

Are Short-term Missions Worth the Cost?

"Are short-term missions worth the cost?" is a frequently asked question. It is followed with "Wouldn't it be more effective if the money spent on short-term missions should instead be given for use by career missionaries."

This is a perfectly valid question and with so many needs on the mission field and the limited resources that most of us are faced with, everyone who gives needs to do so with confidence that they are being good stewards of the Lord's money. We should all desire to make certain every dollar given counts for the cause of Christ. This paper is intended to highlight the value of short-term mission efforts.

For those on a fixed income who do support career missionaries, please continue to do so and do not divert your funds elsewhere. Praise God for you!

For those who do have funds available to help support a short-term mission effort, by all means, take advantage of such opportunity.

Some reasons to support short-term trips are:

- Most career missionaries encourage short-term mission trips to fields where they labor.
- It is a great encouragement to missionaries and the believers they serve to have other believers come and join them in labor for the Lord.
- Those who spend time on a mission field become much more aware of the needs of the career missionary and the mission work and this results in increased giving, praying, writing encouraging letters, and other expressions of love and support.
- Short-term teams provide good fellowship for the career missionaries and their families who often experience loneliness and isolation.
- When career missionaries and the groups with whom they work, start preparing for the work of short-term teams, it provides a renewed focus of their own efforts. We all do better work when we know a peer will see what we are doing.
- Mission agencies invest a significant amount of money in placing career missionaries on the field. Those who go as career missionaries after having first gone on a short-term team have a much higher longevity rate than those who have not.
- A study of the missionary activity of the Apostle Paul reveals that he was in fact involved in a series of short-term missions.
- Churches from which short-term teams are sent benefit as mission work is no longer a theological concept or sermon illustration, but the visible effort of that church. It becomes a work in which their pastor

and/or other members have actually participated. Check out a church that has sent short-term teams to the mission field and you will find a church that has increased its own effectiveness at home. A vision for touching the world will impact your vision for touching your own community.

When looking at the eight reasons above, you will see that effective short-term mission teams do not detract from career missions, but in fact help protect and enhance the dollars spent on career missions.

You should also consider that those who go on short-term teams do not spend all the funds raised on their own needs. For example, teams going to Uganda, use about half they raise on travel, food, lodging, etc., and the other half to support the actual mission activity while in Uganda. The Ugandan people are very poor and funds raised by short-term teams are used to provide scholarships, travel, food, and housing for Ugandan pastors, church leaders, and youth to attend team led studies, seminars, etc. Without such help, they would not be able to participate.

It is also helpful to note that support of short-term teams should come out of "over and above" giving. We ask that you do not divert your tithe from your local congregation to support our short-term teams. The tithe belongs in your own congregation where Godly officers are given the responsibility for its effective use in the kingdom.

The testimony of most believers is that significant change in their walk with Christ did not come as a result of the morning worship service, but in small groups, seminars, retreats, home Bible studies, the challenge of a guest speaker, etc. It is in this very context that short-term teams work.

It is also interesting to note that all mission efforts in the book of Acts were in fact, short-term mission trips. The face of missions is changing as we begin the 21st Century, some missiologists are suggesting the age old pattern of sending a missionary family to live in one area for many years can actually work against building strong, self supporting, self governing churches.

Finally, follow the contribution of your money with a river of prayer for those who will be going. All the money in the world will make no difference if there is not a foundation of prayer for those who go. It has been said, "If you can only do one thing, give money or pray, please let it be to pray." While this may sound overly pious, it is indeed a heartfelt attitude among missionaries.

How ministry costs for Uganda are determined

Cost vary based on factors such as length of stay in Uganda, number of venues served, how far apart the venues are, how many Ugandans attend, and even how many Americans are on the team. The example below shows how \$3,500 per team member cost would typically be utilized. Some venues require fewer funds, others more.

- \$1,300 to \$1,800 air fare to Uganda and back (we fly as cheaply as possible)
- \$ 400 to \$ 600 for accommodations, food, and travel in Uganda
- \$1,400 to \$2,000 used for ministry in Uganda as explained below

Most of us are accustomed to having guests come and minister in our home churches. In such cases, the host church provides travel expenses, lodging and meals, and typically gives an honorarium. The Ugandan church is very poor (average annual family income is less that \$400) and as such, could never cover such costs. Therefore, we cover our own expenses and raise additional funds to provide scholarships, travel funds, food and lodging for Ugandans to participate in the events we conduct, we also help orphans, and to assist in construction.

Some team funds are used to purchase mosquito nets, cooking utensil, medications, medical fees when we take someone to a doctor, Bibles, pay school fees, and many other small items that help families.

ACTI Financial Accountability

The *Africa Christian Training Institute*, ACTI in the USA, and *Africa Christian Training Ministries*, ACTM in Uganda, demonstrates financial accountability in the following ways:

The Africa Christian Training Institute (ACTI) ensures Financial Accountability by the following:

- Governing Board: ACTI officers and board members...
 - Are personally involved in third world ministry and understand the issues associated with such ministry
 - Serve without remuneration and pay their own expenses to attend the annual ACTI board meeting
 - Approve the ACTI/ACTM working budgets and review the annual USA & Ugandan financial reports
- Bookkeeping is done by a Certified Public Account with commensurate integrity and accountability
- Funds received are used as designated by the donor to underwrite ministry in Uganda. Funds are raised for teams and/or ministry projects and not individuals as per IRS rules
- Administrative Costs are generally limited to less than 1% of funds received by ACTI and most of that supports staff in Uganda (ACTM). All functions of ACTI in the United States are handled by volunteers
- ACTI is recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (3) Tax Exempt Organization and gifts to ACTI are tax deductible. Africa Christian Training Ministries (our Uganda arm - ACTM) is a recognized Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) registered by the government of Uganda

ACTI prefers to receipt contributions via email. To facilitate this, please include your legibly printed email address below. The IRS does not require a receipt for contributions of less than \$250.