



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Don't Just Go – Go Guided

By Dale Lusk, International Director - Global Engagements Evangelical Covenant Church

“Why do I need anyone to help me with a mission trip?” I can plan it myself. True. Through the internet it is becoming easier to plan your own trips. Logistics can be done a variety of ways.

Communication is easier too. Through social media and email you can communicate with people around the world on your own. Many people in other countries speak good enough English to communicate. You can use your computer to translate too.

Plus, those mission trip organizations cost money. They have overhead and staff to take care of. I can cut my costs by doing it alone.

I did the same thing when I was a youth pastor. I just planned everything myself. I didn't want anyone telling me what I could and could not do. I didn't want an intermediary between myself and the host. I wanted all of the control. Of course, now that I look back, I see what a bad choice that was. I feel anguish over the mistakes I made and the lost opportunities for ministry we had. If only I had known!

We are starting to see a trend of churches, that have sent mission teams on their own for many years, asking for guidance and help. As we come to understand the world better, we realize how little we know and how much better we can be by partnering with others with some excellent coaching.

Teams that have gone on mission trips for ten years are realizing they have actually only gone for ten WEEKS, not ten years. This amount of time allows for little true understanding. In ten actual years it is hard enough to understand another culture, much less ten weeks.

Find a good a mission trip agency to guide you. Recent studies by leading mission scholars have shown mission trips, led by experienced agencies, result in trips being about four times more effective, than when groups go on their own. This is based on analyzed outcomes of trips.

You might even choose a missionary with experience in leading mission trips, or a group of nationals with the same experience. Remember, though, that just because someone is a missionary, or lives in that culture, does not mean they truly understand all of the implications of organizing an effective mission trip. The intricacies of mission trip implementation are much more complicated than you might think. Even after 27 years I still have much to learn.

In choosing a mission trip agency choose one which focuses on training, being culturally sensitive, relationship building between the team and hosts, creative ministry (not just construction and kid's programs), partnership, learning and has a plan for follow up. Be wary of organizations that are structured to make the North Americans feel good about themselves, with little regard to the true impact on the communities they serve.

Choose a guide and choose well. Make the most of your trip and its impact on furthering the Kingdom of God.

Bio:

Dale Lusk is the International Director of Global Engagements for the Evangelical Covenant Church. He has served in missions for more than 30 years, 27 years of which were spent as the director of MERGE Ministries--the short-term mission ministry for the Evangelical Covenant Church. Dale has also served the church as both a children's and youth pastor.