

A person's hands are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The globe is the central focus, with the continents of Africa and Europe visible. The person is wearing a light-colored, patterned top. The background is a blurred map of the world. The text is overlaid on the globe and background.

**MAKING
MISSION
TRIPS
MEANINGFUL
FOR YOUR
ENTIRE
CHURCH**

Our Goal Is To Help You Have Real Ministry Impact



With nearly four decades of experience in providing services and software to churches of all sizes throughout the world, ACS Technologies has learned a lot. We've collected data, gained vital information, and received thousands of first hand testimonials on best practices and methods that effectively help ministries the most.

This knowledge is the basis for our free ministry guides like the one you're reading right now. We also offer a whole lot of other services, making us the world's largest provider of ministry solutions to churches.

We know everyone needs a little help sometimes. That's why we are providing advice, examples, tips, and information to help you turn your ideas into real ministry impact — that's what we mean when we say "Ideas to Impact."

It is our aim to assist in strengthening how you're currently doing church in providing an alternative to your current efforts. Whichever the case may be, it's our goal to be a trusted resource for how you're serving God.

There are a bunch of ways we can help, and the visual aid on this page outlines ways we can connect with you and help strengthen your ministry.

Thank you for downloading this ministry guide. It is our hope that the knowledge included can help empower you and grow your ministry the right way.

If you're interested in learning more or taking the next step for your ministry, you'll find our contact information at end of this guide.

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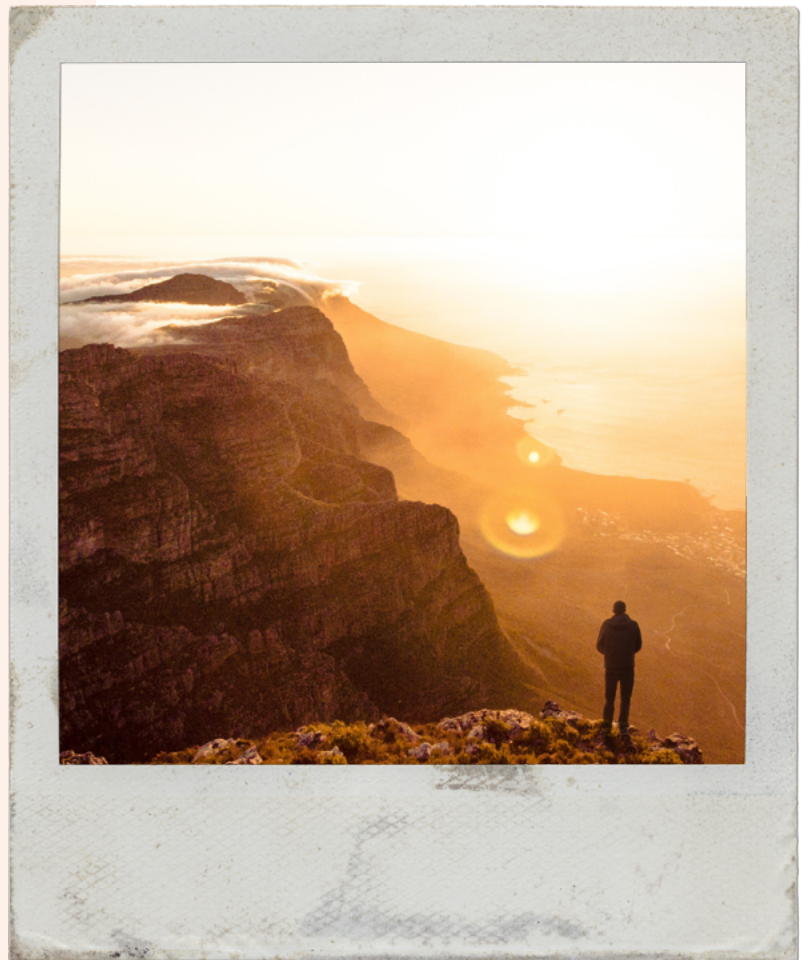
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MAKING MISSION TRIPS MEANINGFUL FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH

THE GREAT COMMISSION

What does it look like to answer the first century call of Jesus to “go” in today’s world? When we hear the word “missions,” Christians often think of selling everything, moving to another country, learning the language and living in a grass hut for the sake of the Gospel. We think of people who give everything away in order to relocate across the globe. In reality, when we say the word “missions,” we aren’t necessarily talking about something on such a large scale.

In fact, short-term mission trips give people the opportunity to travel to an unfamiliar place for just a week or two, participate in the work of the Lord and adopt a missional lifestyle that can ultimately enhance the spiritual climate of the church back home. Mission trips empower Christians to serve in high need environments, live out their faith in practical ways and make a spiritual difference in the lives of people. Christians return home with spiritual clarity and divine direction so they know who God is calling them to be. This is more than just missions. It’s building the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

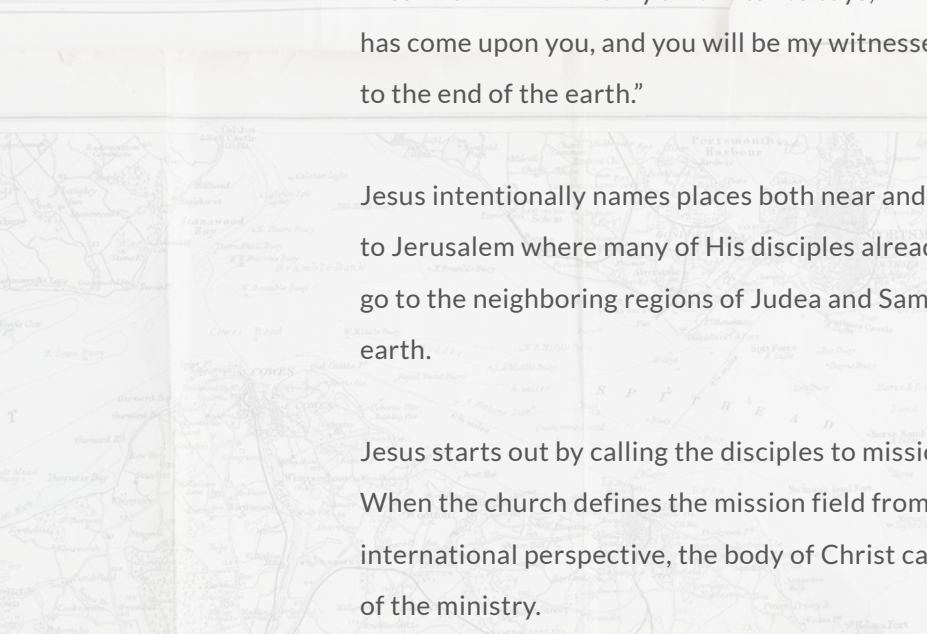




Believers are called to go somewhere

God does not define missions as selling everything and moving across the globe.

“Missions” is HOW the name of God is proclaimed to all the earth. Christians must be missional wherever they are. Acts 1:8 says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



Jesus intentionally names places both near and far. First, Christ told the disciples to go to Jerusalem where many of His disciples already lived. Then, Jesus instructed them to go to the neighboring regions of Judea and Samaria. Finally, Jesus said to go to ALL the earth.

Jesus starts out by calling the disciples to missional living right in their own backyard. When the church defines the mission field from a local, regional, national and international perspective, the body of Christ can play more of a pivotal role in the work of the ministry.

This type of approach eliminates the temptation to glamorize international outreach efforts. In fact, this passage of scripture discourages the church from viewing specific types of mission trips as more “varsity” level than other relief efforts or ministry endeavors. God does not categorize or rank mission trips as if the church was some sort of “farm system” cranking out Triple AAA, Double AA and Single A prospects for the mission field.



MISSIONS SHOULD NOT BE DEFINED BY THE LENGTH OF THE TRIP OR THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED.

Missions should be a daily lifestyle to declare Christ as King. Matthew 28:18-20 commands Christ followers to “go and make disciples.” This is a calling for all believers. But God has gifted and wired each of us with different passions that pull us in a unique direction for building the Kingdom of Heaven.

God calls Christians to proclaim the name of Jesus to the people around them. The specific place, time and people is a unique calling. God sends people to the other side of the globe while prompting others to stay right where they are to share the love of Christ with people from similar backgrounds, occupations and family structures. Whatever the mission, God’s calling is the same for all believers. To share the Gospel to a lost and hurting world.



Short-term mission trips:

BENEFIT OR BURDEN?

Do short-term mission trips benefit or burden the evangelical efforts of missionaries throughout the world? Viewed in a positive light, short-term mission trips equip believers to experience what it's like to adopt a life of vocational ministry. They show Christians how God is drawing them towards a specific calling. Short-term mission trips can propel the body of Christ into missional living back home and influence other believers to do the same. Investing in a local body of believers is one of the key ways the church can see lasting change through brief encounters with other cultures and people groups.

Short-term mission trips encourage believers to live missionally every day so the church can witness long term growth. Yet, short-term mission trips can be seen as a way to simply experience the world and engage in acts of service without creating any true lasting value. Experts warn that many of the customs of American mission teams can act as a burden on the communities and long-term missionaries living in that particular region or part of the world. American group leaders and participants must think more carefully about how they plan and execute mission trips.



PLANNING & TRAINING

A strong short-term mission trip begins before anyone leaves home. Cultivate a fervent desire to spread the Gospel and live missionally. Pre-trip training is imperative for educating leaders and volunteers about the geographic, cultural, political, economic and spiritual climate they will be ministering in.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

Communicate pertinent information and strategic goals for participants and church members interested in supporting the ministry efforts of the team. This approach connects people, builds relationships and maximizes ministry results that make the short-term mission trip experience more meaningful for everyone from start to finish. Send out periodic emails text notifications about the mission trip to the member directory. Give people the trip itinerary 3-6 weeks prior to the start date. After the trip, send out a follow-up reminder about what happened and how the church can participate in follow-up activities.

IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN, YOU PLAN TO FAIL

Leading a mission team that involves the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and the lives of those under your care is a serious matter that takes careful planning. Lay your plans before the Lord in prayer remembering that “unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1). Create an application form with a detailed checklist of expectations that must be initialed by the applicant. Think through every single step from beginning to end and strive for excellence. *“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).*



ROUND UP

Invite the church to a breakfast or dinner to hear about the vision and purpose of the mission trip. Prepare a short video or slide show accompanied by a few testimonies that will inspire people to pray and support the ministry activities of the team. The church will be grateful to see and hear first-hand about the mission trip from the people going into the field.

PRAYER & PACKING MEETING

Gather together the adults and youth going on the trip to load luggage, cover final details and answer questions. Hold a commissioning service for the mission team. Pray for the people going on the trip. Invite family and friends to lay hands on the team and share communion.

CORRESPONDANCE

Challenge small groups to adopt different people going out on the mission field. Support them with prayer, finances, correspondence and follow-up support. These gestures will create a powerful impact in the lives of people in the field and back home.

ON-SITE EXECUTION

A well-trained team must be servant minded and culturally sensitive so they can be a powerful influence and redemptive force in people's lives.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Much harm can be done when teams implement their own ideas about how to carry out different ministry tasks and responsibilities. *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert shares how to avoid unintentionally alienating different people groups during the ministry process. Serve people with spiritual sensitivity and cultural discernment, “*not as unwise but as wise*” (Eph. 5:15).

THE WORD IS A LAMP UNTO THY FEET

Make the Word of God a priority for the team. Fill the mission trip with Scripture from beginning to end. “*Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of God*” (Rom. 10:17) so Christ will be honored, people will be edified and people without faith will be drawn to the Savior.

AVOID THE WESTERN SAVIOR MINDSET

It's common for people from wealthy, developed countries to believe they have all the answers for the poverty and problems of the Third World simply because they come from a more prosperous place. But a short term mission trip is not going to eradicate poverty in seven days and a nation's systemic challenges will remain long after the team leaves the area. Instead, work with partners on the ground reach out and to serve the locals in ways that show respect and cultural sensitivity.

PREACH THE GOSPEL NOT AMERICA

The expressions of Christianity in the local culture will look different than it does in America. Avoid making foreign believers fit into the American Christian mold. The mission field is not a place to wave the American flag or promote a western mindset. Focus on meeting people's needs and spreading the Gospel.

WORK WITH LOCALS NOT FOR LOCALS

Work alongside local Christians and support what they're doing. Avoid taking over and doing work that locals could do for themselves. When push comes to shove, "ask" or "recommend" even if the team can provide professional skill sets that will benefit the community.

BE PEOPLE-ORIENTED NOT TASK-DRIVEN



In foreign countries, the pace of life is much slower than the U.S. Sticking to a well-organized itinerary and rigid schedule can create conflict. Stay flexible and realize that plans may change, events may start late or get re-scheduled and resources may be unavailable when you need them. Executing projects can become the driving force for how a team spends the majority of its time on-site. Completing different ministry tasks is important, but it's even more essential to develop close, lasting relationships with people in the region. Remember, people are more important than agendas.

A woman with glasses and a pink shirt is looking at a laptop screen. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a meeting or office setting.

SERVE LONG-TERM MISSIONARIES ON-SITE

Many short-term mission teams work hand in hand with long-term missionaries on the ground. Yet, the time, effort and expense of hosting a short-term mission team from America can detract from relationship-building work in the community. Instead of relying on long-term missionaries to be local tour guides for a week, focus on serving and encouraging them even if it means spending less time with locals.

PROMOTE THE LOCAL CHURCH

The long-term fruit of a short-term mission team will depend largely on how well the local church can build upon the efforts of the mission team. Successful mission trips should always work in tandem with the local church. Equip pastors and congregations to make spiritual inroads into their communities. Participate in activities that put local Christians in the spotlight while staying busy serving in the background.

ON-SITE MENTORING

The first contact with foreign cultures, poverty and lifestyle alternatives can be overwhelming. It's not uncommon for volunteers to shut down mentally and spiritually in the face of these formidable challenges. Dedicate a significant amount of time in the field to group devotions, debriefing and mentoring so people can process what they are going through and develop healthy, positive attitudes.

Post-trip follow up

Studies show that most short-term missionaries experience more spiritual zeal and commitment during and after a trip. However, those euphoric feelings usually taper off in a few weeks or months after a trip. Some people even become jaded or downcast after what they've seen in the mission field. Follow up with participants on a regular basis to process any negative feelings and turn temporary spiritual momentum into long-term, sustainable growth.

BRING HOME JESUS

Discover ways to put new skills and experiences that you acquired in the field to work in your church and community. Create an outward focus so the church can recognize the need, join the effort and put their spiritual gifts to work in the lives of people throughout different regions of the world.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Sustain the work of the ministry over the next year or so. Come home and share special needs or burdens so the church can facilitate what you started in the field. Recruit people to take up the mantle of ministry that dovetails with their spiritual strengths so you can maximize ministry results.

BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Short-term mission trips can be limited in scope and size. Instead of taking groups to a different place every year, find a place where the church can invest in a region and culture year after year or more frequently if possible. This approach develops a sustainable level of trust with locals that aren't possible with one time mission trips. Teams can get to know the community better and develop a keener sense of how to make the most significant spiritual impact.

SHORT-TERM TRIPS, LONG-TERM RESULTS

Short-term mission trips grant participants the opportunity to see a larger picture of the church and bring home a global perspective. Christians encounter different cultures for the first time and witness the powerful expressions of the church *“from every tribe, language, people and nation”* (Revelations 5:9).

FAITH BUILDING

Believers return home with more *“confidence in the faith”* (1 Timothy 3:13). Christians serve the Lord in fresh, new ways while profound spiritual experiences stretch a believer’s faith beyond their comfort level. Many people sense God’s call to missions or full-time ministry after participating in a short-term mission trip. 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”* (Luke 10:2). A visit to the mission field can alter a believer’s spiritual priorities and unleash the winds of change that can make the church back home a redemptive force in the community.

VISION & VOCATION

Short-term mission trips can be a platform to observe people exercising their spiritual gifts and skill sets in order to be considered for a full-time ministry position back home. Short-term mission trips touch Christians in many ways that reveal their heart for ministry. Team members return home with a clearer vision for ministry and can see more vividly *“every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ”* (Philemon 6) after experiencing new opportunities to share their faith.

THE FIELDS ARE JUST AS RIPE FOR HARVEST AT HOME AS THEY ARE ABROAD.

Christians can overlook what's right in front of them until they leave their familiar surroundings. In just a matter of days, the Lord can unleash the power of the Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a new setting to say, "*Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest*" (John 4:35) even in your own neighborhood and community.

GOSPEL PARTNERS

The bonds of love and fellowship developed between two churches during a mission trip can create the same kind of joyful memories that the Apostle Paul wrote about when he thought of the Philippian believers and their "*partnership in the gospel*" (Philippians 1:5). The commitment and enthusiasm for ministry of a visiting team can inspire local Christians who may have become passive or slothful servants. The church can experience what the apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Achaia, "*Your zeal has stirred up most of them*" (2 Corinthians 9:2).

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Visiting teams can coordinate special ministry outreaches or simply bring the love and joy of Christ to many who need a taste of God's refreshing grace. A service project can be a strategic open door to share the love of Christ and to show the community that believers follow the One who "*came not to be served, but to serve*" (Mark 10:45).

FISHERS OF MEN

Mission teams can inspire the host pastor or missionary to engage in targeted discipleship. Consider the unique opportunity to model for adults and youth an unbridled enthusiasm for the gospel, a heart for the lost, a commitment to prayer and zeal to build the Kingdom of God. Short-term mission teams represent a wide-open door for discipleship training and to make people into "*fishers of men*" (Mark 1:17).

Making mission trips meaningful

FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH

Missions exist for the same reason as Christians. To glorify God and declare Christ's wondrous love. Whether it's a short-term mission trip or a permanent move across the globe, Christians should be on mission with ONE purpose. *"To declare God's glory among the nations and the Lord's marvelous works among all the peoples"* (Psalm 96:3).

Adopt a missional lifestyle that will make missions trips a life-changing experience for the team and the people they serve. Think carefully about how to engage church members, families and friends in the mission trip experience. Church participation and involvement will significantly enhance the spiritual climate and ongoing outreach efforts of the church.

But don't stop there. Embrace the words

of the Apostle Paul in 2

Timothy 2:2: *"The things you have heard from in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men and women who will be able*

to teach others also." Take someone NEW with you the next time you *"go and make disciples"* and create meaningful mission trip experiences for the entire church all over the globe.



Real ideas for real ministry impact.

This guide is brought to you courtesy of ACS Technologies. We're excited to share more information with you about our new ministry tool, Realm.

Realm offers something for everyone in your church. It is a totally new type of church ministry software that combines administration, accounting, and community into one system. It also connects your entire church and personalizes each person's involvement in your ministry.

People in your church and on staff will love Realm. They can access it online or from their phones whenever they want. It's quick, user-friendly, and simple to get started. Plus, we've got a dedicated team to make it a smooth transition and guide you the rest of the way.



Administration

- Track what impacts your ministry
- Modernize church giving
- Host organized events
- Know who's coming and going
- Generate insightful reports



Accounting

- Organize your finances
- Maintain vendor relationships
- Pay bills and write checks
- Reconcile your accounts
- Plan and monitor budgets



Community

- Put names to faces
- Connect people in smaller groups
- Facilitate communication
- Shepherd people through life
- Grow your outreach potential

Three easy ways to learn how Realm can help your church:

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- 2 Watch: Take a quick look into Realm. Visit realmchurch.com
- 3 Talk: Ask us anything. We're here to help.
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