

Why Short Term Missions?

GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

You may have wondered what impact a short-term mission trip can have since you won't be there for the long-term relationships and discipleship of people in that particular area. Whether you are considering a week, month, summer, or semester trip, God can use that time to positively influence the believers you will partner with, the non-believers in the community you will interact with, and the skills you will bring back to your community as you learn to serve and minister more intentionally. Today you will specifically study the call to support other gospel ministers in their specific regions.

Game: Marshmallow, Spaghetti Tower

To help introduce the topic of supporting other believers through short-term mission trips, consider having the group participate in the activity.

1. Split into three teams. The goal of each group is to build a strong and secure tower by using spaghetti noodles and marshmallows in the allotted time. The group that has the best tower wins.
 - a. Team One Instructions: Choose one team member to make the tower. No one else can touch the pieces, but they should advise on the tower's construction.
 - b. Team Two Instructions: Choose one team member to make the tower while the rest of the team plays rock, paper, and scissors with each other until the time runs out. They cannot assist the person constructing the tower.
 - c. Team Three Instructions: All team members will participate in the tower's construction.

Game: Marshmallow, Spaghetti Tower Cont.

2. When the time is up, declare a winner. The game might not work perfectly depending on who had which role, but you should be able to make the same point: Working together made the task easier because you have more ideas to go off of, and there is a camaraderie because you win or lose as a team rather than feeling alone in the task, etc.

***Note:** Before making your connections between the game and the importance of partnering to share the gospel, ask the group what they experienced in each group, whether they liked their role or not, and what connections they saw between the game and the importance of short-term missions.

Share Questions

1. Have you ever been on a mission trip? If so, briefly describe what you did and what you learned from your experience.
2. What do you think the purpose of a mission trip is?
3. What good can come from a mission trip? Could anything negative come from it? Explain.

Bible Context

During Jesus' ministry, he partnered with people to share the good news message (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus called 12 men who became his disciples, and he gave them the job of "fishing for men," that is, to share about Him with all people. In addition to his close 12, Jesus sent 72 disciples in pairs to share the gospel. Furthermore, when Jesus died and rose again, he commanded all his followers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that he commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). Not only did Jesus command this of His followers, but He promised to be with them always. We are partners with Jesus and each other when we obey His instructions to make disciples.

Bible Context Cont.

Most of the books in the New Testament are written by a man named Paul. He was an apostle with the mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul started many churches and remained connected to those places through letters, partnering with fellow workers, and visiting the churches. The book of Philippians (a letter) is an excellent example of the joy partnering for the gospel's sake can create in other believers as they lean into the ministry God has called them to. The apostle Paul was in chains as he wrote the letter, and yet the tone of his writing is of joy and gratitude.

Today you will browse sections of the letter to examine the relationships between sending churches and missionaries.

Study the Scriptures

Read Philippians 1:1-5

1. Why does Paul thank God for the church in Philippi (v. 5)?
2. Take a moment and retell the gospel message. (gospel references: to John 3:16, 1 Cor. 15:3-5, Rom. 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9) Next, discuss ways you can partner with someone in sharing the gospel.

Read Philippians 2:19-24

3. Describe Paul and Timothy's relationship. Why does he hope to send Timothy (v.19)?
4. What does Paul hope to do soon (v. 24)? Why do you think making trips to see the church people is important to Paul?

Study the Scriptures Cont.

Read Philippians 2:25-30

5. Who sent Epaphroditus to Paul? What titles does Paul give to him (v. 25)?

6. Epaphroditus could complete what was lacking in the ministry to Paul from the church by physically being with him in service (v. 30). How can it be extra helpful to send ministers to assist other believers and the ministry they are doing?

Read Philippians 4:14-20

7. What was different about the church in Philippi compared to other churches (v. 15)? Why do you think helping other gospel ministers is a type of fragrant offering to God (v. 18)?

8. How would you explain to someone the benefits of partnering with other believers to serve and share the gospel for a short or long-term mission trip?

9. What might be some struggles when partnering with others? How can you overcome the struggles and remain united?

10. How is God calling you to respond today? {Ideas: Praying differently, equipping and sending others, financially giving, having a willing heart to be sent, partnering with a specific person or ministry that has been on your heart, etc.}

Conclusion

"Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Short-term mission trips help long-term missionaries. There is a saying that goes: Many hands make light work. When you partner with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, more work can be accomplished, and it makes the hard everyday work of the ministers there a little bit lighter. In addition, joy is increased when you serve alongside the long-term missionaries and church members because there is group unity in the mission of making Jesus known through evangelism and service. There is joy through partnership because it confirms for the long-term ministers that they are not the only ones who see value in work being done in that area.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Some of you will be senders to ministers in need, and some will be sent missionaries (short-term or long-term). Whichever your role, we need to actively pray for our response and for more followers of Jesus to respond to the great commission and GO and make disciples of ALL nations.

Pray

How is God calling you to pray after studying the passages today?

Now, spend time speaking with Him.