Welcome to Short-Term Missions! We are excited to be a part of this call to service you’ve received from the Lord. We pray that this Devotional/Journal will assist you in this spiritual journey to which God has called you.

“I am sending you off to open the eyes of the outsider so they can see the difference between light and darkness, and choose light, see the difference between Satan and God, and choose God. I am sending you off to present my offer of sins forgiven, and a place in the family, inviting them into the company of those who begin real living by believing in Me.” - Jesus in Acts 26:17-18

INTRODUCTION

So, you’re finally here! We hope your travel was uneventful and your luggage arrived when and where you did! You probably did much to prepare to be here, including get vaccinations, acquire supplies, and make room in your schedule. Perhaps you packed your insect repellant, sunscreen, and Pepto-Bismol. You are physically ready, but why? For what? Adventure? To serve God? To help people? All of the above?

“...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sunscorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.” - Isaiah 58:10-11

Whether you have taken a crash course in language and read every book on short-term missions you can or whether you haven’t had a minute to think about it until you arrived, we encourage you to take time now to focus on the spiritual foundations of this trip and your experiences here. Our hope and prayer for you is that you will be a light to those who don’t yet know Jesus, to those who have not yet received forgiveness of their sins. We also hope and pray that you come away from this experienced changed, that you will sense the Lord guiding you in your pursuit of Him and as you serve for His glory. The Lord is smiling on you as you take this step of faith.
Day 2
SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Prayer:
Jesus, let me experience your grace and presence as I see You in Your Word. Begin the lesson with prayer. Ask God to be present and to grant understanding and eyes to see. Sometimes spiritual warfare happens during the discussion of the topic of spiritual warfare. The devil would like us to remain ignorant of his schemes.

Read or have someone else read the opening illustration:
Stubbs was a famous British artist who did many of the old equestrian paintings. One such painting is of a hill. At the bottom of the hill is a hidden cave in which a lion is hiding. He has smelled the beautiful white stallion coming down the hill unaware. The next painting is of the lion now sprung and tearing the flesh of the blood-stained, doomed stallion: a vivid picture of how the devil wants to devour us.

Read or have someone read 1 Peter 5:8:
-Does anything about the portrayal of the Enemy in this passage/illustration make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?
-What should our response be to this threat? (Peter gives an answer in the verse just read, but encourage further answers as well.)
-What are your weaknesses, those areas where you need to exercise self-control? The enemy knows them, making it all the more important that you are on your guard and alert.

Read or have someone read 2 Corinthians 10:3-6:
-What thoughts are floating through your mind that you need to take captive to Christ? Surrender them to Him in prayer!
-What spiritual forces of evil, demons, false gods, or idols are worshipped in the country where you are?
-What are the different weapons illustrated in the passage, and how we might use each one as we try to live our Christian life? Pray these verses out loud and visualize physically putting on the full armor of God and going into battle; for that is what you are actually doing every day you live for Christ. Commit your time here to His protection.
-Ask your hosts what spiritual warfare they face and pray the blood of Christ to render these forces powerless.

An idea for group prayer for this lesson may be to have each person pray specifically concerning one piece of armor mentioned in the passage (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, etc). For example, one person can pray that the group would stay grounded in the truth. The next person could pray that we would stand under the protection of Christ’s righteousness when we are accused of sin, etc.

Also pray and commit your time on the trip to Christ—ask for His spiritual protection.

Journal

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Day 3

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

Prayer:
Be with me Lord as I open your Word, may Your will be mine.

Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

As a group, discuss the answer to the following question:
What are the two most important things Jesus asks us to do with our lives?

Read or have someone read Matthew 22:36-40

Read or have someone read Luke 10:25-37

Have someone read:
The situation of grinding poverty is different than the issue of situational crisis as presented in this story, but the point remains the same.

Day after day you may be encountering people on the streets with their hands out, or seeing people living in impoverished conditions. How do you react to them? Do you give them money? Do you smile, talk to them or give them food? Do you avert your eyes and continue walking? Always discuss appropriate responses as a team with your host or long-term missionary on site.

This may be a good time to ask the group about the poverty they have seen since being there, and how it has affected them. Discuss specific situations that the group has experienced together, if appropriate.

-How can we respond more like the Samaritan? Emotionally? Relationally? Physically?

Being in a society where the poor are abundant and there is seemingly nothing you can do to help, remember that they are your neighbors and deserve your respect, not just your pity.

Discuss the answers to the following questions as a group:

How can we respond more like the Samaritan?

If you aren’t there, what steps can you take to get there? How do you think being on this trip is helping you take those steps?

Prayer: During group prayer time, pray for God to grant each of you hearts and hands like Jesus, the ultimate Good Samaritan.

Conclude this time by asking Him to make your heart and hands like the Good Samaritan.

Journal

Day 4

A SERVANT’S HEART

Prayer:
Father God, be near to me as I open Your Word. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

It has been said that everyone wants to have a servant heart, but no one wants to be treated like a servant or do servant’s work!

Read or someone read Matthew 20:25-28

According to these verses, what was Jesus’s purpose in coming to earth?

What do you think about that? What is our purpose in coming on this trip?

Discuss the answers to the following questions as a group:

Aside from the main project you are doing, what are some other ways you can serve those near you? (nationals, teammates, or others?)

In what ways do you prefer to be served rather than to serve?

How can you break this pattern?

One of the best ways you can serve others is with the humble attitude of a learner. Are you showing interest in those around you by your questions and willingness to enter in, even if you’ll look foolish? If not, ask God for the grace to do this more.

Read or have someone read John 13:12-15

Discuss the answers to these questions as a group:

How do we keep this attitude when we are sweating, have diarrhea, and have to eat beans and rice again?

Ask God to form in you a desire to serve, and an attitude like that of Jesus Christ. Pray for eyes to see and hearts to act on opportunities to serve during the rest of the trip.

Journal
Day 5
TEAM WORK/UNITY

Prayer:
Lord, help me to listen and clearly hear You speak today. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson:
One reason missionaries leave the field is because of interpersonal conflict with other missionaries. Surprised? Don’t be; one of Satan’s main goals is to break the unity of the body of Christ. At the least, he would love to render your team ineffective by having you concentrate your emotional and spiritual energy on just getting along.

Are there things that bug you about some of the people on your team? Talk to the Lord about it in prayer, making sure to humbly acknowledge your own shortcomings that may wear on others as well.

Can you think of a time on this trip or other times when the importance of unity was impressed on you? Or have you seen firsthand the pleasantness of unity or the unpleasantness of disunity?

What are we to do toward others?

- According to this passage, how can we encourage unity within our team?
- What are some specific practical ways we can build one another up (v. 2) while we are together?

A good group exercise here might be to go around and have people share good things they’ve noticed in other teammates so far on the trip.

Why does He care about unity?

- Pray for your teammates, asking God to do awesome things in their lives.
- Lord, help me to die to myself. Keep me from minding the petty things that bug me and help the team to be of one heart and mind!

This would be a good time to have teammates pray for one another, either pray for the person sitting next to them, or to divide into prayer partners. Perhaps part of the prayer time should also be a time of giving thanks specifically for each person on the team.

Journal

Day 6
CONSECRATION AND AMAZING THINGS!

Prayer:
Keep me from mental distractions and help me, Lord, to focus on you alone. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read this introduction:
You are reading this page far from your home. Five years ago you probably didn’t think you would be here doing what you are doing. God has moved you and is now using your life for His glorious purposes. Pretty amazing, huh? As we walk in the light, free from habitual sin, God uses our lives in awesome ways. He moves us. . .

“I can’t go with you and stay where I am, so You move me. You give me courage I didn’t know I had. You move me out of myself and into the fire.”

Susan Ashton song entitled “You Move Me.”

- What do you think about these lyrics? What does it mean “I can’t go with you and stay where I am”? What does it mean He moves us?

Read or have someone read 1 John 1:5-10

What are some areas of your life you have not surrendered to God?

- Ask for His forgiveness in humble prayer.
- What is our role as we follow God?
- Would anyone be willing to share about a time when God called them to surrender to Him, and what the results of that were?

Read or have someone read Joshua 3:5 and Habakkuk 1:5

God can and will use your life in a mighty way as you trust in Him for great things as well as small. When you expect God to do amazing things, do you tend to overlook the “small things” while looking for big things? Do you have an example from your own life where you have seen God work in the “small things”? How about in the “big things”? Discuss the answers to these questions as a group.

What are some things God has done in your life already on this trip? Thank Him!

What are you looking with expectancy for God to do or show you on this trip?

What is the difference between “expectations” and “expectancy”?

Prayer: Pray as a group surrendering your hearts as well as your expectations to God. Pray in faith believing God to do amazing things!

Journal
**Day 7**

**TIME TO RECHARGE!!!**

Prayer: Please speak to me today, Lord, and work in and through me. Begin with prayer asking for God's guidance and presence during the discussion time.

You have been faithfully plugging away on this trip for a week now and may be a bit worn out. You may even be sick, grouchy, and down right fed up with the whole experience and yearn for a hot bath, familiar food and your own bed. Let’s take time to recharge our emotional and spiritual batteries!

Read or have someone read 1Thessalonians 5:16-18

This scripture exhorts us to always be joyful, and to continually be thankful, no matter our circumstances.

Joyful – full of or suggesting exultant happiness
Always – at all times; for all times
Continually – seemingly without interruption
Thankful – to express gratitude

In what way are you finding this exhortation challenging at this moment? Ask Jesus for help!

What about these verses struck you? How can we be joyful always? Pray continually? Give thanks in all circumstances? Why are we told to do these things?

Have someone read: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Galatians 6:9-10.

What makes you weary? Discuss the answers to this question as a group. How can you get spiritual rest and refreshment in the midst of this trip?

In what ways can we become weary of doing good?

Optional additional verses and questions to discuss:
- Read Mark 4:31. How does knowing that Jesus is concerned for our rest make you feel?
- Read Matthew 11:28-30. How does Jesus give us rest?

Pray and ask the Lord for the rest and refreshment you need.

**Journal**

**Day 8**

**MAN CANNOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE**

Prayer: Lord, help my heart and mind be attuned to your Holy Spirit’s guidance. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read Deuteronomy 8:3b

“...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

How do we live on the Word of God?

Have someone read the lesson introduction:

It’s so easy to stay from our daily time with God – especially when we are in a different environment. Our routine changes and our Quiet Time with God is frequently put on the back burner. It is important to keep in mind that our strength comes from God alone, not our own actions. He is our strength in times of trial, temptation, frustration, joy, and victory. If we are to seek our strength from Him, it is natural that we spend time fervently seeking him and meditating on His Word.

Take a few minutes now to be still and meditate (focus your thoughts) on God’s Word, and His incredible love for you.

What is He telling you?

Is He still the center of your focus?

If not, where has your attention been focused?

Read or have someone read Psalm 119:19-18 Discuss the answers to this question as a group:

Optional additional verses and questions to discuss:
- Read Psalm 19:7-11, and Psalm 119:103 How is God’s Word described in these verses? Can you think of situations in your life where a certain passage of Scripture has been that for you? Share!
- Read John 15:4-5. What do these verses teach us about why we need to stay in God’s Word?

End this time in prayer. Ask God to direct your focus on Him in these coming days and to help you to fully rely on Him and His strength to carry you through. An idea for prayer would be to pray through Psalm 19:7-14 or a section of Psalm 119, asking God that He would help us see His Word as precious and that He would keep us grounded in it.

**Journal**
Day 9
FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Prayer:
Jesus, let me experience your grace and presence as I seek You in Your Word. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Read or have someone read Galatians 5:22-26.
What struck you about these verses?

Write out each of the fruits of the Spirit in verses 22 and 23.

__________________________________________________________________
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Speak to the Lord and tell Him which of these the biggest challenge is for you right now.

Tell Him what your heart’s desire is regarding this challenge.

-Why do you think these characteristics are described as “fruit”?
-Which of these fruits is the biggest challenge for you right now? Why?
-How do we grow in producing these fruits?
-Thought about the people you have interacted with on the trip so far. Do you think that some of these people have not received these fruits from others and this may have contributed to their status in life?
-Which of these fruits might they need to receive from you?

Read or have someone read Philippians 2:12-16.
Discuss the answers to this question as a group:
How do you feel that God is working in you for His good purpose?

End this time in prayer, surrendering again to His refining work in your life. Pray for each other, that each of you would grow in bearing fruit and surrendering to God’s work in your lives.

Journal

Day 10
THE GREAT COMMISSION – Making Disciples

Prayer:
Father God, be near to me as I open Your Word. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read the intro to the lesson:
Do you realize that if, for an entire generation, no one shared the love and knowledge of Christ with the next generation, Christianity could become extinct in one generation? Think about it.

Meditate on Have someone read Matthew 28:19-20
Discuss the answers to the following question as a group:
Who has influenced you the most to live for Christ in your life? Share how/why they were such a big influence.

Have someone read 2 Timothy 2:2
Discuss the answers to the following questions as a group:
What does it mean to “entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others”?

How do we invest for the next generation?

Journal
Day 11

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Prayer:
Lord, help me to listen and clearly hear You speak today. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read the following:
You have heard it said, “Life is short, play hard!” or, “Life is short, pray hard!” The daily grind often makes us forget the brevity of life, but let us remember the tombstone illustration. On a tombstone there are two dates, the date you were born and the date you die. All that represents your life is a dash. What are you going to do with that dash?

Jim Elliot, missionary martyred in Ecuador in 1956, said: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

What are the things we cannot keep? The things we cannot lose?

Read or have someone read Matthew 6:19-21
How have you seen the truth of v.21 in your life or in someone else’s life?

Where is your heart? Are you investing more in temporal things or things that will last forever? Make a list (Have people share what they wrote on their lists)

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Read or have someone read Matthew 6:31-33 Discuss the answer to this question as a group. What perspective should we have about temporal things? (Optional additional verse 1 Cor. 7:31)

Discuss the answers to these questions as a group:
What are some things on this trip that have helped you realize what is really important in your life?

What things can you change in your life to help you live more for what will last forever?

How will you do this?

Pray, asking God to help you focus your life on the things that matter most.

Journal

Day 12

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Prayer:
Be with me, Lord, as I open your Word; may Your will be mine. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Read or have someone/multiple people read Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; and Ephesians 4:11-13
How would you summarize these passages? (What are the main points?)

Have someone read:
As a member of the Body of Christ, you are called to serve by using the gifts that God has given you. It is important to keep in mind that no one gift is more important than another. Just like a body is seen as lacking if it is missing an arm or a nose, so the body of Christ is left lacking if any one of its parts decides that it is insignificant or tries to take on a different role.

In the past, what have been identified as your primary gifts?

What are your perceived gifts in this group?

How can you use those gifts to serve the members of your group and lift up those that you are serving?

What gifts have you seen in the different team members this week? Share an example of how different gifts have helped the group accomplish its purpose.

Diversity in the Church is important! The churches in different countries can have different strengths from which we can learn. Have the group share what they have learned from Christians they’ve met or churches in which they have worshipped during the trip.

Ask God to use you for His purposes and to help you utilize the gifts He has given you, not just on this trip, but in your life at home.

Journal
Day 13
CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDE

Prayer:
Keep me from mental distractions and help me, Lord, to focus on You alone. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Read or have someone read Genesis 1:27 and Psalm 139:14
What do these verses say about how/why God has created us?

Have someone read:
Know that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and are the prize possession of our God in Heaven! Remember that you were created in the image of His Son and, as such, should take on His attitude. Yes, things get difficult and people can become frustrating from time to time, but the overall morale of the group will be significantly increased with a positive attitude and the attempt of a Christ-like posture.

What are some aspects of yourself that you don’t believe are wonderfully made?
Ask the Lord to show you truth in these areas.

Read or have someone read Philippians 2:1-15
As a group, discuss the answers to the following questions:
How can you show a Christ-like attitude? Here? and at home?

What helps you put things into perspective when you are frustrated?

Day 14
END OF THE JOURNEY?

Prayer:
Please speak to me today, Lord, and work in and through me. Begin with prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence during the discussion time.

Have someone read:
Many times after ministering to others, we can be on a “spiritual high,” often followed by a spiritual low. Be sure to guard your soul and not forget what the Lord has been doing in your heart. Ask the Lord to be close to your heart as you say your goodbyes and return home.

Read or have someone read Proverbs 4:25–27
Discuss answers to this question as a group. Have group members share the main lessons learned while on the trip. What level path has the Lord revealed to you that He doesn’t want you to swerve from since you have been on this trip?

Read or have someone read Isaiah 58:10-12
Ask the Lord five ways you can “spend yourself on behalf of the hungry” when you return home (think of the physically and spiritually hungry).

What are some ways God has shown you that you can “spend yourself on behalf of the hungry” when you return home? (including both the physically and spiritually hungry)

Take time in prayer now and ask the Lord to help you be faithful to continue serving in His name as well as continue growing and maturing in your relationship with Him as you return home. Have each group member write out three things they would like to do as a result of this trip and give it to you. Mail it back to them in a few months.

Pray for one another concerning what God has taught each of you and ask for His strength to continue to serve Him and grow closer to Him. Also pray for the country and the people you are leaving, that God would produce much fruit that would last.

Refer to last page of this devotional “Returning Home” for additional information. It’s vital to debrief as a group. Use the questions on the “Debrief” page of this devotional and review the “Returning Home” page together.

Journal
Day 14
END OF THE JOURNEY!

Pray:
- Pray for yourselves today. Lord, and help us to walk through the week with proper victory for God's guidance and provision during the discussion time.

DEBRIEF

What new things did God teach you about Himself?

Top five things you thank the Lord for from this trip:

Personal observations of your heart growth/challenge/change:

Think of a specific story of someone on your trip who had an impact on you. How did they impact you? What did they do?

How has your heart changed for further service?

How did this mission change your view of the world?

What would you do differently next time?

Type of veterinary work accomplished?

Diseases diagnosed – exotic diseases encountered for the first time:

Training topics covered. Perceived outcomes:

Number of animals treated:

Successes and failures:

Biggest cultural observations:

Funniest observation or memory:

Saddest observation or memory:

Exotic birds, dances, songs, etc.:

High point – low point of mission:

What will be challenging for you when you get back home?
RETURNING HOME

You have just finished a big adventure in your life and are probably experiencing a wide variety of emotions. There are entire books devoted to the subject of re-entry. The areas you should watch include:

- **Fatigue**: physical, emotional, spiritual, and social fatigue. You may be very tired. Take some time for yourself. Rest and be refreshed, you have just finished a life changing experience!

- **Spiritual High**: If you are on a spiritual high from this trip, ride it and praise the Lord, but be aware that often times after highs can come lows – Satan wants to steal your joy and excitement, and you may be under attack. Put on the full armor of God listed in Ephesians 6. Stay in prayer and the Word daily!

- **Spiritual Pride**: Don’t let Satan tempt you to feel superior to those with less compassion or vision who have never gone on a mission trip. Stay humble!

- **Frustration**: You may be frustrated at some of the things that happened or didn’t happen on your trip. Pray and give those things to the Lord. You may be frustrated at the injustices and poverty you saw, or any number of other things that are different from where you live. Give those feelings to the Lord and ask Him how He wants to continue to use you to help fight injustice and poverty. Make a list and do it! You may become frustrated and impatient at the lack of interest and compassion of those around you now that you are home. They may not want to hear all of your stories. Ask them about what has happened in their lives over the last two weeks and they will likely be more interested in listening to you. Be patient and continue to share. God has given you this experience and you are now His spokesperson to impart vision in others.