

Testimony of Short-term Ministry Trip Participant

I have been on two different vision trips to Ethiopia with Sports Friends. A vision trip is the chance to get outside of our typical Christian "bubble" we have the blessing to live in within the United States and see God at work across the globe among those people also created in His image and for whom Jesus also died. Such a trip will shape your eternal and spiritual perspective for years to come. As one of my fellow vision travelers so aptly described: you will be "messed up."

You will see and hear stories of God's grace and mercy that aren't just in print, but are being told to you by those who have lived under His hand of provision and protection. A paralyzed woman healed and a village now living for Christ; small Churches in formerly all Muslim areas where followers gather as in Acts 2 in both joy and care for each other as families now shun them; a young AIDS victim looking forward to death at the orphanage in order to be with his Jesus; the smiles and laughter of so many with so little. You will see a land and people living as in Gospel times; both in regards to their standard of living but more importantly their love for and reliance on Jesus.

And you may find that you learn some of the same lessons that I did - lessons that quite frankly I think we are simply incapable of learning here due to our culture, pace of life, burdens and social demands:

1. To learn who really are the "least of these" in Matt. 25 and to have a broken heart for them as God does.
2. To see the work and challenges of believers around the world with less freedoms and less cultural acceptance and less provision as they seek "thy kingdom come; thy will be done."
3. To begin to see, process and unlock the secret to being content in Phil 4:12. How terribly difficult this is to do in our society and culture. You must step outside, look around, and then look back.
4. To see that we do live in a materialistic, secular society. Of the 3 dangers to the Church of poverty, persecution and prosperity, the latter is deadliest as the Church flourishes around the world amidst poverty and persecution. We have Church leaders in Ethiopia pray for us and the danger of prosperity to the Church in America.
5. To develop a yearning for eternity when all pain and suffering you will see will end; and when we all, including those you will meet, visit and pray with on your trip, will be together before the throne of God.
6. To grow a desire and heart for Africa, its people and those who serve them in the name of the Lord.

7. To grow deep relationships with all whom you share this extraordinary experience in common.
8. To see and know the power and authority of the Holy Spirit, together with God's dominion and sovereignty. When His people desperately need Him, rely on Him and cry out to Him, He is very active in their lives - and the contrast to our daily life is startling. You will want more of God in your daily life.

Such a trip won't come at a convenient time for work or family or needs at home, but it will deepen your faith in our Risen Jesus beyond what I found possible here. Go, see and discover to a new depth of understanding our God who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Go and get messed up!

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