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Abstract

FAITH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSSCULTURAL INTERACTION AND LIMINALITY
Bonding to the Meaning of Scripture Through the Short-Term Mission Experience

John Kenneth Hull

This study evaluates and demonstrates the validity of an eclectic model known as a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction (FCLI) that serves to deepen the faith of those individuals who go on a short-term mission experience. The FCLI was created by joining three variables - 1) crosscultural interaction, 2) relevant Bible studies and discussions, and 3) liminality.

The Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction functions within a framework similar to that of a rite of passage as developed by Arnold van Gennep. In his model, separation, liminality, and reincorporation define the framework for the experience. The same is true within a FCLI.

The data for this study was obtained through seven short-term mission trips. Each of the participating individuals went on one of the seven trips to overseas locations, (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kenya, and Spain). These trips were each one week in duration and the teams were composed of participants of varying age, gender, education, and church affiliation. Prior to departing on their mission trips, participants completed a survey, the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS), developed and validated by The Search Institute.

Within two months after returning home, the mission trip participants were asked to complete a second modified survey. This asked them to identify perceived changes in
their understandings and feelings as a result of their short-term mission trip experience. The first half of the survey consisted of a modified Faith Maturity Scale which utilized the same questions as on the pre-trip survey but allowed participants to identify perceived changes in their understanding of these items based on their mission experience. The second half of the post-trip survey also incorporated the Related Biblical Topics scale, which asked them to choose items from a list of biblical topics for which they felt they had gained new insights and understandings as a result of their trip. Seventy-three of the 101 mission trip participants completed both the pre-trip and post-trip surveys.

This researcher was a participant-observer on all seven trips. By being with them, I was able to observe the actions and reactions of the participants to the dynamics associated with this study. In addition, I was able to obtain immediate reactions to participants’ observations and perceptions as they experienced variables of culture, liminality, interpersonal relationships, and biblical interpretations.

The seven mission trips were each analyzed to determine if the three variables of the FCLI model (crosscultural interaction, relevant Bible studies and discussions, and liminality) were included in the trip design and to what level they were experienced by the participants. This information was then compared with the statistical data obtained from the pre-trip and post-trip surveys.

The results of this research demonstrated that there is a direct correlation between the inclusion of the Faith Centered Liminal Interaction variables and the faith development that occurred in the lives of the participants. Those teams that had the highest levels of the three variables demonstrated the highest levels of faith development.
Conversely, the teams that included these factors the least, demonstrated significantly lower levels of faith development in the lives of the participants.

This study has demonstrated that through a crosscultural experience which incorporates a *Faith Centered Liminal Interaction*, individuals can see realities of life from a new perspective. These new perspectives can then be associated with biblical insights and understandings, which in turn draw participants closer to God.
DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

FAITH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CROSSCULTURAL INTERACTION AND LIMINALITY: Bonding to the Meaning of Scripture Through the Short-Term Mission Experience

written by
John Kenneth Hull

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Missiology

has been read and approved by the undersigned members of the faculty of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism Asbury Theological Seminary

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April 12, 2004
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Chapter 1

Crosscultural Perspectives – The Source of Hidden Treasure
Faith Development in Crosscultural Settings

Faith . . . The Operation of the Indwelling Power

Eight years ago, while I was serving full time as a missionary in San Felipe, Mexico, a young man came on a short-term mission trip with a group from his church. He came to Mexico because a good friend of his had been on a mission trip the prior year, and after he returned, Mike saw something different in him. He was not sure what it was, but it intrigued him, and he wanted to experience it for himself. However, Mike was a typical 19 year-old guy. He came to Mexico for the adventure of being in another country, for the opportunity to be with his friends, and for fun. He was looking for adventure and he was ready to conquer the world. Christianity was not high on his list of priorities in life.

Mike had no idea how much that trip would change his life. The experience in Mexico opened his heart and mind to a new perspective of reality, one rooted in his belief in God. Something changed in Mike. Outwardly, he was the same, fun loving guy, but inwardly, fresh seeds were taking root. These changes were apparent and upon his return home, his father happily informed the team leader, “I have a different son.”

The changes in Mike continued to grow over time. He returned to Mexico with other teams from his church, and each time I saw him, it was obvious that his faith was growing stronger and deeper.
Today, Mike is a committed Christian who is about to graduate from medical school and become a missionary doctor. He attributes much of his dramatic transformation to that first short-term mission trip in Mexico. Something happened to Mike during his crosscultural mission experience that provided him new insights and understandings that led him deeper in his faith.

John Wesley, the founding father of the Methodist Church, had a similar experience. In 1735, a young John Wesley boarded a ship and began a mission trip which took him to the New World where he lived among and ministered to native American Indians. His intention was to remain there and do ministry throughout his life but he only stayed a short while. He felt that he had failed in his endeavors to bring Christ to the Indians so he sailed back to England.

But what Wesley learned from his crosscultural experience proved to be of great value. His own faith was deepened and enriched. Kenneth Collins writes about Wesley’s experience in Georgia saying,

[Wesley] reflected that though the design for which he had set out to Georgia had not been realized – specifically his mission to the Indians – he trusted that God had ‘in some measure “humbled me and proved me, and shown me what was in my heart.”’1 So then, Wesley, the Anglican cleric and sometime missionary, not only had greater self-knowledge because of his experiences, but also was now very meek, perhaps even broken. The Georgia venture, then, clearly had not been all negative – as some have supposed – for it prepared Wesley to be open, in a very humble and teachable way, to all that God had in store for him – and there was much in store. (Collins 2003:80)

Faithful Change

What causes dramatic changes in faith to occur? What enables one person to have a life-changing experience and another not? Why would a situation in which we are serving others impact our own spiritual life? Do biblical principles and meanings
become more relevant through this type of experience than they do when we are at home, living our normal lives? Are there identifiable variables that facilitate a deepening of faith and if so, can they be reproduced so that others may experience similar results?

Faith is an intangible variable. If a person believes in God, that person has a certain level of faith. A person’s beliefs might be as basic as believing that God created the universe or knowing that there is a supreme being over all creation. He may have never seen God or talked to him directly, but faith tells him that this belief is true. Faith can remain simple or basic in its depth and dimension, or it can grow deeper as beliefs turn into awareness, awareness turns into trust, and trust turns into commitment and dependence. So what was it about Mike’s experience that led him to a deeper faith and gave him a new understanding of God around and within him?

As a missionary in Mexico, I had the opportunity to receive over seventy-five short-term mission teams that came from the United States and Canada to serve and assist in the work. In observing these teams, I began to notice an interesting phenomenon.

Within some of the teams, I observed that participants would go through a dramatic change during the course of their service and exposure to the Mexican culture. A degree of transformation took place as each day passed. It was almost like an awakening that was filled with new discoveries, confirmations, and assurances. I would see life breathed into them as they shared their discoveries. A deep sense of peace and joy washed over them as their demeanor took on the characteristics of humility and selflessness. They were drawn closer to God. They went home with a new and deeper understanding of God’s world, their place in it, and their own personal faith in him.
Yet in other teams, these things did not seem to occur. Participants would go through their time in San Felipe and be relatively unaffected. They made few discoveries, and they would return home much the way they had come. They were pleased that they were able to serve through their gifts and talents, but they seemed to have gained little in relation to new insights and understandings.

Curiosity led me to continue communicating with many members of these teams. I found that those who demonstrated dramatic changes while they were serving in Mexico continued to change once they returned home. They were amazed at how they now viewed life from an entirely different perspective. They realized that a newness of faith had taken place within them as they gained greater understanding of biblical teachings. They felt that their time in Mexico brought them closer to God and that their reading of Scripture now provided a new depth of meaning and understanding that they could relate to every aspect of their lives.

These individuals were eager to tell me of the ways in which they had examined their lives and reprioritized the things they considered to be important and of value. They told me of the new way in which they viewed people around them and their own culture. They had a desire to continue to grow in faith, to know God better, to be in the Word, and to live life according to God's teachings.

In contrast, when I followed up with individuals whose personal faith had not seemed to be affected while serving in Mexico, I found that their faith and outlook on life had changed very little. They were happy to have served the poor and most felt that their time in San Felipe was a positive experience in their lives, but they did not feel that the experience changed or affected them significantly. Their beliefs, attitudes, and
understandings were pretty much the same as before going on the trip.

I found the distinct differences between these two types of experiences to be interesting, so I began to research and analyze the characteristics of the groups that came to Mexico and the variables of their on-site participation. Many variables were present, including pre-trip preparation, attitudes and skills of the team leaders, attitude of the participants (degree of ethnocentricity, servanthood, sense of compassion, degree of risk taking, etc.), and whether the trip was focused on a work project or on evangelism. These factors have an impact on team effectiveness and the lives of each individual.

Patterns Take Shape

But, during the course of this preliminary study, through observation, categorizing notable characteristics, and interviewing team leaders and participants, I identified a pattern of three primary factors that appeared to contribute significantly to the impact the experience has on personal faith, and ultimately, on the life of an individual. The three elements are: (1) crosscultural exposure and interaction, (2) relevant, faith-centered teachings (Christian or otherwise) and discussions about the observations and impressions experienced by the team members, and (3) a condition of liminality that causes a state of personal and psychological disequilibrium.

Individually, each of these components seemed to have a positive influence on awareness and understanding, but when combined, they appeared to maximize the potential for deepening one’s faith. The phenomenon that happened seemed to occur as a result of an attachment of the meanings within the faith-teaching to the very fiber of the participants’ lives. Let me explain further each of the three factors.
1. **Crosscultural exposure and interaction** is defined as direct contact between the members of the two cultures (that of the mission team and of the host community) in which two-way communication takes place, and the visiting individuals have the opportunity to enter into the day-to-day lives of the people of the host culture. In this situation, the senses and minds of the participants are exposed to life from a different perspective. The mission team participants are placed in a setting that demonstrates a much broader dimension of reality, one which is beyond their own cultural understandings. This forces them to interpret and make sense of this alternate cultural context, which can be very different from the familiar one at home.

Of the teams that came to San Felipe, Mexico, the degree of crosscultural exposure and interaction was varied. Some teams felt very uncomfortable around the Mexican people for various reasons: they did not speak Spanish or the indigenous languages; they were afraid of becoming sick from bad water or food; they were uncomfortable around poverty; they had preconceived assumptions about Mexicans; etc. As a result, these teams avoided any contact with the people in the culture visited. They spent all of their time together, avoiding the local people. They focused on their work project (construction on a local church or the hospital we were building) and spent their free time together in activities such as playing cards, talking, and listening to music.

Other teams interacted with the local people. They worked side by side with them at the work site, they played with their children (often doing a vacation Bible school), they worshiped with them in their churches, they visited and often had meals in their homes, etc. These teams established relationships with individuals of the host culture and the team members were able to see life from a very different perspective. They came to
recognize characteristics within the culture of Latin America; within the culture of poverty; and within a culture of Christianity that were different from their own.

2. *Faith-centered teachings* provide specific Scripture passages and biblical teachings that are relevant to those things being experienced and observed within this new culture. It involves providing pertinent scriptural references and teachings and allowing participants to make the connection between them and this new perspective of reality. Closely related to this are daily *discussions of team members’ observations, experiences, and feelings* in this crosscultural setting. These individual and group discussions provide the opportunity for participants to talk through things they have observed, to analyze their meanings, and to begin to relate them to a much broader understanding of life, and to the biblical teachings they have just read and heard on the trip. Through these discussions, the biblical meanings gain significance as they are related to the new perspectives of reality.

In San Felipe, most of the teams conducted some type of Bible teaching, study, or devotions while they were there. Of the ones that did, the topics they chose were not always relevant to what the team was experiencing. For example, some would spend the week focusing on prayer and the importance of a dedicated prayer life. One team did a brief study on the book of Revelation. One youth pastor took the opportunity to do a study on “why wait to have sex until you are married.” While all of these studies and discussions were very important and vital to living a Christian life, they were not directly related to what the team members were experiencing when they walked out the door and into the reality around them in this missional setting.
Many of the teams, on the other hand, did use this time to focus on scriptural passages that were directly related to this new culture and their involvement in it. They studied and discussed topics like the poor, compassion, characteristics of Christ (such as humility, selflessness, sacrifice, love for the downtrodden.), the meaning of faith and hope, what it means to be a “good Samaritan,” etc. These passages brought meaning and significance to the new realities the team members were experiencing.

Having group discussions in which participants share observations, experiences, and feelings about what they are encountering was something that was only observed in a small percentage of the groups that came to San Felipe. For those groups that did not, team members never had the opportunity to recognize the abundant amount of information that passed before them during the day or to connect that information with the teachings they received from their Bible studies. Group discussions generate thoughts and insights when people are allowed to verbalize their impressions and feelings, and to hear and learn from the things experienced by other team members. Teams that did not have group discussions missed out on this important method of learning through observation and discussion.

Those teams that did have group discussions had the opportunity to recognize and absorb a great amount of insight through hearing each other’s experiences and thoughts. There was a synergy that took place that multiplied the connectedness to meaning that the participants came to recognize and understand.

3. A liminal experience (see definition on page 19) happens when there is a situation in which individuals are placed in an environment that contrasts with the norms of their own lives. In addition to cultural differences, this situation could include such
things as living conditions, language, foods, smells, social and emotional stress, physical comforts, personal safety, and role modification. The result of adding unfamiliar variables such as these into a person’s life creates a sense of disequilibrium within the psyche. Webster defines psyche as “the mind functioning as the center of thought, feeling, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting and relating the body to its social and physical environment.” (1999:893). In a liminal experience, the psyche is thrown off balance, it is unable to adjust easily to its environment.

This disequilibrium creates a strong need to connect to something that will restore a sense of stability, a sense of attachment and validity. In liminal situations, people connect in one of two ways: (1) with things that are very familiar and readily available, such as their own team members (because of shared characteristics and common values), familiar foods, housing accommodations (such as a hotel), others who speak their language, etc., or (2) with beliefs and understandings that they hold to be true that can be related to those things they see around them. These connections can either be values and judgments that are based on their own cultural norms (e.g., values of money, success, work ethics, roles, statuses, prejudices, etc.), which they then can interpret into the context of the reality of the people and the culture they are visiting, or these connections can be other, more deeply held beliefs and understandings (e.g., relevant psychological, sociological, or theological truths) that explain or validate similarities and differences the participants are experiencing.

When in a liminal situation, if the subjects to which they have chosen to attach are acknowledged, supported, and openly discussed by the group, then the meanings within these items of connectedness will become the basis for the interpretations they make and
the conclusions they draw from this experience.

When people enter into a liminal situation, they can choose to do one of three things: (1) temporarily shut down until they return home causing them to ignore their surroundings as they do the work they came to do, and to maintain the roles and statuses they hold in their own environment, (2) avoid liminal situations as much as possible and connect with the familiar when possible, or (3) be open to their surroundings, participate humbly, and connect with teachings and discussions related to their current experiences. Each team member chooses one path, resulting in different faith development results. (It is common for most if not all members of a team to respond similarly based on the motivation and direction [or lack there of] of the team leader[s].)

Because the very nature of mission trips takes people from a familiar cultural environment and places them in another one, some degree of liminality will be experienced by just about everyone. However, the design of a mission trip will be a major factor in determining the amount of liminality team members experience and ultimately, the effect it has on them.

In San Felipe, the degree of liminality the mission teams experienced varied because of decisions made by the team leaders, interest levels of the groups, predetermined goals that defined the type of work or interaction the team was involved in, willingness to be stretched and challenged by the local circumstances, etc. As a result, some teams ate American food, communicated only with team members, stayed in a comfortable hotel, worked on projects that were similar to their normal work, maintained familiar roles and status levels as at home, etc. Other teams ate with Mexican families, slept on the floor of an old trailer, worked in 110 degree heat, found ways to
communicate in a foreign language, humbled themselves as they served, etc. To survive, they had to adapt quickly because these experiences were very different than those of their everyday lives. I found that the team members that gravitated toward the familiar (hotels, American food, etc.) gained little insight and understanding in relation to the local people, their culture, and their situation in life, and very few made the connections between the realities around them and biblical teachings. On the other hand, those who experienced a greater degree of liminality seemed to gain broader insight and understanding from these new perspectives.

Together, these three identified dynamics (crosscultural exposure and interaction, faith-centered teachings and group discussions, and liminality) seem to form a valuable, repeatable model. I refer to this proposed model as a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction (FCLI).

It is possible that this model could serve universally in that its dynamics are not only relevant in a short-term mission setting, but they could potentially function in any situation in which individuals separate from their normal life environment and enter into a unique setting. This model might serve in other Christian situations (e.g., Emmaus Walks, Cursillo, Chrysalis, student internships in homeless shelters, youth retreats, etc.) and also in non-Christian situations (Outward Bound experiences, Peace Corp assignments, etc.). If the identified variables are incorporated into an experience, it is possible that those involved will be led to a deeper tie to whatever faith subject or sociological principles are being taught and discussed (as long as the basic principles are considered to be true, relevant, and credible by the participant).
This study, however, will be focusing on the deepening of Christian faith, and it will be based on Christian beliefs and understandings. It will also utilize the crosscultural mission experience known as a short-term mission trip as an appropriate vehicle for evaluating this model.

**It's Important Because It's About God and Us - Importance of the Study**

In the Bible, the apostle Paul tells us, “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to *live in him*, rooted and *built up in him, strengthened in the faith* . . .” (Colossians 2:6,7; NIV, emphasis added). Short-term mission trips have always been a way in which individuals can “live in him.” It allows people to serve, help others, give of their time, money, and talents to be more of what Christ wants and asks of them. It allows them to take a week or two out of their lives to live in him, enter into the sacred, and act as Christ did.

But this Scripture also tells us that we need to be “built up in him, strengthened in the faith.” In my experience with the 75 mission teams that came to serve with us in Mexico, I found that all of them came to do the first of these two directives (to live in Christ and do as he did). I discovered that very few, however, realized the incredible opportunity that every mission experience offers for team members to be “built up in him” and “strengthened in the faith” in the process.

Mission trips are a phenomenon that has exploded within the American church culture over the past 35 to 40 years. With the ease of travel and opportunities to go where few men and women have gone before, these trips have become a staple within church mission plans. They provide an opportunity for individuals who are not sensing the call to full time mission service to give a part of their lives to this important work.
Individuals have a desire to give back to God, serve him, and sacrifice through the giving of their time, financial resources, and physical effort. Historically, this motivation has been the overriding goal and principle of these trips, and there is no question that this should be the focus in planning and carrying out these mission opportunities. Referring back to the Scripture verse in Colossians 2, this is one way in which we can “live in him.” However, when team leaders plan mission trips with only this goal in mind, the resulting trips can become one-dimensional.

In reality, the phenomenological nature of short-term mission trips is multidimensional. For those who go and serve on these trips, the inherent dynamic of faith development and personal spiritual growth is a dimension that is as broad and as deep as the aspect of serving. The occurrence of this dynamic has been recognized by most of those who lead trips (because they have seen changes in the lives of those who go), but surprisingly, it has been overlooked in scholarly research and in the planning and preparation of most short-term mission trips. All mission trip designs plan for the fundamental dimension of serving others but not all focus specific attention on the faith development of the participants of the mission team. Figure 1 demonstrates possible outcomes that can exist on short-term mission trips based on trip design when the dimension of faith development of trip participants is considered.
If we begin to understand the phenomenological process of faith development, (which can occur during this experience known as a short-term mission trip), we will be able to specifically design crosscultural interactions to maximize both the serving aspect of the trips and the deepening of faith of the participants.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study will test the thesis that through the inclusion of three distinct social dynamics within a ministry setting known as a short-term mission trip, participants can be discipled to deeper levels of Christian faith, and the basis of this faith can then be assimilated into their lives. The three dynamics of this proposed, repeatable model are: (1) crosscultural exposure and interaction, (2) relevant biblical teachings and discussions of observations and insights, and (3) a liminal experience. Individually, these components can deepen levels of faith, but this study will attempt to determine that if two or all three of these components are combined, the effect is compounded, creating a much
more dramatic impact on personal faith.

Sub-Problems

Sub-problem 1: To gain a basic understanding of the concept of faith, specifically, Christian faith.

Sub-problem 2: To create a protocol for identifying and interpreting personal Christian faith.

Sub-problem 3: To measure the Christian faith of participants before and after mission experiences.

Sub-problem 4: To evaluate the data obtained in order to assess depths or levels of participants' faith and then the assimilation of those meanings within their lives.

Sub-problem 5: To evaluate the correlation between the inclusion or non-inclusion of the three variables with identifiable changes in the faith level of the participants.

Questions Only Research Can Answer – The Research Questions

Research Question 1: Are short-term mission trips vehicles in which individuals can come to understand the Scriptures more clearly and grow deeper in their faith in God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

This question is the primary basis for the research. The fact that individuals can participate in a ministry activity and personally reap unanticipated benefits is considered a given. That does not mean that everyone who participates will necessarily gain new levels of insight and understanding in biblical teachings or in their personal relationship with God. While it is assumed that these benefits can take place through a short-term mission trip experience, this study may prove this to be an inaccurate thesis.
Research Question 2: Do the identified variables within a FCLI, when included in a short-term mission experience, facilitate and increase this new understanding and faith development in those who participate?

The identified variables are dynamics that may be added or excluded from a mission trip either consciously or unconsciously by those leading the teams. The question is, by including them, do understanding and faith levels grow compared to those times when they are excluded?

Research Question 3: Do the three variables within a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction work independently and/or cumulatively to deepen the faith of those who experience them in a crosscultural situation?

Each of these variables may have an effect on faith development. They may, however, work independently or they may have a synergistic relationship that allows faith to develop more deeply when the variables are combined.

Research Question 4: To what degree do these identified variables increase or multiply understanding and faith development when they are combined? Do varying levels of one or more of these variables impact the results?

It is possible that any one of these variables will have a direct impact on the personal faith of the participants when they are included on a mission experience. If that is true, then the question is whether by adding a second and then the third variable, will understanding and faith development grow to even greater levels than when only one of the variables is included? Additionally, does the degree to which each is included have a direct impact on the results?
Giving Shape to the Pieces of the Puzzle - Definition of Terms

This study will utilize theories, principles, concepts, and terms that have been identified and utilized in other research models and studies. These terms will be used throughout this study and they are defined as follows.

Faith

Faith, for the purposes of this study, relates to the level of knowledge one has in the faith source (God); the degree of trust placed in God; and through bonding to the meanings within God’s truth and wisdom, the assimilation of these principles into the person’s life. Our personal faith identity is the degree to which we allow the principles of our faith to determine how we live our lives.

A more significant definition is one given by John Wesley. He said,

Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural [conviction] of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine [conviction] that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” [2 Corinthians 5:19], but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins that he “loved me and gave himself for me” [Galatians 2:20] (Cragg 1975: 106-107).

Deepening of Faith

Deepening one’s faith is the process of becoming more like Christ and drawing nearer to the heart of God, on progressively deeper and deeper levels and then incorporating that attachment into the core of our lives. It is a process that builds within and then beyond cultural definitions and understandings.

Faith Source

Most of the decisions, judgments, and interpretations we make in our lives are based on information and guidance provided by sources we consider to be reliable and
trustworthy. It is in these sources that we place our faith, and it is to these sources that we look for definition, direction, value, and purpose. For example, for Christians, the faith source is God: the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. For Islam, it is Mohammad and the Koran. All religions have a source in which followers place their faith. But faith sources do not have to be of a spiritual or religious nature. Many people place their faith in things of this world, such as cultural norms, governments and leaders, the stock market, authority figures, etc. In reality, most people have multiple faith sources in which they trust and on which they depend. These are usually a combination of both spiritual and secular sources.

**Stages of Faith**

The progression of faith development begins with simple understanding and belief in a faith source and then develops in maturity, potentially to a level of deeply abiding, fully committed faith. Developmental theorists (such as James Fowler, Craig Dykstra, and Stephen Beers) have identified this progression in phenomenological stages or levels.

**Discipling**

A disciple is a learner, and a learner grows through the mental process of assimilating facts and information as well as through personal experiences. The experiences serve to bridge learned information with reality. To disciple someone is to teach and enlighten them with knowledge and wisdom. Jesus Christ is our example of discipling in the way that he taught and developed his apostles. Jesus took a group of average men and through his teachings, they went from being new believers to having deeply committed, mature levels of faith. Their faith became so strong that all were willing to sacrifice their lives so that others would know the saving grace of Jesus Christ.
Jesus taught them through verbal teaching (through stories and relevant analogies), through example, and by allowing his apostles to experience reality that directly related to his teachings. Discipling is nurturing seeds already planted and helping them to grow.

**Spiritual Growth**

Spiritual growth is the process of developing and deepening a personal relationship with God. It is connecting the sacred with aspects of our personal life through new knowledge and insight that is revealed as we mature in our Christian walk. It is an ongoing process that is personal, intimate, and requires an attitude of openness and a desire to learn and change. Spiritual growth is a deepening of a person’s love of God and devotion to Him. It is an increase in awareness of God’s presence in and his desires for our lives. It is the growing realization of our purpose within God’s kingdom, our will and desire to serve God, and our hope to be more like Him. Spirituality incorporates a devotion to God that is exemplified through meditation, reflection, prayer, worship, and commitment. Growing spiritually instills a desire to be obedient to God and directly affects our behavior.

**Rites of Passage**

Rites of Passage are rituals that facilitate and recognize the transition of an individual from one stage of life to another. This process results in the old status being replaced by a new status. An example would be when a boy in a tribal village comes of age. Ceremonially, he leaves his family and the village, performs previously determined acts of bravery and survival, and when he returns, he is ceremonially received as a man. The desired result of a rite of passage is that every aspect of the individual’s life is modified to be in keeping with the culturally accepted norms of the newly acquired
status. The Rite of Passage model, first identified by Arnold Van Gennep, includes separation from society, a state of liminality, and reincorporation back into society (1960:11).

Figure 2: Structure of a Rite of Passage (Zahniser 1997:92)

Liminality

Liminality relates to the experiences in life that are "a chaotic limbo condition of transition" that occur when we live through a period of unknown and unfamiliar experiences. It is "a chaotic time precisely because it abolishes socially sanctioned identities, statuses, and roles" (Zahniser 1997:93-94). A state of liminality exists when participants are in an environment that is foreign to them, and because accepted norms (that provide a sense of security) are noticeably missing, it creates a sense of disequilibrium. This state causes participants to search for new meanings and understandings in order to restore their sense of stability. Because of the psychological dynamics that occur in this situation, those things learned in a liminal state will be deeply rooted within the person's psyche. The new meanings will be carried into the foundational aspects of life once the participant is reincorporated back into their normal setting.
**Pilgrimage**

A pilgrimage is a journey to experience and draw closer to the sacred. It incorporates a structure very similar to a rite of passage that includes separation from normal life, the journey, the encounter with the sacred (a form of liminality), and reincorporation back into normal life.

**Communitas**

*Communitas* is the strong bond that is formed between the individuals who share in a rite of passage or pilgrimage experience (Turner 1969, Zahniser 1997). The shared realities of the liminal period combined with the absence of normal identities, statuses, and roles, draw the participants together in an uncharacteristic, yet deeply meaningful way.

**Short-term Mission Trip, Short-term Mission Team**

A short-term mission trip or team is a group of Christian believers who enter into another cultural environment for one week to one month for the purpose of serving the physical and/or spiritual needs of the local people. In the literature, short-term missions have been defined to include trips of longer duration (Millham 1998, 1992:17), but this study will focus on those of one month or less.

**Bonding**

Bonding is the deep rooted connection established between an individual and another influential reality, such as another individual, people group, social structure, etc. Bonding is the process of forming “affinities that are close, deep, personal, and intimate” (Bochner 1984:544). Bonding has the potential to occur most dramatically when an individual leaves an environment which defines his or her existence and that is
considered to be the norm, and enters into a situation that is radically different. Because of these dramatic changes, the individual will likely have a bonding experience with the nearest form(s) of meaning that provide stability, security, and guidance. Once bonding has occurred, the individual will look first and foremost to that source for meaning, connectedness, direction, and a sense of belonging. The most commonly recognized form of bonding is between a new born baby and its mother and/or father.

**Bonding to Meaning**

Bonding to meaning is a deep rooted connection an individual or a community makes with principles, values, and beliefs. The meanings to which the connection is made are not simply accepted as being true, they become foundational to and intertwined with every aspect of the individual’s life (Zahniser 1997:108).

**Form and Meaning**

Forms are things within a culture that are obvious, observable, or audible. They serve specific functions. One of those functions is to convey meaning. The form itself is not the meaning; it conveys a meaning and participates in it. An example is the cross. The cross is a form that is visible. By itself, it is two pieces of wood nailed together, but the meaning that it conveys to Christians is the foundation of their religious beliefs. One form can express different meanings in different cultures, and likewise, a meaning can be conveyed through various forms (Kraft 1979:64-69).

**Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction**

A *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* is the model proposed in this study. It is composed of three social dynamics that individually can help deepen the faith of participants, but when combined in a situation in which an individual is separated from
his or her normal life, it is possible that they can provide an environment that increases the likelihood of significant faith development and spiritual growth. The three variables are 1) crosscultural exposure and interaction, 2) relevant faith-centered teachings (Christian or otherwise) and discussions of observations and insights, and 3) a condition of liminality that causes a state of disequilibrium.

Notes

1 “Faith is the beginning of that which is eternal, the operation of the indwelling Power which acts from within outwards and round about . . . pours itself out into our whole mind, runs over into our thoughts, desires, feelings, purposes, attempts, and works, combines them all together into one, and makes the whole man its one instrument . . . one embodied act of faith.” J. H. Newman (1801 – 1890)

2 Faith-Centered Liminal Interactions are not specific to Christianity. Given a situation in which individuals are separated from their known environment, exposed to and interact with another culture, and live in a liminal state, these individuals will gravitate to known truths to provide stability in this time of disequilibrium. If they are Christians and Christian principles are being taught, they will identify these principles to those things they are seeing and experiencing. If, however, they are Hindus, or Muslims, or Hare Krishna, for example, and they are discussing relevant principles held to be true by their own faith, they will gain new insight and understanding into those principles.

3 Faith-centered, in this context, refers to teaching that is specific to the defining aspects of a center of power and value in which individuals believe and commit their lives. For the purposes of this study, the source of faith is God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit and Faith-centered teachings will be those taught in the Bible.

4 This study will evaluate impressions of assimilation in the lives of the research participants. The research considers the impact the mission trip participants experienced a month or two after their return. Parameters of the study do not permit analysis of assimilation over longer periods of time.
Chapter 2

The Structure for Faith Development - Theoretical Framework: A Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction

Religious belief and the faith that develops in the source of that belief can be the basis for shaping a person’s worldview and the choices they make in life. Theoretically, as belief and faith in a source grow, changes should correspondingly begin to take place in that person’s life which reflect the principles and teachings associated with the faith source. The assumptions of this study are based on this theoretical premise.

As stated previously, through twelve years of observation and analysis that have included field studies, review of the literature, interviews, and personal testimonies, I have identified an eclectic theoretical model, a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction (FCLI). I believe the model to be valid, universal (as an instrument for developing faith), and repeatable in various settings.

A FCLI is comprised of: 1) crosscultural interaction, 2) relevant faith-centered teachings and discussions, and 3) liminality (See Figure 3). An individual comes into this situation with a certain level of faith (this study is considering the Christian faith) and they separate from their normal environment and enter into a different cultural setting. Through interaction with the dynamics of the culture and with the people living within that culture, hearing and discussing Christian teachings in reference to what is being observed, and experiencing a state of liminality, the participant will then return to their normal environment with a deeper level of Christian faith.
The three components of the model interrelate. A dynamic of awareness begins to take place in which one component provides insight into another, which provides insight into the third, and this then increases awareness within the first at a deeper level. As participants experience the intertwining dynamics of these variables, their observations and impressions increase, allowing them to gain new insight and understanding.

The separation of the participant from their normal life to enter into a crosscultural setting is a necessary component for this process to occur, as our normal environment is naturally all-consuming. Our minds can only focus on so many things. Each one of us knows what a busy day is like. Almost every minute of our day is filled with cell phones, e-mail, family needs, work responsibilities, deadlines, stress, television news, traffic, and bills to pay. When we are in our own environment, it is almost impossible for our minds to shut off all of the things that require our attention so that we can focus on new and different things that can provide meaningful insight and
understandings in our lives. By separating from our own environment and entering into another, we free our minds (for that period of time) to be able to see, hear, smell, and touch another perspective of life. In this environment, the mind is capable of receiving information that it otherwise would be forced to push aside.

In his article, “Being Transformed: An Inner Way of Spiritual Growth,” Edward Thornton tells this story:

A spiritual guide once received a university professor who came seeking spiritual direction. In serving tea, he poured his visitor’s cup full, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer stand it. “It is overfull,” cried the professor. “No more will go in!” “Like this cup,” the spiritual guide said, “you are full of your opinions and speculations. How can I show you the spiritual way unless you first empty your cup?” (Thornton 1984:62)

The same is true of those of us who want to grow spiritually. We are so full of our own interpretations, opinions, and speculations that often we are unable to accept or understand additional insight or meaning. “To make progress on the path of spiritual growth requires us to shift attention from our heads to our hearts” (Thornton 1984:62). In a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction, participants separate from their known world and enter into another setting where they can empty their cups of much of what consumes their minds each day allowing them to be open to receive new information and new understanding. Their hearts and their minds can work together.

In a FCLI, once separation has occurred, participants are placed in another cultural setting. Because the participants are now in an environment that is very different from their norm, a state of liminality is very likely to occur.

The introduction of any one of the three variables (in the proposed model) will provide an increased opportunity for the participants to gain new perspectives on life and
Hopefully, deeper understandings of relevant biblical teachings as well. It is the hypothesis of this study that as a second and then the third FCLI variable are introduced, there is a multiplying effect that takes place in relation to understanding and insight, and participants are more likely to bond to meanings of Scripture. As each of the three variables is introduced, biblical meanings become more tangible as these meanings are interwoven with the realities of this newly encountered culture and worldview.

Theoretically, this results in spiritual growth and deepening of faith. This diagram (Figure 4) metaphorically demonstrates that spiritual growth increases and faith deepens as the three variables are introduced.

Figure 4: Faith Development and Spiritual Growth in a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction
In this hypothetical illustration (the order of inclusion of the three dynamics was chosen randomly), after separating from normal life, an individual enters into this social setting with an existing level of understanding of biblical meanings. When the first dynamic is introduced (in this example, relevant biblical passages are studied and the person is able to discuss his or her observations of the culture around them), that person begins to gain new insight into the Scriptures. If a second dynamic is introduced and the participant directly interacts with the people of the culture on a personal level (crosscultural interaction), the meanings within Scripture will gain even more depth and breadth. If the person is also experiencing a state of liminality, causing him or her to search for personal relevance and stability, they will be open to understand the biblical meanings at a much deeper level. With the inclusion of these three variables, theoretically, there will be a much higher probability that the deep significance of these new biblical understandings will be received in such a powerful way, that the participants will bond to these meanings and that these new understandings will in turn, impact their lives dramatically (once they are reincorporated back into their normal lives).

The three components combined should create a synergy that results in a total effect that is far greater than the effects of each individual component. This theory is illustrated in Figure 5, which gives a hypothetical cross-sectional representation of the kinds of experiences people can have on short-term mission trips.
Figure 5: Faith Development in Relation to Short-Term Mission Trip Involvement (Hypothetical)

Theoretically, the combination of the identified variables causes a greater effect to occur because: 1) "Old formations break up as unfamiliar surroundings, smells, languages and people cause a sense of chaos and uncertainty. . . . one's new found location on the mission field, outside of familiar boundaries and margins, will impact one's formation in such a way that transformation will follow close behind." (Moen 1992:13); 2) crosscultural interaction allows life to be seen and experienced through a very different worldview perspective; 3) faith is awakened and nurtured when relevant biblical teachings are brought to light in this environment because the participants can see the scriptural meanings come to life in a totally new perspective through the lives of the people they came to serve; and 4) group discussions of thoughts, observations,
impressions, and feelings related to what they are experiencing as they are immersed in this new and different culture, serve to bring to light new understandings to what have been, closely held beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.

The process of reflection also serves to heighten cognitive dissonance. The growing need to reduce this unbearable dissonance forces upon initiates a general reorientation in self-understanding and in perception of appropriate social obligation and behavior. . . . this “intensely creative personal process” results in the bonding to meaning so important in Christian discipling. (Zahniser 1997:97)

Combining these three variables provides an environment in which individuals can revisit Scripture passages they have probably read many times over the years and see them through new eyes. It opens the door to perspectives that may be so far outside of their own worldview that it requires them to reevaluate and make sense of what they are seeing, hearing, and feeling. It challenges them to survive in a setting where they are (in relation to Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14:25-33) so far “out of the boat” that they have to trust in God. Their own status and abilities don’t function the same way in this different environment. They begin to lean on God the way God wants them to. By combining these three variables, it gives participants the opportunity to look into the eyes of those they are serving and to participate in their needs, hurts, and joys - just as Jesus did. It creates an environment in which they can be vulnerable, genuinely care about individuals, humble themselves, offer love unselfishly, and begin to experience the teaching that the disciples experienced as Jesus walked with them from village to village.

These experiences can draw us closer to God and the new meanings and understandings we gain can go deep to the core of our being. This experience is what is meant by bonding to meaning. They are no longer meanings that we acknowledge and recognize; they become meanings we exemplify through our lives.
This process is the deepening of our personal faith. Through this deepened faith comes an increased realization that living a Christian life and being a Christian witness is more than being a good person and simply telling people what we believe. It is more than sitting in a pew, attending a Bible study, or participating on church committees. Deepened faith is having an inner transformation that allows individuals to live out more fully the meanings within the Scriptures, in thought, word, and deed. Deepened faith transforms a person into one who sees the world through different eyes, who feels with a warmer heart, who is no longer owned by material objects, status, and wealth, but rather owned by God, who touches those needing a touch, who feels what others feel, and who places God before anything else in life. With deepened faith comes the realization of the depth and breadth of God's presence in every aspect of life. Deepening one's faith means moving from an intellectual understanding of the Bible to living out the meanings that are within the Bible. Deepened faith is the process of being transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ.

It is the hypothesis of this study that a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction*, when used in a short-term mission trip experience, helps guide a participant to deeper faith. This happens as a result of participants taking objective knowledge and bringing it to life through subjectively understood realities. Information that is subjectively encountered is more believable and goes deeper into the mind and soul, causing a bonding to the meanings.

To validate the design of this model and its components, we will take a brief look at some of the information provided by scholars in related fields. James Fowler identified three fundamental principles underlying the theories of structural
developmentalists (which include Piaget, Kohlberg, Erickson, Niebuhr, Tillich, and Fowler) (Fowler 1981:98-101). As we will see, these principles relate directly to the three dynamics in a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction (FCLI) and serve to validate their legitimacy and effectiveness.

First, Niebuhr and Tillich viewed faith from an epistemological focus which is the study of how we know. Themes within their writings view faith "as a way of seeing the world." Fowler further observed that, "Faith for them is a kind of knowing, a constructing of the world in light of certain disclosures of the character of reality as a whole that are taken as decisive. . . . Ways of being and ways of seeing are reciprocal" (Fowler 1981:98).

In an FCLI, being in a crosscultural setting with exposure to and interaction with the local people, participants experience new "disclosures of the character of reality." This new perspective of reality, if not ignored, filters into the minds of the participants and their realities of "knowing" take on new dimensions. Once you "know," then the way you "see" the world is redefined, and that knowledge impacts the individual's dimension of faith.

Second, in discussing the validity of his defined stages, Fowler points out the overlap of the Piaget/Kohlberg models' philosophies with those of his model (in spite of the differences between the Piaget/Kohlberg models of cognitive and moral stages, respectively, and Fowler's stages of faith which are based on knowing and valuing). Fowler states, ". . . in a holistic approach to the human construction of meaning, account must be given of the relations of reasoning to imagination, of moral judgment making to symbolic representation, of ecstatic intuition to logical deduction" (1981:99).
In a FCLI, the introduction of biblical meanings in a crosscultural setting provides an environment in which reasoning can be tied to imagination, biblical morals can be tied to symbolic representations, and intuition can be tied to logical deduction. Crosscultural interaction is the dynamic that provides the impetus for this phenomenon to occur. The group discussions allow for these impressions, representations, and intuition to be shared in relation to biblical meanings, and they provide a forum for sharing insights and new understandings with others in the group. This model provides an environment in which "the human construction of meaning can take place."

Third, the structural developmentalists have identified interaction as a necessary component in facilitating movement from one stage of faith to another. Fowler states:

The structural-developmental interactional approach calls us to view development as resulting from the interchange between an active, innovative subject and a dynamic, changing environment. . . . Adaptation is invention; it is the activation and creative employment of our genetically potentiated structuring (knowing and acting) capacities. . . . The environment "pushes back" against our structuring activities with pattern and reality of its own. . . . Faith is an interactional process. . . . Structural development occurs when, in interaction of subject and environment, the subject must construct new modes of knowing and acting in order to meet new challenges of the environment. Development results from efforts to restore balance between subject and environment when some factor of maturation or of environmental change has disturbed a previous equilibrium. Growth and development in faith also result from life crises, challenges and the kinds of disruptions that theologians call revelation. Each of these brings disequilibrium and requires changes in our ways of seeing and being in faith. (Fowler 1981:100-101) (Italics in the original, bold emphasis added)

These findings, corroborated by Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler, validate the incorporation of a liminal experience within a faith-centered interaction for the purposes of deepening faith. When there is an interaction between "subject and environment" (mission trip participants and the visited cultural setting), participants experience a sense of disequilibrium, and this forces them to "construct new modes of knowing and acting."
The sense of disequilibrium leads to forced evaluation, adaptation, and "changes in our ways of seeing and being in faith." This, as Fowler states, is a dynamic process that leads to structural development, in this case, faith development.

**Delimitations and Generalizability**

1) While this study will focus specifically on experiences of those who believe in the Christian faith, the generalizability of the theory should be relevant in other similar situations that include the three identified variables. This study will only consider the Christian experience in evaluating this model and will not consider other situations.

2) Likewise, there are many Christian experiences that could incorporate this model (such as an Emmaus Walk, ministry retreats, inner city work projects, a trip to Israel). For the purposes of this study, however, I will only be evaluating its use within the crosscultural ministry experience known as a short-term mission trip.

3) This study will not attempt to establish new theories toward the development of levels of faith or to validate or disprove theories which have already been published concerning social development and/or faith development.

4) This study will be utilizing short-term mission trips as the basis for gathering data. Because of the parameters of the study, the research will be focusing on the faith development dynamics of the mission team participants and not on those of the host culture.

5) Leadership characteristics or dynamics are not being evaluated in this study. The three variables being evaluated can be included or excluded (to varying degrees) under strong leaders or weak leaders, experienced leaders or inexperienced leaders,
theologically trained leaders or untrained leaders. The dynamics of the studied variables are independent of leadership characteristics.

6) The team identified purpose for going on the trip is not a contributing factor to this study. The reason for going is a separate and unrelated factor from the dynamics of faith development being evaluated.

7) This study will endeavor to identify personal faith development through the eyes of those who participate in short-term mission experiences. This will be done partly through the use of the Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, et al. 1993) and through participants’ impressions of new understandings and the related assimilation in their lives. The study will not attempt to identify levels of faith (such as those utilized by James Fowler).

**Summary**

Faith is an aspect in our lives that begins with our first knowledge of God and hopefully, it continues to grow and develop. For some, that growth is minimal. For others, it never stops growing. As individuals, we choose whether or not to believe in Jesus Christ. If we believe in Him, then we also have to decide how well we want to know Him, how we will serve Him, and how much we are willing to surrender to Him. If we choose, consciously or unconsciously, to pursue God, one of the primary tools given to us to know Jesus and to grow in our knowledge of him is the Holy Bible. The teachings in the Bible give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God’s greatness, the deep love that he has for us, and the ways in which he wants us to live our lives. Understanding these teachings will lead us into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ,
and through this relationship, our faith will deepen and grow. “Faith comes from hearing
the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

For those of us called to the ministry, we have a responsibility to nurture and
shepherd those who look to us for spiritual guidance. In everything we do, we need to
pursue methods and practices that will enhance the spiritual growth of each and every one
of these individuals.

Short-term mission trips are a growing part of church ministry in the Western
world. They have increased in number and each year, tens of thousands of individuals
travel to another cultural setting to serve God and be a witness for Jesus Christ. Service
and giving are the primary goals that each team strives to accomplish; but these should
not be the only goals. A dynamic environment of life changing awareness,
understanding, and enlightenment is as present in these settings as the air itself, but in
most cases, this incredible life changing dynamic is missed, usually because it goes
unseen, hidden behind the predetermined goals that we have chosen. Lost are golden
opportunities to lead participants to a deeper level of understanding, a deeper level of
awareness, and a deeper level of faith. Unless team leaders understand the potential that
exists for faith development and spiritual growth, the opportunity can be lost.

Are there dynamics within this ministry setting that have the potential to open
hearts and minds to know Christ better? Can a mission trip serve two purposes, one to
serve others and another to deepen the faith of those who go? What are the dynamics that
create this environment, and how can we utilize them to lead our people into a deeper
personal faith in God? This study seeks to answer these questions.
Chapter 3

The Links that Strengthen the Foundations of Faith:
Theoretical Principles Related to the Research Study

"If people have the heart of Christ, they will begin to respond as Christ responded" (Richard McClain 2001). Having the heart of Christ is not something we gain in a moment or even begin to grasp over a lifetime of intellectual study. To have the heart of Christ we must first come to know Christ, to gain more and more insight into his life, his humility, his teaching, and his sacrifices. The more we have the heart of Christ, the more we begin to respond as Christ in all that we do. As Christians, this should be our ultimate goal.

So how do we gain more insight, how do we go about the process of knowing Christ? Are there things we can do which will increase the opportunity we have to grow in our faith? What are some of the accepted theories and principles that we know to be true, that if combined would produce increased maturity of faith within Christian believers?

Schools of theological, philosophical, and psychological thought have produced concepts and theories that are held to be true. Many of these dynamics act independently, producing reactions that are considered predictable. But just as chemicals or elements that are combined produce a unique and different reaction (two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen), so too can these identified dynamics produce phenomenological reactions that might not have been predicted.
My thesis is that the theories and principles identified in this chapter work together in a dynamic fashion to produce a reaction that results in deepened faith. In this chapter, I will identify many of these theories and principles and evaluate each in order to produce a viable framework for this new faith development model.

Theoretical Framework for Interpreting the Data Through a Review of Relevant Literature

The theoretical framework that will be utilized in this study is the proposed eclectic model that I identify as a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction. I discovered this model drawing on principles and theories that have been researched and that are widely accepted. These include:


which provides the basis for identifying growth and depth of faith.


4) The phenomenon of *communitas* as identified by Victor Turner (1969) (Zahniser 1997). This sense of connectedness plays a role in linking teachings with observations and in receiving validation of these new insights.


6) Milton Bennett’s developmental model of intercultural sensitivity which focuses on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral progression that occurs in an intercultural situation.


The following will provide greater detail concerning these principles and theories through a review of relevant literature and by identifying the relationship of each to the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction model. This information is divided into three categories: Faith and Related Principles; Structural Models and Related Principles; and Crosscultural Interaction Models.

Faith and Related Principles

During my fifth year living in Mexico, a mission team came to San Felipe from a church in Houston, Texas. Part of the group had been with me the previous year but the majority of the team members were not only new to San Felipe, but also new to the experience of serving God in a crosscultural setting. Those who came for the first time were filled with anticipation, partly created by the feeling of stepping into the unknown and partly because of the enthusiasm of those who had been there the previous year.

One member of the team was named Bill. I tell you his story because of the dramatic impact this trip had on his personal faith. Bill is a doctor. When I met him, I could tell that he was successful and self-confident. I later came to learn that he was a good, honest man but his religious beliefs and practices were limited to social gatherings with friends in the church and church attendance on Sunday mornings (unless there was a Dallas Cowboy football game on television). When he arrived with this mission team, he told me that he had come to work, to build the new hospital.

Bill was asked to be the leader of the construction team and as the leader, his goal was to accomplish as much during the week as possible. His frustration kicked in on the
first evening when I told the team that we would only be working on the hospital for half of each day while they were there. The other half of each day would be spent with the people of the local, low income community and conducting a vacation Bible school for the local children.

For the first few days, I could see his frustration increase each time I announced that our work on the hospital was finished for the day (usually around 1 o'clock in the afternoon). Then, we would prepare for the vacation Bible school (organizing craft materials, learning songs, preparing Bible stories and dramas, etc.). Bill faithfully participated, but he couldn't understand my logic. He saw this as valuable time wasted that could have been used to finish more of the hospital. Then, on the third day of the trip, as he was driving to pick up a bag of ice, it hit him like a ton of bricks, “the main purpose for us being here isn’t to build this hospital, it is to touch the lives of the local people.” At that moment, he realized that the ministry of labor was needed and beneficial, but the ministry that was most important was in sharing love and kindness with people who have suffered all of their lives, and to be a witness of Christ.

All of a sudden, the meanings within the Scripture verses we had been studying about Jesus Christ, (his compassion, his love for all of his children, and his desire for them to know him), came alive in his mind. For the first time, he began to understand the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ in a new and exciting way. It was like taking words off of the page and suddenly seeing them as beautiful, three dimensional objects. He began to see, not only the relationship between God’s Word and God’s love for these people, but also the relationship between God’s Word and the love God had for Bill.
The time Bill spent with the local people and in the team Bible studies and discussions all seemed to come together to expand the understanding he had of God and also to deepen his personal faith. This experience changed his life. Since having this crosscultural experience, Bill has become an active, committed Christian. He has become a spiritual leader in his church, he leads a large men's Bible study each week, he has served as the spiritual leader on several mission teams, and he leads a weekly Bible study with the staff in his medical practice. He now has an excitement for God that is contagious.

Once we believe in something, (that we conclude is worthy of our trust and devotion), we begin to place a certain degree of faith in that source. The level of faith that we have in this and other faith sources is a determining factor in the way in which we choose to live out our lives. The following is a discussion of the theoretical principles related to faith.

Faith

Defining or explaining faith is like trying to shape a cloud into a nice, neat three-dimensional pattern so that everyone can identify it and properly sort it into categories and compartments. It is next to impossible to definitively explain it much less accomplish it in a way that is agreeable to all. For the purposes of this study, I will address faith from two perspectives: first, looking at faith in relation to God, (its creator and foundational identity within Christianity); and second, looking at faith as defined by the social sciences.

Faith, God's gift. First and foremost, faith is a gift from God. It is a gift given to us through creation that allows us to live in relationship with God. It is innately human
and divine as it allows us to draw closer to him. It is not the result of human striving or achievement. The Word and works of God inspire it. As Christians, our salvation comes through faith. Saving faith is a gift of God’s grace through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourself, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” It is also through the gift of faith that we come to know God. In the following conversation between Jesus and Peter, we see how, through faith, God reveals himself to us. “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven” (Matthew 16:15-17).

Our faith, our relationship with God, has the potential to grow deeper and stronger over time. This gift can increase as we draw closer to him. God gives us the Scriptures as one means of providing information and knowledge that allow our human nature to draw closer to the divine. John 20:30-31 gives us an example of how the Scriptures help us deepen our faith: “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” And 2 Timothy 3:15 states, “the holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

We also grow in our faith based on knowledge of God’s faithfulness to us. Psalm 46:1-3 gives us a glimpse of his faithfulness, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea though its waters roar and foam and the mountains
Faith is an aspect of life that those of us who are Christians come to know as our relational connection with God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As Christian believers, God's desire is (and the desire of our heart should be) that we continually deepen our faith, draw nearer to God, and surrender more and more of our lives to him.

Social science searches for understanding. We are born with the capacity to have faith and it is God's desire that it be placed in him and him alone. But because of sin, we have the ability to direct our faith to other things.

Since faith has such a wide range of inclusion in our lives, beyond that for which God intended it, it is important that we understand its dynamics so that we as Christian leaders can better lead people to place their faith in Christ instead of in the things of this world. Through the following perspectives, we will be better able to understand how a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction can help to accomplish just that.

David Creamer (1996:70), in his book, Guides for the Journey, discusses Bernard Lonergan's theories on human knowing. He relates the example that scientists can dissect the human ear. They can see all of the parts and they can hypothesize how the ear works, but even with all of this empirical knowledge, they cannot see the act of hearing. We, however, know that hearing happens because we subjectively experience it.

The same is true of faith. To the people who recognize their reliance on faith to guide their lives, its existence cannot be denied. They know it to be true. To them, their faith is as real as the act of hearing.

In the process of conducting extensive research into faith and faith development theories, James Fowler studied the writings of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1977, 1979).
Smith wrote extensively on faith and Fowler summarized his conclusions as follows:

1. *Faith*, rather than belief or religion, is the most fundamental category in the human quest for relation to transcendence. Faith, it appears, is generic, a universal feature of human living, recognizably similar everywhere despite the remarkable variety of forms and contents of religious practice and belief.

2. Each of the major religious traditions studied speaks about faith in ways that make the same phenomenon visible. In each and all, faith involves an alignment of the will, a resting of the heart, in accordance with a vision of transcendent value and power, one's ultimate concern.

3. Faith, classically understood, is not a separate dimension of life, a compartmentalized specialty. Faith is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions. (1981:14)

When we look at the phenomenon of faith (as it relates to all aspects of the secular as well as the sacred), we can make a general statement that says, faith is the trust that we place in “something(s)” that we deem to be credible, true, and worthy of our commitment and devotion. The relevance of Smith's interpretation of faith is made even clearer when he suggests that it is “an alignment of the will, a resting of the heart, with a vision of transcendent value and power.” When we have faith, we align our will with that of the faith source and usually we have a peace in our heart that our trust is well placed.

James Fowler has gone deeper in analyzing what he believes to be the foundational principles of this phenomenon. He refers to these principles as the *contents* of faith. He identifies them in this way,

... our faith orientation and our corresponding characters are shaped by three major elements. ... First, there are the *centers of value* that claim us. By this I mean the causes, concerns or persons that consciously or unconsciously have the greatest worth to us. *Worship* and *worth* have etymological kinship. We attribute the kind of worth that calls for our loyalty and commitment to those centers of value that give our lives meaning. Practically speaking, we worship that or those things in relation to which our lives have worth.... the actual center or centers of value in our lives that have god value for us exert a powerful structuring on our ways of seeing and being in the world.

Equally important in affecting our orientations in life are the *images of power* we hold and the *powers* with which we align ourselves to sustain us in the midst of life's contingencies. ... In ... a world of wars, of natural catastrophes, of
senseless random or intentional assaults, of sudden accidental death for us or loved ones, of opportunity and denial, of good health or bad -- in such a world we seek for the images and reality of powers that can be relied upon in life or death. Through the quest for wealth, for office or recognition, through bonds of love and marriage, through institutional affiliation or attachment to groups, through insurance policies and investment portfolios, we look for safety, security or significance in the face of such contingencies. We try to align ourselves with power sufficient to sustain us and these persons and things we love.

In the third place, our characters and faith orientations are shaped by the master stories that we tell ourselves and by which we interpret and respond to the events that impinge upon our lives. Our master stories are the characterizations of the patterns of power-in-action that disclose the ultimate meanings of our lives. (1981:276-277)

To summarize, Fowler's contents of faith, include:

1) Centers of value – we give loyalty and commitment to those centers of value that give our lives meaning.

2) Images of power – we seek for the images and reality of powers that can be relied upon in life or death.

3) Master stories – through these, we interpret and respond to the events that impinge upon our lives. They are characterizations of the patterns of power-in-action.

The influences in our lives that provide us with (1) centers of value, that are (2) sources of power and strength, and that become relevant to us through definitive representations (3) (master stories), are the sources in which we place our faith. They gain credibility and acceptance in our lives as we gain knowledge of, comprehension of, and confidence in the components, claims, and proofs of the source itself.

Faith ties our beliefs (whether from a religion or other source[s]) with our realities and guides how we respond to the situations we face each day. It allows us to rely on the source of that faith (the center of value and power) to provide answers, direction, provision, and wisdom.
In life, there are many sources of value and power. Each of us identifies one or more of these sources in which to believe and to commit ourselves. It would be fair to say that every person has many sources in which they place their faith. The first non-religious source in which we place our faith is usually our parents when we are born. From that point on, the number of these accepted sources increases to possibly include teachers, important influencers in our lives, spouses, institutions, governments and government leaders, the Constitution, scientific data, the stock market, medical science, religious leaders, and even our own self knowledge and ability. From a religious perspective, people place their faith in God, Mohammad, Buddha, or other spiritual entities. Our belief and faith in all of these sources provide definition and a framework for our lives. Each day, we subconsciously make choices as to which source of faith we will honor and live by in any given situation.

A sense of trust and loyalty in something or someone (faith) provides guidance, strength, meaning, and hope in our lives. It is intangible but it is a reality that cannot be denied. We hold onto these sources of value and power because as human beings, we need stable, reliable sources to give strength, substance, and meaning to those things we hold to be true. If at some point, a faith source that we cling to is proven unworthy, we suddenly feel lost and disconnected. We struggle to make meaning out of the things we once believed to be true and we quickly search for another source in which to place our faith.

A non-religious example of this occurred in 1929. Through prosperity and economic growth, many people began to place a great amount of trust in the United States stock market. These people had faith that was so strong they were willing to invest
large amounts (if not all) of their own personal assets in it. When the market crashed, many people became despondent as the source in which they placed their faith proved unworthy.

“Faith is an active and dynamic phenomenon. A verb, not a noun, faith is a way-of-being-in-relation - - a stance, a way of moving into and giving form and coherence to life” (Fowler and Keen 1978:24). Faith is a vital part of our lives and it is “something which is continually undergoing change” (Dykstra 1986:49). We are constantly being influenced by variables associated with one faith source or another moving into and giving form to our lives. With the onslaught of technology, chromosome research, medical breakthroughs, and the communication explosion, the opportunity for new faith sources to replace some of the old or for existing ones to gain greater influence in our lives, has increased greatly.

Throughout life, our faith identity is constantly taking on new faith sources and giving off others. As we grow older, for example, our faith in our parents decreases as their image of power and influence decreases with the increase of our own abilities to be self-sufficient. We begin to place less faith in teachers and professors and more faith in the body of knowledge that we have gained experientially. Our faith in God may have been small and innocent as a child or even as an adult, but hopefully, it grows to be the primary source of faith after other faith sources fail us and we realize that God (who gave us the gift of faith) is the only source worthy to receive it.

In my own life, two of my primary faith sources were personal financial security and the corporate structure in which I worked. These were my “centers of value” and my “images of power.” The “master stories” I heard and shared were ones of other people
who were successful by the standards of the world. These stories provided a means for me to interpret and respond to the events in my life. But when I came to know Jesus Christ, the components of my faith identity began to change and take on a new shape. Money and the corporate structure began to diminish as centers of value and power as God began to increase in this role. My faith identity is very different today than it was twenty years ago.

As previously stated, every individual will base most interpretations, judgments, decisions, and actions on a combination of sources that they feel are worthy of their trust and each source contributes a portion of influence. But the faith sources held to be most valid in the mind of the individual will carry the greatest influence and those considered less valid will influence very little. For example, if there were two men who were diagnosed with cancer and both had God and medical science as sources of their faith, one man might place his greatest faith in doctors, medicine, and insurance companies while the other man might have his primary faith in God, the power of prayer, and the conviction of his own belief.

Advancing faith in Christ. In ministry, it should be our goal to proclaim God as the true source of faith and to focus our efforts on bringing those who believe in God to a deeper level of faith in him. If this happens, God will become the source with the greatest influence in their lives and their words, actions, thoughts, and deeds will begin to reflect characteristic changes from those that were formed by their faith in other sources. This might sound basic and one might assume it to be true of all who serve in Christian ministry, but unfortunately, not all see faith development as a recognized goal or responsibility.
It is usually through personal revelation that we come to understand the vital importance of leading others deeper in faith. John Wesley is a good example. Before his conversion at Aldersgate, Wesley was still struggling with the concept of faith. He met a Moravian from Germany named Peter Böhler who shared with him his understanding of the nature of faith. Wesley became aware of his own unbelief, "of the want of 'that faith whereby alone we are saved, with the full, Christian salvation.'" Because he himself lacked this faith he thought that he could no longer preach it to others. But Böhler said to Wesley, "Preach faith 'till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach it."

Wesley followed his advice and preached this doctrine of faith even though he himself did not totally understand it. He later reflected on this by saying, "I preached in many churches, though I did not yet see the nature of saving faith. But as soon as I saw this clearly . . . I declared it without delay. And God then began to work by my ministry as he never had done before" (Ward and Heitzenrater 1988:228, c.f. Collins 2003:81)

In Christianity faith is unquestionably centered on God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "First, we are saved by faith: 'It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith' (Ephesians 2:8). And second, we walk or 'live by faith, not by sight' (2 Corinthians 5:7)" (Anderson and Saucy 1997:185).

David Creamer suggests that Christian faith can be identified as having three movements or components (1996:125-170). As described, these are the dynamics of faith that are interpreted by/through 1) the head, 2) the heart, or 3) the hands (Figure 6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREE MOVEMENTS IN FAITH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Revealed Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didache (Teaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectualist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Three Movements of Faith (adapted from Creamer 1996: 134)

While there is no significance to the order in which these are listed, Christian belief and faith can grow as the heart, the hands, or the head increase in the perception and awareness of God and the meaning within biblical teachings. As faith grows, more and more of the associated dynamics take place (believing, trusting, committing, celebrating, serving, doing, actuation, living, performing, etc.), not just perfunctorily, but with conviction and genuine dedication.
Referring once again to James Fowler’s observations (on page 66), people who choose to place their faith in God share his values, look to him as a source of power and strength, and know of the master stories told through the centuries of the innumerable characterizations of his power-in-action. But important questions exist: (1) Are God’s values their most closely held values? (2) Is God their primary source of power? and (3) Are the master stories of God the ones that impact their interpretation and understanding of events that impinge on their lives?

The goal of those in Christian ministry should be to continue bringing Jesus Christ to the people, relating his values, telling of his greatness and strength, and sharing the stories that tell of his power in action. Presenting the message in sermons, Sunday school classes, or Bible studies are all very effective and important methods of leading believing Christians deeper in their faith. But in today’s world of information overload (especially in Western cultures) often the message can be drowned out. Even those messages that are heard get blended in with thousands of other bits of information and the functionality of drawing people deeper in their Christian faith through traditional forms of teaching, begins to diminish with this information overload. Additional ways of establishing the Christian message deep within the fiber of people’s lives need to be identified so that their faith in God will be stronger and more influential than any other faith source that comes their way.

**Stages of Faith**

Faith, like knowledge and wisdom, is not fully gained in a moment or a day. Faith starts to take shape once we believe in something, for it is through belief that we begin to place our trust in the source of that belief. All faith is valid in its own right and
cannot be judged or discounted based on its simplicity or its complexity. Faith in its simplest form is often the purest and most genuine.

Faith, however, is a phenomenon that has a depth and breadth that is deeper and wider than we could even begin to comprehend. It is so much more than simple trust placed in the source of belief. Faith that is valued can be expanded and increased as we more fully understand and affirm the things the faith source holds to be of value and to be true. As we grasp, comprehend, and accept deeper meanings within these values and truths, our faith in the identified source grows and it takes root within the core of our thoughts, words, and actions. This deepening of faith is a progression that is compounded when new understanding and insight is gained. As faith grows, the faith source begins to have more and more influence in the lives of believers.

Researchers who have studied this progression have identified common characteristics that take place as faith is deepened. These researchers and authors have referred to the identified transitions within this progression as “stages of faith” or stages of faith development (Archdall 1911; Astley and Francis 1992; Beers 1999; Butman 1990; Dykstra and Parks 1986; Ford-Grabowsky 1985; Fowler 1981, 1984, 1991a, 1991b; Fowler, et al. 1991; Fowler and Keen 1978; Gross 1981; Hagberg and Guelich 1989; Jones 1992 [1957]; Micallef 1997; Rose 1991; Stanley 1998; Stokes 1982, 1989a; Wilkes 1986).²

Faith is a phenomenon that can be simple or complex, stagnant or dynamically changing. Because of its nature, many theories have been put forward about faith development from various perspectives. Richard Butman considers spiritual maturity to be “multiply-determined by a complex interaction of biological, cognitive, psychosocial,
sociocultural, and transcendent processes” (1990:14). His theory focuses on the source of a person’s connectedness to their belief or belief system, either through the institution, the causes and ideals of the religion, or what he implies to be, the faith source.

It is his belief that personal religiousness has the potential for movement towards one or more of the following: (a) “observance religiousness” (identification with a religious system or institution is primary); (b) “intrinsic religiousness” (self-giving devotion to religious causes and ideals are core commitments); and (c) “autonomous religiousness” (a highly individualized commitment to faith that is often independent of institutional structures). (1990:14)

James W. Fowler has been the primary researcher and designer of the stage theory in relation to faith. Many of the foundational principles within his model found their roots in the theories of H. Richard Niebuhr (Fowler 1974), Paul Tillich (1958), Jean Piaget (1967, 1969, 1971, 1976, Ginsberg 1969, Inhelder 1958), Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1973, 1974, 1976), and Erik Erikson (1963, 1964, 1968). Each of these scholars have focused their research on human development theories from various perspectives of cognitive and moral reasoning and each has identified common structural patterns that occur as individuals grow, experience, and assimilate within the environment of their existence.3

Fowler, in discussing H. Richard Niebuhr’s writings on faith, states,

Niebuhr carries out a searching description of what I want to call human faith. He sees faith taking form in our earliest relationships with those who provide care for us in infancy. He sees faith growing through our experience of trust and fidelity... with those closest to us. ... And he sees faith, at all these levels, in the search for an overarching, integrating and grounding trust in a center of value and power sufficiently worthy to give our lives unity and meaning. (1981:5)

Using the structural-developmental theories of these researchers as a basis, Fowler focused his research on faith development which, instead of cognitive and moral
reasoning, considers the integration of modes of knowing and valuing (1981:99). He has researched, evaluated, and defined stages of faith in order to: (1) "find and describe structural features of faith that make comparisons possible across a wide range of ‘content’ differences" and (2) make "it possible for us to systematically compare and contrast differing styles or stages of faith among persons who stand in the same faith community or content-tradition" (1981:99). Agreeing with Tillich and Niebuhr, he considers "faith" to be a natural human proclivity which broadly includes "religious faith as well as the less explicit faith orientations of persons and groups who can be described as secular or eclectic in their belief and values orientations" (1996:57).

Fowler’s research has resulted in the identification of common characteristics that people demonstrate as they grow in their trust, understanding, and integration of the faith source into their lives. He states, "The stages aim to describe patterned operations of knowing and valuing that underlie our consciousness. . . . Faith stages are held to be invariant, sequential, and hierarchical" (1996:57). The stages he identified are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Stages of Faith as Defined by James Fowler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 Intuitive-Protective Faith</th>
<th>- Rise of imagination, formation of images. Mixture of fantasy, fact, and feeling.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Mythic-Literal Faith</td>
<td>- Meanings contained in and conveyed through stories. Recognition of a patterned world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional Faith</td>
<td>- The forming of identity and a personal faith. Follow established patterns of others. Symbols valued over meanings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The early stages are the periods of simple faith, initial growth, and the beginnings of choosing in whom or what to place our faith. The later stages are of a deep, abiding faith in a source that has proven itself worthy and to whom or what we are willing to commit on a very deep level. Most adults who place faith in something, including Christians, fall into the middle stages, specifically, Stages 3, 4, and 5. Stages 1 and 2 are the early stages that almost always occur in childhood. Stage 6 is a stage that is reached by very few individuals. For this reason, this review will look the three stages that most adults fall into, Stages 3, 4, and 5.

Fowler refers to Stage 3 as the Synthetic-Conventional Stage. For those in this stage, faith begins to synthesize values and to provide guidelines by which to live. This person has specific beliefs and values, but seldom shares them with others, choosing instead to exist within the meaning world of those sharing the same beliefs and values. While the beliefs are held to be true, they are not seriously examined. This faith can be swayed in either direction by peer groups that share common bonds.

Stage 4 is known as Individuative-Reflective Faith. The transition from Stage 3 to Stage 4 takes place as people begin to reflect on their own system of meanings and
begin to separate the meanings from the forms that have carried them. They begin to
realize that the authority and values do not come from individuals or symbols (such as a
pastor or religious leader, their church, the cross, etc.) but rather are found in the faith
source which they themselves begin to interpret and understand. As a result, they form
their identity and shape their lifestyle around their own interpretations rather than simply
following the patterns of others. Fowler states that when these things occur, the symbols
that have inherently carried the meaning for the participant now are recognized as being
what the name implies, merely symbols. With this new understanding comes a sense of
loss and a sense of gain. The loss results from a feeling of dislocation and even grief for
having lost things that they had held with great esteem. The gain comes from the new
understanding of the meaning itself and realizing the applicability of the meaning in all
aspects of life, well beyond the symbols themselves. It is in this stage that the person has
to reflect critically on their own identity and worldview in relation to the meanings of the
faith source that they understand to be true. The more they are able to do this, the greater
the deepening of faith.

Many individuals go through the dynamic process of entering into Stage 4 during
the course of their lives. Fowler states that there are dangers inherent to this process.
“An excessive confidence in the conscious mind and in critical thought and a kind of
second narcissism in which the now clearly bounded, reflective self over assimilates
‘reality’ and the perspectives of others into its own world view” (1981:182-183). In a
sense, this is sort of like opening Pandora’s Box. “Stories, symbols, myths and paradoxes
from one’s own or other traditions may insist on breaking in upon the neatness of the
previous faith” (1981:183). It is for this reason that during this process of faith
development in Christian believers, greater exposure to and understanding of biblical meanings becomes very important so that these biblical truths then remain at the focal point of thought.

Stage 5 is known as Conjunctive Faith. Fowler describes entering into this stage as "discovering that the rational solution or 'explanation' of a problem that seemed so elegant is but a painted canvas covering an intricate, endlessly intriguing cavern of surprising depth" (1981:184). At this level of faith there is a broadening of understanding that comes to realize the breadth of wisdom and meaning that penetrates all realities (past, present, and future), that are beyond our ability to modify or control or to define or fit into categories. "Stage 5 accepts as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp" (1981:186). It is at this point the individual realizes that the faith source really has control of everything related to his or her life.

With this new understanding, the symbols of meaning, discounted in Stage 4, once again become important. But this time, the meaning within the symbol is what is valued, not the symbol itself, making it of much greater significance. It is also at this stage of faith that the person reclaims and reassesses his or her past. "This involves a critical recognition of one's social unconscious - the myths, ideal images and prejudices built deeply into the self-system by virtue of one's nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like" (1981:198).

Faith perspectives at Stage 5 have broadened to the point that a person's defining social structures (such as tribe, class, religious community, or nation) no longer confine him or her by the parameters and worldviews of those social structures. The person
realizes “a capacity to see and be in one’s or one’s group’s most powerful meanings, while simultaneously recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality” (1981:198).

Fowler explains the phenomenological transition that takes place as individuals progress from one stage of faith to another by saying,

Each stage . . . marks the rise of a new set of capacities or strengths in faith. These add to and recontextualize previous patterns of strength without negating or supplanting them. Certain life issues with which faith must deal recur at each stage; hence the spiral movements in part overlap each other, though each successive stage addresses these issues at a new level of complexity. . . . Each stage represents a widening of vision and valuing, correlated with a parallel increase in the certainty and depth of selfhood, making for qualitative increases in intimacy with self-others-world. (1981:274)

Figure 6 is James Fowler’s visual illustration of the dynamic process of faith development. In his theory, every individual is at some point in this process. The diagram demonstrates a movement from simple, strongly committed faith at infancy, growing and developing over time. Fowler states, “Overall, there is a movement outward toward individuation, culminating in Stage 4. Then the movement doubles back, in Stages 5 and 6, toward the participation and oneness of earlier stages, though at quite different levels of complexity, differentiation and inclusiveness” (1981: 27).

Since there are many faith sources in which we can place our trust and faith, an individual may be at any given level in relation to their primary faith source. If a new faith source begins to become predominant, the person must reevaluate the premise and foundation of his or her beliefs, understandings, interpretations, and actions in light of this new source. When this occurs, Fowler states that a process of regression takes place. He calls this a “recapitulation of previous stages” (1981:286). Figure 7 illustrates this occurrence.
The "X" at Stage 3 represents a woman’s level of faith development when she was converted to Christianity. At this point, Fowler’s drawing indicates the downward movement within the stages of faith. When the arrows reach the first stage, they begin to move back upward, reassessing and redefining the characteristics of each stage along the way, and ultimately surpassing the previous level of faith.

Figure 7: Faith Development and Recapitulation of Previous Faith Stages (Adapted from Fowler 1981:289)

Fowler states that, “such a movement can lead to release from and transformation of crippling patterns of earlier development, making ongoing growth possible” (1981:289). He sees the process as a “re-grounding of these virtues and their reorientation in light of faith’s new center of value, images of power and decisive master story.... When the recapitulative process has done its work, the person has a new foundation of inner integration from which to move decisively toward the next stage” (1981:290-291).
Fowler’s theories, while inclusive of religious faith, are in relation to faith in general, which can be applied to any one of many faith sources. This study, however, focuses specifically on Christian faith in the Western cultural context. Characteristics identified within Fowler’s stages are utilized in this study solely as guides and points of reference. These prove helpful in interpreting and understanding the faith development process. But this study also looks at the dynamic of subjectively experiencing alternate realities in which biblical meanings are demonstrated and also at the level to which participants bond to those meanings.

For these reasons, this study does not follow Fowler’s research format, nor does it identify the stage any given participant is in or demonstrate that they have moved (for example) from stage 3 to stage 4. Rather, the goal is to understand the recognized dynamics of spiritual growth and deepening of faith that can and do take place in direct relation to increased awareness, knowledge, and experience of God.

As Christians, it should be our goal to be transformed by God, into the likeness of Jesus Christ (as close as is humanly possible). This process is known as sanctification. Edward Thornton, in his book, “Being Transformed: An Inner Way of Spiritual Growth,” describes the process as follows. Every time a person goes to a new level,

a transformation occurs and the old formations are transcended. . . . All growth from stage to stage extends your knowledge and enjoyment of God. . . . Your love [of] and devotion [to God] take a quantum leap forward. To your surprise and delight, each transformation has awakened you to higher and higher levels of awareness, of purpose, and of the will to be at one with [God]. (1984:45)

Deepening of Faith

Before looking at this principle of faith, we probably need to ask the question: Why, especially in a culture that historically has been rooted in Christianity, do we need
to focus our attention on faith development and spiritual growth?

David Bryant (1979) provides us with some insight into this question. He took a long look at Christians and he realized that we fall into many categories in relation to the way we believe and how we live out our faith. Bryant theorized that many of us live a life in which we apply only those aspects of Christianity that meet our particular needs or those that are within our comfort zone and we place boundaries around us that significantly curtail any hope of spiritual growth.

Bryant stated that people live in "Pea-sized Christian Boxes" (1979:27-29). The boxes are self contained, well defined, and have little room for broader spiritual perspectives to be shoe-horned in. He labeled these pea-sized boxes as:

*Convert Christianity* - "I believe, I've prayed the prayer, so I'm in."

*Character Christianity* - "I'm honest, I go to church, I attend a Bible study, I'm a good Christian person, my friends know that I'm active in the church."

*Consumption Christianity* - "I want a church that offers a lot of things for my family, I want my kids in a good youth group, my daughter will have a beautiful sanctuary to be married in."

*Cloister Christianity* - "I love my fellowship group. We do everything together. They are really my church within the church so I don't need to meet other people or get involved in anything else."

*Church Christianity* - "My Christian life is focused on my church. I have been a member for 20 years and I am dedicated to it. I don't think I could belong anywhere else."

*Culture Christianity* - "I like to worship with my kind of people and in the way
we've always worshiped. Other styles of worship just don't seem to be Christian!
If Jesus came back now, I'm sure he would come to America and worship like we worship.”

These may sound strange, but within every church we would probably find many Christians (especially in Western cultures) who fall into one or more of these categories. Many people would say, “So what’s wrong with that? They believe and they are trying to live godly lives. Who are you to judge them?”

In one respect, they would be right. No one can judge others or their faith. The Bible tells us that we are not to judge (Matthew 7:1-2). But the Bible also tells us that we need to deepen our faith. 1 Peter 2:2-3 says, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Also, Jesus explained that we must move beyond specific and defined limits (some of which are described in the boxes above) by deepening our faith. He said,

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:21-23)

When he made this statement, Jesus was referring to the necessity of having a deep, unconditional, and abiding faith that is not in a box but that is exemplified in all of our thoughts, words, and deeds. A centurion demonstrated this type of faith. Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, he knew that Jesus had the power to heal (without even seeing the person who was sick), and his faith was without doubt (Matthew 8:5-13). His faith was not demonstrated by the actions he did before other men. Rather, his faith was demonstrated through his humility before the Lord, through the confidence he had in
Jesus' ability, and the acceptance of Jesus' authority. He had knowledge of and belief in Jesus Christ that he knew to be true and he demonstrated it through his words and his actions. This is the kind of faith that we need to strive for and the type of faith we need to build into the "subjects of the kingdom" who are under our charge. For Jesus said, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good" (Matthew 12:33a).

So how do we move people out of their Christian boxes? How do we inspire spiritual growth that allows them to outgrow the defined limits they have been living within? We start by understanding what it means to deepen our faith, to move to the next stage of faith development.

Within the dynamics of the progression of faith development, Fowler and the other researchers have identified variables that indicate deepening of faith. A summary of some of these are:

† the synthesizing of values;
† being guided by the principles of the faith source;
† reflection on the accepted "system" of meaning;
† separation of meanings from the symbols and/or individuals that carry them;
† greater understanding of the source of their faith;
† self application of the meanings within and from the faith source into the individual's life;
† broadened understanding of these meanings and a realization that they apply to all realities of life not just their own;
† a new appreciation of the related symbols (not for the value of the symbols but for the depth of meaning carried within), a reassessment of the lifelong components
of the individual’s life in light of the new understandings;

† and a realization that a person’s social structures no longer define who they are but rather that they are defined by the faith source and all that it represents.

An important basis for movement of individuals to new levels of Christian faith is their realization of deeper meanings within biblical teachings. Through this realization they can gain new understanding of how those meanings apply to the realities of not only their own lives, but of the lives of all people. (Jesus used parables to teach and illustrate biblical meanings in relation to the realities of life.) When this happens, a greater attachment to God occurs, a deeper kinship and bond is established as the values of the Father become more meaningful and relevant within the mind and the heart of the individual. These things are no longer teachings and direction given by a parent or authority figure, they become relevant, tangible principles, shared values that bind us to our Creator. And as this happens, God’s significance becomes so much more understandable, the life of Jesus in its simplicity and humility and his stories, teachings, and example take on new relevance, and the world and all it has to offer begins to be seen from a new and different perspective. Values and priorities are redefined and the new meanings become bonded within the mental and psychological principles of life.

In my experience with short-term mission teams, many of the team members came to realize and demonstrate an increased awareness of biblical relevance and truth. They had an awakening to biblical meanings as they were subjectively associated with human life that was outside of their own strongly defined worldview perspectives. They began to understand these biblical meanings in the broader context of life within God’s kingdom. When this happened, it was like an unexpected realization that brought new
meaning and depth as they said, “Now I understand what this really means!” And then, through these revelations, they came to assimilate their new understandings of biblical truths into their own lives.

What are some of the biblical teachings that can be seen in and related through a crosscultural setting which can lead people deeper in their personal faith? The following passages are relevant to what they may be seeing and experiencing in this unique setting.

**Bearing Good Fruit** - Matthew 7:16-20; 13:1-23; John 15:1-8, 16; Galatians 6:1-10; Ephesians 5:8-10; Hebrews 6:7-12; 1 Peter 3:8-16

**Compassion** - Matthew 8:1-3; 9:36-37; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14; 17:11-19; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 3:16-18


**God’s Grace** – Matthew 11:28-30; John 1:16-17; 4:3-26, 4:39-42; Titus 2:11-14

**God’s Kingdom** - Matthew 13:44-46; Mark 10:13-16; Acts 10:34-48; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 John 1:5-7

**God’s Love** - Matthew 18:10-14; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 John 3:1; 3:16; 4:9-19


**God’s Sovereignty** - Matthew 12:15-21; Ephesians 4:4-6

**Happiness** – Ecclesiastes 3:9-14; Romans 5:1-2; Philippians 4:4-7


Obedience - Mark 12:28-31; Galatians 6:9-10

Perseverance - Matthew 11:28-30; Galatians 6:9-10; Hebrews 10:19-39; James 1:2-4, 12; 5:10-11; Jude 17-23


Serving - John 13:1-17; Romans 12:4-8; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 4:7-11

Thankfulness - Luke 17:11-19

Those in Need - Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27

Transformation - Romans 12:1-2

Wisdom - Proverbs 3:13-18; James 1:5-8; 3:13-18

Many Christians are familiar with these passages and have come to know them through their own cultural lenses. The meanings and understandings that they have of
each have been influenced by their known realities and cultural interpretations. When
they hear them again while they are experiencing a different cultural context, they have
the opportunity to associate the realities of this new culture with the scriptural teachings.
This new worldview perspective offers the opportunity to interpret and understand
broader meanings within each passage.

Does this always happen in a crosscultural situation? Not always. Sometimes a
person will see the relevance and broader meanings through a new cultural perspective,
but more often than not, these things are missed. By deliberately bringing relevant
passages (like those above) before trip participants and allowing them to discuss the
passages (in relation to what they are seeing and experiencing), the connection is usually
made.

Deepening our faith takes us into closer relationship with God. It gives us a better
understanding of how Hebrews 11:1, 3 defines it by saying, “Faith is being sure of what
we hope for and certain of what we do not see. . . . By faith we understand that the
universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what
was visible.” Faith enables us to see God as our Creator and our Redeemer and it gives
us a certainty of his presence in our lives and of his authority.

Deepening our faith not only brings us closer to God, it also changes the way in
which we perceive and live out our lives. How we understand our world determines how
we will act and react in almost any given situation. The better we understand and are
committed to Christian beliefs and teachings, the more likely it is that we will begin to
model our lives after that of Jesus Christ. Faith leads us in our decisions. It shapes our
actions and reactions and even gives us the strength and the desire to do things that the
non-Christian world would not consider logical.

Colossians 2:6-7 states, “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with thanksgiving.” God is calling us to live in Christ, to be rooted in him, and to continually deepen our faith.

Our goal should be to have Christ “dwell in our hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:17) so that we may have the power “to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge” that we “may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Hebrews 11 demonstrates what it means to have deep abiding faith and as Paul states in verse 40, this faith was lived out even before God gave us his Son. If their faith was so great, how much greater can ours be through knowing Jesus Christ?

Deepening our faith not only dramatically changes and betters our own lives, it also serves as a powerful witness to others. The faith we live communicates the Gospel message, not through words, but through actions. When we live the biblical teachings, we are confessing their truthfulness. We are standing up before a world that acts on logic and we are stating our complete and utter faith in God.

As Christians, it should be our desire and our goal to go deeper and deeper in faith, to better understand God’s Word and to live out his teachings and commands. It should also be our desire to lead others deeper in their faith.

**Spiritual Growth**

It is important to clarify the differences between the concepts of spiritual growth and deepening of faith. Many would probably argue that they are one in the same, but I
would suggest that while they are strongly interrelated, they have enough difference to be addressed separately.

Deepening of faith refers to the process of identifying a source of value and power and then through increased awareness and understanding of its depth and breadth, developing progressively deeper levels of trust and confidence in that source. This process happens as the source becomes known more and more, and this knowledge leads to revelation, revelation leads to understanding, understanding leads to assimilation, assimilation leads to deeper trust and commitment to the faith source, and deeper trust and commitment leads to surrender of mind, body, and spirit to that source.

Faith ultimately is living out our commitment to the faith source(s) that we hold in highest regard. It shapes the fundamentals of life by which we live. It is the horizontal realization (the living out) of our commitment to that which we believe to be “true.” A bottom line description of deepening of faith is increased: knowledge of the faith source, trust in that source, and as a result, assimilation of the principles and values of the faith source into the person’s life.

Spiritual growth, on the other hand, is all encompassing with faith being one part of the total. Spiritual growth includes the horizontal connection of living out the principles and values of that source but it also encompasses the vertical relationship we have with our faith source. It is personal and intimate and increases as we draw closer to the source. It is relational. As our faith deepens (through increased knowledge of and trust in the faith source), there is corresponding growth in our overall spiritual relationship and connectedness with the source.
Spirituality becomes substantive when relational dynamics with the faith source generate feelings, emotions, responses, and assimilation. The relationship variable is the factor that draws human emotion into closer association with an entity and that relationship becomes filled with meaning and life guiding definition. Spirituality from a Christian perspective also centers on a unique and interpersonal relationship. Barbara Hendricks and Thomas Clark express it this way,

> We understand spirituality here in a theological sense, as the relationship, in lived experience and reflective understanding (practice and theory), between the human spirit, individual and communal, and the divine spirit or whatever is conceived within a specific tradition, East or West, as ultimate in human and cosmic life. Spirituality is distinctively Christian when this relationship is conceived as mediated through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, and when the divine spirit is understood as the Holy Spirit, poured forth by Father and Son into the heart of each believer, the church, the whole of humankind, and the whole of creation. (1993: 204)

Spiritual growth from a Christian perspective, therefore, refers to the developing relationship of the believer with the divine spirit of God. It combines experiential knowledge and understanding of God and the Word with meditation and reflection, with prayer, with worship, with increased commitment, and with obedience. Growing spiritually is the development of a love for God that is personal yet dynamic in its scope, childlike yet deeply respectful, intimate yet filled with reverence, fear, and wonder. Our spirituality is the personal and intimate side of our relationship with God and it leads to a desire to conform to his image. Spirituality is the foundation of faith development and in turn, faith is our response to the breadth of the spiritual connectedness we have with God.

Developing that personal relationship with God means that we grow in the areas that are most important to God. Spiritual growth involves growing in our faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 10:15b), but it also involves growing in grace (2 Peter
3:18), growing in love (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9-10; Romans 5:5; Philippians 1:9; Hebrews 10:24; 1 John 4:7-21; 5:1-3), growing in understanding (Psalm 119:27; 1 Corinthians 14:20; 1 Peter 2:2; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 1:17-19; Philippians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:9; Hebrews 5:14), growing in holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10-14; 12:14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:15-16), growing in fruitfulness (John 15:16; Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15; John 15:2,8; Colossians 1:10), and growing in contentment (Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5).

When we grow spiritually, our being is in the process of transformation, a transformation that is not simply cognitive understanding, it is a dynamic that reaches into every aspect of our lives. Being transformed is not a temporary change, a feeling or mountaintop experience that wears off over time. It is a change from within, a change that causes a person to see life differently, to change values and perspective, to change priorities and motives. As Edward Thornton states concerning a major time of spiritual growth in his life,

In that instant my ambition was transformed from career goals to a desire to be at one with God. . . . And the appetite continued - insatiable. The more I fed it, the stronger it grew: a longing, a hungering, a thirsting; a driving, delicious desire - a longing love for God. . . . I was not suffering a breakdown of mental health but was being transformed into a life-style that goes beyond mental health. What was happening was not destroying my values, my relationships, or my work. Instead, it was enlarging my values, enriching my relationships, refocusing and energizing my work. (1984: 27-28)

It is God’s desire that we all grow both spiritually (in our personal relationship with Him) and in our faith (the living out of biblical teachings and meanings as a result of our trust in Him). To help us in this process, God has chosen and appointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to lead us,
So that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the wave, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. (Ephesians 4:10-15)

Spiritual growth occurs as we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), as we learn to love and exemplify that love (Romans 12:9-21), and as we live by faith (Romans 1:17).

**Structural Models and Related Principles**

Within society, there are principles, practices, and patterns that form which begin to provide coherence and a natural flow within the human lifecycle. Those which apply to this study are described as follows.

**Rites of Passage**

At various times during life, we transition from one state or condition of being to another. These can be natural transitions such as puberty, marriage, and death, they can be social transitions such as graduation, marriage, and retirement, or they can have religious connotations such as religious conversion, baptism, ordination, Bar Mitzvah, etc. Within every culture, there are understood transitions, and each is in some way associated with an individual’s change in status within society. Arnold Van Gennep, who studied this phenomenon, identified the dynamics that occur in the ritual of transition, and classified these occurrences as “rites of passage.”

Van Gennep identified three phases that occur in the process of a rite of passage, (1) pre-liminal (rites of separation), (2) liminal (rites of transition), and (3) post-liminal (rites of incorporation). Pre-liminal is a time of separation. The individual breaks away
from the attachments and associations of the old status. The liminal phase is a time of deprivation from the known, when the unfamiliar creates a sense of disequilibrium during which the social transition takes place. The post-liminal stage is a time of re-entry into the original social setting but the person returns changed, with a new social status and recognition (1960:11) (Figure 8).

![Figure 8: Structure of a Rite of Passage (Zahniser 1997:92)](image)

Further study has shown that the rite of passage process can be a very effective discipling tool for leading new or maturing believers deeper in their faith. “By taking the process seriously, Christian cross-cultural disciplers can assist the Holy Spirit in making truth about the Ultimate God relevant to the intimate issues of the lives entrusted to their care” (Zahniser 1997:92).

Why is it important for us as disciplers to identify and utilize effective models, such as this one, for leading people deeper in their faith? Because the apostle Paul gives a direct command to be recreated when he said, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing, and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). Lives can be discipled and transformed through a crosscultural experience because it allows for the rite of passage process to be utilized.
Liminality

Liminality was first identified by Arnold van Gennep, a Dutch anthropologist, in the early twentieth century. He saw the liminal stage as one of the phases (between separation and reintegration) of a “rite of passage” (1960:11, 21).

The concept of liminality relates to being in a position of personal chaos, being stripped of many of the known variables in life and those things that are taken for granted, being without some of the conditioned variables that define life at any given moment in time, and being placed in an environment where the realities of life are lived out differently. The word liminality comes from the Latin word *limen* which means threshold, the beginning point. To be at the beginning means facing dimensions of life that are new and different and it requires observation, interpretation, adaptation, and assimilation in order to survive.

When individuals find themselves in a cultural realm in which realities of life are lived out differently and worldview perspectives do not match their own, they have the potential to enter into a liminal state. If they become mentally, emotionally, and physically disconnected within a cultural space, cognitive dissonance will take place. When this occurs, there is a lack of mental and emotional harmony, a sense of disequilibrium overtakes them, and they grasp for meaning and understanding in order to restore a sense of stability.

Victor Turner further developed van Gennep’s work by studying liminality more deeply in rituals and rites of passage. He identified differences in feelings and emotions experienced by individuals in normal life and those experienced in a state of liminality. These provide insight into the vast disconnect that can occur through this experience.
Some of the variables Turner identified appear in Table 2 (1969:106-107).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal Life</th>
<th>State of Liminality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State [stable, constant]</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality [hierarchy]</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System of Nomenclatures [names, titles]</td>
<td>Anonymity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Absence of Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Absence of Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctions of Rank</td>
<td>Absence of Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Pride of Position</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for Personal Appearance</td>
<td>Disregard for Personal Appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctions of Wealth</td>
<td>No Distinctions of Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfishness</td>
<td>Unselfishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience only to Superior Rank</td>
<td>Total Obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secularity</td>
<td>Sacredness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Knowledge</td>
<td>Sacred Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>Silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship Rights and Obligations</td>
<td>No Kinship Rights and Obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagacity [wise, shrewd]</td>
<td>Foolishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of Pain and Suffering</td>
<td>Acceptance of Pain and Suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Autonomy</td>
<td>Heteronomy [subordination to others]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Contrasting Characteristics Between Normal Life and Being in a Liminal State
While in a period of liminality, many of the primary characteristics of life that are taken for granted (such as everyday comforts, the ability to communicate thoughts and feelings, personal security, hygiene habits, accepted cultural behavior, etc.), flip flop. What was considered to be normal is no longer normal. Meanings that are held to be true in life can take on new forms in the liminal setting and the person is forced to interpret and make sense of these new realities of life. The person involved must reevaluate, adjust, and survive under different “norms.”

It is through this recognition and redefining of meaning that growth and transformation take place. “Transformation is the emergence of new forms and functions in which discontinuity with the old is marked” (Thornton 1984:44). As a result, individuals can come out of the liminal experience transformed as a new creation, different from before, prepared to re-enter their own life culture with a new personal status, elevated through gained wisdom and understanding (van Gennep 1960:11, 21; Turner 1969:94-108; Zahniser 1997:92-97).

Kenneth Tollefson has identified four variables that characterize the liminal state. These phenomenological dynamics contribute to the transformation process. They are marginality, self-reflection, cognitive dissonance, and reorientation. Each of these individually and collectively play a role in transforming individuals’ thoughts, feelings, beliefs, understandings, and self-image from a pre-separation state into a new state of being. In the liminal state, the following process occurs:

First, the transition phase emphasizes **marginality** by stripping the novice of all former status. . . . Stripped of all previous social symbols associated with the former social role (such as rank, property, or prerogatives) the novice is forced to develop a new set of expectations. Second, marginality encourages the novice to create a new identity, to seek new knowledge, and to acquire new skills. Turner (1967:105) views the transition
phase primarily in terms of “reflection” – reflection upon behavior of the past role, reflection upon the behavior expected in the new role, and reflection upon how the novice plans to fill the position in the future.

Third, reflection heightens the magnitude of cognitive dissonance. ... Dissonance is stressful, and therefore, individuals seek to reduce it (Festinger 1957:18). . . . Bernard and Pelto (1987:362) contend that “a key mechanism for bringing about behavioral (social) change is the drive to reduce cognitive dissonance.”

Fourth, the pressure to reduce cognitive dissonance contributes to a general reorientation of an individual’s perception of self, of social obligations, and of social behavior. (1990:317)

Liminal states vary in depth and intensity based on the degree of separation from known variables in life. The more complete the separation and the greater the level of cognitive dissonance, the more the liminal experience is intensified. The opposite is true also. The greater the connections with known realities are maintained, the less impact the liminal experience will have.

The perspectives stated above have been developed from observations of cultural habits and anthropological studies. However, we can also validate the concept of liminality through psychosocial development theories. Erik Erikson based his research and theories on human actions and reactions to situations in life. He focused his studies on the crises that all people experience and he analyzed them in relation to their impact on personal development. Erikson identified human characteristics that normally go askew during crises of life and the impact these have on psychosocial development. For each characteristic, he compared the feelings or emotions experienced during normal times verses during times of crisis. These included, trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair (1968:91-141).
The characteristics identified in a crisis situation are very similar to those identified by Victor Turner (Table 2) which are experienced by individuals in a liminal state. It could be said that an individual going through a crisis is in a period of liminality. James Fowler states that through these life changing crises, there is potential for faith development. In reference to individuals in crisis, he states, "As a part of their coping, in their adaptation, faith forms, functions and is changed" (1981:109).

Liminality is an experience that feels "wrong" and "uncomfortable." We would probably not choose to go through it, but many psychological and spiritual benefits can be gained from it.

This is also true on a short-term mission trip. Within such a trip, participants can experience (varying degrees of) liminality. Several authors who have written about short-term missions have recognized the fruit that results from this phenomenon even though they have not identified the concept of liminality as being the dynamic that causes it. In a liminal experience, lives are transformed (Burns 1990:29,31; Moen 1992:13,34; Eaton and Hurst 1994:25). Thomas Moen explained it this way, "Old formations break up as unfamiliar surroundings, smells, languages and people cause a sense of chaos and uncertainty... One's new found location on the mission field, outside of familiar boundaries and margins, will impact one's formation in such a way that transformation will follow close behind" (1992:13).

Liminality is a phenomenon that has contributed to the deepening of personal faith and the transformation of individuals to new levels of commitment to Jesus Christ. This process "promotes and enhances the opportunity for personal and spiritual development" (Tollefson 1990:326).
Paul's writings identified this concept when he stated that we come to know Christ when we learn “to put off your old self . . .; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

**Communitas**

In a liminal experience, there is a phenomenon of drawing together and bonding that occurs between the participants who share the experience. When the variables of everyday life that normally divide and separate individuals (such as status, position, interests, etc.) are removed and together they focus on and share unique and impactful experiences, an uncommon uniting of participants takes place. This uniting is usually deeper and more long lasting than would be experienced in normal life between acquaintances. In liminal situations, participants “tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism” (Turner 1969:95). This sense of uniting, Victor Turner called *communitas*. He defines it as a “modality of social relationship from an ‘area of common living’” (1969:96).

*Communitas* is important to this study in that participants on a short-term mission experience are sharing in their liminal disequilibrium, in their common belief in God, in their search for meaning in and through this experience, and in their original purpose of serving. Sharing these things in a focused and unfamiliar setting creates a *communitas* dynamic that can positively impact the spiritual growth of the participants. Through this experience, their image of the kingdom of God takes on new dimensions of reality and their newly realized understanding of biblical meanings link life and Scripture together.
Additionally, I have noticed *communitas* occurring between the short-term mission trip participants and the people of the culture that they are serving. Because relationships of mutual caring and sharing are established in an egalitarian atmosphere, strong, deep bonds are made that again create a sense of being in the kingdom of God. These bonds tend to make a deep and lasting impact on the hearts and minds of the mission trip participants and contribute greatly to deepen their faith in God as their understanding of God's creation, realm, and love for all his people, grows to new levels of awareness. God uses this opportunity to scrape some of the scales off their eyes so that they can see his world more clearly. This new found wisdom is one of the stepping stones that leads them from one stage of faith to another.

**Pilgrimage**

A pilgrimage is a sacred journey that leads believers to a place of meaning and connectedness with the source of their belief. It is a journey that is planned and anticipated. In a pilgrimage, believers leave their everyday lives, travel (usually physically but sometimes only mentally) to a sacred place of connectedness, experience deep and intimate worship of and spiritual bonding with that which is held to be sacred, and then return to their normal lives.

Pilgrimages are an important part of many cultures and many religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam (Morinis 1992; Werbner 1989). They have proven to be very effective in leading people deeper in their respective faiths. While some forms of pilgrimages exist within the Christian world, for the most part, Christians in North America have shied away from this form of ritual except for the most obvious pilgrimage which is the Sunday morning worship service.
Pilgrimages have the same basic structure as a rite of passage. There is separation from normal life, a period of liminality, and then reincorporation back into their lives. The uniqueness of a pilgrimage is that the place traveled to is seen as being sacred and/or a place where the sacred can be encountered. There is also created a strong sense of connectedness (*communitas*) with those with whom the experience is shared.

During the pilgrimage, life becomes focused on the sacred. This mental and emotional connectedness that occurs with the sacred has the potential to influence the participants' understanding of life and how they live it out once they reincorporate back into their everyday lives. In his book, *Symbol and Ceremony*, Mathias Zahniser states,

> Pilgrimage . . . can be understood as a rite of passage through space – a journey to a sacred center where bonding to meaning can take place, where people can be instructed and empowered for work and witness. . . . Their journeys to (the pilgrimage location) and home again open up a liminal experience for believers, helping to make the messages and ceremonies at the centers of word and sacrament deeply meaningful and long remembered. (1997: 154)

The role of liminality in the pilgrimage experience is important. The sense of existing (even for only a short period of time) in a setting that is different from the norm contributes to the level of connectedness with that which is held sacred and to the role of the sacred within a broader worldview perspective.

Liminality is now seen to apply to all phases of decisive cultural change, in which previous orderings of thought and behavior are subject to revision and criticism, when hitherto unprecedented modes of ordering relations between ideas and people become possible and desirable. . . . What is secret in the Christian pilgrimage, then, is the inward movement of the heart. (Turner and Turner 1978:2, 8)

A short-term mission trip can be considered a type of pilgrimage. Christian participants anticipate the journey, leave home and travel to a location that can be considered sacred (because the "mission field" is understood as being a place chosen by
God, where He is blessing and anointing the people and those who serve Him there), they work with God’s children (which in itself is a religious experience in which they encounter the sacred), they endure and overcome difficulties, and they come home filled with blessings and good feelings. This pilgrimage, this sacred journey can be done once in a lifetime or repeated many times. Each time serves to renew these feelings and closeness with God.

It can be argued that a short-term mission trip is not a pilgrimage in that it is a form of ministry, a vehicle to serve those in need or those who have not heard the Word. Outwardly and corporately, this is true. However, for the individual participating in this experience, this is a sacred journey, one that can touch the innermost aspects of their heart and soul, bringing together the sacred with the profane.

Bonding

Bonding is a phenomenon that we usually associate with a mother and her newborn baby. When a baby leaves the safe known environment of its mother’s womb and enters into a vastly different world, it has a liminal experience and he or she searches for a person or persons to provide equilibrium in this very strange place. When that person(s) is identified, the bonded connection is made and it becomes a strong and deeply rooted relationship. Through bonding, the baby automatically places its trust in this person(s) and defines itself by that person’s perspective on life. The baby relies on that person(s) to provide meaning, guidance, and security (Klaus and Kennell 1982, Joy 1996:87-88). Donald Joy points out that in birth bonding, there is a critical time when “there is a period of heightened sensitivity to attachment.” This time is within the first three hours of birth (1996:88).
Tom and Elizabeth Brewster have researched and written of the bonding phenomenon that also takes place when missionaries first enter into another culture (Brewster and Brewster 1987a). This crosscultural experience creates a situation in which they leave their safe, known world, and enter into another environment, very different from their own. They too will immediately look for individuals and environmental situations that will provide them with stability and security. Those who first look to individuals and settings similar to their own culture, (expatriates, American style foods and housing, for example) will attach to them. Those who first look to individuals and settings of the new host culture (indigenous people, indigenous foods and housing), will bond to them.

So what are the dynamics of entering into a new and different culture that would recreate within us the psychological need to bond in order to establish attachments that give us security and stability? Culture is multifaceted and the nature of its complexity leads to both fear and respect.

The dynamics that contribute to the composition of any culture are usually deeply rooted and broadly accepted by those for whom the culture is indigenous. Most of the characteristics that define a culture usually run below the surface so that they are not outwardly visible. It can be very intimidating for an outsider to enter into another culture. One can feel lost in the unfamiliar dynamics that are easily assumed and assimilated by those within the cultural composition. Within unfamiliar cultures the characteristics that we see as our strengths can seemingly become ineffective ones. Culture, just by its very nature of being different, has a power and strength to impact our lives. Lacking a connectedness to it, it may lead us to feelings of uncertainty or fear.
But the other side of culture, the personal and intimate side has characteristics that are demonstrated through humanity such as emotions, commitments, loyalties, love, joy, sadness, caring, and compassion (just to mention a few). It has a side that allows us to pick up a child and to see the joy in his or her face; a side that permits us to wash clothes on a rock by the river with a woman and to begin to understand the toil of her life; a side that allows a person to sleep in a shack with a family to experience the discomfort of day to day life; a side that allows us to work side by side with a father who wants nothing more than to provide for his family, even though the definition of “provide” is very different from our own; a side that allows us to see the deep, sacrificial love that mothers of another culture have for their children.

In his book, Bonding, Donald Joy uses an analogy from The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis when considering bonding between the father and his child. We can also use this analogy when considering bonding with a culture. In Lewis’ book, Aslan, the lion, represents Jesus. Susan, a little girl in the story, learns that Aslan is not a man, but rather a lion. “‘Ooh!’ Susan shivers, ‘I thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.’” “‘Safe?’ said Mr. Beaver. . . . ‘Who said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good’” (Lewis 2000:79-80).

Culture can be viewed in the same way. Like Susan who believed that Aslan was a human being similar to her, most people assume that other peoples and cultures are similar to their own. When they realize that they will be confronting something very different from their own, they have a fear of this unknown. They fear for their safety and they are apprehensive to enter into the lives of the people. They prefer to, and often in
short-term mission trips do, keep to themselves, working on a project and spending all of their time within their own circle.

Like Mr. Beaver said about Aslan, “Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good.” The same can be said about other cultures. They are not safe (because they are outside of our comfort zone, they do not allow us to function normally, they are filled with unknowns, and they will require us to experience new and different things) but they are good (because of the humanity within and the new perspectives of life that they offer). If we approach them in the right way, walking in faith, the goodness of them will overflow upon us and we will be enriched by them a thousand fold.

In a ministry, such as a short-term mission trip, the desired effect of the crosscultural experience is to bring people (team members) closer to God and to bond the meanings of Scripture into the very nature of their lives. To do this, people on mission teams need to experience both the strong powerful side of culture and the gentle, personal side of culture to have a healthy bonding experience, not only with the culture, but more importantly, with God. If they only experience the strong side of a culture (e.g. safety concerns, respectful fear, language dominance, overriding cultural characteristics, and visual cultural differences), it will leave a bad taste in their mouths and they will have missed out on the best part. They will not develop a connectedness with this culture nor will they have a desire to connect with the other cultures of God’s world. The bond will not be complete and the full meaning of Scripture will be lost in this situation.

The same is true if a short-term mission trip team member only experiences the personal, intimate side. If their time is spent only hugging children and giving and receiving love, they too will not complete the bonding experience. In this situation, they
will miss out on the full reality of the culture. The emotional, personal experience can
overshadow their perspective and prevent them from understanding the bigger picture. In
this situation, they will only relate to the personal needs of certain people and ignore the
realities of the cultural dynamics around them. The bonding experience will be
incomplete.

For bonding to be optimized, a short-term mission trip team member should
experience the strong, powerful side of a culture (which will contribute to creating a
liminal experience) and a direct contact with the personal aspects of the people. Through
these, bonding will take place, the message of Scripture will become so much more
relevant, and the meanings will become fibers that weave together the tapestry of their
lives.

Does this always happen? Are people (team members) always willing to
experience both? Unfortunately, not. Why is that? To understand, we can look to a
bonding theory identified by Donald Joy. He states,

There is some evidence that infants have no self-consciousness – no ability to
“see the self distinct from the parent or the family.” Jean Piaget describes this
eyarly stage as “egocentrism.” . . . He meant us to understand that the young child .
. . cannot imagine seeing events or objects from any other perspective than its
own. . . . It is out of this unselfconscious egocentrism that the child develops
everous admiration, virtual idolatry for its parents. They are the child’s “self.” .
. . Accordingly, the young child believes the parents can do no wrong. Anything
they do is the best thing on earth to do. Piaget calls this “unilateral respect.”
(1985:99-100)

People are similarly attached to their culture. Their identities are tied to the
culture and they cannot see themselves distinct from that culture. The result is
egocentrism and/or ethnocentrism. We cannot imagine seeing events or objects from any
other perspective than our own cultural perspective. We develop enormous admiration,
and virtual idolatry for our cultural beliefs, practices, lifestyles, etc. Our culture becomes our identity, it is who we are. Our culture can do no wrong. We are so tightly bonded to our own culture that we are very, very reluctant to believe that other cultures have relevance and value and we are not willing to step into another culture and adapt to their different ways.

People on a mission trip are like new born babies, leaving the safe protection of their own cultural womb, to enter another foreign world. The surroundings are unfamiliar, the feel, the sounds, smells, tastes, language, living conditions, etc. are all different and new. Like the bonding experience of a new born baby with its mother and father (which happens within the first three hours of birth [Joy 1985:88]), the ultimate bonding (or lack there of) that normally takes place with a team member to a new culture or people, happens within the first few days.

The initial imprints that are made can become a permanent part of a person’s worldview. For example, a person who enters into another culture for the first time as a business person, will most likely stay in a nice hotel, eat in nice restaurants, shop in the nicer shops, communicate mainly with educated, professional people, and drive past and/or ignore the majority of the people of the culture. The understanding and connection that takes place between this person and the people of the culture is minimal at best and the imprint they make on this person is tainted by the lack of bonding that occurs.

On the other hand, a person who enters a culture for the first time on a mission trip or as a Peace Corp volunteer, for example, has the potential to have a high level of bonding occur. They may live among the people, eat the foods they eat, primarily
communicate with ordinary people, and participate in their daily routines. If they do, they will have a much greater connection with, understanding of, and empathy for, the people of this culture.

An example of this is a man named Ray who was a member of my church. Ray worked for a major corporation and he had the managing responsibility for his company’s business in all of the Central and South American countries. Ray traveled to these countries on a regular basis, but his focus was on business and he had little understanding of the people of these cultures. His empathy level was almost non-existent. He stayed in nice hotels and worked exclusively with educated businessmen who lived and worked within lifestyles similar to his own. His feeling for the general population in these countries was one of begrudging tolerance. He looked down on those who were not on his professional level. E. Thomas and Elizabeth Brewster, in discussing bonding within another culture, gave an explanation that characterizes Ray’s attitude and feelings toward the people of these countries. “Without bonding he does not have a sense of feeling at home within the local cultural context. . . . When normal bonding is not established, rejection of the people, or even abuse, can occur” (1987a:6).

Then Ray went on a mission trip with a men’s group from our church. Because of his lack of bonding with the peoples of these cultures, he was not open to receive the message I was trying to communicate. He was obviously uncomfortable at having to spend time in close proximity and work with the people of the culture that he had always stereotyped through his own cultural perspective. His ethnocentricity was very deeply imbedded. But in spite of his reluctance, God allowed the bonding process to take place. Ray began enter into the lives of the people, in their homes and where they worked. He
worshiped with them. He prayed with them and for them. He began to see and understand their joys and fears, hopes and dreams, frustrations and hardships. Bonding took place as he came to see these people through different eyes, but it took two mission trips and a total immersion within the culture for it to happen. Had he not had this bonding experience, he would have never seen this part of God’s world through new eyes.

The bonding of a person (mission team member) to a new culture takes place on at least two levels. The first is on a level of humility and willingness to step out of one’s own ethnocentric world and to enter into another world, not as someone who is superior, more educated, more successful, etc., but rather as someone who is equal and willing to experience and learn. This attitude is the starting place for bonding to begin.

The second level is one of intimacy. It involves entering into a position in which the person can begin to understand, feel for, and empathize with, the people of the other culture. It involves working with them in their daily labor, entering into their homes, worshiping with them at their churches, playing with their children, hearing their stories, praying with them, and coming to understand their hurts, pains, fears, joys, and dreams. This happens through communication, seeing their situation, touching the reality of their world, working along side of them, caring for them in times of need, etc.

A short-term mission trip that incorporates both of these will result in a greater and deeper bonding of the team members to the people, to the culture, to God’s broader world, and to the messages within the Scriptures. That’s what happened to Ray. He has since told me that those mission trips changed his life more than he ever could have imagined. From that time on when he traveled to Latin American countries on business,
he always went out of his way to be among the people and his love for them was indescribable. But most importantly, his faith was deepened dramatically.

This type of bonding has the potential to occur whenever people have a liminal experience on a short-term mission trip. Team members will bond to those people or situations that first provide a sense of stability in their time of disequilibrium (Brewster and Brewster 1987a, Granberg 1988:344-345, Zahniser 1997:95), especially if they enter humbly and are willing to come to know the people intimately.

**Bonding to Meaning**

Bonding is a connectedness that intertwines itself in, around, and throughout our entire being. It impacts every impression, feeling, decision, and action we take. That to which we bond has a greater impact on us than almost anything else in life. A baby's world revolves around its mother or father. In a like manner, we also bond to those things that provide security, understanding, and direction in our lives. For example, we are bonded to our culture, our religion, our professional connections, etc. When we are separated from those things and people with which we have bonded, we lose that sense of the familiar, the feeling of safety and security.

In the same way, we bond to the meanings within life that provide answers and understanding for the challenges and opportunities we face. These can include such things as: religious beliefs; meanings that define status, race, or class identity; meanings that undergird wealth, investment, or financial security, etc. Those meanings give definition to the components that make up our lives and we hold them dearly, defending them when they are challenged.
Bonding to meaning (a term coined by Mathias Zahniser in his book *Symbols and Ceremony*) goes deeper than simple belief. We can believe that something exists without incorporating the associated meanings into our lives. James 2:18b-19 states, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder.” Our lives demonstrate which meanings we are truly bonded to even though this may be in contrast to what we say we believe.

All of us are bonded to those meanings that we hold to be the ultimate truth. When we become a Christian, it requires a letting go of meanings that are closely held and re-bonding with the new meanings that are taught in the Scriptures. Letting go of that to which we are bonded is very difficult and it is an unnatural process that requires time and dedication. Discipling is the process utilized within Christianity to accomplish that goal. “If Christian discipling involves enabling believers to experience the engagement of the ultimate God in the intimate and vital issues of their lives, then it must go beyond knowing about Christian meaning to bonding to that meaning” (Zahniser 1997:108).

Liminal experiences are the primary scenario in which accepted meanings are raised, challenged, reassessed, and either reinforced or revised. When people move into a liminal state, they enter into a condition of anti-structure. Their structured world is cast aside and they are faced with a world of chaos. While in this state of anti-structure, as stated previously, individuals will grasp for those things that will confirm their beliefs and accepted meanings so that their stability, their structure will be restored.
If left alone, these individuals will associate variables in their new surroundings with those things they believe to be true. If someone is supervising this liminal experience however, they have the ability to guide these people to specific beliefs and to new revelations associated with them. This is an opportunity to direct a person to new meanings to which they can bond or to direct them to confirmations and reinforcements of currently held meanings.

For example, in a tribal rite of passage, the tribal leaders set up a scenario in which a young boy will encounter dangers and challenges that require him to focus on survival techniques and opportunities to build self confidence. Prior to the liminal experience, the meanings the boy was bonded to were those of childhood, the knowledge of protection from danger by his father, the love and nurturing of his mother. Once in the liminal state, he has to release the bond he has on these meanings and establish bonds to the meanings of manhood, strength, self sufficiency, and survival. The tribal leaders establish the liminal environment in order to direct this boy to new meanings, and through it, he bonds to them.

On short-term mission trips, the team leader has the opportunity to structure the variables within the liminal state. This is structuring the anti-structure of the team members. If the leader structures their anti-structure by including 1) Bible studies that are relevant to what the team is seeing, 2) direct interaction with the local people, and 3) discussions that allow team members to relate the biblical teachings with the reality they are seeing in this cultural environment, then they will bond to the relevant meanings within the Scriptures being studied. Mentally, the connection, (between the biblical
teachings and the reality they are experiencing in this new cultural environment), is made in a manner that is dramatically real.

When I was living in Mexico and mission teams came to help, if the team leaders were willing, I helped them structure the variables that took place during the week. This was the case for one of the teams that came. Throughout the week, we were doing devotions and Bible studies about compassion, sacrifice, and selflessness. Each day, we discussed relevant Bible verses and talked about how these related to what they were seeing and experiencing as they worked and did ministry among the local people.

As a part of their ministry, they were conducting a Vacation Bible School each day for over one hundred children. For a group of adults who normally work behind desks, in middle or upper middle class jobs, the focus was on following the preset agenda and completing each task. Communication was difficult as only one person on the team spoke Spanish.

On the fourth day of the Vacation Bible School, the team was doing a drama in which they were acting out the biblical passage where Jesus feeds the five thousand (John 6:1-14). The drama included two puppets who represented a young brother and a sister who had come to hear Jesus that day. One of the team members was dressed as a disciple. When the story was told that there were so many people who needed to eat and there was no food, the disciple went to the puppet boy and girl and said to them, “There are many people here and we wondered if you had any food that you would share to help Jesus feed all of these hungry people?”

The little boy puppet said, “Yes, we have two fish and five loaves,” and the little girl puppet said, “No, Mom gave us this food for our lunch, we can’t give it away.” Then
the disciple said, “Won’t you please help? There are so many people and they are so hungry?”

At that moment, a small, six year old Mexican boy named Juanito, stepped from the crowd of children toward the blanket that hid the puppets. The team leaders started to jump to pull him back so that he would not disturb the drama, but before they could get to him, Juanito reached into the pocket of his torn, well worn pants and pulled out three pesos (all that he had). He reached out and handed them to the disciple and said, “I want to help Jesus feed the hungry people.”

For the team, this one moment of crosscultural interaction became the moment in which the meanings within their Bible studies became bonded to their hearts. As it so happened, the Vacation Bible School was being conducted in the vacant lot next to Juanito’s house. His house was a ten foot by ten foot shack with no windows and an old torn blanket hung over the doorway. The shack was constructed of small pieces of discarded plywood and used rusty nails and cardboard. It had no electricity and no running water. It had no floor, only the packed desert sand. He, along with his mother, father, and baby brother, all slept on one old mattress that they had found in the city dump. Each day, his father struggled to provide food for his family.

So when Juanito came forward and offered all the money he had because he wanted to help Jesus feed the hungry people, the members of the team began to understand deeper meanings within the Scripture passages which they had been reading (about compassion, sacrifice, and selflessness). Juanito had compassion for hurting people he did not even know, he sacrificed all that he had, and his selflessness, given his own situation of poverty, was beyond anyone’s imagination. As I looked around at the
team members standing in the middle of this poor Mexican slum, I did not see one dry eye.

In the team discussion that evening, every member of the team was humbled by the pureness of Juanitos heart and the selfless, Christlike nature of this one little boy. One by one, each person related Juanito to the teachings they had received during the week and they related them to their own lives, past, present, and future. These deeper meanings were bonded to their hearts.

By structuring the variables within the liminal state, this bonding to meaning took place. By leading the team through relevant Bible studies, establishing opportunities for direct interaction with the local people, and having team discussions that allow the team members to relate the biblical teachings with the reality they were seeing, these deeper meanings were recognized and the bonding occurred.

If liminal time is not structured or guided, team members will grasp onto meanings that they already believe to be true. These meanings could be very different from those discussed in the previous paragraphs even though the individuals are in the same liminal scenario. For example, if the liminal experience is in an impoverished community in a third world country, contrasting meanings that could be derived are shown in Table 3.
Table 3: Possible Contrasting Meanings through Guided and Unguided Liminality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guided Liminality</th>
<th>Unguided Liminality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joy and happiness exist even in poverty</td>
<td>Poverty breeds misery and sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness exists even without money</td>
<td>Money - the source of happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength through faith in Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Poverty is weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The poor are rich in ways we are not</td>
<td>The poor are poor in every way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness and compassion are priorities in life</td>
<td>Education and hard work are the priorities in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life can be lived in many ways</td>
<td>American culture is the only way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God created us all equally and loves us all</td>
<td>The poor are not receiving God's blessings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in Christ gives inner peace</td>
<td>Religious belief doesn't put food on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These people are beautiful</td>
<td>These people are sad and miserable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn so much from them</td>
<td>They need to learn so much from me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope lives in their hearts through faith</td>
<td>There is no hope in this place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The meanings we bond to are firmly imbedded within us. Guiding people through their liminal experiences can lead to bonding to meanings within Scripture that result in deepened faith in Jesus Christ.

**Crosscultural Interaction Model – Short-Term Mission Trips**

Crosscultural interaction is a fundamental aspect of Christian ministry as defined by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We are to go and make disciples of all nations, all people groups. One model exists through which individuals experience
crosscultural interaction while ministering through word and by example. That model is a short-term mission trip.

Short-term missions are a ministry vehicle in which individuals (lay as well as clergy) can participate in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). They are called short-term because individuals participate for a defined and limited amount of time (usually one week to two months), and they are considered missions because participants travel to and serve in a ministry setting that is both away from their normal existence and with individuals of another culture or socioeconomic level.

Over the past 35 to 40 years, the concept of short-term missions has taken root and continued to grow within the church culture in North America. Ease of travel has made it possible for groups of people to visit foreign settings and to serve with their time and their talents while maintaining a normal life at home.

The creation and growth of short-term missions has become a phenomenon in modern Christian history. It had its first roots in the late 1940's when Wycliffe Bible Translators took groups of businessmen to the countries and cultures in which they were working. But the concept of sending small groups to serve in foreign settings did not begin to take root until the mid-1960s. In the book, "Maximum Impact Short-term Mission," the authors noted that researcher, Thomas Chandler, had estimated that 540 individuals from North America participated in a short-term mission experience in 1965. This number has grown significantly over the years. In 2003, it is estimated that well over one million individuals will serve on a short-term team (Peterson, et al. 2003:255).

The authors of this book state that exact data on the number of individuals going on short-term mission trips and the number of churches and organizations that are
sending teams is not available. No organization has taken the time to amass this information. As a result, only estimates can be made. Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed have estimated that today, there are probably 35,000 U. S. churches doing short-term missions, sending out between 420,000 and 1.4 million short-termers. In addition, they estimate that approximately 3,700 North American agencies are involved in sending out mission teams with nearly 500,000 participants. Plus, they estimate that more than 1,000 North American schools are sending teams (2003:252-253).

In total, it is believed that approximately 40,000 sending agencies are sending out mission teams. If each only sent out one team, 40,000 mission teams left their homes and went to serve in another country or culture. In all likelihood, close to half of these agencies are sending out between 2 to 20 mission teams each year, making the total number of teams each year well above 60,000.

These groups of individuals serve many purposes: they bring needed resources (spiritual, physical, and financial) to the mission site; they assist missionaries in accomplishing what otherwise might not be possible; they support and encourage the local missionary(ies); they increase their awareness of the physical and spiritual needs around the world; they increase awareness of the Kingdom of God, of the love God has for his people, and of the work He is doing to provide for their needs; they generate interest and enthusiasm for missions within the local church; they increase prayer for and giving to missions; they serve as an introduction point that leads many into full time missions; etc. (Gibson, et al. 1992:21-26, Moen 1992:82, Peterson and Peterson 1991:6-30, Tanin et al. 1995:4).
Even though there are many positive attributes of this type of ministry, short-term missions are also criticized for several reasons. The negative perspectives include: they are considered hit and run ministries through which little is accomplished; cultural insensitivity and ethnocentrism can result in doing more damage than good; the work of the full time missionaries can be disrupted and negatively affected by the teams; preparing for and accommodating a team can emotionally and physically drain the full time missionaries; the cost of sending mission teams is high for the perceived value gained; etc. (Adeney 1996, Gibson 1992:21-26, Moen 1992:82, Peterson and Peterson 1991:2).

In spite of the negatives and because of the positives, the ministry of sending short-term mission teams is now an accepted part of church outreach in the American culture. Because it is so widely accepted and utilized, our goal needs to be to improve on the positives and minimize the negatives so that the Kingdom of God can be well served through them.

One book however, (mentioned above), was recently published (Peterson, et. al. 2003) which takes a deeper look into the dynamics of the phenomena that occur before, during, and after a short-term mission experience. It considers what the authors refer to as “The Process Trilogy.” These are dynamics and occurrences that take place in pre-field, on-field, and post-field periods of the mission trip (2003:127-150). Then they cross reference these with the “Participant Trilogy” which looks at the factors associated with senders, goer-guests, and host receivers (2003:151-164). The authors also consider the interrelated dynamics that occur in and between the goer-guest and the host receiver. Specifically, they look at it in relation to “Giving/Sowing” and “Getting/Reaping” (2003:165-178). This book goes further than any other published to date in evaluating the causes and effects that occur in mission trip experiences.

In addition, some research has been conducted and the findings have been published which evaluate short-term missions from the standpoint of: effectiveness in the field (Adeney 1996, Montgomery 1993); personal impact on the participants (Moen 1992, Peterson 1987, Tuttle 1998); and impact on their churches (Millham 1998).

Of the books discussing the mechanics of the short-term trip, the book by Richard Reichert (1998) entitled, *Missions is a Contact Sport*, places the greatest emphasis on the characteristics of crosscultural interaction and a liminal experience (although Reichert does not identify it as such). The author is a missionary in Ecuador and has received many short-term teams.

Thomas Moen, in his Master of Divinity thesis entitled, “Short-Term Missions,” goes into greater detail than all of the other authors concerning the potential impact a short-term mission trip can have on participants. He focuses on the importance of
crosscultural interaction, biblical teachings and related group discussions. The author identified the fact that lives are impacted when individuals are placed in unfamiliar surroundings. He states,

One factor that is common in all 19 of these testimonies is the element of being in a context that is totally unfamiliar to the individual. All of these individuals put themselves in situations apart from personal comforts and it was when they were confronted with the unfamiliar that they learned to see things as they really were. God often teaches us lessons by leading us out into situations which we must rely on Him. (1992:34)

This touches on one aspect of liminality and its potential outcome. Moen's work is unpublished.

Steven Hawthorne, in an article entitled “Maximum Short-Term Mission,” identified the importance of crosscultural interaction in the mission experience. He states, “Cross-cultural experience helps you prize people over things, value friendships over your own frustrations, and put your plans into God’s hands” (Gibson, et al. 1992:84-87).

In the 1991 study by Roger Peterson and Timothy Peterson for Stem Ministries entitled, “Is Short-Term Mission Really Worth the Time and Money?”, the authors interviewed individuals who served on short-term teams. Their goal was to identify resulting changes in participants’ prayer lives for and financial support of missions, their vision for world evangelism, their participation in mission related activities, and their subsequent return to crosscultural mission. In all of these areas, participant levels increased substantially (1991:6-24,28).

Kathryn A. Tuttle, in her doctoral dissertation, looked at the effects of short-term mission experiences on the spiritual growth and maturity of college students. In her conclusions, she identified growth in spirituality and maturity if participants “were more
likely to go out of their way to help others and were generally more understanding of individual differences” (Tuttle 1998:ii). Tuttle’s research however, did not address the variables being evaluated in this study.

With the exception of the few writers discussed above (Reichert, Moen, and Hawthorne in particular), very little emphasis has been placed on the three characteristics identified in this study. None have identified liminality as a characteristic of the experience nor have they evaluated the related effects.

There are no studies or writings that either identify or evaluate the three dynamics (either individually or combined) as a functioning model within a short-term mission experience. Additionally, I found no writings or studies that evaluate spiritual growth or deepening of faith of short-term mission participants in direct relation to these variables.

The short-term mission experience provides conceptual constructs that can be seen and grasped by the participants. Our cognitive nature is strongly influenced by demonstrable examples, especially those that either confirm or oppose the things that we hold to be true. For a Christian, the short-term mission trip experience offers the unique situation in which held truths are both confirmed and challenged at the same time. It is through this dichotomy that real growth takes place.

Encountering commonly held meanings that are displayed in and through different forms, challenges us to reassess our own system of symbols and how we interpret their related meanings. It can lead to a broadening of our understanding and it can even challenge some strongly held beliefs.

Through these experiences, faith can be deepened or lessened. The cognitive mind is challenged to make sense of what it is seeing. If we are able to connect this new
perspective of a commonly held belief with the source of the meaning (Scriptural truths), our faith will be enhanced. This allows individuals to do more than learn about truth, it allows them to enter into the reality of that truth.

The objective thinker believes that “they can know the truth about things . . . apart from their own perceptions” (Creamer 1996:71). For people who have faith, reality is based on much more. Faith requires objective thinking (which leads to “belief”) but it also requires subjectivity (personal, experiential, within the human conscience). Experience and awareness (outside of the realm of objectively based understanding) can prove to be as valid and can often take precedence over the objective. Short-term mission trips offer the opportunity to see life and a new reality of biblical teachings/meanings, subjectively. Participants can see these teachings lived out from a whole new perspective.

Bernard Lonergan discussed this principle of knowing by stating, “The dynamic cognitional structure to be reached is . . . the personally appropriated structure of one’s own experiencing, one’s own intelligent inquiry and insights, one’s own critical reflection and judging and deciding” (1992:12-13).

This theory also applies to bonding to the meanings of Scripture. We can objectively read the Bible and even believe what it says, but we have to subjectively experience the meanings within the Bible for us to begin to bond with the meaning. To bond with scriptural meanings, we have to first know of those meanings, be able to recognize them in a situation(s) in life, and then subjectively experience them. The combination of objective knowledge with experiential subjective knowledge, creates the situation in which meaning becomes interwoven within the very nature of the individual’s
being. This bonding to meaning creates new lifeview perspectives which impact understanding, personal action, interaction, judgment, and reaction to the occurrences in life. The short-term mission trip is a situation which maximizes the opportunity for this to happen.

From a biblical perspective, Jesus and his disciples served as the first short-term mission teams. Neither He nor they went into a village or a place for long periods of time. They went to a location, stayed in people’s homes, depended on others to feed them, and ministered for a period of days. Then they would move on.

They probably resembled a mission team in that they had a spiritual leader and they were a team of twelve growing Christians. When they went into Samaria, the disciples had some ethnocentric biases toward the people. They probably interacted with them with a sense of superiority.

Scripture tells us that Jesus took them into Samaria, knowing that they were unprepared and that there were things that he wanted to teach them through the process. Jesus loved the Samaritans and He wanted them to know him as the Son of God, but He went to them with a group of well meaning, unprepared servants who probably offended many of the Samaritan people. These passages indicate that Jesus saw his ministry on this mission trip as two fold: to teach and offer salvation to the Samaritans, and to deepen the knowledge, faith, and wisdom of those on his team. He knew that if they gained this wisdom, they would be so much more effective in touching the lives of others for years to come. He used this form of ministry to do both. Did it minister to them in a pure, well defined, focused manner? No. He realized that there was much to be gained by ministering to both groups through this short-term mission experience in Samaria.
Through this experiential participation, tied to the theological dimension of a believer's core foundation, the opportunity for a deepening of faith within each individual is magnified exponentially. Depending upon where a participant enters his or her faith journey, there can be either major transformation or a deepening of faith to new levels. This type of ministry experience offers variables which can provide a unique opportunity for significant spiritual growth.

The primary variable in whether this occurs or not lies in the hands of the team leader(s). The leader can intentionally provide opportunities for cultural interaction, for Bible teachings and discussions of what the team members are seeing, feeling, and experiencing, and to allow his or her team members to be stretched by placing them in a liminal situation. The leader knowingly or unknowingly determines the variables and overall outcome of the short-term mission ministry experience.

In conclusion, we can look at one other incident in the Scriptures that demonstrates how God used these principles to lead one of his chosen, deeper in faith.

We know that Moses attached himself to a family of shepherds, and that the pride of Egypt's palace with his uncalloused hands and fine upbreeding got his first taste of the real world plodding over desert sands looking for places to pasture his sheep. The lessons learned with a staff in his hand and the grit of sand in his sandals were not things you pick up in the palace. God knew that if Moses was ever to be useful as a liberator he would have to learn how to lead like a shepherd. (Reichert 1995:21)

**Precedents in the Bible**

Christianity is the foundational belief system around which this study is based. It is the belief that God is the Creator of all things, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that Jesus was crucified and died for the sins of all humankind, that forgiveness and salvation come only through Jesus Christ, and that after the resurrection of Christ, God sent the
Holy Spirit to lead and empower those who believe. This study looks to identify information and understanding that will lead those in ministry to be able to more effectively bring others to new, deeper levels of faith in God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is the greatest source for guidance, wisdom, and inspiration. The following will look at several biblical passages in an effort to better understand the principles being studied.

**Jesus and his Disciples (Example 1)**

After Jesus selected his disciples, Scriptures indicate that the teaching methods he chose did not include taking them to a synagogue and lecturing to them several hours each day. Instead, he took them from their familiar settings, he led them into cultural settings different from their own, they slept on the ground or in other people's houses, they ate food that was provided by others, and the meanings within his teachings touched on the realities of the lives around them.

Jesus knew that the best way to teach his disciples was to put them in situations where his teaching would be relevant and where their own worlds would not block their vision. To understand about forgiveness, he showed them a woman caught in adultery who was about to be stoned (John 8:1-11). To teach them faith, he walked on the water (Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:15-21). To teach them of God’s provision, he fed the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:11-17, John 6:1-14). To teach them kindness, he healed the leper (Matthew 8:1-3, Mark 1:40-44, Luke 5:12-14, 18:11-19). To teach them of God’s love for all that he created, he ministered to a Samaritan woman and the people of her village (John 4:3-26, 39-42). To teach them

The disciples are the best example of deepened faith created through 1) biblical teaching 2) crosscultural interaction and 3) a liminal experience. Jesus chose these variables to disciple his apostles.

Jesus and his Disciples (Example 2)

Jesus again used these three dynamics when he sent his disciples on their own short-term mission trips (Matthew 10:1-42, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6). His desire was for them to preach about the Kingdom of heaven and repentance, to heal the sick, and to drive out demons. But Jesus did not tell them to stay at an inn and teach in a synagogue, instead he gave them specific instructions that led to a liminal experience. He told them to “Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belt. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic” (Mark 6:8-9). And finally, he instructed them to stay in people’s homes, creating a situation in which they would have to have direct interaction with the people.

Peter

In Acts 10 and 11, Peter answered the call from God to go to another place, to a different people (Gentiles) and culture. In essence, he was sent on a 40 mile short-term mission trip. Through this crosscultural mission experience, his faith was deepened. Even though he was one of Jesus’ disciples and his faith was deeper than almost any other human being, this experience led him to understand the meanings within Christ’s teaching more fully.
God gave Peter a vision (Acts 10:9-16), which created an extreme liminal situation within his mind. God showed him that it was okay to go outside of the Jewish cultural boundaries and to accept what he had understood as being unacceptable. It was through this vision that Peter separated from his known world and entered into another culture, that of the Gentiles. This created another liminal situation for Peter: first, because he was living and eating with Gentiles (Acts 10:24-27, 48b, 11:3) and second, because he was bringing them into the Christian faith (Acts 10:34-48, 11:17). As a result, the relevance of Christ's teaching became clear to him (Acts 10:34). When he walked in faith, entered into this other culture, and saw God moving among these people, he truly understood the meaning behind the words that had been taught to him. Through this, the fruits of Peter's ministry were multiplied as he preached Christ to the Gentiles and "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44).

The believers who accompanied Peter were "astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" (Acts 10:45). God took Peter and those who traveled with him to a new level of faith. For the first time, they saw God working in a situation that was outside of the Jewish Christian worldview that they held to be true.

Later, when confronted by other Jewish Christians, Peter explained all that had happened. In explaining his new understanding, he said, "if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (Acts 11:17)

The result of this short-term mission experience was threefold: 1) the Gentiles came to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Acts 10:44,48), 2) the faith of Peter and his mission team was deepened to new levels (Acts 10:45,47; 11:15-18), and 3) the
Great Commission was being fulfilled as the Kingdom of God was expanded (Acts 11:18). Additionally, as a result of Peter’s new understanding, he and the other disciples were open and willing to send Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-3).

The Seventy-two

Jesus again sent out followers, utilizing the same parameters for ministry. He sent out the seventy-two (seventy in some translations) in pairs to minister in his name (Luke 10:1-24). He gave them the same instructions, “Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; . . . When you enter a house . . . stay in that house, eat and drink whatever they give you (Luke 10:4-7).

Through these instructions, Jesus prepared them to have direct interaction with the local people and to live and minister in a situation that was outside of their normal, known lifestyle environment. The result was that “the seventy-two returned with joy” (Luke 10:17a) having ministered and grown in their own faith. God’s greatness was revealed to them through this experience.

Summary

Faith is a multifaceted dynamic. Obtaining a tangible grasp on the concept of faith is like trying to sculpt air. The multiple definitions that exist for the word faith produce more questions than they answer as no one definition can adequately explain its meaning. But regardless of the semantics, faith is very real and it is a part of all of our lives.

This chapter has reviewed the literature on many of the issues relating to faith. While faith is a relevant aspect of every important relationship and attachment we have in
our lives, this study is focused on faith in relation to Christianity (having faith in God, as Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit).

Faith, as defined in this study, relates to the level of knowledge one has in the faith source (God), the degree of trust that is placed in God, and through bonding to the meanings within God’s truth and wisdom, the assimilation of these principles into the person’s life. Our personal faith identity is the degree to which we allow the principles of our faith to determine how we live our lives.

The literature has demonstrated that we can empirically identify characteristics of faith and those characteristics suggest a process of maturing or deepening of faith that can and does take place. The acknowledgement that faith can develop, grow, and deepen, leads researchers and practitioners of faith to search for those factors which will facilitate this to occur. This study is an attempt to identify the factors that will allow God’s wisdom and truth (that exists in every cultural and socioeconomic setting in forms and worldview perspectives that vary from situation to situation), to be observed, recognized, and realized so that the individuals participating will absorb the information, bond to the meanings, and then assimilate them into their lives.

These faith enabling opportunities exist in a crosscultural experience as individuals enter into a setting in which God’s wisdom and truth are being lived out in and through different social and cultural circumstances of life. This study raises the theory that the variables identified within a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction are factors that will enable deepening of faith.

James Fowler has identified characteristics of faith and the developmental processes that occur as faith deepens. The recognition of these characteristics will assist
in bringing definition and understanding to the effects obtained through the inclusion or exclusion of the FCLI components.

The factors identified within the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction have their roots in structural models and principles that have been recognized for their validity in the field of social science. In many ways, the FCLI parallels the phenomenon known as rites of passage but expands this theoretical framework by utilizing the dynamics of liminality to enhance biblical teachings while they are being observed in a living laboratory, the crosscultural setting.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the factors identified, extensive research was conducted. The data has been collected and discussed in the chapters that follow.

Notes

1 “Faith is the subtle chain which binds us to the infinity.”
   Elizabeth Oakes Smith (1806 – 1893)

2 While this study is not focused on stages of faith or the validity of this type of philosophical description and analysis, it is important to present a broad understanding of the science of faith that has been researched and proposed. The underlying principle that this study is affirming is that personal faith can grow in depth and meaning as new insight is gained.

3 It should be noted that these theories of human development were recognized and established within a Western cultural context. They may or may not have relevance in non-Western cultural settings.

4 Repeating Endnote #3: It should be noted that these theories of human development were recognized and established within a Western cultural context. They may or may not have relevance in non-Western cultural settings.

5 As a clarification to Mr. Smith’s quote, the term “faith” is not used in most of the world religions. It is predominantly a Christian term, but the concept or premise of faith exists within most other religions. It is usually expressed through different terminology.
Clifford Geertz, in his essay, "Religion as a Cultural System," defined religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (1973:90)
Chapter 4

Revealing God’s Teachings Through Cultural Perspectives:
Research Design

*Faith... Illuminating and Sealing the Heart*

Faith is a phenomenon that is intangible. It is like a thread that runs through every aspect of our lives giving each part strength and resilience beyond explanation. As stated before, every individual, from the moment of birth, establishes faith in something(s). But because faith is an intangible phenomenon, measurement of its level of existence has proven to be difficult. However, over the past century, several in-depth research studies have produced tools which help to objectively measure and evaluate faith. This study has been designed to utilize academically accepted research tools and theories in an effort to draw valid conclusions.

**Background and Basis for the Research Design**

I believe we can accept as a given, the fact that faith grows over time as we believe in God, experience His presence in our lives, develop relationships within the Kingdom, worship Him, and learn more and more about the things that have been taught to us (through the prophets, the disciples, the Word, and Jesus Christ). I pray that all of us have experienced this phenomenon. If not, we all know others who have demonstrated a growing level of faith in God or in other faith sources.

The concept of faith growing or deepening is referred to in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul referred to faith growing in reference to new believers in 2 Corinthians 10:15. In 1 Peter 2:2, Peter says, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that
by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” And, in 2 Peter 3:18, he said, “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We as Christians, especially those of us who are considered Christian leaders, are called to nurture believers in their faith. In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul emphasized this when he told them, “We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith” (1 Thessalonians 3:2). As we ourselves grow in faith, we also learn ways to share with others the knowledge we have gained. But we should also be challenged to discover methods that most clearly bring forth the nature of God and allow us to reach a little further into the infinite depth of wisdom and knowledge that he offers through the Word. The research in this study is attempting to do just that by testing to see if the inclusion of the three identified variables provides an effective method through which believers can identify and then assimilate new meanings and wisdom into their lives, resulting in the deepening of their faith.

To research the phenomenon of faith development in a short-term mission setting, I first needed to conduct a thorough study of existing materials to gain an understanding of the topics that are relevant to this subject. This included:

1) A review of the literature and related research studies, to identify existing knowledge, background information, and current philosophies in the areas of faith, spiritual growth, stages of faith, discipling, rites of passage, liminality, bonding, bonding to meaning, and pilgrimage;
2) A review of the literature and related research studies in the areas of liminality and crosscultural interaction, to determine any awareness of or use of the two identified dynamics for the purposes of increased spiritual awareness or deepening of faith;

3) A review of existing research studies and dissertations, to identify established research designs utilized to gather data and methods for qualifying and evaluating levels of faith to determine their applicability to this study;

4) A review of the literature on short-term missions: to determine the scope of knowledge and understanding of this type of ministry; to gain increased awareness of the primary purposes, goals, and objectives established by short-term mission teams and their leaders; and to identify any existing knowledge of or use of the three variables within the FCLI model in this form of ministry.

Research Design

The broad nature of the concept of faith and faith development as well as the scope and interwoven relationship of the three components of the FCLI model made it necessary to develop a multifaceted research approach in order to evaluate the theory being studied. The objective of the research design was to study the dynamics associated with faith development in situations with and without the studied variables, with individuals as they experienced them.

Data Needed to Solve the Problem

To determine whether levels of faith are deepened through the inclusion of the three identified variables in settings described above, this study utilizes the Christian ministry form known as short-term missions for the basis of data gathering. To accomplish the objectives of this study, the following information was needed:
1) From mission team leaders:

- Their understanding of and vision for short-term mission experiences;

- If they consciously utilize them for the purposes of developing spiritual growth and deepening of the faith of participants, and if so, to what degree;

- The frequency of occurrence of the three identified variables within their trips, whether planned or by chance.

2) From individuals who have participated in short-term mission trips:

- Their level of faith (as defined in this study) before and after their experience;

- Their feelings, impressions, and understandings before and after their participation;

- The inclusion or exclusion of the three variables in their experience;

- Identification of new knowledge and understanding gained through the experience;

- Whether the new knowledge is faith based (associated with biblical meanings) or based more in the nature of social awareness and concern (from a humanitarian perspective);

- Whether the new knowledge and understanding is tied to biblical teachings and meanings, and whether it results in deepening of faith;

- Their feelings and impressions about the impact the experience had on them personally at the time of the trip, is now having, and will have on them in the future;

- And the recognized changes (if any) in their lives which they attribute to the new knowledge and understanding.
Structure of the Research

The qualitative and quantitative research for this study focuses on information provided by participants of short-term mission experiences as well as on participant observations that I made while traveling with many of these teams. While the mission trips were similar in the fact that they were all groups from U.S. churches or Christian organizations who traveled to other countries and cultures, other aspects within the mission trips varied in relation to trip location, cultures served, language, team size, duration of trip, age of participants, etc. Variations of this nature are beneficial as they provide a broad spectrum of involvement and many opportunities for exposure from which impressions can be made.

The research was approached from three perspectives: Phase (1) This researcher was a participant/observer on the seven short-term mission trips utilized in this study. Phase (2) Team members on the seven mission teams were asked to complete a questionnaire before going on their trip and another one after they returned. (The questionnaires were pre-tested). Phase (3) Interviews were conducted with church leaders who lead short-term mission teams each year.

Phase 1 and 2 of the research involved personal and direct contact with short-term mission participants before, during, and after their mission experience. Seven mission teams were identified from various churches, denominations, cities, and mission organizations in an effort to provide a broad perspective of mission trip design and philosophy. Prior to going on these trips, the team leaders from each of the seven teams were asked to fill out a questionnaire to determine their goals and priorities for the trip
Then the members of the team were asked to fill out a pre-trip questionnaire (Appendix B) before leaving for the mission site. Several weeks after they returned, they were asked to complete a second, post-trip questionnaire (Appendix C). In addition, I traveled with these mission teams solely as a participant observer with no leadership involvement. Team leaders and participants only knew that I was researching short-term mission trips in general. They were not informed of the faith aspects of the research nor did they know of the three variables being studied.

The goal of this research was to include teams that incorporated none, some, and all of the three variables being researched. Through these, comparisons can be made in relation to those trips that lack the variables and of the multiplying effect that possibly results when two or all three are included.

By traveling with the team (Phase 1), I had the opportunity to evaluate the characteristics of the trip as well as the inclusion or exclusion of the three variables this study is evaluating. If they were included in the mission experience, I was able to evaluate the degree to which each was incorporated and then relate that information to the qualitative and quantitative data gathered. (The variables being evaluated cannot be considered to be simply included or excluded. Each can be included within varying degree. For example, cultural interaction can range from none, to casual contact during a worship service or in shopping situations, to deeper immersion within homes and through working side by side with those of the visited culture).

Research data in Phase 2 was gathered through four progressive components:

Phase 2a - Prior to going on the trip, a questionnaire was given to each of the team leaders (Appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to gain a basic understanding of
the leaders' goals, objectives, and underlying purpose for each mission trip.

Phase 2b - Two to six weeks prior to the mission trip, each team member filled out the pre-trip questionnaire (Appendix B). This survey asked for personal demographic information, but the majority of the questions were a reproduction of The Faith Maturity Scale.

The Faith Maturity Scale was developed by the Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN in 1993 by researchers P. L. Benson, M. J. Donahue, and J. A. Erickson (Benson 1993). It focuses on “values and behavioral manifestations or indicators of faith rather than exclusively on an assent to particular religious beliefs or tenets” (Tisdale 1999: 171).

The conceptual development of this research instrument began in 1987 as six major Protestant denominations came together with the Search Institute for a four year study of personal faith, denominational loyalty, and their determinants. The project was supported by the Lily Endowment. The six denominations included: the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.; the United Church of Christ; the United Methodist Church; and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The scale was designed to place its focus on indicators of faith. As the scale was developed the designers utilized this definition: “Faith maturity is the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives characteristic of vibrant and life-transforming faith, as these have been understood in ‘mainline’ Protestant traditions” (Benson, et al. 1993:3).

As the Faith Maturity Scale was developed, the research team was guided by the following eight considerations:
[1] faith maturity occurs along a continuum;
[2] there are multiple core dimensions of faith maturity;
[3] faith maturity involves both one’s personal relationship with God (vertical faith), as well as one’s relationship with others and behavioral manifestations of faith (horizontal faith);
[4] the scale should have heuristic value;
[5] the length of the instrument and its response format should make it useful;
[6] the scale should minimize economic, educational, and racial-ethnic specificity;
[7] the indicators of faith maturity should not presume an institutional attachment or involvement;
[8] denominational specificity should be minimized. (Hill 1999:171)

The 38 items in the survey were designed to evaluate eight core dimensions of faith maturity. They are as follows (with related question numbers):

1) Trusts in God’s saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus (Question numbers 2, 22, 25, 26, 34)

2) Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace (10, 20, 24, 27, 32)

3) Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one’s religious life (3, 7, 29, 30, 33)

4) Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others (9, 14, 15, 19)
5) Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another (4, 23, 31, 36)

6) Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (5, 12, 17, 18, 22, 38)

7) Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice (1, 28, 35, 37)

8) Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice (6, 8, 13, 16, 21) (Benson, et al. 1993:6).

These core dimensions were designed to provide insight into participants’ level of faith on two planes: (1) what the authors referred to as vertical faith (“One’s personal relationship to God, one’s efforts to seek God, and the personal transformation one experiences in this divine encounter.”) and (2) horizontal faith (“Obligation and action on the human plane. . . . Heeding the call to social service and social justice”) (Benson, et al. 1993:4). In the survey, three of the eight dimensions (listed above) provide insight into vertical faith (Trusts in God, Experiences the fruits of faith [well-being, security, and peace], and Seeks spiritual growth). Three of the eight core dimensions of faith maturity demonstrate horizontal faith (Holds life-affirming values, Advocates social change, and Acts and serves) (1993:4).

I chose to use the Faith Maturity Scale after carefully considering from a list of nine accepted research surveys on faith development and measurement.² I chose this scale because it focused on evaluating faith based on changes in life patterns and the integration of faith principles in all aspects of life.
Phase 2c - Following the trip, a second questionnaire (Appendix C) was administered to the same individuals. This survey contains two parts: The first is a modified Faith Maturity Scale. It incorporates the same questions and survey sequence, but asks for the participants' perspective as it relates to variations in their perception of these aspects of faith, belief, and assimilation as a result of their mission trip experience.

The second component of the post-trip survey relates specifically to the faith variables identified in this study and specific aspects of assimilation. I will refer to this section of questions as the Related Biblical Topics Scale.

The questions in the second component of this survey were also designed to provide information that paralleled the eight core dimensions of faith maturity utilized in the Faith Maturity Scale (Trusts in God, Integrates faith and life, etc.). This allows all three surveys to provide consistent variables and measures for comparison and evaluation.

Phase 2(d) – After the participants (within each team) completed the second survey, I conducted interviews with many of them. Participants had the opportunity to share feelings, impressions, observations, and understandings gained through the mission trip experience. I asked questions that led participants through an evaluative process (Appendix D) that provided opportunities for them to express themselves qualitatively. The questions asked were intended to identify any new understandings or revelations that took place during the crosscultural experience and the participants' perspectives on how these things will or will not impact their lives.

Phase 3 of the research focused on mission pastors and mission team leaders (Appendix E). These individuals were identified through: random telephone sampling;
the professional organization known as ACMC (Advancing Churches in Missions
Commitment); and the organization known as Volunteers in Mission. The objective of
this survey was to identify the primary focal points of the trips these individuals lead in
order to gain a better understanding of the scope of their perceived ministry to and
through the individuals on their mission teams. This also helped to identify whether
these leaders intentionally include any or all of the three variables identified in this study.

Research Sample

In Phase 1 of the research, as a participant/observer, I accompanied all seven
mission teams. As a researcher, I did not participate in a leadership role, but rather, as a
member of the team.

In Phases 1 and 2, the teams represented churches from the following
denominations: Southern Baptist, United Methodist, Christian Missionary Alliance, and a
Bible Church. Three of the trips were led by mission agencies. Two of the trips were
made up of youth (ages 14 through 18) and the other five teams were adults (a few
participants on these teams were under 18). The trips went to the following
countries/cultures: Costa Rica, Spain, Jamaica, Guatemala (Mayan Indians), Guatemala
(Ladino orphans), and Kenya (Sudanese refugee camp and the Kenyan Turkana and
Masai tribes). Of these teams, two focused exclusively on construction/work projects,
three teams focused exclusively on evangelism/ministry, and two did both ministry and
work projects.

In all, there were 14 team leaders and 101 participants. Of these participants, 97
(96%) completed the pre-trip questionnaires and 75 (74%) completed the post-trip
questionnaires. The research data was drawn from the 74 (73%) that completed both the
pre-trip and the post-trip surveys.

In Phase 3 of the research, I have conducted approximately 20 interviews with mission team leaders.

Research Instruments

The research instruments for this study are provided in the Appendix. They are as follows:

Appendix A: Phase 2(a) – Pre-Trip Team Leader Questionnaire given to the leaders of the seven participating mission teams.

Appendix B: Phase 2(b) – Pre-Trip Questionnaire given to the seven participating mission team members (97 completed).

Appendix C: Phase 2(c) – Post-Trip Questionnaire given to the seven participating mission team members (75 completed).

Appendix D: Phase 2(d) – Post-Trip Interview questions.

Appendix E: Phase 3 – Mission Pastor/Team Leader interview questions.

Data Collection Procedures

In phase 1, as a participant/observer, data was gathered through observation with a specific focus on the inclusion or exclusion of the three variables that make up a FCLI and the level to which each was included. In addition, I observed the interaction and responses of the team members. A journal was maintained for each of the seven mission trips.

Phase 2 consisted of three surveys: the Team Leader Questionnaire, the Pre-Trip Questionnaire, and the Post-Trip Questionnaire. The Team Leader and Pre-Trip surveys...
were mailed between three and six weeks before the team departed on the mission trip. Anyone who did not complete the survey prior to arriving in the crosscultural setting was not included as a participant in the research. The Post-Trip survey was mailed approximately one to two months after the team returned home from the mission trip. They filled it out and returned it by mail.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data gathered allows for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Statistical analysis of occurrence, frequency, and correlation will provide insight into the validity and phenomenological impact of the three variables in a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* while qualitative analysis will provide feelings, impressions, and understandings of participants in relation to faith development, and any resulting effects on their personal lives.

Data analysis was done progressively in four categories: (1) analysis of the information gained through participant/observation, (2) correlation analyses, (3) analyses of cause and effect, and (4) quantitative and qualitative relationship analyses. Each has been conducted as follows:

**Participant/Observation Analysis**

The evaluation process as a participant/observer is primarily subjective and it relies on the researcher's observations and judgments. In an effort to provide a fair and objective analysis, a variable ranking scale was designed and utilized in evaluating the seven mission trips. The design basis and criteria are explained in Chapter 5. The results of this research are reported in Chapter 6.
Correlation Analyses

(A) An analysis was made of the demographic variables to determine whether they have a predictive relationship to the outcome variables (those related to faith development). (B) An analysis was done to determine whether there was a predictive relationship between the three principle variables of the study (Bible studies and discussions, crosscultural interaction, and/or liminality) and the outcome variables (those related to faith development). (C) An evaluation was done to look for correlations or relationships between the vertical dimensions of faith (personal relationship with God, the faith source), and horizontal dimensions of faith (the way in which a person demonstrates their faith beliefs in their daily lives) indicated by participants as a result of their experiences. The results are reported in Chapter 7.

Analyses of Cause and Effect

With the correlation analyses (stated above) as a guide, analyses were made to determine the cause and effect relationships of those correlations. This was done through: A) Hierarchical Linear Regression analysis. This focused on specific correlations, in which significant growth was demonstrated, to determine what caused the growth. For those multiple variables that demonstrated faith development growth, hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to determine which of the variables was most important, second in importance, third, and so on; B) Analysis of Variance. This focused on the potential groupings of the variables being studied to determine whether these variables interact with each other to cause the effect or whether they influence faith development independently. The results of this research are reported in Chapter 7.
Quantitative and Qualitative Relationship Analyses

This phase of the research looked at the relationship between the quantitative and the qualitative data to determine the correlation or variance that exists between them. Results are reported in Chapter 7.

Summary

The research for this study was designed and conducted in formats that would provide sufficient qualitative and quantitative data to allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the viability of the proposed model (the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction). The process of designing and testing the research vehicles was a learning experience in itself which provided insight into leadership thinking and team participant impressions and feelings. The final instruments were refined over time to provide valid and reliable information for analysis.

While the process of conducting this research led to cultures and people groups in many parts of the world, it more importantly provided a vehicle for viewing individuals from western cultures as they entered into a dimension of life that is very unique and different from their own. It offered an opportunity to see human responses to cultural differences (including ethnic, socioeconomic, and sociorelational). The resulting thought processes and unrecognized impact on the human psyche produce impressions and conclusions, and these have the potential to impact life in many ways and to varying degrees. The research for this study was designed to evaluate the impact that these situations have on the Christian faith of participants both from the standpoint of belief and behavioral transformation.

To understand the foundation and components that come together to form the
framework of this proposed faith development model, this study included an intensive
review of the literature on each of the components. The following chapter summarizes
these concepts, models, and principles.

Notes

1 “Faith is the effect of God illuminating the mind and sealing the heart, and it is His mere
gift.” James Arminius (1560-1609)

2 Several faith development research scales were considered for use in this study. The list
of those considered follows. The evaluations and comments for each are quotes from
Measures of Religiosity, edited by Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood, Jr., published in
1999 in Birmingham, AL at Religious Education Press. The page numbers where the
quotes appear are in brackets.

Christian Experience Inventory (CEI) measures believing adults’ experience
of their ongoing relationship with God as Person, that is, their daily ‘inner'
experience of being in a divinely initiated, interactive relationship that affects
their attitudes and values. Five subscales yield scores for one’s experience of
(1) growth in faith, (2) trust in God, (3) cost of faith, (4) concern for others,
and (5) justification by faith” [160]. I did not choose this survey because I felt
it was limited in its scope. In addition, the use of a 4-point Likert scale was
not sufficiently broad enough to provide variations in faith development and
understanding.

Faith Development Interview Guide provides a basic outline for a semidirective
interview, the purpose of which is to determine an individual’s global level of
faith development. In this context, the term ‘faith’ refers to the process by
which an individual constructs a personal framework for making the world
coherent and meaningful. . . . A successful interview likely requires
considerable clinical acumen, as well as familiarity with the theory and the
cultural context in order to know when and how to direct the interviewee, and
attend to the underlying meanings in his or her responses. . . . Taped
interviews are transcribed and then inspected for themes, both in terms of
specific contents and underlying process(es)” [163-164]. I chose not to use
the Faith Development Interview Guide because it considered the dynamics
of faith over a lifetime continuum. In addition, the interviews were lengthy,
incorporated variables well outside of the scope of this study, and a significant
amount of training is required before meaningful interviews can be conducted
and evaluated.

- The Faith Development Scale (Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson 1989). This scale
was developed in an effort to provide “a quick, simple, reliable and valid
measure to assess one’s stage of faith development. . . . Rather than define faith in a stage orientation, Barnes, Doyle and Johnson (1989) described faith in terms of styles. The individual’s score is determined by the nine sets of paired items. Each item represents a faith ‘style’ indicative of one of Fowler’s faith stages” [168]. This scale was not chosen because the focus on its questions were not specifically relevant to the variables within this study.

- *The Faith Maturity Scale* (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993). “The Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) is designed to measure ‘the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives characteristic of vibrant and life transforming faith, as these have been understood in “mainline” Protestant traditions’ (p. 3). This definition focuses intentionally on values and behavioral manifestations or indicators of faith rather than exclusively on an assent to particular religious beliefs or tenets. The scale is appropriate for use with both adolescents and adults” [171]. This scale was chosen for use in this study because it focused on beliefs, personal relationship and connection with God, and the degree to which these beliefs were used in forming each person’s habits, choices, and decisions.

- *The Religious Index of Maturing Survey* (Marthai 1980). “The Religious Index of Maturing Survey (RIMS) assesses religious maturity by evaluating an individual’s feelings and orientation pertaining to his or her religious life. This measure pertains to religion in general and does not assess any particular religious commitment” [174]. This survey was not chosen because it is too general in its religious understanding. It is not based on Christianity specifically and it fails to obtain information that would be relevant to this study.

- *The Religious Status Interview* (Malony 1985, 1988; Malony and Nelson 1982). “The Religious Status Interview (RSI) is a measure of Christian religious maturity. Malony (1985) defines Christian maturity in the following way: ‘Mature Christians are those who have identity integrity and inspiration. They “identify” in that their self-understanding is as children of God – created by Him and destined by Him to live according to a divine plan. They have “integrity” in that their daily life is lived in the awareness that they have been saved by God’s grace from the guilt of sin and that they can freely respond to God’s will in the present. They have “inspiration” in that they live with the sense that God is available to sustain, comfort, encourage, and direct their lives on a daily basis (p. 28)” [177-178]. This survey was not chosen because Malony determined that the survey produced “uneven” reliability.

- *The Spiritual Maturity Index* (Ellison 1983). “The Spiritual Maturity Index (SMI) is a general measure of religious maturity that conceptualizes the construct as a continuous developmental process. . . . Ellison conceives of the maturing person as exhibiting autonomy (not basing faith beliefs on the consensus of others) keen perception of reality, and creativity in everyday life” [201]. The Spiritual Maturity Index was not utilized because those who have used this survey found that it needed further development.
- *The Shepherd Scale* (Bassett et al. 1981). "The Shepherd Scale is designed to assess Christian identity. A unique characteristic of this instrument is that it is based on an explicit biblical operationalization of the Christian faith. . . . The authors acknowledge that developing such an instrument is fraught with theological danger and may give the appearance of spiritual arrogance. But the authors also believe that 'there is, to some degree, an observable and measurable life pattern which is distinctively Christian' (p. 342). The authors’ attempt to measure such a distinctive pattern is thus called the Shepherd Scale" [67]. This survey was not utilized because the questions are heavily worded with theological components in the Belief Component, and focuses primarily on Christians’ response to other Christians in the Christian Walk Component.

- *The Religious Maturity Scale* (Dudley and Cruise 1990). "The Religious Maturity Scale (RMS) was developed in response to recent controversies in the psychology of religion. . . . In their Religious Maturity Scale, Dudley and Cruise present what they hope to be a more defensible index of the personal religious search for meaning. They define religious maturity within a psychological rather than a theological framework. The focus, in other words, is on the process of being religious rather than on the content of particular theological beliefs" [142]. This survey, because of its psychological slant, did not fit the purpose or focus of this study.
Chapter 5

Faith Development Unfolds: Discoveries and New Developments

Prior to presenting, (in Chapter 5), the descriptive data on the seven mission trips in Phase 1 of the research, this chapter will provide newly discovered information as well as a recently developed instrument for analysis. This information and data, discovered in the research process from the seven trips, will provide a broader and deeper understanding of the phenomenological dynamics that occur in crosscultural experiences. They relate directly to the development of faith.

Research Discovery

In an effort to provide clarity, I have chosen to discuss one of the important research findings from this study at this point in the dissertation. By discussing it now, I will be able to refer to it throughout the presentation of the data.

Evaluation of the model known as the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction (FCLI) is the purpose of this study. The FCLI includes three primary components, Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Liminality. In the process of gathering and evaluating the data and reviewing the results of each of the seven mission trips, I discovered that the characteristics of liminality are much broader and more comprehensive than had been previously understood.

As previously defined in this study (page 19), liminality is ‘a chaotic limbo condition of transition’ between the old status and the new in a rite of passage. It is ‘a chaotic time precisely because it abolishes
socially sanctioned identities, statuses, and roles’ (Zahniser 1997:93-94). A state of liminality places participants in an environment that is foreign to them and because accepted norms (that provide a sense of security) are noticeably missing, it creates a sense of disequilibrium. This causes participants to search for new meanings and understandings in order to restore their sense of stability. Because of the psychological dynamics that occur in this situation, those things learned in a liminal state will be deeply rooted within the person’s psyche. The new meanings will be carried into the foundational aspects of life once the participants are reincorporated back into their normal setting.

Based on the findings of this study, the definition of liminality does not change, but the identified characteristics that cause or create a state of liminality to occur can be developed further than previously understood. The focus identified in previous writings involves situations in which individuals are in an environment where they find themselves stripped of status, property, rank, role, or anything that may distinguish them and define their identity. “Liminal entities . . . may be represented as possessing nothing” (Turner 1969:95).

The dynamics of a liminal state have been described as being out of one’s comfort zone and/or experiencing deprivation of known variables in life that can create the liminal sense of chaos. In the example of a rite of passage, which has been used by Arnold van Gennep (1960:11, 21) and Victor Turner (1969:94-130) in studying and discussing liminality, young men are ceremonially stripped of the aspects in life that provide identity, status, and meaning. In some situations, this can occur through ordeals that cause “physical and mental weakness . . . such as fasting, silence, and subjection to darkness” (Zahniser 1997:93). By reducing them to a base line of existence, they are prepared to learn and absorb new knowledge that will be the basis for their new role in life, that of a man who has adult responsibilities.
Scholars have understood this stripping of the characteristics of normal life as a means to deprive individuals of familiar physical, psychological, and tangible variables so that the new unfamiliar environment in which they find themselves will create the sense of chaos of a liminal state. In a mission trip setting, this could include placing individuals in physical surroundings that are foreign to their known realities and comforts. Examples of environmental factors that can create a state of chaos are:

+ Being placed in a culture where they do not speak the language;
+ Depriving them of the ability to communicate intelligently;
+ Living, eating, and sleeping in conditions that force them to adapt, such as sleeping on a dirt floor, eating unfamiliar foods, cooking on a wood burning stove, or utilizing an outhouse;
+ Doing hard manual labor or menial tasks;
+ Being relegated to the role of servant instead of the role of leadership held at home;
+ Living in a place where physical safety or physical health is in jeopardy.

Initially, the design of this study was to test the three variables in a FCLI. One objective was to test whether a liminal experience, (that which took people out of their comfort zone and placed them in an environment that was very different from their own), would provide a situation through which faith could be deepened. The intention for this variable was to answer the question, “Could a liminal experience have a direct effect on the faith development of the participants.”

Through observations made as a participant observer on the seven mission trips and through the analysis of data from the research surveys, it was discovered that there is
a second means by which individuals experience liminality which also will lead them into the desired state of chaos. Here are explanations of both.

Physical Liminality

The first type has been defined above. It will be referred to as physical liminality. Physical liminality relates specifically to the dynamics of comfort, status, security, stability, roles or positions, wealth, influence, well-being, control, felt needs, and knowledge. In this liminal situation, individuals are reduced to the basic levels of human nature so that they see new perspectives of life without the trappings of the normal dynamics which define their lives and their interpretation of everything they encounter. A mission trip setting is ideal to accomplish this. Thomas Moen has explained the causes of this phenomenon as “unfamiliar surroundings, smells, languages and people . . . One’s new found location on the mission field, outside of familiar boundaries and margins, will impact one’s formation in such a way that transformation will follow close behind” (1992:13). Naturally, few mission trips lead participants to the extremes listed above, but this social setting may allow this to occur to some degree.

Perceptual Liminality

The second type of liminality is the sense of chaos that is created when individuals are faced with new realities that put to the test and contradict certain fundamental aspects of life which they have been conditioned to understand to be absolute truth. These are challenges to things which they subconsciously accept as fact and often assume that the identical truths are held throughout the world. The combination of these truths defines what they understand to be “reality” and their perception of reality is believed to be reality.
When these “truths” are challenged, a mental state of chaos results, cognitive dissonance ensues, and individuals are forced to evaluate and reconcile this new information. It is through this process that growth occurs. When the known truths that make up an individual’s perception of reality are challenged, a liminal state occurs which will be referred to as perceptual liminality. This is a second form of liminality which can occur whether or not physical liminality is being experienced.

We use our perception of reality to see and interpret life. It is our beliefs, understandings, impressions, prejudices, likes and dislikes, known truths, interpretations, dreams, expectations, sense of right and wrong, and moral values. Perceptual reality is the basis for the way we see and interpret the world; it is our worldview. Because it is reality to us, we strongly hold onto it. We defend it, justify it, sacrifice for it, pass judgment on others as a result of it, and we may even be willing to die for it, or at least justify others dying to support it. Our perception of reality defines us. It is what we know as truth. When someone experiences perceptual liminality, two contrasting perspectives come into play; one, which is closely held, and one, which defines reality from an entirely different perspective.

A state of perceptual liminality may begin to take place as people from one culture enter into the visible realities of another culture. Going from living in a modern, comfortable home in the United States, checking in at an American international airport filled with professional, educated people, flying in a modern jet and then landing in a foreign country, would begin this process. Within a matter of minutes after deplaning, and entering directly into an alien culture of extreme poverty will create the first, dramatic impressions of life that is defined by new and very different realities. This
scenario is exactly what many people on short-term mission trips experience, but not always. In some countries and places, this does not occur. The visible surroundings may not differ a great deal from life at home.

In either case, *perceptual liminality* is experienced at the deepest level when there is direct contact between the mission team and the local people. It is through this interaction that participants may come into direct contact with alternative views of reality. This type of liminality can occur at many levels and the degree of mental and psychological chaos will vary based on the degree of the differences in perceived reality. The greater the perceived difference, the greater the chaos.

Personal contact allows individuals to see and even experience a small part of another person’s world. Our five senses can fill our minds with a great deal of information which can create a state of contradiction and confusion.

Just like in all personal contacts, there are various depths of relationship, that is, levels to which two people allow themselves to go. Relationships can be as simple as acquaintances. Greetings are exchanged, possibly names, and when they see each other again, they may recognize each other and exchange pleasantries. A relationship may go a little deeper and become a superficial friendship, or grow even deeper to become close friends. It may even reach the depth where the two people share personal, intimate details of life.

The same is true in a mission setting. The greater the degree to which one individual enters into the personal reality of another who lives in a very different world, the greater the level of *perceptual liminality* that will occur in the life of the visitor. Naturally, in the short period of time a mission team has in a different cultural setting,
individuals will seldom get to the deepest levels of intimacy as discussed above, but there are still distinct levels to which an individual may enter into the reality of another.

One mission team may come into an area, work together only with members of their own team, and only enter into the different reality of the new setting through sight and sound. Another team may choose to work side-by-side with members of the local culture and exchange pleasantries and share food along the way. Yet, another team may visit the homes of the local people, play with their children, see the condition of their belongings, and witness the dynamics of their day-to-day struggle to survive. They may see them in the marketplace as they strive to make a few cents by selling what they have grown in the poor soil behind the shack where they live, or they may come to know individuals on a more personal level. All of these scenarios provide opportunities for perceptual liminality to occur, but the more an individual learns about the personal lives of those in the local culture, the greater the potential for this chaos to occur.

Two Types of Perceptual Liminality

**Observable Reality.** In keeping with this principle, there are two distinct views into another person’s reality. The first, is identified as observable reality. Observable realities are the defining messages that can be absorbed through our eyes and other senses. These realities do not require personal contact although some may occur. These are the socio-economic level of the individual, the education level (revealed through speech patterns, habits, etc.), the type of work they do, their level of self-esteem, the type of home they live in, personal hygiene, their customs, habits patterns, etc. The dynamics of observable realities are left up to the mind of the individual to interpret. Without further input, knowledge, or explanation, the mind will almost always interpret this
information based on the understandings and definitions of reality that the person observing holds to be true. Observable realities can produce perceptual liminality on a certain level but only if the mind cannot rationalize, explain, or justify what it has seen.

Invisible Reality. But a person experiences perceptual liminality much more deeply if he or she is able to enter into the alternate realities of life on a personal, intimate level. This is a second way of viewing another person’s reality and I refer to this as invisible reality. Invisible realities are the defining messages that are only taken in by gaining insight into another person’s feelings, experiences, perspectives, sorrows, failings, successes, struggles, hopes, joys, and dreams. It is in these that we begin to see life through a different lens, through a different worldview perspective. Experiencing invisible realities requires personal contact. It is usually more difficult for the mind to interpret or rationalize the dynamics of invisible realities based on the understandings and definitions that the person hearing these things, holds to be true. Invisible realities are much more likely to create cognitive dissonance and a state of perceptual liminality.

One of the best ways for individuals to enter into the lives of the local people, into their invisible realities, is to hear their stories. When people share their lives through stories, it opens a window into their soul. Stories provide information about their day-to-day lives. But stories do even more than that. They give us a glimpse into another person’s reality – not just the facts of their reality, but also the basis for their worldview; the reasoning behind their decisions; the events that happened that have determined the direction their lives have taken; the motives for the hard decisions they have had to make; the sources of strength that have guided them through it all; and much more. By entering
into this level of a different reality, *perceptual liminality* is created through the deep richness and genuineness of this alternate perspective of life.

Seeing differences on the surface, such as differences in food, housing, economic level, and rituals, may cause mental and psychological chaos but the mind is usually strong enough to justify, explain, and rationalize most differences at this level. If we do not experience the differences on a personal level, then the state of disequilibrium will be less intense and more easily resolved. For example, while in Guatemala, one may see a girl in a worn dress walking to school down a dirt road. This sight may create impressions of poverty and thoughts of a different style of life, but without further information, it is unlikely that any contradiction of existing interpretations of realities will occur. These are *observable realities*.

However if, through hearing life stories, we gain information on a more personal level, the state of disequilibrium is much deeper and cannot be easily resolved through simple rationalization. For example, we might spend time with this same 12 year old Guatemalan girl and learn that she is an orphan who had been sexually abused by her father from the time she was three until she left home at the age of nine. We might also learn that she is now healthy and happy and credits her survival, strength, and joy to Jesus Christ. These are *invisible realities* and it is at these levels of *perceptual liminality* that the greatest potential for spiritual growth and deepening of faith exists.

Naturally, if the stories are not perceived as having a sense of truth or credibility, *perceptual liminality* will not take place. In each situation, we evaluate a combination of factors to decide whether credibility exists. If we find them to be credible, it is at that point that we begin to experience the conflict of this new reality with our own, differently
perceived reality. Once we judge these new perceptions of reality to be valid, it becomes difficult to dismiss them or ignore them because the mind in some way has to explain two understandings that conflict with each other.

A good example of the dramatically different impact a person can have moving from experiencing *observable realities* to *invisible realities*, is Ray. I shared his story earlier (p. 89). As a businessman, Ray traveled to Latin American countries on a regular basis. On these trips, he saw many aspects of the local cultures but he made all of his impressions based on his own cultural truths that he believed defined reality. He was critical of the people in these Hispanic cultures and did not respect them or hold them in high esteem. Instead, he chose to avoid contact with the local people as much as possible and focus only on those who were educated and successful in the business world.

But when Ray went on a mission trip to Guatemala, the team leader provided opportunities for the team to spend time with the local people, to hear their stories, to enter into their homes, to eat with them, work with them, and worship with them. For the first time, Ray heard the realities within the lives of Latin American people that were not visible through the eyes or the senses. These *invisible realities* created a cognitive dissonance within Ray’s mind and for the first time, he not only came to see them with respect and admiration, he also was able to understand biblical teachings from a completely new perspective. By moving beyond *observable realities* to the *invisible realities*, Ray’s life changed forever.

**Summary**

Since Arnold Van Gennep first identified a liminal state (Van Gennep 1960 [1909]) within a rite of passage, it has been understood to incorporate a stripping of
status, property, rank, or role. It occurs when an individual is placed in a situation that is out of their comfort zone or when there is deprivation of known variables. As a result of discoveries made during the course of this study, Van Gennep’s broad, general description can be further categorized and defined. Forms of liminality can be broken down as follows:

Physical Liminality

Perceptual Liminality

Observable

Invisible

Figure 9
The Components of Liminality

Individuals who participated in these mission trips experienced both physical liminality and perceptual liminality and each was an important factor in their faith development. Recognizing one without the other would fail to present the true phenomenological process that took place. This study will attempt to isolate and identify those situations in which each has played a part.

The FCLI Variable Rating System

As stated before, Phase 1 of the research was designed to allow for direct involvement in and observation of seven mission trips. As a participant/observer, this researcher had the opportunity to experience and evaluate the design components of each trip; the resulting events as they occurred; and the impressions and reactions of the participants as they experienced them, reacted to them, and processed them. Because the
evaluation process is fundamentally subjective and relies on this researcher’s observations and judgment, attempts have been made to operationally define (Pelto 1970: 47-66) the degree to which each of the three variables (Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Liminality) were present in the short-term mission experience. This will provide a basis on which to analyze and compare the levels of inclusion of the three variables being studied. The following will be referred to as the FCLI Variable Ranking Scale.

For each of the three variables (Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Physical and Perceptual Liminality), eight items are listed that describe activities which are indicators of that variable’s inclusion in the mission trip. For each of the activities, a rating of 0, .5 or 1 may be assigned based on its inclusion and the level to which it was a part of the team’s experience. A total score can then be provided for each of the three variables for each of the teams. This list is not all-inclusive but it provides a valuable guide that is more objective to better evaluate a mission trip experience. Inclusion or exclusion of any one item does not mean that a trip was either good or bad, it only helps to better understand the dynamics within the overall trip design.

At the end of each trip’s description and analysis in Chapter 6, the ratings for that trip will be listed. At the conclusion of the chapter, an overall summary of the teams and their FCLI Variable Ranking score will be given.

The charts below provide the rating scale for each of the three variables. Liminality is now identified as both physical and perceptual and both will be evaluated using this scale.
Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions
Indicators of Inclusion

Ratings can be assigned to each item signifying that the event was included in the mission trip and the degree to which it was included.

- 0 – Not included,
- .5 – Occurred to a certain level,
- 1 – Definitely was included, as described.

(7 is the maximum number of points that may be received in any one category.)

**Bible Studies** - Points may be awarded . . .

† If the mission team conducts Bible studies everyday

† If the Bible studies are specifically relevant to the mission trip experience and/or the Scripture chosen parallels experiences the mission team will have/is having in the mission setting (e.g. Jesus serving the poor (Matthew 25:31-46), Christ’s compassion (Matthew 9:35-38), the widow’s mite (Mark 12:41-44), humility (John 13:1-17), etc).

† If the team prays together each day for the needs and concerns of the local people and recognizes the ways in which God has blessed these people.

† If the majority of team members take 15 to 30 minutes each day for prayer and quiet reflection on the relevant Bible verses.

**Team Discussions** - Points may be awarded . . .

† If the team is having team discussions everyday (not at the same time as the Bible studies but at a different time during the day) to discuss the realities in the lives of those the team came to serve, and during which team members offer their observations and perspectives. (These discussions are not those in which trip logistics and schedules are discussed.)

† If within the discussions the Scripture verses from the Bible study are intentionally discussed and related to the experiences the team members have had during the day (if the Scripture verses in the Bible study were not specifically relevant to the experience in mission service, this point is not available).

† If the majority of the team participates in the discussions.

**Bonus Point** - A bonus point may be awarded . . .

† If the majority of the team members begin to make their own scriptural connections with the reality in the mission setting and bring these to light within the group discussions.
Crosscultural Interaction
Indicators of Inclusion

Ratings can be assigned to each item signifying that the event was included in the mission trip and the degree to which it was included.

0 – Not included,
.5 – Occurred to a certain level,
1 – Definitely was included, as described.

(7 is the maximum number of points that can be received in any one category.)

Initial Contact with the Local People - Points may be awarded . . .

† If the team members spend at least 2 hours the very first day (24 hour period) with the local people/community/socio-economic environment (not just observing from afar but contact is made, some form of communication takes place, realities of life are experienced, etc.)

During the Mission Trip - Points may be awarded . . .

† If the team members are working side by side with the local people (in work projects, Vacation Bible School, medical ministry settings, etc.).

† If the team eats at least one meal of indigenous food with the local people either in private homes, a church, ministry center, public square, etc. (not in a restaurant and not a meal in which the team members are being served by the local people to honor them or thank them for their work).

† If the majority of the team members have experiences shopping in the local market place, town square, etc. (not in the tourist shops or in tourist areas) and take time to observe and experience the local culture.

† If team members hear at least five or more of the local people tell stories of their lives, their struggles, their joys, their faith, etc. This is most valuable if it occurs early in the trip.

† If the team members worship with the local people in their church (not just sitting in a group in the back of the church and quietly leaving at the end of the service) – worshiping with them, side-by-side, singing hymns and praise songs with them, praying with them.

† If team members spend time in the homes of the local people, observing their lifestyles, sampling their hospitality, and communicating to some degree.

Bonus Point - A bonus point may be awarded . . .

† If the majority of the team members participate in any other unique crosscultural experience that takes place in which: the team members interact closely with the local people; deep, meaningful impressions are made; and relationships are established.
Physical Liminality
Indicators of Inclusion

Ratings can be assigned to each item signifying that the event was included in the mission trip and the degree to which it was included.

0 – Not included,
.5 – Occurred to a certain level,
1 – Definitely was included, as described.

(7 is the maximum number of points that can be received in any one category.)

During the Mission Trip - Points may be awarded . . .

† If the team members are asked to sleep the majority of the time in a place or situation that is very different from their home setting (on the floor in sleeping bags, on the ground outside, in tents, in inclement conditions, etc.).

† If the team members are required to eat local food and if that food is noticeably different from food they normally eat and/or the water supply is contaminated.

† If bathroom conditions are noticeably different from those the team members usually experience (outhouse, cold showers, no showers, etc.).

† If team members are required to communicate for extended periods of time with local people in a language that is not known to them.

† If the team members are doing physical labor or other strenuous work that is very different from what they normally do at home (construction, manual labor, long hours, etc.).

† If each team member is stripped of the status that his or her personal role carries in their normal lives in order to serve in this setting, leaders will now be in the position of a subordinate, power people will have to become powerless and humble, known skills will not be required and the team members will be asked/required to do things for which they are not skilled.

† If the majority of team members work individually or in small groups within the local culture, with the local people, the majority of the week.

Bonus Point - A bonus point may be awarded . . .

† If a majority of the team members are in positions in which they have to survive (having to rely upon the local people, customs, and food, not team leaders or team resources) within a local culture which is very different from their own.
Perceptual Liminality
Indicators of Inclusion

Ratings can be assigned to each item signifying that the event was included in the mission trip and the degree to which it was included.

0 – Not included,
.5 – Occurred to a certain level,
1 – Definitely was included, as described.
(7 is the maximum number of points that can be received in any one category.)

During the Mission Trip - Points may be awarded . . .
† If the mission trip setting places participants in direct and personal contact with the local people.

† If any or some of the following differ greatly from that of the team members' lives: the culture, lifestyle, socio-economic level, values, religion, religious persecution, social structure, family dynamics, education level, level of sophistication, cleanliness, worship practices, health and overall well being, etc.

† If the majority of the team members hear the stories of the local people early in the trip. Not superficial details, but rather, in-depth, from the heart, revealing life struggles, hurts, joys, values, priorities, routines of living, methods of survival, hopes for the future.

† If the people's stories generate a lot of conversation within the team meetings and discussions.

† If the majority of the team members begin to raise questions that show they recognize the contrast between their own perceptions of reality and the perceptions of reality they are seeing, hearing, perceiving.

† If a majority of the team members begin to question their own lifestyles, values, and judgments.

† If the majority of team members show signs of increasing degrees of humility, empathy, respect for the local people, equality with the locals rather than superiority, paternalism, domination, etc.

Bonus Point - A bonus point may be awarded . . .
† If the contrasts in realities begin to bring the emotions of the team members to the surface (e.g. heartache, sadness, confusion, self-doubt, joy as a result of new revelations and understandings, an expressed desire not to return home and to stay in the visited cultural setting, etc.).
As stated before, this rating system provides a means for operationally looking more directly at the components and dynamics of any given mission trip with relation to the variables defined in this study. Through this system, it will be possible to compare, contrast, and evaluate mission trips and to recognize many of the individual components that occurred to form the whole, either by design or by chance. This rating system is not an exact science but it offers an operationally defined means to better understand and learn through these crosscultural experiences.

Chapter 6 will present descriptions of the mission trips utilized in this study. Each description looks at the basic information of the trip (size, gender and age breakdowns, location, length of time, etc.) and then discusses the descriptive characteristics within each trip of the variables being studied -- Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, Physical Liminality, and Perceptual Liminality.

Notes

1 "Faith is the power that moves our ship through the raging sea of this world."
   Pishoy Kamel (1931 – 1979)
Chapter 6

Revealing the Knowledge We Search For:  
In-Field Research Experiences

*Faith . . . Trust Without Reservation*¹

This study utilized seven short-term mission trips to gather data. Each of these trips represented a situation in which individuals from one culture traveled to spend at least one week within another culture with the express purpose of conducting Christian ministry. Trips were chosen in order to provide a variety of situations based on criteria which included variations in church size, denomination, age, gender, and lead organization (church or mission agency).

This researcher traveled with each of the mission teams as a participantobserver. The primary objective was to evaluate the structure of each mission experience to determine the levels to which the identified variables (*Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Liminality*) were included and experienced by the participants.

This chapter provides a descriptive review of each of the seven mission trips being studied. The statistical data from the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys will be discussed in Chapter 7.

**Mission Trip Summaries**

The following information provides an overview of each mission trip and discusses the dynamics that occurred naturally and by design. At the end of each description, using the scale described in the previous chapter, numeric ratings will be
assigned based on the observed level of inclusion of the three variables being evaluated. These ratings will then be compared with the statistical data generated from the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys.

**Trip 1: Costa Rica**

This mission trip was composed of two leaders and 13 participants (12 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The team members were from ten different churches in Southern Alabama and the panhandle of Florida. Approximately half of the team knew each other since they had previously been on a mission trip together.

The team was led by a married couple who serve in a mission agency which they had established. They work indirectly with another mission agency which is somewhat larger and involved in several countries. This husband and wife have been missionaries in Costa Rica for several years but now live in the United States and lead several mission teams there each year.

Prior to our departure, team members received information through the mail which was to be read before leaving for Costa Rica. The material included: basic trip information such as a packing list, travel tips, reminders on having a Christian perspective during the trip, and a day-by-day itinerary as well as a four page letter from the team leader which discussed “A biblical teaching for servants for Christ in mission.” This letter was very informative and helpful in preparing team members to enter into this experience with a heart focused on Christ, humility, and servanthood.

The team first met together in a hotel the night before our departure for Costa Rica. In this meeting we were given basic information about our work, our focus, and
our itinerary. The meeting was short and provided an opportunity for each of us to become acquainted.

**Work/ministry projects.** The work project for the week was at a local church approximately ten minutes driving time from the guesthouse in which the team was housed. The team worked each day from 8:30 in the morning until 4:30 each afternoon. There were two work projects conducted each day. The first was an eye examination clinic. People from the local community were invited to come and have their eyes examined and used eye glasses were provided for those that needed them. Four members of the team were utilized for this purpose.

The second work project was to construct a cement wall/fence on one side of the church property. This was highly labor intensive and the entire week was needed to accomplish it. Nine members of the team worked on this project.

No other types of work or ministry were included in the week. The team did not conduct any form of ministry such as a vacation Bible school, evangelism outreach, or film ministry.

**Physical liminality.** Upon arrival in San Jose, Costa Rica, we were driven by rented bus to a guesthouse approximately ten minutes from the airport. This guesthouse was owned and operated by a large mission agency. Each room had two twin beds, as well as American style bathrooms/showers for men or women. Three meals per day were also provided. It was located within a suburb of San Jose, but the grounds and the fences surrounding the property provided a sense of isolation from the people in the community.

The meals offered at the guesthouse were predominantly American style food. They were prepared by the staff, served buffet style, and the dishes were collected and
washed by the Costa Rican staff. The food was plentiful. The facility also provides telephone service to the United States, a swimming pool, and a recreation room that had a television with cable access.

Each night, the team would return to the guesthouse, shower, have a swim in the pool, have dinner prepared and served to them, and then retreat either to the internet café or to the recreation room to watch American television shows.

*Physical Liminality* on this trip was minimal. The accommodations, food, and transportation were similar to those they would experience at home. Mentally, the team members had little separation from their normal lives since they were able to watch American television and news each day, communicate with friends and family through telephone calls and electronic mail. On site, they communicated primarily with each other.

*Cultural interaction*. This team had very little exposure to the local culture or to the people of the community. Most of their time was spent at the work projects or the guesthouse. In the evenings, team members would either watch television, read, or walk to an internet café where they sent and received e-mail from home.

The only team members who had an opportunity to be with the people of this culture were the four who conducted the eye examinations. Their exposure was brief and conversations were limited to those things related to the exam. The nine team members working on the wall had little or no exposure to individuals from the local culture.

On the last night the team worshipped at the local church. The congregation hosted a dinner for the team after their normal worship service. At the service, the team members were the honored guests. They were given chairs at the front of the church,
were acknowledged, and brought forward to be recognized and thanked. After the service, the team was led to a large table where they were served dinner. No one from the congregation ate with the team, so little or no interaction took place.

Prior to coming to the worship service/dinner, the team leader advised the team to eat a full dinner at the guesthouse because they would probably become sick if they ate the local food at the church. Consequently, most of the people on the team ate only a few bites from the overflowing plates of home made food which were provided by the church members of this poor community.

Overall, crosscultural interaction on this trip was almost non-existent. Team members left with little or no knowledge of the people they came to serve.

Relevant Bible studies/team discussions. Each morning, the team was led in devotions by the team leader. They lasted approximately 30 minutes. The topics included: ministry with compassion; God working in our lives; joy; faith; why we should call Jesus our Savior; compassion, not judgment or condemnation; God can use you; and answering God’s call.

In my journal, I made this observation, “We are having devotions everyday, but most of them are not directly related to what we are experiencing. . . . They are basically good and thought-provoking, but they lack relevance and continuity. There is little connection to what the team is experiencing each day.”

Looking at the topics for the devotions, one would conclude that they were relevant to the dynamics being experienced. Relevance, however, is dependent in large measure upon the manner of the leader’s presentation of the Scripture verses and whether or not he or she chooses to discuss the topic with relation to life in general or as it relates
to the immediate experiences of the team members. In the case of this mission team, the
devotional leader only occasionally established a relationship between the topic and the
dynamics occurring in and around the team members.

On three evenings, the team met to reflect on the day. On these occasions, the
team leader began with short devotional type messages on the following subjects: the
importance of prayer; the second coming of Christ (the rapture, pre-millenium/post-
millenium); and the Great Commission (analyzing the Greek words “baptize” and
“teach”). These are important topics for Christian faith, but they did not relate to the
current experiences.

The meetings then turned to the question, “Where did you see Jesus today?”
Throughout the week, there was little response to this question. The majority of the
limited comments made were focused on the team or team members. Observations that
related to seeing God in or through the local people were almost non-existent. This
correlated directly with the minimum amount of time the team spent with the people of
the community.

Additionally, there were no discussions about the local people, their culture, their
lifestyle, their needs, joys, or faith. The evening discussions were short and related only
to the sociological and spiritual dynamics of the trip in a very limited way.

On the final evening, there was a communion service at which the team leader
asked that each person share his or her feelings about the week. The comments from
each person were short. Eleven of the comments were about the team and/or team
members, three of the comments were unrelated to the week, and one was about how God
had put together this team and how this demonstrates God’s faithfulness. It was
interesting that not one person on the team mentioned the Costa Rican people, the
experiences they had during the week, any feelings, impressions, or teachings from God.
All comments centered on the team members themselves.

**Perceptual liminality.** Because of the design of this mission trip, this team had
little opportunity to experience any of the factors that would create *perceptual liminality.*
The team had little contact with the Costa Rican people. The facility they stayed in was a
compound, enclosed by fences and the facility was large enough so that they could not
see or experience the locals unless they left the grounds. Their non-work time was spent
either with each other, watching television, or communicating with friends and family on
the telephone or through e-mail.

Their work project was a short distance away and the team traveled by van each
way. At the church where they worked, the majority of their time was spent with
individuals from their own group.

Without interaction with the local people, the possibility of *perceptual liminality*
occurring is greatly reduced. During their time in Costa Rica, they did not have the
opportunity to interact with the locals informally, much less on a personal basis. As a
result, they did not hear any of their stories and mentally enter into the situations of life
within this culture.

**Evaluation.** This team was made up of Christians who wanted to serve God and
the Costa Rican people. Their hearts and attitudes were positive and they were excited by
the work that lay ahead of them. They came into this experience prepared to serve in any
capacity.
The dynamics of the trip were basically determined by the team leaders. They chose the accommodations, the work projects, the amount and types of cultural interaction the team would experience, the Bible study topics and discussion questions, thus setting the tone for the overall experience.

As a result, the team experienced a minimal amount of crosscultural interaction. During the week, there were a few teenage boys at the church and on occasion they worked with the team. The only person on the team who went out of their way to communicate with them was the only teenage boy on the team. He spent time with them and they enjoyed each other’s company. (It is interesting to note that in the statistical analysis of the faith development which occurred in the lives of the participants, this young man scored the highest by far of anyone on the team. This data will be presented in Chapter 7.)

The team also experienced an extremely small amount of physical liminality through their accommodations, food, surroundings, and challenges. In most ways, their time in Costa Rica was very similar to or even better than at home since their meals were prepared for them, and there was time to relax in the evenings. They did not even have to communicate with anyone in the local culture since translators were always available. The one liminal dimension to the trip was the manual labor performed by the team members. This was not the type of work they were normally accustomed to doing.

In addition, this team did not experience perceptual liminality. Their very limited exposure to the local people did not allow them to experience realities from a different perspective.
Bible studies and discussions were only minimally related to the trip experience. There was no doubt that the team and its leaders were committed Christians, but the connection between Bible teachings and the realities of the trip experience were primarily missed. The fact that the team members failed to identify any of these during devotions or team meetings, is a strong indicator that the lack of crosscultural interaction and the lack of relevant Bible teachings had a direct relationship to the outcome.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the Costa Rica mission trip scored as follows:
Table 4: Costa Rica – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences – Daily</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Bible Studies and Discussions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of Status Normally Held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: **2.0**

Crosscultural interaction: **2.0**

Physical Liminality: **1.0**

Perceptual Liminality: **1.0**

**Total FCLI Rating: 6.0**

**Trip 2: Guatemala 1**

This mission team to Guatemala had two leaders and 13 participants (13 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The team was composed of 15 women who were members of a large women’s Bible study at their church. The church is part of a mainline denomination and the trip was organized by church leaders. This church sends out approximately six mission teams each year to various locations.

The church’s Director of Women’s Ministry was one of the two leaders. The majority of the team members had never been on a mission trip prior to this one. The team had three pre-trip planning sessions during which they discussed cultural and biblical perspectives of servanthood, as well as travel arrangements, and ministry planning.

The orphanage the team visited is a ministry their church has been supporting for a number of years and the church had previously sent several teams there. As a result, most team members had knowledge of this ministry and had heard of the work being done there.

The orphanage is a Christian mission started by a missionary couple, 12 years prior. They wanted to adopt five to ten Guatemalan children and raise them in...
Guatemala. Over time, more and more children were brought to them and their ministry grew. Today, they have over 530 children. Most of the children living in the orphanage have either been abandoned or physically or sexually abused by their parents, extended family members, or neighbors. The orphanage is not only home for these children, it is a place where they are safe, where they are being raised in a Christian environment, and where they are loved. Through many “miracles,” the orphanage is now located on its own land, and includes seven dormitory buildings, a clinic, a worship/dining hall, a primary, secondary, and high school, and a vocational training center.

**Work/ministry projects.** Because there are over 530 children living at this orphanage, the team could only focus on a segment of the total. They were asked to minister to the teenaged girls, both junior high and high school. This orphanage has several mission teams that visit them each year. The missionaries who lead this ministry have seen that most teams tend to focus on the little children and the older teenagers are often overlooked. Therefore, this mission team was asked to minister to the older girls.

As it turned out, the week the team was visiting coincided with a change in dormitory housing. The high school girls were switching dorms with the six to ten year old boys. The girls were disappointed at having to move from their established home, but it was necessary because of the growing number of boys at the orphanage. The ladies on the team decided to minister to these girls by making this move a positive experience. They cleaned, painted, and helped decorate the new dormitory. On moving day, the team members helped each girl move and fix up her room. That evening, they threw the girls a surprise house warming party during which they conducted a prayer service and dedicated their new home.
In addition to this work, the team also deloused all of the junior high and high school girls, prayed with each group daily, worshipped with them twice during the week, walked with them to their school each day, and held a Vacation Bible School type ministry with the junior high girls. Other work projects included bathing the six to ten year old boys each evening, working in the kitchen, helping prepare daily meals for the 450 children over five years old, and helping to cook for and bathe the 100 babies (ages one month to five years). On the final day of the trip, the ladies did a foot washing and prayer ministry with each of the junior high and high school girls. The work projects and ministries served to create bonds between the team members and the girls of the orphanage.

Physical liminality. This team slept and lived in one large room over the dining hall. The room had metal walls and a ceiling with openings to the outside where the walls and ceiling connected. At night, the room was cold and in the day it was hot. The flooring was exposed plywood and each woman had an old, 3-inch mattress on which to lay their sleeping bag. The bathroom was a common single toilet used by any one of the 530 children who were in the dining hall and the two showers were in stalls outside. The team cooked and ate their own meals in a separate building. The food was basic but very similar to what they might normally eat at home. The kitchen was clean but small, and the very small room in which the team ate required everyone to be packed in tightly. The dynamics of the room in which they stayed and the kitchen/dining room served to bond the team (communitas).

The team members were definitely out of their comfort zone. Signs of this became visibly noticeable as the week progressed. The quantity of work, the lack of
privacy, the bathroom situation, and their growing fatigue, combined to increase their liminal experience.

**Crosscultural interaction.** The ladies of this team were able to spend a large amount of time with the children of the orphanage, especially the older girls. Each day when they left their rooms, they were surrounded by children of all ages and they were able to see first hand the life they lived. They saw missionary couples who were dedicating their lives to serving God by caring for these children; they saw children caring for and loving younger children; they saw a culture in which survival was a primary factor and that this survival environment was balanced by an environment of love, acceptance, and security. They saw God’s miraculous provision for this group of children.

This orphanage was a culture of children and they, in many ways, were similar to children in our own American culture. They laugh, run, play, ride bicycles, have best friends, desire personal attention and love, and can’t wait to be another year older. But, in other ways because of the things they have endured these children are extremely different. Additionally, the children within the orphanage are from different cultures. Some of the children are Ladino (those children who have Spanish blood) and others are Mayan (indigenous Indian).

Through their work and ministry, the ladies on the team were able to come to know many of the children by hearing their stories and by entering into a part of their reality. They began to understand the personal lives of the children and their cultural characteristics as they lived within the dynamics of a common home with 550 brothers and sisters. The exposure the team members received was definitely of value because
they learned and experienced life that was very different from their own through the eyes and stories of these Guatemalan children.

Relevant Bible studies/team discussions. This team held daily Bible studies and discussions. The Bible studies were conducted in the morning and evening and the subjects were relevant to the reality they were experiencing within this culture. The studies focused on passages about Jesus calling the children to him; the compassion Christ had for the poor, those in need, and for the orphans; God’s provision; miracles produced by faith; and God’s call for every person to serve those in need. The Bible studies provided a logical tie between God’s teaching and the realities found in abundance in the orphanage. They gave insight to the team members who were then able to reflect on them during the day as they lived among and served the children.

The team discussions occurred each evening. The discussions raised questions and observations about life within the orphanage; the realities of the children’s experiences; the differences the team members saw between the lives of these children and the lives of the children at home; and the signs of strength and faith that they saw in the children and in the lives of the missionaries who served them. Connections were made by the team members between the realities that they were seeing and hearing about and the biblical passages they were studying each day.

Every evening, the team members were asked, “Where did you see God today?” This question generated much discussion as one person after another talked of things they had experienced during the day in which God’s hand was evident. They identified occurrences in life that might have easily been overlooked had they not been looking for signs of God working.
The ultimate Bible study was the one they themselves acted out in the ritual of washing the feet of each of the older girls. This humble act of getting on their knees before these young girls who had already experienced a lifetime of pain and hurt, was a spiritually grounding act that not only allowed them to serve in a way that Jesus served, it also allowed them to understand what it meant to be servants in God’s kingdom. It brought to their minds the reality that having wealth and security does not mean that we should ever consider ourselves better than others no matter where they live, no matter what they have endured, and no matter what the circumstances of their reality.

The Bible studies and the team discussions tied together God’s teachings with a new perspective of reality in a very powerful and meaningful way.

Perceptual liminality. The primary variable of perceptual liminality that this team experienced was in hearing the stories of the children who were living at the orphanage. Because of the physical and/or sexual abuse or the abandonment they experienced, each story seemed more heart wrenching than the last. The ladies on this team came from a church and a culture in which their children are loved, protected, and provided for, and the reality of being in the midst of over 500 children who have had nightmare experiences was outside of the normal worldview perspective in which they live. As they heard one horrific story after another they had to come to terms with this new reality.

One of the primary and most important factors in perceptual liminality which this team experienced was that the exposure they had to this information came very early in the week. On the very first day, within two hours of arriving, the missionary who began this work and is the adoptive father to these 530 children, spent approximately two hours with the team members. During this time, he told them of the miracles God had, over the
years, performed at the orphanage. More importantly, he told story after story of the lives of individual children. As one would walk by or come up to him to give him a hug, he would say, "Let me tell you about Maria or Josue or Gabriella."

As the team members heard the stories, these invisible realities, their perception of reality was rocked to the core. The fact that this happened on the very first day, their minds were open to receive the messages within Scripture that brought new meaning and understanding to both their own reality and this new reality that they otherwise could not justify.

Hearing these stories and seeing the children who experienced them forced the women into a state of perceptual liminality. Almost as challenging was the reality that these children were seemingly healthier and happier than most of the children they knew at home. They did not demonstrate the psychological or emotional scars that one would expect to find in children who have been sexually or physically abused, abandoned, or malnourished. The variable that they discovered which caused the healing was the faith the children had in Jesus Christ.

Evaluation. This team experienced a high level of both crosscultural interaction and relevant Bible studies/team discussions. Combined, the impact on the group was evident in relation to better understanding the people of this culture and relevant biblical principles. The discussions brought forth insights and understandings that tied the two together and demonstrated that the team members had a deeper awareness and an ability to cognitively recognize these relationships.

The physical liminal characteristics of the mission trip, intensified by the psychological dynamics of learning about the lives of the children (perceptual liminality),
provided the team members with a sense of personal discomfort and chaos. These were primary factors leading to the experiences had by these ladies.

This team had a life-changing experience. They came away with new understandings, not only in relation to biblical teachings (e.g., faith, endurance, perseverance, God’s provision, God’s protection, and God’s love.), but also in relation to understanding what it means to be a child in the kingdom of God.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the Guatemala 1 mission trip scored as follows:
### Table 5: Guatemala 1 – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions That Scripture to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Bible Studies and Discussions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of Status Normally Held</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

- Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 7.0
- Crosscultural interaction: 4.0
- Physical Liminality: 3.0
- Perceptual Liminality: 6.5
- Total Team Rating: 20.5

**Trip 3: Guatemala 2**

This mission trip consisted of three leaders and 16 participants (10 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The team consisted of a group of adult men, all from one evangelical church in a mainline denomination. These men were all from a Bible study/fellowship group that meets once a week throughout the year. This was the third year they had organized and sent a team to serve the Mayan Indians in central Guatemala. Half of the men had been on at least one mission trip prior to this one.

The team had three meetings prior to the trip during which they discussed travel arrangements, the history and current information on the Mayan culture, local political issues affecting the lives of the people, the situation with the churches in the area and more specifically, the church with which they would be working. They planned the work that they would be doing and the materials that they would need to take with them. During these meetings, they spent time praying for their trip and for the people they were going to serve.

The town the men visited was quite remote. The last several hours of the drive was over rough, dirt roads through the Guatemalan mountains. Because of its
remoteness, very few foreigners were seen there. The residents were primarily Mayan. For over 30 years, Guatemala had been involved in a civil war. The majority of the conflict had occurred in this region of the country and the Mayan Indians had experienced attempted genocide at the hands of government forces and political leaders. For the past six years these people have at last lived in peace.

The church is playing an important role in restoring life to a people who have suffered greatly. The men in this team were asked to come in order to help build a Christian school in the town and to live out their Christianity before the people.

Very few of the Mayan children were able to go to school. There are two reasons why this is so. First, as a result of the extended war, the area is very poor. Those who have land must work it in order to provide for their families. Much of the land had been taken away by the government therefore those who do not own land must sharecrop, giving half of what they grow to the land owner. The culture is still primitive from the standpoint of machinery and equipment, so the fields have to be plowed, maintained, and harvested by hand. Because it is so labor intensive, everyone in the family, including the children, must work in order to provide for their needs. Secondly, if they are able to go to school, they are required to buy uniforms and all of their books. These costs are prohibitive for most families living in this community.

The Guatemalan Church that the men were working with is building Christian schools in many of the Mayan towns in order to provide education for the children. They try to provide scholarships for the materials and classes meet only part of each day so that the children can work with their families the remainder of the day. The mission team provided resources of time and expertise to help construct this school.
Work/ministry projects. The work project was the primary focus for the mission trip. The men worked each day, mixing cement and laying block. The team worked from early morning until sunset.

The ministry the team did was not a structured ministry. Rather it occurred through the personal interactions they had with the local people, through prayer, and through their example. While working on the construction site, many Mayan men worked with them. Some were Christians and some were not. Each day, the men on the team would pray together in a large circle. They always invited everyone at the work site to join with them. Several of the men on the team would pray and several of the local Christian men would pray in their Ixil language.

The Mayan construction foreman was not a Christian. At the beginning of the week, this was merely a job to him that was made a lot more complicated, from his perspective, by the introduction of a large group of American men on the work site. During the week, however, he came to see these men in a different light. They treated each other with respect, they treated the Mayans with respect, and they held prayer sessions several times each day. Most importantly, one event touched him directly.

During the week, the foreman had a toe that became badly infected. Each day, he had to walk back and forth from home to work and he spent the day on his feet while he worked. He was taking some herbal remedies to help heal the infection but his pain and discomfort became obvious to the team. One of the team members was a doctor. The team leaders and several of the men, went to this man and asked him if they could pray with him and ask God to bring healing to his toe. He agreed. The doctor also provided medical care and medicines for him. These acts of kindness, caring, and prayer served as
an important witness to him. The local pastor was then able to talk with him further about faith and the community of God.

**Physical liminality.** The men on this team experienced some degree of *physical liminality*. The hotel they stayed in was older and in a state of disrepair. Some of the windows were broken and would not close, bare bulbs hung from wires from the ceiling, the showers did not work well, and the sheets on the beds were worn and not large enough.

The meals for the team were prepared by two Mayan women so the men did not have the responsibility of preparing their own food. The cooks prepared primarily Mayan dishes. One of the cooks, however, had lived in the United States for several years so she was able to prepare the food in a way that was somewhat familiar to the team members.

During the course of the week over half of the men on the team became extremely ill. A virus or bacterial infection caused them to run high fevers accompanied by severe flu like symptoms. These men became dehydrated and the team leaders came close to deciding to leave midway through the week. Those who experienced this illness were placed in the liminal state of being far away from the modern medical care available at home which provides a strong sense of security that all will be well. Those team members who were themselves sick, stated that they would rather be there sick, doing the will of God, than being at home in their own beds.

Overall, the men experienced some degree of *physical liminality* that had them out of their comfort zone. These factors played a role in their experience and affected their openness in understanding the messages from the Bible studies and discussions.
One team member stated, “Above all, a trip to a country such as Guatemala adjusts my priorities away from the world and toward God.”

**Crosscultural interaction.** The team had several opportunities to interact crossculturally. Each day, they would walk several blocks from the hotel through town to the construction site. Along the way, they would stop in local stores, talk with the people as best they could, and observe the lifestyle of the people.

At the worksite, several of the local men worked alongside them each day. While they were unable to communicate directly with them, they developed a sense of familiarity and friendships were formed. At the worksite, several women from the church would come each day and provide drinks, snacks, and lunch for the workers. As they ate, the team members developed relationships with the men with whom they were working as well as with the ladies who brought the food. Translators helped them communicate but the message of kindness, laughter, and respect did not require translation. During their breaks, the men took time to play soccer and other games with the children.

One experience in particular provided the team with insight into the lives of the Mayan people. The cook invited them to come to her home. She was proud of her home and wanted them to see it. When they arrived, they could not all fit in because the house was small. They had to divide into groups and go in one group at a time. The house had dirt floors and the place where the family members bathed was a cave-like space within the home. The men could only go into this bathing area one or two at a time and they had to crawl through a small opening to enter. To bathe, rocks were heated to prepare the bath water. An extended family lived in this home which had one bedroom and a small
primitive kitchen. The kitchen had a wood burning stove, primitive cooking utensils, handmade table and chairs, and one small light. The team members saw how proud this family was of their home, they saw how clean and healthy their children were, and they saw joy and happiness in their lives. This provided them with new perspectives on life and insight into the Mayan culture.

**Relevant Bible studies/team discussions.** This team had very good, relevant Bible studies. Each morning, they met for this purpose and some of the topics of their studies included: “What is God’s primary concern?” (having concern for others as it applied to going into the mission field); “The model of Jesus”; “What it means to truly love other people”; and “The importance of being used by God.” As the team members went through each day, they were able to relate what they had heard with the realities of what they were experiencing. They bonded to the meanings within the Scriptures.

Each evening, the team met to discuss the day and what they had learned. The primary theme of these discussions was, “The biblical attributes of Jesus that the team saw each day in the Mayan people and in their culture.” The discussions created an atmosphere that allowed the team to discuss and grow in their understanding of life from this new perspective and to see biblical principles through new lenses. One team member stated, “The scales were removed from my eyes.”

**Perceptual liminality.** From the perspective of *perceptual liminality*, a lot of what the team members had to cope with and try to understand was the nature and lives of the Mayan people around them. The men saw the community and conditions in which the Mayans lived (*observable realities*) and they heard the stories of these people (*invisible realities*) through a local Wycliffe missionary who had been living and working
with them for over ten years. They heard about the war and the atrocities that the Mayans had endured. They heard about the economic situation and how difficult it was for men to provide for their families. They saw children of all ages working in the fields, some with hoes that were twice as long as they were tall. They saw children, teenagers, and adults who could not read or write.

One of the boys they came to know was 14 years old. Pedro was the night watchman at the worksite. He did not go to school because he had to work to support his family. His father was very ill and therefore could not work. Pedro was a Christian. When he learned that these men had traveled from so far away to help build this school for the local children, he chose to stay each day and work alongside them. Through Pedro, the men came to understand a reality of life that was extremely different from their own. Many of them had sons the age of Pedro and they began to realize that being 14 in many parts of the world (and even much younger in this Mayan village) meant having man sized responsibilities, but his situation was contradicted by his joy and hope for the future. Their relationship with him and the other people they encountered forced them to rethink well-defined understandings of life.

**Evaluation.** This trip included all of the variables being evaluated in this study, to some degree. The team experienced some *physical liminality* through their accommodations, the food they ate, and their illnesses but most of their liminal experience came through the encounters they had with the Mayan people (*perceptual liminality*). These encounters provided new perspectives on life and forced them to reevaluate their own well-established understandings and definitions of reality.
The team also had an opportunity to enter into the lives of a few of the local people through the visit to the cook’s home, through Pedro, and through the casual relationships they encountered at the worksite. These were all positive experiences but the encounters were not extensive. More direct and personal contact with additional individuals would have provided greater insight and depth of meaning.

The team *Bible studies and discussions* provided an excellent foundation through which the participants could relate the meanings within the Scriptures with the realities they were seeing each day. These topics and discussions served well in bringing meaning to dynamics of life that otherwise might have been taken for granted.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the Guatemala 2 mission trip scored as follows:
Table 6: **Guatemala 2** – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
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</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of Status Normally Held</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

- Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 6.5
- Crosscultural interaction: 4.0
- Physical Liminality: 3.0
- Perceptual Liminality: 6.0
- Total FCLI Rating: 19.5

Trip 4: Guatemala 3

This mission team had two leaders and ten participants (7 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The mission team traveled to Guatemala to serve in the same orphanage as one of the other mission trips previously described (Trip 2: Guatemala 1). Two trips have been included in this study that had many similarities. This was done in an effort to determine any differences in the ultimate outcome caused by variations in the three variables being studied. While the similarities were many, there were some significant differences.

This team consisted of 12 women. Eight of them were from one church. Four of them were from other churches. Some of them knew each other prior to the team meetings and the mission trip but a few first joined the team on the day of departure. Approximately half of the team had been on at least one mission trip prior to this one. Two of the experienced team members led the trip.

Three team meetings were held before leaving for Guatemala. Topics covered included historical perspective of the country and the area, cultural information about the people to be visited, ministry preparation, and travel information. Team devotions were
held at each meeting. The devotions included Scripture passages which were intended to prepare the hearts and minds of the participants for the work they would be doing.

The team flew to Guatemala and arrived at the orphanage which cares for over 530 children. Their work projects and ministry focused on the children between the ages of one week and ten years. As stated in the previous case study, most of these children had either been abandoned or physically or sexually abused by their parents, extended family members, or neighbors. This orphanage is a Christian home that is overseen by the founding missionary couple plus several other Christian missionary couples and individuals. Mission teams come to this home to assist in building projects and to work alongside the staff by providing needed assistance, care, and love for the children.

The same week that this team was serving at the orphanage, another team was also there to assist wherever possible. That team was asked to minister to the teenage boys. Having two teams at the same location added a dynamic to the week that did not exist when the Guatemala 1 team was serving there alone. Although they were working with a different group of children in different dormitories, the two groups overlapped in their shared physical space and in many of their efforts to serve. This definitely had an impact on the overall experience of this team.

**Work/ministry projects.** This team was asked to assist house parents with two groups of children, newborn to five-year-olds (approximately 120 children) and six to ten year olds (approximately 100 children). These groups of children lived in two different dormitories and had distinctly different needs. The house parents for each dormitory had specific requests. For the newborn to five-year-olds, the team helped cook their meals (from baby bottles to baby food to regular food), change diapers, dress the children in the
mornings, clean the kitchen each day, spend time with each child offering love and attention, and then bath and put each one to bed.

For the children between six and ten, the team woke them at 5:30 a.m., dressed them and prepared them for school. They spent time with them in the afternoon and evening, and then bathed them and put them to bed. For this group of children, the team also conducted a Vacation Bible School each day. The VBS included praise singing, crafts, recreation, and a Bible study program.

In addition, the team deloused all of the children in both groups. This took several days.

Each day, the women of this team worked long and hard. Caring for this many children, especially at these ages, was a physical challenge.

**Physical liminality.** This team slept in one large, unfinished storage room above the dining hall. The team members laid their sleeping bags on old, thin mattresses which were placed around the room on the plywood floor. Around the ceiling, there were screened openings to the outside. Because the walls were not insulated, it would get cold at night and hot during the day. The women shared a bathroom with one toilet and one sink located in the dining hall. This was also used by the children during the day. A small, rustic, cement block structure that was built near the dining hall provided two showers for their use.

The team members prepared their own food in a separate kitchen and ate together. The space that was provided for this was small and could accommodate the group but the food preparation and dining space had to be shared with the members of the other team. This situation added to the liminal dimensions the team experienced.
One of the primary liminal factors was the amount of work required by each of the team members. Their hearts were focused on serving but as the week progressed it became more and more obvious that the physical intensity of caring for this many small children was outside of the normal life patterns of the team members.

**Crosscultural interaction.** The team members had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with over 200 children. All of them were Guatemalan but they came from two different cultural backgrounds - - Ladino (of Spanish ancestry) and Mayan (indigenous Indian). While these were the cultures of the children's heritage, there were other, less defined cultures that the team members experienced: the culture of an orphanage and the culture of the kingdom of God that defined this particular orphanage. In a sense, the orphanage and kingdom cultures were the predominant cultures.

Within the orphanage, the dynamic that existed was that of a huge family living together. Each child had over 530 brothers and sisters. Each child lived in a dormitory with Christian house parents who were missionaries dedicated to rearing the children given to their care to be healthy adults and who had the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ. All the children worshipped together and attended Bible studies each week. In addition, most of the children supported and assisted the children who were younger than they and each child who was physically or sexually abused supported the other children who were abused in similar ways. The commonalities that were shared by these children created a familial bond that was stronger than that experienced by most people.

All of these factors combined to create the culture within this orphanage. It was a culture that, in many ways, had the characteristics of the kingdom of God. The team
members were able to see and experience all of these cultural dynamics due to of the quality time spent with the children.

Relevant Bible studies/team discussions. Each day, the team held devotions in the morning and evening. During the morning devotions, the team came together for prayer. They then were given slips of paper with two or three Scripture verses on them. They were asked to go off and find a quiet place for 30 minutes to read the verses, pray over them, and ask God to show them the meaning of each as the day progressed. The Scripture verses were all relevant to the place and the situation in which they found themselves.

In the evening, the team came together for a short Bible study that applied to the things they were experiencing. The leaders then allowed the team members to share about their day. They were asked to speak concerning some of the things that happened, but more importantly, to share the things God had shown them through their work and their time with the children; to talk about the meanings in the Scripture verses that God had revealed to them; and to tell of special experiences during the day where they saw the hand of God.

The team also had the opportunity on two occasions to worship with the 530 children. These worship services served as faith-centered Bible studies in themselves. The team members were able to see the strong, deeply committed faith that these once abused and abandoned children had in Jesus Christ. The genuineness that the children demonstrated in their times of worship was powerful. It conveyed a message to the team members that caused them to compare their own faith, adoration, and love for God and the way their own personal lives demonstrated that faith to others.
Perceptual liminality. Another important liminal aspect of this mission trip was that the team members had to cope with the horrible realities that occurred in the lives of each child before they were allowed to come to this Christian orphanage. This team heard a few of the stories, enough to make them aware of the reality differences between these children and the children in their own families and communities. But this group of women did not have the opportunity to hear nearly as many stories (invisible realities) as the other research team (Trip 2: Guatemala 1) had heard. As a result, the liminal impact of the realities of the children’s lives was not nearly as great on this group as it was on the first research team.

Most of the perceptual liminality that this team experienced was through seeing the realities of so many children living in a communal situation without parents (observable realities). They saw children who did not have the loving surroundings that their own children had nor did they have the opportunities that the women believed were so important for a child to survive and grow into a healthy adult. It was through this experience that they came to realize that God was protecting and caring for these children in a very different but effective way.

Evaluation. The structure and location of this mission trip provided a perfect opportunity for this team to experience a more than adequate amount of liminality (both physical and perceptual), Bible study and discussion, and crosscultural interaction. However, the degree to which some of these factors were experienced was different from that of the other team (Guatemala 1) that had come previously to the orphanage and these variances had an impact on the level in which faith was developed.
In comparing this mission trip with that of the first that also visited the orphanage, there was one factor that was experienced at a significantly higher level by the members of the first trip. On the first trip, the missionary, who founded this ministry, had seen it grow to its current level, and was now the “father” to all 530 plus children, had spent several hours with the team members on the very first day the team arrived. During that time, he walked the team around the extensive facility, showed them the buildings and told them the stories of the miraculous things God had done over the years in providing for this orphanage. He also told the stories of approximately 40 individual children. As he held each child in his arms, he related how each one of them had come to be in this home. He shared stories of the horrendous things that had happened to them and, as tears ran down his face, of the miraculous changes that had come over each one as they received Christ’s love through the missionary staff and the other children. These stories allowed this team to understand the invisible realities within the children’s lives. The time the first research team spent with this missionary laid the foundation for the crosscultural interaction the team members experienced and they immediately entered into perceptual liminality. They were forced to confront alternate realities that were beyond their understanding.

The second research team that visited the orphanage did not have this same opportunity. This man was out of the country the week they were at the orphanage therefore they did not begin their week hearing the heart-felt stories of the children. This team was well into the week before they began to hear about some of the children’s backgrounds. The level of perceptual liminality they experienced was significantly less than that of the first group.
Another factor which impacted this team was that another mission team was at the orphanage at the same time. While both teams were composed of caring, Christian individuals, several factors caused this mixture to take away from the overall experience of the research team.

Within the research team, a natural sense of bonding occurred (communitas). The ladies on the team were all sharing many aspects of this mission trip together. They were all sleeping in one large room, on the floor, in sleeping bags; they were conducting a Vacation Bible School together; they were working with their groups of children together; and they were leading Bible studies, praying, and worshiping together. On those occasions when the other team was with them (cooking, eating, and working with the babies), that sense of bonding was interrupted. There was a sense of discontinuity that occurred several times each day. At times, there was even a subtle sense of competition in the air concerning the things that were being accomplished. I believe that having a second team at the same location had a direct impact on the overall experience for the members of this research team.

In summary, several of the dynamics of the week seemed to lessen the impact on the team members with regard to perceptual liminality, crosscultural interaction, and team Bible studies and discussions. These dynamics included: not hearing the children’s stories from the missionary, activities that were work-oriented rather than ministry-oriented, excessive amount of physical work performed by the ladies, the large number of young children they needed to/wanted to interact with, and adjusting and readjusting schedules and responsibilities which resulted from another group sharing the same space. Especially in the beginning of the week, because of their busyness and some frustration,
they did not seem to connect as deeply with the relevant meanings within the teachings and biblical passages they were given.

However, as the week progressed, they began to grasp the relationship between the Scripture passages and the realities they were experiencing. By the closing night discussion, the deep feelings of their hearts and the knowledge gained in their minds seemed to fuse. These new revelations brought them to tears as they shared the new understandings God had placed on their hearts.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the Guatemala 3 mission trip scored as follows:
### Table 7: Guatemala 3 – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
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<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
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<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
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<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
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<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

- Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 7.0
- Crosscultural interaction: 3.5
- Physical Liminality: 4.0
- Perceptual Liminality: 4.0
- Total FCLI Rating: 18.5

**Trip 5: Jamaica**

This mission trip to Jamaica was led by two adult leaders and had 14 participants (11 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The team members were all from one church of a major Protestant denomination. All of the participants, except for the two team leaders and one other adult, were high school age. This was the first time that this church had taken a mission team to Jamaica and for the majority of the participants it was their first mission trip. All of the participants knew each other well prior to the trip.

The leaders were part of the youth staff at the church. They were in their mid-twenties and related well with the youth. One of the leaders had previously been on and led several mission trips. The other leader had never led a team, but had been on several trips prior to this one.

Before leaving, the team met four times to prepare. They planned a vacation Bible school, prepared all of the needed materials, decided on Bible teachings they would present, and practiced songs and stories. In addition, knowing of the poverty in the area they would be visiting, they gathered toys and clothing that could be given to the local children.
The team meetings included Bible studies and discussions about God’s calling to serve, his compassion for the poor and the lost, and the need to love and reach out to others. The youth on this trip were all active participants in their biblically based church youth program and they comfortably participated in these discussions.

This trip was loosely coordinated by a small mission agency that worked exclusively in Jamaica. Their involvement primarily included local transportation, housing, and contacts for the local ministry opportunities.

Work/ministry projects. The team did not have a work project during their time in Jamaica. Originally, it was intended that they work on a church building or a new dormitory building for the mission agency, but neither work project was organized prior to the team’s arrival.

As a result, the work of the team focused entirely on: ministry to the children of a local neighborhood church; to girls in a detention center; and to patients living in a long-term health care facility. Over the course of the week, the team used approximately 60% of each day on these endeavors. The remainder of their time was spent at the facility in which they were staying. There was a lot of down time.

The Vacation Bible School was conducted at a local church and approximately 100 children participated each day. The team members taught the children Christian songs and led the children in crafts, recreation, and Bible lessons.

On two occasions, the team visited a detention center for young women. The girls who lived there had been placed in this facility by the Jamaican courts because of their involvement in unlawful activities.
The third area of ministry was visiting a local hospital to spend time with the patients. The team visited this facility twice. Ministry to the patients included prayer, reading of Scripture, listening to their stories, and offering acts of compassion and love. This ministry had a dramatic impact on the members of this team.

**Physical liminality.** This mission team was housed in a private home in the hills of Jamaica. The home was owned and occupied by the parents of the president of the mission agency. The team slept in three rooms and approximately half of the team members slept in beds. The others were on mattresses on the floor. Overall, the sleeping conditions were fairly comfortable except for a colony of large ants that made their way into most of the beds.

The entire team and the family shared two small bathrooms. There was no hot water and the water for the shower came from a cistern. Because the home was in the mountains and the team was there in winter, the shower water was extremely cold.

Food was prepared each day by the ladies of the house. The team members did not have to prepare the food or clean up after themselves. The food was a combination of Jamaican and American-style food.

The team was not uncomfortable except for the cold showers and the ant invasions of their beds. Because this team was made up of youth, the living accommodations were similar to those they would experience at a retreat camp.

The primary language spoken in Jamaica is English. As a result, the team members were able to communicate easily with the children at the vacation Bible school, at the detention center, and at the hospital.
From the perspective of *physical liminal*, there were very few things that the team encountered on this trip that caused them personal or physical discomfort. *Physical liminality* (as defined in this study) played a minimal role in the dynamics of the week.

**Crosscultural interaction.** The opportunities this team had for *crosscultural interaction* with the Jamaican people were varied and broad in nature. The location of the home in which they stayed was at the top of a steep hill. It was isolated and a good distance from other homes. Consequently, whenever the team was there, they were only with the members of the family who lived there. They had limited opportunity to spend time with the people of the neighborhood.

In the middle of the week, however, they were able to visit with one economically poor family who lived down the hill. This family had a teenage daughter who was crippled as the result of an accident. The team had the opportunity to hear their stories as the family and the girl shared their lives, their joys, their dreams, and their sufferings. At the end of their time together, the team gathered around the girl as she lay in bed and prayed for her healing and happiness.

The majority of the crosscultural experiences occurred when they worshiped with three congregations during the week and when they conducted ministry at the vacation Bible school, at the detention center, and at the hospital. Each of these offered an opportunity to take time with a small, defined segment of the Jamaican culture.

Of these experiences, the hospital visits provided the greatest opportunities for understanding and growth. These visits played a dramatic role in the overall experience of the team members and, as we will see, these visits became the focal point of the trip for ministry and faith development in the lives of the participants.
Relevant Bible studies/team discussions. The team leader did a very good job conducting Bible studies that were relevant to the mission setting. The focus of these studies was on Jesus Christ and the purpose for the team being in Jamaica.

Each morning, the team leader distributed Scripture verses related to serving, humility, caring, compassion, and being a witness for Christ through their words and actions. Each person was asked to go off to a quiet place and think about the passages, pray about them, and pray for God's leading in the day. These verses and quiet times set the tone for the day. By the time they left the house each morning the team members seemed to have a sense of purpose and a desire to serve.

In the evening, the team would come together to discuss the activities of the day, including what they saw, experienced, and felt. The discussions were good, but brief. The team members shared but there were few probing questions to pull out additional feelings, thoughts, and experiences. This would have helped to deepen their understanding and more firmly imbed the scriptural meanings into their minds.

During the evening discussions after the hospital visits, much more in depth time was spent talking about the details of each person visited and the impressions that were gained from them. The discussions those nights were long, rich, and full of insight.

As the week progressed, the members of the team were making observations and gaining insights that were much deeper than in the early part of the week. They were connecting the scriptural passages that the team leader had been giving them throughout the week with the experiences they were having at the Vacation Bible School, at the detention center, and especially at the hospital.
Perceptual liminality. *Perceptual liminality* was the most important factor in this team's experience. Because of the crosscultural opportunities they experienced during which they were able to spend time with the local people, the team members were able to enter into a world where realities were seen, understood, and lived differently than they were in their own day to day lives.

This appears to have happened because they were able to sit with many people and hear their stories, the *invisible realities*. The family who owned the home in which they stayed told them of life in Jamaica, of the struggles of the people, of the 60% unemployment, of the adults and youth who have nothing to do but stand around and wait, of the religious conflicts with voodoo and witchcraft, of the level of illiteracy, and of the hopelessness that prevails on the island. In the detention center, they heard the stories of some of the girls who were being held there - - of their shattered dreams, and of their lack of desire to change their lives. In the home of the family located near the mission house, they heard of the day-to-day struggles for survival, the lack of food and clothing for the four children, and of the hopes of the crippled teenage daughter to walk and live a normal life. At the hospital, they heard heart-rending stories of decades of loneliness and hopelessness, but they also heard from the same people of the love they have for God, the joy they receive from knowing Him, and of the richness of their lives because of Jesus Christ. By the world's standards, the contradictive nature of these two perspectives of life should not be coming from the same people.

All of the above experiences placed the members of this team in a mental and psychological chaos because they were seeing and hearing about a reality that was very
different from their own. The level of perceptual liminality that the members of this team experienced had a significant impact on them and on their faith development.

**Evaluation.** Based on the structure of the mission trip that was laid out by the mission agency, this trip had the potential to accomplish little from the standpoint of faith development of its team members. The team stayed in a comfortable home that was isolated from the local people and their work projects never materialized. But yet, as the week progressed, enough variables came into play which allowed the team members to have a very positive experience.

At times, the Bible school seemed like organized chaos. The leader from the mission agency dropped off the team each day and then left. Additionally, the church leaders were not present, so there were no adult Jamaicans at the Vacation Bible School to represent authority with the children. This created a difficult situation for the team members. Overall, the children had a very good experience and not only learned from the Bible teachings, but also received Christian love through the youth on this mission team. Laughter, hugs, and unconditional love were given out freely.

The visits to the detention home were also slightly difficult. The girls at the facility were informed that the team was there and were given the option of visiting with them. Only seven of the girls participated. The team spent time with them, singing praise songs, talking together, and, to a limited degree, getting to know each other.

On the second visit, only five of the girls came out and the team sang with them. In addition, two of the young women of the mission team gave their testimonies. Both of their life stories were relevant to some of the situations the girls in this home had experienced (from the perspective of personal loss and struggles). These testimonies
served to break down some of the walls of silence created by these girls who originally
did not want to talk and share.

The experience that had the most dramatic impact on the members of this team
was the visits to the hospital. The team was told that they would be visiting a local
hospital where they would have an opportunity to spend time with some of the patients
and their families.

When the team arrived, they were led into the facility. Their first impression, as
they passed through the entrance gate, was that this was not a typical hospital. Several of
the patients were by the gate and their appearance and actions made it clear that some of
these individuals were not of sound mind. They looked disheveled and some acted
confused.

When the team met with the director of the facility, they quickly learned that this
was a place where individuals who needed long term care, especially those without
families to care for them, were placed to live out their lives. Some, the team was told,
were permanently bedridden and others would be in lounge areas or walking around the
facility. I could tell by the looks on the faces of the youth on this team, that they were a
little apprehensive concerning what was about to happen.

On entering the first open-air lounge, twelve women were found sitting, talking,
or wandering around the common area. They were all in bathrobes and slippers, and they
excitedly exchanged greetings with the team members as the team was led into the first
ward.

This room was filled with approximately thirty five beds, two-thirds of which
were occupied by patients who were permanently bedridden. The other beds were most
likely slept in by the women the team had just seen in the lounge area. The room was so full that the beds were only separated by approximately three to four feet. As the team looked around the room, they could see that some of the women were blind, some were missing one leg or both, some were either sleeping or in a comatose state, some were curled up in fetal positions, and some were sitting on the bed, waiting...just waiting.

The youth stood for a moment, taking it all in and then immediately spread out among the women, sat on the beds, and began talking with them, one on one. Within a short time, they were holding their hands, hearing their stories, laughing with them, crying with them, reading Scripture to them, and praying with them. During the time they were in the ward, each youth spoke with three or four women. As they emerged from the room, they all began to speak at the same time to tell each other the stories of those they had just met. Most importantly, they were all amazed at the faith these women had and the love that they had for God even though their lives seemed hopeless.

The team was then led back into the open-air lounge area where they began having conversations with the women they had first seen. One of the ladies had Downs Syndrome, another sat and talked to herself as she rocked back and forth. Most of the ladies there were mentally healthy, but physically disabled or deformed. The team again joined in with the small groups and individuals to share the gift of caring. One of the teenage girls on the team walked up to a lady who was talking to herself as she was ballroom dancing alone in the middle of the room. The teenage girl from the team talked with her for a few seconds and then became her dance partner. The lady began laughing and together they danced and laughed and danced and laughed.
The team was then taken into the two men’s wards. This scene was similar to the first ward and the team members immediately spread out to meet with each and every man. One man was sitting on the tile floor in the patio. He had a stroke twelve years earlier and lost use of the left side of his body. Each day, he pulled himself out of bed and dragged himself across the floor to that particular spot where he sat the entire day. In the evening, he dragged himself back to his bed.

Another man was approximately 42 years old. Thirteen years prior, he had been walking down the road on his way home from work, when he turned to wave at a friend who was passing, he lost his balance and fell in front of an oncoming car. His spine was severed and he had been lying in this bed ever since. After being there for two years, he went completely blind. As he told one of the team members his story, he shared how blessed he was, how much God loved him, and how much he loved God. He explained how each of us has burdens in life and that some of us have greater burdens to bear than others. This man had a joy and a peace that was beyond understanding. He asked to have Scripture read to him. He chose 1 Corinthians 13, the passage on love. As the student read to him, this man recited the passage simultaneously, word for word, from memory.

The team members had gone to this facility to minister to the people, but the ministry flowed both ways that day. The patients received unconditional love from the members of this mission team but the members of the team were ministered to also, by these patients. Most of the patients living in the facility were Christians. They had a strong faith and love for God. The team members saw the reality of Romans 5:1-5 being lived out. The verses read:
Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Through this *crosscultural interaction* (which occurred on two levels: one with the patients as Jamaicans and one with the patients as the outcasts of society [like the lepers of Jesus’ day]), the members of this team experienced biblical truths, first hand. It had a dramatic impact on them. That evening, while discussing this situation, the youth on this team asked if they could give up their free day in Jamaica to go back to this hospital so that they could spend another day with the residents.

The hospital visits were the turning point in the week. From that point on, the team members began to see everything through different eyes.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the Jamaica mission trip scored as follows:
Table 8: Jamaica – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Bible Studies and Discussions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of Status Normally Held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

- Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 6.0
- Crosscultural interaction: 6.0
- Physical Liminality: 2.5
- Perceptual Liminality: 6.5

**Total FCLI Rating: 21.0**

**Trip 6: Kenya**

The mission team to Kenya had one team leader with 17 participants (8 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). Team members on this trip were from seven different churches (four Southern Baptist, one United Methodist, one Episcopal, and one Presbyterian) and they came from five cities in three different states. Most of the team members met for the first time during pre-trip meetings but approximately 25% of the team members first came in contact with the others on the flight to Kenya.

The team was led by the president of a mission agency which works in several countries within Africa as well as in the United States. The work of the team was focused on the needs of Sudanese refugees who were living in a United Nations refugee camp in northern Kenya. The team leader prepared the team members by providing information through the mail prior to departure and through four pre-trip team meetings. These included information about the culture, the plight of the Sudanese, the situation at the refugee camp, ministry opportunities and plans, and travel information.

**Work/ministry projects.** The primary focus of the trip was to train pastors, encourage church leaders, and provide information and tools for them to better minister
to their congregations as well as the people of the refugee camp. The team divided into
groups, each group taking responsibility for one area of ministry. All of this was to take
place inside the Sudanese Refugee Camp in Kakuma, Kenya.

As happens on many mission trips, when the team landed, it learned that the
activities could not take place as planned. Complications in the camp prior to their
arrival had caused the United Nations to close it down, preventing anyone from entering.

Additionally, when the team arrived, they were immediately surrounded by tribal
nomads from the Turkana tribe. The Turkanas occupy the land in which the Kenyan
government and the United Nations chose to construct the Sudanese refugee camp and
they are extremely poor. The team was not aware that it would be staying among the
Turkana while serving the Sudanese.

Because the refugees were supported by the United Nations, the Sudanese in the
camp receive food, clothing, materials for shelter, schools, and medical care. The
Turkana received nothing and were forced to live off the barren land. The resentment
they had toward the Sudanese was great. As the team arrived, the Turkana people were
asking, “Are you here to help us?” The answer to this question was, “No”. Their plans
were to minister to the Sudanese within the camp.

After settling in at a local guesthouse, the team learned why the camp was closed.
An uprising had occurred within the refugee camp the previous day. Some men from the
Turkana tribe had broken through the perimeter fences, pillaged homes, and killed a few
of the Sudanese people. As a result, the United Nations refused to allow the team to enter
until this situation was resolved. It was unknown whether or not the team would be
allowed to go in at all while they were there.
After discussing the situation, the team decided to refocus their ministry on the Turkana people in the area until that time when they were allowed to enter the refugee camp. For the first two days of their stay, the team conducted a Vacation Bible School, ministered to the women, and showed the Jesus film in the Dinka language (understood by most) at a local Turkana church.

Within the first two days of being there, the uprising became more violent and the team was evacuated from Kakuma. The team was permitted to return after three days but they were still not allowed to enter the refugee camp. The decision was made to ask the Sudanese pastors and church leaders to come out of the camp so that ministry could take place each day, at and around the guesthouse.

One group within the team focused on pastoral training. The pastors in the refugee camp had little formal training. Prior to coming, this group purchased theological reference books (in English) so that they could give a set of books to each of the pastors. The books included commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible atlases, and concordances, etc. The training periods were to be spent teaching them how to use these books in preparing their sermon and teaching messages.

On the first day of this training, the team learned that only a few of the 35 pastors spoke English and only one could read English. As a result, the books were of little value to them and the training would not serve them well. The small group from the team quickly shifted their plans and began teaching an overview of the Old Testament. Currently, the Bible in the Dinka language only contains the New Testament, so this information, these stories, provided them with a background for the way God worked in
the Old Testament. The pastors were thrilled to gain this knowledge as it enriched the foundation for their teaching and preaching.

Another group within the team ministered to the women leaders of the churches from the refugee camp. This work placed the Sudanese ladies in an honored and respected position. Women in this culture are usually not recognized for their work and accomplishments. The women were excited by the fact that this American team thought they were worthy enough to receive this focus of attention. The response to this affirmation was filled with joy, laughter, tears, and praise.

The group from the team held devotions with the ladies, prayed with them, provided them with tools for teaching other women and children (Bible study stories, puppet show training, and Christian songs), and allowed them to talk openly about their lives, their joys, their hurts, their fears, and their hopes for the future. This last area proved to be the most important of all. Tribal customs and cultural practices (people from twenty different cultures lived in the refugee camp) define a woman's role and the quality of her life. Most of the women had been raped and physically abused over the years and this gave them an opportunity to be acknowledged as people worthy of recognition, to share their stories, to cry, and to have others pray for them.

Another group within the team ministered to a large group of young men from the refugee camp who had been scheduled to immigrate to the United States. Their plans had been postponed indefinitely as a result of the terrorist attacks that occurred in New York City on September 11, 2001. These men saw their dreams shattered and were now living in a state of limbo, mentally ready to leave their people and begin a new life but not knowing if or when this might occur. They had many questions and concerns and the
team was able to hear their stories, relate Bible stories and teachings to their lives, and pray with them.

The work and ministry of this team required flexibility. As a result, it reached several groups of people from both the Turkana tribe and the Sudanese refugee camp.

**Physical liminality.** Kakuma is in a desert-like area with a few paved roads. The team stayed in a guesthouse which looked like a small, older motel. Team members slept two to a room, each with his or her own single bed. The beds were adequate, but not very comfortable. The rooms had cement floors, no air conditioning, no fans, a single low wattage light bulb, and mosquito netting over each bed. The bathroom facilities were shared by the entire team and consisted of one toilet, two showers, and two sinks. The facility had bars on all of the windows and gates that were locked at night.

The nights were hot with no circulating air and the days were hotter. Because of the uprising in the refugee camp, most of the ministry was conducted at the guesthouse. As a result, there was always a constant stream of Sudanese and Turkana passing through. The team only experienced privacy after dark when the gates were locked.

The team ate all of its meals at the United Nations compound just outside the refugee camp. The meals were served buffet style and always consisted of rice and/or potatoes, salad, a vegetable, and meat. More often than not, the meat was goat, but they also served chicken and fish. While this may sound similar to American style meals, the flavor, texture, and variety were very basic and African in nature and the menus were essentially the same for every meal. The team did not starve, but the food was somewhat different from what they normally ate at home.
The team also experienced one other liminal dynamic because much of the first week they were unsure of their safety. The news of the uprising, of the looting, and of the killings, raised questions in their minds. The bars on the windows and the locks on the gates of the guesthouse were a source of assurance while at the same time they were a constant reminder that these were all that separated them from any trouble that might arise. The airplane that brought the team in left after dropping them off, so if it became necessary, there was no quick means of departure. While the team members were never outwardly scared, the realities of their surroundings were not far from their minds.

**Crosscultural interaction.** This team had interaction with many people from both of the cultures, but it primarily occurred at the guesthouse. Each day, hundreds of individuals would pass through. The Sudanese pastors came for training, the Lost Boys, whose immigration to the U. S. had been postponed, came for advice and counsel, and the women, who were leaders in their churches, came as well. Plus, the guesthouse was surrounded by the Turkana people, with whom the team members worshipped and conducted ministry.

The team members did not enter into the homes of the local people nor did they have the opportunity to eat with them. Because of their limited access beyond the guesthouse walls, the team did not experience the characteristics of day to day life beyond what they could see from a distance. Their guesthouse and the U. N. compound became an island. Because the locals came to them, they joined together in more of a Western environment than in the environs of these two African cultures.

The women of the team bonded with the women of the Sudanese churches. The sharing of personal information provided an opportunity for the team members to gain a
glimpse into the lives of the Sudanese. They came to know their joys, hurts, sorrows, and
dreams, and they began to empathize with them. They also saw the realities of caring for
a family even while they were doing ministry. One of the team members wrote in her
journal, “Another interesting element of the day was the goat being led across the
courtyard to the slaughter hut. He was bleating and they wrestled him to the ground and
slit his throat, then proceeded to prepare him for lunch! All right next to where we were
praising God with the Sudanese Women.”

The men also connected with the Sudanese and Turkana men as they shared
stories of how they minister for Christ to others in their zones of the compound and
villages. They talked of the difficulties of raising their families in a refugee camp and of
their longing to return to their own villages, their own tribes, and their own land. They
talked of the ongoing, thirty-year civil war and the losses they have experienced.

On five occasions, the team worshipped with African tribal groups. Twice, they
worshipped with the Sudanese and once with the Turkanas. Additionally, while on a few
days of R & R, the team visited a Masai village and twice worshipped in a church with
people from several tribes.

The cultural interaction this team experienced was plentiful and rich.

Relevant Bible studies/team discussions. The team gathered for devotions twice
each day. While these were good and inspiring, they seldom were relevant to what the
team was experiencing. On the first evening, the team chose to have one team member
lead the devotions each day. These devotions were intended to be Bible studies, but after
the first evening, they became times of personal testimonies. One-by-one, each team
member gave their testimony telling of their past and how they came to know the Lord.
These devotions served in bonding the team as they got to know each other more personally. They also served as a reminder of God’s work in each of their lives. However, there was little connection between what was being shared and the experiences the team was having each day nor did these times identify biblical teachings that were relevant to the realities of life around them.

Team discussions usually followed the testimonies and consisted of making plans for the coming day. Each ministry team reviewed what had happened that day and then discussed the schedule and needs for the work the following day.

At the end of the team discussions, the team leader would always ask, “Where did you see God today?” The answers to this question were most often about something another team member had done, but occasionally they would relate to one of the many incredible events of the day.

Overall, the Bible studies and team discussions were not related to experiences on the mission trip. This mission experience was rich in culture, events, and circumstances that could have been related to scriptural stories, passages, teachings, and verses. Had these been brought to the attention of the team members, the opportunity for their faith to grow in these areas would have been greatly increased.

Perceptual liminality: The cultures and situations that the team experienced were very different from their own. Entering into the world of the Turkana and Sudanese could only provide challenges to the understanding of reality that defined the lives of the team members. Because there was so much to take in, this team experienced a fairly high level of perceptual liminality.
The senses alone provided information (the *observable realities*) that challenged personally held understandings of life. The small dome shaped homes of the nomads were made of clay and sticks and they were hardly large enough for them to fit into. The children ran around in old, torn clothing with no shoes. Their feet were hard and calloused. The children were dirty and, except for the very small children, they were unsupervised by any adults. Flies were constantly on the faces of the children and wandered freely in and out of the mouths of the babies. The women labored while the men sat and talked. The men bore scars on their faces, foreheads, or scalps that were made during rite-of-passage ceremonies when they were younger. The smells were of smoke from fires along side the clay huts, of body odor, and of freshly slaughtered goat. The poverty of those living in the village was evident. Families acquired water by digging a deep hole in a dry riverbed.

However, the team had the opportunity to delve further into this African reality. They heard the stories (the *invisible realities*) of those who came to the compound. The women told of the hard lives they lived; of being raped numerous times over the years; of family and elders who did not consider the pain and suffering from these rapes to be worthy of their consideration; of being offered in marriage to men they did not know or did not care for; of giving birth to children only to lose them to malnutrition, malaria, or other diseases; of being passed off to the eldest brother of their husbands if their husbands died and of having to live a life of servitude within that household.

The men told of the great difficulty of providing for their families; of the lack of work and resources by which to survive; of their great desire to return to their home villages, to be united with their families, to regain the sense of manhood and
respectability that they had lost because they had to flee the war and live in a refugee camp; and of their sadness that their tribal distinctions were being lost because of the blending together of so many tribes within a very small area.

These stories provided a glimpse into a reality very different from their own and they were forced to acknowledge these differences and try to reconcile them in their minds. The *perceptual liminality* on this trip was significant.

**Evaluation.** This mission trip offered an incredibly rich environment in which team members could experience a different culture and also move out of their comfort zone both physically and perceptually. The dynamics of being among individuals from several African tribes provided interaction that introduced team members to worldview perspectives that differed greatly from their own. In addition, the reality of being in and around a United Nations compound housing over 80,000 refugees from a war torn country introduced team members to social and political dynamics that most mission teams do not experience. These variables provided maximum exposure to realities of life that could not be ignored and were almost too much to take in. A team could spend months in this environment studying, discussing, and learning in order to begin to grasp all of the realities in this arena.

As a result, the *crosscultural interaction* provided a means to gain perspective and insight into some of the dynamics existing within this environment. Could the crosscultural interaction have been at a deeper level, providing even better understanding? Yes! Had the team members been able to spend more time in the refugee camp, visited or stayed in the homes of the refugees, and even eaten with them, they would have gained even deeper insight and understanding into the lives of the Turkana
and the Sudanese. They would have come to better understand their struggles, their joys, and their faith. The team had limited exposure but because of the magnitude of the overall situation, they were still able to absorb a significant amount of insight.

From a liminal perspective, the team experienced a wide variety of variables that created a sense of being outside of their normal, known world and caused them to readjust their ways of thinking, relating, and existing. Mentally and emotionally, they had to come to terms with these conditions. *Physical liminality* was experienced as they were in the middle of cultural activity which required them to stay in somewhat adequate housing (semi-private rooms, locked and a somewhat protected facility at night, eating in the United Nations compound) but the realities of their housing were still outside of their known norms (shared bathrooms, heat, security, eating goat and other uniquely prepared foods). But the greatest liminal dynamics related to the social, political, and religious situation in which they were living and the variable of their own safety. These were dimensions of *perceptual liminality* and they had the deepest and greatest effect on the team members.

If there was one area being researched in this study that was lacking on this trip, it was in the area of *relevant Bible studies and discussions*. Those that were held were interesting and they served to bond the team members together in their shared Christian faith but they failed to generate an ongoing thought process connecting Biblical teachings to the realities of life around them.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide, the Kenya mission trip scored as follows:
Table 9: **Kenya – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
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<td>Total Bible Studies and Discussions</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
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<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
<td>.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eat Local Food - Different from Home</td>
<td>.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathroom Facilities Different from Home</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of Status Normally Held</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Individually in Local Culture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variables are:

- Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 4.0
- Crosscultural interaction: 5.0
- Physical Liminality: 3.5
- Perceptual Liminality: 5.5

Total FCLI Rating: 18.0

Trip 7: Spain

The mission team to Spain consisted of two adult leaders and 18 participants (13 participants returned both Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys). The trip was led by a mission agency. The members of the team were all from the same church. With the exception of the two leaders and one other adult, the team was composed of high school students. All were members of the church’s youth group. This church is an active, Christ centered church, and overall, the youth on this team seem to be committed Christians who demonstrated an excitement for their faith.

The agency that planned and led the mission team was one that has fulltime missionaries stationed in many countries around the world. In addition, a large part of this agency’s ministry focus is in the sending of mission teams to their mission sites.

Spain is a country that has a very small percentage of its population which considers itself to be evangelical Christians. The majority claim Catholicism to be the foundation of their religious beliefs but a relatively small percentage of the people actively participate in their churches. The mission agency considers Spain to be a post-
Christian country and the focus of the missionaries was to be a witness for Christ, to win some converts, and to plant active, functioning churches among the population.

The mission team hoped to be a witness for Christ through their words and their actions, and to share the gospel message with young people in the area. The plan was to join with a youth group from an evangelical church in a nearby city, and together share their faith with youth in a near-by town that had only one family identified as active, participating Christians.

Prior to leaving for Spain, the team met four times to review materials about Spain, the culture, the history of Christianity in this country, and the situation in the town they would be visiting. They also prepared to share their own personal testimonies and the gospel message. Everyone on the team knew each other through school and youth group activities, but the meetings served to bring them together as a unified team.

Work/ministry projects. The mission team did not have a work project planned for this trip. The focus was entirely on evangelism. The objective was to join with a Spanish youth group and evangelize youth in a neighboring city.

The evangelism was to take place through connections made in sporting activities. The town had a municipal pool and a park with basketball courts, tennis courts, and swings where the two Christian youth groups were to play side by side with the local kids. Once they developed a loose relationship with these kids, the plan was for the Christian youth to share their faith with them.

As it turned out, very little evangelism occurred. For the first three days the local government did not open the pool or park. Because these were the two places where connections were to be made, the team had to reallocate its time. The two youth groups
spent most of this time getting to know one another, learning how to share their faith with each other and through each other (the American youth through the Spanish speaking youth), and learning about each other’s lives.

Once the park and pool opened, both groups joined together to participate in the games and activities. The plan seemed like a good one, but in the end the Spanish kids of the local town stayed to themselves. Their demeanor suggested that they had no desire to communicate with the group of Americans.

Early in the week, the two local missionaries spent time with the team. They shared the history of the area in which the team was staying and ministering. The dominant Christian beliefs of the people that lived there were focused on the doctrines of Christianity as defined in the Catholic Church. They explained that Christians in Spain were very dedicated to their Catholic traditions and they were strongly opposed to anyone bringing in different perspectives. They viewed other Christian beliefs as heretical and divisive to the Catholic Church.

Because this community was so strongly Catholic and leery of evangelical Christians who they believed were attempting to take people away from the Catholic Church, the local residents avoided any contact with the group. Word had spread of the group’s presence and their reason for being there. The team heard that the pool and park had been closed intentionally to keep them away. As a result, very few connections were made since the local youth failed to join with the members of the mission team.

Toward the end of the week, some of the youth from the Spanish church began to make contact with some of the kids in the park. They used the training that they had received earlier in the week to communicate the gospel message. It became obvious that
while the American youth were unable to share their faith with the local youth, their personal commitment to Christ and their dedication in telling others the message of salvation were important factors in deepening the faith of the youth from the Spanish church. They stated that prior to the Americans coming, they had never felt comfortable telling others about Christ and they were almost embarrassed by their faith because it was perceived to be different by the majority of the people in their community. By the end of the week, they were proud to know Jesus Christ as they did and they were sharing their faith with others.

**Physical liminality.** The team stayed in a hostel in the middle of town. The facility was fairly comfortable. The team members shared air conditioned rooms with one or two people. A few of the rooms had their own bathroom, but many on the team shared two common bathrooms.

The meals were prepared by the hostel staff and were served in a private dining room. Tables were set restaurant style and the team was served by two waiters. At each meal, there were baskets of bread, bottled water and Coca-Cola. The meal was served in courses - salad, main entrée, and then dessert and coffee. Breakasts were European Continental style. The staff cleaned up after each meal. The food was somewhat different from that at home and on several occasions, team members chose not to partake of what was served.

From the perspective of physical liminality, not much was experienced by this team. The only significant liminal variable was the language difference. Minor differences existed in the food, sleeping and bathroom situations. Transportation was in American style vans, the town looked much like towns at home, and other factors such as
climate, clothing, and visual surroundings were similar. The team members maintained contact with family and friends at home through the use of a local pay telephone and through an internet café a short distance from the hostel.

Crosscultural interaction. Crosscultural interaction occurred primarily through the two youth groups spending so much time together. From the beginning of the week until the end the two groups were together most of the time. The first day was a get-to-know-you day at the beach. The groups talked, played games in the water and on the beach, and became acquainted. From that day on there was an acceptance of one another and an excitement to be together.

After the team leaders learned that the park and pool were going to be closed, they decided to use the time to teach the youth on both teams how to share their faith. The Spanish youth were relatively new to their Christian faith and were not comfortable sharing the Christian message with others. They did, however, have the ability to communicate in Spanish. The American youth were strongly committed Christians who were much more comfortable sharing their faith, but they did not speak Spanish. Working together during these days, the Spanish youth learned how to easily tell their Christian story and the Americans learned how to tell theirs in unique ways in a place where their own language was not spoken.

This was a very good time of crosscultural interaction and bonding. These two groups were connecting with each other and with the verses of Scripture which gave meaning to their new experiences.

Later in the week, as the two groups were together in the pool and at the park, most of their time was spent together since the local youth avoided them. As the week
progressed, the American team members gained a lot of insight into the lives and the culture of their Spanish counterparts. Through interpreters and unique ways of communicating, they shared the stories of their lives, how they came to know Christ, and what it was like being a Christian within their own culture.

During their time together, many of the American youth visited the homes of the Spanish youth. Some stayed overnight at their homes, spending time with their families, eating meals with them, and seeing life from a different perspective. These experiences became focal points in team discussions as they shared what they had learned.

**Relevant Bible studies/team discussions.** One of the adult leaders on the team was responsible for the devotions that were shared each day. These devotions took place each morning and evening. The topics of the morning devotions were about personal faith and how to best live their lives in a way that reflects that faith.

The Scriptures used for the devotions focused on the aspects in life through which our faith becomes an instrument to lead others to Christ. Knowing God, abiding in him, letting the light of Christ shine through them, and letting others see his presence in their lives were important if their witness was to help lead others to Christ. They were told that this week was one in which their witness to the Spanish youth was the special calling for which they came. But through knowing Christ and loving him their lives would always be a witness to others.

The devotions during the week were Christ centered. Some related directly to the work the members of the team had come to Spain to accomplish and many related to their personal walk with Christ. Together, they served to place the focus for the week on faith and a spiritual connectedness to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Perceptual liminality. The growth this mission team experienced came primarily through the relationships they built with the members of the Spanish youth group. The day they spent on the beach together, within hours of arriving, was fundamental in breaking down barriers and allowed the two groups to come together in a neutral situation. From that point on, they were comfortable around each other and their willingness to be vulnerable provided an atmosphere for interpersonal connections.

Because of the problems with the local government, the two groups spent more time together talking, worshipping, playing, and learning how to share their faith. This time allowed them to tell each other stories about their lives and to share the dynamics of their cultures and faith. This provided the youth on the visiting team a sense of perceptual liminality as they tried to understand the characteristics of life within this Spanish/European community. On the outside, everything looked pretty much the same, but when examined more closely, cultural differences showed the youth from both groups that life was lived out very differently within the other person's worldview. Because this perception of life was so different, the liminal state forced the team members to evaluate their faith through new understandings.

Evaluation. This mission trip was one that was focused specifically on evangelism. No work projects were planned. As a result, the interaction with the local culture required relationship building on a more personal level. Additionally, the cultural differences were more subtle than we might find in a third world country. Spain is a Western, first world nation that is highly educated, professional, and economically established. Variables such as clothing, housing, transportation, and food were all similar to the things found in the United States. In addition, the places and experiences this team
had in the park, at the pool, on the beach, at the church, and in restaurants almost duplicated their experiences at home. Cultural differences were not outwardly noticeable. They were only recognized through personal contact and direct communication with the people.

This team probably would not have seen any of the cultural differences had it not been for the closeness in which they worked with the youth group from the Spanish church. The structure of the mission trip, which had the two teams working together for the entire week, provided a unique opportunity for the members of the mission team to enter into the Spanish culture on a deeper level than otherwise might have been experienced. By spending time together and by visiting their homes and eating meals with their families, the members of this team interacted with this culture on a deep level.

From the perspective of physical liminality, the members of this team experienced very little. Their living accommodations, food, and transportation were almost identical to what they would have experienced on a week-long trip within their own country. The liminal variables that came into play were primarily the language differences and the feelings of rejection experienced within the general population of the community.

The Bible studies during the week were somewhat relevant to the things they had planned to do while there but they turned out to be more relevant to the work God had planned for them. The focus on being a light to the world, serving God more effectively, using their youth to glorify God, and having the heart of God, all combined to focus their hearts on the work at hand. The Bible studies also served to remind them of the importance of their own personal relationship with God.
The teachings they received each day served to fuel the fire that became the primary and most important reason for their being there — to be witnesses of a committed Christian faith to the youth in the Spanish church.

On the surface, if success of the ministry on this mission trip was considered, one would probably conclude that little ministry was accomplished. The team members were not able to evangelize anyone in this town. Circumstances did not allow for that to happen. However, when one looks deeper, the true success of this trip was seen in the lives of the youth from the Spanish church.

The Spanish youth were all young, evangelical Christians, living in an environment that saw them as heretical. They were ashamed to talk of their faith. The success of the trip was accomplished through the spiritual maturity of the youth on the mission team and through the example they demonstrated to the Spanish youth. They showed them the strength of their faith by the way they were willing to openly discuss it, by their desire to openly pray and praise, and by the way they embraced the Spanish group as brothers and sisters in the kingdom of God. The success of this ministry was in the spiritual impact it had on the lives within this local church group. The devotions during the week helped to remind the members of the team of the nature of their God and the importance of remaining close to him and of serving him. Bonding to the meanings within these teachings took place, not only in the lives of the team members, but also in the lives of the Spanish youth.

Using the FCLI Ranking Scale as a guide the mission trip to Spain scored as follows:
Table 10: Spain – Trip Scoring for Inclusion of FCLI Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Studies and Discussions</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies Everyday</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Studies that are Relevant to Experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Prayer Together for the Local People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Personal Prayer and Quiet Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Discussions of Experiences - Daily</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions Tie Scripture to Experiences</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Participated in Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Connections – Scripture and Reality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Bible Studies and Discussions</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscultural Interaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
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<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
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<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
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<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Liminality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping Situation Different from Home</td>
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<td>Communicate in Different Language</td>
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<td>Physical Labor or Strenuous Work</td>
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<td>Have to Survive Within the Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Physical Liminality</td>
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<tr>
<th>Perceptual Liminality</th>
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<td>Direct/Personal Contact with Local People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Culture and Lifestyle Differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stories Generate Thought/Conversation</td>
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<td>Recognize Contrasts Between Realities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question Own Values, Lifestyles, Judgments</td>
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<td>Noticeable Change in Members’ Demeanor</td>
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<td>Contrasts Create Strong Emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Perceptual Liminality</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The trip scores for the FCLI variable are:

Relevant Bible studies and team discussions: 5.5
Crosscultural interaction: 6.5
Physical Liminality: 2.5
Perceptual Liminality: 4.5
Overall Trip Rating: 19.0

Summary

The seven mission trips used for this study all proved to be different in nature, design, and outcome. Each offered unique characteristics and phenomena that allowed for individual study and analysis and provide an adequate basis for contrast and comparison. The variables of Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Liminality (Physical and Perceptual) were demonstrated in varying degrees.

The data from the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys will be presented in Chapter 7. The data will be used to identify the impact each mission trip had on the personal faith of the participants. The surveys provide a vehicle for evaluating specific faith dimensions based on the participants’ responses. By comparing the analyses of the seven mission trips with the faith development survey outcomes, conclusions will be drawn concerning the validity of the three variables as instruments for the deepening of faith.

The following table is offered as a summary of the FCLI scores of the seven mission trips included in this research (maximum score - 7 points).
Table 11: Degree of Inclusion of the Three FCLI Research Variables
Breakdown by Team Using the FCLI Variable Rating System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>CR</th>
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<th>K</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crosscultural Interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hours with Local People – First Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Local People Daily</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eats One or More Meals with Locals</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and Observe in Local Businesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hear Personal Stories Early in the Trip</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship with Locals in Their Church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend Time in the Local’s Homes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Unique Cross Cultural Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crosscultural Interaction</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

"Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation."
Elton Trueblood (1900 – 1994)
Faith is dynamic. It is constantly being tested, challenged, and formed through life's experiences and encounters. It is impossible to begin to identify or recognize all of the phenomena that cause faith to develop and mature within the heart and soul of an individual. But some of the those that can be identified are ones that draw people closer to God and encourage them to live according to His teaching. Bible studies and communal worship, for example, should be specific in their intent to nurture and develop an understanding of and appreciation for God. Other aspects of life that can become agents of change in faith development are forced upon us as we face circumstances that are beyond our ability to control. The serious illness or accident of a loved one, any situation that seems hopeless, a need that is beyond our means to fulfill, are all examples of occurrences that place us in positions of dependence on someone or something else in order for the situations to be resolved. We have to place faith in that source for assistance and it is in times like these that faith can grow.

But sometimes our faith is developed through subliminal messages and occurrences that just seem to happen around us. We see and observe dynamics of the moment that serve to become instruments of inspiration that lead us to revelations that deepen our faith. Usually, we are not even aware that these have occurred.

All of the dynamics of faith development listed above can occur on a mission trip experience. We can intentionally provide Bible studies and communal worship to inform
and lead participants to gain new understanding and awareness of God and his
faithfulness. Additionally, those who go on mission trips are often in situations in which
they have no control. They are in foreign countries: their ability to communicate, to
move around, and to obtain resources is hindered and they are forced to have faith in
others and on God to provide and to protect.

But the most common form of faith development comes in the third dynamic
listed above, through messages that we receive, through the actions of others, or through
circumstances in life. These are the things that are harder to identify, to define, and to
measure.

An example of this latter situation occurred on a mission trip to a remote Mayan
city which was led by a very good friend, named Chuck. This team traveled a long
distance over treacherous, unpaved mountain roads to reach the small town where they
would live and work. While there, they worked side by side with the people of a local
council, helping them to build a school for their children. Through the week, they not
only labored together, they prayed together and worshipped together, sharing the
common love they had for God.

But one of the interesting dynamics that happened was in the lives of the local
people. Through the week they were together, the Mayans saw the great faith of this
group of people who had come to serve them. This group of men and women who had
given of their personal time and had spent a large sum of money to come, was now
laboring to help them fulfill a need, and all because of their great love for God. The faith
of the men on this mission team was evident in the sacrifices they had made and in the
joy they demonstrated while they worked and worshipped together.
At the end of their time together, the pastor of this small Mayan church came to Chuck and said,

We are so moved by your love for God and your faithfulness that you have demonstrated by coming to help us. Your actions have made us realize that we have never done anything to help anyone else or to demonstrate our faith to them. Because of you, we have made a commitment and I promise you this now, that we as a church will travel to another village even further down the dirt paths of these mountains and we will bring them the love of Christ just as you have brought it to us and we will help them build their church.

The mission team had no idea that their witness was the major component in their efforts that led those they had come to serve to deepen their own faith. So how does one measure faith development effectively when the dynamics are so broad and so obscure?

**Faith Development Measured By Design**

An empirical study of faith requires a combination of experimenting, observing, listening, and gathering impressions. Individuals react to insights gained through life’s experiences. Some are obvious and identifiable; others are impressions made through subtle, subliminal occurrences. Our faith is defined and developed through an ongoing series of interactions in life that mold our subconscious understandings of the sources of our faith.

As stated before, faith is so multifaceted, it is next to impossible to scientifically categorized each of its dimensions or to specifically define its components or to predict definitive actions or reactions of individuals to the subliminal introduction of faith creating experiences. As a result, we look for insightful clues and impressions that help us better understand this intangible aspect of life that is so vitally woven into the fabric of our lives.
This study has utilized a number of research components in an effort to be as thorough as possible in reviewing aspects of faith and faith development in individuals through crosscultural experiences. The intent has been to evaluate: the level of knowledge individuals have in a faith source (God in this study); the degree of trust that they place in God; and through bonding to the meanings within God’s truth and wisdom, the level to which they assimilate these principles into their lives. This study is an attempt to identify some of the factors that allow God’s wisdom and truth to be observed, recognized, and realized so that the individuals participating will absorb the information and bond to these Christian meanings.

To determine whether levels of faith are deepened through the inclusion of the three identified variables in crosscultural settings, this study utilized the Christian ministry form known as short-term missions for the basis of data gathering. To accomplish the objectives of this study, the following information was needed:

1) From the mission team leader:
   - Their understanding of and vision for short-term mission experiences;
   - If they consciously utilized short-term mission trips for the purposes of developing spiritual growth and deepening of the faith of participants, and if so, to what degree;
   - The frequency of occurrence of the three identified variables within their trips whether planned or by chance.

2) From individuals who have participated in short-term mission trips:
   - Their level of faith (as defined in this study on page 16) before and after their experience;
- Their feelings, impressions, and understandings before and after their participation;
- The inclusion or exclusion of the three variables in their experience;
- Identification of new knowledge and understanding gained through the experience;
- Whether the new knowledge is faith based (associated with biblical meanings) or based more in the nature of social awareness and concern (from a humanitarian perspective);
- Whether the new knowledge and understanding is tied to biblical teachings and meanings, and whether it results in deepening of faith;
- Their feelings and impressions about the personal impact the experience had on them at the time of the trip, is now having, and will have on them in the future;
- And the recognized changes (if any) in their lives which they attribute to the new knowledge and understanding.

The qualitative and quantitative research for this study focused on information provided by participants of short-term mission experiences as well as on participant observations that I made while traveling with mission teams. While the mission trips were similar in the fact that they were all groups from American churches or Christian organizations who traveled to other countries and cultures, other aspects within the mission trips varied in relation to trip location, language, cultures of the host, team size, duration of trip, age of participants, etc. Variations of this nature were beneficial as they
provided a broad spectrum of involvement and many opportunities for exposure from which conclusions could be drawn.

To conduct the research for this study, I was a participant/observer on seven short-term mission trips. Team members were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix B) before going on their trip which was composed of the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS). This scale was developed by The Search Institute. They were then asked to complete another survey after they returned (a modified Faith Maturity Scale plus the Related Biblical Topics Scale [RBTS] – Appendix C).

The results of the research will be presented in this chapter. The previous chapter included the description of the seven mission trips and the level to which each included the three variables examined in this study.

**Measuring the Depths: The Research Measurement Scales**

In order to have a clear understanding of the research results, it is important to first review the basis, design, and reasoning for each of the research scales utilized in gathering the data. Together, they provide a comprehensive analysis of faith development in crosscultural situations.

**The Faith Maturity Scale**

The Faith Maturity Scale was chosen from several research instruments that have been designed and utilized in faith development research studies over the past few decades. It was chosen because it was designed to measure “the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives characteristic of vibrant and life transforming faith, as these have been understood in ‘mainline’ Protestant traditions” (Benson, et al. 1993:3). It focuses on “values and behavioral manifestations
or indicators of faith rather than exclusively on an assent to particular religious beliefs or tenets” (Hill and Hood 1999:171).

The survey consists of 38 questions (Appendix B) that were designed to evaluate eight core dimensions of faith maturity. They are as follows. They are designed to measure to what degree a respondent:

1. Trusts in God’s saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus (Questions 2, 22, 25, 26, 34)
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace (10, 20, 24, 27, 32)
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one’s religious life (3, 7, 29, 30, 33)
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others. (9, 14, 15, 19)
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another (4, 23, 31, 36)
6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (5, 12, 17, 18, 22, 38)
7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice (1, 28, 35, 37)
In addition, utilizing 24 of the 38 questions, the designers of the Faith Maturity Scale created subscales to provide greater insight into participants’ level of faith on two fundamental planes: 1) what the authors referred to as vertical faith ("One’s personal relationship to God, one’s efforts to seek God and the personal transformation one experiences in this divine encounter.") and 2) horizontal faith ("Obligation and action on the human plane. . . . Heeding the call to social service and social justice") (Benson et al. 1993:4). In the survey 12 questions are used to measure vertical faith and 12 to measure horizontal faith.2

This research vehicle was chosen primarily because it looked at faith on the two dimensions, vertical and horizontal. One has to question whether faith is genuine if it is only believed and not lived out in thoughts, actions, reactions, and choices, etc. It has to be stated that the 38 questions established in the Faith Maturity Scale, the eight categories and the vertical and horizontal subscales, are not definitive. Any research instrument can be questioned and challenged for its completeness. None are perfect. This one, however, has proven credibility as a source of measuring faith development (Benson, et al. 1993:1-26; Tisdale 1999:171-174) and it focuses on both having a personal relationship with God and the way this relationship manifests itself in day to day living.

**Pre-Trip Survey design.** The Faith Maturity Scale was first given to participants before leaving on their mission trip (Appendix B). In addition to questions related to participant demographics, the questions on the FMS were the only ones asked. This was done to provide a baseline of information about each participant’s level of faith so that analyses and assumptions could be made when compared with the data collected after their experience. For each question, they were asked to answer by choosing a number on
Post-Trip Survey design. Within one to two months following their return home, participants were asked to fill out the Post-Trip Survey (Appendix C). This survey utilized the same Faith Maturity Scale questions but this time asked them to respond to each question based on their perception of how their experience on the mission trip had altered that dynamic in their lives. In order to allow respondents to signify whether their experience led them to now feel less so or more so about any given item, it was determined that the Likert scale of 1 to 7 was insufficient in providing that information. A broader scale was used which allowed them to answer within a range of -5 (This is definitely less true of me since going) to 0 (I feel the same as I did before going on the trip) to +5 (This is definitely more true of me since going). This change also provided an opportunity to learn if these faith characteristics had been assimilated into their lives.

Furthermore, in the Post Trip Survey, I felt that it was important to look at additional variables beyond those included in the Faith Maturity Scale. To this end, I identified specific biblical topics and aspects of life that were relevant to mission experiences and included them in the survey. The resulting scale which was added will be referred to as the Related Biblical Topics Scale (RBTS). This research scale will be discussed after a brief explanation of the reasons for using two different scales for the pre- and post-trip surveys.

Why use different scales? For anyone reading this dissertation with a discerning eye, the question can be raised, "Why did you not use the same scale for both the pre- and post-trip when collecting the data. If the two scales for the pre-trip and the post-trip had
been identical, you could have made direct comparisons both subjectively and statistically.”

To address this question, I would first like to review some basic information concerning these two research surveys. The Pre-Trip Survey was administered to the research participants prior to each of the seven mission trips. This survey was composed of several demographic questions followed by the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS).

The FMS was developed and tested by The Search Institute of Minneapolis, MN. It was originally developed as part of The National Study of Protestant Congregations (NSPC). Their study involved 11,000 adolescents and adults from six Protestant denominations. They developed it guided by “eight considerations:

[1] faith maturity occurs along a continuum;
[2] there are multiple core dimensions of faith maturity;
[3] faith maturity involves both one’s personal relationship with God (vertical faith), as well as one’s relationship with others and behavioral manifestations of faith (horizontal faith);
[4] the scale should have heuristic value;
[5] the length of the instrument and its response format should make it useful;
[6] the scale should minimize economic, educational, and racial-ethnic specificity;
[7] the indicators of faith maturity should not presume an institutional attachment or involvement; and
[8] denominational specificity should be minimized” (Tisdale 1999:171).
The research data of The Search Institute demonstrate that this research instrument has high reliability as well as face, content, and construct validity (Benson 1990; Tisdale 1999:172).

The FMS is a research instrument that considers many aspects of faith, particularly those that we subconsciously prioritize in our lives. Faith is a gift from God. That fact cannot be disputed, but each of us chooses the things in which we place our faith and the level to which our faith is attributed to them. As Christians, our inherent nature is to place our faith in God rather than in the things of this world. The Faith Maturity Scale measures the level of faith that we place in God based on our beliefs, attitudes, and actions. These are the faith variables that this study intended to evaluate especially in relation to the development of that faith to deeper levels.

The participants were asked to complete the Faith Maturity Scale prior to leaving on their mission trips in order to provide a baseline of information about their level of faith. By utilizing seven separate groups as the population for this study, there was the possibility that they would differ greatly in their faith levels. One group may have been composed of Christians who were young in their faith while another may have been made up of individuals who are mature in their faith. Or, as it turned out, the teams may have been relatively at the same levels of faith. Either way, it was important to know this information as it would ultimately have a direct relationship on how the final data was interpreted. Through the Faith Maturity Scale, I was able to identify that all seven teams were at approximately the same level of faith, therefore, differences identified in their post-trip faith levels were not skewed by pre-trip differences. The changes could then be
safely identified as having occurred as a result of their mission trip experiences. This was a valuable piece of information.

Normally in research, the ideal would be to administer the same survey to the participants after their return so that contrasts and comparisons could be made both subjectively and statistically. This was not possible in this study for two reasons: First, the creators of the Faith Maturity Scale determined that this research instrument demonstrates stability over time. As a result of this stability, one would not expect to see overall changes in results if the test was given again to the same population at another point in time.

Second, this study is designed to determine whether the inclusion of certain variables is instrumental in generating perceived changes in faith. To identify perceived change, participants needed a response scale that allowed them to signify increased or decreased levels of acknowledgement for each of the 38 items. Often on the Pre-Trip FMS Survey, participants chose number 7 on the scale of 1 to 7 as an answer to some of the items. If the same survey design had been used post-trip, the participants would not have been able to indicate an increase in their perceived faith for those items.

To accommodate the goals of this research to measure perceived changes, the Revised Faith Maturity Scale was created. This Post-Trip Survey utilized the same 38 items of the FMS but asked the participants to identify perceived changes on a scale of -5 to 0 to +5. Responding below 0 indicated that the item was less true of them after the trip, 0 indicated no change, and responses 1 to 5 indicated that the item was more true of them after the trip.
By doing this, direct statistical comparisons could not be made between the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys. However, as a result of utilizing the same 38 items from the FMS, the Pre- and Post-Trip Survey results could be compared through structural similarities: the dimensions of vertical and horizontal faith (pre-trip levels and post-trip perceived change) and the dimensions of the eight faith variables listed above (pre-trip levels and post-trip perceived change).

**The Related Biblical Topics Scale**

This scale is composed of a list of characteristics, principles, and variables in life that are discussed and taught in the Bible. The list was included in the Post-Trip Survey in an effort to identify specific areas in which new insight and understanding was gained by the participants, during the cross-cultural experience. The list is not an exhaustive list and represents only 27 items, but the 27 items are ones that are relevant to ministry experiences such as a mission trip.

The RBTS also includes nine items related to day to day living. Participants were asked to identify those things in their lives that were directly altered as a result of what they experienced and learned on the short-term mission trip.

These points of biblical teaching and changes in life practices were divided into the same eight faith-describing categories used by The Search Institute in evaluating results of the Faith Maturity Scale. They were also divided into the two subscales vertical faith and horizontal faith.³

**The Demographics of the Research Population**

In this study, 101 people and 14 leaders participated in the seven mission trips. Of the 101 participants, 97 completed the Pre-Trip Survey, 75 completed the Post-Trip
Survey. Seventy-four of the mission trip participants completed both the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Surveys. For the basis of evaluating and drawing conclusions, this study will only be utilizing the data from the 74 participants who completed both surveys.

This research population was composed of a broad cross section of demographic variables. In total, there were 48 females (64.9%) and 26 males (35.1%). The age breakdown is as follows:

Table 12: Demographic Breakdown by Age of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 to 24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 64</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When cross-referenced with gender, the ages fell out as follows:

Table 13: Demographic Breakdown of Gender and Age of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 to 24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Likewise, the education level of the participants spread fairly evenly from having completed Junior High School to having obtained a graduate degree. Tables 14, 15, and 16 provide education, education by gender, and education by age distribution of the research population.

Table 14: Demographic Breakdown by Education Level of Population

- Junior High  21 (28.4%)
- High School  13 (17.6%)
- College      27 (36.5%)
- Graduate School  12 (16.2%)
- No Response  1 (1.3%)

Table 15: Demographic Breakdown by Education and Gender of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Demographic Breakdown by Education and Age of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;15</th>
<th>15-18</th>
<th>19-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-50</th>
<th>51-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a very broad range of occupations in the population of 74 participants.

Included in the total were: accountants, airline pilot, carpenter, doctor, engineer.
firefighter, guidance counselor, High School students, homemakers, insurance adjuster, lawyer, musician, nurse, office manager, optometrist, pharmacist, sales representatives, software engineer, teachers, veterinary technician, and x-ray technician.

Of the total, 30 (40.5%) had never gone on a mission trip prior to this one, 44 (59.5%) had. The population breakdown by number of previous mission trips and gender is as follows:

Table 17: Number of Previous Trips and Gender of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Previous Trips</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>21 (28.4%)</td>
<td>9 (12.2%)</td>
<td>30 (40.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12 (16.2%)</td>
<td>5 (6.8%)</td>
<td>17 (23.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 (6.8%)</td>
<td>4 (5.4%)</td>
<td>9 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>4 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48 (64.9%)</td>
<td>26 (35.1%)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The seven mission trips were also led by different entities. Some of the trips were organized and led by church leaders, some by mission agencies, and some were a partnership between a church and a mission agency. They were:
Table 18: Mission Trip Leadership Affiliation

Church led
- 30 participants (40.5%) – (Guatemala 1, 2 and 3)

Mission Organization led
- 20 participants (27.0%) – (Costa Rica and Kenya)

Partnership of church and mission agency led
- 24 participants (32.4%) – (Spain and Jamaica)

The participant breakdown of leadership entity by participant gender is as follows:

Table 19: Leading Organization by Gender of Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip Led By</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>20 (27.0%)</td>
<td>10 (13.5%)</td>
<td>30 (40.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Agency</td>
<td>11 (14.9%)</td>
<td>9 (12.2%)</td>
<td>20 (27.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>17 (23.0%)</td>
<td>7 (9.5%)</td>
<td>24 (32.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48 (64.9%)</td>
<td>26 (35.1%)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team sizes ranged from 10 per team to 18 per team. Thirty two participants (43.2%) (those who filled out both a Pre-Trip and a Post-Trip Survey) were in smaller groups (9-15) (Costa Rica, Guatemala 1, Guatemala 3) while 42 participants (56.8%) were in larger groups (16-25) (Jamaica, Kenya, Spain, Guatemala 2). Team size can affect the dynamics of mission trip experience. For this study, it was important to have teams of various size to determine whether this would be a factor in the development of faith in a short-term mission trip setting.

Seven mission teams were included in this research project. Of the seven teams, two were composed of only women; one team was only men; four of the teams were a
mixture of both men and women. Another breakdown of the seven teams was that two of the teams were composed primarily of youth (members of their church youth groups); five of the teams were composed of mostly adults. The overall descriptive data (for those who completed both the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys) for the seven teams in the research design is as follows:

Table 20: Demographic Overview by Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 15 15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Faithful Foundation: Pre-Trip Survey Results

The Pre-Trip Surveys, as stated before, contained questions to obtain demographic information on the participants and the 38 questions of the Faith Maturity Scale. The purpose of this survey was to take the faith pulse of the participants before leaving on their mission trip. The desire was to gain an understanding of how each team
compared against one another, to see if all things were relatively equal, and to be able to evaluate participants' faith changes and development after returning from their trips.

Through their own indication, all 74 stated that they were Christian believers. The Pre-Trip Surveys showed that all of the groups were composed of committed, well-rounded Christians (in all eight categories), and that all seven teams were relatively equal in their levels of faith (see Table 23).

It is interesting to note that the age level of the participants was not a factor in the level of faith identified by the participants. As stated above, two of the seven teams were composed of youth (Jamaica and Spain). Both of these teams came from evangelical churches and this could account for their having biblical knowledge and a strong level of belief. The youth demonstrated a strong desire to evangelize openly. While the faith in many of the adults on the seven mission trips is strong, adults are reluctant to share their faith as openly. Youthful enthusiasm is demonstrated in this reflection on the Spain mission trip. “Despite nearly every obstacle placed before us my team and I absolutely fulfilled our mission of spreading God’s Word. I feel more blessed, useful, and alive.”

In relation to gender, the women demonstrated a slightly higher overall level of faith. While both males and females demonstrated higher levels of faith in the vertical faith subscale (personal relationship to God, efforts to seek God, and personal transformation experienced in worship) than the horizontal faith subscale (the way in which faith and religious beliefs guide a person’s actions in life, behavioral manifestations of faith), the female score for vertical faith was higher than the male score and the reverse is true for horizontal faith.
In reviewing the information gained from the Pre-Trip survey, it will be helpful to compare the data from this study against the data obtained by The Search Institute in their nationwide study. This will provide a basis for comparison and will serve to validate the reliability and repeatability of the Faith Maturity Scale and demonstrate the validity of the data gained through this particular study.

Table 21 provides a listing of the 38 items on the Faith Maturity Scale. Also provided for each are the mean values and standard deviations obtained by the Research Institute in their study and the mean values and standard deviations obtained in this study. While there are some differences in individual means and/or standard deviations, the data show that overall, the results of this study are consistent with those of the Search Institute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>R.I. Mean</th>
<th>R.I. Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Study Mean</th>
<th>Study Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.</td>
<td>4.53 ↑ 1.40</td>
<td>4.31 1.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again.</td>
<td>6.76 .93</td>
<td>6.92 ↑ .37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.</td>
<td>5.61 1.22</td>
<td>6.18 ↑ .83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I help others with their religious questions and struggles.</td>
<td>3.85 1.50</td>
<td>5.20 ↑ 1.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I tend to be critical of other people.</td>
<td>4.24 ↑ 1.20</td>
<td>3.45 1.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.</td>
<td>3.84 1.38</td>
<td>4.62 ↑ 1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) My faith helps me know right from wrong.</td>
<td>5.98 1.06</td>
<td>6.59 ↑ .80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) I do things to help protect the environment.</td>
<td>4.98 ↑ 1.41</td>
<td>4.42 1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9) I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.  
   | 3.75  | 1.77 | 5.39 ↑ 1.48 |

10) I have a hard time accepting myself.  
    | 4.79 ↑ 1.47 | 2.90 1.78 |

11) Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.  
    | 5.84 1.35 | 6.51 ↑ .83 |

12) I take excellent care of my physical health.  
    | 4.98 1.28 | 5.15 ↑ 1.32 |

13) I am active in efforts to promote social justice.  
    | 2.77 1.40 | 3.08 ↑ 1.63 |

14) I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.  
    | 4.14 1.50 | 5.92 ↑ 1.05 |

15) I take time for periods of prayer or meditation.  
    | 4.41 1.71 | 5.66 ↑ 1.45 |

16) I am active in efforts to promote world peace.  
    | 2.40 1.42 | 2.62 ↑ 1.42 |

17) I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.  
    | 6.04 ↑ 1.02 | 5.30 1.49 |

18) I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.  
    | 4.20 1.53 | 4.21 ↑ 1.57 |

19) As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.  
    | 5.01 1.56 | 6.10 ↑ 1.24 |

20) I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have.  
    | 3.99 ↑ 1.48 | 3.69 1.72 |

21) I give significant portions of my time and money to help other people.  
    | 3.94 1.43 | 4.71 ↑ 1.43 |

22) I speak out for equality for women and minorities.  
    | 3.53 ↑ 1.71 | 3.39 1.85 |

23) I feel God’s presence in my relationships with other people.  
    | 4.66 1.45 | 5.90 ↑ 1.06 |

24) My life is filled with meaning and purpose.  
    | 5.17 1.27 | 6.05 ↑ 1.03 |

25) I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain/suffering in the world.  
    | 4.36 ↑ 1.57 | 2.53 1.55 |

26) I believe that I must obey God’s rules and commandments in order to be saved.  
    | 3.08 ↑ 2.11 | 2.89 2.42 |

27) I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious.  
    | 4.83 1.53 | 5.28 ↑ 1.86 |

28) I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the U. S. and throughout the world.  
    | 4.73 ↑ 1.55 | 4.38 1.68 |

29) I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.  
    | 4.21 1.70 | 5.30 ↑ 1.66 |

30) My life is committed to Jesus Christ.  
    | 5.50 1.52 | 6.59 ↑ .72 |

31) I talk to other people about my faith.  
    | 4.29 1.68 | 5.79 ↑ 1.15 |
32) My life is filled with stress and anxiety. 
   3.47  1.58

33) I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
   5.03  1.43

34) I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
   5.01  1.49

35) I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues.
   3.85  1.83

36) I like to worship and pray with others.
   6.39  .90

37) I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.
   5.47  1.39

38) I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God’s creation enough to help the poor.
   5.40  1.61

In reviewing and comparing these findings, some statistical differences can be seen between the two populations but overall, the results indicate a consistency which validates the survey and its use in this study. Differences in individual means and standard deviations can be attributed to differences in theological beliefs and understandings within the populations.

Overall, the scores of the participants in this study are somewhat higher than those of The Search Institute. The higher numbers are understandable in that most of the seven mission teams in this study were made up of individuals who consider themselves to be evangelical Christians. (This was not a planned or intentional population outcome. Many churches and organizations were contacted to be a part of this study. As a result of willingness to participate and scheduling considerations, the final seven teams all came from evangelical churches.) The survey by The Search Institute was conducted on a much broader basis and incorporated churches that were all along the theological spectrum from fundamental to liberal. Because of the diversity within The Search
Institute's study and the narrower focus of the population in this study, slightly higher scores in certain areas were anticipated.

In addition, the participants in this study are set apart to some degree because they are all individuals who felt a desire or calling to serve God and they chose to leave their homes and go to a foreign country to do it. Their dedication to God was such that they were willing to sacrifice time and financial resources in order to serve. The participants of the study conducted by The Search Institute were selected randomly from the general church population.

The following observations are offered from the data provided in Table 21 above.

Observation #1: The mean scores are fairly balanced between the two research populations. Those in the Search Institute study had higher means on 14 of the items and the FCLI population scored higher on 24.

Observation #2: The questions that the Search Institute population scored higher on, in comparison with the FCLI population, have the following themes: a desire to help the poor; they are more critical, have lower self-esteem, higher levels of stress and anxiety; they are more tolerant and accepting of different religions, they promote equality, harmony, and care of the environment; they are more inclined to believe one has to obey to be saved and they believe more strongly in separation of church and state.

Observation #3: The questions on which the FCLI population scored higher in comparison with the Search Institute population, have the following themes: they demonstrate a stronger belief in God; they demonstrate higher levels of faith, trust in God, living by faith, and sensing God's presence; they are more involved in helping
others and in promoting social justice; and they are more active in Bible studies, spiritual growth, prayer, and telling others about Jesus.

Observation #4: Regardless of which research group scored the highest on any given item, participants from both studies scored low on the following items: promoting social justice, promoting world peace, and believing that you must obey to be saved.

Observation #5: Regardless of which research group scored the highest on any given item, both groups scored high on the following items: believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; faith guiding their action and their sense of right and wrong; they see evidence of God in the world; and they commit their lives to God.

All of these observations provide a baseline understanding of the two research populations and verify that both are relatively the same in their understandings of God and the belief systems that direct their lives. This information serves to confirm the FCLI population as a valid group to utilize the Faith Maturity Scale.

One of the primary measures of the Faith Maturity Scale is the overall mean of the 38 items. In the Search Institute study, the combined mean average of the participants from the five denominations was 4.63. The mean Pre-Trip score for the seven mission teams in this study was 5.14. This score is higher than the Search Institute’s mean by 0.51. Taking into consideration the differences in the populations stated above, a spread of 0.51 is understandable.

The Search Institute determined quartile range spread for the mean averages from their data. The quartile ranges provide perspective of the score distribution. Twenty-five percent of the research population fall in each quartile. This provides an understanding of the population distribution in relation to faith level. The quartile ranges are:
Table 22: Quartile Range Spread from the Search Institute Faith Maturity Scale Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Quarter</td>
<td>5.27 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Quarter</td>
<td>4.74 to 5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Quarter</td>
<td>4.20 to 4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Quarter</td>
<td>Less than 4.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average mean score for the Search Institute (4.63) fell in the second quartile. The average mean score for the research population of this study (5.14) fell in the third quartile. This indicates that overall, the scores in the FCLI were distributed slightly higher than those of the Search Institute. As a basis for comparison, the Pre-Trip Faith Maturity Scale mean for each of the teams is shown in Table 23. The last column shows how each team would fit into the quartile listings of the Search Institute study.

Table 23: Pre-Trip Faith Maturity Scale Mean Averages by Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Pre-Trip Mean</th>
<th>Quartile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Mean</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional measures of faith maturity used by the Search Institute are the vertical faith subscale (personal relationship to God, efforts to seek God, and personal transformation experienced in worship) and horizontal subscale (the way in which faith and religious beliefs guide a person's actions in life, behavioral manifestations of faith). In the research survey done by the Institute, the national means for mainline Protestant adults were 5.12 for vertical faith and 4.12 for horizontal faith. In this study, the vertical mean was 5.98 and the horizontal mean was 4.26.

Overall, the research teams in this study scored higher on both the vertical scale and the horizontal scale. The gaps between the vertical and the horizontal scores for both study populations (Search Institute and FCLI) indicate that a personal relationship with God is a stronger, more intentional part of their lives than the realities of living out the teachings of their faith.

Many people have a dynamic personal faith, filled with devotions, prayer time, consistent worship, and closeness with God that defines their lives. But for many, they find it difficult to demonstrate the lessons they have learned. Going on a short-term mission trip is a huge step for many. When they go on a trip, their lives are usually changed. An example is one woman who chose to step out in faith.

Participating on this mission trip was a gift from God. In the beginning it was a struggle to make the final decision to go but God showed me affirmation that I needed to be on this trip. I will always be grateful for the things he showed me. I saw children, young and old, praising our Lord with all their heart, soul and mind. Jesus is all they have and their hearts are conformed like that of Christ.

While the horizontal faith levels of the two populations are relatively the same, the gap between the vertical and the horizontal scores for the population in this study is wider than that of the Search Institute study. This is caused by the fact that personal faith
and a relationship with God are higher in the FCLI study population. Again, this could be attributed to the explanations given above.

By team, the vertical and horizontal mean scores displayed in Table 24.

Table 24: Pre-Trip FMS Vertical and Horizontal Mean Scores by Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Vertical Mean</th>
<th>Horizontal Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.98</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the overall Faith Maturity Scale mean, the vertical and horizontal means for the individual teams within the total population of this study were almost all higher than the Search Institute overall averages. This information serves to provide a baseline for comparison and evaluation with the Post-Trip Survey data that will follow.

Overall, the 74 participants in this research study all demonstrated a level of faith commitment that was higher than the national average in the Search Institute study. The result of having Christians who were more mature in their faith would seem to minimize the expected degree of increased faith that could be realized by them through a mission trip experience. If, in fact, increased faith is demonstrated in this group, that would seem
to be an indicator that a greater amount of increase could potentially be realized if the same opportunities were provided to individuals who were less mature in their faith development. This stands only as a question that warrants an opportunity for future research.

This could be tested by utilizing the research design used in this study and by conducting the research with two control groups: one with mission teams that test out at lower levels of faith development on the Pre-Trip Survey and another with mission teams that test out at higher levels of faith development. In order for this to be an effective comparison, the paired mission trips (each paired with another with a contrasting faith development level) would need to be similar in design and with relatively equal levels of the three Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction variables.

Increasing the Faith Within: Post-Trip Survey Results

The Post-Trip Survey was given to team members one to two months after they returned from their mission trip. As with the Pre-Trip survey, they were anonymous but coded so that the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Surveys for each individual could be compared. As stated above, in the first part of the Post-Trip survey, participants were again asked the 38 questions in the Faith Maturity Scale. This time, however, they were asked to indicate to what degree the statement was less true of them as a result of the mission trip, the same as before they went, or more true of them as a result of the mission experience. The scale ran from -5 to +5 with 0 indicating the same as before going.

The second half of the Post-Trip survey included the Related Biblical Topics Scale (RBTS). These were 27 items that identify specific areas in which new insight and
understanding could be gained by the participant during the crosscultural experience. It also included nine items related to day to day living. They identify aspects in the participants’ lives that can be directly altered as a result of what they experienced. Participants could choose any or all of the 36 items and indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 the degree to which they gained insight or that their lives had changed.

Post-Trip Faith Maturity Scale (Modified)

First, we will look at the results of the Post-Trip Faith Maturity Scale. The overall mean score for the seven mission teams was 1.52 on the scale from -5 to +5. This response of a positive 1.52 demonstrates that the participants experienced an increase in their level of faith that they felt was a direct result of their mission trip experience.

(It should be noted that the scores from the Faith Maturity Scale in the Pre-Trip Survey will not be directly comparable with those of the Modified Faith Maturity Scale utilized in the Post-Trip Surveys. In the first, participants were asked to identify [on a scale of 1 to 7] how each of the items applied to their lives and their belief systems. [These mean scores usually range from 3.0 to 6.5.] In the second survey, participants were asked to identify [on a broader scale of -5 to +5] their perceived change in these specific areas of faith. [These mean scores can usually range from -1 to +2.5.] The Pre-Trip Survey was utilized only to provide a baseline of participants’ level of faith development from which comparisons can be made. The Post-Trip Survey provides the substantive data on changes directly related to the mission trip experience.)

The survey results showed that 72 of the 74 participants and all seven mission teams experienced an increased level of faith as a result of their mission trip experiences. (Two participants from the Costa Rica mission trip indicated no change, either positive or
negative, in the faith development characteristics measured.) The mean averages for each mission team in the research study ranged from 1.06 to 1.88. This data and a further breakdown of these results, which follow, provide a statistical perspective of each trip that reflect directly upon the makeup and design of those trips. The Post-Trip modified Faith Maturity Scale mean scores for each of the teams follow in Table 25:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Post-Trip Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation #1: Almost all of the participants (72 of 74) indicated faith level increases as a direct result of their mission trip experience. This indicates that regardless of the trip design, mission trips are effective instruments for deepening faith and providing individuals with a different worldview perspective. These trips serve as a rite of passage, as described by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner (see the discussion on rites of passage in Chapter 3, page 95). Individuals are separated from their environment, enter into a state of liminality, and then reenter their environment with new
understandings and insights. Through this process, individuals learn, grow, and develop and are then reincorporated back into their own society, changed. This data indicates that this model, known as a short-term mission trip, is effective from the perspective of deepening the faith of participants.

Observation #2: Some trips are more effective than others and take participants deeper in their faith. Differences within the design and experiences must account for the variations in faith development.

Observation #3: There is not a direct relationship between the pre-trip faith level of a team and a level of new insights and understandings gained. For example, the team that had the highest pre-trip mean score for faith level had the second from the lowest mean score for faith development on the Post-Trip Survey, and the team that ranked fourth in the pre-test ended up ranking first in the post-test, having the greatest level of faith development. Only one of the seven teams maintained their rank order position from the Pre-Trip Survey to the Post-Trip Survey (Guatemala 1). This shows that there is not a direct correlation between the level of faith going in and the level of faith development that can occur. The conclusion is that mission trip design and experiences have a direct relationship to the level of faith development.

Observation #4: There is not a direct relationship between the demographic makeup of a mission team (gender, age, education, or group size) and the level of faith development that occurs.

Just as in the Pre-Trip survey, this Post-Trip Survey also looked at the vertical and horizontal faith subscales. These statistics also provide a descriptive insight into the
ultimate faith development characteristics of each trip. The results are as follows in Table 26.

Table 26: Post-Trip Faith Maturity Scale Vertical and Horizontal Subscales by Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Vertical Mean</th>
<th>Horizontal Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Means</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.24</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.16</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation #1: All seven teams demonstrated faith development in both vertical faith and horizontal faith. Similar to what was stated above concerning the mean averages, these numbers indicate that mission trips are effective instruments for developing faith, both horizontal and vertical.

Observation #2: Just as in the Pre-Trip Survey results, participants in all seven teams reported greater understanding on aspects of vertical faith than on horizontal faith. The growth in each of the two categories varied greatly (from 1.47 to 2.81 in vertical faith; 0.71 to 1.57 in horizontal faith).

Observation #3: There is not a direct relationship between the faith levels of participants prior to going and the level of growth in either vertical or horizontal faith.
Observation #4: There is not a direct relationship between the demographic makeup of a mission team (gender, age, education, or group size) and the level of vertical or horizontal faith development.

Observation #5: There is no direct correlation between the levels of increase in vertical faith with the levels of increase in horizontal faith. This indicates two things. First, the level of increase in one does not necessarily correlate with the level of increase in the other. (For example, the Spain team ranked second within the seven teams in the vertical faith scoring but only ranked fifth in the horizontal scoring). Second, if a team scored low in one of the two, it is not an indicator that they scored high in the other one. (For example, the Costa Rica team reported the lowest levels in both the vertical and the horizontal categories).

It is important to look at these numbers from another perspective. By looking at the spread between the vertical and the horizontal scores for each team, we are able to gain additional information as to those teams that gained more of one or the other through their experience. Table 27 provides the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Vertical Mean</th>
<th>Horizontal Mean</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kenya  2.06  1.23  0.83  
Spain    2.61  1.17  1.44  
**Total Means**  2.24  1.16  1.08  

If the spread is larger, this indicates a greater level of faith was developed in reference to a personal relationship with God (vertical) and less on the aspects of living out their faith (horizontal). The two teams that had the highest spread were Jamaica and Spain. The post-trip faith development data listed above in Table 16 coincides with the focus of the Bible studies and discussions that were held on each of these trips. The topics discussed were evangelism and having a deep, personal relationship with God.  

If the spread is smaller, this indicates a relatively greater level of faith was developed in reference to living out their faith (horizontal) and relatively less on the aspects of a personal relationship with God (vertical). The two teams that had the smallest spread were Costa Rica and Kenya. The post-trip faith development data listed above in Table 27 coincides with the primary focus on each of these trips. Both of these teams had serving as their primary focus rather than characteristics of having a personal relationship with God. 

Observation #1: The two teams that had the largest spread, Jamaica and Spain, were both youth groups. The team leaders focused a lot of their Bible teaching around the topics of personal faith, trusting in God, and seeing his miracles in their lives. The topics discussed were less focused on living out their faith.  

Observation #2: The two teams that had the smallest spread, Costa Rica and Kenya, were the two teams that did not have relevant Bible studies on their trips. Instead, they were focused on serving, giving to others, and aspects of ministry that relate directly
to living out faith. Discussions related to their personal faith in God were few.

Observation #3: The three teams that had spreads in the middle (Guatemala 1, Guatemala 2, and Guatemala 3) were teams that had an emphasis on both.

Observation #4: This data strongly indicates that the design and focus of a mission trip have a direct relationship to the type of faith (horizontal or vertical) that is developed. Intentional planning can provide additional insights and understandings that will increase faith levels of vertical faith, horizontal faith, or both.

Overall, the responses to the 38 questions in the modified Faith Maturity Scale (the team mean average and the vertical and horizontal subscales) indicated that the experience positively affected the faith level of each team. To understand the meaning and value of these statistics, it is important to relate this data to the qualitative analysis of each mission team that the previous chapter discussed. Connecting these two important aspects of the study will show a direct correlation between the variables included within a mission trip design and the resulting level of spiritual growth of the participants.

Faith Maturity Scale – Connecting the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Jamaica. Statistically, this team scored the highest in the measurements of faith development. Their overall mean average on the Post-Trip Faith Maturity Scale was 1.91. They also scored the highest in the vertical faith subscale (2.81) and second highest in horizontal faith (1.38). This team was composed of high school students and two adult leaders.

The design of this mission trip incorporated all three of the research variables in this study (Relevant Bibles Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and
Liminality). The interesting fact is that the liminal experience that they encountered was not physical; it was perceptual.

The Bibles studies each day were relevant to the experiences the team members were having and to the situation and environment of this mission setting. The team was ministering to the poor in the mountains of Jamaica, a country with an unemployment rate that is over 60%. The individuals they saw and ministered to were living in poverty or in situations that seemed hopeless.

The team Bible studies and devotions were focused on the compassion of Christ, caring for those in need, humility, serving others, and being a witness of Christ through their words and actions. Specific Scripture verses that related to these themes directed their quiet times and they were asked to spend time in prayer for the Jamaican people.

The team discussions related to these topics utilized the experiences of the day to recognize similarities between the biblical teaching and the realities of life. It wasn’t long before the team members realized the connections and began to bring forth their own observations as they discussed their impressions, emotions, and feelings of what they had seen. The most powerful and effective occurrence of this kind followed the two times the team visited and ministered at the long-term care facility. The Scripture verses seemed to come alive for them as they held their discussions.

Their crosscultural experiences were not extensive, but they were meaningful. Because the primary language spoken in Jamaica is English, the team members were able to converse with those they met. The Vacation Bible School offered the opportunity to learn about life from a child’s perspective and the ministry at the long-term care facility provided insights on many levels.
The experiences at this facility allowed them to enter into cultural worlds that were very different from their own. First was the culture of those who are physically at the mercy of others because of the severity of their condition. They were the poorest of the poor (poor financially and poor physically). Second was the culture of the outcast, those that the world discards. Jesus taught about these people when he showed compassion, mercy and love to the lepers.

The liminal experience of this team was not physical liminality; it was perceptual liminality. This occurred somewhat through the lives of the children at the Vacation Bible School, as the team members had to reconcile the reality of the children’s world (the invisible reality) with the reality that they themselves have come to accept as normal. But they experienced the greatest and most dramatic perceptual liminality when they entered into the long-term care facility.

Seeing people confined to bed, unable to function, abandoned by family and friends, with bodies that were twisted, maimed, blinded, and confused, forced them to quickly come to grips with a side of life that they had never before experienced. Part of their perceptual liminality was coming to terms with what they saw as complete and utter hopelessness, the observable reality.

The other part of their perceptual liminality was in trying to comprehend how individuals such as these could have: such deep and genuine levels of faith; a love for Jesus Christ that flowed from their hearts and their lips; the strength of their commitment to that faith; and the level of joy and hope that they proclaimed for what God had in store for them. These were the invisible realities. These experiences were liminal for the members of this team in that the realities they saw were so strongly opposed to the
fundamentals of life, which they came into this experience believing to be universal truths. They had to reconcile mentally, the variables within this contrasting reality.

The reconciliation within their own minds came through the one source that made sense of this new reality, the lessons within the Bible. One of the youth expressed it this way, “Through going on this trip, I have learned how God’s love is sufficient through all situations even through pain, sickness and poverty. Also it was a revelation to me how materialistic Americans can be when I saw the joy that some of the people in such desperate situations are so content with God’s love.”

The members of this team truly bonded to the meanings within the Scriptures. The combination of crosscultural interaction, relevant biblical teachings and discussions, and liminality (specifically, perceptual liminality) served to make deep, lasting impressions within the minds and the hearts of the participants. The results of their Post-Trip Surveys validate the importance of the inclusion of the three variables of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction within a mission trip design.

Guatemala 1. Another team that also scored high on the Post-Trip Survey was the first team to go to Guatemala. This team, along with the Jamaica team, scored the highest on the Post-Trip vertical and horizontal subscales. This mission team was one of the two teams that served at the orphanage. Even though the two teams were very similar in makeup and the mission site was the same, the faith development of the two groups turned out very differently.

The ministry this team was involved in was with teenaged girls. Because of the age of the recipient group, the team members were able to communicate with them and establish relationships. This allowed for crosscultural interaction, as the team was able
to enter into the lives of these girls. They heard their stories of how they happened to be
living at the orphanage (almost all of them were deeply personal and painful), they
helped them pack and move their personal belongings, and they helped to create a new
home for them in another dormitory building. Bonding occurred, as individuals from the
two groups grew close, very quickly.

In addition, the team experienced both physical (to a lesser degree) and
perceptual (to a much higher degree) liminality. Physically, they experienced some
conditions that were not a part of their normal lifestyles and forced them to reevaluate
basic aspects of life that they took for granted.

But to a much greater extent, the team experienced perceptual liminality. Hearing
so many stories of the pain and suffering in the children’s lives (on the very first day the
team arrived), they were caught off guard. Immediately, there was a need to reconcile
this new information. Cognitive dissonance ensued, as they suddenly had to comprehend
and deal with new realities of life. The team members’ perceptions of childhood were
shaken as they heard of the unthinkable things that so many of the children had to endure
before coming to this home. These were the invisible realities that they would never
have known if they had only observed and not heard the stories.

As they heard each story and looked into the eyes of the child that lived it, they
had to reconcile two dynamics. One was the suffering that each child endured and the
other was the new reality, which was a child who was healthy, psychologically stable,
and happy. How can any child have the second when they experienced the first?

As the week went on, the Bible studies and discussions the team was having were
relevant to what they were seeing and experiencing. They were studying about God’s
presence in times of trouble, God's love for those in need, God's healing power, the hope that Christ offers us, and God's love for the children. One of the ladies stated, "This trip had me take a serious look at my life and the life in this country. I realized how very spoiled and self-centered I/we have been. I saw directly how God can transform lives—it is not the amount of money we throw at a problem. It is God's transforming hand and His love." Another one said, "For me, all my tidy understanding of God—the biblical God—vastly changed and I think of it as 'opening up' the eyes of my heart to see Him more fully."

Because of the team's crosscultural interaction, the liminality (especially the perceptual liminality), and the relevant Bible studies and discussions, the biblical lessons learned became deeply connected within their hearts and minds. The team bonded to the meanings. The overall team mean of 1.88 and their high scores in both the vertical (2.61) and the horizontal (1.57) subscales, are strong indications that the dynamics within this mission trip are logical causes for the strong levels of faith development of the participants.

Costa Rica. All seven of the mission teams incorporated varying degrees of the three variables this research study is investigating. The teams that incorporated the highest degree of the three variables scored the highest in the Faith Maturity Scale evaluation. As the level of inclusion of the three variables decreased, the research data indicates lower levels of faith development. The one team that most clearly demonstrates this conclusion is the team that went to Costa Rica.

In contrast to the two teams discussed above, the Costa Rica team scored the lowest on the overall mean of the Post-Trip Faith Maturity Scale (1.06) and also the
lowest on vertical faith development (1.47) and horizontal faith development (0.71) (see Tables 25 and 26).

The design of this trip was almost void of the three variables of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction. It was, by chance, the opportunity to observe a crosscultural interaction that excluded these variables, which allows comparisons with the other six mission trips, which all included the three variables at various levels.

The team leaders conducted Bible studies and discussions each day, but the factor missing was that the topics (while important to Christian faith) were not relevant to what the mission team was seeing and experiencing. Participants were not provided biblical subjects or verses that they could associate with life within this culture.

Because of isolation from Costa Ricans, both at the mission house where they were staying and at the work site, the team experienced very little crosscultural interaction. Almost all of their interaction occurred within the group itself.

The physical liminality experienced by the team was almost nonexistent. The team’s accommodations, food, and surroundings were comfortable and pleasant. Very little occurred that separated them from the status, roles, or comforts of their normal lives back home.

Because of the lack of crosscultural interaction, the team had almost no opportunity to gain access to either the observable realities or invisible realities that exist in the lives of the local people. Without these, and with their time spent among themselves and watching cable television channels from home, the team experienced minimal levels of perceptual liminality.
Even with the lack of these elements, the team still demonstrated increased levels of faith on the Post-Trip FMS Survey. Mission trips, by their very nature as being instruments of service for God, provide a spiritual connectedness that in itself, leads participants to think about and associate with biblical lessons learned in a lifetime. A mission trip is a sacred journey, a pilgrimage, and as a result, aspects of spirituality resonate within the hearts and minds of participants.

This study, however, is looking at the opportunities to increase faith development through the design of the mission trip. From this perspective, this mission team to Costa Rica demonstrated a level of faith development that was significantly lower than that of the other teams in the study. When the data is reviewed, a strong correlation tracks the level of FCLI variables included with the level of faith development reported by the mission trip participants. This is verified through the subjective data provided thus far and through a correlation analysis that will follow later in this chapter.

The last part of the Post-Trip Survey provided data from the Related Biblical Topics Scale. These results, when compared with the overall Pre-Trip FMS and the Post-Trip FMS Surveys, will bring to light additional aspects of faith development through *Faith-Centered Liminal Interactions*.

**Related Biblical Topics Scale (RBTS)**

The Related Biblical Topics Scale was the second portion of the Post-Trip Survey. It was added to the modified Faith Maturity Scale in an effort to evaluate participants’ perceived changes in their understanding of faith variables and principles as a result of their mission trip experiences. The list of biblical topics provides a fresh and
different insight into the aspects of each trip and the valuable lessons learned through them.

The Related Biblical Topics Scale contains 27 topics and 9 personal actions related to day-to-day living. The participants could choose which of the 36 items were relevant to their situation and then identify the degree to which they had gained new insight or understanding of those items. Because the question asks them to identify incremental gains over and above the awareness they already have, the scores were not expected to be as high as those of the Pre-Trip Faith Maturity Scale. The scale range is from 1 (a little) to 7 (significantly).

The mean average score of the RBTS for all seven teams combined was 3.05. This indicates that participants gained new insight and understanding of biblical topics from their ministry experience. The team averages for the RBTS were as follows:

Table 28: Post-Trip Related Biblical Topics Scale (RBTS) Mean Scores by Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Post-Trip Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.05</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observation #1: The rank order of the teams differed somewhat from the Post-Trip FMS scores. Two of the teams remained in the same positions: Guatemala 1 scored the highest with a mean average of 4.12 while Costa Rica scored the lowest with a mean score of 1.68.

Observation 2: Those teams that scored the highest on this scale appear to have made more direct correlations between the realities they experienced and specific biblical topics. When participants hear discussions of relevant biblical topics while experiencing realities of life that can be directly associated with them, it is like seeing the parables of Jesus being lived out in front of their eyes. Jesus knew that stories and real life associations were the most effective method for teaching the spiritual lessons of life.

Observation #3: The teams that scored the highest on this scale were the teams that had the highest level of relevant Bible studies and discussions. Guatemala 1, Guatemala 2, Guatemala 3, and Jamaica all did an excellent job of introducing relevant Scriptures and promoting thought provoking discussions.

Observation #4: The two teams that did not have relevant Bible studies and discussions were the teams that scored the lowest on this scale. Both of the teams from Costa Rica and Kenya conducted Bible studies but they were mostly on topics that were unrelated to the wealth of experiences the team was having.

The vertical and horizontal faith subscales of the Related Biblical Topics Scale were established by applying biblical topics and related actions that were appropriate to a personal relationship with God (vertical) and living out the principles and values associated with that relationship and faith in God (horizontal). (The list of the identified characteristics is in endnote 5). The scores by team are listed in Table 29.
### Table 29: RBTS Vertical and Horizontal Means by Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip</th>
<th>Vertical Mean</th>
<th>Horizontal Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 1</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 2</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala 3</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.07</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation #1: The Guatemala 1 team scored the highest in both vertical and horizontal faith. These scores tie directly to the high levels of all three of the FCLI variables within their trip design. Important factors also relate to the reasons they scored higher in both areas. The team was working with a group of children who, for cruel and unusual reasons, had to leave their families and live in an orphanage. They gained a new understanding of how to live their faith with strength, hope, and joy. These factors impacted their horizontal faith. But while they were experiencing these situations in life, they were also participating in Bible studies and discussions that helped them to see the importance of their own relationship with God. Tying the two together provided the ideal environment through which their faith was deepened.

Observation #2: Of the seven teams, the team from Spain had the largest spread between their vertical and horizontal scales. This can be explained by the fact that this
team was focused on evangelism. Almost all of their time was spent hearing the
salvation message and learning how to communicate it to others. Very little of their time
was spent in situations in which they were serving. Additionally, this trip was located in
a modern, middle class community in Spain. The lifestyles and environment were not
such that the mind would naturally be opened to individuals living with physical want or
need because that did not exist. While the spiritual need was great in this community,
there were no observable characteristics of this need, therefore associations with relevant
biblical teachings related to horizontal faith were not made. However, because of the
team’s focus on evangelism, the biblical teachings associated with vertical faith were
more identified and understood.

Observation #3: Guatemala 2 scored relatively high on the horizontal scale. The
situation in which they worked attributed to this outcome. The team worked, prayed, and
worshipped with a wide variety of the local indigenous people. They learned about the
lives of these people and how they have walked in faith through very difficult times.

Observation #4: The Costa Rica team scored the lowest in both of these
categories. Their low level of connection with the local people, Bible studies and
discussions that were unrelated to their experiences, and the lack of liminality (either
physical or perceptual) all contributed to this low level of faith development.

(For a summary by trip of the Pre-Trip Faith Maturity Scale, Post-Trip Revised
Faith Maturity Scale, and the Post-Trip Related Biblical Topic Scale mean averages, by
the eight categories, vertical and horizontal subscales, and team totals, see Appendix H).

The Related Biblical Topics Survey has 36 items that the participants could
identify as being relevant to new insights and understandings gained through their
mission experience. In evaluating the data, each item was reviewed for its level of relevance to the study, from several perspectives: the mean score of each item overall (total scores divided by 74), a list ranking based on the overall mean, the number of times the item was chosen by the 74 participants, and the mean score of those who chose each item (the total score divided by the number of people who chose it as having been relevant to their experience). The results of these evaluations are as follows:

Table 30: RBTS Participant Identified Biblical Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Mean of Total</th>
<th># That Chose It</th>
<th>Mean Score of The Chosen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>59 of 74 (79.7%)</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>56 of 74 (75.7%)</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>56 of 74 (75.7%)</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>59 of 74 (79.7%)</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>51 of 74 (68.9%)</td>
<td>5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>55 of 74 (74.3%)</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>50 of 74 (67.6%)</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>48 of 74 (64.9%)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>48 of 74 (64.9%)</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>47 of 74 (63.5%)</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling Others</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>46 of 74 (62.2%)</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>48 of 74 (64.9%)</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>54 of 74 (73.0%)</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>45 of 74 (60.8%)</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>50 of 74 (67.6%)</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Mean of Total</td>
<td># That Chose It</td>
<td>Mean of Chosen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal priorities and values</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>57 of 74 (77.0%)</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith you place in God in your life</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>51 of 74 (68.9%)</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer life and time in the Word</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>50 of 74 (67.6%)</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of other cultures/people</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>47 of 74 (63.5%)</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading the message of Jesus Christ</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>48 of 74 (64.9%)</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving time/talent/resources to help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others in need</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>49 of 74 (66.2%)</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: RBTS Participant Identified Variations in Day to Day Living
Giving time/talent/resources to help others grow spiritually 3.01 50 of 74 (67.6%) 4.44
Incorporating biblical teaching into life 2.93 46 of 74 (62.2%) 4.72
Social Justice/Caring for the poor 1.85 37 of 74 (50.0%) 3.70

Observation #1: It is interesting to note that “faith” was chosen by the most participants and it had the highest total mean average of the 36 items. This is directly associated with a personal relationship with God. This is significant. Of all the biblical topics, the participants in these crosscultural ministries chose faith as the one in which they learned the most. Not far down the list of the biblical topics they learned the most about was prayer. The fact that they chose these two, faith and prayer, demonstrates that their relationship with God was strengthened and their faith was deepened.

Observation #2: Several of the other biblical topics in which they felt they had gained the most new insight and understanding were love, caring, and helping. These are all tied to living out their faith.

Observation #3: They also chose “grace” highly. This is seen as both God’s grace in their own lives and the grace that they as individuals can share with others. On many of these mission trips, the teams encountered individuals in the host culture who demonstrated grace through situations and circumstances that were beyond the understanding of the team members.

Observation #4: It is interesting that all 27 items had a significant number of people state that they felt their mission trip experience provided them with new insights and understandings in these areas. Even the one that was picked by the fewest participants (fear) was chosen by 35% of the total. God reveals himself in many ways
each and every day. At home, when our minds are racing to accomplish the next task or the information overload fills our heads, it is very difficult to see the subtle revelations of God. On a mission trip, however, much of the confusion is drawn away and eyes and minds are more receptive to receive the message God wants to give. The breadth of the choices the participants of this study made in the Related Biblical Teaching Scale is an indication of the effectiveness of this setting for deepening faith.

Observation#5: Of the nine characteristics related to living day-to-day, most often the participants chose “personal priorities and values.” Mission opportunities allow people to realize how much they have, how much they horde, and how little they really need. They also realize that the people they have been working with and serving are usually happier and more at peace with life than the mission trip participants are themselves, even with all of their personal possessions, activities, status, etc.

Observation #6: It is interesting to note, “social justice and caring for the poor ranked the lowest in variations in day-to-day living. One of the reasons for this might be because two of the teams (Spain and Costa Rica) were not working among the poor. Their exposure did not provide an opportunity for them to be involved with the poor and to relate these lessons to biblical teachings.

Observation #7: The same reasoning might explain why “incorporating biblical teaching into my life” was also low. Two of the teams did not have strong Bible studies and discussions. The associations between life and biblical lessons were not made and the opportunity to discover the connections was probably lost.
For a listing for each mission team, the number of times each biblical topic was chosen by the team, the team mean for each topic, and the mean of those within the team who responded to each item, see Appendix I.

As can be seen in the tables in Appendix I, members of each team selected many of the biblical topics and variables of daily living. For the purpose of focusing on the most important information, those topics and variables that were identified with the highest mean averages are listed by team. Participants felt that they had gained the greatest amount of insight and understanding on their trips in these areas. It should be noted that on every mission trip, participants demonstrated an increased level of faith. This fact, in itself, demonstrates that overall, crosscultural experiences in which participants are there for the purposes of serving God, result in faith development. This study, however, is attempting to prove that faith is deepened through these experiences, and to evaluate the levels to which faith development occurs.

The following (Table 32) are the topics and variables that each team identified as being the ones in which they gained the greatest amount of new insight and understanding as a result of their experience. Also included are the mean averages for each topic and variable.
Table 32: RBTS Topics and Life Variables Chosen Most Frequently (Highest Mean) by Each Team

**Costa Rica** (12 Participants)

**Biblical Topics**
- Acceptance 3.17 (8 participants chose this topic)
- Faith 3.00 (7)
- Humility 2.42 (6)
- Following 2.3 (6)

**Variables of Day to Day Living**
- Personal Priorities/Values 2.42 (6)
- Giving to help others in need 2.43 (6)

**Guatemala 1** (13 Participants)

**Biblical Topics**
- Love 5.77 (12)
- Prayer 5.38 (12)
- Caring 5.31 (13)
- Poor 5.31 (12)

**Variables of Day to Day Living**
- Personal priorities and values 5.31 (13)
- Faith in God in life 4.46 (11)
- Help others grow spiritually 4.38 (12)

**Guatemala 2** (10 Participants)

**Biblical Topics**
- Caring 4.70 (9)
Humility 4.50 (7)

Poor 4.50 (9)

Variables of Day to Day Living

Giving to help others in need 4.90 (9)

Help others grow spiritually 4.70 (9)

Personal priorities and values 4.70 (10)

Guatemala 3 (7 Participants)

Biblical Topics

Love 5.57 (7)

Simplicity 4.86 (6)

Humility 4.71 (6)

Needs vs. Wants 4.71 (6)

Variables of Day to Day Living

Acceptance of other cultures/people 5.29 (6)

Prayer life/Time in the Word 3.43 (5)

Jamaica (11 Participants)

Biblical Topics

Poor 4.55 (10)

Healing 4.36 (9)

Faith 4.18 (9)

Variables of Day to Day Living

Prayer life/Time in the Word 4.00 (9)

Spreading the message 4.00 (10)
**Kenya** (8 Participants)

**Biblical Topics**

Materialism 4.50 (7)

God’s Grace 4.38 (7)

Hard Times 4.38 (7)

Needs vs. Wants 4.25 (7)

**Variables of Day to Day Living**

Personal priorities and values 4.88 (8)

Faith in God in life 4.25 (7)

**Spain** (13 Participants)

**Biblical Topics**

Telling others 5.85 (12)

Love 4.62 (11)

Prayer 4.49 (12)

**Variables of Day to Day Living**

Prayer life/Time in the Word 4.62 (9)

Spreading the message 4.23 (9)

**Qualitative Research Findings**

Research is a broad science with many formats through which we are able to gain information so that we can draw conclusions about those things. Quantitative research provides statistical data, like that reported above, which provides us with mathematical equations that allow us to make comparisons and draw conclusions based on averages, distributions, variances, etc.
Qualitative research, however, relates to information gathered through observation, personal interviews, testimonies, reporting and other methods of recording thoughts, impressions, feelings, emotions, understandings, and insights. Both types of research methods were used in this study and some of the discoveries will be reported here.

**Physical and Perceptual Liminality**

In Chapter 4, the discovery of two dimensions of liminality were discussed. The first is *physical liminality* which relates to the dynamics of comfort, status, security, stability, roles or positions, wealth, influence, well being control, felt needs, knowledge, etc. When any or all of these factors are stripped away, individuals are usually thrown into a state of disequilibrium as these known variables of normal life are variables that almost always provide consistency, structure, and predictability to life.

The second dimension of liminality, I refer to as *perceptual liminality*. *Perceptual liminality* is experienced when individuals are faced with new perspectives of reality that put to the test and contradict certain fundamental aspects of life that they have been conditioned to understand to be absolute truth. When these “truths” that they hold are challenged, a mental state of chaos results, cognitive dissonance ensues, and individuals are forced to evaluate and reconcile this new information. It is through this process that growth occurs. A state of *perceptual liminality* can begin to take place as people from one culture enter into the visible realities of another culture and it is experienced at the deepest levels when there is direct contact between the mission team participants and the local people. Personal contact allows individuals to see, begin to understand, and even experience a small part of another person’s world.
Two Distinct Views of Reality — Observable & Invisible

Also discussed in Chapter 4 are the two distinct views of reality discovered through this research study. The first is identified as observable reality. Observable realities are the defining messages that can be taken in through our eyes, and our other senses. These realities do not require personal contact (although some may occur). The dynamics of observable realities are left up to the mind of the individual to interpret. Without further input, knowledge, or explanation, the mind will almost always interpret this information based on the understandings and definitions of reality that the person observing holds to be true. Observable realities can produce perceptual liminality to a certain level but only if the mind cannot rationalize, explain or justify what it has seen.

The second view of reality is identified as invisible reality. Invisible realities are discovered when an individual is able to enter into the alternate realities of life on a more personal, intimate level. Invisible realities are the defining messages that are only taken in by gaining insight into another person's feelings, experiences, perspectives, sorrows, failings, successes, struggles, hopes, joys, dreams, etc. These realities require personal contact. It is much more difficult for the mind to interpret or rationalize the dynamics of invisible realities based on the understandings and definitions that the person hearing these things holds to be true. Invisible realities are much more likely to create cognitive dissonance and a state of perceptual liminality.

New Concepts of Communitas

This study has also brought to light distinctive characteristics that identify two different types of communitas. Communitas is a dynamic that has long been identified as a unique type of social relationship that develops among individuals who share a state of
liminality as they are in an egalitarian state, void of the normal statuses, roles, authority, or privilege (Turner 1969:96-97, 126-129). Through this study however, I have discovered that there are two distinct types of *communitas* that can and do occur in liminal situations. They can occur independently of each other or they can occur simultaneously.

The first I have identified as *communitas de securitas* (community of security). This social relationship develops among individuals sharing a state of liminality who cling to each other to regain a sense of equilibrium. Shared understandings reaffirm and validate their own “knowns” in a situation wrought with unknowns. *Communitas de securitas* provides a sense of security. It is an attempt to provide a quick fix for the liminal sense of disequilibrium that they are experiencing.

If this type of *communitas* is the only one that the mission team experiences, the development and deepening of faith will be prohibited. In this protective reality bubble, they will not have to step out of their comfort zone to regain stability and safety through the expansion of their minds and through connecting the unknowns with their knowns through shared truths, the relevant biblical teachings. On the surface, this type of *communitas* seems like a good thing because the team members bond to each other but in reality, this type of *communitas* is a paralyzing dynamic that squelches faith development.

The second type of *communitas* I have identified as *communitas de experientia* (community of shared knowledge gained through experience). This type of *communitas* is not created by a clinging together to regain a sense of equilibrium, this *communitas* is created with those who share in new revelations of truth. The bond that brings them
together is shared knowledge that they have experienced together and that no one else can truly understand without having had the same experience. It is a brotherhood/sisterhood of equality and shared unique experiences. Together they have experienced these new revelations of truth and together they have bonded to the meanings.

If mission team members experience this type of *communitas*, the opportunities for developing and deepening faith will be enhanced because the participants have stepped outside of the confines of their protective reality bubble. Through faith, they have entered into the alternate realities (most likely the *invisible realities*) and gained new insights and understandings that, when tied to the relevant Bible teachings and discussions, lead to deepening of faith.

The dynamics associated with *communitas de experientia* are very different from those associated with *communitas de securitas*. Not only will the former promote faith development while the later will prohibit it, the bonds established between members in *communitas de experientia* are more likely to last for a long, long time. Sharing knowledge that can only be known through shared experiences provides a unique connection, especially when the knowledge is directly related to new understandings of divine truths. The bonds established within *communitas de securitas* will most likely dissolve quickly once the individuals return to their normal lives and resume their statuses, roles, and positions.

In interviews held with the members of the Guatemala 1 team (one of the teams that incorporated all three of the FCLI variables and scored highest in faith development), they themselves have identified a unique and mysterious connectedness that they feel toward one another. One stated,
When we see each other, there is a smile that fills us from the inside out. As our eyes meet, there is an instantaneous moment that flashes through our minds that connects us because we know that we know. The unique thing is that as much as we have tried, we cannot explain our new knowledge well enough or effectively enough for anyone else to truly understand. But when we see each other, we know that we know because we shared in the revelation and that knowledge bonds us together.

Correlation Analysis: Validation of the Research Instruments and Analyzing the Data

This research study was designed to provide information related to the development of faith in those who experience interaction crossculturally within a ministry setting known as a short-term mission trip. One hundred and one individuals participated in seven mission trips. Ninety seven of them filled out a Faith Maturity Scale questionnaire prior to their trip. Seventy four of these individuals completed a modified Faith Maturity Scale questionnaire once they returned.

The Faith Maturity Scale administered in the Pre-Trip Survey consists of 38 statements and it asks participants to respond to each statement based upon the way they feel it is true of them. Their answers can range from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (strongly true of me).

The modified Faith Maturity Scale in the Post-Trip Survey utilized the same 38 statements, but this time, two distinctions were made: the type of response they were asked to give and the size and scope of the scale through which they would answer. In the first change, participants were asked to respond, not about how true the statement was of them, but rather how they felt the experience they had on the trip had changed their perspective of each item. In the second change, the scale used for participants to respond to these items was not the Likert 1 to 7 scale utilized in the Pre-Trip Survey. Instead, a
different scale was used which allowed them to report either a positive or a negative change in their lives. The scale ranged from -5 (this is definitely less true of me since going) to 0 (I feel the same as I did before going on the trip) to +5 (This is definitely more true of me since going).

Because of the modifications made in the Faith Maturity Scale questionnaire, direct comparison of the means or the variance in the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip surveys cannot be made. This is because the modifications created two distinctly different questionnaires.

It was expected that the Post-Trip Survey would generate lower scores as the result of changing the scale from 1 to 7 (in the Pre-Trip Survey) to a scale of -5 to +5 (in the Post-Trip Survey). Also, by providing a wider range of answers, it was expected that this would produce greater variability in responses. It was also expected that the change in the way the participants were asked to evaluate each statement would result in a stronger correlation between the variables in the Post-Trip Survey than those in the Pre-Trip Survey.

The following analysis is provided in an effort to explore the effects these two modifications had on the data generated. This has been done by identifying any changes to the distribution of the two sets of data (Pre-Trip FMS to Post-Trip FMS) and then relating them to the modifications in the questionnaires.

To do this, I have utilized the eight thematic core dimensions of the Faith Maturity Scale. (These are listed in the first column of Table 33). Each of the 38 questions is an identifier within one of the eight dimensions. Each of these dimensions is composed of four, five or six of the questions. Scores for the eight dimensions are
arrived at by summing all of the answers of the respective questions within the categories.

After generating a total FMS score and sub-scores for each of the core dimensions from both questionnaires, Table 33 was created by calculating the Pearson correlation for each core dimension and the total FMS score. These were ranked by the Pre-Trip correlations and the percentage of change in correlation was calculated.

Table 33: Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Comparison of Correlations of All Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Pre-Trip Rank</th>
<th>Post-Trip Rank</th>
<th>FMS Score (Pre-Trip) Correlation</th>
<th>FMS Score (Post-Trip) Correlation</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrates Faith &amp; Life</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.839**</td>
<td>.857**</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences Faith in Community</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.736**</td>
<td>.840**</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds Life Affirming Values</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.710**</td>
<td>.832**</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts &amp; Serves</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.679**</td>
<td>.693**</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.651**</td>
<td>.781**</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusts &amp; Believes</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.500**</td>
<td>.734**</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocates Social Change</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.327**</td>
<td>.707**</td>
<td>116.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences the Fruits of Faith</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.283*</td>
<td>.768**</td>
<td>171.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson Correlations can be explained this way,

This statistic is an index of the degree of linear relationship between two variables. A Pearson product-moment correlation can range between -1 and +1.
A perfect positive correlation would be indexed by +1 indicating that with each unit of increase in one variable an equivalent movement is measured in the second variable. A perfect negative correlation would be noted by -1 indicating that with each unit increase in one variable there is an equivalent decrease in the second variable (Silver 2004).

From this data, the following observations can be made:

Observation 1 – In each of the dimensions, the Pearson product-moment correlation increased in the Post-Trip Survey results. In all eight of the categories, the correlation was above .600 and positive.

Observation 2 – Between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Surveys, the amount of change in Pearson product-moment correlation ranged from 2.1% to 171.4%.

Observation 3 – In the Pre-Trip correlations, all but one is significant at the .01 level. In the Post-Trip Survey, all are at the .01 level.

Observation 4 – The dimension that had the greatest change was Experiences Fruits of Faith (experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace). It moved from being significant at the .05 level to the .01 level and its correlation increased from .283 to .768.

Observation 5 – The rank order of only three of the core dimensions changed between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Surveys (Acts & Serves changed from 4th to 8th; Seeks Spiritual Growth changed from 5th to 4th; and Experiences Fruits of Faith changed from 8th to 5th). These findings will be discussed a little farther on in the section entitled, “Summary of Correlation Analysis.”
Examination of Core Dimensions that Did Not Change Rank Order
- Linear Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance

The five graphs at the left are scatter plots of each of the core dimensions that did not change between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Surveys. The red elements (+) indicate the Pre-Trip Survey data and the blue (*) indicates the Post-Trip data. The mean averages are represented by the red horizontal line (Pre-Trip) and the blue horizontal line (Post-Trip). The diagonal red and blue lines are linear regression lines.

Observation 1 – There is very little overlap between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip data in all five of these graphs. Each group is relatively tightly clustered. The group clustering (red high, blue lower) was anticipated given the change in the scales between the Pre and Post Surveys (1 to 7 vs. -5 to +5).

Observation 2 – Because of the
Observation 3 – The distribution of the Post-Trip data is more widely distributed along its linear regression line than the Pre-Trip data. This occurred because the participants were asked to evaluate their perceived change in themselves as a result of the experience.

Observation 4 – There is a general symmetry between the distribution of the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip data. This indicates that the modifications that were made to the Post-Trip FMS Survey had the same general effect on all of the core dimensions that did not change in rank.

Conclusions – This correlation analysis indicates that the modifications that were made in the Post-Trip Survey have generated the expected effects on the core dimensions that maintained their rank levels. The patterns of distribution remained relatively constant. The differences in the location of the clusters on these graphs are directly related to the range of answers on each of the surveys (1 to 7 on the Pre-Trip Survey, -5 to 0 to +5 on the Post-Trip Survey). This indicates that neither the change in the structure of the question nor the change in the range of possible answers created a discernable change in the relative distribution of the data.
This strongly suggests that while the surveys varied, both surveys are valid and consistent for the purposes of producing results for this study.

Examination of Core Dimensions that Changed Rank Order

Observation 1 – The Pearson correlation in the core dimension Acts & Serves did not change significantly (2.1%) between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Survey. The similarity in the correlation numbers can be seen in the degree of symmetry in the shape and density of the groups of data (red and blue). These results differ from those reported above. The participants experienced perceived changes in themselves in relation to some of the questions within this category and/or, they considered the variables within the categories of Seeks Spiritual Growth and Experiences the Fruits of the Faith to have been affected to a much greater degree than those in Acts and Serves.
Observation 2 – When looking at the dimension of Seeks Spiritual Growth, (which moved from being ranked 5th to 4th) the Pearson correlations changed by 20% between the Pre-Trip and the Post-Trip Surveys. This can be seen in the changes to both the density (decreased) and the shape (more oval) of the distribution from the Pre-Trip (red) to the Post-Trip (blue) data. It appears that a small number of outliers are responsible for increasing the variability of answers at the upper end of the scale.

Observation 3 – When looking at the chart for Fruits of the Faith, the Pre-Trip data (red) is randomly dispersed around the regression line (oval shaped). The Post-Trip data (blue) is seen clustering more closely around the regression line. This demonstrates the stronger correlation between the variable of Fruits of the Faith and the total FMS score that is reflected in the 171.4% increase from the Pre-Trip to Post-Trip Surveys. This indicates that the variance was caused by changes that occurred in the participants to a much greater degree than has been shown to occur through the modifications to the surveys.

Summary of Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis has demonstrated that the modifications made in the Faith Maturity Scale for the Post-Trip Survey did not noticeably alter the basic statistical outcome. The surveys provided consistency in their correlations of the relationship between the data in the eight core dimensions and the total FMS scores.
It is worth noting that in reviewing the results of the correlation analysis of the Pre-Trip and Post-Trip data, all of the correlations increased, some significantly. Five of the eight dimensions while increasing in correlation, maintained the same rank that they held in the Pre-Trip Survey. The variations in the design of the survey did not have an adverse effect on the outcomes from the Post-Trips Surveys.

Three of the dimensions, however did change rank. Seeks Spiritual Growth changed from the 5th to 4th position. This change could be partially attributable to the differences in the surveys but it is also likely that participant reaction to occurrences on the trip played a role in the change.

The two dimensions that changed the most were Acts and Serves and Experiences Fruits of Faith. Acts and Serves was ranked 4th in the Pre-Trip Survey and it ranked 8th in the Post-Trip Survey. The expected inflation of the data distribution did not occur but nonetheless, it did show an increase. A likely explanation of this outcome is that when the participants filled out the Pre-Trip Survey, they were about to embark on a mission trip. They were in fact, preparing to act and serve. Their focus and motives were foremost in their minds. After returning from their trip and being home for a month or two, these initial thoughts were most likely reduced in emphasis and the knowledge and new insights gained took a more prominent position in their minds. According to the data, Acts and Serves was not devalued but rather, other dimensions of the faith experience became stronger descriptors of the participants’ understanding and expected consistency in answering related questions.

The Pearson correlation of Acts and Serves increased from .679 to .693 between the pre-trip survey and the post-trip survey. Through the mission trip experiences, the correlation of Faith and Serves increased. This correlation only indicates that through the
experience, it is more likely that a person will answer related questions in this category, consistently. It is in this predictability that we can glean assumptions that through the mission trip experience participants gained insight and understanding about acting and serving that place it more strongly in their minds. The correlation for all eight of the FMS subcategories increased indicating that through the trip experience, participants were exposed to each of these areas enough and sufficient insights were gained to have certainty that they will answer all questions within a given category in a similar way.

The dimension Fruits of Faith demonstrated the greatest degree of change. This occurred not only in rank (from 8th to 5th) but also in the change in the Pearson correlation (from .283 to .768). The results of this dimension vary dramatically from those of the other seven dimensions. This is an indication that experiences and new understandings gained through the mission trip were significant in impacting the participants' minds and hearts in this area. The variables in this dimension are centered on having a deeper belief and faith that produces fruits. The characteristics defined through the statements in the Faith Maturity Scale for this dimension are the ability to put life in perspective and not to be anxious about the pressures that are placed upon us; to have a sense of meaning and purpose; to experience a peace that surpasses all understanding; to trust in God in all situations; and to respect the love and goodness that God has created inside each one of us.

The participants of the trips came to recognize fruits of their faith that in the past, they had taken for granted. Often, we do not recognize the blessings that are before us until we see others who are in need gain strength and joy through their faith. Many on these trips came to realize that while those they went to serve were in need of so many things, these people were rich in things that the members of the mission team were
lacking in their lives. Before we can appreciate the fruits of our faith, we have to be able to recognize them as being blessings from God. This is what happened to many of the participants on these seven mission trips and it is why this category increased so greatly.

It is understandable that a short-term mission experience would provide a deeper understanding in all eight areas defined in the Faith Maturity Scale and particularly in those areas that increased the most in the correlation analysis: experiences the fruits of faith, seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others; trusts in God’s saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus; and advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice.

The correlation analysis has provided valuable information to validate the two forms of the Faith Maturity Scale utilized to gather data and it demonstrates strong statistical evidence to the fact that individuals who participate in short-term mission experiences gain a deeper understanding of God and of those things that have been identified within this study that are indicators of faith and faith development. One of the participants in the study observed, “This was truly a life changing experience for me. God opened my eyes in a new way and He opened my heart to share His love with others. There has been a significant change in my relationship with God and with others.” Another stated “There were so many elements that have changed or are changing in my life since the mission trip. I felt God starting to open my eyes in the [preparation] time for the trip and he is continuing this process even today. Things that I have never thought much about now stick in my mind daily.”
Summary

The statistical data from Phases 1 and 2 of the research has provided a basis from which observations and conclusions can be drawn. The data analyzed and reported in this chapter allows us to conclude that:

1) The demographics in this study provided a broad representation in all of the areas identified as relevant. These areas were gender, age, occupation, education, the type of organization leading the mission trip, and whether or not participants had gone on a short-term mission trip prior to the this study.

2) The Faith Maturity Scale proved to be a valid research instrument as the mean and standard deviation coefficients of the results in this study coincided with those of The Search Institute.

3) The test for linear relationship between the Pre-Trip Survey (Faith Maturity Scale) and the Post-Trip Survey (modified Faith Maturity Scale) demonstrated that the variations were consistent, indicating that the modifications made to allow for measurement of perceived changes in the principles of faith development in the Post-Trip Survey did not diminish the validity or effectiveness of this survey.

4) The Pre-Trip Survey verified that all seven mission teams demonstrated similar levels of faith. Because they were similar, we basically started on an even playing field. Any variations in faith levels could be attributed to variations in the mission trip designs rather than on differences in pre-trip faith levels.
5) The results of the Post-Trip Survey identified distinct differences between teams in faith level indicators as identified by the mission trip participants in relation to changes they perceived in their lives.

6) There exists a direct correlation between the level of faith development identified by the participants with the degree of inclusion or exclusion of the three variables within a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction.

7) Short-term mission trips were shown to have a positive impact on the faith development of the trip participants in all of the mission trips. However, the trips that incorporated the three variables of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction demonstrated significantly higher levels of development than the trips that did not.

8) There did not seem to be a direct correlation between the pre-trip faith level of a team and the level of new insights and understandings gained.

9) There was not a direct correlation between the demographic makeup of a mission team and the level of faith development that was acquired.

10) All of the mission teams demonstrated faith development in both vertical faith and horizontal faith.

11) There is no direct correlation between the levels of increase in vertical faith and the levels of increase in horizontal faith. This indicates that: (a) if a team experiences an increase or decrease in one of the two, there will not necessarily be a direct correlation with the increase or decrease of the other; and (b) there also is no converse relationship where if a team increases in one they will automatically decrease in the other.
12) There seems to be a direct relationship with the events and topics on a mission trip with increases in either vertical faith or horizontal faith. For example, teams that focused on evangelism on their trip scored higher on vertical faith than horizontal faith. Conversely, the teams that focused on serving and more of a social ministry, demonstrated greater increases in horizontal faith than in vertical faith. The teams that included both faith centered ministries and social type ministries demonstrated more of a balanced increase in vertical and horizontal faith.

13) The clearest distinctions in this research were demonstrated between the Costa Rica experience and those of the Jamaica and Guatemala 1 mission teams. The Costa Rica trip included very little of the FCLI variables and they, by far, scored the lowest in self-perceived changes in faith development. The other two teams, however, very effectively incorporated all three of the variables of the FCLI model. The levels of self-perceived faith development were by far the highest of all the teams.

14) The teams that scored highest in the Related Biblical Topics Scale were those teams that experienced perceptual liminality by hearing the stories of the local people. They were able to make clearer connections between the realities within this culture and the principles within the Bible.

15) The two teams that held Bible studies that were not directly relevant to the experiences of the mission team were the teams that scored the lowest on the Related Biblical Topics Scale.
16) The teams that focused on the spiritual aspects of ministry (both through their service and the Bible studies/discussions) scored higher on the vertical faith subscale of the Related Biblical Topics Scale. The opposite was also true. Those that focused on more of a working and or social ministry tended to score higher on the horizontal subscale.

17) The results of the Related Biblical Topics Scale demonstrated that short-term mission trips are excellent Christian experiences in which participants gain insight into a wide variety of biblical teachings and principles. Trip participants gained insight into all 27 items (to various degrees) identified in the scale.

Notes

1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”
   Hebrews 11:1

The faith development research scales considered for use in this study included:

- The Faith Development Interview Guide (Fowler 1981)
- The Faith Development Scale (Barnes Doyle, and Johnson 1989)
- The Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, and Erickson 1993)
- The Religious Index of Maturing Survey (Marthai 1980)
- The Religious Status Interview (Malony 1985, 1988; Malony and Nelson 1982)
- The Spiritual Maturity Index (Ellison 1983)
- The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al. 1981)
- The Religious Maturity Scale (Dudley and Cruise 1990)
- The Growth in Maturity Index (The Search Institute)
The Faith Maturity Scale – Components of the Vertical and Horizontal Subscales

**Vertical**

3. My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
7. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
9. I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
11. Everyday, I see evidence that God is active in the world.
14. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
15. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation.
19. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.
24. My life is filled with meaning and purpose.
31. I talk with other people about my faith.

**Horizontal**

1. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
6. In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
8. I do things to help protect the environment.
13. I am active in efforts to promote social justice.
16. I am active in efforts to promote world peace.
18. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
21. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.
22. I speak out for equality of women and minorities.
28. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
29. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
33. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
37. I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.

**Related Biblical Topic Scale**

Components of the Eight Faith Categories and Vertical and Horizontal Subscales (adapted from the Faith Maturity Scale)

**Trust and Believe**

- Faith in God
- Fear of the unknown or what lies ahead
- Following Jesus
- God’s Kingdom
- God’s Love
- Healing

**Experiences the Fruits of Faith**

- God’s grace
- Happiness
Integrates Faith and Life
Forgiveness
Giving
Hard times
Humility
Materialism, money, and accumulated wealth
Needs verses wants
Obedience
Perseverance
Pride
Simplicity
Power, status, and success
Incorporating biblical teachings more deeply into your life
Your personal priorities and values
The faith you place in God in every area of your life

Seeks Spiritual Growth
Prayer
Seeking God
Your prayer life and time in the Word

Experiences and Nurtures Faith in Community
Telling others about Jesus
The importance of evangelism and your own efforts to spread the message of Jesus Christ
Helping others grow spiritually by giving of your time, talents, and resources

Holds Life-Affirming Values
Acceptance and tolerance of others
Acceptance of other cultures, people groups, and individuals

Advocates Social Change
The poor
Social justice and caring for the poor

Acts and Serves
Caring, compassion, and kindness
Helping others
Sacrifice
Helping those in need through your time, talents, and resources
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<td>- Fear of the unknown or what lies ahead</td>
<td>- Caring, compassion, and kindness</td>
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<td>- Following Jesus</td>
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<td>- God’s grace</td>
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<td>- Materialism, money, accumulated wealth</td>
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<td>- Healing</td>
<td>- Needs verses wants</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Prayer</td>
<td>- Power, status, and success</td>
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<td>- Seeking God</td>
<td>- Social justice/Caring for the poor</td>
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<td>- Prayer life/Time in the Word</td>
<td>- Incorporating biblical teaching into life</td>
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<td>- Your personal priorities and values</td>
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<td>- Acceptance of other cultures and people</td>
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<td>- Helping those in need with your time,</td>
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Chapter 8

Knowledge Drawn from Theory:
Summary and Conclusions

Faith... A Firm and Certain Knowledge

God is the source of all faith. Faith is a gift that was given to us at creation that provides an unseen, reliable source of strength, assurance, and hope for everything that occurs in our lives. Our faith should be placed in God because he is the giver of life and the guarantor of our future. Faith in God comes naturally. Almost everyone prays to a creator God at one time or another because of the innate understanding that this source of life has power over aspects of life. Ironically, a recent worldwide survey conducted by the British Broadcasting Company found that even 30 percent of atheists pray (British Broadcasting Company 2004).

Isolated people groups that have never heard of God or Jesus Christ have acknowledged their belief in an ultimate being who created all things and has power over the earth and all of humankind. An example is given through the lives of the Chickasaw Indians who were discovered in the New World. John Wesley was a missionary to Georgia when he met with tribal leaders.

Wesley inquired after the Chickasaw beliefs. He began with the question: If they were convinced that the One Mighty Lord governed over all things? Out of the discussion Wesley received the answer that four beloved Essences are “above” - the Clouds, the Sun, the Clear Heaven and He that lives in the Clear Heaven. As Wesley more closely inquired, if they knew only one such Lord, he heard the reply that they accepted a kind of Trinity. On the question, if this triune Essence created the Sun and the other essences, the Indians remained unsure of such information. On the other hand, they believed that all humans had been created on the earth by His hand. They were not sure if the Essence loved them, but they
confirmed that this entity had often rescued them out of life-threatening situations. (cited in Schmidt 1973:32-33)

The point to be made here is that God is the source of faith and it is in God that we should place our faith. Unfortunately, being human, we have the ability to choose whether to have faith in God or to place our faith in humanly derived institutions, programs, organizations, or individuals of influence. As Christian leaders, it is our responsibility to teach, to guide, and to lead believers deeper in their faith in God so that the things of this world do not take his place in their hearts and minds. Jesus Christ gave us this commissioning when he said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). To make a disciple means more than leading someone to believe (James 2:19). “To make disciples does not mean to make members of churches, but to give people the desire and power to be like Jesus” (Amaral 1999:4).

Because we as humans place our faith in many things (including God), our minds are continually taking in information that either validates or invalidates those things in which we place our faith. In turn, this new information can alter the degree to which we rely on our sources of faith for our decisions, judgments, interpretations, and actions. Culture plays a large role in providing this information. Culture is the lens through which we see and interpret most aspects of our lives.

God’s world is so much bigger than the confines of our own culture. His truths are true in every context. But since it is through a cultural context that his truths are interpreted and understood, cultural norms can play a large role in how we define truth.
They color and influence our interpretations. Is it possible to live within one culture, receive the gift of God's salvation, and then live through the faith that he has given us? Absolutely. But since biblical truths can be understood through the lens of culture, the meaning of truth can become a blending together of various understandings. Cultural norms can play a role in our interpretations.¹ This can lead to syncretism² which can lead individuals away from God rather than toward God.

Our goal as Christians is to grow continually in our faith in God. It is to provide others with valid and strongly compelling information (credible sources, examples, and proofs) that will lead them into a stronger relationship with God and into a faith that is placed in him, rather than the things of this world. Our goal should be to gain understanding of God's teachings as they were given by God. They are relevant not only in our own culture, but across all cultures.

The proposed model within this study, the *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction*, provides an environment that offers significant exposure to Christian principles, in Word and reality, in a unique situation in which the mind is open (cleared of normal outside variables) and ready to absorb new insights and understanding that lead participants closer to God. In a short period of time (through separation and *liminality*) the model combines knowledge (*biblical teachings*) with living examples (*crosscultural exposure* to realities that express biblical meanings) that can result in significant deepening of Christian faith.

When participants are able to see biblical teachings through a different cultural lens, the teachings begin to come alive in depth and meaning. As they experience this, a feeling of newness comes over them. It is as if they had previously been viewing these
teachings as two-dimensional monochromatic images and all of a sudden, they are seeing them in three dimensions and in full color; for them, the teachings now have depth, height, and width greater than they had ever known before.

Through this experience, their perceptions of these teachings are forever changed in their hearts and minds. As a result, they are drawn closer to God, bonding more deeply to him because they have entered into a Holy place, a place in which understanding is clearer. They have a sense of communing with God because they have entered into a new level of understanding of his truth, his mercy, his grace, and his love.

The real communitas that occurs in a FCLI is between the participant and God - that relationship has always existed from God's perspective, but this experience contributes greatly to the participant dropping their barriers and drawing closer to God. They do this because they have just learned intimate details that make their relationship with him so much more personal.

To date, little or nothing has been written on the impact of short-term mission trips in the lives of the participants. I was unable to find any published articles that considered this aspect of short-term mission experiences. Nor was I able to find publications on faith development in crosscultural situations. It is difficult for me to understand how these topics could have been overlooked when our churches are sending out thousands of mission teams each year.

Having been a missionary who received over 75 mission teams and having led another 25 teams, I find it hard to understand why no one has focused their attention on the faith development aspects of mission team experiences. Anyone who has led a team has seen the effect these trips have on the lives of those who go. It is not a hidden
occurrence that requires investigation to find, it is almost always evident in the words and in the lives of the participants once they return home. Mission trips change lives. There is no denying that.

But recognizing this dynamic is only the first step. The important thing is to learn what causes the change and then to design mission trips to include the identified variables so that this incredible dynamic of faith development will take place each and every time a mission team goes out. This is an opportunity that is begging to be recognized but we as church leaders have failed to see or respond to it.

This study was designed to evaluate the aspects of faith development in the lives of mission team participants. More specifically, the study was designed to evaluate the theory that the inclusion of three distinct social dynamics in a short-term mission trip (Crosscultural Interaction, Liminality, and Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions), would disciple participants to a deeper level of Christian faith. This faith would then be assimilated into their lives.

The initial research questions were: Are short-term mission trips vehicles in which individuals can come to understand the Scriptures more clearly and grow deeper in their faith in God: the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit? Do the identified variables, when included in a short-term mission experience, facilitate and increase this new understanding and faith development in those who participate? To what degree do these identified variables increase or multiply understanding and faith development when they are combined? Do varying levels of one or more of these variables impact the results?
Conclusions Drawn from this Study

Many observations were made through the data that was collected in this study. Some were derived through the statistical data and some through qualitative assessment and reflection. To present these findings, the following will provide a quick overview of the general conclusions from this study. More detailed explanations will follow.

1) Short-term mission trips, for the most part, all include the significant components of learning, liminality, crosscultural interaction, bonding experiences, etc. to some degree.

2) Almost every short-term mission trip will demonstrate a degree of faith development in the lives of participants through the general nature of the trip being a form of a holy pilgrimage.

3) Mission trips that include the three variables of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction demonstrate a significantly higher level of faith development in participants than those trips that do not include them.

4) Mission trips with the highest levels of the three FCLI variables demonstrated the highest levels of faith development.

5) Conversely, the mission trips with the lowest levels of the three FCLI variables demonstrated the lowest levels of faith development.

6) Cognitive associations are most likely to be developed if teachings and meanings of relevance are presented and discussed during the trip.

7) Conversely, cognitive associations are most likely to be overlooked if teachings and meanings of relevance are not presented and discussed during the trip.
8) The level of cognitive dissonance (created through liminal experiences) is a very important factor in the phenomenon of faith development in a crosscultural situation.

9) Liminality is broader in scope than previously recognized. Two dimensions of liminality have been identified through this study: physical liminality and perceptual liminality.

10) Gaining a perception of the new reality demonstrated by the host culture is a vital part of the faith development process in a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction.

This study has brought to light that perceptions of reality can be discovered in two ways: Observable realities are the defining messages that can be taken in through our eyes and our other senses; and invisible realities, which are the defining messages that are only taken in by gaining insight into another person's feelings, experiences, perspectives, sorrows, failings, successes, struggles, hopes, joys, dreams, etc.

11) One of the most important and effective methods of entering into another person's or another culture's invisible realities is to hear their stories. When people share their lives through their stories, it opens a window into their soul.

12) Communitas is a dynamic that has long been identified as a unique type of social relationship that develops among individuals who share a state of liminality.

Through this study however, I have discovered that there are two distinct types of communitas that can and do occur in liminal situations. The first I have identified as communitas de securitas (community of security). The second type I have
identified as *communitas de experientia* (community of shared knowledge gained through experience).

This study has brought to light many new pieces of information in relation to short-term missions, but more importantly, it has identified variables that are significant factors in bringing to light new biblical insights and understandings in the minds of Christians which serve to lead them to deepen their faith. The following will look at each of the primary variables in a little more detail.

**Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction**

It is amazing what can happen when people are placed in a situation that is entirely outside of the reality box in which they live. Our world is so diverse, but most people do not have the opportunity to see beyond the dimensions of their own work, family, city, state, and possibly, nation in which they live. We remain in a well defined cultural world. Our natural psychological reaction to the world is that “everyone must see life the way I do,” or “my life provides me with the basic understandings I need, so they must be the correct understandings.”

Those who have had the opportunity to experience and/or live in different cultural situations know that there are many ways in which to view the world and that each culture has their own way of understanding. No one way to view the world is automatically right or wrong, they are just different.

As Christian leaders, it is our goal to lead people deeper in their faith in God. A major part of that process can take place when they gain a new understanding of the teachings within the Scriptures. God has provided the Bible for us as a guide to teach us
how to live, how to think, and more importantly, how to align every aspect of our lives within his good and perfect will.

Understanding the Bible can be difficult. Even when Jesus was teaching his disciples, on several occasions, he had to explain what he meant by a lesson he had given. He even went one-step further and taught through stories and parables, because he knew that people could relate the stories to their experiences in life.

Understanding the Bible and God's teachings becomes even more difficult when the dimension of culture is added. Meanings are expressed through cultural forms. Therefore, they are not expressed in the same way around the world because people must interpret things through their cultural understandings, through their worldview. Worldviews differ greatly and therefore, the way in which biblical teaching is understood differs as well. Because life is experienced differently in different cultural contexts, the applications of the biblical meanings are understood in different ways.

One way to deepen someone's faith is to broaden his or her understanding of the teachings within the Bible. This can be difficult to accomplish as the busyness of our own personal world as well as the consistencies of the cultural dynamics around us, do not provide us with an opportunity to see things from a fresh perspective, a perspective that allows us to evaluate and construct new understandings.

This study has demonstrated that a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* is a valuable model for providing this fresh perspective, and each of the three variables (*Relevant Bible Studies and Discussions, Crosscultural Interaction, and Liminality*) is valid and an important component in faith development in a crosscultural setting. By following the basic structure of a rite of passage (separation, liminality, and
reincorporation), a FCLI will provide an environment in which faith can develop and deepen. The greatest levels of faith development occur when all three of variables are included. The following diagram is a simple illustration which identifies the overlapping of the three variables.

![Diagram]

**Figure 10: Faith Development Potential of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction**

Based on the research data, the initial statement of the problem (p. 14) can be restated in this way: This study has tested and found valid, the thesis that the inclusion of three distinct social dynamics within a ministry setting known as a short-term mission
trip, will disciple participants to deeper levels of Christian faith and these new understandings of faith will then be assimilated into their lives. Individually, these components can deepen levels of faith, but if two or all three are combined, the effect is compounded, creating a more dramatic impact on personal faith. This diagram, Figure 11, demonstrates that spiritual growth increases and faith deepens as the three variables are introduced. The order of inclusion of the three variables was chosen randomly.

Combining these three variables provides an environment in which individuals can study Scripture passages they have probably read many times before and see them through new eyes. It opens the door to perspectives that may be so far outside of their
own worldview that it requires them to reevaluate and make sense of what they are seeing, hearing, and feeling.

In this study, seven mission trips were evaluated for the inclusion of each of the three variables and the level to which each variable was included. The two trips that utilized the FCLI model most effectively were Jamaica and Guatemala 1. The data from their Post-Trip Surveys demonstrated that they had the greatest increase in faith development of all the teams. The team that scored the lowest in faith development, Costa Rica, was the one team that had none of the three variables included in the trip experience. The faith level increases in the other four mission teams corresponded approximately with the level of inclusion of the three variables. Figure 12 visually portrays the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction model, showing that the synergy created through the inclusion of the three variables between separation and reincorporation, produced a higher level of faith in the lives of the participants.

Figure 12: The Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction Model

- **Bible**: Relevant Bible studies and discussions of participants' observations and insights
- **CCI**: Crosscultural interaction
- **Lim**: A liminal experience

Participant's New Level of Faith
The following, Figure 13, is a recreation of that diagram that includes a listing of the seven teams, showing the level of perceived faith change for each team and the level of inclusion of the three variables identified through the Variable Rating Scale.

**Figure 13: Post-Trip Survey Results of the Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction Model**
By combining these three variables, it gives participants the opportunity to look into the eyes of those they are serving, participate in their needs, feel their hurts, and joys — just as Jesus did. It creates an environment in which they can be vulnerable, genuinely care about individuals, humble themselves, offer love unselfishly, and begin to experience the teaching that the disciples experienced as Jesus walked with them from village to village.

These experiences can draw us closer to God and the new meanings and understandings we gain can go deep to the core of our being. This occurrence is what is meant by bonding to the meanings. They are no longer meanings that we simply acknowledge and recognize; they now become meanings we exemplify through our lives.

This is the first time these variables have been joined together in a functioning model of faith development. Moreover, other than the component of Bible studies, this is the first time these variables have been identified with faith development. There are existing theories and principles that help validate each and help explain why these work so effectively in the process of deepening faith. Most of these have been discussed in Chapter 3, but there are a few other theories that add additional insight into our understanding as to the validity of the FCLI model.

The first looks at the ways in which we come to know. In his book, *Guides for the Journey*, David Creamer discusses the writings and theories of Bernard Lonergan and his understanding of learning through induction and deduction. He states, "What is important . . . is Lonergan’s demonstration that authentic human development is dependent upon the successful integration of two seemingly conflictual vector forces; one
When the two are brought together, development occurs (Figure 14).

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Figure 14: Development Through the Integration of Inductive and Deductive Learning (Adapted Creamer 1996:91)

A Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction integrates both inductive and deductive learning simultaneously which usually, in this crosscultural situation, creates conflicting vectors of understanding and meaning (different cultural views of biblical teachings/meanings) which in turn leads to reevaluation and the defining of new understandings. Through team leader led relevant Bible studies and discussions, existing knowledge of biblical teachings (values handed down/assimilated) guides participants in
their work and relations with the people of the local culture (beliefs lived in experience) (deduction). At the same time, through crosscultural interaction and liminality, participants are experiencing the realities within the host culture (experience coming together) which leads to reevaluation and judgment and the establishment of new values applied to the biblical teachings (induction). The two work simultaneously in a FCLI and are tied together through the leader led discussions.

This is usually the point in time when perceptual liminality creates the sense of cognitive dissonance and the mind has to rationalize the conflicting images and understandings. Kenneth Anderson (1972), in his book Introduction to Communication Theory and Practice, discusses cognitive balance. He states that in life, given the fact that we have a worldview that is based on our own cultural understandings, we will encounter “significant inconsistencies in our cognitive structures, either as a result of external or internal stimuli.” He continues,

Cognitive discrepancies can be created through relating beliefs or attitudes to different beliefs or attitudes; introducing new information into the system; bringing into relationship items which were not previously related; producing or revealing inconsistencies between cognitive elements and behavior; and changing the importance or significance of given elements or relationships. (1972:36)

From the cognitive dissonance and the joining together of the deductive understandings with the inductive insights, comes the personal dynamic that combines experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Each person goes through their own internal review of all the information from these “seemingly conflictual vector forces” to reach their ultimate conclusions. Bernard Lonergan explains,

The dynamic cognitional structure to be reached is . . . the personally appropriated structure of one’s own experiencing, one’s own intelligent inquiry and insights, one’s own critical reflection and judging and deciding. The crucial issue is an experimental issue, and the experiment will be performed not publicly but
privately. It will consist in one's own rational self-consciousness clearly and distinctly taking possession of itself as rational self-consciousness. *Up to that decisive achievement, all leads. From it, all follows.* No one else, no matter what his knowledge or his eloquence, no matter what his logical rigor or his persuasiveness, can do it for you. But though the act is private, both its antecedents and its consequents have their public manifestation. (1970:xviii-xix, emphasis added)

The team leader(s) need(s) to orchestrate the three variables of a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* so that the experience for the team members is optimized for faith development to occur. If they are interacting with the local people so that *perceptual liminality* occurs, relevant Bible teachings are being offered each day, and the team is allowed to discuss their observations, impressions, and feelings, it is probable that each individual, through their own rational self-consciousness will come to conclusions that lead to deeper levels of faith in God. Then, once they return home, these new understandings will hopefully be woven into all aspects of his or her life. These will be the “public manifestations.”

The three variables of the *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* are all vital components in this process taking place. Without the *crosscultural interaction*, the team members do not have the opportunity to see and experience an alternate perspective on reality. Without that, *perceptual liminality* will not develop and in all likelihood, cognitive dissonance will not occur. Without the cognitive challenge, the mind has no reason to consider any insights other than the ones it already holds to be absolute truth. But even if crosscultural interaction is included and perceptual liminality does create cognitive dissonance, without relevant Bible teachings, the associations made will probably not lead to deepened faith. “The method chosen to deal with the discrepancy
will be the easiest one, the one which will cause the least psychological discomfort and
demand the least energy" (Anderson 1972:36).

By incorporating the three FCLI variables into a crosscultural ministry setting,
new insights and understandings will happen. And because relevant biblical teachings
are being offered, the associations made will be in relation to them.

Equally important are the discussions each day. Preferably, the discussions
should be held each day after the team members have had the greatest exposure to the
local culture. As Anderson stated above, "Presumably, the method chosen to deal with
the discrepancy will be the easiest one." A team leader can allow that to happen, or he or
she can direct the thought process through the discussions. The discussions provide the
opportunity for team members to collectively talk about what they have seen and
observed, how these things conflict with the knowns of their own lives, and most
importantly, how these things relate to the biblical lessons being discussed each day.

Anderson also discusses concepts related to comprehension. These observations
corroborate the effectiveness of the variables within a Faith-Centered Liminal
Interaction. Anderson makes the following observations on conditions that are necessary
for comprehension to take place:

† "Comprehension is basic to acceptance... Comprehension is dependent upon
attention for success" (1972:55). In a FCLI, attention is gained by separating the
participants from their known world. When individuals are out of their own
environment, they are better able to close their minds to their normal reality and
distractions. Their minds are more open to observe and reflect.
“To the degree that necessary stimuli are misperceived, incompletely perceived, or ignored, comprehension will be obstructed” (:55). Misperceptions in a FCLI are avoided through the team discussions about culture, the history and background of the local people, and most importantly, the observations and experiences of the team members in relation to the biblical teachings being presented. The team leaders need to guide the discussions by providing important background information and by answering questions raised concerning those things that are misunderstood by team members or which cause the greatest amount of cognitive dissonance.

“On the other hand, if attention is drawn to irrelevant or distracting stimuli, comprehension will also be weakened” (:55). The concept of separation is not just a physical separation from normal life. Separation is most importantly associated with a mental separation from the known or the norm. When teams are in the mission setting but still maintain a mental connection with their own reality, comprehension (and as a result, faith development) will be minimized. For example, when mission teams watch television, call home, e-mail friends and family, use cell phones to conduct business at home, or isolate themselves, comprehension is weakened greatly. This can also occur when the Bible studies and discussions are not specifically relevant to those things the team members are seeing and experiencing.

“If the stimuli are not linked with our interests, values, needs, goals, and drives, there are no apparent reasons to attempt to comprehend” (:56). The stimuli in a
FCLI are linked to the biblical teachings. This provides reason to attempt to comprehend.

† “One of the most basic methods of checking for and ensuring comprehension is to utilize feedback” (56). The team discussions provide an opportunity for feedback to occur. Through these discussions, the team leaders can direct the conversation to topics of importance and the team members will provide feedback about what has been seen and observed.

It is amazing how this process takes place as separation tied in with crosscultural interaction generates cumulative responses that develop new understandings of the two cultural realities through the biblical teachings. Once this happens, there is an excitement and joy that comes over the participants as they realize that they have drawn a little closer to God as they have come to understand him more deeply.

One research participant stated, “I was 71 years old on my first mission trip. I wish I had started doing this many years ago. This was an emotional and spiritual experience which I had never before felt.” Another said, “It made me see things that I had not seen about my walk with God.” And another, “It was great! Their faith and their excitement in having a ‘simple’ church to worship in. Their thankfulness of small things. The realization that we are all the same in God’s eyes.” And lastly, “The biggest thing God taught me was about trusting in him. He showed me that when I trust in my own abilities, I will fail, but he never fails. I also saw the importance of his Word – and how it relates personally to my life.”
New Discoveries and Insights

In addition to demonstrating the validity of the *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* model, this research has also brought to light new discoveries related to already identified and accepted principles. These discoveries are as follows:

**Cognitive Dissonance Optimizes Faith Development**

Liminality is a situation that places participants in an environment that is uniquely different from their own known world and because accepted norms (that provide a sense of security) are noticeably missing, it creates a sense of disequilibrium. It is "a chaotic limbo precisely because it abolishes socially sanctioned identities, statuses, and roles" (Zahniser 1997:93-94). Cognitive dissonance results which requires processing and evaluation in order to reach a conclusion and regain stability (control).

The level of cognitive dissonance created through liminal experiences is a very important factor in the phenomenon of faith development in a crosscultural situation (Tolefson 1990). In this situation, a person is thrown into cognitive limbo because they discover new worldview perspectives contrary to what they “know” to be true.

My original *FCLI* model did not sufficiently emphasize this aspect of liminality. I have learned through this research that cognitive dissonance realized through liminal experiences, can produce higher levels of faith development. Faith development is optimized when cognitive dissonance is accompanied by relevant biblical teachings and discussions.

**The First FCLI Results in Higher Levels of Faith Development**

I also discovered that the most dramatic impact on faith development usually happens on a person’s first mission trip, especially if the trip is to an environment where
the differences are greater and liminality is heightened. But, faith development also
occurs in a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* even if participants have already been
exposed to the alternate realities in the visited culture. An example would be the men in
the Guatemala 2 mission trip in the study. Approximately half of the men on the team
had been on at least one previous mission trip to work with the Mayan Indians. They had
been exposed to the cultural differences and experienced the liminal aspects of that
encounter. Those on this team who had been there before demonstrated further increases
in faith development, but those who came for the first time and experienced higher levels
of cognitive dissonance, demonstrated higher levels of faith development. The *FCLI*
model functioned to produce growth in faith in both groups of people.

On the other end of the spectrum however, if there is no liminality, no cognitive
dissonance, and no relevant Bible studies, little faith development occurs. This was
demonstrated through the team that went to Costa Rica. In summary, the three variables
within the model are phenomenologically viable for the development of faith.

Physical and Perceptual Liminality

In addition, the historic understanding of liminality has been very general in
nature. This study has demonstrated that two distinct types of liminality exist.

The first type of liminality is *physical liminality* which relates specifically to the
dynamics of comfort, status, security, stability, roles or positions of wealth, influence,
well being, control, felt needs, knowledge, etc. The normal physical dynamics of life
provide a sense of familiarity and familiarity provides a sense of security. When familiar
physical dynamics are taken away, the liminal sense of chaos occurs.
A second type of liminality I have identified is perceptual liminality. Perceptual liminality is the sense of disequilibrium and chaos that is created when individuals are faced with new perspectives of reality that put to the test and contradict certain fundamental understandings, explanations, and beliefs within life that they have been conditioned to understand to be absolute truth. While physical liminality can be an influencing factor in faith development, the experience of perceptual liminality has a much greater affect on the development of faith and understanding.

These two forms of liminality relate to dynamics of life that each person experiences on a regular basis. They are both important because they both impact “reality.” Every person has their own understanding of reality. It is formed over the years through experiences, lessons learned, and the influence of important people. Because these understandings are reality to us, we hold onto them firmly. Liminality occurs in any situation in which our reality (physical or perceptual) is challenged by an alternate perspective. It is like looking into a mirror. Every time we look into a mirror, we are confident that we will see the same image every time. But when we are in a liminal state, the image we see can be a very different image.

Here are two examples of how perceptual liminality created chaos and how biblical teachings transformed chaos into deepened faith. The first occurred when I was leading a mission team across the border from the United States into Mexico. The team consisted of professional people who had traveled to other countries on vacation and business and had passed through immigration in modern airports at one time or another. Their impression was that this process was relatively easy, professional, and routine.
The night we drove across the border, the Mexican border police saw an opportunity to make a little extra money on the side. Two of the team vans were waved through the checkpoint, but the cargo van with a week’s worth of food, construction materials, and Vacation Bible School materials was told to pull to the side. After conversing with the guards, I learned that they wanted $200 to allow the van to pass.

After spending approximately forty-five minutes with the officials, I went to speak to tell them about what had happened. When I walked up to where the team was standing, it was easy to see that they were having a liminal experience. The chaos and disequilibrium showed in their faces. Some were nervous, some were frightened, and some were angry. I learned later that one of the team members who spoke Spanish was very angry and he wanted to go back to verbally have it out with the border patrol officials. As the team saw me walk up, I could tell that they quickly became confused a second time because they saw that I was not upset, I was joyous and excited. I asked them to make a circle so that we could pray.

Before we prayed, I explained to them that this had never happened to me before and I apologized for the inconvenience. Then I told them that we would probably need to pay the $200 but it was not important. It is money that they intended to use for supplies and other things, but I told them that it was money well spent. I shared with them that during that forty-five minutes I was with the officials, I was able to witness to four of them by showing them kindness and respect (which they seldom received, especially in a situation like this one), and by talking about God’s love for them and the children of the community we were going to serve. Three of them realized that what they were doing
was wrong and apologized. The fourth, unfortunately, was the headman, who still wanted the money.

But as we prayed, the team realized that the situation that was so contrary to what they had expected or had ever experienced before, was not a bad thing, but rather, a time in which we put into practice many of the things that Jesus modeled and taught. The liminal experience turned into a time of joy and a time of learning as biblical teachings gained new meaning in their hearts and minds. That event set the tone for the week as they began to gain new understandings and insights within biblical truths throughout the alternate reality of the poor Mexican community in which they worked.

The second example occurred in Guatemala as one team arrived in the Mayan culture. On the very first day, I told the team about the history of the Mayans including the recent history of a thirty-year civil war in which hundreds of thousands of the Mayans had been slaughtered in an attempted genocide. Then, I told them that we were going to go into the marketplace which would be packed with Mayan vendors, children asking for money, dogs, goats, pick pockets, and Mayan shaman. I could tell that they were a little excited, but mostly nervous.

As we worked our way through the overly crowded, narrow streets in Chichicastenango, the closeness of the people, the smells, and the poverty immediately created a liminal affect in the minds of the team members. They were doing everything possible to stay close together, clinging to the familiar in the midst of this perceptual liminality.

When we arrived in the packed town square, I directed the team members to the steps of the large Catholic Church. As we ascended half way up, we passed two shamans
doing their incantations as they swung metal cans on a rope that had hot, smoking embers within them. I asked them to spread out on the steps and spend time just watching the rhythm of the culture as the market teemed with activity.

I could see them sit nervously, grouping together in twos and threes. As time passed, they watched as the Mayans, who are small in physical stature, working hard to provide food for their families. They saw children taking care of their baby brothers and sisters; they saw women carrying heavy loads on their heads, through the crowds, with a baby in a cloth wrapped behind their backs. They saw the children and the women wearing beautifully hand woven, colorful blouses, and dresses. They saw the elderly, stooped over, carrying bundles or selling something that was broken or worn. They saw old women and children in torn, tattered clothes, begging for money for food. These were the realities that they had expected to see. These were people living a difficult life, struggling in poverty, miserable in their existence.

But then they began to notice that these people did not look miserable. They were happy and full of life. The children laughed and played, the women stopped to talk with each other and to share a tortilla with a friend. The men joked and laughed with their friends as they passed by. On the steps, many of the Mayans began to gather around the team members, at first to try to sell them things, but after a while, just to sit with them. The Mayans and the team members didn’t speak the same language, but they found ways to communicate. Soon, the team members were no longer frightened, they were enjoying themselves and laughing with the Mayans. They were received warmly by people that turned out to be very different than they initially perceived them to be.
Later that evening as we had our team discussion, they explained how their fear and anxiety had turned into joy and a sense of being alive with excitement. They said that they came to realize how beautiful the Mayan people were. They wanted to know how these people who had nothing, could have more joy than they themselves who had money, success, and possessions. They even recognized that this must have been very similar to what Jesus saw as he walked through the crowds in Jerusalem. For the first time, they came to understand that all people, even in poverty, are beautiful and loved by God.

The team initially experienced perceptual liminality that created chaos in their minds, but the biblical principles began to have new meaning as they were able to associate them with the new realities of life they experienced in the Mayan marketplace. This experience was the first of many during the week that helped to lead the team members deeper in faith.

Observable and Invisible Realities

This research also demonstrated that there are two dimensions of impression and connectedness that potentially can take place in a crosscultural situation. When people of two cultures come together, the first and most obvious dimension is the observable reality. These are the defining messages that can be taken in through our eyes and our other senses. These realities do not require personal contact (although some may occur). These are things such as the socio-economic level of the individual, the education level (revealed through speech patterns, habits, etc.), the type of work they do, their level of self-esteem, the type of home they live in, customs, habits, patterns, etc. Assumptions from these observations are made about the person/culture.
The second dimension is the *invisible reality*. These are the defining messages within life that are only seen by gaining insight into another person’s feelings, experiences, perspectives, sorrows, failings, successes, struggles, hopes, joys, dreams, etc. We can gain this insight by hearing their stories, by spending time with them in their homes, by worshiping with them, etc. It is at this level of the *invisible realities* that one can come to understand that different, valid realities can and do exist outside of the well defined boundaries that one individual or one culture has come to understand as absolute truth. *Perceptual liminality* will most likely be experienced and experienced at a much deeper level if participants are able to enter into the *invisible realities* of life.

A good example of this can be seen by comparing the experiences of two of the short-term mission teams in the research project, Guatemala 1 and Guatemala 3. These were both teams of women who were from the same church, were in the same age range, and were approximately at the same levels of faith. Their short-term mission trips were to the same orphanage (one team departed as the other arrived), and they experienced the same level of *physical liminality*. But their Post-Trip Surveys identified that Guatemala 1 demonstrated a greater level of faith development than Guatemala 3.

The primary difference that occurred between these two teams was the level of *perceptual liminality*. On the first day that Guatemala 1 arrived at the orphanage, the missionary who cares for the 530 children, spent several hours with these ladies telling them the stories of many of the children. These stories were so heart wrenching and so beyond the scope of the reality understood by the team members, that *perceptual reality* was created from their very first day. This had a huge impact on their entire week as they were able to begin to understand the healing that took place in each of these children’s
lives through their faith in Christ. The alternate realities of these children were the *invisible realities* that opened their eyes to new insights and understandings within the Scriptures.

Guatemala 3, however, did not have the same opportunity to hear the stories of the children until much later in their week. As a result, their discussion of the biblical teachings did not have the *invisible realities* of the children as a focal point of their thinking and understanding. Later in the week, as they heard some of the stories, connections with the Scriptures were made, but not as deeply or to the level of those made by the team members in Guatemala 1.

**New Understanding of Communitas**

*Communitas* is a dynamic that has long been identified as a unique type of social relationship that develops among individuals who share a condition of liminality as they are in an egalitarian state, void of the normal statuses, roles, authority, or privilege. Through this study however, I have discovered that there are two distinct types of *communitas* that can and do occur in liminal situations. The first I have identified as *communitas de securitas* (community of security). This social relationship develops among individuals who share a state of liminality who cling to each other to regain a sense of equilibrium. Shared understandings of their normal realities reaffirm and validate their own “knowns” in a situation wrought with unknowns. *Communitas de securitas* provides a sense of security.

The second identified type of *communitas* is *communitas de experientia* (community of shared knowledge gained through experience). This type of *communitas* is not created by a clinging together to regain a sense of equilibrium, this *communitas* is
created with those who share in new revelations of truth. The bond that brings them together is shared knowledge that they have experienced together and that no one else can truly understand without having had the same experience. It is a unifying brotherhood/sisterhood of equality based on shared understanding.

All of the variables within the *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* play an integral role in the development of the faith of individuals who are in a crosscultural situation. This is a phenomenon that functions in leading individuals to reflect, reassess, and then claim new insights and understandings about life and more importantly about teachings within the Bible. The result is individuals who are drawn closer to God and who can then incorporate these new insights and understandings into their own lives.

The process that takes place in a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* follows this progression: In a crosscultural situation,

1) Participants see a view of reality that is different from their own.

2) A sense of chaos or disequilibrium occurs because these new perspectives of reality are difficult to understand, hard to accept.

3) Through studies and discussions, participants begin to see these new realities through related biblical teachings.

4) As a result, they gain new understandings of the biblical teachings.

5) This thought process causes the team to reevaluate their own realities and view them from the perspective of the biblical teachings and new understandings.

6) Assimilation of the new biblical understandings takes place in their own lives once they return home.
Their personal faith in God is deepened as these new understandings create a sense of intimacy, of personal connection with God. This new revelation and understanding is received as a personal gift and as a demonstration of his love.

**Short-Term Mission Trips**

Short-term mission trips are types of ministry that date back 30 to 40 years. They are a phenomenon that has gained momentum as churches see an opportunity to participate directly in foreign missions.

In the past, churches’ involvement in mission consisted of financially supporting career missionaries and on occasion, having one of them visit their churches to tell their stories and show a few slides. For many Christians, this became an annual event at their church and sending the necessary financial resources was a responsibility that all Christians felt was necessary. Beyond that, missions were a distant, disconnected aspect of their faith.

With the onset of short-term mission trips, church members began to have the opportunity to personally participate in this aspect of ministry. The ease of international travel provided reasonable access to foreign mission sites and the costs were not prohibitive.

**The Value of Short-Term Mission Trips**

As more and more teams began to go out in service, the short-term mission trend seemed to become a wave continually growing in numbers and enthusiasm, but little time or thought was put into the realities of what was happening through them. All those who participated in them realized that this was a great thing: the team members loved the experiences; lives of team members were changed; new insights were gained; home
churches were becoming energized for missions; and a percentage of those who went were feeling called into full-time ministry (a higher percentage than in the general population of church members).

But even with all of this growth and enthusiasm, little had been written on short-term missions. Beginning around 1991, a few people began writing articles and books on the subject (Peterson and Peterson 1991; Gibson, et al., 1992; Moen 1992; Eaton and Hurst 1994; Anthony 1994). These were the initial stages of defining this type of ministry and most offered advice on how to form a team, make preparations, gather travel information, etc.

Surprisingly, very little research has been done to evaluate the dynamics of this ministry. A master's theses raised some questions and scratched the surface (Moen 1992) and a few doctoral dissertations carried these questions a little farther (Cocannover 1998; Millham 1998; Tuttle 1998; Wilson 2000; Wisbey 1990). But to date very little has been published. Only last year, 2003, was the first book published which looks more deeply into the connection between those who go to serve and those who receive (Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission by Peterson et al.). But none of the articles or books evaluate or focus on the dynamic of faith development through these experiences other than to mention it in passing.

This study has taken an in depth look at the opportunities for faith development through this type of ministry. While the focus of this study was on faith development rather than on short-term missions directly, the study has demonstrated that short-term missions offer tangible value as a means of deepening faith. One participant wrote, "I
have finally realized that God is in control – He can do anything! Since the trip, I’ve started having quiet times every day – my faith in God has grown a lot.” Another stated,

This trip has helped me grow in a way that I never thought was possible. I have started reading my Bible every night and spending time in prayer. This trip has brought me so much closer to Christ. I thank God every day for giving me this opportunity to help other people. Not only have I helped other people grow spiritually, but I have also noticed a difference in myself.

And another said,

In C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy notices that Aslan appears larger when she first sees him after a period of being away – He tells her that he hasn’t changed, but she has. That’s how I feel: I am able because of this trip to see God’s hugeness in a new way. He is universal and that means he is everywhere and needed everywhere. Praising him in another language and seeing his power in new ways in a new setting has helped enlarge my conception of who he is.

In addition, through qualitative observation and in field discussions with individuals of the host cultures, this study found that the teams that were deliberate in including Bible studies throughout the week, personally interacted with the local people, and experienced *perceptual liminality*, were the teams that were most positively received by the local population. While many mission teams (unbeknownst to them) seem to do more harm than good in the local setting, the teams described above left favorable impressions on both the local people and the local missionaries.

**Benefits Gained by Those Who Go**

The overall value that is gained in and through a short-term mission trip is first and foremost dependent upon the attitude of the team. While I was a missionary in San Felipe, Mexico, three of the teams that came demonstrated this principle. The makeup of these teams was relatively the same (age, gender, profession, etc.). The teams lived and worked in the same environment for the same amount of time.
The first team came and immediately felt uncomfortable with the poverty and cultural differences around them. They decided to establish a schedule in which they worked on the hospital as a team ate together, played cards together, and worshipped together. They gained their stability by clinging to the common familiarities they shared in their normal lives and by minimizing their contact with the culture (*communitas de seguritas*). When they left, they had learned very little from their experience.

The liminality they experienced was minimal. At best, there was some *physical liminality* but no *perceptual liminality*. They experienced *observable realities* when they arrived and looked around the poor community surrounding the clinic. When they did, their minds interpreted it all based on their own culturally based understandings. They never allowed themselves to enter into the *invisible realities* of the people around them. As a result, they never gained an understanding of life through this entirely different perspective. Without this basic knowledge, there was no foundation from which to gain new insights and understandings from biblical teachings.

The second team spent some time with the people of the community, but when they were together they interpreted what they saw based on preconceived norms and values. What they saw and focused on were the causes of poverty (which they saw as laziness, lack of education, poor choices, etc.); the superiority of the American government vs. the Mexican government; the happiness their money buys vs. the misery they imagined in the living conditions around them, etc. By connecting with these values and principles, this team simply reinforced their own cultural perspectives and failed to see anything positive in the culture or in the lives of the people they came to serve.
This team failed to enter into a level of perceptual liminality. They saw the observable realities but they failed to go the next step, to hear the stories of the people and to allow them to introduce the invisible realities within their lives.

The third team chose to step into this alternate reality trusting that they needed to look beyond their instincts and serve through kindness and acceptance. They definitely felt out of their comfort zone but the connection they made, which gave them stability in this liminal state of disequilibrium, was through Scripture verses that they found which addressed these issues and provided them with answers. They spent their time everyday praying for the local people and discussing what they were experiencing each day. When they entered into the shacks that served as homes for the local people, they returned to tell of the strength of the character they saw in these people, of their endurance, of the joy they found in simple things, of their strong faith, of the love and respect within their families, etc. Through the team discussions, I could see that the Scripture verses not only settled their nervousness it also gave them compassion and respect for the people living around them.

This team had an attitude of openness, humility, and servanthood. They experienced perceptual liminality because they were willing to enter into homes, respectfully listen as the people shared their lives and their stories, and allow God to show them new perspectives to biblical teachings. This team not only gained insight from the physical realities, they grew the most because they allowed their minds to enter into the invisible realities of the culture they came to serve.

In discussing transformation through mission, Anthony Gittins stated,

To go far from home, however, is not yet to be engaged in mission; to move to the margins and over the edge of one's own familiar world in the name of the Gospel
and the Realm of God is. Sometimes in going far away, we go like tortoises, taking our house and home (prejudices and blinkers) with us. But if we can identify our narrowness, our pettiness, our limitations, and our boundaries, and if we can break through them and into the world of others, we are truly on the verge of mission. (1993:10-11)

**The Problem of Ethnocentrism**

One of the primary barriers that prevents a team from entering into another cultural environment and claiming the prize of new insights and understandings is the failure to exercise intercultural sensitivity. Team members who hold onto their own cultural understandings to the point of judging others as being wrong are ethnocentric.

Cultures are different. Everyone attaches meanings to the ways in which we live out our lives. Milton Bennett (1986) created “a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity” which looks at the states and stages of ethnocentricity and its opposite, ethnorelativism (Appendix J). Ethnocentrism occurs when we become strongly committed to the belief that our cultural way is the right way, the only way. These feelings become like a cement wall that prevents any opportunity for the gaining of new insights and understandings.

The key to growing is to first realize that differences do not necessarily mean that someone is right and someone is wrong. Differences are merely that, differences. The study of culture has shown that there are many ways in which to live life and if we allow ourselves to observe other perspectives, we grow in our own awareness and understanding.

In order for faith development to occur on a short-term mission trip, participants cannot be in an ethnocentric frame of mind. While Bennett describes greater levels of cultural acceptance and adaptation than any mission team will experience, it effectively
demonstrates the differences between these two distinct frames of mind. Mission trip participants who have ethnocentric feelings will not have the ability to see those things that will help establish new understandings of biblical teachings. Team members need to be encouraged to open their minds to different perspectives in life. If their minds are open to at least see the differences, the crosscultural interaction aspect of a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction will provide the opportunity for them to not only recognized differences, but to go the final step of experiencing perceptual liminality through the invisible realities within the lives of the local people.

One research participant wrote, "The opportunity to step out of our comfortable settings/surroundings and see the world through a different culture’s eyes will change you! Also, you will come face to face with how we judge others by labels without knowing the individual. You will be challenged to see them as individuals."

Leaders of short-term mission trips are leading people into an opportunity through which liminality can occur. The team members are seldom aware of the unique psychological and defining nuances within the worlds from which and into which they are transitioning. Leaders are moving them to the margins, out of their familiar worlds and into another world that is defined differently. For transformation to take place, they do not have to identify their own limitations and boundaries prior to going – the Holy Spirit will bring awareness to these things, and point out: value in differences they see and experience; strength and character in those living in great need; faith that surpasses understanding; and hope that stands as a foundation of life.

If we get out of our familiar shells God will show us a whole new world. But we have to step out of our world first and be willing to experience that which is unfamiliar.
Benefits to the Host Population

Short-term mission trips have long been criticized for doing more harmful than good to the local population. Mission teams have been described as hit-and-run ministries that come in with enthusiasm, do work that they, the team, decide is needed, disrupt the local rhythm of life, and leave with a lot of fanfare and emotion. In many cases, this is true. A short-term mission team can do more harm than good.

But this study has also demonstrated that mission teams can be a method of conducting effective and important ministry in a different cultural setting. All seven of the mission trips included in Phase 1 of the research in this study contributed within the local community in a positive and effective way. None of these teams fit the description above as they all entered into their mission setting with attitudes of respect for the people and a plan which allowed them to serve while causing minimal disruption.

But it must be stated that this study did not directly interview individuals of the host cultures to obtain this information. The observations are based on subjective assessments that are based on having seen many types of mission teams over the years. Within the 75 plus mission teams that came to serve with me in San Felipe, Mexico, there were many that I could easily describe using the definition above. They arrived with great enthusiasm, faithfully did everything they had planned to do, completed their agenda, and left with as much enthusiasm as they had when they arrived. Because their focus was on their own agenda and they failed to place their priorities on the felt needs of the local people and the missionary, the results were usually well intentioned, but in the end, self-serving.
But I also had many teams that came and ministered in effective ways that were incarnational and focused on the needs identified by the people of the community. Their time and efforts were of great value in bringing Christ to life, through their work, their attitudes, and their ministry. Most of these teams produced fruit that was truly experienced by the local population.

Here is an example of ministry that was accomplished through a team that went quietly unnoticed. When I was preparing to leave San Felipe to return to the United States to begin doctoral studies, one of the local churches in this poor community held a dinner and program to send me off. During the evening, people stood up one by one and told stories of how this ministry had affected their lives. Many of these testimonies would serve to demonstrate that mission teams can be and are effective in bringing Christ through word and action in a culturally sensitive way, but the testimony of one lady demonstrates how the simple work of a mission team can have an eternal impact on people’s lives.

The lady stood up and said, “You don’t know me, but six years ago my four year old daughter came to a Vacation Bible School that you were doing in my community. At the end of the week, after telling them about Jesus, the children were asked if any of them would like to pray and ask Jesus into their heart. My little girl raised her hand and repeated the prayer that was given. She came home and told me that she had asked Jesus into her heart and begged me to allow her to go to the church each week so that she could learn more about Jesus.”

“I did not know anything about the Bible, but I had heard that there were nice people at the church, so I let her go. After a while, she started taking her sister with her,
and then her cousin, and then her aunt. I decided that I had better find out what was going on at the church, so I started going.”

She said, “I am telling you this story because I want you to know.” She pointed to a large group of people sitting on old, hand made benches and she said, “Do you see the fifteen people sitting there? Because of your Vacation Bible School and because you told the stories of Jesus and asked my little girl if she wanted to invite him into her heart, all fifteen of us now know Jesus Christ as our savior.”

I had never heard this story prior to that night, but it made me realize that the mission teams that had come down had been a witness of Christ in ways that I would never know. Those that chose to put ethnocentric feelings aside and to open their minds to see another culture (two cultures actually, the Mexican culture and the culture of poverty), entered into these new realities of life in a way that served God well and left an eternal mark in the lives of many people.

Short-term mission trips may not be a perfect method of doing ministry, but if we can identify ways to design them so that they serve the local people with sensitivity, kindness, compassion, and respect, their witness and their words will plant seeds that God can use to fill the old wooden benches of all his churches. This study has demonstrated that a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction, if utilized, with help to provide mission teams will the tools to make that happen.

Validation as a Pilgrimage

In the definitions provided in Chapter 1 (page 20), a pilgrimage is defined as “a journey to experience and draw closer to the sacred.” In a pilgrimage, believers leave their everyday lives, travel to a sacred place of connectedness, experience deep and
intimate worship of and spiritual bonding with that which is held to be sacred, and then return to their normal lives.

This research has consistently recognized that those who go on a short-term mission trip, view it as a service to God. It is not simply a work of social conscience which, for example, can be provided through organizations like the Peace Corps or the United Nations. A mission trip is a planned event for which Christians leave their everyday life, travel to a setting where ministry is to be conducted in the name of Jesus Christ, experience a connectedness with God through this service, and then return home.

Under a strict definition of the word, a pilgrimage is a trip to a sacred site, a site that is usually recognized by a religion for its significance in its historical roots. The site of a short-term mission trip, however, has no specific attachment to Christian history. But in the spiritual psyche of a Christian, the foreign sites where God’s work is being done, is sacred.

All of the teams researched, demonstrated a spiritual connectedness among the trip participants and their desire to serve God, to draw closer to him, and to do it in a place that is set aside for this purpose. Their primary goal was to serve, but they wanted to serve in a place that they intuitively felt was sacred.

Because it fits our understanding of a pilgrimage, one of our primary goals should be to utilize short-term mission experiences to draw believing Christians closer to God and as a result, deepen their faith in him.

Validation as a Rite of Passage

A short-term mission trip can also be identified as a rite of passage. The definition given on page 19 states, “Rites of passage are rituals that facilitate and
recognize the transition of an individual from one stage of life to another.”

Transformations are usually seen as major events in life. Leaving for college, getting married, and retirement are all examples of transitions that result in a change in life. They transition individuals from one stage in life to another and with them, come new roles and responsibilities.

These are all examples of major changes in life, so one might ask how a short-term mission trip can be seen as a rite of passage. Transitions in life do not have to be major for changes to occur. When someone grows deeper in faith, changes in life should follow. As an individual draws closer to God, that closeness should lead to a desire to live life with God’s teachings as a higher priority. The apostle Paul stated “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

A mission trip can be a rite of passage experience if the individual separates from home, enters into a liminal state during which he or she grows deeper in faith, and then returns home “transformed by the renewing of [their] mind.” Does transformation happen to everyone who goes on a short-term mission trip? No. But for many, it does. The stories told earlier of Mike (pages 1-2) and Bill (40-42) and Ray (89-91) are examples of the thousands of people whose lives are transformed through a short-term mission experience.

One research participant wrote, “I gained a relationship with Christ on this trip. I was a Christian just because my family was and I realized that I could have a relationship with Jesus. I accepted God’s forgiveness, grace, and love on this trip.”
Another mission trip participant stated, “God saved me, my marriage, and my life on my first mission trip.” And a third said, “This trip changed my understanding of what is truly meant by following Jesus, of walking with Him daily and being dependent on Him for everything.” And finally, this observation, “It was a life changing event because my character and heart changed. After the trip, my love for God and for others grew. This is evident in having more joy in sacrifices and caring for people more.” Additional comments of transformation from mission trip participants included in this research study can be seen in the notes section at the end of this chapter.³

Short-term mission trips definitely serve as a rite of passage for some individuals. If trips are designed so that faith development of the participants is one of the highest priorities of the trip, all participants will experience changes in their faith and as a result, in their lives.

Summary

This study has been an incredible journey through which I have learned more than I ever anticipated learning when I began. The data strongly indicates that faith is developed in crosscultural situations through a Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction. By incorporating the three FCLI variables into a short-term mission trip design, the faith level of the mission trip participants will be deepened as new insights and understandings of biblical principles are realized. A spiritual awakening takes place that leads to a deeper personal faith in God, and through this new faith with new understandings and insights, personal lives are changed as they assimilate these new understandings into their own realities. Short-term mission trips are so rich in opportunities for faith development, we would be remiss if we failed to utilize them to draw people closer to God.
But I also believe that the *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* model is a universal model that will produce the same faith developing results in other situations. From a Christian perspective, this model applies, for example, to such programs as youth retreats, Emmaus Walks, inner-city ministry programs, and prison ministries. Even if one takes a personal retreat to a place where life is lived out differently (for example, a monastery), the principles of a *Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction* will impact faith development. But I also believe this FCLI model will function to draw people to a deeper connection to whatever faith source they focus on while they are in a liminal experience.

For example, if a young man goes to war, this liminal situation will serve as a vehicle to draw this man or woman closer to those things that provide answers and stability for their disequilibrium. If they are Christians and studying the Bible during this time, their faith in God will be deepened. If, however, they are focused on honor and patriotism, they will become more dedicated Americans. If they are Muslim and focus on teachings from the Koran, they will draw closer to their Islamic roots and faith.

Another example would be those people who became followers of Jim Jones and the People's Temple (Newsweek 1978). Sadly, the principles within this model unknowingly served to draw people deeper in their faith in Jones.

Liminal situations create cognitive dissonance that has to be resolved in order to regain stability. Those things that are the center of focus at the time, which provide meaning and definition, will be the things for which greater understanding is gained.

Having awareness of the dynamics associated with liminality is vitally important for those of us who want to disciple Christian believers to greater levels of faith. The
Faith-Centered Liminal Interaction is a model that we should understand and utilize in our endeavor to strengthen the kingdom of God.

Notes

1 "Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit." John Calvin (1509-1564)

In our own culture in the United States, cultural norms have changed dramatically over recent years. The expansion of technology (radio, television, movies, computers, the internet, satellite dishes, etc.), has provided a fast moving vehicle for the introduction of changing practices, ideas, and beliefs that would not have been tolerated 25 years ago, which are being accepted by many in our culture as normal today. The fact that these cultural changes are affecting the interpretation of biblical teachings can be seen in the division that is occurring in the Church. Several Christian denominations have split or are considering splitting over differences in interpretations. Some of these divisions are theologically based, but the new interpretations of biblical teachings that are causing most of these divisions today are paralleling the changes that are occurring within the cultural norms. Acceptance and tolerance for beliefs and activities within the culture are being combined with teachings within the Bible and new interpretations are being formulated.

2 Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines syncretism as "the reconciliation or union of conflicting (as religious) beliefs or an effort intending such; . . . flagrant compromise in religion or philosophy; eclecticism that is illogical or leads to inconsistency; uncritical acceptance of conflicting or divergent beliefs or principles."

3 Additional quotes of transformation given by participants of this research study:
"I feel truly changed: 'wanting' versus 'needing,' the importance and weight of possessions, and compassion and admiration for the poor."

"This trip directly impacted the decision I had made the day I came back, to die to myself and live for him."

"I could not sleep for at least a month following this trip. God has placed the people of Senegal on my heart and I have returned two times and am in the process of bringing the vision to others to help our brothers and sisters in the name of 'Christ'."

"After I returned from this mission trip, strangers on planes, in other cities, etc. would approach me and ask me to tell them about what I had that they knew was missing in their lives."
“Although adoption was never considered before the trip, I returned to Russia six months later to adopt a 12 year old orphan girl (I had met on the missions trip). This did not fit any plans I ever had for my retirement years. I was 64 years old and my life will never again be the same. I now believe the adoption was God’s number one reason for directing me to go on this trip! It was a life changing experience for me and also for the child who is now my daughter.”

“Before going on this trip, I knew prayer was important, but I didn’t have any life experiences to connect it to me. After this trip, I incorporate prayer in every aspect of my life.”

“Each mission trip I’ve been on I’ve seen growth in my own spiritual maturity and the desire to help others to experience God in a different and deeper way of love for themselves and others.”

“What would Jesus do? I now say what will I do? After my mission trip, my life seems focused and with purpose. God’s leading is so important to me. Yes my life has changed because someone asked me to go. Now I ask all the time.”

“My husband and two grown children also went. It was such a blessing to see the impact on their lives. My daughter recommitted herself to God and changed direction in some areas of her life. My son decided to go to college. Since then they have been eager to go on other mission trips. Even though our focus was on building rather than one-on-one people contact, we still got to know some of the nationals. Their love for the Lord and their graciousness to us changed us more than we would ever change them.”

“Fellowship with truly Christian men, who I had not known prior to the mission trip allowed me to grow and experience the heart of Jesus.”

“I left my heart in Haiti. I love all of God’s people now. I see them through God’s eyes. They are all beautiful. My wants are not as important anymore. Spending time with people and showing them the love of Christ is more important.”

“The biggest impact this trip had on me was in the area of accepting God’s love for me in a deeper way and the joy of being about my Father’s work, doing something significant for Him.”

“I have been a Christian for over 40 years, raised in the church – believed in the Great Commission but this trip turned my life upside down and made us (my husband and I) realize people are the same everywhere – they desire eternal life and to be able to provide for their families. The people in the USSR were never our enemies – the government was.”
"As a result of the mission trip, I am now actively pursuing my call to ministry through prayer and Scripture."

"I learned to recognize and look for opened doors to witness. I learned to be open to serve God and follow his leading. I want to help others in our church have the same growth."

"I learned that God can and will use me if I make myself available to Him. God is in the business of changing lives."
Appendices

Appendix A
(Pre-Trip Team Leader Questionnaire)

Mission Team Leader
Thank you for helping in this research effort.

The following questionnaire is to gather basic information on the mission trip you will be leading. This study is being conducted in an effort to better understand the crosscultural ministry known as short term missions. The study is not looking to judge these trips but rather to understand the dynamics that happen within them.

Your responses will be anonymous and neither your name nor your church's/organization's name will be used in the published results of the study. In addition, this information will not be shared with team members.

Thanks again for your help.

Code Number __________

1) Is this mission trip through: a church, a mission organization, or other organization?
   ___ Church. What denomination? ____________________________
   ___ Mission Organization. Which One? _________________________
   ___ Other Organization. Which One? __________________________

2) To what country or culture are you leading this trip? ____________________________
   Will you be ministering in:
   ___ more of a modern/metropolitan area?
   ___ a rural town/village/country setting?
   ___ other. Explain ____________________________

   Will you be ministering to:
   ___ educated youth/adults?
   ___ less educated/labor focused youth/adults?
   ___ other. Explain ____________________________

   Will you be ministering to:
   ___ economically stable individuals?
   ___ economically poor individuals?
   ___ other. Explain ____________________________

3) What would you say is the purpose of this trip?
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________


4) How many people will be going on this trip? ____________________________

5) Of those going, how many are:
   _____ Adults
   _____ High School Age
   _____ Junior High Age
   _____ Children

6) Of those who are going, what percentage would you say are:
   _____% Strong committed Christians
   _____% Maturing Christians who demonstrate a desire to grow in their faith
   _____% Believers who demonstrate less interest in growing in their faith
   _____% Young Christians, new to their faith
   _____% Non-believers

7) As the leader of this mission trip, what are the two or three primary objectives that you would like to see accomplished?
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

8) What are the main activities that the team will be doing while there?
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

9) Where will the team be staying the majority of the time?
   _____ In a hotel
   _____ In a local church
   _____ In homes
   _____ In a dormitory or group building
   _____ Other type of housing. Describe

10) Have you led a mission team before? _____ Yes _____ No

11) If yes, how many other teams have you led? ____________
    And to what countries or cultures?
    ____________________________
    ____________________________

Thank you again for participating in this research project.
Appendix B
(Mission Team Member - Pre-Trip Questionnaire – Typeface Reduced)

Thank you for agreeing to help in this research effort.

The following questionnaire is part of a study to analyze cross-cultural ministry experiences most commonly known as Short Term Mission Trips. Your participation is greatly appreciated and your reflection on your experience will contribute to a better understanding of this form of ministry.

The research will be conducted in two parts: The questionnaire you have in your hand today is to be filled out within a month or two prior to your mission trip; The second questionnaire will be given to you after you return.

Please try to complete all of the questions as accurately as possible as most of the questions refer to feelings, reactions, and impressions to variables in life. There are no right or wrong answers and the questionnaires are anonymous.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to help in this study.

Gender: Male ______ Female ______

Please circle your age: 15-18 19-24 25-34 35-50 51-64 65 and over

Ethnic Identity: African American _____ White/Anglo _____ Hispanic American _____
Asian American _____ Multi-Ethnic _____ Other ____________

Schooling completed at the time of the trip:
Junior High _____ High School _____ College _____ Graduate School _____

Profession ____________________________

Do you consider yourself a Christian? Yes___ No ___
If yes, for how long? __________

Have you gone on other mission trips before this one? Yes ___ No ___
How many? ___ Locations? ____________

What is the date of your mission trip? Month __________ Year __________

This mission trip is led through:
My church - Which denomination? Baptist ___ Methodist ___ Presbyterian ___ Lutheran ___ Catholic ___ Other ___
A mission agency - What agency? ____________________________
My church in partnership with a mission agency (Please check denomination above and give agency name)

Number of people on your mission team? 1-8___ 9-15___ 16-25___ 26-40___ 41 or more____

What country and/or culture group will your team visit? ____________ For how many days? ____________

Please read the following statements and circle one answer for each. Please be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is of your feelings and attitudes and not how you would like it to be.

1) I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

2) I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

3) My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)
4) I help others with their religious questions and struggles.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

5) I tend to be critical of other people.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

6) In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

7) My faith helps me know right from wrong.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

8) I do things to help protect the environment.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

9) I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
   (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

10) I have a hard time accepting myself.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

11) I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

12) I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

13) I am active in efforts to promote world peace.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

14) I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

15) I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

16) I feel God's presence in my work, in my life in general.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

17) I am a part of a group of people, a group of friends that work together.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

18) I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved.
    (Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)
27) I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

28) I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

29) I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

30) My life is committed to Jesus Christ.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

31) I talk to other people about my faith.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

32) My life is filled with stress and anxiety.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

33) I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

34) I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

35) I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

36) I like to worship and pray with others.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

37) I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

38) I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation enough to help the poor.
(Not at all true of me) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Strongly true of me)

Thank you again for participating in this research project. Have a great trip!
Appendix C
Mission Team Member - Post-Trip Questionnaire
(Typeface reduced)

Research participant,

Thank you again for helping in this research effort.

The following questionnaire is the follow-up portion of a study to analyze crosscultural ministry experiences most commonly known as Short Term Mission Trips. Your participation is greatly appreciated and your reflection on your experience will contribute to a better understanding of this form of ministry.

The research is being conducted in two parts: The questionnaire you have in your hand today is the second part. It is to be filled out within a month or two after you return home from your mission trip. You will notice that the first half of the survey includes the same questions that were on the first survey. Please read the instruction carefully as they ask you to answer in light of your recent mission trip experience. The second half of the survey is an addition that was not on the first.

Only fill out this questionnaire if you answered the questions on the first survey prior to going on your mission trip.

Please try to complete all of the questions as accurately as possible as most of the questions refer to feelings, reactions, and impressions to variables in life. There are no right or wrong answers and the questionnaires are anonymous.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to help in this study.

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Please circle your age: 15-18 19-21 25-34 35-50 51-64 65 and over

Ethnic Identity: African American ___ White/Anglo ___ Hispanic American ___
Asian American ___ Multi-Ethnic ___ Other ___

Schooling completed:
Junior High _____ High School _____ College _____ Graduate School _____

What is your job or profession? _________________________________

Do you consider yourself a Christian? Yes___ No ___ If yes, for how long? ______

Have you gone on other mission trips before this one? Yes ___ No ___ How Many? ___ Locations: _______________________

What was the date of your mission trip? Month _______ Year _______

This mission trip was led through by:
___Your Church – Which denomination? Baptist ___ Methodist ___ Presbyterian ___ Lutheran ___ Catholic ___ Other ___
___A mission Agency – What agency? ________________________
___My church in partnership with a mission agency (Please check denomination above and give agency name)

Number of people on your mission trip? 1-8 ___ 9-15 ___ 16-25 ___ 26-40 ___ 41 or more ___

What country and/or culture group did your team visit? ___________________________ For how many days? _______

PART I

Please read the following statements and mark one answer for each. The questions in this part of the survey are the same as those you answered before going on your mission trip. Please read each one and indicate whether you now feel that this is less true of you, the same as before you went, or more true of you, in light of your mission trip experience. Remember, be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is of your feelings and attitudes and not how true you would like it to be.
1) I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

2) I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on a cross and rose again.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

3) My faith shapes how I think and act each and every day.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

4) I help others with their religious questions and struggles.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

5) I tend to be critical of other people.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

6) In my free time, I help people who have problems or needs.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

7) My faith helps me know right from wrong.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

8) I do things to help protect the environment.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

9) I devote time to reading and studying the Bible.
   This is definitely less true of me since going
   I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
   This is definitely more true of me since going

10) I have a hard time accepting myself.
    This is definitely less true of me since going
    I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
    This is definitely more true of me since going

11) Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world.
    This is definitely less true of me since going
    I feel the same as I did before going on the trip
    This is definitely more true of me since going
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<td>12) I take excellent care of my physical health.</td>
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<td>13) I am active in efforts to promote social justice.</td>
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<td>14) I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.</td>
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<td>15) I take time for periods of prayer or meditation.</td>
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<td>16) I am active in efforts to promote world peace.</td>
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<td>17) I accept people whose religious beliefs are different from mine.</td>
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<td>18) I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.</td>
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<td>19) As I grow older, my understanding of God changes.</td>
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<td>20) I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and obligations I have.</td>
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<td>21) I give significant portions of my time and money to help other people.</td>
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<td>22) I speak out for equality for women and minorities.</td>
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23) I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.

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24) My life is filled with meaning and purpose.

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25) I do not understand how a loving God can allow so much pain and suffering in the world.

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26) I believe that I must obey God's rules and commandments in order to be saved.

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27) I am confident that I can overcome any problem or crisis no matter how serious.

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28) I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the United States and throughout the world.

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29) I try to apply my faith to political and social issues.

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30) My life is committed to Jesus Christ.

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31) I talk to other people about my faith.

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32) My life is filled with stress and anxiety.

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33) I go out of my way to show love to people I meet.

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34) I have a real sense that God is guiding me.

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This is definitely
less true of me
since going

I feel the same
as I did before
going on the trip

This is definitely
more true of me
since going

35) I do not want the churches of this nation getting involved in political issues.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

This is definitely
less true of me
since going

I feel the same
as I did before
going on the trip

This is definitely
more true of me
since going

36) I like to worship and pray with others.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

This is definitely
less true of me
since going

I feel the same
as I did before
going on the trip

This is definitely
more true of me
since going

37) I think Christians must be about the business of creating international understanding and harmony.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

This is definitely
less true of me
since going

I feel the same
as I did before
going on the trip

This is definitely
more true of me
since going

38) I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation enough to help the poor.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

This is definitely
less true of me
since going

I feel the same
as I did before
going on the trip

This is definitely
more true of me
since going

PART 2

Please read the following statements and answer each. Remember, be as honest as possible, describing how true it really is of your feelings and attitudes and not how true you would like it to be.

39) Thinking back, in which of the following areas, if any, do you feel that the trip gave you new insight and understanding in relation to biblical teachings?

- Respond only to those that apply to you.
- Place a check mark next to those that apply and
- To what degree did this new understanding occur? (Circle the appropriate number)

Acceptance and Tolerance of Others
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Caring, Compassion, and Kindness
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Faith in God
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Fear of the Unknown or What Lies Ahead
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Following Jesus
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Forgiveness
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Giving
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

God's Grace
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

God's Kingdom
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

God's Love
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

Happiness
(A Little) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)
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40) Any additional thoughts or comments concerning the elements mentioned in the previous question?

41) Would you say that this short term mission experience directly altered your life in any of the following areas?

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<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Scale 1</th>
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<th>Scale 3</th>
<th>Scale 4</th>
<th>Scale 5</th>
<th>Scale 6</th>
<th>Scale 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social justice and caring for the poor</td>
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<td>Incorporating biblical teachings more deeply into your life</td>
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<td>Your personal priorities and values</td>
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<td>The importance of evangelism and your own efforts to spread the message of Jesus Christ</td>
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<td>Acceptance of other cultures, people groups, and individuals</td>
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<td>Giving of your time, talents, and resources to help others grow spiritually</td>
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<td>The faith you place in God in every area of your life</td>
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42) **Overall**, how much has this short term mission experience affected your life and changed the way you live each day?

(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Significantly)

43) If you indicated that the experience had an impact on you, would you like to comment further? (Use the back of this page if necessary)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire and may God continue to bless you.

As a follow-up to this study, if you would be willing to be interviewed three to five years from now, please fill out the attached card so that I will be able to contact you at that time. NOTE: The questionnaire you just filled out will still be anonymous. I will not use the information on the attached card until I begin the follow-up study in years to co
Appendix D
(Post Trip Interview Questions)

Welcome. As you know, I am working on a research study on Short Term Mission Trips. The final part of this study with your group will be this discussion tonight.

Before we start, I want to thank you for the help and information you have already given me by filling out the two questionnaires before and after our trip. Your information and input will be of great value to this study.

Tonight, I would like to ask you several questions so that we can discuss them as a group. These kinds of discussions provide us with the opportunity to reflect on the thoughts of others and often they help us to clarify our own thoughts.

As your moderator, I will lead you by asking specific questions that relate to our Short Term Mission Trip. Feel free to comment on any or all of these questions and please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Since this is a research project, your honest answer is the best answer.

In order to get all of the questions in, I will allow a given amount of time for each question and then I will move to the next question. If for some reason, you do not get an opportunity to share something that you feel is important, please write down the question and your comment and give it to me after we finish.

I want you to know that I will be recording our discussion tonight so that I will be able to listen while we are here tonight and I will be able to listen to it again later to take notes.

As with the surveys, your answers will be anonymous. To help me match comments with questionnaires, however, as you answer a question, please start by stating the research number you were assigned. This is not so that I can identify you personally, but rather to allow me to more efficiently coordinate the data.

Again, thank you for being here tonight and for providing me with your comments and observations.

1) In a sentence or two, tell me what you think the original purpose of our trip was.
2) Was the purpose fulfilled or did the trip evolve into something different?
   a. If it evolved, what did it evolve into?
3) What did you like best about this trip?
4) What did you like least about this trip?
5) How would you describe the time you spent with the (Mexican, Guatemalan, Nicaraguan) people?
6) How well did you get to know them?
7) Tell me any positive things you saw in them.
8) Tell me any negative things you saw in them.
9) What did you have to offer them?
10) What did you teach them or do for them?
11) What did you learn from them, if anything?
12) Tell me about our living arrangements there (housing, food, comfort, etc.).
13) Did you feel uncomfortable or out of place in any way? How? What effect did this have on you?
14) Did our living arrangements contribute to or take away from the experience you had? If yes, how?
15) What would you do the same or differently the next time (concerning living arrangements)?
16) Tell me about the group discussions and/or Bible studies you had during the trip.
17) Did they relate to what you were seeing and experiencing? How?
18) Are there any biblical teachings or principles that stood out in your mind through this experience?
19) Did you gain any new insights into biblical teachings that you thought you understood pretty well?
20) Has this trip affected your personal faith in any way? How?
21) As a result of this trip, will you live your life any differently? How?
22) To summarize, what would you say was the most important thing you learned through this experience?
23) Do you have any final comments?

Thank you all again for your time and for your input. You have helped me tremendously and I have learned a lot from you.
Appendix E
(Mission Pastors and Team Leaders – Interview Questions)

Thank you for taking a few minutes to assist in this research project. This study is being conducted to better understand the ministry known as Short Term Mission Trips. You have been selected to help with this survey because you have indicated that you have led Short Term Missions Team(s) within the past two years.

Please answer the following questions . . .

Name

Church or Organization
Address

1) Over the past ten years, how many short term mission trips have you led? ______

2) To what countries or cultures?

3) Why do you do short term mission trips?

4) How many people do you take in your average team? ______

5) Please list the two or three primary objectives you want to accomplish on these trips.

6) In a few sentences, what would you say are the primary indicators that you would use to describe a successful mission trip? ______

7) Please give a basic outline of the activities of your team during the length of their stay (e.g. Arrive Saturday, Worship and settle in on Sunday, work projects and VBS Monday through Friday, R & R on Saturday, return home Sunday). ________________
8) Please give a basic outline of the activities of your team on a typical day on a mission trip (e.g. work project all day, or work project in the morning, VBS in the afternoon, devotions in the evening).  

9) Time on a mission trip can be used in many ways. When you led, on average, approximately what percentage of your teams' time (excluding sleep time) was spent on: 

- Work Projects - (construction, repair, medical clinic, etc.)  
- Team Time (meals, devotions, prep times, team rest, etc.)  
- Personal and social interaction with the people of the visited culture?  
- Ministry to the local people (VBS, teaching, discipling, mime, puppet shows, evangelism, etc.).  
- Worshiping with the local people in their place of worship?  
- Personal prayer, devotion, reflection time?  
- Personal or team recreation in the visited city or at the beginning or end of your time there?  
- Other 

10) Did your team members enter into the homes of any of the people they were there to serve? 
Yes ______ No _____  
If yes, on average, how many times during a week? _______  
For how long in total? ________

11) Would you be able to say that most of your team members made friends with and entered into the lives of at least two or three of the local people? 
Yes _____ No _____

12) When your teams had personal interaction with the local people, were they usually with: 
- adults?  
- children?  
- teenagers?  
- A fairly balanced blend of at least two of these groups?  

13) Which of these best describes where your teams stayed while ministering to the people?  
- We stayed in a hotel.  
- We stayed in homes of the local people.  
- We stayed in a local church.  
- We stayed in a dormitory or special building designed to house groups or mission teams.  
- Other type of housing. Describe: ____________________________
14) **As compared to life at home,** how would you **rate the following** experiences encountered by your teams (on a typical trip)? (1 - being “Similar,” 7 - being “Extremely Different”)  Also, give **one or two words that best describe each.**

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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

15) **On these mission trips,** especially in the setting in which the teams were living during the time, **do you think they felt** (physically and emotionally):

- comfortable and at ease because of the many similarities to their lives.
- somewhat comfortable.
- somewhat uncomfortable and out of place.
- Very uncomfortable because of the many differences from their lives.

16) **To what degree do you feel they were distracted and/or thrown off balance** by the differences they experienced?

(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Extremely)

17) **During your short term mission trips,** did your teams have (check all that apply)

- Daily devotions, prayer, and/or Bible studies? (If not, skip questions 18 and 19)
- Time for personal reflection, Bible study, and prayer each day?
- Regular team discussions about the people, the culture, the local church, etc.?
- Regular team times in which they could express their feelings, observations, and insights about their experiences?

18) **If your teams did Bible studies and/or devotions,** was there usually a relationship between the Bible verses/teachings and what you were experiencing?

- There was a direct relationship
- There was some relationship
- We used this opportunity to study other topics
19) How important, do you think, these Bible studies and/or devotions were to their overall experience on these mission trips?

(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Extremely)

20) Who would you say benefited most from these mission trips?

_____ The people in the visited culture.
_____ The members of the mission teams.

Please explain

21) Have you seen any lasting benefits of the short term trips that you led in the following areas:

the cultures served?

_____ No
_____ Yes – Please explain

the lives of the team members who went and served?

_____ No
_____ Yes – Please explain

your church or organization?

_____ No
_____ Yes – Please explain

22) Do you have any specific examples of dramatic impact on any of the three areas listed in question 21? (Use the back of this page or attach another sheet if more room is needed).

23) Do you have any additional comments or thoughts to share about the short term mission trips you have led?

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire and may God continue to bless you and your ministry.
Appendix F

Eight Faith Categories and Vertical/Horizontal Faith Scores
(Pre-Trip FMS – Post-Trip FMS – Post Trip RBTS)

(Note: Because of the difference in the range of answers from which the participants could choose in the Pre-Trip FMS Survey [1 to 7], the Post-Trip FMS Survey [-5 to +5], and the Post-Trip RBTS [1 to 7], the means listed in these tables cannot be directly compared across the category lines for the sake of drawing conclusions. Instead, they can be utilized to identify trends and degrees to which new insights and understandings have been gained.

The Pre-Trip FMS mean averages serve merely to provide a baseline of the team’s faith level prior to going on their mission trip.

The Post-Trip FMS is the level to which team members felt they had gained new insights and understandings [in the respective categories of faith] as a result of their mission trip experience. For each item in the FMS, they could choose within the range from -5 [This is definitely less true of me since going] to 0 [I feel the same as I did before going on the trip] to +5 [This is definitely more true of me since going].

The Post-Trip RBTS allowed participants to identify new insights and understandings gained in relation to specific biblical topics and variables of day to day living.

The survey consists of 38 questions that were designed to evaluate eight core dimensions of faith maturity. The eight dimensions are as follows. The respondent:

1. Trusts in God’s saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus (Questions 2, 22, 25, 26, 34)
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace (10, 20, 24, 27, 32)

3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work family social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life (3, 7, 29, 30, 33)

4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others. (9, 14, 15, 19)

5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another (4, 23, 31, 36)

6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (5, 12, 17, 18, 22, 38)

7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice (1, 28, 35, 37)


These core dimensions were designed to provide insight into participants' level of faith on two planes: 1) what the authors referred to as vertical faith ("One's personal relationship to God, one's efforts to seek God and the personal transformation one experiences in this divine encounter.") and 2) horizontal faith ("Obligation and action on the human plane. . . . Heeding the call to social service and social justice") (Benson et al. 1993:4). In the survey 12 questions are used to measure vertical faith and 12 to measure horizontal faith. The questions used to identify vertical and horizontal faith are identified in endnote 2 and 4 in Chapter 6.
The rankings listed next to each mean average are the ranked position which that team came in when compared with the scores of the other seven teams in the same category.

**Costa Rica**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Trip FMS Mean</th>
<th>Rank with Other Trips</th>
<th>Post-Trip FMS Mean</th>
<th>Rank with Other Trips</th>
<th>Post-Trip RBTS Mean</th>
<th>Rank with Other Trips</th>
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**Jamaica**

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Appendix G

Related Biblical Topics Scale –
Listing by Trip of the Topics Chosen, Team Mean per Topic, # of Participants that Chose Each Topic and the Mean of Those Who Responded to Each

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Appendix H

Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The Ethnocentric States and Their Stages

I. Denial
   A. Isolation
   B. Separation

II. Defense
   A. Denigration
   B. Superiority
   C. Reversal

III. Minimization
   A. Physical Universalism
   B. Transcendent Universalism

The Ethnorelative States and Their Stages

IV. Acceptance
   A. Behavioral Relativism
   B. Value Relativism

V. Adaptation
   A. Empathy
   B. Pluralism

VI. Integration
   A. Contextual Evaluation
   B. Constructive Marginality

Ethnocentrism – ‘The term ‘ethnocentric’ is here defined in the simplest possible way as “assuming that the world-view of one’s own culture is central to all reality”’ (Bennett 1986:33).

I. Denial – “A denial of difference is the purest form of ethnocentrism” (33).
   A. Isolation – “The circumstances of physical isolation can foster the denial of the existence of difference. . . . From a position of isolation cultural difference is not experienced at all” (33).
B. Separation – “The intentional erection of physical or social barriers to create distance from cultural difference, hence maintaining the state of denial” (35).

II. Defense – “The term ‘defense’ refers to a posture intended to counter the impact of specific differences perceived as threatening. The threat is to one’s sense of reality, and thus to one’s identity which, at this point is a function of that cultural reality” (36).

A. Denigration – “The most common strategy to counter the threat of difference is to negatively evaluate it. This kind of denigration of difference is generally called ‘negative stereotyping,’ wherein undesirable characteristics are attributed to every member of a distinct group” (37).

B. Superiority – “This form of defense emphasizes the positive evaluation of one’s own cultural status, not necessarily the overt denigration of other groups. . . . Threatening cultural difference is countered at this stage by implicitly relegating it to a lower-status position” (38)

C. Reversal – “Although the phenomenon here termed ‘reversal’ is not an inevitable stage of intercultural development, it is a common enough occurrence to deserve mention. . . . Reversal involves a denigration of one’s own culture and an attendant assumption of superiority of a different culture” (41).

III. Minimization – “The last attempt to preserve the centrality of one’s own world view involves an attempt to ‘bury’ difference under the weight of cultural similarities. The state of minimization represents a development beyond denial and defense because, at this stage, cultural difference is trivialized” (41-42).
A. Physical Universalism — “With the further assumption that all cultures are merely elaborations of fundamental biology, cultural difference is relegated to the relatively unimportant position of permutation” (42).

B. Transcendent Universalism — “In a kind of abstract parallel to the concrete behavioral assumptions of physical universalism, transcendent universalism suggests that all human beings, whether they know it or not, are products of some single transcendent principle law, or imperative. . . . The statement, ‘We are all God’s children’ when the ‘children’ include people who don’t subscribe to the same god, is indicative of this religious form of universalism” (43).

Ethnorelativism — “Cultures can only be understood relative to one another. There is no absolute standard of ‘rightness’ or ‘goodness’ that can be applied to cultural behavior. Cultural difference is neither good nor bad it is just different” (46).

IV. Acceptance — “In this state, cultural difference is both acknowledged and respected. Rather than being evaluated negatively or positively as part of a defensive strategy the existence of difference is accepted as a necessary and referable human condition” (47).

A. Respect for behavioral difference — “It is easiest to accept that verbal and nonverbal behavior varies across cultures, and that all forms of such behavior are worthy of respect (if not personal support)” (47).

B. Respect for value difference — “Relativity of cultural values is central to intercultural sensitivity. At this stage of development, there is acceptance of the different world view assumptions that underlie cultural variation in behavior. Alternative beliefs about both what exists in reality and the value which may be
attached to those phenomena are respected as viable, at least as they are expressed in a cultural context. In addition, at this stage one acknowledges one's own worldview as a relative cultural construct (cultural self-awareness)” (49).

V. Adaptation – “This state of intercultural sensitivity involves the emergence of abilities to use acceptance of cultural difference for relating and communicating with people of other cultures” (51).

A. Empathy – “Central to any intercultural communication skill is the ability to experience some aspect of reality differently than it is ‘given’ by one’s own culture. . . . [Empathy] involves the imaginative participation in a different worldview” (52-53).


VI. Integration – “This person has incorporated difference into the ‘meaning of life’ and is thus capable of acting as a whole, functioning individual outside the constraints of any particular culture. In this stage, difference in general becomes integral to identity” (58).

A. Contextual evaluation – “Contextual evaluation is a development beyond adaptation where one attains the ability to analyze and evaluate situations from one or more chosen cultural perspectives. Implied by this ability is both the skill to shift cultural context and the concomitant self-awareness necessary to exercise choice” (59).

B. Constructive Marginality – “The subjective experience of people who are struggling with the total integration of ethnorelativism. They are outside all cultural frames of reference, by virtue of their ability to consciously meta-level (self-reference) any
assumption. In other words, there is no 'natural' cultural identity for a marginal person" (61-62).
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Butman, Richard E.

Campolo, Anthony

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Davies, J. G.

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