DEVOTIONS FOR SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

1. Listening for God’s whisper


This week, you will have the opportunity to spend 30 to 45 minutes each day in solitude: reflecting on God's Word, journaling, and praying. God is calling for you. Take advantage of this time to listen for God’s whisper.

Reflection questions:

1. Why do you think that God came to Elijah in the gentle whisper instead of in the wind, fire, or earthquake?

2. Why do you think Jesus was led to the desert after his baptism, before he began his ministry?

3. Why do you think Jesus found it necessary to retreat to a quiet place to pray so frequently?

4. Are there a lot of distractions in your life?

5. What are they distracting you from?

6. Do you feel hurried?

“For most of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them.” —John Ortberg
2. Not about us

**Scripture:** Luke 12:22-34, 2 Corinthians 4

Anxiety and the things of this world often consume our lives. This world tells us to constantly focus on ourselves: how we feel, what we need, what makes us happy. Yet the Scriptures constantly remind us that it is not about us. We don’t need to worry because our power comes from God. We matter because we are children of God, and our focus should not be on ourselves, but on our creator.

**Reflection questions:**

1. What makes you anxious? Why?
2. Do you really think God will take care of you?
3. What causes you to lose heart?
4. What do you think is the “god” of our age?
5. What does Paul mean when he tells us to fix our eyes on what is unseen instead of what is seen?

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?’ Actually, who are you _not_ to be? You are a child of God...We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.” —Marianne Williamson
3. Building each other up

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16, James 3, Hebrews 10:19-25

In community, we need to pay attention not only to ourselves, but also to others—how they are doing and what they are feeling. This week, look out for others who are struggling and take time to encourage, build up, and pray for them.

Reflection questions:

1. How can the community we find ourselves in build us up? How can it tear us down?

2. How do you think James 3 fits into the idea of community? How does this affect the way we act on this trip?

3. Is there someone on this trip that feels like a burden to you (someone that bothers you)? What does it look like to treat this person with respect and love?

4. Who do you need to encourage this week?

“The body of Christ was alive, no longer trapped in stained-glass windows or books of systematic theology. The body of Christ was literal, living, hungry, thirsty, bleeding. Church was no longer something we did for an hour on Sunday, and church was not a building with a steeple. As Don Everts says in his book Jesus with Dirty Feet, ‘Referring to the church as a building is like referring to people as two-by-fours.’ She came to life. The church became something we are—an organism, not an organization.” —Shane Claiborne
4. Serving Judas


It is amazing that Jesus washed his disciples’ feet before he talked about Judas’s betrayal. Even though he knew Judas was going to betray him, he still treated him the same and served him by washing his feet. We don’t know how long Jesus knew about Judas’s plans, but the fact that the other disciples had no idea who it was shows that even in those circumstances, Jesus showed no favoritism.

**Reflection questions:**

1. Why should we serve others? Is it hard for you to serve?
2. How do you think your faith is seen by others?
3. How does serving others like Jesus did compare to what society teaches us to do?
4. Where is God calling you to serve? If you don’t know, pray that God will show you.
5. What does faith like a “love affair” look like?

“Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair.” —G.K. Chesterton
5. Sacrificing for the kingdom

**Scripture**: Mark 10:17-31, 1 Peter 3:8-22

Mark 10:17-31 is one of those passages many of us would rather ignore. Like the rich man, we would have a hard time giving up all of our possessions for God. But sometimes God does ask us to serve in ways that feel extreme to us, ways that require sacrifice. Putting God above everything else in your life is no small commitment. Are you ready to make it?

**Reflection questions:**

1. Can you relate to the rich man?
2. Would you give up everything you own to follow Jesus?
3. Why would Jesus ask the man to do that?
4. Could God be asking you to sacrifice something in your own life? What might it be?
5. Can suffering actually be a good thing?
6. Are you willing to suffer for Christ? Have you? How?
7. What are the things you tend to ignore in the Bible? Why?

“You guys are all into that born again thing, which is great. We do need to be born again, since Jesus said that to a guy named Nicodemus. But if you tell me I have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God, I can tell you that you have to sell everything you have and give it to the poor, because Jesus said that to one guy too…But I guess that’s why God invented highlighters, so we can highlight the parts we like and ignore the rest.” —Rich Mullins
6. Lord of all creation

**Scripture:** Psalm 104, Isaiah 45:18, Colossians 1:15-20, Romans 8:18-27

While we often focus on God’s relationship with humanity, God created and rules over the entire universe. We are called to serve as stewards of God’s creation, to care for it responsibly and compassionately. And when we explore the natural world, we can experience the One who created it in new ways.

**Reflection questions:**

1. Do you experience God through nature? How?
2. What is it about God’s creation and silence that helps us experience God’s power? Take some time to be silent and listen for God’s voice.
3. What do you think Paul is referring to when he says that God is reconciling all things? Does that include nature? If so, what does that mean for us as we follow Christ?
4. Paul also says creation has been groaning. How do you see this happening in the world today?
5. How can we be better caretakers of God’s creation?

“If I could live another life, I think I would devote it to ecology, because I also believe that this is a truly spiritual and Christian work. Genesis begins with our mandate to take care of God’s creation, and never has our failure to do so been more acute than now. Learning to live as caretakers of creation and friends to our fellow creatures must be at the core of a new kind of Christianity.” —Brian McLaren
7. A different kind of blessing

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:1-12

Spend some time thinking and praying about this passage. It seems Jesus’ message turns many “normal” or “mainstream” ideas in our culture upside down.

**Reflection questions:**

1. How is the view of blessing in this passage different than the messages we hear in our culture about blessing?

2. Why do you think Jesus challenges our ideas about blessing?

3. How does your life look different when you think of blessing as Jesus describes it in this passage?
8. Changed hearts


Peter’s response to the transfiguration is classic: “Hey, let’s stay up here! I’ll build some tents, and we can hang with Elijah and Moses and Jesus. That would be awesome.” Many people feel the same way after trips and retreats. We encounter God in new ways and want to preserve the spiritual momentum. But the disciples don’t stay on the mountain. In the next passage, they are back in town, and Jesus is healing once again. Like Peter, you will be returning to everyday life. But that doesn’t mean that your experience “on the mountain” doesn’t matter. Through our mountain experiences, we grow closer to God. That changes our lives and our hearts. We learn how to better love our neighbors, and we deepen our commitment to loving and serving God.

Reflection questions:

1. How have you encountered God this week?
2. What is one area in which God is working on your heart right now?
3. How might God’s work in this area begin to change your perspective or behavior?