line ministers in the inner city were the real missionaries. Because of their influence, I decided to go to graduate school to get more training in missions.

But a strange thing happened on the way to becoming an urban missionary. Halfway through my first year of training at Abilene Christian University, I felt an incredibly strong pull toward marriage and family therapy. Though this education path felt like it could make a helpful contribution to many people struggling with life and relationships, it wasn't exactly what I had imagined to be mission work. Yet the pull was so strong that I found myself at a fork in the road. The great philosopher Yogi Berra famously

said: “When you see a fork in the road, take it.” I took the fork in the road as best as I knew how. I got accepted into the marriage and family therapy program at ACU, thinking my pathway to doing mission work was over. I recall coming to the resolution that my mission impulse would eventually wither and die.

It didn't. Instead, it grew.

Confusion

The further I got into my marriage and family therapy training, the more powerful the impulse for mission asserted itself. Feeling called in two different directions became a spiritual frustration for me. God was calling me to the impossible. I kept asking God in my prayers what my authentic path was: Should I become a missionary or become a marriage and family therapist? I promised Him I would do His will, but I first requested some clarity. The uncertainty was not sitting well in my spirit. So... how did God answer my prayer?

God said yes.

When God answered yes to my question—which was not a yes-or-no kind of question—there were only a few possibilities to consider. (1) I doubted I was actually hearing from God. (2) Maybe I was hearing from God, but God was confused. (3) It was possible I was hearing from God, but that I was confused. I decided that I was confused, because I really believed I was hearing from God. And given the choice about which one of us was confused (me or God) that was easy. Humans are prone to confusion, not God.

Five-Word Mission

Fast forward a decade and a half to McNeal Hall on the University of Minnesota campus. I was running late to a meeting in my second year of doctoral work in family social science. Halfway up the stairs a thought suddenly filled my whole being:

The mission of your life is to heal and to heal. The message was so impactful and bold that had it been an audible voice, it would have reduced McNeal Hall to a pile of rubble.

“To heal and to heal?” I mumbled out loud to an empty atrium stairwell. By the time I arrived to my meeting, I understood the meaning. I had just been divinely instructed to spend the rest of my life actively healing my own wounds while also helping others to heal theirs. That was my calling. That was my authentic missional path.

The Locus of Mission

Vocational and spiritual clarity came to me a decade ago. Since then, I have reflected on that holy moment in the atrium stairwell hundreds of times. Those words taught me these 10 truths about mission:

1. I'm already on mission.
2. The location of mission is where ever I am.
3. Mission is as much inward as it is outward.
4. There is as much in need of saving inside of me as there is outside of me.
5. Mission is where my compassion meets the world's hurt.
6. Mission is where my hurt meets the world's compassion.
7. It is not my mission.
8. God does good work even when all I have to offer is confusion.
9. The desire to do mission is itself mission.
10. Love my neighbor as I love myself has always been the mission. ☺



Chris J. Gonzalez Ph.D., LMFT
*Assistant Professor of Psychology
Director of the Marriage &
Family Therapy Program
Lipscomb University*

**“For when I am weak,
then I am strong.”**

2 Corinthians 12:10

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We Need You to Anchor Us!

Every year, over 600 Lipscomb students reach out to about 7,000 friends and family members to raise money for their specific mission trips. More donors give to Lipscomb students through the mission department than anywhere else on campus.

But as you have seen in the pages of this edition of Intersections, there is a lot more involved in mobilizing nearly 1,000 people on 60 mission trips around the world than the funds provided for specific students' travel. Our goals are global and long-term, so we need funding to support that long-term mission.

Lipscomb Missions teams return to the same locations year after year, serving host partner ministries by proclaiming the name of Jesus in both word and deed. Nearly 50 percent of Lipscomb's graduating classes engage in a mission trip during the four years they spend among us. These short-term trips instill a lifetime heart for service in our students as they become

vocational missionaries and ministers of the Gospel in whatever profession they choose.

While it should take a small army to equip, train and administer the Lipscomb Missions program, we do it with a team of five full-time employees and a handful of paid interns. In addition, we rely heavily on 175 passionate and selfless volunteer team leaders to lead and mentor our students into ministry. This model of volunteerism has proven both effective and sustainable for the past 15 years!

The goal of Lipscomb Missions is to come alongside and serve the needs of our host partner ministries and to provide opportunities for our students to serve. In order for us to serve more of both, we need additional financial partners to join us on the journey!

The Missions Development Fund is the financial backbone of Lipscomb Missions that provides the necessary revenue streams to cover expenses for equipping team leaders, staff trips, team leader subsidies, research and scouting trips, promotions and marketing, wages to pay interns, special events to recruit students and more.

We are looking for Anchor Partners to come alongside Lipscomb Missions and commit \$1,000, \$3,000 or \$5,000 a year. By placing Lipscomb Missions in your congregation's annual budget, by placing the program in your will or by including the program in your annual corporate donations, you too can plant spiritual seeds of God's love throughout the globe.

If you would like to discuss becoming an anchor partner then call or email me or Tom Riley at the contact numbers below. If you would like to make a donation to Lipscomb Missions, log on to www.lipscomb.edu/intersectimissions.



Scott Sager

Scott Sager
Vice President for
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Partnering with Lipscomb in ministry

Tom Riley, the development officer and director of outreach for the College of Bible & Ministry, is also committed to raising funds for Lipscomb Missions. If you have an interest in donating to the Missions Endowment Fund or making a bequest to Lipscomb Missions you can also contact him at tom.riley@lipscomb.edu or 615.966.6239.

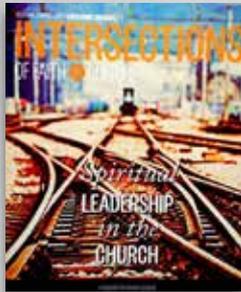


Best Practices?

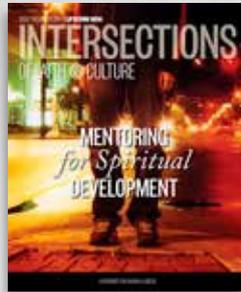
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Pick up a few valuable lessons.

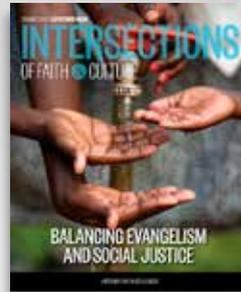
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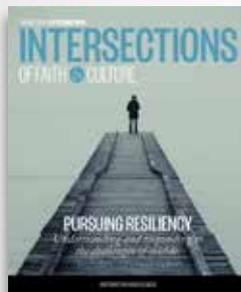
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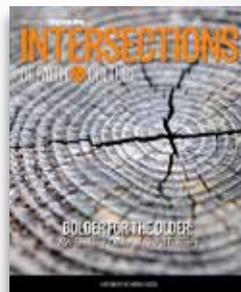
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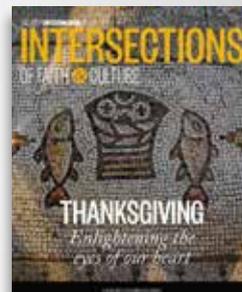
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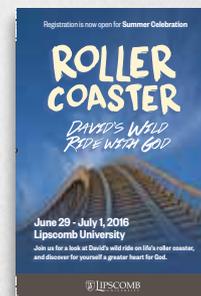
A UNIFYING CORE: THE MESSAGE OF ROMANS



DEPLOYED—IN AN UNCIVIL WAR: THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN



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A close-up photograph of a woman with long blonde hair and a purple headband kissing a young girl with dark curly hair on the cheek. The girl is smiling broadly. The background is a blurred green field.

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