

Let's go!

By Kyle Bailey

Participating in a short-term mission project can be a life-changing experience. It is a tremendous gift to leave your comfort zone and see God at work in another context. When we go, our faith is challenged, and we grow in our understanding and dependence upon God. We also encounter a deeper level of Christian community with our fellow teammates and with local believers. God shapes our perspective on the Great Commission and renews our calling to make disciples.

And then it's time to return home. We say our goodbyes to our teammates at the airport and go back to our own familiar surroundings and comforts. All goes back to normal. The memory of God's work in our lives starts to fade as we face the regular rhythm of routine.

Returning home is much like what happened when the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* spilled back into the spare room after a lifetime in Narnia. Peter, Susan, Edward, and Lucy had fought battles, gained wisdom, and ruled with grace as kings and queens. Then, without warning, they were suddenly children again. No time had passed in the real world. In their hearts, they knew they were different—it just could not be seen by the others around them.

Those who go on short-term mission trips know this feeling. Though you may not look physically different, your heart is changed, and you have grown significantly in your faith. From many years of leading and facilitating short-term missions, I've come to believe that what we do after a trip may be the most important part of the experience.

When done well, short-term mission projects are catalysts for spiritual growth. After a mission project, or any other spiritual mountaintop, there are a few key practices you can do to guard the work of God in your life.

PRESERVE THE MEMORIES

There is power in keeping a written record of your experience. I always recommend that participants on short-term mission projects journal during their time away. It does not have to be extensive—just notes on key occurrences and answers to prayers. Then, as soon as possible after returning, write down your story. This serves to both preserve the memory of trip and to organize your thoughts in a way that helps you to effectively share your testimony.

I also recommend setting up a shared drive of photos with your teammates. Others' pictures will reflect their unique perspective on the project. Go through the images and choose your favorites to keep in a folder you can quickly access. I would even go as far as to print off these pictures and organize them in an album. This may seem old fashioned, but there is tremendous value in holding a physical memory of your experience.

Pictures and stories can still fall short in truly relaying what you experienced to your family and friends. For this reason, mission teams should get together soon after their project to debrief and share testimonies of God's work. A good idea is to keep in touch with team members as means of staying accountable to commitments to pray and grow.

STAY ENGAGED

A mission trip is an accelerated course in cross-cultural studies. In a short period of time, we learn new words and customs. Our senses are overwhelmed with tastes and smells that seem exotic to our palate. We see the Kingdom of God in action and catch a small glimpse of Heaven—a diverse church from every tribe and tongue worshipping before the Lamb of God.

The beauty of these sensations is that they open a new frontier of global understanding. We've realized now that our cultural experience has been limited. It awakens a desire within us to learn more about the world and God's plan for redeeming His creation.

There are many wonderful resources available to learn more. Over the last 200 years, Christian missiologists have been on the forefront of intercultural research and have produced an ever-deepening library of material. A great way to access this material is through taking a course such as *Perspectives*. There are also tremendous missionary biographies, books by church leaders, Bible studies, and podcasts that can help provide a fuller view of the history and current issues in missions.

There are two online resources that are extremely important for those wanting to learn more about global missions. The Joshua Project (<https://joshuaproject.net>) and Stratus (<https://stratus.earth>) are databases detailing the spiritual needs of every people group and nation in the world. This data informs the mission strategy for both organizations and churches around the world.

The more we learn about missions and the Biblical mandate of the Great Commission, we can become overwhelmed by the immensity of the task. Without divine intervention, we understand that countless souls will spend eternity separated from God. This knowledge should drive us to our knees in prayer.

In addition to the Joshua Project and to Stratus, there are other helpful prayer resources. *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, is available in both print and online at <https://operationworld.org>. The IMB has an extensive prayer guide for missions on their website at <https://www.imb.org/pray> and through their app. These resources can help us establish a daily rhythm of praying for the nations.

START WHERE YOU ARE

Living a changed life is a choice we live out day-to-day. The starting point of the Great Commission is loving the neighbor that God placed before us—where we are, right now. Yes, we are called to “go.” All followers of Christ must remain sensitive to the missionary calling to leave behind all that is familiar for the sake of the Gospel. Yet, our primary responsibility is always to make disciples. This calling is not defined by geography. It is not just something we do when we are on a mission project.

In many ways, this is the most difficult lesson to learn from our mission experience. It takes practice and willingness to step out in faith. As you return home, ask God to give you a greater burden for the lost. Pray that He will open your eyes to see the true spiritual condition of those in your sphere of influence. Then, pray for opportunities and the courage and obedience to share the Good News of Jesus as He leads you. And, He will lead you—whether across the street or around the world.



Kyle Bailey is Dawson's Associate Minister of Missions. Originally From Marietta, GA, Kyle graduated from Beeson Divinity School in 2013 with a Master of Divinity. Kyle and his wife Ali served primarily with mission partners in South Asia and Latin America. They have two children, Thomas and Claire, and a Goldendoodle, Gus.

DAWSON | 2025 MISSION PROJECTS

EAST AFRICA | EDUCATION SUPPORT PROJECT

Dates: March 7–15
Leader: Liz Cuenin
Type of Ministry: Teaching,
Cross-Cultural Worker Support
Participant Profiles:
Adults, College Students

LAREDO | COLLEGE SPRING BREAK MISSION PROJECT

Dates: March 8–15
Leader: Cole Griffith
Type of Ministry: Service,
Community Outreach, VBS
Participant Profiles: College

SOUTHEAST ASIA | EDUCATION SUPPORT PROJECT

Dates: March 21–28
Leader: Belinda Stroud
Type of Ministry: Teaching,
Cross-Cultural Worker Support
Participant Profiles: Adults

ECUADOR | FAMILY MISSION TRIP

Dates: March 21–28
Leader: Bryan Howard
Type of Ministry: Service,
Community Outreach, VBS
Participant Profiles:
Families, Students

EURASIA MINISTRY SUPPORT TEAM

Dates: March 30–April 4
Leader: Lisa Simpson
Type of Ministry: Children's
Ministry, Worker Support
Participant Profiles: Adults

EURASIA COLLEGE MINISTRY TEAM

Dates: May 12–22
Leader: Avery Flynt
Type of Ministry: Outreach,
Prayer, Evangelism
Participant Profiles: College

COLORADO SPORTS CAMP

Dates: July 5–11
Leader: Andy Cartee
Type of Ministry: Sports Camp,
Community Outreach
Participant Profiles:
Families, Adults, Students

HONDURAS FAMILY MISSION PROJECT

Dates: July 27–August 2
Leader: Reyna Craft
Type of Ministry: Children's
Ministry, Community Outreach
Participant Profiles:
Families, Adults, Students

GUATEMALA | MEDICAL MISSION PROJECT

Dates: August 4–8
Leader: Dr. Randy Stewart
Type of Ministry: Medical
Participant Profiles: Medical
Professionals, Adults, College

UGANDA | MEDICAL MISSION PROJECT

Dates: August 22–Sept. 2
Leader: Debbie Moss
Type of Ministry: Medical,
Refugee Relief
Participant Profiles:
Medical Professionals

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