

Spiritual Preparation: A Devotional Guide for Missions Volunteers



South Carolina Baptist Convention

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All quoted scripture is from the New International Version.

Day 29 - Spiritual Gifts - Ephesians 2:10

Ask God to help you maximize your spiritual gifts to the fullness of His power in your life and work. What are your gifts?

Day 30 - Praise God - Psalm 95:1

Ask God to help you praise Him for His greatness. Tell God how great He is and how much you depend on His greatness each day.

Spiritual Preparation: A Devotional Guide for Missions Volunteers

As I reflected on what spiritual preparation means to our experiences as missions volunteers, I was struck by how little time most of us spend really focusing on getting ourselves ready spiritually for God has called us to do. Maybe you don't fit into that category, but I believe all of us can and should spend more time with God preparing for our work and ministry on the mission field.

My prayer is that God will speak to you first through His Word, and then through the devotions in this booklet; that He will make scripture passages that you have read many times fresh and new. And that you will find that the time that you set aside to worship, study and to hear God's voice will become as necessary to you as breathing and eating.

May God bless you abundantly as you follow His call to share the Gospel everywhere you are.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Colossians 3:16-17

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Spiritual Preparation

One of the hardest things that you will do to get ready for your mission project is your spiritual preparation. It always seems that many things get in the way and distract us from preparing our hearts for tasks ahead. Many of us seem to focus on the physical preparation (conditioning our bodies for the long flights, walking, climate, etc.) and the logistics of our project (what are we going to do, what do we need to pack, where are we going to stay, what are we going to eat, is there going to be bottled water, what kind of bathroom will there be, etc.). In focusing on the physical and logistical, we neglect the most important aspect of our preparation – allowing God to prepare our hearts and minds for what He has called us to do.

We are challenged in every aspect of our being when we go to the dark places where people don't know Jesus - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Every one of these aspects needs attention and preparation for the task. In my experiences, I have found that I am challenged spiritually more than the other areas. The spiritual warfare that I engage in drains me to the point that I feel hollowed out and dried up at the end of each day.

Spending time during the months preceding your project in spiritual preparation will ensure that you have what you need to fight the spiritual darkness that you will encounter. This preparation will also help you combat the inevitable culture shock that you will experience. Be diligent in scheduling times for spiritual refreshment, encouragement and growing in knowledge of God. If you don't plan it, you will neglect it.

There are several aspects of preparation that you need to engage in. They are:

- 🌐 **Corporate Worship** – it is of utmost importance to spend time with your Christian family worshiping together. Make sure to attend every worship service at your church that you can. The writer of Hebrews admonishes us in Hebrews 10:25 “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together for worship.”
- 🌐 **Private Worship** – as we spend time with God in our “prayer closet”, part of that time should be in worship and

Day 23 - Peace - Philippians 4:6-7

Pray that God will give you peace in your work and the issues you face daily. Give one thing to God that you are worrying about.

Day 24 - Devotion to God - 2 Corinthians 11:3

Ask God to help you maintain true devotion to Christ. What do you do in your devotion time with God?

Day 25 - Obedience - John 14:15

Pray that you will obey and love God regardless of the circumstances/situations in which you find yourself. Give one way you are following God in obedience.

Day 26 - Listening to God - John 10:27

Ask God to help you know His voice and follow Him. What has God been saying to you lately? How did you respond?

Day 27 - Express Love - Mark 12:30

Ask God to help you model Christ's love to others in your community. List one tangible way you can demonstrate God's love and do it.

Day 28 - Retreat with God - Isaiah 50:4

Pray for times of retreat and refreshing with God.

Day 17 - Team Spirit - I Corinthians 3:7-9

Ask God to build strong teams that bring glory to God. What will you do to forge partnerships with others?

Day 18 - Stand Firm - 2 Corinthians 4:17

Ask God to help you stand firm on the Word when tempted, stressed and challenged. What Word have you hidden in your heart concerning something that has challenged you?

Day 19 - Boast in the Lord - 2 Corinthians 10:17

Be quick to give God the credit. What do you need to give God credit for?

Day 20 - Seasoned Speech - Colossians 4:6

Ask God to help you know how to respond to every person you meet. How will you respond to those who do not agree with your train of thought?


Day 21 - Persistence - Philippians 3:14

Pray for endurance, stamina and a sense of peace as the Kingdom of God comes on earth as it is in heaven. What will it take for you to persevere?


Day 22 - Resist Temptation - I Corinthians 10:13


Pray that God will help you flee temptations when they are present. Trust God when you are tempted to

adoration of Him. God loves it when we tell Him how we feel about Him. When we verbalize our love and praise to God, we will experience His presence in new and exciting ways. This might be through speaking to Him out loud, praying silently, writing it down in a journal, singing hymns and praise songs and reading scripture praising God.

 **Bible Study** – reading and studying God’s Word. You may already have a Bible Reading plan in place that you use each day during your quiet time. If not, you will find two 30 day plans in this booklet as well as 14 days of devotions that you can use in the two weeks prior to your trip. As you use these devotions, focus on the Scripture passage first. Read the passage and spend time meditating on it and hearing what God has to say to you through His Word. Then move to read the devotion and use the reflection questions to help you see what God wants to teach you through His Word.

Have a plan to memorize scripture that will be helpful and meaningful to you on your project. God will lead you to verses that you need if you will spend time reading His Word and letting Him speak to you through it.

 **Days of Fasting** – you may decide that observing days of fasting is helpful in your spiritual preparation. Fasting helps us to focus on praying and hearing what God is saying to us. You may decide that one day each week helps you focus on what God has called you to do. Some may decide that more than once a week is needed.

 **Journaling** – many times we don’t begin to journal until we leave for our project. I believe that we miss a great opportunity when we do this. Begin journaling as soon as you have committed yourself to your project. God will begin to speak to you, giving you scriptures and thoughts that will be valuable as you prepare and go. You will find that on the really hard days for your journey, something that God revealed to you weeks, sometimes even months, prior to your trip will help you during those difficulties.

Use your journal to write down your thoughts, God’s revelation to you and your answers to the reflection questions as you use the 14 days of devotions.

Don’t neglect your spiritual preparation. It is the most important thing as you get ready for what God has called you to do.

Day 1

Focus Scripture – Proverbs 4:20-27

Key Verse: Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

What do you think of when you read the phrase “guard your heart?” What does that mean to you?

The heart is so much more than just an organ in our bodies that pumps blood or what we refer to when we talk about our affections. The heart is regarded as being the seat of the intellect, the feelings and the will. The heart is often spoken of in God's Word as our innermost being.

The New Living translation states the verse this way: "Guard your heart above anything else you have, because it determines the kind of life you will live." Warren Wiersbe says that the heart is the "master-control" of the life; a wrong heart always produces a wrong life. To allow sin into the heart is to pollute the entire life.

Anytime a patient goes in to have surgery, the first thing the doctor will do is check the person's heart. After all, if the heart is not right, nothing else will be right. Without a healthy heart, the best surgery in the world will do the patient no good. In the physical realm the heart is at the center of life. It is the pumping of that muscle that spreads life to the rest of the body.

It is the same in the realm of the spirit. As a result, we see the biblical emphasis on the importance of having our hearts right with God. In Matthew 5, Jesus pronounces His blessing on those who are "pure in heart." Being pure means to be of one kind, no mixture, of singular purpose, being fully devoted. Jesus' focus is on the heart. As in the physical life, the core of Christian existence is the heart. A heart right with both God and other people sets the stage for a meaningful life and meaningful ministry. Without a healthy spiritual heart you are spiritually dead, no matter how well you understand theology or how much of the Bible you have committed to memory. It is the

recognition for yourself. In what ways do you glorify God?

Day 12 - Dependence on God - Proverbs 3:5-6

Ask God to help you learn to depend on Him. What ways can you depend on God in your life?

Day 13 - Daily Prayer - Acts 6:4

Ask God to help you show up at the practice field of prayer and get to know God more. How is your prayer life?

Day 14 - Spirit of Unity - Romans 15:5-6

Pray for a spirit of unity as we work together as partners in His Kingdom. List one way you can encourage unity.

Day 15 - Eyes to See Like Jesus - I Samuel 16:7

Pray that God will allow you to see the hearts and minds of others as He does. How do you relate to others of different races, cultures or economic backgrounds?

Day 16 - Direction from God - Isaiah 48:17

Pray that God will give us vision and direction. What is God saying to you?

Day 6 - Purity - Psalm 119:133

Pray for yourself to be renewed by God's Word that no sin will have dominion over you. What sins are trying to dominate your life? What does God's Word say about those sins?

Day 7 - Hunger for God - Hebrews 5:14

Pray for a hunger and thirst for God and His Word as you seek Him daily. How are you getting to know God better?

Day 8 - Boldness to Share the Gospel - Ephesians 6:19

Ask God to give you boldness to share the Gospel with others whom you come in contact. Share with someone this week about an opportunity you recently had sharing the Gospel.

Day 9 - Rest - Mark 6:31

Ask God to help you recognize the need for rest away from responsibilities. How many hours of rest do you get daily? How much time do you spend with your family?

Day 10 - Guard the Treasure - 2 Timothy 1:13-14

Pray that God will help you focus on sharing the Gospel and not be distracted by issues. Who did you share the Gospel with recently?

Day 11 - Glory to God - Matthew 5:16

Ask God to help you give all the glory to Him and not seek

pure in heart who shall see God.

We will be ineffective in the mission that God has called us to if our hearts are not pure. Confessing our sin and finding the forgiveness of God's grace is the first step in preparing our hearts for ministry. What are temptations that you face in your life that may cause your heart not to be right with God? What steps to do you need to take to avoid those temptations?

The second step involves our daily time with God in Bible study and prayer. As we spend time with God, He will help us to be prepared to flee temptation as well as give us scripture verses and thoughts that will help us guard our hearts and stay on the right path with Him.

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?
2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?
3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

Day 2

Focus Scripture – Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Where does your power come from? When you begin a ministry task or seek to live out God's purpose for your life, where do you find the strength to do it? Many times we try to do things on our own – in our own strength or wisdom. I find that every time I do that, I fail. I do not have what I need in myself to succeed. Only when I rely on God's strength in my life do I find that I have what I need.

On my own, my physical strength is not enough to deal with long flights, hot and humid weather, different food, etc. But when I rely on God's power in my body, I can cope with whatever physical challenges come.

On my own, my emotional strength is not enough to deal with separation from family, a strange culture, people who I don't understand and who don't understand me, etc. But when I rely on God's power for my emotions, I can cope with the separation and different lifestyles.

On my own, my mental strength is not enough to deal with hard theological questions, understanding different belief systems, etc. But when I rely on God's power for my mind, I can overcome not having all the answers and know what to say when questions arise.

On my own, my spiritual strength is not enough to deal with

30 Day Bible Reading Guide

(Adapted from the guide written by Elaine Helms, NAMB)

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.
(Jeremiah 33:3)

Day 1 - Sacrifice of Holy Living - Romans 12:1-2

Ask God to empower you to be healthy in mind, body and spirit. What will you surrender to God?

Day 2 - Focus on God - Matthew 6:33

Pray for focus on God's plans and agenda above everything else. What do you hear God saying? Write it down

Day 3 - Study God's Word - 2 Timothy 2:15

Pray for time to spend in the Word and ask God to give you discernment. Have you memorized or meditated on any scriptures this week?

Day 4 - Confession and Repentance - Psalm 139:23-24

Ask God to help you regularly seek examination by the Holy Spirit and repent from wrongdoings that have become shadows in your life. What have you confessed lately? What have you repented of lately?

Day 5 - Humility - Philippians 2:3

Pray for humility in your life and ask God to help you exemplify humbleness. How do you exalt others around you?

30 Day Bible Reading Guide

(Source: International Mission Board)

1. Spiritual Renewal for Service - Psalm 51
2. Taking Time to Pray - Mark 1:35-45
3. The Word and the Way - Psalm 119:2, 19, 105, 165
4. The Power to Serve - Acts 1:1-12
5. Christian Depression - I Kings 19:1-18
6. Here I Am, Let Me Go! - Isaiah 6:1-12
7. Fit to Serve - Ephesians 5:1-17
8. Availability Plus Christ - John 6:1-14
9. Commissioned to Serve - Matthew 28:19-20
10. Empowered to Witness - Matthew 28:16-18
11. The Unlikely Witness - John 4:1-42
12. The Expected Result - John 4:1-42
13. Making the Ordinary Extraordinary - Acts 4:1-19
14. Revive Us Again - Psalm 85
15. Overcoming Difficulties - Numbers 13:25-33
16. Removing the Stones - John 11:39-40
17. The True Measure of Greatness - Matthew 20:20-28
18. Differences Between Good Missionaries - Acts 15:36-41
19. When You Cannot Finish the Task - Luke 10:25-35
20. Acting Like What You Are - Matthew 21:18-19;
Galatians 5:22-23
21. Overcoming Prejudices - Jonah 1:1-3, 3:1-20, 4:1-3
22. Serve With Gladness - Psalm 100
23. Serve With Gratitude - Psalm 103
24. Serve With Compassion - Jonah 4
25. Serve With Urgency - John 9:1-7
26. Serve With Inner Strength - John 15:1-16
27. Serve With Love - John 21:15-23
28. Serve With a Team Spirit - Romans 12
29. Serve For Common Purposes - I Corinthians 1:23-31; 2:1
30. Proclaiming Liberty to the Poor - Isaiah 61:1-6

being away from Christian brothers and sisters who encourage and help me, not being in worship with my church family, etc. But when I rely on God's power for His Spirit to be active in me, I find His Word is sufficient to feed my soul and His Spirit helps me to commune with the local believers where I am. On my own, my spiritual strength is not enough to deal with the spiritual warfare that I will encounter as I go into enemy strongholds and dark places. But when I rely on God's power, His light will shine through me and the people I meet will see that there is something different about me. I will also have the power through Jesus' name to banish Satan and his demons from my presence.

Verse 20 says that God is able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." Do you believe this? How have you seen this manifested in your life? It seems that we see this promise come true more as we participate in missions projects – or maybe the reality of the promise is there in our lives everyday and we just miss it... When we are on mission, we are looking for God to do miraculous things.

The first time I went to Taiwan was in December 2001. My team worked with a local church to do community outreach. First, we went to a local park where some of the team sang and others twisted balloon animals to gather a crowd on a Sunday afternoon. The church members moved among the crowd, talking to people and asking them if they know about Jesus. It was a great experience! As our team was praying together before we left the US, we prayed that we would have the opportunity to see one person come to know Christ as Savior during our trip. God answered our prayer immeasurably more than we asked and we saw 7 people accept Christ!!!

What are you asking God to do as you go on mission?

Is your prayer a "human-sized" or a "God-sized" prayer? Ask God to work in and through you in ways that are more than you can imagine!

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?

Day 14

Focus Scripture – Revelation 7:9-17

Key Verse: Revelation 7:9

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

The Apostle John paints such vivid word pictures in the book of Revelation. His description of the worship before the throne of the Lamb in chapter 7 is staggering. People from every nation, tribe, people and language will gather before the throne and lift their voices in worship and adoration of Jesus. The number is more than anyone can count!!

John Piper states in his book *Let the Nations Be Glad* that “missions exists because worship doesn’t.” He begins by stating that “missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.” (*Let the Nations Be Glad* by John Piper, copyrighted 1993 and 2003 by Desiring God Foundation)

God desires a relationship with each and every man, woman and child on planet Earth. Integral to that relationship is worship of Him as Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Savior, Healer, Comforter, Father, Sanctifier, Peace, Shepherd, Judge, Righteousness, Ever-present, Omnipotent, Holy One, Deliverer, Redeemer, Everlasting, and King.

Our task and calling is to share the Gospel with as many people as possible so that those people have an opportunity to accept the salvation that God offers through Jesus Christ and begin a relationship with Him where worship takes prominence. As you prepare for your ministry, don’t neglect your own times of worship of God, both corporate with your church family and your private worship times. Take encouragement from John’s vision that as you share the Gospel with people around the world, you play a part in bringing people to worship at the

Day 3

Focus Scripture – I Peter 3:8-16

Key Verse: I Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

What is the reason for the hope that we as Christians have? Many of the people that you will encounter (and do encounter on a daily basis) have no hope. They are living life, desperate for something that gives them meaning and purpose. The Apostle Peter admonishes us to always be prepared to give an answer when people ask us what is different about us, why do we have joy, why do we have hope, why do we have meaning and purpose in our lives.

We as Christians have accepted Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives. We recognize that He has a purpose for our lives – something that He has called us to do. We have a joy that is indescribable, no matter our circumstances because of God’s promises to us. We have hope, in this life and in the life eternal to come.

Your personal testimony – your story – is a great way to share the reason for the hope you have. It’s your story and no one can tell it better than you. Telling your story gives you credibility because you are sharing what has happened to you personally; no one can dispute it because it is yours.

Take time to write out your personal testimony. Practice sharing it with people so that you can share it comfortably and quickly. It should be no more than 2 minutes long. A very simple format is:

1. My Life Before Christ – did you grow up in a religious or non-religious home? What were you missing? (Don’t dwell on past sin or go into specifics.)
2. How I Received Christ as Savior - how did God convict you of your lost condition? How did you come to understand the “good news?” Exactly how did you receive Christ as Savior and Lord?

3. The Difference Christ Now Makes in my Life - What benefits do you now enjoy? How have your priorities changed?

In addition to your salvation testimony, you may want to prepare several other testimonies for oral presentation. Subjects that you might consider are:

- * What does Christ mean to me in my family
- * What does Christ mean to me on the job
- * What does Christ mean to me in the community
- * What does Christ mean to me in my church

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?

2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?

3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

nations, then he will fill the truck that's driving toward the nations. He will bless the church that's pouring itself out for unreached peoples of the world. And this blessing is not payment for a service rendered; it is power and joy for a mission to accomplish. When we move toward the unreached peoples, we are not earning God's blessings, we are leaping into the river of blessings that is already flowing to the nations. (By John Piper. © Desiring God. www.desiringGod.org)

The ultimate goal in missions is to share the Gospel with every person so that they have the opportunity to respond to the gift of salvation and live a life of obedience and worship to God. By living out our obedience to Matthew 28:19-20, God will bless us and our efforts to share the Gospel. The blessing is not dependent upon the response of the people we tell; the blessing is dependent upon our obedience to go and tell.

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?

2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?

3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

Day 13

Focus Scripture – Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

The God that we worship is not a tribal deity or made of wood or stone. He belongs not just to a region or a specific people or a country. He is the God of all nations. The truth of this is reflected in many of the Psalms. They reveal God's heart for all of the nations of the world and His desire for them to worship Him.

The word used for nations is the word for peoples or ethnic groups, not geographical or political groups or countries. God desires for every person on planet earth to have a relationship with Him and out of that relationship comes worship and praise of Him.

He calls His people to declare His praise among the nations. We as His people, His children are to share the message of His love and who He is to those who don't know Him. Jesus commands us in Matthew 28:19-20 to go and tell – it is a commandment, not a suggestion. God promises His blessings when we praise Him and make Him known by telling His story.

John Piper said in his message entitled “Let the Nations Be Glad” –

When God Will Most Likely Bless Us

God will most likely bless us when we are planning to bless the nations.

There is another point implied in this main one: if God blesses his people for the sake of the nations; then God is most likely to bless us when we are planning and longing and praying to bless the nations. If God wants his goods to get to the

Day 4

Focus Scripture – Romans 10:5-15

Key Verses: Romans 10:12-15

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The Apostle Paul writes in this passage that we are justified by our belief and saved by our confession that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. He quotes Isaiah 28:16 when he says “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

He reminds his readers that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles – that Jesus is the same and He is Lord of all and blesses all who call on him. He then quotes Joel 2:32 when he says triumphantly that everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

But then he asks the question of how can people be saved if they don't hear the Gospel message. That question rings down through the ages to us – how can those in the world who haven't heard the Gospel hear if we don't tell them?

God calls us to share the Gospel. Matthew 28:19-20 is not the “Great Suggestion” – it is the “Great Commandment.” Jesus doesn't say “if you are going” or “maybe you can go.” He says “GO!” And as we are going, we are to teach and preach and baptize and make disciples.

You are following God's command and call to go and share the Gospel with those who don't know and have a relationship with Him. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 in verse 15 of the passage in Romans: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of

Day 12

Focus Scripture – Hebrews 11:1-12:3

Key Verses: Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 11 is what I consider the “Hall of Fame of the Faithful.” The writer recounts for his readers the men and women of the Old Testament who were found to be faithful to God through some of the most difficult circumstances.

The writer begins Hebrews 12 with the words “since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.” The writer is referring to those whose stories he has told in chapter 11. These witnesses are those who have been found faithful through the ages, then and now.

Consider the great cloud of witnesses with which you are surrounded. It may be grandparents, parents and other family members who are now in heaven. They gave you a spiritual heritage and foundation that God is building upon in your life today. It may be Sunday School teachers, missions leaders and others Godly Christians who made significant impacts on your life.

Write down names of some of those significant people in your life. Praise God for the impact that they have had on you.

This great cloud of witnesses also includes those missionaries who have given their lives in service to sharing the Gospel with a lost world. I immediately think of people such as Lottie

Day 5

Focus Scripture – Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

We see people everyday who are living in darkness. You meet them at the grocery store, the gas station, Wal-Mart, your neighborhood...sometimes even in your church. You will meet people when you go on your mission trip who are living in darkness – some may never have even had the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

You will recognize them immediately. Many will have a look of hopelessness and despair in the eyes; some will be going through their religious rituals with desperation, hoping to appease their god and gain some type of favor; others will seem to have just given up.

Jesus calls us to be the light of the world. He gives the illustration in these verses about lighting a lamp. We don't light a lamp and then hide the light. We put it in a place so that it lights up the entire room. Jesus says that in the same way, we are to be the light that leads people to see that something is different about us and points them to God.

How do you show the light of Christ?

Hopefully, you listed ways such as joy in life no matter the circumstances, the places you go, the speech that you use, the way that you treat people no matter who they are, etc.

In many countries it is assumed that because you are an American, you are a Christian, and often the perception of the people about Christians is not what true Christianity is. Jesus calls you to show the world what a true Christian is – you have joy, hope and peace and your relationship with God through Jesus Christ has made a tremendous difference in your life.

Jesus of Nazareth; he is in his own person the Lord that healeth us. He is the beloved physician of men's souls. 'By His stripes, we are healed.'" Spurgeon then quotes Psalm 147:3-4: "He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars and calls them each by name." As we pray for those who are broken, whether in spirit or body, we proclaim God's love and healing to them in Jesus' name.

3. Through Jesus, there is freedom and release. He is the Liberator. There are many who live in captivity and darkness – it may be financially, in their relationships or literally in prison – but all who don't have a relationship with God through Jesus live in spiritual darkness and captivity. We are to be the light in the darkness to lead them to Christ; we are to be the proclaimers of the freedom that is found in Jesus.
4. We comfort those who mourn and grieve. There are so many in our world who mourn and grieve with no hope. They know nothing of the promises of eternal life. We are to bring the good news of the Gospel so that when the days of mourning and grieving come, they can have hope. I'm reminded of the song by Steven Curtis Chapman titled "With Hope." The chorus says:

We can cry with hope; We can say goodbye with hope
'Cause we know our goodbye is not the end, oh no
And we can grieve with hope, 'Cause we believe with hope,
(There's a place by God's grace) There's a place where
we'll see your face again.
We'll see your face again.

We see that the end result is that the believers are called "oaks of righteousness." When I think of an oak tree, I think of the old oak trees in the Lowcountry of our state. These are tall, stately trees that have weathered many storms and still stand strong. Believers become like that – strong and firmly rooted. We are called righteous not because of anything we do, but because of what Christ does in us that shows forth when the difficult times come. We stand strong in our faith, maintaining our joy and hope.

Day 6

Focus Scripture – Philippians 2:1-8

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Do you like everybody you meet? Do you get along with everyone in your life? We all find that there are people we just don't like and those we just can't get along with – even in our own families!! God doesn't call us to like everybody in the world; He calls us to love them as Christ loves them.

The people on your team may be from your own church or association whom you know well and dearly love. They may also be people who you have never met before your pre-trip team meetings. Either way, these are people you will be spending a great deal of time with in "close quarters" for 1 or 2 weeks or more. Some things to remember as you work and minister together:

1. God has called all of you to go on this mission together. Each person has a specific reason and purpose to be on the team.
2. Everyone on the team has the same goal – to teach English, conduct sports camps or VBS, prayerwalk or whatever. The overall goal is to share the Gospel and the love of Jesus Christ with people who don't know Him.
3. God calls each of us to be a servant to one another. In these verses, Paul tells us to do nothing out of ambition or conceit, but in humility, not looking to our own interests but the interests of others. Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant. He is our example to follow in how we relate to

- and serve each other.
4. Variety and diversity is good. God calls each of us with our different personalities, gifts, abilities, strengths and roles.

There will be times when you will be tired, feeling ill, get “cranky” or overwhelmed by culture shock. Your teammates will have those days too. Be sensitive to each other. Help each other when those days come. Ask your teammates for help – don’t feel weak or embarrassed – know that everyone goes through those times. Treat each other with love and respect. The people around you will notice how you interact with each other and that will be a witness to them. As we serve each other and minister to the people we meet with the attitude of Christ, we’ll make a difference in their lives that will have an eternal impact.

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?
2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?
3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

Day 11

Focus Scripture – Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

We as Christians have a message that everyone in the world needs to hear. Just as Isaiah was called to preach to the people of Israel, we are called to share the very same message with the world today. That message is that Jesus Christ came to do all that is proclaimed in these verses.

Through the Holy Spirit that abides in us, we have what we need to share the Gospel in a hurting, rotten world. We can only do this in the name of Jesus through His strength. Paul reminds us of this in Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” We see in these verses from Isaiah what we are called to do and share.

1. We are called to preach good news – the Gospel. Man is separated from God because of sin and God took the initiative in making a way for man’s relationship with Him to be restored. God sent Jesus, His perfect, sinless Son, to die on a cross so that through our belief and confession of Him as Lord and Savior we find forgiveness of our sin and restoration of our relationship as children of God. Romans 5:8 tells us that “God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” John 3:16 says “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will never perish, but will have eternal life.”
2. Through Jesus, the brokenhearted are healed. I love the way that Charles Spurgeon describes this in his sermon entitled “Beauty for Ashes.” He says “Jehovah Rophi is the

Focus Scripture – Luke 12:22-31

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?

Are you a worrier? Do you have to have all the facts and information? For many of us, we want to know all the details – what am I going to do, what do I need to pack, where am I staying, does it have air conditioning or heat, what kind of food will there be, etc. Many times we get so caught up in the details that we forget why we are going in the first place.

3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

Jesus tells His disciples not to worry about what He considers the little things in life – food, clothing, shelter. For the disciples and for us, these aren't little things, but Jesus helps us to put it in perspective.

He reminds us as He reminds them that God provides for the birds and the flowers and He will provide for us. God will give us what we need when we need it. He already knows these things long before we do!

Living here in the US, we are blessed beyond measure. When we flip a switch, the lights come on. When we turn the faucet, we get clean water..and hot water when we turn that faucet. We go to the grocery store and can choose between hundreds of different kinds of products, buying whatever we like or want. We are spoiled!!

we sow generously and give cheerfully, God pours out His grace on us so that we have all that we need to succeed in the work that He has called us to do. The giving and the work don't earn the grace and salvation of God – these things are the natural response that we should have because of the salvation and effects of God's grace in our lives.

Do you see the promise here? No matter what God has called you to do on your missions project, He will give you everything you need to succeed because of His grace in your life and your willingness to give of yourself – money, time, talents, gifts, etc. Rest in this promise and know that His grace is sufficient and His strength is perfect.

Reflection –

1. What is God teaching me through this scripture passage?

2. How can I apply this teaching to my life during my mission trip?

3. How can I apply this teaching to my life here at home?

Focus Scripture – John 14:25-27

Key Verse: John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

What scares you? For some people, it is fears such as the dark or spiders or snakes or heights. For others, it is a fear such as death, maybe of a loved one or their own, or imprisonment or torture. For me, my greatest fear is going to the dentist. My fear is so great that I have to leave the room when I watch a movie or TV show and they show someone at the dentist. Some of our fears seem silly and childish, but that doesn't make them any less real.

In John 14, Jesus tells His disciples that He will soon be leaving them. He tells them to take comfort in the promises He gives. In the verses preceding verse 27, Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit that will comfort and help them. He tells them not to be afraid. Jesus goes on to tell them that many will suffer persecution just as He has suffered, but the Holy Spirit will be there and God will grant peace and help.

Many missionaries and missions volunteers are called to go to hard places in the world – places where there is persecution and it is dangerous to be a Christian. But Jesus tells us that we do not have to be afraid. My pastor husband has preached many sermons over the years about not being fearful – not being afraid. He shares that there are 365 times in the Bible where God says do not fear,” “do not be afraid,” “fear not.” That is one for every day of the year.

As you go on your mission project, what fears do you have?

The whole of John 14 should give you comfort and help with your fears as you read the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. John 14:27 should resound through the ages that we

