

Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus to All People Everywhere

By Nina Abraham

Medical missions is both a humbling and gratifying experience that allows volunteers to share God's love toward others while providing much-needed medical care. Matthew 28:19 (ESV) states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This is not simply a suggestion from God, but a command to go and share the gospel to all nations, tribes, and tongues throughout the world.



Currently, I have been on three medical mission trips, one to Costa Rica and two to the Dominican Republic. Each time, I have returned to the United States even more grateful for the many blessings that I often take for granted. The people whom we served often have nothing, but still praise God and declare He is good despite their circumstances. Seeing the people worship God and hearing their stories of His faithfulness is truly inspiring. Mission trips serve as proof that each person can be used by God wherever He has placed them in that moment. Each person only needs the willingness to be used by God in any way that He calls upon him or her.

Christian medical mission trips are designed to provide care to the local people, as well as plant seeds in their hearts about the Lord and Savior whom we serve. When our team arrives in a foreign country, the biggest obstacle is making sure all the packed medications make it through customs without being confiscated by airport security. We were blessed with no hassles as the Lord answered our prayers for safe medication passage. Once the team arrived in the city where we will stay and minister for the week, we first categorized the supplies so that we can better serve the patients with an organized clinic. The next day, we started the clinics which are divided into different sections: evangelism, triage (e.g., blood pressure and blood sugar screenings), wellness check, pharmacy, and vision screenings. This allows us to work efficiently and get everything completed in a timely manner.

On my trip to Costa Rica, God reminded me that He is sovereign and in control of everything. There was a patient who came into the clinic with her child to get medical help. Little did that patient know her life was going to be transformed as well. My friend Jay had the privilege of talking to this woman on the day she came in. At first, she was quiet and did not want to open up about her spiritual life; but as Jay continued to prompt her, he was able to find common ground and delve into a deeper conversation with her about Christ. He was able to relate to her because they both have a Catholic background; and after much discussion about what it means to be saved by grace, Jay asked if he could pray with her. After praying together, she told him that she was feeling a pain in her chest, and it felt as if it was radiating. As a 4th year pharmacy student at the time, Jay recognized her symptoms as the classic signs of a Myocardial Infarction. He quickly alerted Dr. Axtell, who gave her aspirin and nitroglycerin

tablets and called the ambulance. This showed me that if a person is willing to be used by the Lord, they can do incredible things for Him and His glory! Just imagine what could have happened if my friend Jay was not willing to be used by the Lord where he was placed that day. The patient might have died without possibly understanding what being a Christian is truly about. God used the Costa Rica trip and the two Dominican Republic trips to remind me of the many attributes that comprise His character.

There is another story that I will always remember – it took place when I was in the Dominican Republic. A patient came into our clinic in Santo Domingo with a foot ulcer. It looked as if there was a gash in his foot/leg. As I looked at him, I realized that his spiritual healing was even more important than his physical healing. He didn't have the money for the medications to treat the ulcer, and he had let the infection continue to spread because he thought there was nothing that could be done. I remember considering the reality that medications may only be a temporary fix, and that he'd likely end up back in the clinic soon. That being said, one of my professors, Dr. Santamaria, was able to find sterile gauze to wrap up his foot. He poured saline on the wound to try to keep it clean and prevent the infection from spreading. Though we were unable to provide the man with a cure, we were able to provide him with care and prayer. His situation seems impossible, but it is not impossible with God. In Jeremiah 32:27 (ESV), God declares, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"

God used my second trip to the Dominican Republic as a reminder that not only is He the peace in the middle of madness, but also that He deserves the glory as the ultimate Healer regardless of how many patients we treat. Often, as is the case in pharmacy, we get so busy and backed up that it becomes chaotic and we rarely have time to take a break. God reminded me that although things may get crazy busy in our line of work, we must remember that it is He who ultimately provides peace, rest, and healing. I remember an instance when I was at the triage station taking a patient's blood glucose. It was the typical chaotic conditions, but I didn't let that bother me because I knew the people still needed my help. I am so thankful that God used me to help a girl who was hypoglycemic. Her blood sugar was 56 mg/dL, which is very low, especially considering that she had eaten just before her blood sugar was taken. Normal levels for fasting blood glucose are between 70-99 mg/dL. She was feeling dizzy and sweaty, which are some common signs of hypoglycemia. When I saw this, I immediately knew that I needed to correct her blood sugar; so I applied the rule of 15 and gave her four oral glucose tablets, then waited 15 minutes to re-check her





blood sugar. Praise God, when I re-checked it, her blood sugar was normal! God gives the knowledge and tools we need on (and off) the mission field to be His hands, feet, mind and spirit!

From my very first mission trip until now, God has been growing my passion for helping people and doing missions around the world. The goal of every mission trip is to reflect Christ in everything we do, and ultimately bring Him glory. The treatments that we provide for the people of the country only last for so long, but what truly matters is the impact that we make for Christ. That is something that, once received, can never be taken away from the people. I honestly cannot wait to go on another medical mission trip. As a student, you go there expecting to make a difference and impact their lives. But the whole experience impacts your life as well, as you witness their consuming love for God, and how they still praise God in spite of their circumstances.

My name is Nina Abraham. I am currently a pharm D. candidate at Palm Beach Atlantic University Gregory School of Pharmacy (GSOP). I am extremely passionate about missionary work which is why I take every opportunity my school provides to go on mission trips. I have had the opportunity to go to Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic where I get to put the skills I learned into practice. I am also involved with CPFI, and have been to many of the national and regional meetings. My plan after I graduate is to hopefully work in a hospital as a pediatric pharmacist. I love being able to bring a smile to patient's faces especially when the patient is a child!

Short-Term Missions, Long-Term Impact: Leveraging Partnerships with Local Health Care Providers and Churches

By Justin W. Cole

To many people, the Dominican Republic is known as a vacation destination with posh resorts, but great poverty and discrimination are found in many parts of this island nation. The sugar cane growing regions of the Dominican Republic are a prime example. Sugar is one of the main agricultural products exported from the Dominican Republic, and nearly all sugar cane is cut by hand with machetes. For many Dominican citizens, the work of cutting sugar cane is beneath them. Migrant Haitian workers have come to the sugarcane fields looking for the opportunity to work for meager wages in the fields.¹ The workers and their families live in small, impoverished villages called bateyes or “slums,” where clean water and safe food are scarce. Many Dominicans live in similar conditions near the bateyes.

In May of 2017, a team of two pharmacists, three pharmacy students, and a languages student was organized through Cedarville University's School of Pharmacy and Global Outreach to share the gospel and serve the people living and working in the bateyes. The aim of this trip was three-fold: to meet the medical and spiritual needs of the people in the bateyes, to survey the health needs in the bateyes, and to set the stage for future medical mission partnerships with a mission organization called Del Rey Ministries. In essence, our aim was to support the work that God was already doing in the Dominican Republic. Through this experience, the Lord taught us much about how short-term missions can effectively support the long-term investments of individual pastors, missionaries, and health care providers in the field.



Upon our arrival, we quickly observed the difficult living conditions near the sugar cane fields. The medical needs of these people are extensive, ranging from treatment of parasitic infections (due to water contamination), hypertension, HIV/AIDS, and dental conditions. Prenatal and postnatal care for women and infants is inadequate. Seeking relief from these maladies, the people of the bateyes turn to many things, including local witch doctors. The poverty in the bateyes is material, physical, emotional, and spiritual. We also heard stories of discrimination against the Haitian workers in the bateyes. Some Haitians are not able to obtain citizenship papers even after living years in the Dominican Republic, which is the key to obtaining many resources in the country. Without these papers, a person cannot get married, own property, or access health care services. Essentially, over 500,000 people are treated as if they do not exist. The need for advocacy, quality medical care, and the good news of the gospel is urgent. While many well-intentioned people have come into the region offering assistance, some

of the efforts have caused harm to those living in the bateyes. In contrast, Del Rey Ministries is working to affect lasting changes by making the gospel of Jesus Christ known throughout the bateyes. Their strategy for successful ministry is three-fold: identifying local Christians that God has called and equipped to be spiritual leaders in their communities, equipping those leaders to teach sound biblical instruction and serve the people, and supporting local leadership for long-term impact with short-term mission teams.²

In addition to equipping spiritual leaders, Del Rey Ministries collaborates with a local doctor. Dr. Yasquina Benjamin grew up in Batey Marguerita as the daughter of a local pastor. After attending medical school, Dr. Benjamin chose to forgo a lucrative job in the city to care for the people of the bateyes. She works to provide care by traveling to where there is need and working from her in-home clinic, which consists of only two rooms – each about the size of a small bedroom. Her resources are often limited, but her heart for Christ and