

“Load Up!” Out of your Comfort Zone into the Mission Field

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There has been nothing in my life that compares to a mission trip: out of my comfort zone and stripped back so that God can reshape, reenergize and reignite the passion I have to labor in His ministry. With a mission trip, it is not just building a house that is significant, but building relationships with new friends – God’s people in need – sharing the love of Christ and building a stronger bond with God. We have been created to praise and serve the Lord God Almighty. We can do this by serving His people. Only weeks ago, I was blessed to be part of a mission trip that served His people in Juarez, Mexico...

“Load up!” That was the last thing said as everyone piled into 15-passenger vans for our mission trip to Juarez to build houses for those in desperate need of a place to call their own. What else could it be that makes one look forward to cramming into vans filled with people you don’t know, sitting on an uncomfortable seat for 48 straight hours, without the comfort of your own schedule, no shower, eating sandwiches for every meal and sleeping on the hard ground? It is a blessing and a calling that only comes from God to make the difference in the lives of His people! It is the voice of God prompting us to serve Him by serving His people.



Upon arriving to Juarez, we weaved around the outskirts of town. I always enjoy watching the faces of those who are making the trip for the first time as they experience a new culture. Within fifteen minutes we arrived to the campus called “home” for the next 5 days: a church we have been staying in for over 10 years. The pastor and his family have become near and dear to us. (We have been making this trip time and time again.) They graciously open their property to us – up to 200 people on some trips! The kids scrambled to claim a space on the floor to plop their stuff. Then we gathered together to worship in song, prayer and receive from God’s Word.

Many on the trip had no idea what to expect while others were pumped and ready to work, knowing exactly what was to come...5:00 a.m.: “Wake up!” The CD player turned on the highest volume played “GO”. Audio Adrenaline sang: “I wanna be your hands, I wanna be your feet, I’ll GO where you send me, GO where you send me!” As we awoke this sluggish group, the goal was to remind them that we are working as instruments of God to do His will. Breakfast was served and into the vans we went, off to the worksite!

When we arrived, the group teamed up with a project manager who taught the workers how to build a home. The first thing we did was stand in a circle encompassing the ground on which to build. Everyone took a knee and placed one hand on the ground as we prayed:



“Lord, we are standing on holy ground. Today nothing sits upon this space other than the lives of those who love you and desire nothing more than to do your will. Give us the strength and determination to endure the task that is before us. You have blessed our lives and, in turn, we pray that we too can be a blessing to others. It is hard to believe that in just 3 short days a house will stand on this very spot and a family will have a home. Bless the hearts of those who are kneeling at your feet this very moment and bless the home we are about to build for we pray that in your name we are furthering the kingdom of God. Amen.”

Before we could bat an eye, we had built the frames to lie on the ground while another team mixed concrete to pour the foundation. Although it was a long, hot and difficult day of grueling work, together it got done. Next came framing walls, windows and doorways. You could hear nailing, measuring, cutting, hammering, the squeal of saws amongst laughter! With a roof, chicken wire, stucco, door and window installation, everyday the ground that originally stood empty began to transform into the shape of a house!



By nighttime, heavy exhaustion began to take its toll. Some stood in line to bandage blisters, have a splinter removed or receive Gatorade to offset dehydration. Some came for aloe to ease their sunburned necks - the one place they forgot to apply the sunscreen! All in all, it was a good exhaustion. Then came well-deserved sleep! Very quickly would come morning and the work would start all over again. Three days of heavy labor, sweating from 100+ degree heat but loving every minute of it!



By day 4, we finished! The ground which once was empty now bared, not just a house, but a home for a family who had never before had a house they could call their own. They no longer would have to fight the elements of rain and cold whistling through the pallets, which they had built to shelter the children and grandparents living with them. Now, for the first time, there are locked doors and windows to keep them safe as well as electric.

Just as before when we knelt on the empty ground, we now stood side-by-side with each other and this family. The family we had built for received a Bible in their language. Each person who had swung a hammer, nailed a nail, cut a piece of wood or had anything to do with the construction of this home was invited to sign the inside cover of the Bible as a remembrance that God blessed each one of us by allowing us the opportunity to further the kingdom of God. We also had the opportunity to pass the house keys so that every hand touched and prayed for the family. The Bible and the keys ended up resting in the hands of the head of the household.

This was one of the most powerful moments I have known in my life, that God could use such a small and weak soul like myself. Many tears were shed in the circle, from both the team and the family. It wasn't so much in the giving that I was blessed but in the receiving. I have always received much more from the strength and spirit of the people of Juarez than I could ever give. God has revealed to me, time after time, that He is in everything that I do. Because He lives in our hearts and because of our willingness to share, He uses us to share His love with those who may not know Him yet; and, as a result, we are all blessed beyond measure.

I have often felt like a lump of coal - black and dirty with jagged edges. And, I have learned that, before I surrendered my life to God that is exactly what I was. The miracle is in what He does with that lump of coal – with each one of us. He presses and molds us in ways we could never do on our

own. And, in His eyes, the end result is a beautiful, smooth, brilliant diamond created to shine with His love!

Tips:

- Recognize the great opportunity to be a witness to God's people through serving in missions.
- Remember: Whatever your occupation – mother, carpenter or artist – your talents can be used towards service on a missions trip.
- GO! Incorporate a mission trip into your annual summer schedule (perhaps more or less than once year, as God leads you).
- Talk to your congregation's outreach committee to discover what mission trips are being planned for the upcoming year.
- Pray for God's hand to be on your decision-making: *Where am I being called?*
- Take the logistical steps to make this happen: Request off work, get involved in fundraising opportunities, save up!
- Pray that God would... Give you a heart for His people, whom you will be serving; for His hand to be in their life; for protection on your group as you travel; that God would make your group effective; and that He would give you the words to say as faith-sharing opportunities arise.

Resources:

To find upcoming mission opportunities...

- Check your church bulletin or web site
- Drop into your church office or
- Ask a member of your Outreach Committee.
- For LHM Global Work & Witness Trips that are available to you, go to: <http://www.lhm.org/globalmission/projects.htm>!