

## **ABSTRACT**

### **SHORT TERM MISSIONS AS DISCIPLESHIP: BEST PRACTICES FOR REAL LIFE IMPACT**

by

Mark A. Byrom

Short-term missions (STM) have enveloped the North American global mission effect over the last several decades. The great challenge of STM has been to develop a plan that effectively creates opportunity for both impact where ministering along with life-change for those participating. The nature of this study is to examine best practices of organizing STM with discipleship practices effectively incorporated into a model that involves training, implementation and real follow-up.

The purpose of the research was to determine best practices of discipleship around the whole STM experience with lead in, execution and application following a trip. The study examined Christian and Missionary Alliance churches in the U.S. that are actively involved in STM programs. A total of eighty-six participants were included out of eight churches including church leadership teams, Alliance missionaries and forty-nine STM participants.

This study laid out three solid recommendations for every church to consider and research further in developing their own strategy of STM with discipleship in mind. The recommendations include a specific training and follow-up plan (true to church and partner cultures), good leaders identified and trained and the intentional mechanisms in place to multiply all the relational facets of STM. Out of these three findings comes enhanced potential for people to apply what they have learned within their own culture or to take the next step in considering their call to full time cross-cultural ministry.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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SHORT TERM MISSIONS AS DISCIPLESHIP:  
BEST PRACTICES FOR REAL LIFE IMPACT

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

This study examined sending short-term mission (STM) trips out of U.S. based churches for discipleship possibilities in the lives of team members. Personal experiences highlight the importance of this study. Subsequent is an overview of the problem and a description of how the researcher examined STM teams and programs at Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) churches around the U.S. The model and modes of research proposal are presented along with an explanation of who is a part of the study and what this research determines.

### **Personal Introduction**

Millions of dollars are spent on short-term mission trips each year and many thousands of church laypeople participate in these cross cultural ministry experiences. The landscape of Evangelical mission work sent out from North American over the past two decades has changed in significant ways. As a participant in cross cultural mission work in Europe since the late nineties, I have seen many of these developments grow over the years. Churches want to be involved hands-on along side their long-term workers overseas and in partnership with nationals who want to reach their countries with the gospel. When my team in Bosnia and Herzegovina functioned best with teams from the States it was because of a strong relationship with an informed partnering church who served well. Many people from these churches became engaged with cross-cultural ministry at a high level. My assumption in hosting many teams was that STM team members were able to bring back some kind of cultural perspective to think more like a missionary and help their churches minister faithfully within the local culture. I assumed that there was some kind of discipleship experience shaped around their trip that would result in real life change, influencing people to think more like an Acts 1:8 Christ follower, as the passage says:

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (NLT)

In just the past several years, my family and I have transitioned to ministry in the U.S. again, after living overseas since 1999. More recently, I stepped into the role of pastor of global connections (overseas missions) in a large Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Wisconsin. To this position, I bring experience with both the receiving and sending STM teams (I was also a mission pastor in Seattle for three years before going to Bosnia where I served twelve years.). What has struck me recently, especially in the capacity of leading and organizing STM trips for my church, is the great effort that is made to prepare teams for working on-site cross-culturally. We can focus on the project and team dynamics, plus fund raising and promoting a trip. Yet, the prospect of the discipleship impact on the team members can be lost in all the other preparations for and working out of a trip. In contrast to the intense effort made in preparations for the trip and the ministry during the actual trip, little is done to help those returning hold on to real life change because of the experience they had as part of a STM cross-cultural team.

My experience with STM trips is that a well-developed trip that partners strategically and cross-culturally with missionaries and nationals on the ground can influence team members from a North American church toward true life-change impact. The whole experience of preparing, experiencing a cross-cultural environment and applying intentional life practices after a trip can all contribute to a life changing discipleship experience. However, I find that very little is done to channel and foster these significant experiences into greater involvement locally, in a church-based ministry, and in a missional approach to everyday life. There is a treasure trove of potential for discipleship to be developed which is an opportunity missed because of lack of follow-through related to a STM experience. I am convinced that God calls us all to the Acts 1:8

Christ-centered mandate, both corporately and individually, which makes a connection between the global ministry and the local church. In today's world, there is great opportunity for developing the next generation through a discipling experience during preparation and follow-up to a STM trip, especially one lived through a cross-cultural setting.

Most people I speak with who are going into long term career cross-cultural ministry first had a confirmation of their calling during a STM overseas. My calling and sense of gifting came through a trip working in Israel for several months over a summer and visiting several other locations in Europe and Central America. I find that what I observe as best practices takes place when there is a strong partnership between a sending church and a receiving team overseas who have been in a long term relationship working together. Preparation efforts include pre-trip training to help prepare a team for an experience in a foreign country, how to prepare and focus on the cross-cultural experience. There may be some intentional focus on how a person prepares at a heart level, spiritually, for a trip. Yet, from my experience, much of what is felt, observed and realized while on a trip dissipates rapidly upon returning to everyday life back home. The practices that result in life application of the discipling opportunities from a STM trip are easily lost and go unrealized in individuals' lives. Any one of us would say the same of an impacting weekend retreat, a summer camp experience and a marriage seminar; these happenings away from everyday life can allow us to examine our lives and values in significant ways. These are discipling opportunities. Through best practices participating in a STM trip, there is the potential for a deep discipleship experience that can foster realization of gifting, a calling into ministry both local and global and the development of a missional awareness of our culture back home (which the church has often lost touch with how it can impact effectively).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The cross-cultural STM experience can be life changing, at least that is the claim many churches make. If it is potentially life changing, why are the missional perspectives experienced in a cross-cultural team excursion so hard to effectively embrace after returning home? There is untapped potential of teaching missional lifestyle through strategically developing those who have been on STM mission trips with an intentional discipleship process. The urgent shortfall is potentially countered with the right follow-up. There should be continuity with the discipleship process in preparation and during the experience cross-culturally. The whole STM experience provides potential to challenge and grow individuals into embracing a missional lifestyle that can effectively impact a church's missional stance in both its local community and the whole world. Leaders and organizers in churches who are sending teams overseas must work to better understand how to create a complete model of discipleship for the STM experience that is full of well-balanced discipleship. We have an un-seized opportunity to help people reach their full potential of growth in perspective and lifestyle after spending time overseas with an STM.

There have been great improvements related to the development of resources for training and preparing teams for STM trips. Most of what is available on the shelf in bookstores and in preparation manuals is about how to prepare and do the ministry. Now is the time for the follow-up materials and strategies to catch up with the initial work invested to prepare and send STM teams. There should be ways to help individuals on these teams hold on to the life shaping aspects of the ministry and cross-cultural experience. As the *Goer Guide* challenges us, we must avoid this black hole of STM waist of experience and move toward intentional application even many years after a person's STM experience (Brian Heerwagen 1). The goal is real life change that embraces God's heart for the world both global and local. The focal point is the Christ centered Acts 1:8 model of life. No matter where we are proclaiming the gospel, we ask similar questions of our life: how we relate to the people outside the Kingdom around us.



### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study was to determine best practices of discipleship applied in the preparation, execution and with special attention to the follow-up of STM team experiences within various sized churches of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in United States.

### **Research Questions**

The entire experience of a STM team includes the preparation before travel, the on-sight ministry and the return assimilation back into the home culture. In order to study discipleship as related to participation with a STM team, research must include questions about best practices of each portion of the experience. The questions were tailored for mission mobilizers who have participated in the discipleship process to be able to give feedback on what practices worked best. Questions were developed to consider how each portion of a trip could potentially contain unique and specialized discipleship practices. The study focused on specifically C&MA churches around the United States over various sizes that have active STM programs. These questions include:

#### **Research Question #1**

*What kinds of practices take a team from preparation and execution of a STM trip to individuals experiencing actual discipleship?*

#### **Research Question #2**

*What are the best practices of follow-up after a STM returns home that facilitate ongoing discipleship and the living out of a missional lifestyle?*

#### **Research Question #3**

*What are the best lived out practices of discipleship that long-term cross-cultural workers find impacted their journey as a result participation with a STM team?*

### **Rational of the Project**

The first reason this study matters is that there is an incredible amount of resources that churches in the U.S. put into sending STM teams. So much money and time go into STM teams and these numbers are only going to grow in upcoming years. It is important not to waste the experience and opportunity that potentially can come out of the STM experience in the life change and ministry potential with those who have participated. STM team organizers should better facilitate and intentionally create mechanisms that enable a full discipleship experience for those participating on a team. The implications are huge to every area of ministry in a church that can benefit from people who think with more depth and breadth about how to reach their own culture and understand their gifts and potential because of a cross-cultural experience.

A second reason this study matters is the great potential for developing future cross-cultural workers who identify a calling because of a short-term trip they have taken. The study could help mission mobilizers better understand that there are clear best practice actions that can be taken before, during and following a trip. Insight from these inquiries could help develop preparation models and on-sight activities which can be incorporated during the actual trip that benefit follow-up activities in a significant way. The research results could help develop a tailored model of addressing STM experience and follow-up within STM sending Alliance churches in the States.

A third reason this study is important is because the Church is global and must be impacted by a missional mindset that allows Christ to be proclaimed locally and globally by individual people in local church families. Seeds of discipleship through culture crossing can be planted among both senders and receivers at individual, family and church levels. Different areas of ministry might focus a team toward impact to a specific target group overseas. Participation in well planned and executed STM trips is an effective way to bring better

understanding of the cross-cultural experience, yet this does not guarantee that people are living out the observations and realities they have experienced. The discipleship potential of STM trips should include intentional planning related to how the cross-cultural portion of the trip has implications back home with what participants have learned in a new and different place. Partner churches and missionaries overseas should play a strong role on what is considered best practice in STM discipleship plans.

The fourth reason this study is important is because there are tangible ways that individuals can find their missional voice and life after a STM trip experience. Intentional discipleship practice involves crucial steps of full evaluation and debriefing of the STM realizations. There must be mechanisms as part of Christ's body that can help us grow after the trip and apply effectively a new perspective on the world to our everyday life. The result should be a better self-understanding of gifting and calling which should result in more lifestyle change and refocusing/retooling. Our neighbor, family, coworkers and other people in everyday life should be viewed in new ways. An understanding of the needs and ministry cross-culturally should result in higher levels of capable involvement in projects and ministry within our own culture and setting at home. Without a strong cross-cultural experience, we have a tendency to view the world through only our own lenses. When we prepare for an STM trip, we consider how we can view the differences in that culture and relate love and gospel to those people in a way they understand.

Follow-up to a STM experience is challenging because all people have a tendency to return to what is most familiar in life practice. Experience of a new culture is challenging. Yet follow-up is no different back home, maybe a little harder discerning the language of culture (because it is too familiar). For too long we have only viewed our culture from our own perspective. A person who is open to apply their experience overseas to life in their own culture

is given new tools to see everyday life from very different perspectives. We can learn how to consider what we failed to notice of our own culture and start to relate truth and love of the gospel to people in our lives back home that we never knew we could touch. The church is missing a great discipling tool if they do not follow through properly with those who have gone as part of STM trips.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Short Term Missions (STM):** cross cultural ministry activities that are most typically done by church lay people working with partners overseas for a limited period of time, typically less than two weeks. As Brian Howell related in his book about STM, the length of what STM can be is very hard to separate out between two weeks to two years in length, according to most research (38). Short-term missions can be described as any cross-cultural trip under the length of two years in duration. Yet, for this study, the principle researcher delineates STM as two weeks or less in nature. Any trip longer than two weeks and up to two years is understood as a Mid Term Mission trip. Over two years is understood as Long Term Missions engagement overseas.

**Discipleship,** as referenced within this study, is the life change process that takes place in Christ followers' lives as a result of being impacted by the life input of other believers in their living out of daily life. In order to understand what it means to make disciples, consideration is given to what being a disciple within the missional context means as part of a STM trip.

Discipleship goes both ways. Discipleship can reflect on how a person grows in their understanding of following after Christ and also becomes a catalyst to creating new disciples. Christ calls us to be disciples by his gospel and additionally calls us to live and proclaim our Christian faith (Hans Kvalbein 49). Discipleship relates to all believers in Christ and conveys a concept of a life that is in the process of change. The concept involves relationship, trust and a call to carry-on the faith between the generations and the nations. The corporate sense of a

disciple has significant implications to the individual for eternity before God (Leland Ryken et al. 208).

**Liminality** as understood in this study is the set of conditions developed within training and new experiences that create opportunity for individuals to be open to change and life impact learning opportunities. The concept of liminality relates to how humans interact with change. There are times in the lives of all people when there is transition and a person's self-perception or understanding is more open to influence. There is more openness to new concepts and imagination where their person can be impacted in both a constructive or destructive fashion (Bjorn Thomassen 1-2). The concept of liminality relates well to the experience a person goes through during a STM trip cross-culturally. The perspective and world view of an individual is challenged. There is potential for either positive or negative impact into how they develop as a Christ follower. The potential for impacting discipleship is great during the testing and challenge of cross-cultural experience in the group context of a team.

**Cultural Intelligence or CQ** (David Livermore) is the level of awareness an individual has related to their own culture and other cultures. CQ involves being able to interpret and understand yourself and the culture of your sending body, i.e. the country you grew up in. It also involves holding and wielding the tools necessary to minister and work with the receiving church in a different cultural setting. It could be seen as another step is processing how one sees their world upon returning to their home country. CQ involves learning how to process and apply what life should look like with new insights into God's greater culture that is multi-cultural and applicable in ways that were not seen before traveling cross-culturally.

**Strategic Partnerships** as related in this study are those relational connections that are between a church and those that it works with in another location such as with international workers overseas or with a church or missionary team in another country. STM must take into

account the possibility of longer-term strategic partnerships between ministries in two different cultures. By developing a relationship with a receiving church or team of missionaries, a team can be received at a much more effective level of ministry and developmental level. There is the blessing of connecting with the Majority World, as Paul Borthwick describes, where we can learn about a posture of mutual interest and vision to impact the world. There is a blurred line between the senders and the mission field (103). The synergy of relationship between a team overseas and a church locally create collaboration of new perspectives that reflect God's broader view of the world and how we all come together in Christ. Truth is that God's people around the world have so much to learn from each other. Duane Elmer challenges people in this globalized world to serve others in a way that they interpret as servant hood (125). Within a partnership, we can come to understand the impacting nuances of local perceptions culturally which allow our STM to have greater impact.

**Transformission** (new word coined in book by same title) as referenced in this study is the training of Christian disciples through short-term missions in the developmental experience that can take place in the preparation for a trip, the actual on-sight experience plus a strategic follow up after returning home. Naturally a STM trip to another country should invoke opportunity for real life change. Authors, Michael Wilder and Shane Parker relate that there should be a "round trip" perspective that realizes the importance of lasting change after a trip. The book describes the transformational dimensions of STM mission as a mold for discipleship. The four dimensions are shaped by the practices of influence, how we develop individual people, how we engage them in the whole STM experience and finally assess the impact (173). The STM experience is not always giving but receiving too. What a person receives in life application after the trip is full of potential for life change and new involvement in ministry skills development.

### **Delimitations**

The boundaries of this study are reflected in focusing on eight different sized Alliance Churches with viable functioning short-term mission programs. These were churches in the continental United States which regularly send teams to locations on other continents.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

The following cluster of resources speak directly into perspectives, possible exercises and life application that can and should take place with individuals after they have returned from a STM. Their voices were integral in building foundations for the research that followed.

**Paul Borthwick. *Western Christians in Global Missions: What's the Role of the North American Church?*** Borthwick conveys the importance of the North American Church working to better know the rest of the world. The global church has much to teach and challenge the values and lifestyle of Americans who follow after Christ. A significant part of this is to develop partnership relationships with the global church that includes STM trips (190). In response to connecting to the global family of Christ, there are lifestyle changes that must take place and a growth of passion that should result from an impact on our hearts realizing what God is doing around the world and what we are called to in participation (197).

**Brian J. Heerwagon, *The Next Mile: Short-Term Missions for the Long Haul.***

The book is part of a series of resources for churches preparing to send STM teams. The Next Mile is one of the only series the principle researcher found that is almost exclusively focused on what happens when a team returns to the States after a trip. There are many mission agencies that contributed to this compilation, yet I feel that there could be much more material than what they put together. The resource is not aimed to a technical audience and is not very well documented with source material.

**Brian M. Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel***

*Narrative and Experience.* Howell gives the perspective of an anthropologist examining the topic of short-term missions from scholarly perspective. His study gives practical suggestions for understanding the effects of STM trips. He examines the narratives that mold and sustain the experience of what happens in STM. The study gives fair balance of affirming the good and also the areas that need to be constructively addressed related to STM out of churches in the U.S. The main focus of the book concerns the narrative, or the shaping dialogue, that in function contributes to and forms how STM experiences create impact (6-7).

**David Platt, *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God.***

The second book in Platt's series, *Radical*, takes into account how the whole of the body of a church works together to fulfill the Great Commission. The lifestyle and corporate sense of being in this mission together relate well into the topic of this dissertation. The upfront challenge Platt leaves today's American Evangelicals is that no matter our role on a local church family, we are missing God's heart for the world if we lack in love for the lost and compassion for the poor (37). He directly confronts the challenge we face when returning from a cross-cultural trip where we had great opportunity to realize how lost and starving the world is both physically and spiritually. It makes no sense from a position of following after Christ to let life return to the norm once back home. Platt challenges us to the radical life God is calling us to live. The STM experience should launch us into an even more radical lifestyle and passion to serve and participate in what God is doing around the world. In Platt's discussion, he addresses the trappings of the church corporately to be sidetracked even by good things from the central cause of making God known and serving the most needy in the world. Platt sees STM cross-culturally as a key part of people realizing their long-term part in participation with a church that wants to impact the world for Christ (93).



**Robert J. Priest, *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Mission: Doing it Right!***

Priest is a professor of mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, thus approaching the topic of STM cross-cultural teams from an academic and practice perspective. He devotes a whole section of his book to resourcing material to help evaluate and improve the impact of STM on those that are participants. He has generated more scholarly material related to short-term missions than any other researcher related to the phenomenon of STM in today's world, a movement that involves millions of people on an annual basis.

**Research Methodology**

The project was to determine the best practices for enabling life application of insights gained through a STM trip. To gain a complete picture of those practices, pre-STM and during-STM approaches were also studied.

**Type of Research**

The methods used in this pre-intervention research were qualitative in nature with the intent of identifying categories of best STM discipleship practices that Alliance churches have adopted. The first method was a semi-structured interview with the Alliance international workers. The second method was group-focused interviews of two to four missions/ministry leaders in local CMA churches, preferably face to face at one time together, using open-ended questions. The final method was a questionnaire model for individuals who participated in STM from the same churches represented in the focus groups.

**Participants**

The first group of subjects were Alliance International Workers who were just starting their ministry or were seasoned veterans, both men and women of adult age twenty or older. Experienced workers in the Alliance could relate their own experience with STM and how it influenced their journey, very different from a U.S. based perspective of church leaders or

participants. The second subject group was adult men and women twenty years in age or older who participated with short-term mission trips, both lay and staff, from both small and large Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches in the United States. The focus on church leaders was on those with real experience in planning and participating in STM teams which was necessary in order to get real perspective and feedback necessary for this study. The third participant groups were lay participants from the same churches as participant church leaders, again made up of both men and women over twenty in age. Lay participants could give perspective of what kind of discipling they actually experienced on and following their trips. By choosing Alliance Churches from around the country to participate, the study reflected the variety of churches in this specific denomination in structures from a national demography of church congregations from around the U.S.

The potential participants were determined by a sample of convenience (from the network of colleagues of the principle investigator) and through snowballing to ask those in the initial sample to pass on names they would recommend. All participants were in healthy mental, physical and emotional states. They could be from any ethnic background. They were attending the Alliance church they went on a short-term mission trip with. They did not have any institutionalized status.

### **Instrumentation**

The IRB received the principal investigator's goal of completing the following studies of participants through three researcher-designed instruments. The first models were semi-structured interviews with a desired goal of one on one interaction with five or more international workers in open-ended questioning. The second model consists of focus group interactions with teams of preferably three to four mission pastors and lay leaders from eight or more Alliance Churches of various sizes. The total participants from church mission leadership

teams were up to thirty-two participants. For the third instrument, an STM participant questionnaire, the goal included interacting with recent STM members from these churches with focus group leadership distributing inquiries with those that had been on recent STM trips. Each church could have up to ten people who responded to the Survey Monkey electronic survey questionnaire (up to eighty lay people participating). The total number of participants could be up to +/- 114 people.

### **Data Collection Method**

The case study method was used to make a qualitative study of at least eight Christian and Missionary Alliance churches of various sizes from all around the United States. An examination of how these churches followed-up with those in their church going on a STM trip cross-culturally overseas was included. The researcher considered churches between three hundred and four thousand in attendance with the knowledge that most Alliance churches are smaller in size.

In January, there has been a gathering of Alliance mission pastors and lay mission mobilizers from larger Alliance churches, similar in size to the target study goal. On location, the researcher found both Alliance international workers present and church mission leadership teams attending the conference. This pool of individuals and teams was interviewed during the conference over a one-week period, with follow-up interviews via teleconferencing or VOIP utilized for any shortfalls in the number of interviews conducted. The completed research time frame was around one month. Leadership from church focus groups was emailed with a request to send out links to the Survey Monkey questionnaire to STM participants from their churches in order to get best candidates to do the research survey who had participated in short term trips out of these churches. Best practices were identified through the questions presented and showed

which methods of follow-up were being used and which worked most effectively for long term life-change in those that participated with short-term trips.

### **Data Analysis**

As described later in chapter three, the process of data analysis included organizing the information according to a qualitative research model proposed by Jennifer Mason, Irving Seidman, and Tim Sensing. The goal was to generate data received from the interviewing process of international workers with the Alliance, Alliance mission focused church leadership teams plus the filling out of questionnaires of recent STM team members reflecting on their pre through post trip experience and what they found to be effective in helping them apply their experience into real life change. The targeted participants were adults from various ages twenty or older who have all had connections with Alliance churches and mission practices through STM. They responded to programs and practices that their church has developed and implemented in practice following up STM teams. Effectiveness was evaluated by questioning long-term change in individuals by their testimony of personal experience, measuring change in their own lives. Measuring this change was determined by accounting for the number of international workers that can be identified as impacted through follow-up in their first excursions overseas with STM trips. Out of those targeted for research in this study, there was opportunity to account for how many people were helped to tangibly to be more involved in ministry as a result of their cross-cultural experience with good follow-up.

### **Generalizability**

The STM movement in the United States is strong and bridges into many evangelical denominations. There are very likely direct correlations between what is taking place in C&MA churches and in other similar denominations where an equivalent study could be developed. The concerted focus of this study was focused on best practices that can bridge between churches in

various demographic and geographic locations, especially in the U.S. There may be more challenges to see a correlation with churches in other countries. With C&MA churches, it was important to find best practices and realize the challenges our denomination faces related to how STM teams are prepared and followed up. Investment in STM trips could have much better results in real life impact with more intentional practices.

### **Project Overview**

The importance of STM preparations, follow-through and follow-up and related areas is examined with relevant literature including a biblical analysis of the topic. Then the methodology of this research is presented with a clear understanding of the tools of research method that were used in this study. Research results are presented considering all the correlations of data. Finally, the results are examined towards developing an assessment and application of information for real use related to how C&MA churches can better organize and implement the sending and follow-up of their STM teams.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Strategic intentional discipling through a short-term mission experience provides potential to challenge and grow individuals into embracing a missional lifestyle which can effectively impact a church's missional stance into its local community and the whole world. Leaders and organizers in churches who are sending teams overseas must work to better understand how to create a follow-up model of discipleship after the short-term mission experience. The purpose of this study was to explore what Alliance Churches in the U.S. are doing to utilize STM to the fullest for life impact on those that participate. The problem is that churches have an un-seized opportunity to help people reach greater potential of growth in perspective and lifestyle after spending time overseas with a short-term mission trip. This chapter explores the themes of biblical and theological foundations related to discipleship as well as the missional nature of the church. It also explores current literature regarding the nature of short-term mission trips.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

There is strong biblical basis behind the discipling process that can take place before, during and after a short-term mission trip. God holds STM team participants to a higher standard, desiring them to be impacted by what happens through the experiences that take place while they serve others in new places. A centerpiece of what this ministry looks like is a Christ centered Acts 1:8 model of life where believers take into account all that God is doing around the world and how they related personally and corporately to it. Christians can be shortsighted and only think about what is going on locally or they can be fixated on global ministries but do very little locally. God's track record in scripture calls his followers to be inspired in both areas

because they are interrelated. There is good opportunity to impact the local church, to take in the full scope of God's heart for the world both in their neighborhood and even to a different and far away place. STM members get a chance to see ministry and culture in a different context and consider, through a properly followed up short-term mission trip, how to reach their own local culture in new ways. The challenge is that far too often Christ followers fall into what could be called "camp syndrome" which is something many have found true after a great camp experience. Believer, greatly moved by the experience, just goes back to life as it was like nothing changed while away at camp. The biblical narrative records the stories of men and women being sent, experiencing change and coming home as different people. Sending out people to impact others for Christ is not a new thing; to be sent is a gift, a command and blessing.

### **An Old Testament View of Mission**

The basis of mission is ultimately to bring and reveal the glory of God to his entire creation. Unfortunately, because of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God, all creation has fallen. As a result, God persistently seeks people out with a heart to restore them to Him. The task is huge, but it is God's mission and he means to accomplish it according to his purpose.

There are many examples of the sending out of the people of God found throughout Scripture. The Bible is clear that being pulled out of one's comfort zone and being sent to a different location is one powerful form of discipleship where God can truly change a person in ways of living their lives. In fact, the theology of sending is an integral part of the core value of how God chooses to make himself known. Throughout the Old Testament, God's mind is on his people but also all the people the world even as he chooses to use the Hebrew people to accomplish the purpose of blessing all nations. In Genesis 17:1-7, God calls the patriarch Abraham to a new land and establishes the "everlasting covenant" where blessing will be

brought to all humanity. It was through the faithfulness of Abraham and his descendants that God's people received the Law.

God clearly establishes that there is one God in all the earth. As Meg Crossman describes, "Israel wasn't great because of the number of people or the wars it won or the cities it built – Israel was great because God called the nation to demonstrate His character and love to the nations around it" (15). In the book of Hebrews, the author emphasizes right living that comes out of the supernatural work of Christ, his complete and whole sacrifice. He is the mediator of the new covenant which is reflected in what is written of Abraham in Hebrews 11:8-10 in the NLT...

<sup>8</sup> It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

Abraham models life transformation through the act of pilgrimage, not calling any place truly his home. He was looking for certainty of eternity with his Creator. There was a sense of not getting bogged down with extra baggage or things that would weigh down a journey both in the physical sense of things or in the soul as believers take care not to let their heart wander too. He came to understand God's heart for the world. The standing position of God through the Old Testament is that he desires relationship with his people, the descendants of Abraham. However, this relationship was a catalyst through his own people to make his presence known and that this relationship to mankind would not be limited only to this one people. His purpose was to always be extending his message to the nations. As Christopher Wright says:

The Old Testament tells its story as the story or, rather, as part of that ultimate and universal story that will ultimately embrace the whole of creation, time, and



humanity within its scope. In other words, in reading these texts we are invited to embrace a metanarrative, a ground narrative (54-55).

The nation of Israel was called to live out a journey that reflected God's heart to send his very own people into the world as part of his missional purposes for all of mankind.

The display of God's intentions to all nations was revealed in Exodus 19:3-6. As the people of Israel have been in captivity, their escape and rescue out of Egypt defines Israel in its role in redemptive history. Why has God chosen to rescue his people? It is in Exodus 19:5 where there is a larger scope of God's plans for Israel; in his words, "...you will be my own special treasure from among all the people on earth; for all the earth belongs to me." As Michael Goheen relates:

Israel is called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. Holiness refers to being set aside wholly for God's use. Thus, Israel is a nation set apart for God's use in his redemptive work. They are to live holy lives in the midst of the nations. The role that Israel will play is a priestly one. In the same way a priest plays a special role in the midst of a nation, Israel will play a priestly role among the nations. A priest is separated from the rest of the nation to be a model of devotion consecrated to God's service and to be a mediator of God's blessing to the rest of the nation (Num. 6:22-26) (42).

It is here that Israel's missional role becomes explicit, without any doubts, that they have a role, on behalf of God and his kingdom, to bridge this reality to the nations.

Out of the text of Psalm 67 there continues to be a call upon God's people that God has plans for all people to come to know him and worship him. There is clear instruction in the Psalm that God calls us all as his followers to proclaim his plan to the whole earth. In verse two of the Psalm it states, "May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere." These are action words of worship, not passive void of activity. The call reflects directly back to the idea of Genesis 19 of the priesthood of God's people to be a bridge of his desire to be known among all people on earth. This Psalm is referenced out of Numbers

6:24-26, a priestly benediction that is changed slightly in this passage, with the name for God being used as Elohim (God) rather than Yahweh (Lord) from the Aaronic benediction. The use of Elohim is significant because it is the name of God that is used in relation to God's relationship to all men and nations, even toward all of creation (Walter Kaiser 15). God's missional purposes are reinforced in David's words through this Psalm. He has plans for his people to participate in having all people coming to know him and worship him.

One of the well-known OT accounts of God's missional purposes is through the account of God's mission for the prophet Jonah to the people of the Assyrian city of Nineveh. He only cooperates with God after being told to go multiple times and being made to go after running away in the opposite direction. In chapter 4 of the book of Jonah, the prophet is clearly displeased with God's position of forgiveness toward a repentant Nineveh (which was understandable for all the contempt and terrible acts they had shown against Israel). In verses 1-3 of this chapter, we find Jonah speaking out against God's grace toward Nineveh, "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people." Even in spite of Jonah's poor attitude, God's mission to the lost prevailed. God is clearly shown to be a God that has a missionary heart for all people, even those he would have destroyed.

Even as at the end of the time of exile, the prophet Daniel reflects into God's missional purposes as he cries out for God to fulfill his promise to restore his people to their land and rebuild the temple. He was a leader among his people in the midst of a foreign nation, but he did not lose sight of God's greater purpose of his people to all nations, as we read from Daniel 9:16-19. As Steven Hawthorne relates concerning this passage:

Daniel's over-riding concern was that the ruins of intended glory on the temple mountain in Jerusalem was a continuing reproach to God's glory to "all those around us." He prayed that God would restore the people and the city so that the glory of His name would be restored (43).

There is an understanding that God is persistent to bring glory to his name and that his people (specifically Israel) would make his name known in all the earth. Throughout the prophets both major and minor, there is an ongoing missional understanding of this same missional purpose as put forth by God in the beginning. He wants relationship with all mankind and is using his special people to get this done. We are set to see God's chosen one, the Messiah, opening the door for even the Gentiles to participate in proclaiming and going into the whole world to make God's missional purposes known

### **New Testament Biblical Materials Related to Short-Term Mission**

Christ is the ultimate example of the cross-cultural missionary as he left his place in glory with God and descended to earth (Philippians 2:5-11) to become the perfect model of bridging life to the lost as Savior of humanity, free to all peoples. All the OT messages of God's missional purposes are fulfilled in Christ coming to live among us. Through his ministry he not only engaged his own people, the Jews, but also the foreigner throughout his ministry, showing no favoritism but embracing all. Out of Jesus' ministry as accounted for in the Gospels, we have the model of what the disciples were called to which is related in the spreading of the gospel around the world. God's missional purposes were now to be fulfilled by any person, Jew or Gentile, who embraced Christ and his grace and filling to be empowered to proclaim God's missional heart to people around the world.

The context of the beginning of the book of Acts out of the New Testament centers on the reality that Christ is passing along his mission to his followers. He is giving them the

empowering and enabling they need to be witnesses or ambassadors for him into ultimately the entire earth. The model comes with relationship to the concept of discipleship and here in the passage of Acts chapter one we find Jesus ascending to heaven and the disciples of Christ charged with a mission. You cannot make disciples without those that have already been a part of conversion and the discipleship process which continues as a person lives out the Great Commission to go and tell and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). The theme is of a “restoration of the kingdom” which must be done as a worldwide mission (John Polhill 86). The questions related to the return of Christ are directed away from the times and dates, away from a restoration of Israel, away from politics and away from a Jewish agenda to a much larger focus on a worldwide mission. Speculation is useless as believers reading this passage move into verse eight where everything running through the disciple’s heads is brought into a proper perspective.

There is a promise of the provision of Christ to his disciples, of the ability witness with divine power. Luke has already established this in his Gospel, chapter 24:47, that the Spirit will come to empower the followers of Christ to proclaim to all peoples. The other two Gospels and the longer ending of the Gospel Mark each include a final commissioning interaction calling Christ’s followers to proclaim what they have seen and experienced, divinely empowered to complete this mission (Robert Stein 619). The context of Luke’s writings reflects aspects of discipleship, the molding and shaping of people to be all that Christ intends. Christ already modeled mission with the disciples during their three years together. By chapter eight of Acts of the Apostles, the early Church has been scattered because of persecution out of Jerusalem and into the regions of Judea and Samaria. There is an underlying impression that the *going* is a hard thing for Christ followers. There is a challenging aspect of discipleship found as people are

being stretched out of their comfort zone; meeting and interacting with unfamiliar people in unfamiliar settings requires consistent dependence on the One who modeled missions perfectly.

### **Christ's Modeling of Mission to All People as a Discipling Opportunity**

Some might say that the Great Commission was just thrown into the Gospels at the end of gospel story inadvertently, that it was a big jump to move from Palestine to think of the whole world. However, the work Christ did with his disciples while they ministered together reflects his deep compassion for people. Jesus brings himself and the Good News to Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans alike. A conclusion believers can draw by carefully reading the Gospels is that God had the whole world in mind from the beginning and this should shape Christians' growth in following Christ.

Recorded in Matthew 8 and Luke 7 is an account of Jesus' interaction with a Roman Centurion who was a Gentile, one of many encounters Jesus had with non-Jews. This centurion was a man who loved the Jewish people and had built the synagogue in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. One of his servants was sick and paralyzed and he asked Jesus to heal him. It is interesting to consider that the only reason the Jews thought he was worth helping was because of his actions toward them (building the synagogue), implying that outside of this they would have thought less of a foreigner. This Centurion expressed great faith when he described a chain of command and the belief that Christ's authority was sufficient to heal from afar. Christ was astonished and commended the man on his faith, showing his disciples and the local Jews there that Gentiles have just as much potential for faith as the Jews. Jesus proceeded to maximize his point by describing many coming from the east and west (plus the north and the south by Luke's account) to feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Christ was preparing his disciples for a much larger picture of the Kingdom including the

Gentiles. Ministry among another people is an opportunity to be impacted deeply enough to start seeing all people through Jesus' eyes.

Matthew 15 tells the story of a Canaanite woman the disciples run into while in the area of Tyre and Sidon, north of Galilee along the coast. She comes to Jesus asking for mercy towards her demon-possessed daughter. It is at this point that it would seem the disciples thought a cold shoulder would be appropriate to a Gentile woman as they argued to send her away in verse 23. Jesus, on the other hand, uses the interaction with the foreign woman as a tool to humble the disciples when he says to her that he was only sent for the lost sheep of Israel. She begged further for help with her daughter and Jesus then goes on to say that it is not right to take food from children and throw it to the dogs for the Jews, they had called Gentiles "dogs" for some time now. It would seem that the Savior was talking down to this woman, but he is just holding off to teach his disciples a lesson (Craig Blomberg 243). Within the original text, Jesus is using a more affectionate term for a pet which puts this woman's asking for her daughter's healing into a deeper level of faith. She never gives up and Jesus acknowledges her faith and heals her daughter within the hour. The way he treats the woman was radical and different from what the disciples expected and shows them Christ's desire to reach out to the Gentiles.

Jesus lived out a mission into the region of Samaria several times which could be considered to have some similar attributes to what believers think of as STM today. With one incident found in Luke 9:51-55, he was coming to a Samaritan village and the locals refused to welcome him to their town. Two of the lead disciples, James and John, were quick to exclaim that they should call fire down from heaven to destroy these people. Both were strongly rebuked by Jesus. In some manuscripts, there are additional notes by early Greek scholars that emphasize that Jesus did not come to destroy men's lives but rather to save them (H.D.M. Spence-Jones

245). There is no sense that Samaritan villages are to be avoided or that they were seeking out these places at this point in ministry together (John Nolland 536-537). It was an opportunity from Christ to counter the existing culture of animosity towards the Samaritans and to give the disciples a sense that he Himself was Savior even to these people outside the mainstream Judaism of the day.

In the Gospel of John 4:3-42, Christ models a short-term mission trip in his travels with the disciples when he purposely headed north from Judea toward Galilee through the region of Samaria. This was a two-day trip and midway in the journey he needed some rest; it was around the sixth hour which was noon. The well where he chose to rest was near Mount Gerizim and was a well-known sight near the town of Sychar with the historical well site known for being originally dug by Jacob. Jesus would have known that they would likely mingle with Samaritans. The locals were practicing a faith similar to Judaism and were expecting a prophet “like Moses” in the last days (Walter Elwell 1888). In many ways, the situation was ripe for something significant to happen which was not expected by the disciples during this occasion.

There was a significant amount of prejudice against Samaritans by the Jews. In verse nine, the reader sees that they chose not to have anything to do with Samaritans. Jesus’ modeling interaction in this setting was very much a stretch for the disciples. He breaks all the rules of Jewish piety speaking with this Samaritan who was also a woman rejected by her village (Craig Keener “John 4:7”). Jesus’ conversation was impacting but loving toward this non-Jewish woman and brought her to belief (vs. 29) but also brought her to the point of becoming an evangelist to her whole village. The whole village came to speak to him during a two-day stay. The people were convinced he is the Savior of the world. Jesus, the cross-cultural visitor, brought the village of Sychar to the point of experiencing a revival in just a few days of ministry.

Christ modeled training the locals as they turned to follow him even when his disciples were telling him to take a break. At this point, he challenges the core twelve that these people are ripe for harvest, ultimately for eternal life (vs. 35-36). In taking a side trip off his original plan to this place, Jesus models an engagement within a cross-cultural situation that was very successful (Roger Peterson et al. 208-209). What the disciples got during this occasion was an opportunity to see Christ expanding beyond just a Jewish context and significantly impact a people and region, as they would find out later in Acts 8 when the church was scattered even into Samaria. Following the martyrdom of Stephen, it was Philip who spread the Gospel in Samaria so much so that Peter and John had to come and see what was happening and confirm the miracles taking place.

All of the cross-cultural experiences Christ gave to his core group of disciples were modeling a discipleship style of providing understanding and life experience to change and develop their view of the world. God's heart for the whole of humanity was evident with Jesus. The example of willingness to cross cultural boundaries was clearly modeled and proclaimed by Jesus' own example and ministry teachings to his disciples.

### **Mission Trips in the Book of Acts as a Disciple-Developing Experience**

To consider the expansion of the New Testament Church, the apostle Paul's life and work must be taken into account. He was the premier leader of the first mission movement, a powerful preacher and extensive writer. The Acts of the Apostles encapsulates the mission endeavors of Paul and a group of missionaries sent out all through the Roman Empire and beyond. Paul very well can be held up as a model of the commitment a real missionary must have as Donald Kitchen makes note:



Paul...never spent a full 'four year team' in any place but was constantly changing his field of ministry. His longest stay in any one place was two years (at Ephesus). Many of his ministries were accomplished in time periods that today would be considered as only a brief visit to the mission field. Paul, however, was used of God to plant churches in four different provinces of the Empire, spanning two continents in less than ten years (24).

Paul was committed to make a long-term impact, but his strategy was much closer to what would be considered as shorter-term missions today (mid-term in nature). He was not one to set up mission stations but to progressively move on and preach Christ in locations where people had not heard the Good News. Harold Cook challenges the idea of a station as being static, knowing it can be a place that sometimes gets bogged down and expands on a longer-term commitment with short-term paradigms:

Missionary work, though it may occupy a missionary's lifetime, is essentially temporary in nature. The missionary always looks forward to the time when this part of that, or even the whole work will be completed. What does this mean to the missionary? It means that if he is a capable worker, one of two things will happen. Sooner or later he will have to change his location, as each job is completed; or he will have to have the mobility within himself to change his type of work as the old needs are filled and new ones present themselves. In either case he needs to be mobile (109-110).

Part of the effectiveness and validity of the short-term model with long-term success was the actual involvement of the people who participated in the short-term missions. The impact and follow-up in these individuals' lives lead to one of the most impacting and powerful movements of faith expansion. Paul believed in preaching the Gospel only where Christ had not been proclaimed, knowing that he did not want to build on what had already been built before (Gerald Hawthorne et al. 450). Over three hundred years Christianity moved out into all of the Empire in significant ways. Part of this was the effectiveness of developing missional lifestyles through the actual experience of doing mission.

Many think of Paul as the leader of the missionary endeavors he was a part of. After he was recognized as a new Christ follower by leadership of the Christian movement, Paul was sent out by Tarsus on a one to two-year mission, his first recognized trip, under the leadership of Barnabas as described in Acts 11:25-30; 12:25. John Mark accompanied them on the journey and they ministered in both Antioch where Barnabas and Paul preached and taught a large group of people for a year. This church would become a sending force of missions. They also spent time in Jerusalem where they helped with relief and aide, which was given from the church in Antioch to their brothers and sisters in the city of origin. The humanitarian side of the trip was reported back to the church in Antioch to debrief on their activities. Paul was the student and this was an opportunity to grow in understanding mission and proclamation – living out a missional lifestyle.

Paul's second official mission trip was two and half to three years in length and he visited over fourteen locations through what is modern day Western Turkey and the lower Balkan Peninsula. These activities are recorded in Acts 15:36-18:22. The group going and working together in different cities included Silas, Timothy, Luke plus Aquila and Priscilla. All the locations were shorter stays and those accompanying were heavily involved in discipling of new believers on locations to multiply themselves. Highlights included working in Philippi where Lydia and her household were converted and baptized and became part of the movement here. There were breakthroughs in Thessalonica and Berea where many came to faith, but few then responded when he was in Athens. There were times when individuals carried on while Paul or others moved on.

Paul's primary activity during this second mission trip was to return to every city where they proclaimed the Gospel and visit the believers and see how they were doing. It was his

practice to nurture established churches so they might be even more firmly planted (Hawthorne 450). Paul was using a repetitive deployment strategy that really makes the kind of trips he made short-term in nature (Peterson 217). All of individuals accompanying Paul were at a level they could stay and continue the work while he went on to the next community. A debrief of all the experiences and work done was expressed in Caesarea where the church was greeted along with the church in Antioch where he spent more time.

By Paul's third trip, which is found in Acts 18:23-21:16, he was heading out for a longer four year time period along with a larger group of sent ones from the church in Antioch. Familiar faces such as Luke and Timothy were a part of the entourage along with new workers named and unnamed, specifically the disciples from Caesarea. Twelve different locations would be visited during this time period, some multiple times. Paul would come to a region and travel all through the area incessantly discipling the new believers, coaching his team on how to follow-up. Ephesus was Paul's longest stay including three months of preaching in the market area then staying on for two years to disciple the new believers.

Teaching was the tool of choice in raising-up a new church. Much of Paul's style of ministry could be compared to the Methodist circuit riders of early America, traveling through a region speaking into faith communities during regular visits. Paul used strategy in how he teamed those participating, such as sending Timothy and Erastus together ahead of him to Macedonia in Acts 19:21-22 (Hawthorne 447). There were always strategies that included sensitivity to leading of the Spirit.

Paul built his missions ministry around strong relationships with those colleagues he traveled with and with those he established as leaders in new church plants. There were many opportunities to visit and stay with new local believers and consider how to best impact the local

community and grow new believers. Ministry was taking place and forms of discipleship in praying and encouraging were taking place in the mist of hospitality and refreshment. Among those he worked with in developing his mission focus, there clearly were patterns of post-trip debriefing and planning for next trips. These are guesses but likely good ideas of what Collaboration was happening between with Paul and his sending churches such as with Antioch and when he came back to Caesarea and Jerusalem (even with an imminent arrest ahead for Paul). All of Paul's epistles were an outcome of the relationships he built and the discipling relationships he lived out and modeled in the mission trips he went on.

Paul's last trip was unconventional as he was arrested and brought to Rome for trial coming from Jerusalem. He already had operated with a model of flexibility, able to change plans and develop a new opportunity as the Lord opened doors into ministry. The reality is that travel plans change and health can be a factor at times, but Paul believed in the Spirit guiding toward opening new phases of mission (Hawthorne 450). Much of this trip still held to the conventions of what he had lived out on previous trips, specifically to have people around him who could be discipled and focused in ministry effectively where he went. Anywhere he spent time, people were coming to Christ. His time in Rome gave him opportunity to meet with people and write and communicate at a high level with the various ministry points he had worked in during previous trips.

A menagerie of people from different backgrounds all became parts of the short-term mission movement. After the day that the great persecution broke out in Jerusalem, it is interesting that the professionals of the church stayed and the non-professionals were the ones that went out proclaiming wherever they went. People from the Jerusalem church were spread out across Judea and Samaria (a reference to the passage of Acts 1:8) and others went as far as

Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. This was the beginning of ministries in these locations. Many were impacted and believed what was being preached. Teams were the standard as seen with Barnabas who traveled with Paul on his second, third and forth trips. Later on he traveled with John Mark to Cyprus. He was a man that invested in others and worked diligently to develop those he worked and traveled with. He believed in Paul when no one else had the courage to do so and believed that God had drawn this man to himself.

The Apostle Peter was the key leader of the church and eventually joined in on the short-term movement, going shorter distances to Samaria first then later to Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea. It was in Joppa during one of these trips when God gave him a different vision to include outreach to the Gentiles. Seeing the family of Cornelius convert to follow Christ also impacted Peter and the church was greatly impacted with a different perspective at this point. As related by Leslie Newbigin, Peter and the church were converted too (65). They were now able to see a greater vision of what God intended for his Gospel being preached into the whole world. As Christ followers consider how individuals are impacted during a short-term mission trip today, many of the same impacts take place on location where they minister and also in their own lives and perspectives in viewing the world. The Apostle Peter's life was changed greatly during the revelation that took place on a short-term trip with unintended outcomes.

The list goes on of those that joined in with the short-term New Testament movement. Tychicus was one of the seven that accompanied Paul on his first trip during the return segment in 47 A.D. Again, these seven were a group of those traveling who were impacted by the experience and later were able to continue in growing into ministry. Tychicus then is referred to as the one Paul asked to go to Ephesus and Colosse to inform them of Paul's status while he was in prison in Rome. His last short-term trip was on the island of Crete.

Relationships between those that went are strong as collaborated by the connection between all the different participants on these trips. Titus is referred to in 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy and in his own letter. He was involved in five short-term trips and one long term to Crete for six years.

In considering the many examples throughout the New Testament of mission lived out in short, strategic trips often repeated, a pattern surfaces that Christ practiced himself with the twelve as recorded in Luke 9:1-10 and Mark 6:7-31. Working with twelve men from different backgrounds, mostly uneducated, and normal everyday people, Jesus sent them on what might be considered a similar model of short-term mission trips, going out into among the people into towns and villages where they were living. Beyond just training, they were charged with exercising demons, healing those who were sick and proclaiming the Gospel. The following steps and guidelines sound very familiar when thinking of preparing and sending out of short-term teams today:

- Commissioned to go out, sent by God with his authority (Luke 9:1-2)
- Sent out in groups, or pairs in this case (Mark 6:7)
- Given pre-trip instructions and development/training (Luke 9:2-5)
- Achieved Kingdom results, measurable toward growth (Mark 6:13)
- Followed-up experiences to debrief and apply what was learned (Luke 9:10) (Peterson 230)

The original twelve were also joined by a larger group of seventy in Luke 10:1-19. They received the same kind of training and were expected to perform and work in the same way as the original twelve in going out on mission. It was not just a training exercise but actual ministry which is a challenge to every short-term mission trip today. Teams need to take on all the preparations plus the actual work on the ground and do so for effective ministry followed by debriefing and assessment of what has been learned during a short-term trip. All the people who

Christ enlisted of these seventy appear to be normal average people. Mission is not just for the few and elite but for a much larger group who represent what Christ would call his Body, his Church, to impact the world with the Gospel.

### **Mission Context Similarities of NT Church and Today**

The book of Acts is full of examples that can be related into our modern missions context today, taking into account the life and times during the beginning New Testament Church. Travel was not as convenient as today, but the Roman Era was a time when trade and commerce moved freely across Mediterranean ship routes, over well-constructed roads and travel networks. God clearly chose a time in history when the Gospel of Christ could easily and readily be brought across a vast empire in a central location in the world. Politically there was organization at a high level between territories and provinces overseen for maintenance of peace and order, bringing freedom to interact between many large regions around the Mediterranean which was expansive (David Freedman et al. 830). Jerusalem, as a starting point, presents itself as a land bridge between Asia, Africa and Europe. All the major empires of the ages from these regions passed through Palestine. The Greeks left their mark and gave the empire a common trade language that evened the linguistic challenges between many conquered people of many tongues who were ruled by the Romans.

The persecution of the early believers in Jerusalem mentioned in Acts chapter eight easily meant a spreading of the movement and the establishment of the first churches which would become sending churches both of short and longer-term missions. Perceptions of Christianity varied widely across the Empire. The Roman view was that of ambivalence among so many other movements and religions (Freedman et al. 836). There were networks of Jewish populations across the empire that had synagogue gathering locations which were a voice of

biblical concepts into a very heathen and anti-Christian society. As Christ followers moved about the Empire, the concept of being sent always came back to Christ's challenge to be prepared and shaped through the experience personally. The changed and impacted lives lived out into the world empowered by the Spirit becomes the mechanism of witness and impact to reach and disciple those who hear for the first time and embrace Christ.

One expression of the church's continued commitment to mission is short-term mission opportunities. God blesses both the senders and receivers with the gift of hearing the Gospel and witnessing lives change. Today there are many churches out of North America and many other locations that are sending short-term teams or individuals. There are more opportunities to do missions in new creative incarnational ways. Christians may not always be welcome, but they are ready to go in and do business or teaching and live out their faith intentionally and subtly impact those around them toward realization of Christ in their lives. Today's church has the hard job to reach people similar to what Paul faced going in Athens. Then there are the locations where believers have freedom to do whatever they can. Kim Hammond and Darren Cronshaw describe the importance of Church engaging with the world culturally:

Sentness is not a new program but a posture of availability to God and engagement with the lives of people around us. As such, it's not just good for the people we meet; it's also good for us. We think all Christians and people in ministry need the balance of engaging with the world around them. We love the exercise and friendships, conversations and fun that come from regular engagement in sporting communities and friendship circles outside the church. It is good for the body and good for the soul. It puts us in touch with people we would not meet otherwise. It exposes us to different perspectives and helps us understand how people outside the church, or with different faith perspectives or none, see the world (61-62).

Just as Paul was involved in both proclaiming and relief ministry, so too the church today is doing this creatively. There are so many ways to connect with your world and to realize a



tangible way that Christ's followers can participate in what's happening with mission around the world both locally and globally.

### **Theological Foundations**

The Latin term *missio Dei* is closely related to the word "mission" and conveys the concept of God at work in the world. God has stamped his very nature as an expression which is embedded into his creation. God in his nature is the Father who sends the Son who sends the Holy Spirit; all three of the Godhead sends the church. The concept of sending the cross-cultural missionary is done so in partnership with the Triune God who is fulfills *missio Dei*, God's mission (Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas 32). This is the driving force of missional theology, of God's work throughout history, with his desire to have with his closest part of creation, humanity.

We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission; for theology rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*. So mission should be the theme of all theology (David Bosch 494).

God is at work in the world and chooses to include his followers as part of making himself known. This is where the sending of workers cross culturally comes in. God wants to relationally bridge into cultures and make himself known. Scripture is a part of this, but God sends his followers as physical extensions of the incarnation reality of Christ's presence in the disciple's heart. When we send workers, we send Jesus.

The beginning of the Gospel of John relates the biblical foundation of incarnation with the Word of God made into physical flesh (John 1:1, 14). Consider why The Bible has been translated into every language possible; it is because of the incarnation as a theological foundation for the mission of making Christ known personally here on earth. In his book on the mission of translation, Lamin Sanneh talks about how "translatability" as one of the largest

contrasts of Christian mission as compared to Islam in its mission. The Koran can only be presented in Arabic because it only exists on earth as a replication of tablets that are in heaven. It is untranslatable because Arabic is Allah's only language. To even pray in another language, your mother tongue, could result in a Muslim being considered an outcast (211-214).

Theologically, Christianity is about God connecting to people in their own language and culture.

The foundation behind a theology for STM trips begins with the realization that God is calling his people to a deeper walk; they are empowered to serve his cause of making him known around the world. The vertical relationship of believers knowing their Savior and God better through a deeper realization of discipleship and the horizontal relationship of people better understanding one another are both essential elements of Christ's Church impacting the world that does not know him.

### **Disciple Makers Being Discipled – Full Circle**

The purpose of a short-term mission must revolve around Christian mission which reflects both Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 where believers are called to go and be out in the world, proclaiming and interacting with the intent on reaching target recipients with the Gospel. John Stott speaks of:

...the essential biblical background to any understanding of mission. The primal mission is God's, for it is he who sent his prophets, his Son, his Spirit. Of these missions the mission of the Son is central, for it was the culmination of the ministry of the prophets, and it embraced within itself as its climax the sending of the Spirit. And now the Son sends as he himself was sent (22).

Christ is the model for sending out, the incarnate God now sends his followers out with his Spirit in their hearts. By sending others, he is sending himself. The mission is all about bringing glory to Christ's name and bringing more people in relationship to and worship of him. Mission has the attribute of being Spirit directed advance. We look to the Spirit for guidance on what to do

and how he wants us to grow as disciples in the process living out mission. The outcome of short-term mission is a double blessing through:

1. The impact of being a servant participant and living this reality and its impact into the world through acts of service and participation in ministry.
2. The participants can also experience impact into their lives own lives through a realization of God's missional purposes in their everyday life practice.

The disciple maker is also growing as a disciple while in ministry and in the experience of going out and being sent. There is a biblically based blessing that is serious and significant. In the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostle, Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit within the believing witness. It is a disciple making mission, where making disciples is at the core of the apostles' mission in Acts. Christ sent his disciples out to proclaim but grow through the experience. The short-term mission experience should be a discipling experience. There is a reason God calls believers to participation that involves receiving blessings and understanding the plan God has for their lives. Much of these perspectives are seen in the mission trips the early Church was involved in sending, specifically models by Paul's journeys.

### **Theology of Sanctification and STM – Jesus' Call to Personal Discipleship**

The ministries of the Apostles and Paul are built on the foundation of extreme personal suffering and the potential for loss. As Mark Morris says reflecting on this, "Paul's greatness did not reside in the pragmatic concerns or quantitative results, but in his faithfulness to Christ's commands and to the Great Commission" (21). To grasp the concept of sanctification, the New Dictionary of Theology describes it as the concept of holiness, of unblemished righteousness. It involves the concept of consecration or dedication (Sinclair Ferguson and J.I. Packer 613). According to the Hebrew and Greek, the word sanctification literally means "to be set apart" in

relation to the concept of common use (Stanley Grenz et al. 105). To be made holy is to be very special, a reflection of what God wants for each of in lives.

In considering Jesus' call to discipleship, a centerpiece passage is Mark 8:34-37 which reads in the NLT version:

<sup>34</sup> Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. <sup>36</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? <sup>37</sup> Is anything worth more than your soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

God is calling his people to choose a God-honoring lifestyle. In verse seven, the word "soul" would be better translated using "life" rather than "soul" because often present day people think in the Greek fashion where the soul is considered independent of the physical body which is not a biblical perspective (James Brooks 137). Taking up one's cross will involve the whole person: body, mind and soul. It is important that believers lean on God for strength in living this out not in their own strength.

Theologically, sanctification, or a becoming more like Christ, must emerge out of participation in a short-term mission trip, a real life impact that calls people to truly take up their cross in new ways. It is interesting to note the economic terminology in this passage: words such as save, lose, benefit, gain and worth. A God-honoring lifestyle is going to take into account possessions and every aspect of life. It is a time to count the cost, to tally up what is consider more important than Christ (Brooks 137). To deny oneself does not mean do without one thing or many or to find redemption in self-rejection or self-hatred. Rather, denying oneself moves self out of the way and moves toward making God and Savior the center of one's devotion.

In 1 Peter 1:13-16, Peter continues with this same theme of sanctification and transformation:

<sup>13</sup> So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. <sup>14</sup> So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup> But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. <sup>16</sup> For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because am holy. (NLT)

The idea of holiness is pulled together by the concept of radical transformation of the entire person. "In becoming sanctified and being sanctified, every facet, feature, attribute, and detail of a person is exposed and rejuvenated, rendered new" (W. Stringfellow 41). As the imperative sense of the wording of this verse shows, one must remember that God's commands are always based out of his grace. To keep the perspective correct, a person should say that the indicative (what God has done for humanity through Christ) is going to always be the imperative (the way people are to live). Confusing the indicative with the imperative results in people relying on works rather than leaning on God's grace and power (Thomas Schreiner 77). As related to the experience of a cross-cultural mission trip, experiencing this kind of transformation will impact a person's entire being. But believers cannot try to live this out in their own strength; they have to lean on the empowering of the Holy Spirit which is the center of Act 1:8. The disciples were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower God's mission and people's commitment to live as set apart for Christ's glory in the whole world.

### **Exploring the Two Sides of STM – Challenges and Strengths**

With the massive number of annual STM participants from North America numbering in the millions, one might think that there was a strong consensus on the benefits of these kinds of trips. Among those studying the effects of STM on participants and the places they visit, there is

a splintering of views. One of these players, Stan Guthrie, relates an overview of the problems and benefits of mobilizing for STM:

Short-term work, whether two weeks or two years, can indeed be effective and pleasing to God. Yes, it can cost a lot of money, disrupt nationals and missionaries, encourage short-term thinking, and inoculate some against career missions involvement. But done well, it can open participants' eye to the sometimes gritty realities of the world, make them aware of their own ethno-centrism and the gifts and courage of non-Western believers, and spark a lifelong commitment to missions. In the best cases some real kingdom work gets done, too (89).

Word of mouth would reflect assessment toward either positive or negative side of STM trips depending on who you might speak to and their own experience. To better explore the issue, a few different experts are consulted for expert perspective.

#### *Harmful Possibilities with STM*

The following are the most prevalent problems researched among experts related to STM trips, specifically with short-term trips of two week or less with both adults and youth:

*1) Finances spent and resourced used on STM trips can be better resourced.* It may be that those on the on-site could better use funds used for STM missions overseas or that a long-term environment would have deep impact for the gospel. One suggestion is that STM should bring a refocusing on long-term development and investment. The same researcher concluded that STM can be valuable the beginnings of long-term commitment and better global perspective and connection (Jo Ann Van Engen 22-23). The team should be careful not to come focused only on the needs of a community. By considering the assets that exist in a location, there brings a focus on what we can learn from those we are serving. The effective team takes all these realities and envelopes them in the training preparations, which better enable the team to function on the field, and get the most from this experience (resources better on-site).

*2) STM teams can disrupt missionaries and nationals on-site.* The ongoing work on a field overseas can easily be disruptive at least seasonally and in some cases all year long. The students or adults that visit with little training can unintentionally do more harm than good. As a researcher relates, many sent workers and nationals have observed attitudes that are “insensitive” and “domineering” from visiting STM teams (Edward Zehner 510-511).

*3) Starting as going short-term can lead to staying short-term and never engaging in a long-term partnership or calling.* When individuals never see anything greater than just short-term they miss out on seeing the growth of a ministry and impact on nationals. This is where STM tourism might be implied. As missions leaders J. Mac Stiles and Leeann Stiles suggest, STM trips are best as part of multi-year successions of engagements with no one trip standing alone (49). They are about building relationships and partnering that further the progress of specific ministries over a length of time.

*4) Priorities can be misplaced where there is the question of any real mission work being done through STM trips.* The thinking goes that if the trip is focused on the development of those on the team, then it takes away from the focus of what missions should be about, specifically evangelism and discipleship. Borthwick puts it well:

Almost all short-term mission team members start their reports with the description of “how much I grew.” And it’s fair to say that stretching the worldview and expanding the faith of our North American short-termers is one of the most tangible results. Ponder this critique, however: an older missionary colleague asked me a question that stings to this day. He asked, “Do you realize that the short-term mission movement is perhaps the first time in Christian mission history that the mission is being done for the benefit of the missionary (136)?”

Also, as Wilder and Parker point out, this can be the case when STM are poorly prepared and are not engaged and partnering at a level beneficial to those on-site. The team member’s life might change because of the STM experience as a valid part of going, but supporting the long-term

work of evangelism and discipleship of nationals should be a greater priority (45). STM should primarily be focused on the support and empowering of local ministry.

From the perspective of Majority world leaders, U.S.-originated STM is not always the best option for discipling church people. Related to a deeper life experience through a STM experience, a Sri Lankan religious leader, Vinoth Ramachandra, asks why a rich group of western Christians need to see the world in the pretense of STM. He goes on to ask why these groups need “to have ‘exposure’ to mission before they engage in mission, when the great majority of missionaries in the world are poor and unable to afford such costly trips?” (Ramachandra “Who Says ‘No’ to Mission Trips?”). From a Kenyan perspective at a 2009 STM conference in the States, Pastor Oscar Muriu, senior pastor of Nairobi Chapel, expressed, “The African Church is subsidizing western discipleship and asked the church of the West to do your own spiritual formation at home! We don’t have the time or the resources to do it for you” (Susan LeFeber 48). From both these non-Western pastor’s perspectives, there is strong critique of STM done as a means of discipleship with a sense that it is influenced by wealth and power. This is a good reminder that these pastors are reacting to what could be called mission tourism. This is countered by STM philosophies that understand locations and the people as significant and important and see what is beneficial in a long-term development for mission-oriented disciples on a team sent from a church to a partner overseas (Wilder and Parker 45).

### *Constructive Possibilities with STM*

Constructive Possibilities with STM missions, especially toward life impact of team members, is argued for by constituents who lead teams overseas who see things differently than those above. The following are observations from experts that would be positive to STM:

1) *Cultural understanding of people on STM team visits is possible.* When a team of Westerners is in a new cultural place and they live life with the locals this can lead to breaking



down stereotypes and engrained ethnocentrism. In his book *Cross Cultural Servanthood*, Duane Elmer understands a cultural learning stance as “the ability to glean relevant information about, from and with other people” (93). David Livermore reiterates this idea in his book *Cultural Intelligence*, where he unpacks the framework of appreciating other cultures through learning:

Cultural intelligence is an essential skill for most twenty-first-century ministry leaders. It’s necessary for us to embody Jesus among ethnically different people in our neighborhoods. It is what we need when we work with people from different cultural contexts, whether they’re across the street or multiple time zones away (Chapter 3).

The potential of learning good cultural skills on an STM is possible by bridging into cultures with the right training and guided experience. Elmer relates that learning about others is helpful to a STM participant as they “get a basic orientation to the people and their culture” in order that they can be able to “check and better adjust...expectations against reality” (94-95).

2) *The effect of STM participation can be hard to process, but lead to deep realizations.*

As related by one of the authors in the book *Transformation*, time in Rwanda visiting a memorial to the hundreds of thousands that died was terrifying and transforming. The conviction of the story shows that our experiences can be processed into real life impact:

As I stood there, just a few feet away from stacks of human remains, I wanted to turn it off, but there was no way to do that. Just as there was no way for those young children, or their parents, to “turn off” their own horrific murder. They experienced with their final moments an extreme demonstration of the capacity for sin that human beings possess. This was a moment when I grew in my conviction that the establishment of the Church among every people for the sake of His name and through making disciples is worth my life. It is worth it because God frees His people from the enslavement of sin-even the sin of murdering men, women, and children (Wilder and Parker 48).

Challenges are not easy to take beyond just the moment to bring back home and apply to your everyday life after an STM. As Wilder and Parker go on and talk about the compass impact and its lasting characteristics as:

...our reasoning for exploring STM philosophy and practice, so that we can identify and develop practices that might enhance and optimize this kind of lasting change. We want to see what practices and concepts might help STM lead to sustainable transformation (48).

There are clear benefits to the experiences of an STM which can help a person see the world through different lenses that penetrate into their views of life back home. The key is to find the best practices.

3) *Global mission focus can develop a mindset toward long-term missions.* Often those that are considering long-term service consider the possibility through going on an STM trip. For many youth interested in missions, this is the standard suggestion from their church and family. Michael Pocock functioned as leader in The Evangelical Alliance Missions (TEAM) and identified factors that increased the possibility that STM participants might become career workers overseas. The following are Pocock's four suggestions from his organization's experience:

1. Candidates were made to go on an orientation prior to being selected as part of a summer mid-term experience overseas.
2. As the sending organization TEAM included a set pre-selection standard with high requirements set in order for an individual to be on a summer ministry.
3. TEAM also set up on-field experiences of service that were challenging and intensive that involved direction interaction with those in the local culture with no sheltering from the ways of nationals and enculturation.
4. The last requirement from TEAM was a "post-field debriefing" of all that participated in a summer or STM experience where there was opportunity to interact about both the good and challenging parts of their experience (122-125).

With the right interactions with those participating in shorter experiences overseas, considering what is done before, during and after, there are prospects for solidifying longer-term career workers through STM.

### Three Challenges to Lasting Change with Participants through STM

As already related, STM trips are controversial as to their impact on the people going and what is accomplished on site where a team ministers. With this study's focus on discipleship opportunities through STM for participants, it is natural to consider if there is potential for lasting change. This *first reason* change is hard with STM, presented by Livermore, is the idea that many organizers of STM teams assume a "send them and they will grow" mentality ("If We Send Them, They Will Grow...Maybe"). When it is assumed that change takes place, there is a tendency to not be deliberate and intentional with the preparations and follow-up with a team. Just because an individual on a team is placed in a different culture to experience the poverty and dichotomy of that location from their own culture, it does not mean that there will be lasting impact into their life. Some say STM does not bring lasting change. The reasons real change is often not realized are diverse and complex, but three primary theories present themselves in the literature about STM.

A *second observation* about the challenge of lasting impact with STM teams comes from LiErin Probasco who researched the impact of both domestic and international STM trips. What was observed is a greater life impact on those participating in domestic STM over those on international trips. Her understanding was that it was a greater jump to bridge between the cross-cultural context and home which made assimilation of the experience harder to bring back to every day life of participants (219). The 'jump' referred to by Probasco is also known correctly as the concept of learning transfer. To implement change in the midst of a different experience, learning transfer is necessary in order to resource a person's experience and draw applicable conclusions to apply to one's life (Nate Furman and Jim Sibthorp 17). The position of transfer theory maintains that "little evidence exists that a participant can effectively apply what is learned in one context to another, novel context (Steven Durning and Anthony Artino 189)."

Lasting impact is challenging at best, especially in the cross-cultural context and must take into account some strategies to counter bridging experiences overseas into everyday life. More diligence will be needed in training and follow-up with teams that go cross-cultural to overcome transfer walls with STM participants. Other literature would show that this gap can be bridged but will involve a church that is very proactive in training leaders and developing a team which can relate to a receiving site that is well versed in hosting teams.

Inadequacies in leadership or facilitators are the *third reason* that STM teams have less impact on those participating in a trip. Most churches do not have dedicated staff or lay leaders who are able to coordinate and oversee the preparations and hold a standard for leadership of STM teams. Even in larger churches, even mega-churches, a missions pastor is not well trained from a missiological understanding. Between the two camps of church leaders and academic missiologists, there has been very much understanding or agreement to study and create better resources that would impact how well we develop STM team participants. Robert Priest and Joseph Priest recognize that scholars and practitioners are not working together; even college campuses with a missions department have lay led mission trips with little connection to faculty missiologists (67). As a missiologist in contrast to this issue with STM, Brian Howell worked in a study of Central Wheaton Church's STM program. He refers to this church as the CWC and found an example of how leaders often function with STM in the church setting without considering better structures for preparation and follow-up outside of standard American thinking:

...the preparation stage of STM frames the cultural context and produces the guiding narrative that will inform the trip. The example of CWC demonstrates the many ways the narrative framing of the trip occurs through the words and actions in this phase. Relatively speaking, CWC has a substantial and thoughtful preparation process for STM teams, but when those teams are led by laypeople with no more expertise in cross-cultural training than those going, they rely on the structures of American evangelical culture to inform the narrative preparation and

are likely to reproduce narratives drawn from their own culturally particular narratives and theologies (179).

Today's STM leaders must dig in and resource their perspectives to bridge outside of the limitations of uninformed cultural understanding and how we can bridge two cultures. The team leader backed by an informed church can be developed and trained cross-culturally.

### **Leadership as Catalyst to STM Participant Growth**

Leadership is a very important to the success of a STM team both corporately but also for the discipling impact that can take place with each team member. The technical and administrative sides of STM can be coordinated with a leader helped by church staff or volunteers. Where the real challenge comes is with a leaders ability to invest in team development and mentoring. Source literature on STM corroborates that good leadership is essential to the success of creating opportunity for good ministry to take place because of a team that is motivated to serve and grow through their experience. Elmer relates the centrality of leadership done well which originates out of a leader modeling Christ's life out of a servant heart when he explains:

Everyone is called to be a servant. This is the foremost calling of all who decide to follow Jesus. The leader, however, has the particular responsibility of showing the people of God what that servant life looks like. The religious leaders of Jesus' day got this completely wrong (see Mt 23:1-36), and right up to the end of Jesus earthly life the disciples also got it wrong (see Mt 20:20-28). No individual leader will capture all of what Jesus was, but every leader must show us something of what Jesus was. And it seems that every leader must evidence the essence of Jesus: humility (131).

As related earlier, STM leadership not only reflects Christ's servant heart but also considers the cross-cultural implications of all that the STM is doing. A team leader must be developed in cultural awareness. A term for this is "Cultural Intelligence" which David Livermore has developed for a training topic as he has considered how STM teams are developed. He relates some of the challenges with leadership being in the an areas that needs improvement:

The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflict, poor leadership, and bad teamwork. All too often we try to respond to these challenges by attempting to change surface-level behaviors rather than getting at the assumptions and convictions behind our behaviors. We learn the dos and don'ts about how to act when we go somewhere, yet it seems to make little difference in how we actually interact cross-culturally. We come home with zealous descriptions of how we've changed; yet within a few weeks, our lives look pretty identical to how they looked before the trip (Serving with Eyes Wide Open 16).

All the items Livermore lists at the beginning of this text can be attributed back to aspects of what leadership contributes to a STM team and how the participants are developed as a whole.

The cross-cultural skills are very much a teaching point for the leader of a team in what they are trained in and are able to develop in those that serve on the STM team.

The creativity that goes into developing a STM trip, to coordinate a team, is related to the innovative and visionary sides of leadership. Hammond and Cronshaw relate the visionary aspect of how a leader can impact their STM ministry team:

Creative initiatives often start with a leader's vision for something new, as well as an invitation to others to join in out-of-the-box brainstorming and dreaming. Good church planters have a thought-through approach to developing ministries and usually some idea of the shape of the church they are planting, but they are also eager to involve and empower others in their teams to dream and plan alongside them (174).

Just as a church planter needs a thought-through process to develop ministries, a STM leader requires the same attributes. The church can enable their STM leaders to embrace their creativity and develop systems that are insightful and creative for training, implementing and following up a STM team trip.

Wilder and Parker have written for change impact into youth on STM teams, relating some ideas that translated well into STM leadership roles which are transferable to adult teams also. Here is one area of what they presented in their book related to STM leaders:

We would like to see a *representational* approach to youth mentorship lived out. In this model we are representatives of the King and His kingdom to those whom we lead and engage with the life-changing truths of the incarnate Son of God. Being “present” with our students through every twist and turn of life is a necessary component of being a diligent representative (incarnational *practice*). It is not the end itself, of course, rather, our walking with them (representational *nature*) is the means to their transformation (end) (185).

At the center of a leader’s role is the process of developing significant relationships with those on the team where a role of being a discipler is embraced and grown. The idea of “being present” starts with time spent in preparations and then in follow-through all the way into follow-up after the trip. A leader is incarnational in how they live out and model a life set apart for Christ. Time spent in meetings can incorporate equivalent time of walking with those on the team. There are challenges in the adult context as compared to the student, especially in time spent together and in what is appropriate for gathering and connecting.

In Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert’s book for STM on *Helping Without Hurting*, they relate a list of qualities and understandings a STM leadership should have or be trained in:

- Existing engagement in missions and poverty alleviation – or movement in that direction.
- Strong commitment to effective poverty alleviation principles and dedication to holding participants accountable to those principles.
- Humility and willingness to submit to local leaders.
- Respect from the team members.
- Experience in cross-cultural travel and/or relationships (101-102).

All these qualities reflect into Cultural Intelligence a strong sense of awareness on how a STM team can work together and with respect and understanding both in their own team context of interpersonal relationships and cross-culturally to those the team is serving. A leader will be key for the team to understand practices and positions that might be harmful to those that are served cross-cultural. For participants, these lessons of service with a servant heart and understanding

of poverty alleviation principles are very applicable to living out faith back home, a solid step in the discipleship process. As they noted in their book, all these points are opportunities to train and develop leaders to function well in how they help their team function and grow together.

### **Partnerships as Catalyst to STM Participant Growth**

The various literature concerning STM often relates the importance of how teams sent are more effective in working with a partnered location, national church or team of missionaries. The sense of relationship and understanding each other over a length of time is key to the success of partnership. At the center of partnership is mutual respect and understanding which the west has not always been good at through its mission endeavors around the world. Livermore relates an important perspective on partnership across cultural divides that we need to be focused on a mutual relationship. Here is his perspective:

May we beware of the potential that exists to wield our acts of service as yet another way of using power to build our own kingdoms. One of the ways to turn this upside down is to look for ways to pursue mutual relationship and service rather than one-way service. How can we serve and learn together? Every church, whatever the context, has gifts. Every church, whatever the context, has needs. We must develop cross-cultural partnerships with churches that are mutually enriching and beneficial (Cultural Intelligence, Chapter 13).

The way that a partnership is mutually beneficial is through the pursuit of this deeper relationship and understanding. It does not come easily and often needs help from those that understand cultures and how to communicate. Reality is that the western churches have much to learn from their brothers and sisters in the east and south. The western church needs this kind of contact. The kind of exposure Borthwick talks about relates to the real purpose behind the relationship of a western church and ministry with that of the Majority World...

... the growth and energy of the church of the South presents the Western church with the question: "How can our relationships and partnerships with Christians from the South be a tool of God to help reinvigorate the church in our postmodern society?" Might the future of short-term missions from the West be more to



expose our people to the Acts-like expansion of the church in Southern locales rather than to “do” cross-cultural ministry (61)?

Western culture is so focused on getting things done in order to do something more. This greatly impacts how STM operate when they go cross-culturally. The growth and maturing that comes out of real cross-cultural partnership is reflected when we move beyond doing and start to understand relationships at new levels. This is the access point to real learning from our partners out of their context rather than our own.

The prospect for team members to grow in a circumstance of partnership grows with the opportunity to understand another culture and way of thought because we take time to build the relationship for the right reasons. In his book on the West in an age of the Majority Church, Borthwick reflects on a conversation he had with an African leader where he learned perspective on the United States involvement in their area of the world. This leader related that he saw only ‘interests’ rather than real friendship on their part (135). Borthwick adds to a different level of relational understanding that can come out of the contact we have which can cause us to grow:

I reflected on his political commentary, and then I took it down to the personal level. I started wondering about our friendships in the global mission community. Do we have friends or simply “interests”? Do we reflect the community of faith with sincere, abiding love for each other, which is the way that the world will know that we are Christ’s disciples? Or are we no different than the business or government communities, which tend to relate to others only when the relationship advances self-serving ends? Are we participating in short-term missions for the purposes of building reciprocal, kingdom-building relationships across cultures, or are we simply using our international opportunities as ways to foster our own growth (135)?

Borthwick also relates two great questions from the Majority World to partners from the West:

1. Does the church in America have the humility to learn from us, or do they consider themselves to be the world’s teacher?
2. Does the American church have the magnanimous spirit to work alongside us in genuine partnership that is based upon mutual respect and shared resources, or do they simply see us as their “partners” to fulfill their plans in our countries (86)?

As STM teams go to serve along side believers in cross-cultural context, we must be able to answer these questions. The spirit of true partnership reflects into a deeper life that is rooted in the humility of our walk with Christ. The discipleship opportunities abound. We must actually move beyond just being partners to being brothers and sisters in Christ with a deep love and compassion toward one another to learn and grow together in impacting the world for Christ.

### **Relational Influence Factor to STM Participant Growth**

In our modern world, Christ followers can get caught up in the alienating relationships of modern life as much as any person (technology does not help with social media and email). Two scholars examining the U.S. evangelical movement in Christianity have found that through worship practices and a focus on our spiritual lives believers are trying to overcome the relational divides in society (Tanya Luhmann 2004; Jon Bialecki 2008). In much the same way, the STM story that is developed through a team's relational experiences together accomplishes similar results for participants. In a short time together, cultural and economic distance is bridged with a powerful sense of unity on a STM team. As Howell relates from his experience leading STM teams, "True humanity, community and ideal fellowship are glimpsed, if not experienced, in ways that are ultimately transformative" (145). Relationships are key to discipleship on STM.

The development of peer relationships is essential. More literature is found relating to peer interaction with youth STM trips than with adult. As Wilder and Parker relate, "Leadership, as many have observed, is at its most basic level, influence...the *availability* and *accessibility* of peers places them in a unique place to informally and formally influence one another for mission (184)." The reality of youth having deep influence on one another is why so many youth can be impacted through what they experience together on an STM trip. This reality can exist with

adults on STM but at levels that are less influential. Still, the peer relationship must be grown and developed for the potential of impact.

Another area of relationship to be invested by STM teams is toward the missionaries the team is interacting with in the cross-cultural setting. Howell relates from his own experience on a Caribbean mission trip how team members over the years reflected back on the impact of interacting with the missionaries relationally while on a STM trip:

In the varied tales of my team members, every person-adult and student-pointed to personal relationships with the long-term missionaries or Dominicans as one of the most significant outcomes of the trip, a way in which they were "changed." For some this was about particular individuals they had come to know and with whom they planned to have a long-term friendship. Others talked more generally about the "the kids we worked with" or "the Dominican Christians we got to know," but, particularly for the students, these relationships were narrated through the STM encounter as a spiritual connection in which theological lessons of gratitude or contentment offered the transformative (if temporary) insight into their own spiritual condition (146).

Relationships on-site through the STM encounters are potentially powerful at a spiritual and emotional level. Howell continues to unpack the importance of relating to nationals in comparing the work that was accomplished to the level of importance of the relationships that were developed with those on a STM:

...work performed, like the relationships formed, was typically understood in personalistic terms. Among the members of our team and in several other cases, I certainly heard people talk about the work project and the accomplishments of our labor. But in the recollections of work experience, the economic or political consequences of such work become secondary to the spiritual and relational transformations at the heart of the experience (149).

The term 'personalistic' connotes personal relationship with peers on the team but also hints at connecting with missionaries and nationals on location. The concept is tied to all the activities of the STM team's interaction with the project on location which is only the means to the interaction of connection that was grown.

What becomes most important are the relationships and bonds that have been impacted more than the work and project that was left behind. These are what transform the heart which is central to the discipling side of STM. Duane Elmer gives us perspective on the forms of learning which are important for entering and living in another culture:

- Learning about others yields facts that help us adjust our expectations and generate fruitful avenues for deeper learning after entering the culture. The danger: we may stop learning and think that now we know everything necessary for ministry. It also tends to create “we-they” categories.
- Learning from others yields understanding that moves us into strong, enduring and trusting relationships resistant to colonialistic attitudes and dependency. The danger: we may tire of learning from and move into the telling mode; that is, I have the answers.
- Learning with others yields authentic partnerships where each probes deeply the mind and heart of the other, bringing interdependent growth and culturally sensitive ministry. “We-they” categories are replaced with “us” categories. The danger: I can’t think of any (85).

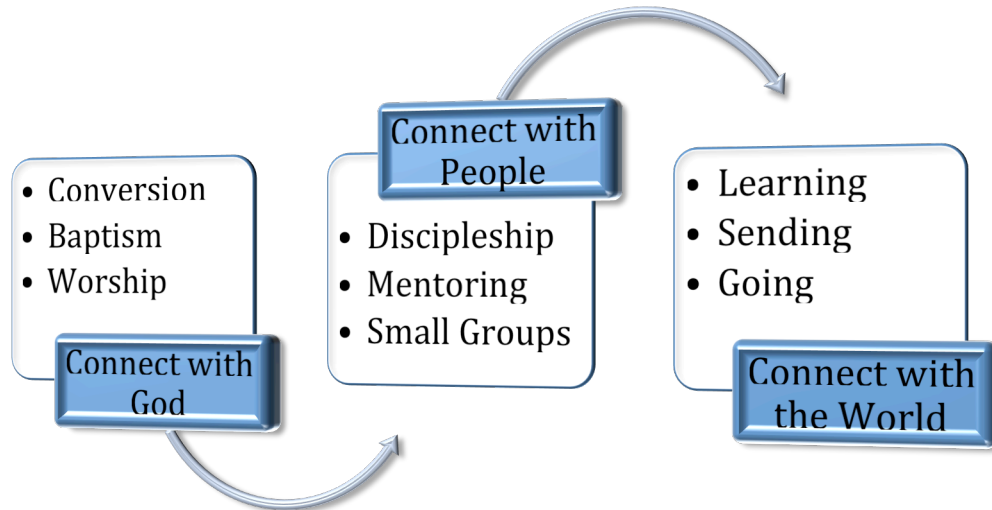
For these attributes of cross-cultural relational understanding to permeate how STM teams function, the team leader must be able to train and cultivate in expectations, bonding of trust and interdependence. Realizations of cultural bonds are realized when a team has opportunity to apply what they have learned on-site among partnering nationals.

### **Processes in STM Trips toward Development**

The training and follow-up of STM teams, including what kind of activities take place while engaging in mission cross-culturally, all have aspects of development which are manifest in sustained processes. The processes are transformation with STM when there is an ongoing engagement related to development; it is not about a one-time event (which cannot be a change agent of a length of time). Discipleship is a central mechanism for ongoing change through the developmental process of understanding God’s Word through both study and actual life experience (Duffy Robins 448-449). A model of discipleship process that has been shown to be effective in church growth strategy by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger involves what they call

“simpler church” represented through an upfront step-by-step practice of people going through stages of spiritual growth (60). An example of a model is found in Wilder and Parker’s book:

**Figure 2.1** – Examples of Discipleship Process (Wilder and Parker 190)



When STM is purely a onetime event, there is no reason to believe that it will be consistently transforming – that is why STM is not the heart of the issue. Instead, discipleship is what is really central. Every church can create patterns of process that fit their structure for training and developing STM and those participating.

The importance of having a process behind the structures of relational interaction is a key factor to the success of a team’s trip both corporately and individually. Four tiers of relationship content stand out from the perspective of Wilder and Parker as important to the transformational influence on the participant on a STM. Unique patters of learning and interaction flow out of the kind of connection that takes place with each of the following relations with STM participants:

1. Life Leaders – Content through Modeling
2. Mentor-coaches – Content through Dialogue
3. Team – Content through Shared Life
4. Church – Content through Teaching (192)

The links that are formed in content that accompanies each approach can open up greater depth of learning and interaction that has clear implications on life change outcomes. As processes of development are solidified in a home environment, these processes can also impact the worldview of those learning (David Putman 81). This is especially true in the STM context of growth opportunities creating creative process settings through the various tears of relationship and environment that are available to STM teams as they take advantage of the available settings of cross-cultural, church and secular community opportunities before, during and following the trip the team goes on together.

### **Challenged to Engage Globally and Locally**

One of the greater challenges with STM is for teams to apply what they have learned cross culturally on a local basis when they return to their own culture. The goal is that an STM experience can have influence on the levels of our lives. Various authors have used the term *glocal* to refer to this concept as the impact of a missional view intentionally affects all earthly dimensions at the same time (Wilder and Parker 210). Roberts relates well the dimension of this scope from a biblical missions perspective:

The Great Commission was not sequential steps but dimensions we operate in simultaneously. It's not Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, then the uttermost parts of the world. But Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world (132).

As a team is developing a STM trip overseas, a big part of being effective in a *glocal* perspective of the Great Commission is that what is done overseas can also have the equivalent activity back home in a way that is relevant to ministry in both locations. This is not for all activities but core developmental processes which should reflect this perspective. Practical steps are necessary especially in the cross-cultural setting of preparing teams to best interact with nationals. Anne-Geri' Fann and Greg Taylor have

some relevant steps of how a team can bond better with nationals for participants on STM trips:

1. Integrate rather than separate.
2. Learn as much as you teach.
3. Get to know their whole lives.
4. Try to speak the language (66-67).

More than ever, these same standards can be applied back home for any person going on a STM trip especially with the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of typical U.S. cities.

When a team is functioning cross-culturally, engaging with the local population, are they considering where and with whom their team is going to develop bonds with? Long-term relationships with nationals should be considered. A relational bond can be a powerful catalyst for potential future longer-term workers. Chris Leake talks about the importance of building relational ties with nationals while on STM for deeper impact on student and adult participants:

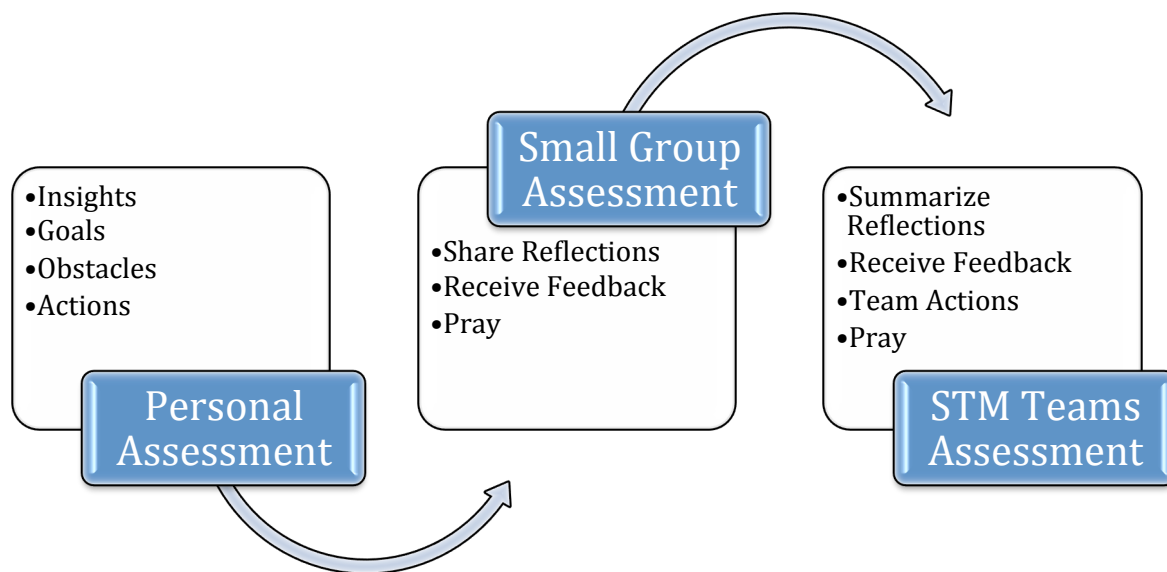
Perhaps you know people who have made significant decisions, commitments or changes in life direction as a result of STM participation. But with what are they bonding, and what types of commitments will they make as a result? Few will deny the role of STM in mobilizing long-term mission laborers. Ask any full time foreign missionary if his or her first time on the mission field was during STM involvement, and chances are the answer will be yes. Is it possible, though, that the way we are doing STM is one of the reasons we are seeing so few long-term laborers going to the most unreached areas of the world? If we do not bring short-termers into contact with the unreached and teach them this need, they will not bond with the unreached (“Bonding through Short-term Mission: A Lifeline to the Unreached”).

Strategic relationships for engaging globally will bear significant fruit if well thought out and developed with the right long-term impact mentality. Good partnerships can help in creating the possibilities to reach strategic people groups where bonds can be made as STM teams interact with these peoples.

## Understand Assessment for Change

What happens after a STM returns home has been related as one of the most important parts of all the activities related to a trip. There are opportunities for assessment that can give a team opportunity to consider the impact of their trip on a potential outcome in new practice in life patterns. The assessment process can involve not only the individuals on their own going through a specific debrief but also involve portions of a team (which may include key groupings or leadership of a team) and also the whole of a team in group feedback. The following chart relates the kind of process and questions team participants should be guided through to properly debrief and identify the direction they should go now that they are home. It is a time to plan long term for what can be applied from lessons learned while traveling with the STM team overseas in a different culture. The following figure gives an example of how a team could develop a guiding process for stages of discipleship and the activities that accompany each stage of the STM:

**Figure 2.2** – Debriefing Process Stages and Activities (Wilder and Parker 190, Jordan 141-142)





There should be a dichotomy or contrast that those who are debriefing their experience can use in order to help in seeing the differences from their experience and what they will face at home.

There are potential similarities related to reentry of a team to what a long-term worker experiences in returning to the States. In considering what might impact the STM participants and affect their ability to apply life change, these are significant factors (even if they are only realized in small portions).

- From being primarily concerned with the spiritual to being primarily concerned with practical matters.
- From being daily surrounded with Christian encouragement and fellowship to deriving your fellowship and encouragement from Wednesday evening and Sunday morning services.
- From having a fixed and measurable goal to perhaps having none at all.
- From seeing abject poverty firsthand to perhaps experiencing seemingly overwhelming wealth.
- From a high degree of self-motivation to searching for a new motivation.
- From being somebody special in the culture in which you were serving to being nobody special.
- From serving with people who have a world perspective to being with people who, in many cases, do not care much for those out-side their own circle (Fann and Taylor 52).

A helpful guide is laid out below as related by David Johnstone concerning what kind of depth can be used when debriefing a team. Various levels of reflection and interaction are helpful with the realization that debriefs can be spread out over a length of time. The following are two examples of different levels of questions for debriefing a STM team:

**Table 2.1** Debriefing Levels of Reflection and Perception (Johnstone 525)

Level of Reflection and Perception	Foundational Question	Example Questions After Dinner in a Host Culture
Knowledge	<i>What is happening?</i>	<i>What did I hear? What did I see? What did I feel? What did I eat?</i>

Understanding	<i>Why is it happening?</i>	<i>Why were our hosts hospitable?</i>
Wisdom	<i>What do I need to do because it is happening?</i>	<i>Am I as generous and hospitable to my guests?</i>

The potential for follow-up with those on a team is challenging in the context of today's busy schedules. In the STM curriculum, *The Next Mile*, Heerwagen offers the insight, "Follow-up implies one event or action. Follow-through communicates the idea of continuing-something that is not bound by time or event. You start with the end in mind (2)." The curriculum goes on the present model of long-term plans in following up with STM trip. The concept relates that leadership will need to assess the levels of follow-up that should take place for each member. A blanket approach is not always the best, though maybe for some interactions. Other interaction can be determined to be at different levels for each person. The *Next Mile* curriculum presents a plan to create three levels of team members in follow-up to a trip where each group has different commitment and interest. Those with higher interest, which often are a smaller percentage, are the ones that bring resolution by debriefing and make a strong plan of follow-up.

### **Short-Term Mission Elements of Discipleship in Community**

Community of Servanthood: there is the opportunity for development through participating in short-term mission as a team working together. The idea of a cooperative training model is powerful with on-sight involvement that you cannot get in the same way as in the classroom. Duane Elmer refers to this kind of environment of journey together as a "pilgrimage of servanthood (30)." Cross-culturally, there are opportunities to see acts of service from different angles. In the environment of community, there is opportunity to work out a better balance of theological and Bible training and practical side of a hands-on model in the environment of ministry (Peterson 234). Elmer, in his book on cross-cultural servanthood,

describes steps to openness that enables real servanthood to take place in the discipleship opportunities that can relate to STM:

The first principle in the pilgrimage to servanthood is openness. To be open like Christ is to invite others into our presence and treat them in ways that will make them feel safe in our presence. Second, acceptance of others is to proactively communicate respect and dignity to each human being based on the fact that each is an image-bearer of God. Both openness and acceptance are deeply rooted in the character of Christ and expressed in his relationship to all humanity. The third principle, trust, moves us yet closer to the goal of servanthood. Without trust little of significance will be accomplished (61).

The concepts of openness, acceptance of others and trust cultivated in a program of community interaction within a team and toward those they serve together is a catalyst of deep life change.

Deeper Life Learning: believers are called to a closer walk with Christ in their spiritual life through incorporating certain disciplines into the short-term mission experience. Prayer is at the core of what enables “mission” as Jesus reminds his followers in Luke 10:2 to pray for laborers who are to be sent into the harvest fields, those that would complete his mission. These prayers can be tangibly lived out in a community of learning and development on a STM. Christ followers are called in mission to grow through learning in community. Elmer reflects on the dynamic of learning as Christ followers in community where we better learn how to learn in all circumstances and from all people we meet which is essential in the STM cross-cultural environment:

Learning from and with are not simply good strategies, they are resident in Scripture and touch every part of our relational lives. Common grace tells us we can learn from believers as well as those who do not believe in Christ. We learn from and with because such activity honors the God who made us brothers and sisters, priests and members of the same body. God in his wisdom placed us together in healthy interdependence so that we will best reflect his glory and accomplish his work (101).

Short-term mission must have a positive impact on all participating toward personal growth in seeing their world through Christ's eyes (as they dig into Scripture and understand what they see in the world around them). Believers can start to understand the depths and love of Christ in Ephesians 3:14-19 that reflect into how a believer functions in community and toward the world around them. The context of what was happening in Ephesus was rooted in the relationships that build up the body of Christ which can include a team of STM team members working together.

Exploration of Spiritual Gifts: as part of development/training and growth in greater depth of spirituality and closeness to Christ, there must be some exploration of spiritual gifts. Each of Christ's followers has different ways they can build up the body of Christ. While on short-term mission, there is opportunity to be more aware of ministry opportunity and attentiveness of the Spirit's leading. The chance to experience how the power of Christ manifests itself in ways team members see on many short-term trips is an example of what they can find in their own lives to bring back home. In Luke 10:7, those sent out were amazed and excited to have been a part of the power encounter of ministry as they prayed demons out of people and healed the sick. Hands-on exploration of the gifts is an opportunity readily available to Jesus' followers through serendipitous discovery. Biblically, there is strong precedent for this just looking at Jesus and the disciples learning to minister along with him and eventually through him.

Understanding of Other Cultures & God Around the World: Christians are called to be aware of the Majority World Church, of those sisters and brothers around the world who are living out faith. Christ followers in the west have much to learn from them. Borthwick challenges today's Western Christ followers that they are called to expand their worldview and see the extent of what God is doing around the globe. As he relates, the Majority World Church

has a zeal for the Lord, a zeal for missions, expectancy of faith and a faith that is rugged and sacrificial (88-93). Christians have already seen the Apostle Peter's vision while on mission where God impacted him with his acceptance of Gentiles coming to Christ. Much in the same way, all those involved in a short-term mission trip are called to love different people in new ways and with new awareness. On the concept of ethnocentrism where we compare our culture and ways to other cultures and how they do things, Elmer relates:

Everyone is ethnocentric. It's natural to believe that we do things the best way. So it's unnatural for the cross-cultural servant to assume that other cultures have been blessed by God. But when we discover the validity of other cultures' ways (though maybe not all their ways), we not only discover the beauty and diversity of God's own character, but we discover something about ourselves and are freed to change in ways that better reveal our Creator to others (117).

The opportunity to go into a new and different culture gives opportunity for God to "knock down the walls of their box" and learn to see things that believers never understood before. Elmer describes well the importance of understanding another people:

Understanding is the ability to see patterns of behavior and values that reveal the integrity of a people. Let me say it another way: understanding another culture is the ability to see how the pieces of the cultural puzzle fit together and make sense to them and you. Life in another culture is frustrating at first because we do not see the bigger picture, but the wonder of eventually seeing the pieces fit and the picture of understanding appear is exhilarating (102).

Mission field environments give STM participants opportunity to realize some stark realities about life in different locations and see this without judgment. God calls his disciples to live out Romans 12:2 and bring renewing of their minds through the challenging experiences of a cross-cultural short-term mission trip. Even getting "outside of a person's cultural box" close to home can be of similar value to challenge a believer's values and perspectives and see people and the world through Christ's eyes in new ways. Again, Elmer relates an excellent overview of the kind

of questions a team can ask of itself when considering how it will relate to another culture. All of these questions could be incorporated into the STM training and preparations:

- Serving. You can't serve someone you don't understand. At best you can only be a benevolent oppressor—like forcing someone to say “I'm sorry” when that is an unnatural way to apologize.
- Understanding. You can't understand another person until you have learned from them and, eventually, with them. A learning attitude signals humility and a willingness to identify with the people.
- Learning. You can't learn from another person until you have built trust with them. People won't share important information with someone they don't trust, especially cross-culturally.
- Trust. You can't build trust with another person until they feel like they have been accepted by you—until they feel that you value them as human beings.
- Acceptance. You can't communicate value and esteem to others unless they feel welcomed into your presence and find themselves feeling safe—openness.
- Openness. Openness with people of another culture requires that you are willing to step out of your comfort zone to initiate and sustain relationships in a context of cultural differences. While requiring some risk, it launches you on the wonderful and fruitful pilgrimage to servanthood.
- Openness is rooted deeply in our view of the God who welcomes sinners and accepts them as bearers of his image; thus each person possesses a sacred dignity—the kind of dignity that compels us to also welcome others into our lives (123-124).

### **Best Practices from Current Resources for STM Teams**

*Reentry:* As a result of the new awareness a STM team brings back to its sending people and church, there is so much potential to pass on missional thinking to the body back home. There are avenues to new enthusiasm through the team returning, sharing and living out their experience in their Jerusalem. As a people reflect on their return home, they should be aware of three different ways of handling re-entry into the life they return.

- 1) The first reaction is that of being an *Assimilator*, who has traveled and experienced significant impact but slips right back into life as it was before the short-term trip. The greatest opportunities for life-application and further spiritual growth are now lost. The trip and ministry experience are now just a past memory that means little to life now that a person is back at home.
- 2) The second would be those that react so strongly that they are *Alienators*, who react to the difference and dichotomy between their third world experience

and the way life is back home. They become very critical of what is reality back home and eventually move back into life as it was before just because they do not know any better. They are no better off than the *Assimilator*.

- 3) Then third, there is the *Integrator* who takes what they experienced and takes the time to process the dissonance between what happened during the trip and how they are going to live their life back home. The desire is to see real life impact from the short-term experience (Heerwagon 27).

The STM sending church must learn about the return in investment related to what they do with short-term missions. Taking the time to understand what you invested and experienced is key to realizing what the experience can mean to your life back home. Just as Luke 6:38 says in this passage out of the NLT:

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.

Christ followers give as goers with the right expectation toward receiving those who are sent and then take this same good measure as a standard of what one can expect in the sender's lives out of the reciprocity of the two-way relationship here. Both the giver and receiver should be blessed without taking away from each other resulting in Kingdom growth. What happened in an individual's life serving overseas can have a significant impact on how they live their life back home.

*Cross-cultural preparedness:* One of the best holistic approaches for preparing a group of students or adults for bridging into a new culture is Livermore's cultural intelligence (CQ) classifications. These are the four areas of cross-cultural understanding that every STM should be well versed in and be prepared to use while on their trip:

- CQ Drive: Your level of interest, drive, and motivation to adapt cross-culturally.
- CQ Knowledge: Your understanding about how cultures are similar and different.

- CQ Strategy: Your ability to interpret cues and plan in light of your cultural understanding.
- CQ Action: Your ability to behave appropriately when relating and serving cross-culturally (Serving with Eyes Wide Open 111).

These four types of CQ are each independently necessary to develop and create aptitude in order to bridge between cultures. Any team would benefit from examining the many books Livermore has available for both STM and business application of the CQ concepts and integration into life practices. More and more of these concepts are directly applicable to how average Americans function with our multi-cultural society. This is a great opportunity to prepare for going as an STM using Livermore's tools to practice cultural intelligence within a home environment.

### **Research Design Literature**

The vast majority of material reviewed in literature relating to the theoretical underpinnings of this study is phenomenological in nature where there is a focus on the actual lived out experiences of those involved with STM activities through the local church. The research models employed in this study focused on the interpretive feedback of participants related to STM. A mixed-methods approach gleans the participants' experiences to gain more clarity and understanding of what events and activities might provide insight into the constructs that bring about more effective life impact through STM preparations, implementation and follow-up (Ernest Stringer 20).

The study of STM examines data collected through the experiences of three groups of people who are directly involved with STM out of Alliance churches. The process has been designed by taking into account models as laid out by several authors including Jennifer Mason (2002), Irving Seidman (1998) and Tim Sensing (2011) with a focus on qualitative methods of



analyzing interviews of both missionaries and church leadership. The follow-up to the interviews involves lay people who have been on STM trips interacting with a questionnaire about their experience. The three research instruments provide good opportunity to do phenomenological examination of the data through the specific insights observed through the experiences of these three participant groups. As reflected by Mason, the models of collecting data through these instruments, reading the data and finalizing analysis through the principle researcher's relationship to the data and interviewees will result in specific insights into the object of research (149). Much can be gleaned from insights observed through the lenses of what has been read both biblically, through the literature review and ultimately through analysis of data collected through the research instruments.

### **Summary of Literature**

The literature related many aspects of how STM team experience can bring change. Out of Scripture, the theme of sanctification stood out as essential for STM discipleship considerations. The concept of a narrative that God writes through history of his desire to create opportunity for mankind to come back into relationship with him is a key concept to STM. The experience of STM is an opportunity for team members to realize God's narrative in their own story and what he is doing to help them strengthen their relationship with him. A theme also rose out of the NT concept of Christ mentoring his disciples out of a "cohort" style of living together and experience life together in a way that was transformational. This is potentially applicable to how STM and the relationships on a team, especially with a leader, can bring impact into team member's lives in a discipling manner.

The main themes out of the literature to consider include the importance of leadership development and role with the STM. There is also the important consideration of how a team is intentionally trained and developed to better understand and relate to another culture.

Community or relationships are also integral to the success, development and follow-up of a STM team, especially for life change outcomes. Branching off of the concept of relationship is the importance of developing strong partnerships. As a theme, there was more literature on this topic than anticipated and the implications of falling short in partnership seem to have higher negative impact than the principle investigator would have thought. Understanding the arguments of Corbett and Fikkert in the book *Helping Without Hurting* will be helpful in considering the implications of what STM done poorly does for how well team members are impacted during a trip. Out of the many challenges to STM, most are seem to be potentially countered with good training and follow-up with STM teams.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The cross-cultural STM experience can be life changing, at least that is the claim many churches make. Yet, missional perspectives experienced in a cross-cultural team excursion seem to be hard to effectively embrace after returning home. There is potential of teaching missional lifestyle through strategically developing those who have been on STM mission trips with an intentional discipleship process. The urgent shortfall is potentially countered with the right follow-up. There should be continuity with the discipleship process in preparation and during the experience cross-culturally. The whole STM experience provides potential to challenge and grow individuals who will embrace a missional lifestyle which can effectively impact a church's missional stance in the community and toward the whole world. Leaders and organizers in churches who are sending teams overseas must work to move beyond just training for a trip and establish patterns of discipleship as a way of life for team members and ultimately the whole of a sending church. We have an un-seized opportunity to help people reach closer to their full potential of growth in perspective and lifestyle after spending time overseas with an STM.

The entire experience of a STM team includes the preparation before travel, the on-sight ministry and the return assimilation back into the home culture. In order to study discipleship as related to participation with a STM team, research must include questions about best practices of each portion of the experience. This study tailored questions for those who are actively involved with STM ministries related to Alliance Churches in the U.S., specifically for mission mobilizers who are lay participants, church leaders and international workers who have participated in the related STM discipleship process to be able to give feedback on what practices worked best.

While robust research has explored preparations for and operations of STM, less investigation has occurred on what happens when the team returns home.

### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study was to determine best practices of discipleship applied in the preparation, execution and with special attention to the follow-up of short-term mission (STM) team experiences within small and large churches of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in the United States. The study interacted with church lay STM trip participants, groups of two to four church mission pastors or leaders. It also included personal interaction with long-term Alliance cross-cultural workers who were impacted by participating in STM trips. Using individual interviews, focus groups and electronic questions as a part of a qualitative approach, this study explored how discipleship can be a part of a short-term mission trips.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

#### **Research Question #1**

What kinds of practices take a team from preparation and execution of a STM trip to individuals experiencing actual discipleship?

Every church has different practices that they use or would like to use related to how STM from their church prepare and deploy into a cross-cultural experience. Numerous manuals and books have been written about these practices, but this question was designed to better understand specifically how Alliance Churches are developing their own systems and exercises. There are no set denominational standards as to how any of these churches are required to prepare teams so the question is designed to find out what teams and individuals have found most effective or ineffective in their specific church settings. Each Alliance church has different

partnerships and connections overseas so the diversity and spectrum should reflect the uniqueness of each and give some unique insights into best practices.

### **Research Question #2**

What are the best practices of follow-up after a STM returns home that facilitate ongoing discipleship and the living out of a missional lifestyle?

The sheer volume of material available to prepare and help STM teams succeed while on their trip contrasts sharply with the amount of material for follow-up of a trip. Based on reviewed literature, there was an apparent challenge to apply practices learned while on a STM trip to everyday life upon return home. Question two was designed with application to the team members and leaders who were the focus of the RQ #2 instrument who can speak out of their own experience returning after a trip or in leading and organizing a team and its follow-up. Any best practices or shortfalls were presented for examination. What have these church families seen that changed in people's lives? What dynamics of life practice related to the STM experience resulted in individuals impacted toward a deeper walk with Christ?

### **Research Question #3**

What are the best lived out practices of discipleship that long-term cross-cultural workers find impacted their journey as a result participation with a STM team?

A commonly held assumption about career workers serving overseas is that their earlier STM experiences influenced their call to missions. The third research question was designed to find what practices carried over from short-term trip experience into the longevity of a call and life of ministry with long-term Alliance IWs. The third research question helped Alliance international workers walk through their own experiences and reflect back on how any previous experiences impacted their consideration of longer-term service. These interactions with missionaries reflected the most personal of the three research mythologies.

### **Ministry Contexts**

The Alliance describes itself as part of a Christ centered Acts 1:8 church family, a movement 6 million strong worldwide. The Alliance of the U.S. is smaller than most mainline denominations numbering around 2,000 churches. As a missions-minded church founded over 130 years ago, it has functioned as a missionary sending organization that has reached people in nations around the globe. Today there are Alliance ministries in over seventy countries with over 700 workers out of the U.S. serving in cross-cultural ministry capacities (cmalliance.org, “About Us”). Over the past three decades, the Alliance has sent more short-term mission teams overseas than many evangelical protestant denominations. Out of these churches, there are a smaller number which send their mission mobilizers to attend the annual Alliance conference called Converge which focuses on networking and helping larger churches ranging in size of attendance from 300 to over 5,000.

The context for U.S. churches and how they relate to their world continues to change with the nature of a globalization, the ability of people to travel with ease and continued communication breakthroughs. Over the past three decades STM has expanded beyond typical youth group focus to all ages. The number of U.S. based Christians who were involved in short-term cross-cultural trips within the past year is recorded as high as 1.6 million (Priest ii). This number is certainly low because it did not include youth group based STM trips. The number of STM trips out of U.S. based Alliance Churches continue to grow. This contemporary trend poses a challenge to how long term missions function. Much research has been done on how short-term missions have been sent out all over the world. Much less has been researched relating to local, long-term impact of STM once participants return from cross-cultural experiences.

The most effective way to capture what is happening before, during and especially after STM with participants is to elicit stories from them. This study asked participants to articulate how they have changed and how they will continue to live into that change once they are home. Tim Sensing identifies qualitative study as incarnational in nature. God enters into the disordered and complex reality of our lives in this world and brings transformation. The researcher looked at the context of STM in Alliance churches because this matters as to how God encounters our people. Method has involved description of the ministry context with the intent of examining the experience and perspective of participants related to STM ethnographic in nature (12). The interaction was regulated through a mutual intent of service to the community of those in the Alliance that served and impacted through STM. Sensing describes the communal nature of how a qualitative study develops with the researcher involved:

The dialogic nature of a practical theology research project allows the participants to co-author their future stories. Qualitative research involves being reflexive and autobiographical; therefore, when the researcher shares some of his story, the community will have a sense of where he is coming from, where his heart is, and what the influencing factors are for him. Some of a project's participants have been involved in church life a long time while others have not. Engagement in the project will facilitate a forging of their Christian identities into the larger Christian community and story of God (xxii).

The researcher was able to create a sense of community with the different church leadership and missionaries that participated in the research mechanisms with a sense of the larger community within the Alliance family of churches.

Those that were involved in this research mechanism were part of the large church family the principle researcher participated with as a missions pastor in The Alliance. These participants have known the researcher's heart to make short-term missions better and more effective in impacting those that participate which has been made clear in preparation of participants and through the researcher's relationship with them. The community of this study's

research allows for participants to co-author what they have understood be their future stories in living out STM through their ministries. Those involved in this research have been involved either for a long time or shorter periods of time, but their engagement has facilitated collaboration into each of their identities within Alliance church families. The result has been a better understanding of how we have done STM as individual churches and as a denomination.

### **Participants**

The study included three different groups of participants. With these three different groups there were set inquiries with a total of three instruments of study used to explore and examine short-term missions in Alliance Churches in the U.S. The focus of the research interaction was on different individual's perspectives related to what they have experienced as best practices of discipleship while participating with a STM team.

### **Criteria for Selection**

The first group of selected participants consisted of available Alliance international workers who are in the States during their furlough season where they could be interviewed in person. The Converge conference of Alliance missions mobilizers offered opportunity to interview some of these individuals. The main criteria for selecting the Alliance international workers was that these individuals have had extended ministry experience overseas as a career in missions. The principle investigator chose a mix of individuals who 1) were just starting their longer-term service, who 2) have reached the middle of their careers, and who 3) have returned after serving extended time overseas of over a decade. The most important expectation was that these individuals needed to have served with The Alliance and have served in a capacity where they actually related to Alliance STM teams from the U.S.

The second group of selected participants was chosen out of a pool of leaders from U.S. Alliance churches who attended the Alliance Converge Conferences in 2016 or 2017. Those



chosen by the researcher were present as teams of two to four which represented highly motivated missions minded congregations that have been doing STM at a high level. All the groups have had similar hearts to collaborate and have benefited each other to do STM better and with more intentionality for life impact with participants. A total of eight leadership groups were interviewed, all connected to the Converge conference with six interviews conducted in person on site at the conference in January 2017. Preference on choice was determined by level of availability and by the number of leaders that were present. Later in February, several groups were interviewed through the means of VOIP Skype call or conference call in order to accommodate time constraints and their limited presence at the conference.

Coming from the same churches as the leaders mentioned above, the third group of participants were people who had experienced STM as team members. All individuals selected for the on-line questionnaire will be selected through their leadership, giving the best possible groupings of people who would meet the criteria of the research instrument. The church leadership sent emails entailing the nature of the study with a link to allow participants to go to the web-based Survey Monkey instruments. Ultimately, the final participants were self-designated by their willingness to participate. There were some churches that did a better at promoting the potential participants. In all there were forty-nine participants from seven of the eight churches represented by groups of leaders interviewed.

### **Description of Participants**

Of the Alliance International Workers who participated, two were female and three were male, all originating from the U.S. from a Caucasian ethnic background. Locations of service included West Africa, the Middle East, Europe, with one just completing the final steps to be appointed to either Europe or Asia. One of the five has returned to the States within the last five years and is serving in regional leadership within The Alliance. Every one of the five have had

some experience with STM both in going themselves prior to long-term service or with receiving teams where they have served presently or recently. The principle interviewer knew each of these international workers for no less than four years, some as long as twenty. Seasons of life represented included being female and single, married with young children, and married with children transitioning out of the home. Ages ranged from early twenties to late forties. All participants have completed their undergraduate program and several of them have completed a master's degree with one having completed a doctorate of ministry. All would represent a core sampling of the kind of workers that serve with The Alliance.

The second group was comprised of church leaders who were tasked with mobilizing their Alliance congregations for world missions mobilization. They all had some connections with how their church has sent STM overseas in the last few years. Both male and female participants were involved ranging in ages from their mid-twenties into their sixties. All participants were Caucasian and came from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. At least one from each group included paid church staff, specifically a core leader who was responsible for the organization of STM teams out of their church. Every group of the eight churches had lay leaders present except for one. States represented by location of the eight churches included New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, Wisconsin, and California.

The last of the groups were forty-nine STM participants from seven of the eight churches represented by the second group of church leaders interviewed. There was a solid balance of gender represented with participants numbering 53% male and 47% female. Ages were well balanced with the following ages presented with the percentage of the whole: 22.5% from those 20-29 in years, 12% from 31-40 in years, 20.5% from 41-50 in years, 30.5% from 51-60 in years, and 61-70+ at 14.5% in years. States these participants are from included New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio and Wisconsin. All participants had been on a STM trip within the

past three years. The vast majority (36) had been on a trip within the past year. Locations where individuals served overseas included 19 who traveled to Asia, 11 to the Caribbean, five to Africa, four both to South America and Central America (total eight) and then four who did not go overseas but served in cross-cultural settings in the U.S. No data was obtained relating to socio-economic levels or education. They all attend at Alliance churches which would be considered more middle-class with those that attend.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were informed of their potential relationship to this study through their review of a written or digital consent form explaining the nature of the study and how steps would be taken to protect their confidentiality. These specific consent forms were presented before participants partook in each of the three different research instruments (refer to Appendixes A-C). All who contributed in the study were required to sign the written consent form as a contingency for their feedback. The information of the study was held in confidentiality with physical copies locked in a desk or room while the principle investigator was not accessing these materials. The digital information was protected by secure passwords for accessing information on the computers used along with web based cloud storage and electronic applications that were utilized. This study's information was held confidential through the use of pseudonyms and general explanation. Names of churches and locations have been changed or referred to in a general fashion. Upon completion of the project, data was deleted from all digital storage and physical copies were shredded. The study did not share any sensitive information outside of the research team of those participating or advising the project. There was neither personal financial interest related to the study and research nor any inducement for participation by monetary or non-monetary means. Subjects did not have any costs related to their participation.

The principal investigator chose not to include his own church and its leadership or lay participants who have gone on STM trips to participate in the study. The reason for this decision was based on the concern that participants from the church of the investigator would not be able to be objective to the extent necessary for clear feedback of information. There would also be the challenge of true anonymity and confidentiality with those that the principal researcher interacts with on a regular basis.

### **Instrumentation**

The research tools were organized into three different instruments, each designed by the researcher to answer questions connected to aspects of the three main research questions, each from a different perspective.

#### **Semi-Structured Interview – Instrument #1**

The first instrument was focused on individual one-on-one interaction with Alliance International Workers (IW) who served longer terms or were preparing to serve long-term in the near future. Each person has been interviewed by the primary researcher and has been asked to interact with five preset questions (see Appendix D). The format of these interactions was a semi-structured interview which was executed with intent to remain true to the questions but give room for expanding concepts as presented by those interviewed. The focus was to understand how previous STM team experience impacted each of their present callings and to find any discipleship implications. The principle researcher was able to formulate questions out of insights from the literature review as well as personal experience as an international worker who served with The Alliance previously and consider what kind of inquiry could shed light into the impact of previous STM experiences.

#### **Focus Group – Instrument #2**

The second research instrument was focus group interviews that involve eight Alliance Church leadership teams which included mission pastors and lay leaders involved with the logistics and implementation of STM teams out of these same churches. These were Alliance Churches of various sizes ranging approximately from 300-5,000 in regular attendance. The interviews were conducted in-group forums of three to four leaders together who were interviewed in person or by group video chat on-line through the Internet or by teleconferencing. The five questions of the focus group instrument concentrated on bringing the relational environment of the interviews into an interaction that gave perspective into how discipleship has fit into these team's preparation, implementation and follow-up of short-term mission trips out of each respective church (see Appendix E). The group format opened the conversation to include the various viewpoints of each individual and their interaction with teammates. This perspective gave a unique standpoint on the inner workings of STM's impact into church life for each congregation.

### **Questionnaire – Instrument #3**

The final research instrument was a questionnaire format using Survey Monkey as the electronic tool for the presentation and collection of questions related to STM team participants from these focus churches. Church leadership interviewed for the focus groups of the second instrument distributed links to the on-line form by emailing their constituency who they deemed met the criteria of the instrument. Criteria included individuals from their church who had been on a STM trip in the past three years, who were at least twenty years in age and were of either gender. Individuals filled out the questionnaire anonymously on their own, encouraged to do so by their church leadership who had been interviewed previously for the second instrument. A total of thirteen questions were asked (see Appendix F for a sample). After agreeing to the consent form, each participant acknowledged their church name and location, how long it had

been since their last STM experience, their gender and age. The target group was specifically adult participants who were between 20 years of age to 70 years plus in age, grouped by different age brackets. They acknowledged having been a part of a STM team within the past three years. These questions worked toward the discovery of what insights or observations these participants identified as best practices they experienced through their own personal participation with STM teams from their church.

### **Reliability of Project**

The greatest strength of the project is the relationship of those participating with the subject and focus of the study. The leadership interviewed was involved in the organization and implementation of STM teams out of the participant churches. The principle researcher had opportunity over several years at the same Alliance Converge Conference to talk about STM at various levels of practical experience. These preliminary observations about potential questions for the instruments were tested in these previous gatherings of church mission leaders at these conferences. These interactions were the field test through the significance these questions have related to the specifics of preparation, implementation and follow-up of STM teams. Each church that participated has been doing STM for years, has been struggling to make this ministry function better and is interested to see what others have tried and experienced.

The principle researcher interacted with expert review of the participants of the study by asking prepared questions, which resulted in good solid feedback of experience, and observations which were recorded. The tools of this study gave strength to the observations because there were three different instruments from different perspectives. The expert review was established through the expertise of the main investigator who has extensive experience with STM as a mission pastor and former international worker. These different perspectives resulted in opportunity for triangulation of identified factors related to real life change or lack of change

with those involved in the study. The questionnaire showed itself to be balanced with similar ratios of gender and age throughout all those who participated. Only one church did not participate in the questionnaire instrument. People were responsive to the open ended questions that yielded the best and most comprehensive data.

### **Validity of Project Design**

The study included a variety of tools for research in order to give three different perspectives, each designed to give a unique perspective in relationship to the three main research questions. The purpose of the study is to find the best explanations and feedback related to individuals understanding the impact of STM on them personally or with those that have been involved. The balance of leadership perspective that prepares and sees the teams as a whole contrasted with those that view the experience as participants gives good contrast value to the study. Add the perspective of international workers and their long-term perspective and the study has one more angle of understanding with those that receive teams and who have seen the long term impact of STM in their own lives and on the mission field overseas. These are three solid groups of participants which can contribute qualitative validity through their experience in a storied fashion through expert review and descriptive analysis.

Any other denomination or mission organization could recreate a similar study by organizing interviews of similar target participants in churches and their leadership plus international workers that have received teams from their denomination or organization. The aim is to identify best practices related to the experience and follow-up of all those in participation. Similar interviews and questionnaires could easily be fashioned from the examples used in this study. Similar results should follow, tailored to the kind of practices present in any sending group of churches who are actively involved in STM internationally. The study is set to incorporate churches out of a U.S. based setting rather than in another country as sending

national church. In order to recreate the research, the project director should be someone well versed in both the world of church ministry sending team and receiving teams as an international worker in order to be true to the nature of this study.

### **Data Collection**

The nature of this project requires exploring motivations, personal meanings and memories. Qualitative research capitalizes on such ways of knowing. Sharan Marriam and Elizabeth Tisdell capture the strengths of qualitative research in the following:

1. *The focus of qualitative research is to understand meaning and process related to how people make sense of their world, to interpret their experience* (15). Research explored the process of achieving life impact through the *process* of preparation, going on a cross-cultural experience with a local church ministering with a partner overseas and then returning to apply what has been learned. The study will seek to *understand* how people are impacted and what mechanisms were helpful to achieving results. The qualitative attributes of this study revolved around interpretation of the experiential data related by those participating in the three research instruments that were utilized.

2. *Qualitative research involves the researcher as the primary mechanism to collect and analyze data* (16). As the researcher, one cannot separate themselves completely from the subject of discipleship through STM team experiences. The researcher needs to have the primary position of being the main instrument to develop the questions utilized in this study to explore its three main research questions which are driven by a desire to find best practices from my colleagues and larger Alliance church family in the States. The methods in interaction with participants have been the standard of protocol throughout the study. As Seidman relates, the most important characteristic of the interview process is the ability to show a genuine interest in those that are being interviewed, their stories and ideas. All of the interaction is solidified in



significance with those being interviewed through a clear realization that they offer something to what is important to the research which comes out of the interviewer's experience (78). Related to the interviews will be credibility of those interviewed recommending their support to those in their churches who have been asked to participate in the questionnaire, the least relational of the instruments to be employed.

3. *Qualitative research involves fieldwork, inductive in strategy, where theory is built through observation* (Merriam and Tisdell 17). The challenge of fieldwork related to STM teams is subject completely to the interview process. As the researcher, there is an impossibility to have experience with any STM sent out by churches participating in the study. As a result, the interview process relies on reflection on personal experience with all those in the study. Group leadership will be interviewed together to better understand how they develop discipleship practices into the planning and implementation of sending STM teams. As a pastor of missions, questions were designed to mimic the same kind of questions the researcher has heard from many colleagues who send STM teams from their churches. The context of a minister in midst of research with colleagues is cyclic in nature. Sensing describes the pastoral-student as living and working within the context of the study, identifying a particular problem to address (64). The next step is an interaction to address the situation and, in the case of this study, identify shortfalls or possible best practices that will create a better model of discipleship through STM. As principle researcher with set experience, there is an allowance to incorporate language and similar experience where questions can be developed toward a better test of the experiences of those who participate in the study.

A strong reality of the researcher's ability to interact with the data of this study will be the reflexive nature of the reading of the data. As Jennifer Mason relates, "A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you have generated, and will seek to explore your role and

perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data (149).” It must be considered that as researcher, the self-perspective of the principal researcher affects the process of generating data and interpreting it. Therefore, results need to include the researcher’s relationship to what is formed of patterns and practices that are identified through the observations of patterns and practices that relate to STM in the Alliance U.S. based church context.

4. *Qualitative research is richly descriptive using words and pictures rather than numbers to relate context* (Merriam and Tisdell 18). Any description of experiences as related to STM by participants shows feeling and intent which are best related through descriptive means rather than numerical (such as with quantitative research). Rich description will involve utilizing quotes and excerpts from the interaction with the parties involved in the data collection. The phenomenon that will be researched related to STM is experiential in nature, thus utilizing relating context and reflection related to the setting, individuals involved and the activities related in each interview interaction.

The qualitative approach of this study was developed out of Merriam and Tisdell’s principles noted above. This study will seek to use a systematic approach to find answers to the three research questions employing Sensing’s realization of examination of the social settings and people that indwell these settings (56). The three instruments and their questions delineated the boundaries of the study and the participants involved as they related to the reality of their experience.

### **Methodology of Data Collection**

Three instruments were used to conduct the systematic research. The first two instruments were accomplished over a two-week period with the largest portion of the interviews conducted in person over a three-day period during the annual Alliance Converge Conference.

Only a few interviews were conducted later via distance electronic means within several weeks of the conference. The principle researcher conducted all interview interactions. The individual and group interviews were conducted in private rooms or spaces where minimal interruptions would take place. Each of the participants was given a list of the questions along with an initial consent form to sign. Interviews averaged between twenty-five and thirty-five minutes in length and were recorded on an iPhone 6s with a voice-recording app. Recordings were digitally named and transcribed by main concepts and ideas with the specific interviewed person identified for each portion of the conversation.

All the questionnaires were collected over the period of approximately one month following initial interviews of all the group teams from churches in the beginning of the data collection phase of study. Each participant was selected by church leadership according to their ability to meet the criteria necessary in order to complete the questionnaire. This included the age and most recent STM experience of participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data breakdown began with the investigative process of organizing information within understandings of qualitative research analysis as proposed by Mason (2002), Seidman (1998) and Sensing (2011). The interviews were processed into conceptual transcripts highlighting all the major phrases and concepts of each individual that participated including delineation of the specific individuals who spoke in the different focus groups. Consistent throughout the data analysis was intentional revisiting of the questions that have driven the study along with any peripheral questions that have presented themselves. The data sources involved are the two interview models and the questionnaire. These transcripts were processed by reading them over four to six times, referring back to some points in the original recordings at several points.

The pattern for reading the data involved both interpretive and reflexive models.

Interpretive involves the principle researcher constructing a version of what is thought to be represented by the data, specifically what is inferred. This study has been concerned more with the interpretations and understandings of those being interviewed, specifically their perspective as related to the main research questions. The reflexive side of reading the data involves the principle researcher's own role in interacting with the data from personal experience and understanding. As Mason described these models of reading, the final analysis has reflected a reading that captures and expresses the relationship between the feedback from interviewees and the principle researcher (149). The key was to balance objectivity and not read too much of the personal side of the researcher's opinion and experience as to detract from what is gleaned from the data of the individuals participating in the study.

The measurement of actual discipleship taken place is the extent of identifiable life change experiences of those who are subjects of the research. These identifiable experiences correlated with identifiable observations of best or poor practices of church leadership teams' or international workers' experience has shown identifiable results. The data collection categorized all the different questions of the three instruments into their relevant positions in relationship with the three main research questions. Out of these three categories based on original research questions, identifiable patterns yielded nine different files that triangulated apparent connections to models of acceptable real life discipleship taking place. In some cases, the lack of practices became an identifiable data point that was explored more in relationship to the three different participant groups. Each of the positions of experience and vantage points were then correlated into the patterns of data observed.

At the point of categorization, main themes started to emerge. These themes produced observable patterns that showed both convergence and divergence with best practices of STM

training and follow-up. These themes also showed a correlation with findings related in the literature review which correlated together and provided the material for the generated findings in Chapter four of this study. An overview of patterns and related codes are correlated into charts that show the findings of data associated with this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

Chapter Four reports the principal researcher's findings from all the data obtained through the three research instruments to show insights into the relationship between STM preparation and implementation practices, follow-up and long-term life impact. Through content analysis, these factors were examined for any major themes that emerged. Between the interplay of church perspectives and the international worker vantage points, the opportunities abound for life impact with those that go on an STM trip. As one of the Alliance International Workers spoke:

... anyone coming to our *field*, their primary work will be letting them see, throughout a field to see several things that are diverse. We want to overwhelm them with wonderful work the Alliance in our context is doing. A good robust orientation is necessary, whether a few hours on their first day, but you also want to do a good debrief at the end to help these folks process the treasures they've experienced and take it back to their context...the most important factor is a good debrief. Not every missions organization gets this right...we saw some come back without a proper debrief totally disoriented and confused as to what their life was to look like now (after this STM trip) as opposed to a good debrief by another organization where they invested days in participant's debrief where as a result they are not off balance and see what they plug into back home.

This Alliance IW captures a critical perspective on the challenge of doing the trip well with the right follow-up. It is easy to be "overwhelmed" with a STM trip. If team leaders host an intentional debriefing-reintegrating process, the sense of being overwhelmed can shift to purposeful community action. However, churches have a hard time channeling and helping those who have had a cross-cultural STM experiences to apply and effectively embrace real application back home. This chapter reviews the research data with the goal of gaining insights into the process of doing STM well, especially with proper application following a trip.

The purpose of this study was to identify experiences and real life practices applied around Alliance STM trips that result in a lifestyle of discipleship applied back home with the Great Commission in mind. The feedback from the three research questions helped to better understand best practices of preparation and implementation of STM, the best way to have real life impact with follow-up and finally to identify long-term implications of STM within Alliance circles. There are untapped potential for teaching missional lifestyle by strategically developing those who have been on STM mission trips with an intentional discipleship process. How are Alliance Churches in the U.S. approaching STM with a goal like this in mind? The following presents both interview and questionnaire research data.

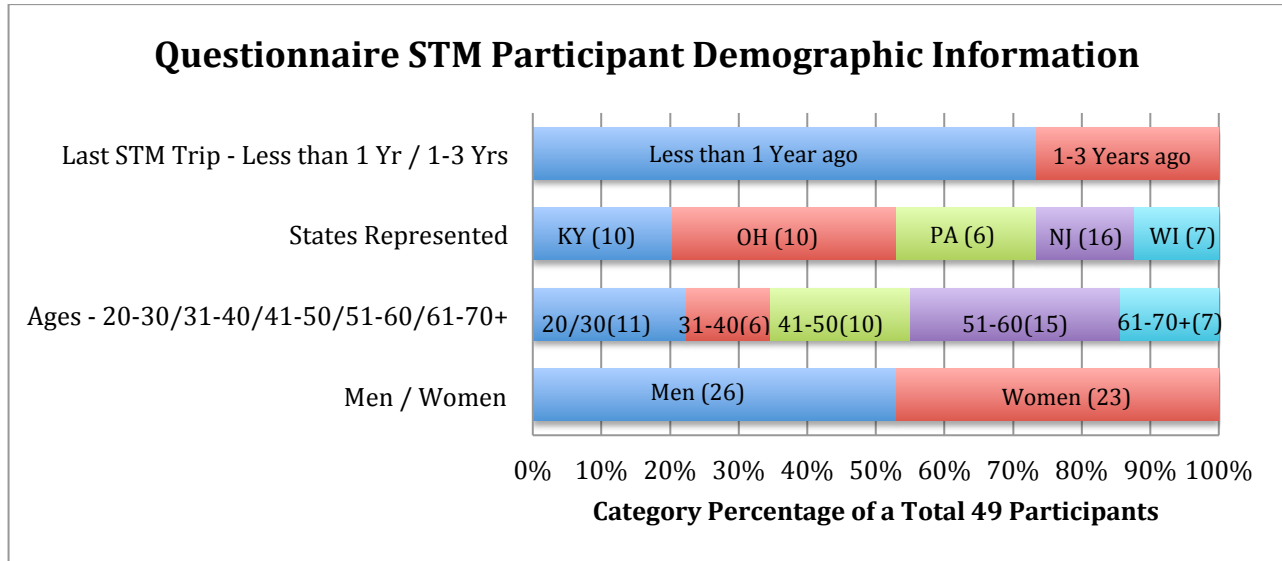
### **Participants**

The three groups involved with the study were all part of The Alliance in the U.S., either as International Workers sent to serve overseas, as pastors/lay leadership within Alliance churches that have been active in sending of STM teams overseas or as members of the actual STM teams sent out by these same churches. All research participants had taken the step of exploring what it means to be a part of sending churches:

1. Five long-term international workers (IWs) who have served overseas with The Alliance
2. Twenty-four church leaders from eight different Alliance Church mission leadership teams who are paid or volunteer related to mobilizing their church for global missions
3. Forty-nine STM participants from seven of these Alliance Churches
4. All participants are a part of the Alliance movement out of the United States

The number involved in the research portion of the study was a total of seventy-eight adults. Of these, forty-one were men and thirty-eight were women. States represented included New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Wisconsin and California. International workers served in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The demographics of those participating in the questionnaire are detailed in chart 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**

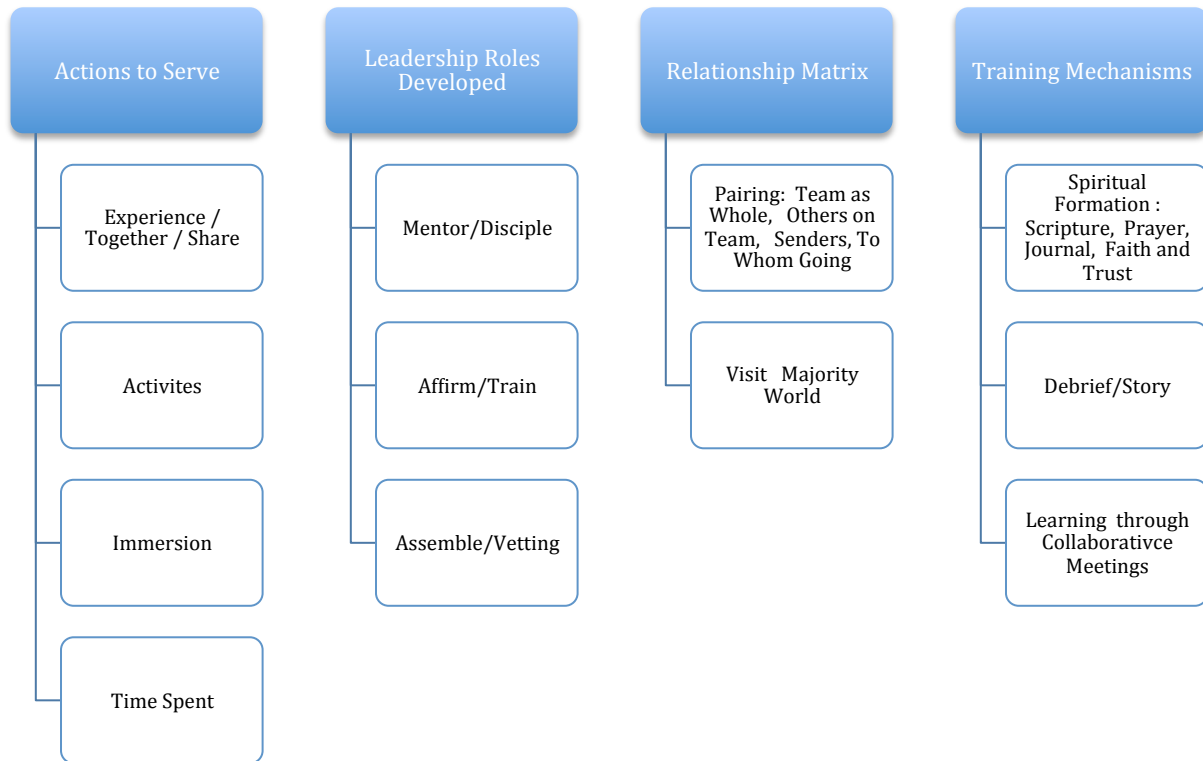
### Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

*What kind of practices take a team from preparation and execution of a STM trip to individuals experiencing actual discipleship?*

The first RQ findings came from all three different groups represented through the specified questions in the instruments of research. Each instrument included questions that related purposely to best practices in preparation and implementation of STM. The semi-structured (SSI) interviews of international workers stood in some contrast to the focus group (FG) of church leaders and the questionnaire (Qn) feedback from those in the churches going on STM trips. The following analysis will identify which questions in the SSI, FG, and Qn helped answer RQ #1. First, the data was analyzed to find reoccurring themes and key words that related to the main ideas connected to best practices. The main categories (and sub-categories) that developed out of the data relating to all three participant groups are laid out visually in the following figure:

**Figure 4.2 Categories and Sub-categories on STM Best Practices**





Each group studied gave unique perspectives related to the four categories. The IWs had the perspective of being on both sides, having been earlier on STM and then as long termers received STM teams. With church leadership teams as part of the FG, there was the opportunity to see the perspective of those that actually sent the STM teams and organized their implementation. Finally, the actual team participants in the Qn interaction related the perspective of those that actually go on STM. To organize the data into manageable analysis, each instrument group was examined in relationship to the four main categories identified by all three groups. There were different perceptions and testimonies as to how these concepts related to best practice and what became the most useful platforms of change to suggest for future STM teams through these observations by the principle researcher. Through the lenses of the three groups, each category could be better understood within the context of the present day Alliance STM movement out of the U.S.

### **Essential Elements RQ #1 Categories - SSI International Workers**

With the SSI instrument, question three related directly to RQ 1 asking about best practices experienced in STM trips that impacted these IWs most (see Appendix D). Question three with the SSI interviews related to RQ 1 by asking what practices impacted the IWs interviewed most, specifically which activities stood out to them. Question four related by asking what experiences from STM impacted their life practices with question five asking what practices are now in use by IWs interviewed. The stand out observation of the interaction with international workers related to the feedback that none of the five could clearly trace their calling to go into full time mission work back to a specific STM trip. What became apparent was that some experiences have come to apply to their present ministries, but they did not remember many specifics of their STM activities that still follow them today. Most of what was related was from mid-term length experiences such as a summer internship or an entire year overseas during their formative years of exploring a career of cross-cultural missions. In several cases, participants never even took a STM trip before becoming an international worker with the Alliance.

Of the activities around STM or mid-term time overseas, three out of five IWs interviewed identified relationships as being the most impactful aspect of their experience. One of the women found that the Alliance workers she interned with modeled discipleship in the midst of intentional interaction with her. Two factors were clear: first, that they wanted her to succeed in what she was doing as part of their team in ministry and life in this European setting, and second, they gave her a clear avenue to interact and ultimately give input to the team in meetings and personal conversations. She clearly was deeply impacted by how the team accepted her at a relational level with one key team member investing in relating at what she called “a real discipleship level.” There was real discipleship taking place in team meetings too.

Another team member spent a year doing a work-study program that included an immersion experience where he got to see and experience the real daily life of the locals where he lived and worked. The most important aspect of this part of his experience was getting along with nationals where he built deep, significant relationships. A testament to what was developed relationally was described as friendships that continued to the present and still impact how he thinks and ministers as a long-term worker (in a completely different part of the world). The rapport in the local cultural context was formative to how he would function in his present relationships in ministry overseas even in a completely different cultural context that is similar in the relational expectations (which are high).

My study abroad program was very reflective. We were living with guys that were doing mission and doing community development...I continue to read their updates, which are full of theory of development...there is a lot of theory that I've taken from those guys and appreciated...a lot in my ministry today.

What stood out from the interviews was the importance of relationship; participants identified those relationships as the source of real life impact. Life lessons were learned in relationships while participating in the mid-term mission experiences which participants have now correlated with how they perceive the world and God's present mission in their cross-cultural contexts today.

Research data from interviews with these IWs also related the importance of giving those in STM the right experiences while on their mission. Three of the five related that on site ministry engagement was essential to their own personal development. They went on to identify engaging in ministry with the local people as one of the most important aspects of STM, creating a deep impact on how teams would experience their on-site involvement. One SSI leader interviewed made the case for giving STM team members a way to contribute practically. For example, to teach English abroad offers practical insight to the participants for doing the same

ministry back home. STM participants are then able to take these practical ministry experiences, debrief and then process a new understanding and how it can be brought back to their context.

### **Essential Elements RQ #1 Categories - FG Church Mission Leadership**

With the FG Instrument, there were apparent perceptions identified by a church mission leadership as a team and also as individuals as part of the team. The first two questions related to the focus group interviews that spoke directly to best practices around STM activities and experiences, and their lifelong impact on the participants (see Appendix E).

Question one of the FGs related most of all to the training mechanisms in place for the preparations of teams determined by the number of times mentioned and the explanations from each team. The question explored what churches do to prepare a team for a trip with specifically discipleship in mind. Each church had anywhere from four to nine training sessions before teams departed for their destination. Training was done more by staff than by lay people. Various resources for preparation were mentioned including Corbett and Fikkert's book, *When Helping Hurts* (which also comes in a STM version), Culture Link's STM Training Manual (found at [www.culturelinkinc.org](http://www.culturelinkinc.org)), and the materials of Standards of Excellence in STM (found at [www.soe.org](http://www.soe.org)). One of the churches developed its own tailored training curriculum by pulling resources from various books and creating a plan that matched their church vision and style of missions. All the groups included forms of training that included multiple opportunities for discipleship building practices such as learning how to give a testimony (in front of their church), outreach activities locally through their churches and lessons in cultural awareness. Several of the church mentioned prayer as the foundational base to all their preparations of STM teams.

Of note was the integration of the importance of relationship into the preparations of teams at more than half of the churches in the study as related by FG interviews. The idea of pairing team members with others on the team and also with some individuals within the church

to function as prayer partners who were participating in sending teams was integral to the aspects of accountability in teams and to the church that sent them. They also got a sense of focus and clarity for the mission and activities related to long-standing relationships with those who were visited while on the ground overseas. One leader related integration of prayer partners in a unique fashion:

We also got the church involved, there were supporters where each team member will have an Advocate that prays for them and has them over to get to know that person before they go. That means you're not alone. It makes a big difference when you're out in the field. The Advocates wrote letters to us to open on the field.

Therefore, prayer could involve those sending a team member at a high relational level. In the one case quoted above, very specific people were assigned as prayer partners to individuals on a team. The other four mentioned prayer in correlation to relationship between their sending church and those they were sending. There also was integration within the team itself, including where roles were established, which more than one church mentioned. A focus on meals was mentioned as important to team dynamics, of acknowledging fellowship time around a table with food as being integral to building relationship (with team members and with others they connected to while on the trip). The one FG group interviewed mentioned that food is often a big part of the culture of their team meetings and was planned into the training schedule and follow-up plans for each STM team.

Both FG question numbers one and two mentioned the importance of leadership for a team. Question two expanded to asking church leaders what were best practices for life change before, during and following a STM team's trip. Robust training was revealed as important along with the challenge of finding and developing the right new leaders for STM teams. Leaders were declared as integral to how devotionals were developed and in implementing a standard of training with the team. Even more, debriefs were completely dependent on the

deliberate intentionality of team leaders who would use group interaction to unpack preparations and time in country most often on a daily basis with these churches. Leaders needed to have a sense of personal responsibility and help the team to not view themselves as individuals but as a whole team. Leadership was seen as a very important factor in the development of relationships within the STM team. In one case, a leader spoke of a “synergistic conversation” with those on his/her team, not necessarily planned, but emerging from the natural relationship of being a discipler to those on the team. Deliberate, as stated by some leaders, did not always mean that a leader had to have a manual of practices in order to impact those on their team.

In contrast, another church mentioned using catch phrases that leaders would use as a training tool which were then repeated over and over throughout the trip and became memorable phrases to everyone on the team long after returning. These were shared codes, simple phrases such as “give 110%” which team leaders could use with opportunities to interact and encourage team members who were giving with strong effort toward the mission of the STM team.

Another code phrase was “be here now” which highlighted how easy it is to be caught up on the cell phones. These were simple phrases anyone could remember even a year after a trip and refer to with each other having gone on the trip together. The highest level of training for team leaders (and some team members) of any of the churches mentioned was the use of Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne’s book *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* which one church used as training materials (especially for potential leaders). Team leaders were part of a vetting and selecting those chosen to be on teams. They were part of modeling the humility and sense of cohesion necessary for teams to function and be successful toward life change.

### **Essential Elements RQ #1 Categories - Qn STI Team Participants**

With the Questionnaire Instrument (Qn), it was easier to identify percentages of qualitative concepts by the numbers that responded in certain ways. The Qn question number

seven asked those participating to remember best practices and experiences on their trip that made long-term impact in their lives (see Appendix F). The top five categorized responses are related through the following table.

**Table 4.1 – Top Practices for Life Change of STM Participants**

Best Practices	Responses	Participant %	Ideas Identified
Relationships	34	69%	With Team, Locals, IWs
Devotions	18	37%	Journal, Scripture, Prayer
Activities	14	29%	Tasks involved
Experiences	7	14%	Seeing, Fully Present
Learning	5	10%	Listening, Being Taught

By far, the idea of relationship stood out with team members at all the churches involved in the Qn part of the study. There was mention of not only the inner team's relational dynamics but also interactions with indigenous people plus the long-term workers from the U.S. The devotional aspects of the experience ranked just ahead of participating in the activities of the trip. Differentiating the last two categories was challenging with *experiences* being what impacts through being on location and *learning* being what is understood through teaching moments from leaders both on-site and from those leading the team.

With Qn question number twelve, team members were asked to describe what they would say to a friend considering a future STM trip. The top responses were categorized through a sense of *real life change* that came out of their experience. Individuals described that they learned about trust, faith and were stretched through the situations overseas going with a STM team. Examples of phrases used by respondents included:

1. The importance of mission especially in my own town and job
2. My perspective on mission and service to others changed

3. I had a complete perspective change in being ok to “give up” some personal things I may want now, that aren’t wrong, but that don’t match up with my feeling that God is calling me to full-time missions.
4. My trip has cultivated a much stronger global understanding of how other people /believers live in other countries. It has given me a greater desire to pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ overseas in general in India specifically.
5. The trip really made me more honestly assess what my spiritual gifts are. Also, I was made aware of how much “stuff” Americans have.
6. A stronger desire for time away and with God, prayer, the act of serving

One person described how their friend found a new relationship with Christ because of their experience on the trip. Key words mentioned also included how people were blessed by going, heard from God and grew spiritually. By the style of questionnaire, there were positive responses on what would be described to friends of what was faced personally while on a STM trip experience.

### **Overview of Data from RQ #1**

The data overview from the three instruments and questions related to RQ #1 showed that relationships and good leadership are some of the most important aspects of impacting those on a team. To understand relationship as a matrix of impacting connections gives full dimension to the trio of the participating groups in this study (missionary, church leader and STM participants), each reflecting on how their perspectives showed the importance of dynamic social opportunities related to STM teams. The interplay between sending church, receiving IWs and those that are on the STM all interact with the potential for impact or the lack of integration. The leadership factor comes into play as to how relational integration interacts with the other factors categorized such as the training mechanisms and how the team will choose to serve both in action steps and in attitude both in training and during the actual trip. There was a surprising correlation of similar insights from all three different groups of participants through the three research instruments of the study.



## Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

*What are the best practices of follow-up after a STM returns home that facilitate ongoing discipleship and the living out of a missional lifestyle?*

With the second RQ, each instrument's participants reflected on how certain practices impacted team members in the follow-up return of STM teams related to how they lived out a deeper walk with Christ with a heart for the lost people of the world (see Appendix D). Questions were focused on finding best practices but also included or left room to mention the contrast of ineffective activities. In many ways, the best follow-up categories mirrored some of the same identified categories for preparation. The follow-up was often related as challenging by the participants in the interview setting. This was observed as one of the FG's teams related the challenges of good follow-up with STM teams:

One of the things that I have always felt, maybe it's my youth "pastor-ness", is when do I ever get to say "mandatory" ever? Right? Like you don't get to say the word *mandatory* except for on the prep side of a missions trip. You can really say mandatory because you still have a pretty good carrot there in the sense that they all want to participate in this trip...so the mandatory is on the front end, I feel like we get the ability to be persuasive, do good discipleship, and I really see this as discipleship 101, such as "here is where we are now and how we approach God's word, to abide, all that". We're trying to build that into them...but the post-trip, your carrot is gone – so you kind of lose that instant ability to have that kind of influence. I think that's why it's personally so challenging following a trip.

The same sentiment was described from the IW perspective, watching how churches handle their returning teams. As this church struggles with follow-up, other churches had similar experience. The STM participant's responses gave some different angles from those that have done the receiving and sending in leadership. The following are some of the most significant findings related to follow-up of STM teams organized by instrument participant groups. The main categories will be identified and examined related to STM after trip follow-up.

### Essential Elements RQ #2 Categories - SSI International Worker

The semi-structured interview questions with the IWs that related to RQ #2 are questions four and five of this instrument (see Appendix D). With question four, IWs were asked about what they learned from leadership that impacted their lives while involved with STM. Again, there was a much stronger impact with leadership on mid-term trips with four out of five participants. Only one participant, who was in high school at the time, was impacted in a memorable way during a STM. What was related most of all was the help of a leader modeling to those that they worked with, specifically these individuals before they were long term-workers overseas. Emphasis was on the deeper life with another participant, specifically in modeling the spiritual disciplines and a powerful prayer life. With another IW, he referred to his experience with teams received during long term service stating, “The key is for a team to be led well to have best impact for life change, the potential of good things to come out of the trip is much higher.”

In relationship to how teams should be lead, another IW explained that too often a team is led with high expectation on an emphasis of the experiential while going on a trip. He felt that people should send less teams and when they do come that leaders should plug their team in by being purposeful. This is the art of helping people in this process of perceptions and expectations (which is a part of discipleship). There is less opportunity for this to take place without a good team leader and shows the importance of interacting with someone else who can influence and serve wherever the Lord would lead. The strongest categories of leadership influence related out of this group were:

1. Leadership role
2. Modeling a discipling lifestyle
3. Purposeful focus throughout leading a team on a trip

The SSI interview’s fifth question in relation to RQ 2 concerned IW’s application of lessons learned on a short-term trip connected to how they minister today in a long term role. At

a personal level, best practices translated into long-term lifestyles included living out what was modeled for them in spiritual disciplines, caring for each other on a team (team dynamics) and preparing for the trip with good interaction. One of the IWs references his experience with long term partnerships between an overseas site and a sending church resulting in much higher long-term impact on those that were a part of these teams. In correlation, another IW expressed the importance of relationship with locals while on mid-term mission. He learned so much about real relationship from nationals which still impacts his present long-term ministry overseas and the style of relationship structure in ministry:

There is a lot of theory that I've taken from those guys and appreciate a lot, it isn't that easy to encapsulate things – I guess the impact has been profounder and deeper than a quick lesson or short lesson...I don't know how I learned on the first trip, if simply realizing the guys (*locals*) that I connected with best were the Indonesian guys and evangelists that were there. I think there is value in really enculturating, and to an extent my wife and I, related with our team, but also some of our best relationships are just *locals* and I think that maybe one of the things I learned was that in the field, don't stay in your bubble. I learned to appreciate enculturation.

Lessons learned in training and relationships can continually impact a participant's life in the long run. The missiological principles that individuals quoted here were traceable back to what they did before going. For example:

Dabbling in different types of ministry was good, for example in "one country" where I got to help out with kids ministry, cleaning, library cataloging, finances, finally getting a taste of everything on a field was impactful, because it wasn't like a solitary "this is the only ministry I get to participate in" – it's easier over a long time, but even three weeks is enough time to show you all those different aspects...in another trip a huge part of what we did would be to spend two if not three hours in prayer and just being in the Lord's presence singing and reading the word, having our own time with the Lord and often together as a team. We needed that because "this country" is a very dark country spiritual, so we needed to cover ourselves also having that time with the Lord...just really relying on the Lord for everything we did there, asking him, Lord, where do you want us to go today...that was impactful even after I got back...

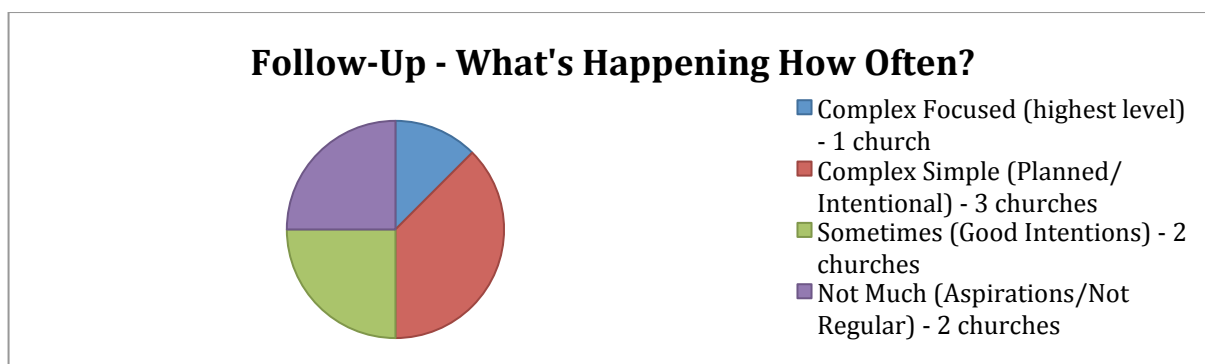
In her case, she learned solid principles of relying on the Lord and learning to try all kinds of ministry which showed a solid missiology of reliance upon God and willingness to become what God wanted for her on the field. Good training is key to being enculturated when on the STM or mid-term trip. Within the team context, knowing each other is also crucial. Another of the IWs interviewed in this study described that new life habits which start developing on a STM experience can result in different life habits at home upon return. Again, categories that stand strong with SSI question five are the importance of relationships and how leadership and training correlate with the function of relationship both on the team and in the local context for missions.

### **Essential Elements RQ #2 Categories - FG Church Mission Leadership**

Focus group instrument questions numbers three, four and five related to RQ 2 in exploring follow-up practices after STM teams return home (see Appendix E). Questions three and five explored what these churches have done for follow-up practices that have been most helpful toward real life change.

Only half of the participating churches had real follow-up with their STM teams. Figure 4.3 conveys the different levels of follow-up within the eight churches that were interviewed:

**Figure 4.3 – FG Church Follow-up Numbers**



The analysis shows that one church had a complex and intentional program in place with three others that have implemented intentional planning for STM follow-up. All of the churches

expressed a realization that there is a need and that follow-up is important for an STM program. These results reflect the reality that only half of the participating churches had any feedback on real best practices for follow-up.

Out of question three, data aligned with four categories connected to best practices for establishing real life implementation after returning from a STM trip. The following table relates these categories and how often the FG leadership teams in similar fashion mentioned them:

**Table 4.2 – Categories of Best Practices Identified Most (Eight FG Churches)**

<b>Category – Intentional Practice</b>	<b>Relative Realities to Category</b>	<b>Number of Churches which Identified Category</b>	<b>Percentage of Eight Churches</b>
Relationship/Community	Preparations & follow-up together as a team	3 Churches	38 %
Prayer / Holy Spirit	Learn to rely on God, Key is a base of prayer	3 Churches	38 %
Leader as Discipler	Intentionality key, Influence from beginning, co-leader	2 Churches	25 %
Debrief following	In mind from beginning, application guidance	1 Church	13 %

Again, relationships are identified as an important part of the STM experience. Community develops through the beginning and implementing of a team. Team relationships build toward how the STM team chooses to hold each other accountable and continue to ask the hard questions of application after the trip. One of leaders in an FG interview talked about how relational follow-up will outlast programs and meetings following a team's return:

I think that's different for everybody. I wish that if we did "x" that the church would set up a post mission class, but I don't think it's that. I think helping people connect to what it was that got tapped on their heart while they were there. For some it was giving, so finding avenues to be generous with their resources. For some, I love rolling up my sleeves and getting dirty. There are all kinds of avenues here, so it's connecting to the local ministry. Don't come home and forget about it. The way that happens is through relationship. There are ten

people that if I see them I will be asking them about how they are playing this out, because it comes naturally. They'll ask me the same thing...what are you doing?

The most likely people to hold believers accountable to what God began on an STM are the people who traveled with them. They shared unique experiences and can honestly ask the hard question of how someone really is living out the missional lifestyle.

Two of the churches with follow-up plans made prayer the centerpiece of how they ran STM out of their church. The goal in each case was to establish a prayer pattern that team members would carry into life following their trip. Part of this, in one case, included a relational connection with core prayer partners who became designated Advocates for one specific person on the team, writing prayer notes for that person to open each day as well as meeting with them before and after the trip. This was one example of the collaboration of prayer that became contagious to a whole team and at the same time the whole sending church.

We also got the church involved, there were supporters where each team member will have an advocate which prays for them and has them over to get to know them personally before going. It makes a big difference when you're going out into the world. Those advocates wrote letters to us, to open on the field...a letter for each day and they knew what we'd be doing each day and many of them really put a lot of thought into the letter, biblically based devotions...it makes a big difference to the congregation that we aren't going to them just for the funds for the trip. We need you all to be in on this trip, it's that our church is sending a short-term team.

FG leaders in one case expressed the need for the leader to have intentionality and for the church to free that leader from logistics to focus on the relationships with those on the team. Again, there is an interconnection between the categories. A co-leader was found to be extremely helpful to ease the load of responsibilities in preparations. It was described that influence would begin as a team that was formed, and continued to grow, through the real life situations they found themselves in together. The more a team leader and co-leader could work to create an environment to build impact through these circumstances and then have proper follow-up in

team relationship, the more opportunities developed for growth among team members. As mentioned by one church leader, the team leaders were the ones who would host various forms of debrief and plan for actual team follow-up:

We try to do a couple debriefs, to do one relatively quickly usually when we get back someone is gone – so it becomes a challenge. We try to do one at three weeks and then one at three months. It doesn't always work that way. The mentality is to get it while it is relatively fresh and then to come back three months later. We've been able to get this done on some of our trip. We encourage people when we set up this session to go back to your journal and take a look at it and be prepared to talk about one day on the trip. It doesn't matter whether we executed on this discussion or not, it gets people to be prepared and think. We think debriefing is important. We recognize for most people that the longest part of their life is after the trip, not before it.

A trip viewed as one part of a person's larger journey is valuable for how a team prepares and follows-up from STM. A good connection into ministry back home is important but challenging as another participant FG church leader conveyed:

We are continuing to try to build a local ministry...for us here; this is our weakest (follow-up). We would say that this is an area that is difficult. When we begin our STM training we start our ministry where we care more about the "seventy" than the "seven". You know? The rest of your life, versus the seven days – a philosophy we hold from the beginning of forming a team.

Catching the "why" behind the long term is also an important part of keeping the long term in mind. Lay people financially and spiritually supporting long-term missionaries are a good example of life long impact. As another church related:

Catching what is long-term by connecting with those who are sent is helpful to learn and realize what support to those who are sent actually looks like. We have a goal of living out Romans 15:20. We want to connect with a place that is not known.

The categories come full circle back to relationships where a connection is observed between those on a team with their leader and the team with the people they serve. There is potential for implementing a new circle of relationships that can impact believers' life practices.

As question five inquired into much the same concept as question three, churches gave a few different perspectives on what was most helpful for follow-up. Again, only half of the churches were doing real follow-up, as related in the following table:

**Table 4.3 – Categories of Most Helpful Follow-up Practices (Eight FG Churches)**

<b>Category – Helpful Practice</b>	<b>Relative Realities to Category</b>	<b>Number of Churches which Identified Category</b>	<b>Percentage of Eight Churches</b>
Story	Internal, public, “prayer” wow factor	5 Churches	63 %
Relationships/Meetings	Lifetime, ongoing impact, organic (not too systematic)	3 Churches	38 %
Missional Values	Ministry opportunities at home, vision of church embraced (missions)	3 Churches	38 %
Debrief following	Required upon return, internal and public	1 Church	13 %

The idea behind “story” as category related to the importance of conveying a team’s experience to the sending church. It also involved the interaction between team members speaking into each other’s lives about what they witnessed in each other throughout the STM journey. There is both the public and more personal, internal side of story to an STM team. With one church, there was the power of conveying story behind answered prayers which was conveyed as the “wow” factor, the reality of learning faith and trust through seeing answered prayer. One church had people complete the statement, “This is the first time I’ve ever \_\_\_\_\_.” The prompt was a catalyst for helping people create real story out of their experience.

Related to missional values, the conversation came back to providing ministry opportunities at home after a team returns. Two churches noted that missional values for a team



should be reflective of the values of the sending church. If done correctly, a team experience could clearly reflect the sending church's vision for and values of missions.

All the churches felt they fell short in the area of debriefing. FG question four revealed how difficult it is to have people hold onto lessons learned. In one case, a church called a STM a “blip” in the life of a person that once back home gets back to business very quickly. One other church said that team members get back to their old routines. Another area a church described where it falls short is developing a missions-oriented culture in the church as a whole. Follow-up was stifled because of the lack of a training plan, the lack of tracking tools for interacting with people who had participated and the quick loss of the “high” of a trip.

Suggestions for improvement included creating a curriculum for better follow-up. More meetings following a trip came up with two churches. If people are already plugged into a ministry before they go, it is also easier to have them continue with a new ministry heart following a trip overseas. One church's suggestion included having a potluck dinner for all team participants throughout a year for building community and continued awareness of how they all are part of the church vision. Creative intentionality for bringing people into a higher awareness of missions should come out of community. Another church suggested pairing people on teams up into intentional relationship groups and that these groups could continue to meet following the return of a team.

### **Essential Elements RQ #2 Categories - Qn STI Team Participants**

Questions eight through thirteen as part of the questionnaire relate to RQ 2 (see Appendix F), as shown in the following figure.

#### **Figure 4.4 – Qn Eight Observations of Follow-up**

### Follow-up Observed by 49 STM Members



Continuing with the integrated Qn, question nine asked about what was helpful. The following chart conveys the top three categories of what was helpful to STM members in their debriefs:

**Table 4.4 – Helpful Elements of Debrief (from 37 of 49 who answered)**

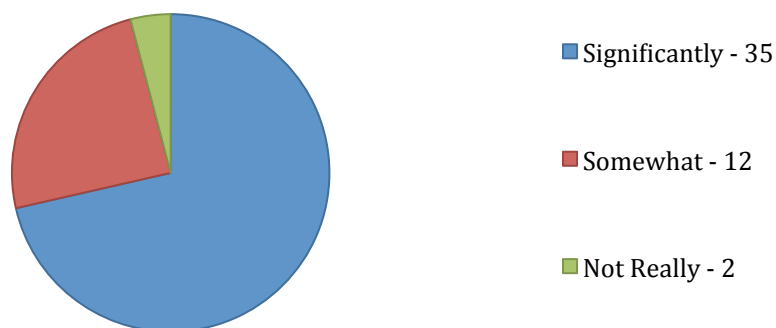
Category – Debrief Helps	Relative Realities to Category	Times Mentioned with 37 respondents
Consider Experience Impact	Evaluation, sharing, take away identification, reflect, share, identify successes	6
Consider Future Application	How to improve, reentry into home culture, future plans, common challenges	4
Relationship Strengthening	Reconnect, celebrate, continue mutual support, later reunions	4

There was no mention of systematic materials used for any debrief such as a book or tailored plan by the sending church.

With Qn question number ten, participants were asked about the continued impact of their STM experience on their spiritual growth or discipleship. The following figure shows how they responded:

**Figure 4.5 – Qn Question Ten Observations of Continued STM Impact**

### Impact of STM on Spiritual Growth



Question eleven asked about any participants' perspectives changing in certain categories following their STM experience; all forty-nine responded with the information conveyed in the following table:

**Table 4.5 – Qn Question Eleven – STM Categories Contributing to Life Impact**

Category – What Impact by STM Experience?	Relative Realities to Category	How Many Mentioned of 4
Mission Awareness / Relationship to Mission	Financially, promotion, appreciation, personal involvement	31
Spiritual Walk / Relationship To God	Prayer (deeper, directed, focus), restored hope/faith, spiritual formation (disciplines, gifting assessed, broken (open to be molded/stretched)	14
Missional Lifestyle Change / Relationship to Call	Promote going, love others including the lost, desire to learn (language and culture)	14

Of the forty-nine, three were called to serve long-term cross culturally as a result of their time and experience as part of STM trips.

Regarding what participants planned on sharing about their trip, the highest response showed that twenty-four of forty-eight (half the group) would respond by telling their friend to go. These were clearly strong calls to go with personal experienced expressed behind the response. Ten said they would tell someone to pray and consider what God might be calling them to in considering being a part of a STM trip. Obedience was the concern with these answers.

The final Qn asked about what STM participants would share about their experience to others, conveying potentially the impactful sides of their trip. The following table lists out what categories of response were related:

**Table 4.6 – Qn Question Thirteen – What Shared of Impact of STM?**

<b>Category – What would you share of your STM experience with others?</b>	<b>Relative Realities to Category</b>	<b>How Many Mentioned of 49</b>
Life Actions	Helping, blessings, participating	23
Life Impact	Change/lessons learned, personal growth (spiritual beneficial), taught through experiences, global perspective gained	20
Life Calling	To serve/enabling, clarity of call, captivated heart	14
Negative to Send Teams	Hard to tell people about trip	1

One story to note related to one person who went on a trip to Paris and was moved by the lostness of the people of France. She recalled being moved to tears while standing in front of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Her story was a key part of a calling to long-term service overseas. One person was answering the questions while referring back to their STM experience as they

now are living overseas. There clearly were categories that had to do with life being changed through the experience of participating in a STM team. The STM participants' responses reflected more positive feedback on what created life impact than was conveyed by a portion of the church missions leaders.

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

*What are the best lived out practices of discipleship that long-term cross-cultural workers find impacted their journey as a result of participating with a STM team?*

The interaction with the group of five IWs from The Alliance represented a much different perspective on STM and its long-term impact on those that participate. Each of the international workers related to the instrument questions from their own experience, but there were clear correlations that presented observable data. To relate the findings of all five SSI instrument questions to the main RQ 3, four main concepts appeared as especially relevant to how STM impact the long-term for these individuals.

### **Short-Term Does Not Necessarily Lead to Long-Term**

All five of the IWs interviewed were not called into long-term service because of what they experienced during an STM trip earlier in their lives which was conveyed in the SSI question one feedback from all parties interviewed. Three out of the five had good experiences with STM and it helped to solidify what they felt God was already calling them to. As one IW said, short-term mission equaled low impact but an internship equaled impactful. Calling in four of five cases came at an early age out of what was experienced in church or because of the strong family ties to missions. The most rewarding experiences with missions before going long-term had to do with internship experiences overseas for several months up to a year or more on location. Relationships which were developed in the mid-term had more impact on the long term calling of those involved, either teammates or team leaders that were invested in these

participants in this study. It was acknowledged that there can be people that find a calling through STM as related by those interviewed but the STM experiences may not be as prevalent as many would think. Clearly the mid-term experience had much more longevity of impact on those who serve for several months up to a year in an internship experience.

### **Relationships Have Long-Term Impact**

Consistent reference to the importance of relationships formed on STM and mid-term experiences was identified in SSI questions one through four. Out of the five IWs, four of them related the importance of relationship to their formation spiritually in conceptualization of overseas missions and in being immersed in cultural learning. Through the connection of relationship with a team leader or sight coordinator for internships, three of the five related opportunity to learn through modeling of the spiritual disciplines, especially in learning deep prayer. Team leaders influenced the most through relational interaction such as leading by example, debriefing giving both positive and suggestions where interns feel short. A team will learn through relationship with locals, specifically through what one IW called enculturation. While on a trip, it is easy to stay in your “bubble” and not embrace the local culture at a relational level. As reflect by three of the participants, some of their best friends are nationals on the field. With a team that is visiting for less time, enculturation is still very important. There is a sense that a team leader in the STM context is a guide that enables a team to find structure but balance this with levels of freedom to explore the local culture and people. A mid-term sight coordinator fits more examples of the impacting leader for the IWs participating in this study. Long time on-site leaders were identified by several participants in this study to have had influence toward deeper impact for life change.

### **Opportunity to Learn Spiritual Disciplines**

The art of living a deeper life while in ministry would apparently impact the team participants not only during the STM but also well into future life and ministry. One of the SSI IWs expressed the impact of taking two hours of prayer and tailored preparation time before departing for ministry later in the morning. The discipline of focus and use of time by the team leader, specifically the purpose to be ready for intensive ministry for the day, is still an ongoing influence into the ministry of the participant interviewed for this study. There were other trips where she had to figure out things on her own but these did not compare in level of personal impact as when a leader modeled deeper spiritual life skills. As mentioned in the book review, the Majority World is a wonderful place for westerners to learn from local believers. One participant described being deeply impacted in his personal walk with Christ through an immersion experience working with locals in a Muslim context while on internship in Asia. A huge part of going deeper was realizing Christ's heart for the lost and being changed into alignment to Kingdom values for an unreached people group. As another participant said that through an immersion experience they got to see the real of people on site. Time alone just with nationals really changes perspective and heart for the person which was described as a spiritual experience.

### **Practical Ministry for Life Practice**

Some of the reflection made by the IWs included insights from receiving teams at their locations of service. One clearly identified impactful practice was to have team members experience real IW life, not artificial, where they could get a sense of the Alliance DNA when it comes to missions overseas. The opportunity to have a long-term partnership with receiving locations was identified as being very effective in giving direction to giving significant ministry opportunities to STM members. In the mid-term length trip, several participant IWs described the opportunity try out ministry in a number of different contexts. With the longer length of the

mid-term trip, there was time to do more debriefing and to see realities and negative of working within a ministry team. Practice of ministry in the shorter team trips translated into real life ministry as long-term workers. As mentioned earlier, practical ministry involves structure plus freedom where interns are expected to make the most of their time but have opportunity to make mistakes and learn to lean on God and their team through crisis, team dynamics and how a team functions without having too much conflict. Practical ministry comes from a well lead team. One of the participants went to a location without a clear leader in place and found this situation to be much more challenging.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Through the triangulation of feedback from IWs, church missions leadership, and STM team participants, five clear findings stood out in the research. Aspects of each one of these findings were found in significant proportions for each participant group even with significantly different angles of viewing the research topic.

1. In reality, within the Alliance STM context, there is limited long-term impact toward a calling to long-term service cross-culturally. *The mid-term model presents better long-term impact toward calling and real life change related to developing ministry skills.* Still, there were some on STM trips in the study who were deeply impacted by what they saw and experienced which resulted in a sense of calling to long-term. There would apparently be a small percentage that is impacted to this level which would be willing to go through all the steps to eventually be deployed overseas as longer-term workers.
2. There is a *relationship-building matrix* of in-team networking, ministering with IWs and partnering with nationals which is significant toward creating opportunity for real life change. The more intentional a church is to create opportunity in networking the relationship matrix, the more effective they are in creating real discipleship opportunities



for STM participants. Sometimes relationships are organic in nature but seeing opportunity by creating expected interactions can create good connections between team leaders, those who are served overseas and between STM members (the matrix).

3. *Leadership roles must be developed* and enabled for a STM experience to be effective, influencing life change in STM team member's lives. This is the foundation of the discipleship opportunity for all team participants who are ultimately coached into a deeper life with Christ by the team leader.
4. *Training mechanisms* are essential to the good fruit of life change and must include intentional follow-up to an STM experience. Debrief interactions are a must and impact more with the creativity and efforts of the team leadership. Spiritual formation is also an essential part of the STM training experience and is an essential mechanism tool. Collaborative meetings both before, during and following an STM trip are equally important to the highest success of life change in those that go.
5. *Actions to serve* are apparently a very real mechanism for creating ministry minded life change in STM participants ultimately impacting how they live their everyday life. Teams should build intentional acts of service into their preparation, implementation of going and then, just as important, mobilize application back home in the States. Immersion on site of a STM team with an intentional servant ministry focus is good for embracing a new culture and loving and blessing the people there but also to embrace your home culture and how you can serve Jesus there too upon returning home.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

As a missions pastor in a large Alliance Church, STM ministries are an integral part of what I do. In my role, it was natural to explore how to do STM better toward a higher level of discipleship for those participating in our trips overseas. With this study, the reason I chose to use qualitative research methods relates to the importance of each unique story behind the life experiences of those who were involved in experiencing what God is doing around the world through STM. I could have collected quantitative data to see the statistics of perceived changes, but it would not have reflected the processes and greater life story realized by those interviewed as well. Doing STM well with real life impact is not an easy prospect and involves the interaction of people involved to go together through potentially stretching experiences (such as cross-cultural ministry). The problem is that we often focus on the preparation without the proper follow-through after returning home. Real life change is not natural and simple with those who have participated in STM teams. The purpose of this study has been to understand what kind of practices applied intentionally to STM preparation, implementation and follow-up lead to real disciple making life changes. The context is with C&MA churches in the United States that are actively involved in sending STM teams overseas.

The final chapter of this study analyzes the principle findings of chapter 4 through the lenses of the biblical and literature review as synthesized through the perspective of the principle researcher. The three research tools' perspectives of missionaries, church global missions leaders and lay people who have gone on trips overseas will be explored from the evaluation of this Alliance missions pastor who served overseas over ten years as a missionary with the Alliance. Best practices for life-impact with STM participants have been identified. The

research reviewed in chapter four resulted in five specific findings which, from my experience and judgment, comprise the final four major findings. In addition, resulting implications for ministry in evangelical churches in the United States, specifically within the U.S. network of Alliance churches, are noted.

### **Major Findings**

#### **STM is a Mechanism to Identify Participants for Mid-Term Missions**

The observations I made prior to conducting this dissertation research would say that I leaned a lot more on using short-term mission for long-term impact. I was one to receive teams and did not often get a chance to see what kind of real impact developed out of the experience they had serving in STM with our team in Bosnia Herzegovina. It wasn't until the last several years as a mission pastor that I started to realize that follow-up with STM is challenging. I found that creating a culture of follow-up to STM experience means having a strong intentional system in place. I was not very focused on connecting STM to mid-term missions; rather, I would just assume the connection was made directly to long-term missions.

During the study, I enjoyed hearing the perspectives of all three instrument participant groups. The group that intrigued me the most was the international workers who were not affected deeply by their STM experiences if they actually had them at all. The missionaries interviewed related that short-term mission trips they experienced were much less significant when compared to the impact mid-term mission trips had into their lives and future ministries. It became clear that realizing the mid-term bridge is important and in this point I started making a clear connection with my own experience. I received my call to missions long before I ever took an STM. There were a few STM experiences in college but the one experience that truly clinched my calling into long-term missions was a mid-term experience in Israel for a summer internship. Living with missionaries or nationals, I immersed myself in the culture and its

activities and found a strong sense that a life like this was for me, that God was confirming this call. It started to make more sense that STM must be viewed in one sense as a mechanism for identifying those that could do a longer mid-term trip and solidifying their impressions and potential calling in some form of a longer trip, not attached to a traditional STM team going out.

Following the study and review of the research results, I also noticed that there were a few of people who had going on STM trips and filled out my questionnaire that clearly received a call to longer term. The vast majority moved into a higher level of respect and urgency to support missions globally but did not sense a calling cross-culturally themselves. My focus with the church mission leaders was very much on STM but still there was some talk of mid-term.

In the literature reviewed, more often than not there was still a standing notion that a typical STM trip over two weeks or less could be a strong catalyst to individuals becoming long-term workers. Michael Pocock talked about his organization's focus on mid-term experience as being production for long term and TEAM as a sending agency focused on developing the next generation of workers. I did not find much talk among authors about how STM could be used as a measure and stimulus for consideration among team participants. In one case, Chris Leake spoke of the importance of building strong interaction with nationals into an STM experience on-site. His observation is that participants who got to know the people of a country at a heart level had much higher chance of continuing on to mid-term and long-term in ministry which would confirm this finding of this study's research. In The Christian and Missionary Alliance today, mid-term is taking up a lot of interest and potential through more opportunities for these kinds of trip. In the literature reviewed, there was conversation almost exclusive to the benefits and organization of STM teams with only hints of considering next steps that would result in mid-term trips for those sensing a call.

Biblical and theological framework would in itself favor the benefit of mid-term over short term. Just the fact of Jesus' disciples spending three years with him points to the strength of community in mission that is strong for living life in ministry with your team of months and years. The biblical review found examples of these interactions through portions of the Gospels, specifically Luke 9:1-10 and Mark 6:7-31. There were similar preparations for excursions and concepts of taking a trip outside of your homeland which reflect similar preparations for STM. The scope of the training of the disciples and also the larger group of seventy in the Luke passage show a development for longer-term ministry in mind. Freedman's perspective was highlighted in the biblical review talk about how the early church was being spread through the empire because of persecution. This would have been a push from the church to think in longer terms of training and development, always preparing to be sent (with the long term in mind). Any short-term ministry within early church had long-term implications to those involved and being equipped.

Theologically, the mid-term fits better with sanctification being a process of growing in self-control and being open to transformation which could fit into any one of the three lengths of service (short, mid and long). As Brooks related in the theological section concerning denying oneself, it involves being able to count the cost of what following after Christ (even to the ends of the earth) might look like. STM is only a stepping-stone in the longer process of preparing a potential missionary through the ongoing training of mid-term level work where deeper life can be honed and advanced to a higher level necessary for long term.

### **STM Life Impact is Dependent on a Strong Relational Matrix**

My personal observations of how a relational matrix related to STM prior to the study were limited to times when as a missionary I received teams in Bosnia and only recently offered more observations through being a missions pastor. Most of these STM teams came out of a

strong relationship with the sending church. We limited most STM teams to being from our partnering church in the U.S. The thought of organizing a team around the multi-faceted relational opportunities within its own structure between a team leader, other team members, the nationals or missionaries receiving a team and the sending church was not a strong consideration from my perspective. I was most focused on my relationship with the pastor and leaders from partnering churches sending a team. Relationship most often seemed to come up with a team when there was conflict related to teammates or with those nationals or teammates our Alliance Team in Bosnia were working with. The STM teams that had strong inner relational connections held together better. Those with strong relationships with our family and the Bosnia Alliance Team did the very best.

During the study, I found that relationships related to STM came up substantially in the interactions with church leadership teams and those who responded to the questionnaire. I observed that the church which organized setting up a strong training time and follow-up organized through a team leader's role could be impacted by their whole team experience as a community. Those churches that had the better organization of team relational structure had better discipleship opportunities. Relationships also came up with the Alliance missionaries, that mentors and sight coordinators greatly helped in their journey with applying their experience in the short to mid-term to the long-term. In two specific cases where missionaries were interviewed, they referred back to very specific leaders over a ministry who took time to invest in them and encourage them.

After the study, correlating the results solidified the importance of relationship as one of the most important factors an STM can develop for life impact in its team members. The core observation in research findings was that churches must consider their role in developing the matrix of relational connections between:

1. Team leader (who is trained and proactive in bonding with team)
2. Team members serving together
3. Receivers of a STM team who they will serve and work along side on location during the actual trip.

The church leadership and a team leader must work together to develop a clear plan of activities and actions to develop a team relational matrix plan. Foundational actions that will become part of a matrix should involve focused kinds of activities that match the needs and trip activities anticipated to be most effective. There are always going to be “organic” relationships that develop naturally on any team, but a church should have a plan in place to build strong relationships for best impact following a trip including solid debriefs and commitments of team members to continue meeting and interacting for accountability. Several of the churches invested greatly in getting lay people to pray and relationally connect with a team. I was very impressed with the implications both before and following a team trip and the interaction these churches facilitated with prayer advocates and team members. Much long lasting fruit and life change came out of these relationships.

The literature reviewed had a solid focus on STM teams and the importance of the relational development and investment needed to make life impact. The literature supported the importance of the concept of the STM relational matrix. One of the best tools for a team to be prepared for cultural engagement relationally is David Livermore’s Cultural Intelligence (CQ) model which was referred to in much of the literature reviewed for this study. In his premise, he reviews four characteristics including CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy and CQ Action that all represent concepts that a STM can be trained in, practice locally and bring globally when they travel (Serving with Eyes Wide Open 111). Relationally, these are concepts that can impact all facets of the relational matrix for STM. Another confirming piece of the literature reviewed was Wilder and Parker’s observations of the importance of availability and accessibility of peers

on a team as related to how a team is developed (184). Only through specific formal and informal gatherings is a team bonded at a level that creates the best opportunity for discipleship and deep influence into team member's lives.

Theologically the research showed that relationship is essential for discipleship to take place. Christ modeled a leader/shepherd/mentor relationship to his disciples even as Stein relates to the endings in the Gospels where there is a commissioning of Christ's followers to work together, to be commissioned together, to proclaim him to the world (619). The corporate sense of working together as team is very applicable to the importance of relationship and the ability to be empowered in spiritual growth to function as a part of the whole in Kingdom work. This is the calling of every STM team.

### **STM Leadership Strength is Essential to Life Change in Participants**

Prior to doing this study, I had experience in both leading and participating in STM teams. My understanding leans into a strong sense of the importance of a leader to the success of a team. I approach STM with experience of leading, receiving and sending teams. I have always worked to be sure to lead well in my role or to support those in leadership well in receiving a team or sending a team. The area that has been new to me in starting this study are the resources and solid backing in the literature of the importance of developing STM leaders. One of the positions I have taken in my present role as a missions pastor is to work with the best leaders to help identify and train new leaders of STM teams. This concept translated well as I found other church leaders doing the same with their STM programs. During the study, I found other leaders all working to find the best ways to develop their leaders. Good leadership of a STM comes out of those that understood the culture of both the sending church they were being developed by and the culture of those they led teams to. After this study, I have been observing the feedback from participants in all three instruments who clearly identified the leader as a key developmental



factor in their own personal development. Where a greater level of discipleship took place, there was a leader's influence and intentional interaction involved.

Literature reviewed corroborated this finding throughout with many saying that a team's success and impact on its members rises or falls on the abilities of its leaders. Brian Howell found that a church could have good intentions but would allow its STM teams to be lead by those with little cultural awareness and ability to create effective cross-cultural training. There was evidence in the literature reviewed from many sources like this where leadership training falls short and is much needed. As Hammond and Cronshaw related, leaders need to have vision and the ability to think out of the box related to how a team is developed and create a well thought through plan for developing their team (174). The literature also pointed to developing a significant relationship between a team leader and the team, that this in itself is an incarnational practice that ties into the potential of discipling and making life impact into team member's lives (Wilder and Parker 185). The planning factors are where a church can best support a team leader and develop them above and beyond their natural abilities (which will be seen with the next finding).

Biblically and theologically there is a strong framework of examples illustrating the importance of leadership in creating discipling opportunities. With the Apostle Paul's ministry, he used strategy in how he teamed up those that were participating in his ministries even choosing Timothy and Erastus together as Gerald Hawthorne points out in reference to Acts 19:21-22 (447). Paul's model was to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in choosing and interacting with those he worked with. Paul's whole ministry was marked by his ability to network relationally and lead through those that he invested in and developed. Biblically, the leader is the one that God chooses to be the catalyst for developing those around them. Paul modeled this with his teams both in church planting and in creating mission teams to go out

where he nurtured and used a repetitive deployment strategy (Peterson 217). As the leader of the early church mission and church planting movement, Paul was the model for how people could be developed and multiplied, a concept that relates directly into how STM teams should be led.

### **STM Life Impact Connected to Deliberate Training and Follow-up**

Before being a part of this study, my observation was that there are a lot of resources for preparing STM teams for cross-cultural trips but little help for doing follow-up well. Part of this perspective has come out of my lack of being able to follow-up with teams out of my own church in Wisconsin. People's lives are so busy and unless there is solid intentionality with those organizing a trip, little is done following a trip. My own experience as part of being on STM involved much more personal reflection, intentional journaling and intentional interaction with nationals and missionaries on sight. I put together my own mid-term trip to Israel working with Alliance missionaries and nationals which resulted in a confirmation of my call overseas and an awareness of an ability to function cross-culturally. I have lived out preparation and follow-up to my own trips where I see that both are important to application of lessons learned. Intentionality is not something that every member of a team can be expected to do on their own.

During the study, I found that church leaders have similar issues to what I've experienced with preparations and follow-up with STM. While interacting with the different churches and the people that participated in STM trips, all of them expressed the importance of a plan on place for activities, meetings and training. All of the churches that participated had a variety of different programs and resources they use regularly with a few developing their own tailored programs. I was impressed with a few that stood out as being very well organized with a clear plan and vision in place. In correlating the results of the research after the study, I found that these same organized churches had a lot of good feedback from those that participated with their STM program. Research also showed that spiritual formation is very important as a tool of

developing and following teams through their journey and narrative experience together. The kind of activities chosen were also a key factor in the level of impact on participants. Several churches talked about immersion experiences where there was a strong partner capable of giving a team good cross-cultural experience as being key to life impact through STM.

In the literature the ability of a church to prepare its STM teams for bridging the divide between their culture and the one to visited is one of the greatest challenges. Part of the challenge is that many churches do not understand the benefits of partnership and a mutual relationship with those that we are working with from the other culture. Borthwick highlighted many issues related to how the Western church can better understand the Majority World. There is so much that we can learn and be impacted by through our brothers and sisters in another country, but we need to be ready to build relationship and not just “do” missions (61). In the literature, there was also modeling of different discipling processes that can be incorporated into the training of STM teams. Wilder and Parker, in their book on Tranformission, enveloped the concept of the STM discipling process into three categories: connecting with God, connecting with people and connecting with the world. Out of these three areas, their plan involved clear mechanisms of development (190). Other examples related to three concepts of an intentional plan with specific activities incorporated into the program of development and follow-up of entire teams.

The whole model of a deliberate training and follow-up come out of biblical examples throughout scripture. Sanneh was reviewed in the theological section of this study, talking about the “translatability” of Scripture as contrasted against how rigid the Koran is to bride into different cultures. We as God’s people are not called into one culture but are rather God is invading every culture and redeeming it. The process of training and follow-up to the STM experience is about allowing participants the opportunity to realize God’s mission to make

himself known to all people, that God is at work in the world. It is a concept that was reviewed as *mission Dei* where God, in his nature, is embedded into his creation. He chooses to have us participate in making him known. Naturally the key is to see how this mission fits into theology – the practicing out of living through life Christ and allowing God’s mission to impact the world (Bosch 491). The life change and training that go into it are essential to STM. Training means that real discipleship is taking place that impacts both before and during a trip but also following an STM trip and applying those lessons learned to one’s own cultural setting.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

Any church out of the U.S. which is serious about doing STM well should consider how it organizes the sending of teams cross-culturally and in domestic settings (which are often very cross-cultural too). Logistics done well (finances, visas, travel schedule, etc.) are not enough in themselves for a trip to be successful in serving and impacting those that have gone on a trip. This study lays out three solid recommendations for every church to consider and research further in developing their own strategy of STM with discipleship in mind. They will include a specific training and follow-up plan (true to church and partner cultures), good leaders identified and trained, and the intentional mechanisms in place to multiply all the relational facets of STM. Out of these three findings comes the result of people that can either apply what they have learned within their own culture (and benefit the ministries of the sending church at home) or take the next step in considering the call to full time cross-cultural ministry by taking a mid-term trip.

The resources are available to organize a discipleship plan which will include pre-field preparation and activities that are developmental during the trip with clear plans for debriefing and follow-up after returning home. There will be just as much effort put into developing an intentional plan of development for follow-up as the pre-training. Leaders will not be just

anyone who wants to go but be those that are best qualified to the skillsets needed for leading cross-culturally and discipling with reentry in mind. The consideration of relationships and how they can be cultivated will be incorporated into all aspects of STM with strong thoughtfulness made to consider the other culture the team will serve in and partnership with overseas. The practice of ministry through STM with these considerations will be much more well rounded and impact all parties involved including the sending church, those who are sent and those that will receive the STM team.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study included three different groups in the instrumentation. They were not equally balanced in their voice into the research question with only five international workers represented in comparison to the eight churches and their leadership and 49 church STM participants. With the churches that were represented, not every team included the same number of leaders interviewed and in one case the main leader could not be present at the interview time. One interview of a church leadership team included two different interviews because one person could be at the first meeting. Also, one church did not get any of its people to respond to the questionnaire giving me responses from seven of the eight participant churches.

With consideration of what I would do differently, I would have presented the questions for the in-person interviews well in advance rather than a short term before the interview. Also, I would recommend that the researcher set up the interview times well in advance to better ensure all participants could be present. The bulk of the interviews were done at a conference where this would have been easy to set up with better preparations for a schedule of interviews. I would also have taken more notes right on location during the interviews which would have been helpful during the data analysis.

There seemed to be enough feedback quantity that there were good amounts of data to review and analyze. It was helpful that clearly every church involved had a functioning STM program in place. Also, the variety of different sized churches gave valuable insight into different perspectives related to the research question. The scope of the study being limited to only Alliance churches and missionaries gave all those involved a similar culture from which to work from. This gave perspective that should be useful to the Alliance church family in the U.S. and benefit similar kinds of denominations around the country.

### **Unexpected Observations**

The interaction with Alliance missionaries was eye opening. Most interesting was the reality that none of those interviewed had any strong ties to STM but were much more impacted by their mid-term cross-cultural experiences. In some cases, these mid-term trips had very significant impact on what would become their long-term service in learning concepts of community, team and cultural adaptability. Another finding that was surprising from the missionaries was the understanding that they viewed STM as more of a catalyst to better relationships with sending churches. There was not as much perspective on how STM could be developmental to those that participate on the teams. The great impact they considered was the consideration that some participants might have a deeper understanding of why a church sends long-term workers and how to better pray and support them. Partnership realities were much more evident from the Alliance missionaries, followed closely by the leaders of the church who found their best options for STM effectiveness in working with partners overseas. Very little was said by the STM participants about partnership in comparison to the other two groups.

### **Recommendations**

The main recommendation to church leaders organizing a STM program is that they should consider the best practices to impact both their team members and those where they serve.

STM should not be done haphazardly. There must be a plan that flows out of the mission of the church in conjunction with partnership overseas where teams can be sent intentionally with a purpose and focus that flows out of relationship. Team leaders should be well versed in the culture of their church and the destination culture and understand the importance of cultivating a relational matrix around all those involved with an STM trip (sending church, team members, those receiving the team including missionaries and nationals and then themselves as leaders).

If another researcher would want to do a similar study, I would recommend that they get a clear sense of which churches in their denomination or network of church should participate. It would be good to know that every main church missions leader is completely on board to not only participate themselves but also mobilize people for doing a questionnaire. The questionnaire is the more challenging instrument of the three used in this study although processing questions is very time consuming. Keeping questions in an interview very specific is helpful, but it is good to be thoughtful in helping those interviewed to elaborate in a way that adds to understanding their views related to the main research question. Being consistent with this with each person or group interviewed will make the study an even better review for research. To answer the question of who might benefit from this study, there will be many churches that could consider these findings that are trying to do STM well.

For future research, I would recommend that specific aspects of STM follow-up programs be examined for best practices. The interaction of STM related to mid-term might be examined more and how the two can better be bridged and complement one another. The challenge of doing STM in our changing world should also be examined and how this might impact how partnership that develops through STM adapts to more security issues. A final recommendation for future study would be to consider how new generations benefit from STM and how Millennials can participate with impacting the generations before them through STM.

As a result of this study, I am planning on detailing a strategic plan for my church in how we function developmentally with STM participants. Part of this will involve writing our own STM preparation and follow-up manuals tailored to the culture of our church with consideration of our partners overseas. Partnership will involve implications for strengthening ties to our workers serving overseas who are from our church and for relational ties to several sister churches with whom we have connected with for years. The manual for training and follow-up will include separate training for developing leaders which is an evident need as seen by the research in this study. The manual will also incorporate some of the best resources for training in cultural awareness and how a team can develop a relational matrix that fits our style of STM. A large part of envisioning this manual will be getting the backing of all the main church leaders to approve and endorse its use.

### **Postscript**

In reflecting back on this journey of exploring STM in my own Alliance context, having been involved with STM from just about every angle possible, it is good to see that there are some solid discoveries that have come out of this study. When churches do STM with good cultural understanding and a plan to incorporate models of discipleship with good follow-up, there are clear implications of real life change for those that participate. There are also possibilities of strengthening partnership and better opening the people of a congregation to the reality of how God works around the world. Better yet, those that are able to fully engage with what they learn overseas once home will bring new life to the churches in the States. Our culture is changing so fast and becoming multi-cultural itself that STM in both overseas and domestic options is a mechanism God will use to strengthen his church and raise up better models of outreach and church health. The world keeps getting smaller and smaller and STM can potentially fill in the missional gap that so many churches are needing as they realize they are a



part of a global Church. This is our God's heartbeat, to make himself known. STM must be done well to function and impact as part of God's plan for those that have yet to be reached who will be impacted in the long-term through the partnership of churches sending short-term. There is a good future for STM.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER – Alliance International Worker

#### *Short-Term Missions as Discipleship*

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Byrom from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have served long-term overseas with The Alliance and have had some kind of short-term mission team experience in your past.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to meet with Mark Byrom in person or by VOIP interview via the World Wide Web for an interview. You will be provided with a list of the five questions Mark will focus on during this interview, which will last for up to thirty minutes. There may be some follow-up interaction via e-mail as results are tabulated, if future clarification may be needed related to one of your answers. The study participation is voluntary and does not include any payment for your time. The interview will be recorded. It is important to know that e-mails and VOIP are not completely secure methods of communication. With this study, the researcher will maintain confidentiality of what is said in these interactions.

Your immediate colleagues and Alliance International Ministries leadership will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Mark Byrom, the principle investigator. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Mark Byrom questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your leadership any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER – Alliance Church Mission Pastor or Leader

#### Group Forum Interview

##### *Short-Term Missions as Discipleship*

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Byrom from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have served as a mission pastor or leader in an Alliance Church in the United States and have short-term mission team experience and have overseen this ministry in your church.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to meet with Mark Byrom in person or by VOIP interview via the World Wide Web for an interview along with a group of two other church mission pastors or leaders. These forum trios will be provided with a list of the five questions Mark will focus on during this interview, which will last for up to forty minutes. There may be some follow-up interaction via e-mail as results are tabulated, if future clarification may be needed related to one of your answers. The study participation is voluntary and does not include any payment for your time. The interview will be recorded. It is important to know that e-mails and VOIP are not completely secure methods of communication. With this study, the researcher will maintain confidentiality of what is said in these interactions and it will be encouraged that participants will also maintain confidentiality it cannot be guaranteed.

Your immediate colleagues in the group forum and your immediate church leadership in oversight of your ministry will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Mark Byrom, the principle investigator. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Mark Byrom questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your leadership any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

#### Short-term Mission Trip Participants

##### *Short-Term Missions as Discipleship*

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mark Byrom from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you have served as part of a short-term mission team in a cross-cultural experience within the past three years and are twenty years old or older.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to fill out an on-line questionnaire as faithfully accurately as possible. You will be provided with a list of questions in this electronic form that will focus on giving feedback on your short-term mission experience before, during, and after you went on your trip. The study participation is voluntary and does not include any payment for your time. The questionnaire should be able to be filled out in less than fifteen minutes.

Your mission pastor or leader will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Mark Byrom, the principle investigator. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Mark Byrom questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your leadership any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Research Instrument #1:**

Interview questions for Christian & Missionary Alliance International Workers (Missionaries):

- 1) What impacted you to consider your aim toward long-term service through a short-term mission experience as a younger person?
- 2) What are some of the results either positive or negative that happened after your trip (maybe another trip for example or the development of new practices in life)?
- 3) Can you name and describe best practices around short-term mission activities/experiences that impacted you most?
- 4) What did you learn from those that led or participated with you in your short-term mission trip that impacted you most in your life practices?
- 5) How do you apply lessons of short-term into your present long-term ministry overseas?

## APPENDIX E

### **Research Instrument #2:**

Interview questions for church leadership focus groups of three leaders per group:

- 1) Walk me through what you do to get a team ready for a short-term mission team experience (the non-negotiables which prepare best for real discipleship to take place).
- 2) What mission trip practices are most effective for life impact on short-term team participants (before, during, or after the trip)?
- 3) Consider what intentional practices best establish a real life implementation of lessons learned on a short-term mission trip?
- 4) Where do people fall short in finishing well and holding on to what they have learned during their short-term mission team experience? Explain.
- 5) As you have led your short-term mission teams have you included planned follow-up? If so, what did you find most helpful?

## APPENDIX F

### Research Instrument #3:

Questionnaire for STM team participants for study churches (who have been on a trip within the last three years):

#### QUESTIONNAIRE:

Directions: Please fill out each question below. Please use the back of this paper if you run out of space for any response. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

- 1) Do you give consent to participate in this study?
- 2) Church name and location:
- 3) How many years/months since your last short-term mission trip?
- 4) Where did your short-term mission trip go for ministry?
- 5) Male or female (choose one)
- 6) Age bracket (choose one)
  - a. 20-30 b. 31-40 c. 41-50 d. 51-60 e. 61-70
- 7) Remember what practices or experiences on the trip that made the most long term impact (Some examples could be journaling through the whole experience, building a significant relationship with another person on the trip, reading through portions of scripture in conjunction with your experience, ...). Please give some examples.
- 8) Did your team have any planned follow-up?
- 9) What did you find helpful (with planned follow-up)?
- 10) Has the trip you participated in continued to impact your spiritual growth and discipleship?
- 11) Did your perspective change on anything? How? (Examples could be your prayer life, how your service in your local community as developed, how you developed a stronger sensitivity to poverty, that your shopping habits have changed).
- 12) If your friend were to consider going on a STM trip but wasn't sure – what would you tell them?
- 13) When people ask you about your STM experience, what are the one or two things that you include when you share?

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