

ZEALOUS DEVELOPER.



This is where God comes in. God has meticulously put this body together; He placed each part in the exact place to perform the exact function He wanted. If all members were a single part, where would the body be? So now, many members function within the one body. The eye cannot wail at the hand, “I have no need for you,” nor could the head bellow at the feet, “I won’t go one more step with you.” It’s actually the opposite. The members who seem to have the weaker functions are necessary to keep the body moving; the body parts that seem less important we treat as some of the most valuable; and those unfit, untamed, unpresentable members we treat with an even greater modesty. That’s something the more presentable members don’t need. But God designed the body in such a way that greater significance is given to the seemingly insignificant part. That way there should be no division in the body; instead, all the parts mutually depend on and care for one another. If one part is suffering, then all the members suffer alongside it. If one member is honored, then all the members celebrate alongside it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:18-26 (the voice, emphasis added)



WHAT MAKES A ZEALOUS DEVELOPER?

1. CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS.

While on your trip, it is important to understand that we can create buildings that are durable and have a solid foundation meeting a true need in the community, but our work must extend beyond physical buildings and reach into the lives and hearts of people. Our work is that of eternal matters, seeking to expand the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of all people. Construction is a platform that we use at Next Step to meet families within communities and to build relationships with those families. Take time during your workday to step back from construction and interact with community members. May we push ourselves to view each individual that we encounter on our mission trip as a part of the body of Christ: believing that each part is valuable to the overall function of the body. In that, we will inevitably build relationships that suffer alongside those suffering, and celebrate alongside those celebrating.

2. POTENTIAL VS. PLIGHT.

It is important to understand the deep need that exists within the community in which you will be working this summer. Many of these communities reveal statistics regarding poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, suicide, storm damage, homelessness, and disease that is rampant. These statistics reflect a reality that we must not ignore. But in that reality, it is even more important that we allow these communities and the individuals that live within these communities, to shake themselves free of the reputation they have developed as being impoverished, unemployed, or ruined from a storm. We must look beyond the statistics and define communities by their potential.

As human beings, we often step into the identity that others place on us. If others identify us as the class clown, we will often say words, tell jokes, or act in a way that supports that identity. It is the same within a community: we can indirectly continue a cycle of poverty or hopelessness by fixating on statistics that define a community as impoverished and hopeless. Our perspective on the condition of a community will impact the way that we interact and engage with the people within that community. Let's take a step beyond the statistics (although accurate) and interact with individuals and the community in a way that lifts them up as a significant part of the body of Christ.

3. EMPOWERMENT VS. DEPENDENCY.

Next Step Ministries believes that short term missions done effectively can empower a community, as opposed to supply ongoing assistance to a community. We seek to build relationships that create confidence within a community, assuring that the community is able to function as a sustainable unit. We are all tools within the community to support and encourage that process. Our goal is to work ourselves into a new role within each community in which we help the community move from dependency to active participation in the process of rebuilding itself. In that, we ask that you work with community members instead of for community members. Take the time during your trip to work alongside the family for which we are building for and teach them (or mutually learn) construction skills. Understand that offering someone five minutes of your time to teach is much more valuable and sustainable than giving away five dollars in cash.

4. DEVELOPMENT VS. RELIEF.

Relief within a community creates a provider receiver relationship: one that discredits what a local individual may have to offer in the process of rebuilding and replaces it with what an outsider provides or gives to that individual. Development within a community is walking with people, being relational, taking time to listen, and creating opportunities for empowerment. Development is focusing on efforts that will extend your work beyond one week, and help to create sustainable change within the community. It is important that, with every word or action we take during our week, we promote active participants, as opposed to passive recipients. This can come in the simplest of forms. If a community member asks to help with a project, or move something in their home, we often times reject the offer. After all, we are in the community to serve, so we insist on doing it for the community member. Instead of rejecting that offer, we encourage you to invite each community member into the building and serving process. Collectively build, learn, and serve.

5. ASSET-BASED VS. NEEDS-BASED APPROACH.

We have the opportunity to approach our mission trip with either an asset-based approach or a needs-based approach. An example of a needs-based approach involves asking a community member, "What do you need?" This creates a dynamic between you and the community in which you must be the provider of the community's needs. It promotes a savior mentality and passive dependency. An asset-based approach instead takes the time to ask a community member what they already have and encourages the use of what already exists in the community. Be creative in finding ways to involve the community during your trip!

KEY TAKEAWAY

As the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to become zealous developers through the way that we interact with the community we are serving. Simply becoming aware of these concepts is a great start. You have the opportunity to be a part of empowering a community, and to extend your services beyond one week through pouring yourself into the people, resources, leadership, and skills that already exist in a community. **As Zealous Developers, we are compelled to serve in a way that empowers the community. We believe in the people of this community and view them as a valuable part within the body of Christ.**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. How have you seen the Body of Christ evident in your own youth group? What different parts exist? What are some examples to show that all parts of the body really are necessary in order for the overall body to function effectively?
2. In past experiences with friends, family members, peers at school, or people in your neighborhood, how have you interacted with someone that is seemingly less significant than you, or maybe has less to offer? How could you interact with that person differently in order to communicate/show that you believe that person is valuable and has something to contribute?
3. Which of the above concepts seems most unfamiliar to you? How has your thinking changed? What are some questions you may still have about these ideas?