Volunteerism in Mission

Objectives:
Your study of this chapter should help you to:

● Define short-term mission

● Recognize the importance of volunteerism in the church

● Evaluate the benefits of volunteerism to both the individual and the church

● Identify what contributes to volunteer effectiveness

Key Words to Understand:
short-term mission
volunteerism
reverse mission
Standards of Excellence
tentmakers
missional effectiveness

In the western United States, a layperson gave a missionary a ride to the airport after a local church’s weekend missionary convention. The layman doing the driving had managed several
successful business ventures, chaired a corporation, and been president of a bank. On the way to the airport, he talked about wanting to walk away from that part of his life and become a volunteer in overseas mission work. That layman had been a staunch supporter of missions through his prayers and financial giving. He now wanted to give a season of his life to global missions.

Volunteer opportunities in the global mission movement have attracted believers of all ages. Large numbers of young people go on **short-term mission** trips during times they are not in school. Adults of all ages who have prayed for and given money to missions efforts are jumping at chances to do hands-on mission work for brief periods. The modes of volunteer mission service are varied: weekend trips across a nearby border, one-to three-week trips, college students participating in spring break and summer-long events, people spending six months to two years or more serving as individuals or couples (rather than in large groups), and a hybrid kind of volunteer service called tentmaking. These short-term mission participants cross cultural and geographic boundaries to use God-given skills and talents to do construction, teach English, set up computer centers, work in orphanages, fit eyeglasses, tutor missionary children, and help
with disaster relief, evangelism, leadership training, and medical work.

Involvement in volunteer short-term mission, as distinct from longer career service, began expanding just after the middle of the 20th century. Facilitating the growth of short-term mission have been global communication systems and the ease and speed of air travel. Short-term mission, regarded for a while with suspicion by mission professionals, is now a strategic component of world evangelism programs. Many mission agencies have volunteerism offices with career missionary teams often having someone assigned to supervise short-term mission groups and individuals coming to their field. Mission professionals have so fully embraced short-term mission that volunteer experience has virtually become a prerequisite for career missionary service.

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In 1970, you could count the number of youth groups doing short-term missions on one hand. Now it has become a standard feature for thousands of youth groups.

--Seth Barnes

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Roger Peterson, longtime head of the Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders, has calculated that 1.5 million North Americans participate each year in various types of short-term mission. Of that 1.5 million, roughly one-third are doing domestic trips, about one-third are going to Mexico, with the other third go elsewhere in the world. Other estimates of short-term participants range as high as 4 million North Americans with a total annual investment of more than $4 billion U.S. In terms of raw numbers, getting people to do short-term mission seems to have been hugely successful. Of course, participant numbers and money spent do not tell everything. There is more to short-term mission than numerical totals. Among the questions that will help evaluate the use of volunteers:

- Is mission volunteer activity moving the Church toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission or is it, in the words of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”?
- In what ways do career missionaries see volunteers as a burden? In what ways do they see them as a blessing?
- Which specific long-term goals can short-term mission volunteers help accomplish?
What are some positive and negative long-term effects of short-term mission activity on the participants and their sponsoring churches?

In purely accounting terms, could money spent on travel and food and lodging be better spent by sending it straight to the mission field?

The Effectiveness of Volunteers

Short-term mission participants often receive minimal or even no cross-cultural training. Many do not speak the heart language of the people in the area where they go. Most participants are on-site for less than two weeks. Because of these and other issues, some have wondered whether it is possible that short-termers can be of lasting benefit to the world mission enterprise.

The verdict is now in on that question, and the answer is a resoundingly positive one. Parts of the global Church have been profoundly impacted by people doing short-term mission. The Kingdom effects of this huge number of people doing short-term mission are evidenced in three ways. The most visible and talked-about effect occurs in the places where short-term volunteers go. That receiving end is, after all, the focus of the trip. Still, even with all the things that are seen on the
receiving end, mission professors John Nyquist and Paul Hiebert have concluded that those most affected by short-term mission involvement can be “the short-termers themselves and their sending churches.”

1. Effect on the Field

On the receiving end of a mission trip, the effects are both tangible and intangible. Given the obvious limitations of short-term volunteers, they still accomplish some very visible things. Construction work gets done on buildings; neighborhoods become aware of a church in their midst; people are drawn into events where the gospel is proclaimed; health-care needs are met and church leadership gets needed training. Some of these short-term mission accomplishments are quantifiable; other accomplishments are not easily expressed statistically.

Sometimes people look at the money being spent on transportation, housing, and food and wonder about cost-effectiveness. “Just send the money,” they say, assuming that transferring financial resources is the most important result of short-term mission trips. Actually, some of the most significant effects of short-term mission have nothing to do with money or even hours of work on building projects. The relationships generated during short-term mission experiences may be more
important for Kingdom purposes than the buying of concrete blocks or cement. Related to that is how short-termers help host congregations recognize their connection to the global Church. Believers whose congregations have hosted short-term volunteers frequently talk about how the arrival of a volunteer or a group from abroad confirmed to them that they belonged to the worldwide community of faith. A short-term team can also have energizing effects on the host church. When it sinks in to a host congregation that short-termers are giving of their time and paying for their own travel to work with them on a project, the effects can be both humbling and energizing.

In an ecclesiological sense, the short-term mission movement demonstrates that the Church is globally the Body of Christ where everyone’s gifts and talents can be put to use, sometimes across great distances. Such volunteering of one’s skills and talents for Kingdom work has been a fixture of Church history. While the Holy Spirit’s gifting mentioned in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 does not specifically include construction skills, the recognition of craftsmanship skills as being from God is mentioned in the Old Testament when the Lord gave instructions to Moses concerning the construction of the Tabernacle: “I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you” (Exodus 31:6).
2. Effect on the Participants Themselves

The second set of effects of short-term mission concern the impact made on participants, or “goer-guests” as Roger Peterson calls them. On a strictly human level, short-term mission facilitates beneficial cultural exchanges. Another effect on participants confirms what the Bible says about the value of giving of oneself in service to others. During short-term mission trips, people experience firsthand the scriptural principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive. What frequently happens on mission trips is that those who have gone to minister wind up being on the receiving end of ministry in reverse mission. Social work educator Edward C. Lindeman noted how volunteer service often generates positive feelings of self-worth:

The act of volunteering is an assertion of individual worth. The person who of his own free will decides to work . . . is in effect saying, I have gifts and talents which are needed. I am a person who accepts a responsibility, not because it is imposed upon me, but rather because I wish to be useful. My right to be thus used is a symbol of my personal dignity and worth!
One way that entering the ranks of mission volunteers enriches a person’s life is through changed attitudes about prayer, mission giving, and mission education. This showed up in research that James Engel and Jerry Jones did on the attitudes of Christian baby boomers toward the missionary enterprise. Many of the Americans involved in short-term missions have been members of the boomer generation, that generation born in the 20 years following World War II. This generation began with the baby boom that resulted when hundreds of thousands of American soldiers returned home after World War II and started their families. After surveying professional baby boomers in several American evangelical churches, Engel and Jones concluded that going on a mission trip affects how members of that American generation view world evangelism. Engel and Jones said their research showed that “spreading the gospel overseas as a ministry is a high priority among those who have been onsite overseas, those who are financial contributors to missions, and those engaged in personal evangelism.”

Research by Roger Peterson and others has also shown that long-term shifts in attitudes and actions occurred among many short-term mission participants. Peterson’s research indicated that mission trip participation generally resulted in a stoking of passion about global missions as evidenced by a doubling of
prayer life and financial giving to mission causes. That same study also indicated a substantial increase in involvement in mission-related support activities. Mission agencies say that significant numbers of new missionaries report receiving their missionary call during a short-term mission trip. All of this does not mean that every participant on a 10-day mission trip has been dramatically transformed. In that regard, going on a mission trip has some parallels in how a youth camp or a men’s retreat affects people. For an occasional participant there will be striking positive changes; for most others who are positively impacted, the changes are smaller. The changes, however, are usually incremental; thus, the more short-term mission experiences people have, the more likely it is that they will experience noticeable changes.

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Remedy for a Sick Church

The best remedy for a sick church is to put it on a missionary diet."

--Unknown

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3. Effect on the Sending Church
How mission trips affect the sending church may be the least obvious of the three categories of short-term mission effects. Still, a lot of money comes out of local churches to transport short-term mission participants to and from a destination as well as feeding and housing them while there. The home church receives dividends from its investment when the spiritual fervor of returning participants ignites new passion within the local church. David Hayse, who coordinated hundreds of short-term mission teams, observed that short-term mission trips “have made an incredible impact on the sending church.”

Many sending churches experience ripples of positive effects before and after having members participate in short-term mission trips. Excitement is generated within the local church as volunteers prepare to go and then after they come home. As trip stories are told and retold, sending congregations often gain a renewed sense of ownership for the world mission task. This can shift the focus of a congregation’s concentration away from a maintenance mind-set toward the fulfillment of its global covenant responsibilities. As laypeople put their gifts and talents to use in world evangelism, there is often renewed recognition within the home church that believers need to function together as the Body of Christ. The mobilization of prayer support for the trip will often have positive side
effects for the sending congregation. A burden and passion for lost people in another part of the world may get people thinking about the lost of their own city. As Engel and Jones noted, there is a link between involvement in personal evangelism and a passion for world evangelism. Churches that have people regularly going on short-term mission trips also often become leaders in overall financial support for world evangelism. As in the case of individuals, the changes in sending churches rarely are seismic shifts. More often the changes will be incremental with the impact increasing as more and more church members have short-term experiences. The effect that short-term mission has on sending churches is one answer to those wondering why all the money is spent on the trip rather than just being sent to the mission field. Of course, the question is a moot one anyway because money spent on mission trips is almost always “new” money for global mission.

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Kingdom Work Gets Done Too!

Short-term work, whether two weeks or two years, can indeed be effective and pleasing to God. Yes, it can cost a lot of money, disrupt nationals and missionaries, encourage short-term thinking, and inoculate some against career missions
involvement. But done well, it can open participants’ eyes to the sometimes gritty realities of the world, make them aware of their own ethnocentrism and the gifts and courage of non-Western believers, and spark a lifelong commitment to missions. In the best cases, some real kingdom work gets done, too.

--Stan Guthrie, Christianity Today news editor

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The Downside

There is a downside to mission volunteerism. Because of the huge numbers of people involved, it should not be surprising that problems have occurred. Every mission organization has stories of disastrous volunteer experiences that include people not being adequately prepared, of groups destructively pushing their own agendas, and of inappropriate behavior that set back a church’s witness. Volunteer mission can be done in ways that obscure key long-term mission goals. There is the danger of letting the desire to quickly accomplish something visible determine the overall mission agenda. Short-term mission programs risk amateurizing mission strategy with priorities and programs being determined by people with little training or cultural sensitivity and only limited experience on a given mission field. Some trips are overhyped in terms of what can be
accomplished in one or two weeks. Short-term mission can mistakenly be presented as the primary way the Great Commission is being fulfilled. Sometimes, short-term mission participants do not really comprehend that they are just one more link in a chain of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting events.

It is not uncommon for short-termers to express disappointment that they did not accomplish more. What they have failed to see is that the changes in themselves and the accomplishments on the field need to be understood as small increments of bigger things going on rather than as paradigm-shifting revolutions. Sadly, there has sometimes been the artificial creation of a need so that volunteers will have something to do. Not infrequently, short-term mission activity creates dependency attitudes within the receiving church. Because there are new people continually coming in to short-term mission, the perpetual doing of very basic training can make it seem like the wheel is having to be reinvented every two weeks.

On occasion, self-centeredness, paternalism, or ethnocentrism cause short-term mission volunteers to do things without the knowledge of or against the wishes of the host church, necessitating damage control and even an occasional complete redoing of construction projects after the group leaves. Participants sometimes go on a trip just because a
friend is going. Others have signed up thinking the trip they were going on was a sight-seeing one with only a small amount of spiritual flavoring. Some go on short-term trips seeking the emotional rewards of their own hands-on involvement rather than looking for ways to invest in long-term empowerment.

The participants of two-week mission trips must not be exalted as the superstars of world evangelism. While the overall impact of short-term mission has been significant, some participants come to think of themselves as excursion missionaries who feel that tremendous fulfillment of the Great Commission occurs whenever they make a two-week trip somewhere, an attitude that is a slap in the face to missionaries giving decades of their life to global mission.

For these and other reasons, going on a mission trip is not a positive experience for every participant or every group or team. Sadly, some short-termers even come home embittered by the experience. Sometimes there is bad team chemistry and people return home upset at each other. Sometimes clashes with field missionaries or national leaders occur that do not get satisfactorily resolved. Inappropriate behavior on the part of team members occasionally necessitates sending someone home early.
As the short-term movement gathered momentum, one concern was voiced that has turned out to be less of a problem than was feared. In those early years, there was concern that mission trips would drain money away from other world evangelism needs. That has not happened in the way people feared because most of the people going on short-term mission do not pay for trips with money they planned to give to missions; they use their own vacation money. So, people trying to conjecture how that $1 billion to $4 billion could be better spent need to realize that this is not money that would be given to global mission if all short-term mission opportunities were abolished. Rather than draining away funds, short-term mission has often increased mission giving.

Standards of Excellence

A few years ago short-term mission leaders in Great Britain and Canada drew up a list of characteristics of good short-term mission experiences. Building on what the British and Canadians had done, the U.S.A. Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders created seven Standards of Excellence that it began promoting as marks of sound short-term mission. Those standards established benchmarks of God-centeredness, a partnership paradigm, mutually agreed-upon design, comprehensive administration, qualified
leadership, appropriate training, and thorough follow-up. While many of the million or more short-term participants each year are going in groups, those standards are just as valid for individuals serving in short-term mission assignments. Trying to reach the benchmarks set by these seven standards will not guarantee a great experience for every participant, but it certainly moves things in that direction.

**Standard 1: God-Centeredness**

The first standard of excellence, God-centeredness, looks at how well short-term mission experiences follow the Matthew 6:33 principle of seeking first God’s glory and His kingdom. In order to do this, short-term mission projects must be built on sound doctrinal foundations—ecclesiological and soteriological—rather than on the need to finish a construction project or give a youth group something to do. God-centeredness means that short-term participants will recognize and affirm that the primary focus is the triune God and not them or the experience. For mission trips to be truly God-centered, they must be enveloped in persistent prayer and seek to foster godliness in thoughts, words, and deeds.

**Standard 2: Empowering Partnerships**
The second standard of excellence calls for short-term mission to be done by an interdependent partnership of senders and receivers. In the best short-term mission experiences, short-termers recognize that they are primarily accountable to career missionaries and national partners on the field rather than to an individualistic sense that God has called them to accomplish something. Authentic partnerships can flourish only where there is mutual trust fortified by functional systems of accountability. Initiating, building, and nurturing partnerships can be a challenge in cross-cultural situations where communication problems cause frustration and misunderstanding. Then, even when the spotlight is on the receptors, the participants must never feel that they are going to do something for someone, whether that someone be a missionary, an indigenous pastor, or a congregation.

**Standard 3: Mutually Agreed-Upon Design**

The third standard of excellence judges whether both goers and receivers have been partners in planning the experience. An excellent short-term trip never has one side announcing to the other, “Here is what we’re going to do.” Whatever methods and activities are done must contribute to the long-term health of the partnership and must fit within agreed-upon strategies. The
experience must have a doable design. That is, it must ensure that participants can successfully implement their part of the plan while the expectations placed on the host receivers are within those people’s capabilities. For example, it is probably unrealistic for a team to expect to do 10 days of one-on-one personal evangelism in a culture where none of its members knows the language. Likewise, it is probably unrealistic to expect that every member of a host congregation will give 40 hours to being with a mission team during the week they are on-site.

**Standard 4: Comprehensive Administration**

How short-term mission is set up and administered can make a difference in how successful it will be. This fourth standard calls on leaders of short-term mission programs to be above reproach in handling finances and to be truthful in pretrip promotion and in post-trip reporting. It expects that short-term mission programs will be of high quality and will be carried out with integrity, flexibility, and thoroughness. For example, in an area where there is little or no potable water, providing sufficient purified drinking water is a detail that must be on a priority list. Criminal activity on the field, an unstable political climate, or even just travel itself all have the potential for creating safety and security problems for short-
term mission participants. Thus, good trip organization will set up appropriate risk management procedures. This includes formulating action plans for accident, natural disaster, or civil unrest scenarios.

**Standard 5: Qualified Leadership**

As with almost any venture, having leadership that is competent, organized, and accountable is important for successful short-term mission. This fifth standard calls on organizers of short-term mission programs to recruit and train capable leaders who are spiritually mature and who see themselves in a servanthood role. Such leaders must see their primary role to be that of empowering and equipping rather than of running the show.

**Standard 6: Appropriate Training**

A well-done short-term mission will train participants prior to their going to the field and continue that training while the volunteers are on the field. In addition to preparing participants for specific tasks, such training needs to foster in them a measure of cultural sensitivity. The training will also seek to prepare people for interpersonal and mission team dynamics and for handling individual behavior problems in
biblical ways. One of the newest trends in short-term mission is that of putting groups together from two different nations or cultural groups to form a unified team to go to a third culture. In this case, participants will need cross-cultural training to enable them to successfully interact with other members of their team as well as with their site hosts.

**Standard 7: Thorough Follow-Up**

The seventh standard recognizes that good short-term mission programs provide debriefing and follow-up for participants. This should be done by on-field and post-field debriefing. It will be done with some on-field reentry preparation and through follow-up and evaluation after the volunteers return home. This standard recognizes that cementing long-term changes as a result of people’s short-term experiences usually necessitates post-trip follow-up.

**Longer-term Short-term Volunteers**

As the numbers of participants on short-term mission trips have increased over the last few decades, remarkable things happened. One was that short-term volunteers began saying, “I don’t want to go home after two weeks or a summer. I have a skill and time and money. I want to come back as soon as
possible.” Those short-termers began returning to mission fields to serve as volunteers for periods of up to two years. A positive thing for the career missionary is that midterm volunteers, as Miriam Adeney has called them, need less direct supervision than a team that will be on-site for only one week. The longer time frame gives more opportunities for the volunteer to learn culture and language. Thus, those midterm volunteers can usually assume more significant ministry roles than is possible for those who are on a field for only a few days.

**Retirees**

In many countries, people are able to retire from the work force while continuing to receive an income. Like the retiree previously mentioned who shared his dream with the missionary, other retirees are asking: “Is that all there is to life?” As people retire, they are faced with deciding what to do with the productive years they feel are still ahead of them. In an *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* article titled “Boomers, Busters, and Missions,” Ken Baker noted that numbers of American evangelicals 50 years of age or older are giving themselves to a second career in missions.²²

**Precareer Volunteers**
Spending a year or two in volunteer mission service has attracted college and university students wanting to do hands-on cross-cultural ministry before beginning their careers and families. The U.S. government fanned interest in volunteerism with its creation of the Peace Corps and Americorps. In Britain, taking a “gap year” during one’s university years has been a long tradition. Those kinds of programs gave young adults a way to see the world while helping their fellow human beings. The government programs, plus the example provided by young Mormon volunteers, gave churches and mission agencies models for providing young adults in-depth mission experiences. Thus, in addition to those going to a mission field as volunteers for one to two years right after they graduate and before they launch into their career, some are taking a semester or even a year off during college to serve as mission volunteers.

There are pros and cons to sending young adult volunteers to serve alongside older career missionaries. One drawback is the volunteers’ lack of life and career experience. Another is their frequent failures to comprehend how negative certain behaviors can be for the church in other world settings. As Craig Sheppard, missionary to Kosovo, has noted, “Short-termers hold the integrity of the gospel and the ministry of the church in their hands. I have seen and experienced volunteers
compromise the integrity of the ministry.” The positive side is that young adults tend to be flexible (a good characteristic to have in cross-cultural mission) and willing to adapt to new situations. Even when they fall short of their high expectations of what can be accomplished in a year or two, their enthusiasm to change the world can be contagious. Their presence may push those with whom they minister to be more radical in sharing the gospel than they would otherwise.

Volunteer service for a year has more potential to produce lasting change in a person than will a 10-day trip. This is one reason why mission agencies need to offer significant midterm opportunities for young adults. Factors in the success and failure of young, midterm volunteers include how self-motivated they are, whether they feel they are part of something significant, and how thoroughly they understand what is expected of them. When young adults have mission experiences, the good and bad ripples from that can influence a church for years to come. As was previously noted, it is not uncommon to hear of full-time missionaries receiving their call while serving as midterm volunteers. Some midterm volunteers have even made seamless transitions into career missionary service.

**Tentmakers**
One group of hybrid longer-term mission volunteers is known as tentmakers. While other volunteers take time off from their jobs and use savings or raise funds from friends and family to go on short-term mission trips, tentmakers fund their mission experience by taking a secular job in another culture with the intention of doing evangelism, discipleship, and church planting in their free time. There are several options between the extremes of having a full-time tentmaking job and being totally supported by donors or churches in one’s home country. William Carey did some tentmaking as he ran indigo processing plants and other business operations in India. Tentmaking has also been a way to do mission in creative access areas where visas and resident permits will not be issued to those doing missionary ministry in traditional ways. The downside to being a tentmaker missionary is that much of a person’s day and energy is soaked up by a secular job.

One example of a tentmaker missionary was Kim Sun Il, a Korean kidnapped in Iraq in 2004. Kim was in Iraq working as a translator for a South Korean firm and doing evangelism during his free time. He was highly educated with college degrees in English, theology, and Arabic. His passion for mission work among unreached peoples led him to the dangerous task of working and trying to minister in a war zone. He had been in Iraq for a
year when he was kidnaped by Jama’at al-Tawhid wa’l Jihad (in 
English, “Monotheism and Holy Struggle”) terrorists. They 
threatened to kill him and released video footage of him 
pleading for his life. Sadly, after a month in the hands of his 
knappers, Kim’s beheaded body was recovered outside of Baghdad. 
His killers posted an Internet message that read, “We have 
killed an infidel who tried to propagate Christianity in Iraq.”

Tentmaking should not be viewed as something less than the 
ideal, which is done mainly to get people into closed countries. 
Indeed, tentmakers’ professional training and abilities can give 
them opportunities to minister in strategic settings in open as 
well as closed countries.

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When the world sees millions of “retired” Christians pouring out 
the last drops of their lives with joy for the sake of the 
unreached peoples and with a view toward heaven, then the 
supremacy of God will shine. He does not shine as brightly in 
the posh, leisure-soaked luxury condos on the outer rings of our 
cities.

--John Piper

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Evaluating Midtermers

Douglas Terry did his doctoral dissertation on the effectiveness of longer-term or midterm volunteers who have spent from six months to two years on a mission field. Terry tried to evaluate the midtermers’ effectiveness by surveying them and the career missionaries and local Christians with whom they had served. According to Terry:

Any mid-term missionary who contributed significantly to a mission ministry and its goals, witnessed effectively about Christ, was satisfied with his or her ministry, was deemed suitable for this ministry, was able to communicate adequately with those ministered to, had a good relationship with at least one on-site career missionary, had a good relationship with at least one on-site national Christian, and the recipients of whose ministry were satisfied with it, is by definition effective missionally.16

From this list of characteristics or variables Terry developed a Missional Effectiveness Index, or MEI. He then correlated volunteer’s MEI scores with a number of other variables. The top three variables showing up in Terry’s study all have to do with communication and relationship. The most important variable contributing to the missional effectiveness of midterm volunteers was language communication skills.17
Cultural adaptation, which is inseparably tied to language learning, was the second most important variable in the high MEI scores. The third most important factor was the development and maintenance of good relationships. The fourth was spiritual readiness. Terry’s study also showed age to be a significant variable. His research indicated that midtermers who had the best missional effectiveness scores were between 55 and 64 years of age.

Most midtermers discover that one or two years of volunteer service go by very fast. They find themselves just starting to connect with people when it is time to go home. Thus, they need to be intentional about training others to do what they are doing or else their involvement and contributions will not continue after they leave. Because of the significant missionary ministry that midterm volunteers have given, some mission agencies have begun including them in the number of missionaries they report as being deployed.

**A Win-Win Proposition**

Volunteerism can benefit everyone involved. Fruitful short-term and midterm mission can assist not only the mission outreach of the church but also the spiritual maturation of
individual participants themselves as they look beyond their own interests “to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NIV).

In a *TIME* magazine editorial, Margaret Carlson noted the current popularity of volunteerism within American culture, “Volunteerism hasn’t been cool since Camelot . . . [this is our] first chance to turn the Selfish Generation into something more like the Greatest Generation . . . to help our indulgent generation awaken to what [U.S. Senator] McCain describes as ‘a cause larger than ourselves.’”

By themselves, short-term mission programs cannot fulfill the Great Commission. However, there is a paradigm for using short-term volunteers that has win-win possibilities. Volunteer mission programs can have more than numerical success. Such programs can also be full of significance as they enable believers to contribute meaningfully to Kingdom purposes.

**Questions for Reflection**

1. Why would young people and retirees be the best sources of volunteers?
2. Why has there been such an explosion of growth of volunteerism within the Church?
3. Most missiologists believe that the primary beneficiaries of volunteer programs are the people who go, not the people they go to. How may this ultimately benefit the Church?

4. What is a creative access area?

5. What are the seven Standards of Excellence?

6. What did Douglas Terry find to be important characteristics contributing to the missional effectiveness of midtermers?

7. Based on what is said in this chapter, how would you respond to the person who says, “Wouldn’t it be better if we just sent the money overseas rather than spending it all on airline tickets and housing and food”?