

SPECIAL MISSIONS EDITION // LIPSCOMB NOW:

INTERSECTIONS

OF FAITH & CULTURE

RE-THINKING
short-term
MISSIONS

A RESOURCE FOR CHURCH LEADERS

INTERSECTIONS

OF FAITH & CULTURE Volume 4 Number 1



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.

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Nearly 1,000 people travel around the world each year to carry out mission work through Lipscomb University. See how the experience has impacted a few students on **page 19**.

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Intersections magazine is published twice a year by Lipscomb University. Go to lipscomb.edu/servingchurches to read more.

Postmaster: Send changes of address to *Intersections* magazine, Lipscomb University, One University Park Drive, Nashville, TN 37204-3951

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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

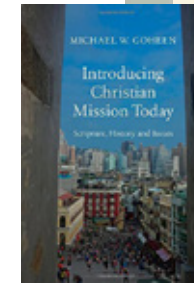
Effective missions requires dedicated host partners. I often tell our staff that when we identify the right host partner, everything else generally falls in place. The host partner ministries are the ones who are in the trenches day in and day out, week after week, year-round. They are the director at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

INTERSECTIONS *Recommends...*

Helpful texts on the theology of mission

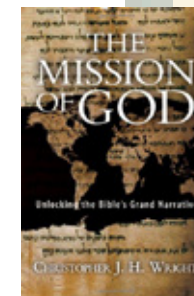
Recommended by Earl Lavender

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).

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. [🔗](#)

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



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.



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. Klotzy 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



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 HTT'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.



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
in Developing Communities
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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.

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.’”

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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 outdoor setting.

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