

Are Domestic Missions as Important as International Missions?

Huntington, Indiana, is a small town that is witnessing a revival stirring within the youth. For 10 days, I was able to witness this firsthand by the opportunity to lead a trip to this town to serve with six other college girls. During this time, I saw how the Lord radically changed not only the young students' lives but mine as well.

The Awakening Church held what they called, "Hope Week " for middle- and high- school students. Throughout this week, they had teachings on various topics like "What is worship?" and "How to hear from God." Later they had opportunities to go out into the community to serve and evangelize to people in the downtown area.

The first teaching set the tone for the week, focused on what it means to live life on mission. They were taught what missions should look like from a broad standpoint and what it means to be a Christian. After this first session, many students felt a tug from the Lord to rededicate, or commit for the first time, their lives to the Lord.

With every morning teaching, they were able to take each lesson and put it into practice the same day. And as they saw others' lives change with what they believed was a small task or something they were scared of, they began to walk in boldness. Students who refused to speak up and ask a question were going up to strangers and asking how they could pray for them, within the span of five days. They understood that despite their age, they had a great impact because they had the Lord working within them.

As each student had a better understanding of the gospel, they

were able to walk in boldness. They had an advantage. They were able to reach other young people through shared experience and obvious commonalities that were from their age. Meanwhile, they could reach adults just the same through the adults' feelings of trust in a child rather than trust in a typical stranger. The trust stemmed from a place of an understanding that the student had no ulterior motive or set agenda, they just wanted to share the wisdom they now were filled with. When each student approached a new person, there was a lack of usual discomfort that allowed for better conversation from truthfulness among all ages.

Adults around them were encouraged to do the same and what started with around 20 students going out and taking their first steps to a life on mission, led to a stirring of a movement of God. In many corners of the downtown it was no longer uncommon for a middle school student and an adult to be praying with someone. Or to see a group of high school students with a leader watching them to be giving out clothes and water to those in need.

This week alone was an answered prayer for the leaders of the Awakening Church. A year prior, when asked what their need was for their town, they answered with the need for a movement in the youth, for a movement in the middle school age through college age. They were witnessing a pattern of young people stepping away from the church, all around the same age, while also seeing an increase in drug addiction and suicide rates.

After my time in Indiana last summer, and having a better understanding of what this town was facing, the Lord called me back for these 10 days. In October, the words "it's not done yet" kept replaying in my head followed by a vision of the streets of Huntington. I knew going into this trip that I would see just what the Lord meant by that and why He called me back. I saw a fresh fire in students and a fresh wind in adults. And still, I fully believe these words are still true and that this is just the beginning.

This is a true example of how important domestic mission trips are. Just as every nation has needs, every small town does as well. Go into your community and to other places around you and understand it better. The best way to meet those needs is to get to know the people, popular interests, the history of the buildings. Understanding that the needs in Seattle, Washington, are different from the needs of Beaufort, South Carolina is the first step. After grasping this, you're able to have a fresh perspective to learn who you're serving, why you're serving and how to do it best.

Although we're called to go out into the nations and preach the gospel, we're also called to do the same within our homes, neighborhoods and communities. Mark 16:15 says, "And then he told them, 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone'." Domestic trips are important because the Lord calls us to go into "all" of the world- not all of the world, besides your nation.

We're called to a life of fulltime ministry. We are called to be used by God in all ways always. The area doesn't lessen the weight of the work or the importance of it all. Help those in need, pray for people, preach the gospel. It's time we stop placing our own restrictions on what missions and ministries look like.

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