

Types of Missions

When discussing the many different opportunities there to serve, one must taking into consideration three characteristics: purpose, activity, and length.

Purpose

There are endless service opportunities available today. One need not look far to find one that suits them. However, an important distinction must be made between gospel-centered and service-centered opportunities. Does the opportunity propagate the gospel? If not, it is a service-centered opportunity. If it does propagate the gospel, it is gospel-centered, but can fall under evangelism or missions.

Gospel-Centered

In session four, we discussed different doctrines that affect our way of thinking about missions. One distinction we made was between evangelism and missions. Do you remember the difference between evangelism and missions?

Evangelism

Evangelism is the act of bringing the gospel or good news to someone. It involves bringing and proclaiming the gospel to the lost, but it is not a saving act – our role is to be faithful in sharing in the good news with the lost. Calling those to salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. The root Greek word for evangelism is *euaggelion*, which simply means “good message” or “good news” or “gospel.”

Missions

Although there is no word in the New Testament for missions, a close association is the Greek word ἀποστέλλω (*apostello*) originally meaning “I am sending,” “I am sending forth,” “I am sending away,” “I am sending out,” or “I am setting apart.” In its purest form, missions involve people sent forth from the church to people who have not heard the gospel or who have no access to a church. Missionaries share the gospel (evangelism) with the goal of gathering new believers into a church. True mission trips will always involve evangelism with the goal of planting new churches who in turn reach their own communities through evangelism.

True missions always involve evangelism, though evangelism does not necessarily involve missions. One of the primary goals of missions is church planting. Evangelism usually brings new believers into an existing local church.

Service-Centered

We often label any trip going out from the church as a mission trip. A youth choir that travels throughout the US singing in various churches may actually not be involved in mission work at all. If they are not intentional in sharing the gospel, they may not be doing evangelism either. Mission trips can and should work with local churches when available, but should continually be encouraging these churches to plant churches.

There are organizations out there that are purely service oriented – they meet a need (a very real need), but there is no propagation of the gospel. They are sometimes secularly based, but sometimes they are a Christian organization. An example of this type of organization is Habitat for Humanity. This is not missions, it’s not evangelism, and should not be mistaken as such.

At UBC, because the gospel is precious to us, we will intentionally be involved in evangelism and mission based trips and projects. We are in no way demeaning these organizations as we feel need-based and humanitarian projects are valid and needed throughout the world. But as believers, we cannot separate the message from the trip or project. We cannot contain the good news of Christ.

As a church, we should understand the difference between gospel-centered evangelistic and mission trips as well as service-centered trips as it will affect the goals of our outreach ministry and future trips.

Activity

Regardless of the purpose, there are many different activities to choose from. Obviously, there will always be overlap, but the majority of these can roughly be divided into two areas: skill-based and care-based.

Skill-Based

Some trips or projects are centered on a specific skill-based activity and therefore require skilled workers because specific roles must be filled. These types of trips can include, but are not limited to:

- construction (including plumbing, electrical, etc),
- administrative training usually involving computers,
- medical/health trips (specific or general community health)
- agriculture projects (crop production or well-drilling)
- education training,
- preaching or teaching in churches,
- business training,
- sports outreach,
- and more.

Care-Based

There are also trips and projects which do not require a specific skill to be a participant. These can include humanitarian or benevolence activities such as:

- outreach to inmates,
- disaster relief,
- orphanage outreach,
- minor construction (painting, other instructed work, etc),
- trash pick-up,
- homelessness outreach,
- food pantry work or soup kitchens,
- prayerwalking,
- English tutoring,
- VBS or Backyard Bible Club,
- street evangelism,
- random acts of kindness,
- and more.

Christ-Based

Although activities can be divided into these two areas, when a trip or project is Christ-based or gospel-centered, there is a place for everyone and the divisions above no longer exist. For example, although a

medical mission trip needs medical professionals, it can also include people who have a heart for prayer or talking with families waiting in line.

It is also important to point out that all of these opportunities can be gospel-centered or merely service-centered. Medical work, humanitarian efforts, agricultural projects, and educational ministries could be carried out as ends themselves. There are thousands of people around the world that do good things, but are not believers. However, believers or missionaries who are involved in such enterprises are motivated by God's call to share more than agriculture techniques or relief to those who suffer. They go because of a desire greater than merely addressing humanitarian needs. Something more than healing sick bodies, improving the quality of life, and advancing the educational level in third-world countries compels them. They go so that all peoples will have an opportunity to know Jesus and so that God's kingdom can be advanced to the ends of the earth.

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Length

Regardless of the purpose or the activities taking place, service opportunities can typically be divided into three time frames: short-term/volunteer, extended/long-term, and career/life.

Short-Term/Volunteer

These trips are generally no more than one month in length but are usually one to two weeks. Because of the short nature of these trips, partnerships with national believers are important. Although they are short, they still require training and preparation. There are opportunities all over the world for short-term/volunteer teams.

What is the Point?

- They are important for Christian fellowship and spiritual encouragement.
- Teams can help with specific projects or areas of expertise.
- There is encouragement that comes to the long term workers from knowing others value their work.
- They can often help participants test a call to full time service.
- Short-term workers can bring others into the Kingdom – conversions may come later or immediately.

It has been said that short term trips are more for the people going than the people they are going to. Is this true? Yes and no. God can use short term teams to do amazing things for the people they are serving. But often times, especially for first time go-ers, the impact of the trip will be more substantial for the person going. Exposed to the lostness of a world without Christ and seeing firsthand how God works through the power of the gospel, volunteers often return home with hearts open to God's call. (To the Ends of the Earth, 103) God can use a week long trip to ignite a heart and passion for telling the lost about Christ – perhaps giving their life to serving overseas where the message of Christ has not been.

Importance of Partnerships

At UBC, we believe that forming partnership is important. This is why many of our trips are repeated every year. Partnerships can take on different forms – returning to the same place time and time again,

knowing and partnering with local believers, maintaining year-round relationships with the national partners and choosing locations strategically.

- In Boulder we are partnered with The Well & East Boulder Baptist, as we look towards a long-range goal of planting a church in Boulder, CO.
- In Mexico, we partner with Kerry & Marui Johnson leading in evangelism and discipleship in indigenous villages.
- In Colombia, we partner with Travis and Beth Burkhalter (IMB) leading in a evangelism and discipleship, towards a church planting movement among the villages in the Amazon.
- In Haiti, we partner with Noel & Lori Tugwell with Outside the Bowl.
- In the Deserts of Africa, we serve alongside Joshua & Kayla and Joseph in reaching the B People, our unreached people group.
- In Ethiopia, we are partnered with The James Initiative to see orphan care and church planting established.

Short term teams do more damage than good, right? Unfortunately, this can sometimes be the case. When a team goes in, with no regard for the culture or perhaps without a partner on the field, the impact they make may be damaging. However, when a short term mission teams goes and takes special care to learn about the culture and the people they will be serving and they partner with someone already on the field, they can do amazing things for the Kingdom. When a team goes, they should go with the mindset of encouraging local believers and under-girding their ministry.

Without the mindset of partnerships, these trips would be little more than vacations with a purpose. To increase effectiveness of short term trips, there must be a presence on the field to build up local believers and disciple and train them in leadership and church planting.

Extended/Long-Term

These trips/projects are generally not shorter than a month in length but can range from one summer to five or so years. Again, partnerships may play a role in these trips/projects. Many organizations require these individuals to raise their full support; however, the IMB (International Mission Board) does not. Monies given to the cooperative program are used to support missionaries worldwide. These trips often require extensive training and preparation because of the extensive exposure to culture while on the trip/project. There are many opportunities available – both gospel-centered and service-centered.

Gospel-Centered Examples

In the past, the IMB has offered three main extended/long-term opportunities, but recently made another available called *Hands on Africa* which gives young people the opportunity to serve in Africa for 4-5 months at a time.

Journeyman Program

In 1965 the IMB began a two-year *Journeyman Program* for recent college graduates. This short-term missionary service for single young adults under 30 years of age has proved to be popular over the years and has continued to grow. Volunteers in the Journeyman Program are assigned to universities, community ministries, sports ministry, and many other channels for sharing the gospel with their generation. Some use degrees in teaching or business to assist in teaching missionary kids or in helping provide logistical support for missionary teams. Others work alongside colleagues in evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.

International Service Corps

International Service Corps provides a channel of service to other qualified, God-called individuals and couples to serve in two- and three-year short-term assignments.

Finishers Project

Mission organizations have also seized a new trend of older individuals who have expressed interest in mission service. Some express a lifelong call that was never fulfilled, but now in their retirement years they would like to serve. If they are in good health, many spiritually mature senior adults desire to devote their final years to a significant ministry. *Finishers Project*, a channel through which retired people can finish life's productive years in missions, is an organization recently launched.

Service-Centered Example

The Peace Corps traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an agency of the federal government devoted to world peace and friendship. Since that time, more than 190,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have been invited by 139 host countries to work on issues ranging from AIDS education to information technology and environmental preservation. Peace Corps Volunteers continue to help countless individuals who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities.

Career/Life

The length of these trips depends on the person, but generally, on average last more than 15 years. These are the individuals whom short-term and long-term individuals/teams partner with. It is these that we are to build up and encourage. Similar to long-term missionaries, many organizations require these individuals to raise their support, not including the IMB. Because of the commitment required from these people, extensive training and preparation is required. This includes learning the language of the people you are going to serve. Some organizations also have educational requirements (IMB), but most do not.

There are very few service-centered activities available that are career/life-time assignments. However, career missionaries are the primary channel for mission service worldwide. Although there may be more individuals who participate on short-term or long-term trips/projects, career/life missionaries are making the largest impact for Christ. Intending to spend their lives on the mission field, they learn the language and the cultural worldview, nurture relationships, and engage in long-range strategies for evangelizing the people. Their strategic role includes planting and nurturing church growth, discipling and training leaders, and modeling ministries from the indigenous churches of the future.

Discussion of Examples

Below are a handful of examples to discuss with the class.

Service-centered or Gospel-centered?

Apply what you have learned today to decide whether these examples are service-centered or gospel-centered.

Example:

Three friends decide to help serve dinner on Tuesday night at Seven Hills in Fayetteville.

This is a service-centered project. Acts of compassion are not always gospel-centered.

Example:

A local family wants to host a backyard Bible club at their house. They are excited to invite their neighbors and plan to BBQ with the parents.

If the gospel will be shared at the Bible club, this is a gospel-centered activity.

Example:

A 25 year-old woman is headed to Africa! She is very excited about the things that she will be doing there. She recently became a Christian but does not have a local church. When she read about this opportunity to serve, she became very excited. While in Africa, she will be working with an AIDS clinic in Maseru, Lesotho. She is thrilled that she will be able to demonstrate the love of Christ to the children there.

This is an example of a service-centered trip for a Christ-centered individual. Perhaps she was able to share the gospel with the children – but if she merely demonstrates the love of Christ and there is no proclamation involved, the trip is not gospel-centered. Even when our intentions and actions are good, we can often lose sight of purpose.

Example:

A group of 18 college students heads to New Orleans for their spring break. They are partnering with Habitat for Humanity and will be building a house for a local family. The family receiving their help are not Christians. Although some of the students are believers and had the hopes of sharing their faith with the family, the opportunity never arises. After a week of serving, they return home – exhausted and excited about the house they were able to complete.

This is an example of a service-centered trip. The team was able to provide for a very real need for the family, but because they did not share the gospel, it is not gospel-centered. If they shared the gospel would it be evangelism or missions? (It would be evangelism because they do not have the intention to plant a church and would be encouraging the family to join a near-by church.)

Example:

Another group of 15 college students go to New Orleans for their spring break. They are partnering with another construction project and will be dry-walling a man's house. The man is

a member of a local church, Edgewater Baptist. The team will be handing out fliers later in the week to the surrounding neighborhoods to help promote the upcoming Easter Outreach at the church.

This is a gospel-centered trip. The team is both pouring into a local believer but also helping the local church reach their neighbors. It is mainly evangelism as it is building up an already established church. What if the church was hosting an Easter service twenty-miles away in a neighborhood whose church was destroyed in the floods of Hurricane Katrina in hopes that they can help start a local church in that neighborhood? It would then be a gospel-centered mission trip.

Missions or Evangelism?

The following examples are all gospel-centered. Decide whether they represent missions or evangelism.

Example:

A group of friends who all live in the same neighborhood decide to host a family-friendly neighborhood outreach at their home on Saturday following the Razorback football game. They all attend church in town, but have been praying about the possibility of planting a church closer to home. Of course, this won't happen for at least another year, but they want to engage their neighborhood now. At the football game, they did not share the gospel to the large group, but the friends each had the opportunity to talk individually with people and three shared the gospel.

This is an example of gospel-based missions and evangelism. The intention of these friends is to plant a church in addition they were able to share the gospel with three of their neighbors. By hosting a neighborhood get-together, they have begun to build relationships as well. If they did not have the opportunity to share the gospel with those three people, would it still be missions? Yes – because their intention is to plant a church. However, we should use everyone opportunity we are given to share the message of Christ's love for us.

Example:

A medical team is heading to India in October to meet the physical needs of the people. They will set up their clinic in Gorta, a strategically located DK/Kuvi village. The team is composed of two doctors, a student-nurse and a recent college graduate. The college grad will spend the afternoons prayer walking the village and talking with locals using a translator.

This is missions. Because we are committed as a church to see a church planting movement among the DK/Kuvi, everything we do should have the purpose of missions.

Example:

A group of Christian students from the University are tired of seeing people standing on Dickson Street with signs condemning the crowds to hell. Next Friday, they plan to wash the windows of the all the cars in the UBC parking lot. In addition they will include a small card that says, "Hope you enjoy your clean windshield! Showing you Christ's love... no strings attached." In smaller print at the bottom of the card it reads, "University Baptist Church, Service @ 10:30 on Sunday, 479-442-5312".

This is evangelism because it is pouring into the local church. If they did not include a card and only washed the windows – or perhaps the card read, “Pay it Forward” with no mention of Christ or the church – it would be service-centered.

Conclusion

We know that service opportunities are all around us – the need (whether physical or spiritual) can be overwhelming at times. As believers, we are called to act. However, in order for our efforts to be eternal, they must be gospel-centered. They can be any length and involve almost any activity – but we must have Christ at the forefront of our purpose.

Near the end of this class, we will be participating in a service opportunity of our choice. Let’s take the remainder of the class to brainstorm and plan out what we will do. Although the activity itself can be almost anything, we must take special care when deciding what the purpose of our project will be.