

The Mission Behind a Mission Trip

It is mission trip season! Whether you are doing a local, long distance, or an overseas mission trip, there are always plenty of planning and details to work through. Do we put more thought into the detail of the mission trip than on the reason for taking one at all? I mean more than helping a community or running a V.B.S.? I was challenged with this question early on in my undergraduate Youth Ministry class. Are mission trips just something expected to do, or is there a theology behind the mission trips we take?

Jesus directs us in Mark 16:15 to, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” and in Matthew 28:19 Jesus commissions His follower, saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” All believers are called to share their faith with others, and there are many ways to do so. However, we must be purposeful in selecting mission trips. There are a lot of good destinations and projects, but are they effective? Here are some points of consideration a group of V.C.N. Youth Pastors discussed at our May meeting.

1. Does this effectively promote the Gospel to others?

Just as it is crucial to read the Scripture in the context it was written and then apply accordingly, the same is true for sharing our faith with others. I want to preface with this, if you and your group are not sharing Christ with those in your own local community and being God’s hands and feet, you are not ready to go out and do it somewhere else. The Great Commission cannot be separated into these separate parts – we must proclaim Christ at home, or we’ll never proclaim Him effectively in another culture. Furthermore, when selecting a location for a mission trip, make sure you and your group understand the culture of the community and the context you will be entering. This leads into the second point to consider:

2. Is it needed?

The reasons for going away on a mission trip must be a need from the community that your group can adequately fulfill. Is help wanted by the community? Having help forced upon the host culture in an unwanted way will make the Gospel fall on ears closed in frustration. While James 2:14-16 teaches of the futility of faith without works, works without need may hinder faith.

3. Is it cost effective?

Not only do we need to consider the need for the trip, we need to consider the resources we bring to the need. To put it bluntly, is the help you bring helpful, or would it be better for you to just send money? Mission trips can be costly. Is the cost of the trip a worthwhile investment for both the youth group and the community? The cost is important to consider for the youth going on the trip. There is a balance of not making it too expensive, while also having it enough for students having some investment in the trip.

4. Is it right for your group?

Lastly, know your group. Know the strengths and gifting of those you take. Do you have students who can work hard, or who can boldly talk with strangers? Balancing stretching students without tipping the scales to breaking students is an important skill youth leaders must develop.