



NOTES FROM DAVE...

Is Short-Term Mission Still A Good Investment?

Lately short-term missions [STM] has been taking a beating. As our economy continues to slow, people are rightly asking if STM is worth the continued investment.

Let me share a little story, and you decide.

A little over 15 years ago a skinny little pastor named Alejandro came to me and asked for help in building a worship center. He was newly married, fresh out of seminary, and leading a bible study with his wife out of his childhood home.

I told Alex that I felt we could help and that I would drop by and see him as soon as possible. That turned out to be about a year as we were working in another location at the time.

When I finally got there, Alex showed me the small shack, about 15 x 15, that the new church had built for their Sunday services.

As we talked he asked me to take a walk with him. He had something to show me. About 2 blocks from his home he showed me a vacant piece of land. He told me the cost of the land was about \$2500.00 and was wondering if I could help his church purchase the land. I told Alex we could help with about \$1500.00 but he would have to raise the other \$1000.00.

A few months later Alex called to say his church had their part and asked if we could come and make good on our pledge. It was a fantastic Valentine's Day for me in 1995 when we made that purchase.

Since that day, hundreds of short-term participants have served with my ministry, Adventures in Life, at Pastor Alejandro's church. We have poured tons and tons of concrete. We have painted, painted, and then painted again. We have roofed, we have dry-walled, we have plastered, and we have helped in countless other projects, all in partnership with this church in Ensenada.

This is the easy stuff to see. Anyone can look at a piece of property and see change. Stuff like walls, trusses, roofs, and windows are all quickly evident. But for me, effective STM means changed lives, not just changed landscapes.

Last week I returned to this church for the first time in a couple of years. I was invited by Alex to celebrate his daughter Damaris' 15th birthday, a big event in Mexico. The church was packed for the celebration.

As I sat there waiting for the service to begin, I was able to look around and see some folks I had not seen in years. Men who had struggled with drug addiction, women who had been prostitutes, and others who, when they showed up at this church years ago had the look of hopelessness etched in their faces.

I remembered a conversation I had a few years ago with a leader of another church we helped build in Guadalajara. This leader, Ignacio, wanted to thank us for helping his church get a place to worship. And he wanted to explain why our help was such a big deal.

Brother Dave he said, many small churches here in Mexico die out before they can ever get a facility, because if they do not have a facility, they can't grow big enough to survive.

Maybe someone else would have come along and helped Pastor Alejandro and his church get a place to worship 15 years ago. Maybe God would have blessed them in some way to enable their, at that time, small congregation, to be able to afford a facility.

Who knows how it might have worked out had Alejandro never sought me out. But I do know this.

As sure as God used Nehemiah and his team to rebuild the temple using the talents and resources of people from all over the area surrounding Jerusalem, He used young people serving in short-term mission from places like Huntington, West Virginia, Los Angeles, California, and Burns, Oregon to build that church in Ensenada.

Short-term mission is not perfect. Those of us in this type of ministry are constantly trying to improve our serve, but let's not lose sight of the good that does happen through STM.

Lives have been changed forever by the power of the Gospel preached in that small church in Lazaro Cardenas, Ensenada. For that, I think God is happy and the angels are rejoicing because indeed, the investment was worth it!

Dave Miller is Executive Director of AIL Ministry. [Read more here!](#)

Prayer Needs

AIL Funding

Adventures in Life is behind on our 2010 budget. We need a strong November and December to finish our year.

Men for Oaxaca in February

We will be finishing the Zapotec Bible Training Center in Tlacolula February 5 - 12, 2011. We need 25 men committed to being part of this trip.

Eye Doctor and Dentist in March

AIL Medical Trip ~ March 26 - April 2

2011 AIL Intern Staff

We need 6 college students to be AIL Summer Staff in 2011

2011 AIL Oaxaca Kids Camp

We need 16 people to help us in Oaxaca during the week of July 23 - 30. This camp will be with the Zapotec and Mazotec people groups.

OUR VISION

To make known the transforming power of the Gospel through short-term mission in Mexico.

OUR MISSION

To develop ministry partnerships to reach the heart of Mexico

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