

Spiritual Reflections

DEVOTIONAL: THANK YOU, LORD!

Exodus 15:1-21

- Recall what Moses, Miriam, Aaron, and all the other Israelites did when they made it safely across the Red Sea. (They sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, recalling all that God had done to guide and deliver them.)
- We can use this same model while on our trip. We celebrate God for bringing us here safely and we celebrate everything he has done and will continue to do while we are here.
- Allow opportunity to share how members have seen God at work.
- Ask someone to read Lamentations 3:22-23.
- Allow opportunity for team members to share how they have experienced God's care and protection on this journey.
- Gather in a circle and do 'popcorn prayer'. Ask team members to give one-sentence praises to God for bringing you to this place. Pray for a spirit of openness as you learn about what God is doing in this place. Pray that God would use each member of your team to bless someone in this place.

Daily Reflection:

Ask the team about what they have observed in this place. Are there cultural differences/similarities? How has what they have experienced so far impacted them? Is there anything that they have observed that they are struggling with?

Daily Tips:

- Observe – in a spirit of openness, suspend judgement.
- Ask why – be a learner.
- Push yourself to engage in as many ways as you can.
- Listen – really, really listen.

DEVOTIONAL: VISION + VALUES

Matthew 28:16-20

- As Jesus was preparing to leave this earth and his disciples, he left them some very important instructions. To 'make disciples of all nations' includes every ethnicity, every tribe, every type of person – across all the languages, barriers of understanding and geographical hindrances. Everyone needs to hear the good news of the gospel!



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- How do you see yourself fitting into the Great Commission? How can you live that out while on the trip?
- Have someone read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,12-14,27
- Even though we are together as a team, each of us individually has something to offer. Allow opportunity to share how God has been using your gifts while on this trip. Are there times when we have missed a prime opportunity to share God's love?
- Gather for prayer, focusing on how God can use each member of the team to fulfil his will, and that the team would be open to his leading.

Daily Reflection:

What is one thing that you experienced today that has really stood out to you? Why? What is something new that you have learned today, whether about yourself, about someone else, or about the community in which we are serving?

Daily Tips:

- Be ready for God to open your horizons and teach you a lot!
- Be ready to work as a team player the whole time – and be flexible.
- Allow time each day to be with God alone.
- Pray for yourself and your teammates.

DEVOTIONAL: HUMILITY

Philippians 2:1-8

- While on this trip, God will be more concerned about who we will 'be' in our ministry location rather than what we will 'do' here.
- What instructions does Paul give with regards to who we should be? What example does he provide that will help us to accomplish this?
- Having a heart of humility does not come naturally. Our culture often pushes us away from an attitude of humility toward one of selfishness or pride. But following Jesus clearly calls us to be humble servants.
- Allow opportunity for group members to spend some quiet moments in prayer, asking God to give them a heart of humility and to follow his example.



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Daily Reflection:

What are some differences that you have noticed in the way people think and do things in your host country? Are there times when we have had the idea that we, our ideas or the way we do things are 'better'? What have you been able to learn from the new people you have met?

Daily Tips:

- Be open to doing things that are not typical to how you usually do them. You will be exposed to a wide variety of ministry styles. Don't rule out any. Put your heart into it, and God will teach you something.
- Remember that every individual you meet with and talk to has their own personal perspectives. Every person will be on different ground. Be open-minded to where they are.
- Use every experience as an opportunity to learn. Never be afraid to be open to a new way of thinking or doing.

DEVOTIONAL: SUBMISSION

1 Thessalonians 5:11-15

- For many people, the word 'submission' is one that they would rather avoid. Some are afraid of what would happen if they submit. Others are convinced that submission is somehow related to our absolute agreement with the one we're submitting to. Some view submission as never questioning those leading us. Godly submission, however, looks very different. It is not only a requirement for the believer, but it is also an avenue to great blessing!
- In Thessalonians, what is God calling us to do when it relates to submission to our leaders?
- Throughout Scriptures we are given examples of who we should submit to in our lives. Have someone read:
 - James 4:7
 - Hebrews 13:7
- Based on these Scriptures, who are we to submit to and what responsibility do they have in our lives?
- Allow opportunity for prayer that God would strengthen the team and give wisdom and guidance to the team leader.

Daily reflection:

How has God been using you on this trip to lead others? What kind of an example have you been? Are there areas where you need to improve?

Daily Tips:



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- When working with the residents from your host country, ensure to be mindful and respectful of cultural differences (dress, gestures, words and phrases, etc).
- When working together as a team, be respectful of each other's differences, show respect for the team leader and always set a good example for those who may be watching and observing us.

DEVOTIONAL: UNITY

John 17:20-23

- This passage is all about unity and God's desire for us to work together as one.
- Why is it so important to Jesus that we be united?
- Unity is essential to good teamwork. On this trip, you are part of a team of brothers and sisters in Christ. How can we be united together, especially in the nitty-gritty details of living and learning together?
- Have the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Have them read Romans 12:9-21 and Colossians 3:12-17. On a piece of paper write out at least 10 of the commands for good team unity. In the small groups, share in prayer together, asking God to help them display each of the qualities of a good team, as listed in Scripture.

Daily Reflection:

How has God been using the team to fulfil his purposes? Are others around us able to see us working in unity? What areas do we need to work on?

Daily Tips:

- Be aware of the differences of other team members and find ways that you can work together, using the unique gifts that God has given you.
- Show appreciation for the gifts that other team members bring to the table.

DEVOTIONAL: MINISTRY IN THE MIDST OF POVERTY

Luke 4:17-21

- Jesus' ministry constantly involved ministering to people who were the outcast of society. He reached out to the lonely, the sinner, the hurting, the weak and the poor. When he read the passage from Isaiah he knew that he had come to fulfil that prophecy. His job was to reach out to the people that were often left alone.
- Where does the idea of ministering to the poor begin? Allow time to look up the following passages and make time for discussion:



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- Sabbath Day: Exodus 23:12
 - Sabbath Year: Deuteronomy 15:1-6
 - Year of Jubilee: Leviticus 25:8-13
- God provided these guidelines so that the poor should always be taken care of. If life was difficult and someone was forced to sell their land or become a slave, there were provisions in place so that at the Year of Jubilee everything should be returned as it once was. The poor would gain possession of their land again and the slave be set free.
 - What are we doing to understand issues of material poverty? How can we be generous with the resources that we have? How will our attitudes and behaviours change as a result of this trip?
 - Have someone read Isaiah 58:1-3,5-10. God was not furious with the Israelites because they did not fast or adhere to the Sabbath. It was because they failed to care for the poor and oppressed. They failed to stand up for justice.
 - Spend time together in prayer seeking God's guidance how he can use each person to 'act justly and to love mercy' (Micah 6:8). Seek God's direction on how he can use each person to minister in the midst of poverty.

Daily Reflection:

What sights have we seen where we have been guilty of just walking by – whether at home or on the trip? How can we address the issue of poverty?

Daily Tips:

- Take note of the sights you see around you. Look closely at how people live (housing, food, clothing, education, etc), in comparison to what you have at home.
- Learn to express appreciation and thanksgiving every day for what you have access to – both the big and small things.

DEVOTIONAL: SHOUT IT ALOUD!

Isaiah 58:1-3

- Bishop Desmond Tutu once said, 'If you are neutral in a situation of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.'
- From the beginning of time God has been giving guidelines and setting requirements for our living with regards to the oppressed in our world. The Bible uses groups of individuals as examples such as the poor, widowed, orphaned, lonely, sick, etc. Jesus himself set the example for us when he was here on earth. The people that often everyone else shunned and stayed away from, he spoke with, dined with and befriended.
- Seek other Scriptures that reference standing up for justice:



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- Micah 6:8
 - Jeremiah 22:3-5
 - Exodus 22:22
 - Romans 12:2
 - Luke 10:33-37
- God gave us our voice so that it can be used. Jesus used his voice to change people's lives ('Go and sin no more', 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity', 'Today salvation has come to this house', 'Do not be afraid'). We have the same potential.
 - Spend time together in prayer for the injustices that you have seen thus far on your trip. Pray for specific situations and people that you may have encountered and the courage to use your voice to make a change.

Daily Reflection:

What is one injustice that we have seen that has impacted our lives? What are some of the restrictions that these people live with on a daily basis? What kind of consequences could be encountered if they try to overcome the injustices they face? How will we use our voice, even after returning home, to speak up against those injustices, while protecting the people we have met? Is it possible for us to remain neutral in these situations?

Daily Tips:

- Be more aware of the conditions of people's lives – where they live, what they eat, how they are treated.
- Be willing to offer a kind word or greeting to others.

DEVOTIONAL: WHO ARE THE POOR?

Matthew 25:31-46

- Jesus' ministry involved a concern for those who were in need, including the poor. Often our intentions for helping others may be to do what we feel they need, or what is best for them. However, this can cause more harm than good.
- There may be a number of different factors about a person's life that, when looking at them on the outside, may cause us to categorise them as poor. We often define 'poor' as a lack of wealth or material possessions; however, someone who is poor can be dealing with issues much deeper than this. The lack of money or possessions could be the result of other situations in their life, or circumstances. Equally, they may have skills and resources, aside from the material, that are great blessings in their lives.



- What does Scripture tell us about 'the poor'? Does it address more than just a need for money? Allow time to look up the following passages and make time for discussion:
 - Acts 4:33-34
 - Deuteronomy 15:4
 - 1 John 3:16-18
 - Matthew 5:3
- Dr Martin Luther King once said that real compassion for the poor is not giving change to the beggar, but changing the very edifice that created beggars in the first place.

Daily Reflection:

Does the way I live my life support or challenge a system that creates and reproduces poverty? Do I hold a narrow view of people experiencing material poverty, or places that have been generally characterised as 'poor'? What kinds of 'wealth' have we seen on this trip (community, family, connection to nature etc)?

Daily Tips:

- Take the time to talk to the people you encounter and listen to their story instead of just giving a hand-out or doing a good deed for them.

DEVOTIONAL: OPENNESS TO NEW LEARNING AND NEW REALITIES

Philippians 2:5-13

- A seeker went to visit a wise one, hoping for enlightenment. The wise one invited the seeker to her cell and offered her a drink. 'Yes, a drink would be fine,' said the seeker. The wise one poured until the seeker's glass was full, and then kept pouring. The seeker watched until she could take it no longer. 'It is over full,' the seeker said. 'No more will go into it.' 'Like the glass,' the wise one said, 'you are full of your own truths, ideas and opinions. You cannot be enlightened until you first empty your glass.'
- Going into a new country also means entering a new way of life, a new set of rules and standards, a new way of thinking, new ways of doing things and a whole new culture. All of this will probably be very different from what we are used to. However, the important thing to remember is that our way may not necessarily be the best way. Scripture reminds us to humble ourselves and this means being open to new ideas and new ways.
- After experiencing a new culture and meeting new people, in what ways do you feel you need to 'empty your glass'?
- Spend time together in prayer asking God that you open your eyes and heart to be accepting of other people, allowing the opportunity for him to teach you new things.



Daily Reflection:

What are one or two big differences that you have noticed in the way things are done? What has been your response in these situations? What lessons do you think God was teaching you?

Daily Tips:

- Try to avoid making comparisons to the way you do things back home. Instead, be open to learning something new and seeing a different approach.
- Branch out by trying a new food, such as a local dish. Appreciate the abundance of food you have on a day-to-day basis and give thanks for the meals provided in your host country.



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