

CHBC Missions Class  
Lesson IX – Short-term Missions  
August 05, 2001

Theme: A Biblical and application treatment of the topic of short-term mission activity.

Instructional Objective: Lord willing, the students will consider and understand the Biblical basis for short-term Gospel work. Moreover, students should receive information regarding practical suggestions to become effectively involved in short-term missions projects.

Outline Summary

1. What is short-term mission work?
2. Is short-term work modeled in Scripture?
3. Is short-term work helpful?
4. How can we maximize the usefulness of short-term trips?

1. What is short-term mission work?

Ask: So before we begin to look into the topic of short-term missions, we need to define what we mean by the term. So what do you think of when someone mentions a “short-term” mission trip or project?

- A. Mission work: crossing cultural boundaries to advance the cause of the Gospel.
- B. Short-term: generally less than a year. Often only a few weeks
- C. Examples:
  - i. Student summer mission projects
  - ii. Short trips to encourage overseas workers
  - iii. Special projects, like medical relief work.

2. Is short-term work modeled in Scripture?

State: Before we consider any other facets of short-term mission work, we need to look at Scripture to see if this seems to be a method of pursuing missions that God approves of. We may not be able to get detailed plans for specific missionary approaches from the Bible, but a careful perusal of Scripture reveals more detail about missionary work than many realize. In this particular context, we want to look and see if the practice of short-term missions had a place in the early missionary work of the Apostles, as preserved for us in Holy Scripture. To consider that, we can turn to the history of early Christian missions preserved in the Book of Acts.

- A. Peter in Acts 10
  - i. Travels to bring Gospel Cornelius
  - ii. Time involved...probably about a week.

## B. Paul's Missionary journeys –

State and Read: In his book “Short-term Missions,” Mac Stiles summarizes Paul's first missionary journey as follows:

“What most marks my mind about Paul's travels are the powerful miracles, the growth of the church and the bravery of those proclaiming Christ. But look carefully at the less flashy but quite revealing time frame of Paul's journeys. F.F. Bruce notes that the church in Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas for missionary work in the spring of AD 48. Paul and Barnabas first visited Barnabas's home country of Cyprus, where they stayed for eight weeks. From there they journeyed by sea to Pamphylia for two weeks. Then, after traveling by land, they wintered in Iconium for four or five months.

In the spring of 49 they moved to Lystra and Derbe, where they stayed for fourteen weeks. In Derbe they probably celebrated the one-year anniversary of their departure from the home church in Antioch. From Derbe, Paul and Barnabas spent their summer retracing steps to encourage the new Christians and returned to Antioch, rejoicing, in the late summer of 49.”

State: Paul's second missionary journey is similar. In fact, by our normal definition of short-term missions, the only time Paul was NOT doing short-term work was when he was in prison or under house arrest. This certainly doesn't argue that we should all do work in this way, but it does give a clear example that short-term work has been used as God's means to carry the Gospel to new places.

### 3. Is short-term work helpful?

State: So I hope we see from these Biblical examples that there does seem to be a place for short-term work in spreading the Gospel to all peoples. But it is also appropriate for us to ask if such an approach is really helpful in our current context. Since Scripture does not command short-term trips as a necessary part of evangelism, we are right to think about its apparent utility.

Along these lines, many involved in missions have noted four major areas where short-term work adds to the overall effort to carry the Gospel around the world.

- A. Short term work can be an encouragement to long-term workers?
  - i. Importance of Christian fellowship and spiritual encouragement.
  - ii. Help with special projects and areas of expertise.
  - iii. Encouragement that comes from knowing others value their work.

- B. Short-term work can help participants test a call to full-time service.
  - i. Part of a call may be evident fruitfulness. Short term trips allow you to test your fruitfulness in another cultural context.
  - ii. Determine ability to adapt to strange environments.
  - iii. Allows you to test the desires of your heart.
  
- C. Short-term workers CAN bring others into the Kingdom
  - i. Long term work is not the only way to harvest.
  - ii. Cold evangelism can work with God's help.
    - 1. Conversions may come later.
    - 2. Conversions may come immediately.
  
- 4. How can we maximize the usefulness of short-term trips?
  - A. Learn about the culture you will visit.
    - i. Cultural awareness not the main point, but it is important.
    - ii. Paul's example of cultural sensitivity
      - 1. 1 Corinthians 9:22.
      - 2. Be willing to adopt neutral cultural norms.
      - 3. Respect and enjoy the good things in their culture
    - iii. Peter's example of cultural sensitivity
      - 1. Acts 10:28-29.
      - 2. Allow God to determine what is clean or unclean.
      - 3. Be respectful, but remember that the Word also judges all cultures.
      - 4. Sin is not deserving of sensitivity. Acts 10: 25-26
      - 5. The point is to foster trust and win a real hearing.
  
  - B. Return to the same place time and again.
    - i. Going to the same places where you live is good for evangelism
      - 1. Willow Creek has suggested going to the same bank, lunch counter, dry cleaner, etc. to foster relationships.
    - ii. Going to the same mission field each year is also good for evangelism.
      - 1. Variety is not the point.
      - 2. Relationship built over time may yield fruit in time.
  
  - C. Know and partner with any local believers.
    - i. Will help you to be more sensitive to local situation.
    - ii. Provides for church placement for any converts.
    - iii. Helps to foster fellowship for isolated local Christians.
  
  - D. Maintain year-round relationships with workers in country.
    - i. Pray support for local workers.
    - ii. Helps you to know their physical needs.

- E. Be a mule. Bring missionaries stuff that they need.
- F. Choose your destination strategically.
  - i. Not all sites are the same.
  - ii. Even for short-terms choose wisely.
  - iii. Muslim world is the focus of our church. (though not exclusively).
  - iv.
- G. Use the resources of your local church.
  - i. Sermons – grow where you are now.
  - ii. Classes – Missions, Two-ways-to-live, Discipling, etc.
  - iii. Books – “Mack and Leeann’s Guide to Short term Missions.”
  - iv. International students – start crossing cultural barriers here and now.
  - v. Other Christians – get to know missionaries.
  - vi. Elders – let the leaders know what you are thinking well in advance of planning a trip..

Conclusion:

1. Short term missions can be a fruitful way to carry the Gospel if done well.
2. Sending even short term workers is the responsibility of the church and should be done by the church as a whole, not ourselves.
3. Plan ahead so that your travels with be most