

Jamaica Short-term Missions
25th Anniversary Team Reports

Laura M. Murphy, D.C.
Williamsburg, IA



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Learning Trust Teaching Truth

When we obey God in faith,
there is much blessing

I reflect on my time before, during, and after being in Montego Bay, Jamaica, for a short-term mission trip, I can see that the big lesson God has been teaching me is to trust Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says it well, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not unto your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”* For me, trusting God isn’t easy, and I find myself worried and confused because I’ve followed my own way, or I’m frustrated and angry because things are not happening my way or in my timing. The Christian life is all about leaning on God and daily seeking His will, but, more often than not, I find that it’s not until I’m broken do I really seek God’s will, necessitating many trials in my life. I’ve always been strong willed and that sinful tendency dies hard because I like being in control. I’m not sure why it is that I think I have a better idea of how my life should go than God because I make as many, if not more, foolish decisions than wise, and my sin frequently alienates me from people I care about.

In November 2009, I had the opportunity to go down to Jamaica with a clear focus on sharing the Gospel. It was fun adjusting the kids at the schools, but even more awesome to be able to share Biblical truth with them. I first went to Jamaica with the CCA in 2004, and, although I thought I was a Christian, God later showed me that I had head knowledge but no heart knowledge - I was the churched unsaved person. I had gotten past my attitude of *“I will not go to church again except for a wedding or a funeral,”* started attending church again, and heard the Gospel, but still had a love for the world and the things in it. It took the pressures of opening an office to humble me enough to see my need for a Savior. Before I was saved, I had a desire to go on a mission trip, but more from a humanitarian point of view than of sharing the Gospel. After I came to know the Lord as Savior, my desire for missions didn’t go away. It was still something I wanted to do, but it seemed as if there were no open doors for me to go, so I just tried to forget about missions.

At the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, the Lord was continually bringing missions to my mind. I still had a desire to be a missionary. One morning, a little girl from church ran up to me to give me a paper about missionaries going, ministering, and reporting to the local church. Then, on a Sunday, a guest missionary was telling a story about a man who felt led to be a missionary, but he only had one leg. This man went, despite the ridicule and obstacles, and had the opportunity to share the Gospel with many lost people and see them come to know the Lord. The people asked him why others hadn’t come to share the Good News with them, and he said they were too busy. Then the speaker looked right at me with my recently broken ankle and said, *“Your church even has a one-legged person.”* I was so overwhelmed

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ASSOCIATION**

2550 Stover, B-102
Fort Collins, Colorado
80525-4642

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(970) 482-1404
Fax (970) 482-1538
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Learning Trust, continued.

by all of this that I cried out to the Lord that I was willing to go, but would He ever let me go? The next day, I received a letter from the CCA about the 25th anniversary trip to Jamaica, inviting back all those who had been there before. I took this as a clear answer to prayer and planned to go on this trip. I still didn't have an open door to be a missionary full-time like I desired, and I had mixed emotions. On one hand, I was excited to go back to Jamaica for the week and share the Gospel; on the other hand, I didn't want to feed the desire for missions to which I seemed to not be getting the answer I wanted. I was praying for contentment with being where I was and struggling with every reminder of missions.

Despite my mixed emotions, I obeyed God and went to Jamaica. I arrived in Montego Bay and quickly met up with our team leader and a few other team members. Our driver/guide, Dudley, took us to the hotel where we met up with the rest of the team. It was neat to watch God take people from 11 different families and draw us so closely together that you'd think we'd been great friends all our lives.

We were able to attend the local churches for services, and it was great to see more of the Body of Christ.

Monday we started our week of clinics in the schools. Instead of just adjusting, I was asking the kids questions to get them thinking about eternity. The first question I asked them was, "If you were to die today, do you know where you would go?" Some kids answered no and some said yes, but couldn't answer the follow up

question of why. Many had no idea why they would go to Heaven and others thought that because they were a good kid, believed in God, or were baptized that they would go to Heaven. I would then share with them Isaiah 64:6a "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags," and that being good, or anything we do to earn favor with God for that matter, does not get us to Heaven, but that John 14:6 says, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me.'" I would also ask them if they knew how to get to Heaven, and if they went to Heaven and God asked why He should let them in, what would they say? It was great sharing Scripture with them.

It wasn't until I got home and had a horrible time adjusting to being back that I really started to reflect on Isaiah 64:6 and what it meant for my life. So often I'm like the foolish Galatians who, having begun in the Spirit, were trying to be made perfect in the flesh. It helps me to think that every "good thing" I do apart from Christ is as appalling to Him as a rag that I use to clean up something so disgusting that I just throw it away when I'm done. Thankfully, God never just throws us aside, but gently shows us the sin in our hearts and gives us a desire to turn to Him to be

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Teaching Trust, concluded,

cleansed.

My unsaved family members are a huge burden on my heart. Some go to church, others don't, some seem open spiritually, others don't, and I'm unsure if any of them are saved. I read the most encouraging Scripture over Christmas: 1 John 5:14-15, "*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*" I know from 1 Timothy 2:4 that God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. That gives me confidence that God has heard my prayers regarding salvation for family members, the people of Jamaica, the ladies from London I met at the hotel, the people in my practice, and unsaved friends. Now the hard part begins, waiting on His timing. 1 John 5:14-15 gives me the encouragement I need to endure waiting for God's timing because I know that He has heard me and will continue to do His work in the hearts of those I pray for, and that it's only Him who can do that work in their heart. It also encourages me that, when I pray to become more Christ-like, God has heard and will perform that very thing.

Thus God has ended my year with a promise I can put my trust in; our prayers for the salvation of unsaved people and for the sanctification of believers are always God's will, and He will hear us. Prayer is always where all ministry, including missions, must start because that's the power in ministry. There is no ministry apart from prayer because we cannot change people's hearts; only God can change hearts. Each one of us has a mission field right before us that we can be praying for and serving in faithfully. God also calls every believer to "*Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*" While He may not be calling to you physically to go to another country, you can still be a part of people in that country coming to know the Lord by praying for their salvation and for open doors for missionaries in those countries. In James 5:16 we're told, "*The effective, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much,*" so be faithful to pray, and if God gives you the burden, go and share the Gospel. The CCA has many short-term trips that you can serve on, but it will involve you trusting God with your practice, your family, financial provision, and your safety. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and to trust God every step of the way because every time we obey God in faith, there is much blessing.