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# ibc GO Missions

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31 daily devotions to prepare you for joining God in what He is doing locally & globally



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# Introduction

Congratulations! The fact that you are reading these words means that you are just one month out from taking a huge next step of joining God in what He is doing via one of our iBCGO Missional Partnerships. Our prayer is that this iBCGO mission experience will become a significant landmark in your spiritual journey of faith.

We are convinced that we are able to experience and understand the heart of God as never before as we prioritize His calling above our own comfort and join Him in seeking out those who are still far from Him...or have never even had an opportunity to hear the truth about Him.

## Your Next 31 Days

While we are committed to doing everything we can to equip you for fruitful cross-cultural ministry, the most important preparation for any missional experience is personal preparation because the greatest potential of impact comes from the overflow of our own personal, dynamic walk with Christ.

We encourage you to prioritize time for personal Bible study and prayer over the next 31 days. The following devotionals will provide daily encouragement from God's Word, and taking just a few moments to journal your thoughts in the spaces provided will help you to listen carefully and discern God's direction regarding next steps.

*"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us - **so that** Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations" Psalm 67:1-2*

*"Que Deus tenha misericórdia de nós e nos abençoe, e faça resplandecer o Seu rosto sobre nós, para que sejam conhecidos na terra os Teus caminhos, a Tua salvação entre as nações." Salmos 67.1-2 (Brazilian Portuguese)*

*"Ya Allah, kasihanilah dan berkatilah kami; pandanglah kami dengan senang hati, supaya seluruh dunia mengetahui kehendak-Mu, dan semua bangsa mengetahui penyelamatan-Mu." Mazmur 67:1-2 (Malay)*

*"Tanpri, Bondye, gen pitye pou nou! Voye benediksyon ou sou nou! Fè nou santi ou la avèk nou, pou tout moun sou latè ka konnen sa ou vle, pou tout lòt nasyon yo ka konnen se ou ki delivre lèzòm." Sòm 67:1-2 (Haitian Creole)*

*"Dios nos tenga compasión y nos bendiga; Dios haga resplandecer Su rostro sobre nosotros, para que se conozcan en la tierra Sus caminos, y entre todas las naciones Su salvación." Salmo 67:1-2 (Spanish)*

Day One

# Spiritual Renewal for Service

## *Psalm 51*

Now that you have read all of Psalm 51, please note carefully verse 3 as it relates to spiritual renewal for service. *"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me."* A companion verse in the New Testament says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Spiritual renewal begins with the suggestions in these verses.

1. In our relationship with the Lord, we are not what we ought to be. Some of the obvious sins like lying, stealing and lusting may not be part of our lifestyle, but pride and selfishness are constant hindrances to a full commitment to Christ. Someone has rightly said, "Self is always ready to exact its rights as regards honor, comfort, convenience, property and so forth: and self has generally a somewhat magnified view of what its rights are." We need to acknowledge the fact of pride in our Christian lives.
2. The step to spiritual renewal is to confess our sin to God and claim His forgiveness. This should be a daily occurrence for the sincere Christian.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Two

# Taking Time to Pray

## *Mark 1:35-45*

If Jesus prayed, how much more should we pray? We can gain strength for our prayer life by following Jesus' example. He was never too busy to pray. Many people excuse themselves from church, prayer, witnessing and ministry by saying, "I'm too busy." This Bible passage comes from the Galilean ministry of Jesus, where He performed most of his miracles and attracted the greatest multitudes. Busyness, rather than an excuse not to pray, was His motivation to pray more!

Jesus found a time and place to pray. Verse 35 gives us some important pointers on prayer: *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* If we follow that pattern, our life will be improved and our Christian ministry strengthened.

God's will, revealed through prayer, may be different from the will of the multitude. The Bible does not tell us what Jesus was praying, but when he met Simon he had already decided to move in another direction. Jesus could have stayed comfortably in Capernaum, but He went into another town. Often, well-meaning friends and relatives will try to discourage us from going overseas for ministry.

Jesus' time of prayer followed by an intense ministry to people. Prayer equipped Him for ministry; it refreshed Him and kept Him focused on His Father's will. Follow Jesus' example to develop and strengthen your own prayer life. You must prepare for your ministry overseas through a consistent prayer time, communing with your Father and seeking His will.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Three

# The Word & the Way

## *Psalm 119:2, 19, 105, & 165*

Psalm 119 is unique in many ways; it is the longest chapter in the Bible. Every verse except two mentions the law, word, commandments and precepts of God. Above all else, it emphasizes that the Word of God is indispensable in the life of a believer.

The Word of God will bring happiness (v.2), comfort (v.76), liberty (v.45), boldness (v.46), hope (v.116) and wisdom (v.98). All of the elements needed in your Christian life are found within the Word and the law of God.

The Word of God will keep you from sin and will direct your paths. Verse 11 states, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."* Verse 105 says, *"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."* Many times in your ministry overseas, you will not know exactly what to say, but having God's Word in your heart will always give you an appropriate answer to the questions asked of you. "The Bible says," is appropriate in most situations and respected by most people. It is important that, like a flashlight whose beam goes before us, we have the Word of God to direct our path.

The Word of God will show us His character. Verse 156 mentions that mercy of God. His love, truth, and righteousness are revealed throughout His Word. Your thoughts about God are formed through the study of His Word, and what you think about God will determine how you act.

Those of us who have been in volunteer projects all over the world cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Word of God in your life. To neglect the Word of God as part of your preparation for overseas ministry is to limit what God can do in and through your life. Spend time with God's Word in prayerful meditation.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Four

# The Power to Serve

## *Acts 1:1-12*

Christians need to understand that eternal victories do not occur apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Energy is wasted because Christians do not claim the power of God to do the task. In witnessing, we attempt to lead people to repentance and a new life. How foolish to think that we can do these things apart from God! These verses suggest ways that God can use you to accomplish His work in the lives of others.

You must feel that God has chosen you for the purpose of witnessing. The words in Acts 1:1-12 were written to those whom God had chosen, as you see in verse 3. John 15:16 says, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last..."* You should claim these verses as your own and feel that your involvement overseas is a call within the will of God.

The Holy Spirit must be recognized in your life. To the early followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came with power and signs. That empowered them to do the task God had given them to do. Today, the Holy Spirit still empowers you to accomplish what he calls you to do. The Holy Spirit is in your life. As you surrender willfully to Him, you will feel that power from within. When sin is removed from your life, the Holy Spirit can accomplish His purpose in you.

A powerful witness is the result of surrender to the Holy Spirit. Verse 8 tells where you should go to witness. *"To the ends of the earth"* places no limit on our witness for Christ. Today Christians who are led by the Holy Spirit will want to witness to the world with boldness, wisdom, and power, as did the early Christians.

God is leading you into the far regions of the world on this overseas project. He will empower you through the Holy Spirit to accomplish His task.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Five

# Christian Depression

## *1 Kings 19:1-18*

Christian workers, great and small, pass through periods of depression. Passing through the experience it may not be detrimental, but remaining that way for a period of time can adversely affect your Christian ministry. So universal is this phenomenon that each Christian can expect it under certain circumstances and, recognizing it, gain the victory.

Depression can come after a victory with God. Preachers and church leaders often experience a "blue Monday" following a power filled Sunday. A mountaintop experience with God is often followed by a valley of despair. Elijah certainly experienced this.

Physical fatigue can lead to spiritual depression. It is important for a Christian witness to be physically as well as spiritually strong. As a volunteer overseas, you must be alert to physical fatigue. You need adequate rest to witness effectively, for even Christian zeal and enthusiasm cannot endure when you are overcome by physical fatigue.

Depression increases when you are alone. Elijah was alone under a juniper tree and later in a cave, when his despair became greatest. Sharing your victories with others will help alleviate your despair. God's Word and presence will bring ultimate victory over depression. God showed Elijah the fallacy of his thinking and, with power, revealed His presence to Elijah.

The worst time for homesickness and depression is midweek-the emotional energy upon arrival has been depleted; the long trip overseas and lack of proper rest have taken their toll. There have been victories for God Sunday through Tuesday, but there is a letdown on Wednesday. Fortunately, you will pass through this period and end the project triumphantly.

Watch for signs of depression during your overseas experience. Get plenty of rest, and draw closer to God through study and prayer. He can bring triumph over depression!

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Six

# Here I Am, Let *Me* Go!

## *Isaiah 6:1-12*

Isaiah remembered the year well. He marked it in his memory as being the year the king died. But he also remembered it for another reason.

During that year he had a very deep worship experience with the real King, the Lord of Hosts. He caught a vision of himself, in all of his sinfulness, in stark comparison with the majesty and holiness of God. A seraphim flew to him with a hot coal and purged his lips in a symbolic act of spiritual cleansing. And he heard the voice of the Lord saying, *"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"* Isaiah responded, *"Here I am. Send me!"* (v. 8).

For years I read that passage as though the Lord had Isaiah trapped. He was cornered! What else could he say, except whimper, "OK, Lord, I'll do it."

Then I went on a partnership evangelism project to Chile. Our teams saw hundreds trust the Lord. It was the closest thing to Pentecost I had ever experienced. We were blessed beyond measure.

Upon returning home, I read that passage again. Suddenly I saw it from a new perspective. Isaiah was not trapped; he was privileged!

If people only knew what blessings await them on volunteer projects, they would be like second grade students when asked who wants to run an errand for the teacher. They would all be on their tiptoes shouting, "Here I am... Let ME go!"

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Seven

# Fit to Serve

## *Ephesians 5:1-17*

We've often heard someone say, "Well, that's just the way I am." That expression usually follows some blunder or is used to excuse the hurt caused by someone else. That excuse disclaims the teaching of the New Testament and cheapens the power of the Gospel.

We are children of the light and followers of God. As such, we can have no fellowship with those who love the darkness and who walk in the flesh. Our effectiveness on any assignment or task will be in direct proportion to our obedience to Christ and submission to His will.

We will get by with nothing. Sin and rebellion will be revealed by the light sooner or later. Often, it's sooner than we wish, and in circumstances that bring public dishonor to the church. Paul's list of sin is not exhaustive, but it is a guide to those who serve our Lord as volunteers.

As you serve overseas you will find yourself under a spotlight. You will be subjected to new pressures and test of your faith. You will be in a different culture and aware of a difference in the interpretation of what is right and wrong. The Bible is the one unchangeable guide in any context. Make it the lamp that guides your steps along any path in the world.

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Key thought for today:

Day Eight

# Availability Plus Christ

## *John 6:1-14*

There are some good lessons here for all of us. For example, here at home, all those who seem to follow Jesus do not do so with the same motive. You will find this true overseas as well. In another lesson, we learn about how Jesus knows who is hungry and cares about their well-being. So, as His disciples, we must notice the needs of those around us and do something about them. Jesus uses this scene to teach a big lesson in faith.

I want us to look briefly at three elements of the story. First, there is the boy. He was there when he could have been comfortable at home. He had something to share. He could have gone empty-handed as part of the problem rather than part of the solution, but he came forward and gave all he had to Jesus. Isn't that what you are doing?

Secondly, there is the little he had to offer. I wonder how many times I have heard a lovely and talented Christian say, "I really can't do much." Multitudes of volunteers come back from an overseas mission thrilled at how much a little counts where there is nothing at all.

Finally, and most importantly, there is the Lord. Without Him, there is no story, no miracle, and no multiplication of resources. With Christ present any situation may present the possibility of the unusual, the unexpected, and the miraculous. "*Where shall we buy bread for these may eat?*" Jesus said to Phillip (v.5). When you look at the white fields of harvest and the difficult tasks, remember that, with your presence and the little you have to offer, there is victory in the Lord.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Nine

# Commissioned to Serve

## *Matthew 28:19-20*

Some biblical teachings seem to be clear, forceful and easy to understand. Direct commands are an example of “easy-to-understand” teachings. Here is one that is hardly debatable- *“Therefore go and make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit”* (v.19). There seems to be little doubt that our Lord had some strong expectations that all of His people would see themselves as the “goers.” Congratulations! You are going!

What will you do when you go? These verses say you will do many things in obedience to His command. Some of you will be teachers, disciples, spiritual counselors and helpers; others will work with their hands and demonstrate with their lives that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior.

It can't all be done at the same time and often not in the same day or place. You will find that the Holy Spirit will order your priorities and set you job description almost daily. Flexibility is just another word for your daily walk in the Spirit. Remember that He is with you. Our Lord is gracious to be with us always, all the time, everywhere.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Ten

# Empowered to Serve

## *Matthew 28:16-18*

Treasured verses bring new light and strength for service each time we read them.

Obedience brings many blessings when disciples go to the places "...where Jesus had appointed them:" (v.16). To make Him Lord of our lives is to allow God to move us away from the path we had chosen and had seen as both secure and comfortable. We must give up our desire of comfort and security and allow God to decide our zip code. God's place for us is a place of blessing and vision.

You will be away from familiar sights and sounds and from your spiritual support system while overseas. When you experience illness, homesickness and pressures from unfamiliar work environments, remember He has "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*" (v.18). Amazingly, even though He has the power, the Christian has Him-the presence of Jesus himself. Matthew 28:20 tells us, "*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" That may be the very place you find yourself- the end of the world.

We are empowered to serve where some worship Him and where some doubt. Not everyone will believe and worship. We are empowered for victory in both arenas of service.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Eleven

# The Unlikely Witness

## *John 4:1-42*

I have always been impressed and amazed at the complete openness of our Lord and His presence of mind when talking to people. He knew where He was, what He was doing and how to make people understand the things of the Kingdom and their place in it.

This scripture passage is about a most unlikely witness. She is hostile at first, then curious. She had her own religion and culture but had not lived by them, and her marriages had constantly failed. Her world changed when she had to face this failure and with it in His presence.

He was the Messiah. She was moved enough by her own encounter with the Lord to place the failures and heartache behind her. I know of very few people who have done notable and courageous things for the Lord and have not faced failure. All have a feeling of inadequacy and weakness as we stand before the Lord.

Many who go overseas on volunteer assignments carry hurts, disappointments and a sense of weakness with them, but they have not allowed the past to cloud the joy and peace that forgiveness has brought. As you fulfill your call to ministry, go with the peace that Jesus gives and with the power He promises.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twelve

# The Expected Result

## *John 4:1-42*

Look again at this encounter between our Lord and the Samaritan woman. She heard His message and went into the city to proclaim that He was the Christ. The disciples were also in the city buying food.

The disciples were so busy about the Father's business they often missed the most important mission of all, "... *to seek and to save the lost*" (Luke 19:10). The woman went about town happily sharing what she knew of the Lord. Lay people, pastors and missionaries can be in either group.

Be aware of ministry opportunities while you are overseas. Remember your primary mission. There is no conflict-you can draw water, and you can tell about the "river of living water" at the same time.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Thirteen

# Making the Ordinary Extraordinary

## *Acts 4:1-10*

The incredible factor in volunteerism is that God can take ordinary people and help them overcome extraordinary challenge. After Peter and John had turned to town upside down with their preaching, they were rudely thrown in jail. They rose to the occasion through the power of the Holy Spirit. They boldly preached the claims of Christ to the ones that apprehended them.

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took notes that these men had been with Jesus” (v.13). Regardless of your background and training, God can and will use you. Spend time with Jesus and develop a natural boldness to your witness.

The spiritual equation is this: One ordinary soul plus God equals more than enough to accomplish His purpose. Go with the courage that only Christ can provide!

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Fourteen

# Revive Us Again

## *Psalm 85*

The words of this familiar hymn spring from verse 6:

Revive us again, Fill each heart with thy love;  
May each soul be rekindled with fire from above

Life has a way of dragging us down. We long to breathe the fresh wind of the Spirit of God in our lives. The same things happen to Christians around the world. We *all* need revival.

As you minister overseas, you will not lead people to revival without having experienced it yourself. The road to restoration is not unlike your initial path to God. It is a road of repentance and faith which leads to the flowing fountain of gratitude. Colossians 2:6-7 says, *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."*

What wholesomeness comes to our relationship with God when we daily seek His forgiveness and leadership! As the psalmist describes it: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good..." (V.10-12a).

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Fifteen

# Overcoming Difficulties

## *Numbers 13:25-33*

Giants are all around us. In our family, personal, business and social lives we encounter giants which seem to overwhelm us with their strength. Even faithful and obedient Christians shrink in the face of problems or difficulties. These giants usually take the shape of fears-fear of the unknown, fear of living in another culture, fear of traveling and fear of failure.

Fear can cripple, paralyze and hinder us from God's work; but faith diminishes our fears and enables us to move forward.

Exercise your faith and pray for the strength to keep your giants in proper perspective before moving on to the ministry God has set before you.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Sixteen

# Removing the Stones

*John 11:39-40*

"Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (V. 39-40).

When asked to be a member of a literacy team in Burkina Faso, Ellen replied, "I have two teenage children who depend on me daily, a husband who can't cook and won't wash clothes, limited financial resources and no background for teaching literacy. You want me to leave my family for four weeks, provide money and airline tickets and go halfway around the world to help teach people to read and write a language that I have never heard!" to her astonishment, her family, encouraged her and agreed to take care of household chores during her absence. Preparation for Ellen's ministry became a family affair.

At the debriefing following her ministry, Ellen explained, "I saw God at work in my family as He helped each of us to develop skills to do that which needed to be done. I experienced the joy of seeing people who had never heard of Jesus before, come to know Him as a Savior. People I hardly knew in our church family became close friends as they supported my trip."

Ellen's doubts were the stones that kept her from seeing the glory of God at work in her. What are the stones that hinder your preparation for overseas ministry? Exercise your faith to the glory of God.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Seventeen

# The True Measure of Greatness

## *Matthew 20:20-28*

Jesus encourages His followers to pursue true greatness. He says, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave." (V. 26-27)

Great men and women have eyes to see the opportunities that are overlooked by those obsessed with their own importance. Great men and women do not start out being great, but their little deeds leave behind a light which continues to shine.

The greatest person I know has never held public office or possessed great wealth. He is a layman, a builder by trade, who volunteers his services to bring men, women, boys and girls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He constantly seeks ways to witness to the lost and help those in need. He is consistent in little deeds in his home community and his church as well as in overseas settings. He is one of the greatest, yet humblest people among us.

Jesus speaks of a greatness which the world does not know-selfless obedience to God's will. It involves long hours, fewer selfish pleasures and the risk of being misunderstood and unjustly criticized. Are you in pursuit of true greatness?

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Eighteen

# Differences Between Good Missionaries

## *Acts 15:36-41*

"Are missionaries like other people?" Naomi asked. She was taught to hold the missionary in high esteem. To her, they did not possess strengths or frailties in the same fashion as other Christians. "Yes," the preacher replies, "they are like other Christians; they are like the rest of us. The difference is they have been called by God to work in another part of the world." He could have added that missionaries possess different personality traits and work styles, and sometimes they differ among themselves.

The disagreements between missionaries are exaggerated and painful at times. Occasionally, as with Paul and Barnabas, a difference in opinion about methodology occurs. However, both missionaries find greater freedom, and new works multiply, when they continue to minister through different methods.

Missionaries desire the prayers of their congregation. They need volunteers to help plant new churches, strengthen existing congregations and complete a host of other tasks. Missionaries need support so their ministries may continue regardless of personality and work differences.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Nineteen

# When You Cannot Finish the Task

## *Luke 10:25-35*

Moses was permitted to the Promised Land but was not permitted to lead the children of Israel into it; Joshua and others were to complete the task. David envisioned the building of the temple; but, it was under the leadership of his son Solomon that it took shape. Frequently, those who begin God's work must entrust its completion to others.

This was vividly demonstrated in a three-year partnership mission between Tennessee Baptists and the Baptists of Burkina Faso. The volunteers who laid the first foundation for the buildings knew they could not physically complete the project. As team after team made its contribution, developed, new ministries were started and existing ministries were strengthened. The last team stood in the same location as the first team, but saw a different place. They saw a school to help people read and write their own language, a health clinic, two missionary residences and 32 new churches where more than three thousand people worshiped.

Pray for volunteers who begin a task and must leave its completion in the hands of others. Ask that they may have the gift of vision to see the completed task.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Twenty

# Acting Like What You Are

*Matthew 21:18-19; Galatians 5:22-23*

Who is she? Can you tell by the way she dresses and talks, or by the way she acts? Who is he? Can you tell by his conversation, or by the way he relates to others? The adage, "actions speak louder than words" takes on new meaning as you serve in another culture.

Church leaders in one Caribbean country cautioned a team of volunteers from the United States, "When you walk on the street do not dress and act as a tourist. The people of our country expect those who work with us in our churches to reflect Christian dress, actions and conversation when they are shopping, sightseeing and ministering in our churches."

Always be aware of the image you portray while volunteering overseas. Just because something is acceptable in the United States does not mean it is acceptable in a foreign culture.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-One

# Overcoming Prejudices

*Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-20; 4:1-3*

"I just didn't like blacks. I won't eat with them, work with them or talk with them unless absolutely necessary. It really had to be a strong appeal to get me to go to Jamaica as a volunteer carpenter," Bill asserted. "I really thought I would be able to do my work with little, if any, contact with Jamaicans." He continued, "No one told me I would have two members of a Jamaican church working with me and I would be expected to stay in a Jamaican home."

Bill went on to tell how God used that experience to reveal important things about being prejudice. First, some blacks hold the similar prejudices towards whites. Second, prejudice is an expression of sin. And last, Christians have a personal responsibility to help others overcome racial prejudices. This volunteer experience made Bill realize that God's love transcends all racial and cultural barriers.

Do you have any prejudices? Pray for God's help in overcoming any prejudices that may hinder the effectiveness of your volunteer ministry.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Two

# Serve with Gladness

## *Psalm 100*

Your long awaited dream will soon become a reality as you make plans to spend time overseas in a volunteer assignment. You receive your passport, secure your visa, fill out your information form, write your testimony, pay the cost of the project, attend orientation and purchase incidentals you will take overseas. With increasing excitement, you learn some greetings in the language of the people and polish your witnessing and ministry skills. You pray daily with committed friends with God's blessing to be shown and for victories to be experienced. Finally, you say goodbye to close friends who come to the airport to assure you of their love and support.

The trip is more tiresome than you expected. You arrive and hear, in a strange tongue, that your bag has been damaged and some things are missing. It's much hotter than you thought and you are dying of thirst, but the water is unsafe to drink. Your hotel room is not ready and it will be another three hours before your tired body can have a bed to rest its weary bones. Perhaps the orientation you expected is nonexistent and very little preparation has been made for your ministry.

The test is before you: Will your disappointment cause you to gripe and complain, or will you make the most of an imperfect situation? The psalmist says to serve the Lord with overflowing gladness and gratitude. Then...leave the results to God.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Three

# Serve with Gratitude

## *Psalm 103*

Someone correctly stated, "The first step toward idolatry is a thankless heart." Similarly, the first step toward service is remembering with gratitude what God has done for us. He reminds us not to forgive His blessing-forgiveness, salvation, healing, material provisions, undeserved mercy, grace, and loving-kindness. In fact, the hand of God continues to reach out with blessing too numerous to count but so precious we should try to name them.

The psalmist tells us to bless His name with all that is within us - our tongues, or minds, our hearts, our energies, our thoughts, our wills, our talents and our gifts. The psalmist then closes this chapter by asking that we, His servants, bless the Lord by doing what is pleasing to Him in all places He works and rules. This includes every place we go to server.

Being part of overseas missions work means doing many things that are difficult and frustrating. Our work may go unnoticed and unappreciated. We must go, however, with a grateful heart shaped in the image of the One who came to serve and give His life for all. Then we will learn to bless His name, not only in the comfortable, well-known places but also in the tough, unfamiliar one as well.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Four

# Serve with a Team Spirit

## *Romans 12*

We go out as volunteers ready to serve. We need committed servants rather than glory-seekers, super-stars or prima-donna. We do not need "lone rangers" as much as we need dedicated team members.

It is amazing how much can be done if we are willing to contribute to the overall good of the project. We must do what the mission or national convention need. Preconceived ideas of the way things should be done may not be how things should be done. The "American" way may not be God's way overseas.

Short-term service can bring out the best and worst in us. Our grumbling, complaining volunteer can disrupt the unity and effectiveness of a dedicated team. The best laid plans will change as schedules are rearranged and unforeseen need are addressed on the field. The grace of encouraging each other as we do God's work overseas can energize and inspire us even when things go wrong. In a real sense, we not only belong to God but to each other. Our talents and gifts are joined together as an offering to God and His global purpose.

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Five

# Serve for Common Purposes

*1 Corinthians 1:23-31; 2:1*

Be prepared for new experiences and different standards as you go overseas. My least favorite holiday is Halloween. I'll never forget making costumes for our two daughters to participate in a trick or treat outing among American community in Kaduna, Nigeria. When they returned home, one of our finest Nigerian pastors made an unexpected visit to our home. Looking at our children in astonishment, he asked, "What is the meaning of this? Why are they dressed that way?" I tried to explain some of the background for the holiday customs to the inquiring pastor. Then he quietly said, "I thought this was the kind of life you missionaries asked us to leave!"

Earlier in Africa, pantsuits were worn only by women of the street. In most African and Latin American countries, the use of any form of tobacco by believers is considered unacceptable behavior. Certain things we consider to be completely acceptable may cause Christians in another culture to stumble and fall. Paul says for the stronger to help the weak we cannot simply seek our own good but the common good of others.

Also, some things we consider wrong may be completely acceptable by Christians in another land. We do not come as judges but as servants. We must win our rights to teach by becoming learners. This is not saying, "While in Rome, do as the Romans." It is saying, be flexible and caring enough to adjust so whatever you do, it will be done to glorify God and to strengthen His body, the church.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Six

# Serve with Compassion

## *Jonah 4*

I remember trying to go to a remote village in Nigeria by way of a trail. It was the dry season and, as I tried to drive across a waterless creek bed, my car lodged neatly between the two banks of the stream. I couldn't go forward or backward. It was extremely hot, and there was no help in sight. I became angry with the pastor who had suggested that we go to this remote village. I became angry with God who had called me. I became angry with myself for agreeing to travel on a road that was almost nonexistent.

I forgot about the lost-village without a church. I was more interested in the welfare of my car than that of the people who needed God's love. At the insistence of a Nigerian pastor, I reluctantly prayed with him for help. To my amazement, in a few minutes 12 farmers returning from their work literally picked up the car and shoved it out of the creek bed.

Jonah cared more for the comfort of a ground vine than for the redemption of the great city, Ninevah. It is possible to serve overseas without showing the love and compassion of Christ, but certainly not desirable. The right work with the same motive that caused God to give Christ to the world will break down almost any barrier.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Seven

# Serve with Urgency

## *John 9:1-7*

Although Jesus was interested in correct belief, He was far more concerned about correct actions. He felt compelled to come to earth to seek and to save humanity from sin. He felt the need to go through Samaria and witness to a sinful woman who desperately needed the living water, he steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem, knowing it meant rejection and certain death.

Jesus saw a blind man and strongly stated to His disciples, *"We must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work"* (v.4). The "take it or leave it" attitude is not acceptable to God. There is work to do and the night of life is coming. This is your chance to do some of the work of God overseas.

It is not enough just to say, "I'll go!" You must prepare for the task you are expected to do. You must open your eyes to every opportunity. The day of service is before you, but night is coming. The blind of heart are waiting. Like Jesus, we must work now, for we may never get this opportunity again.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Eight

# Proclaiming Liberty to the Poor

## *Isaiah 61:1-6*

Abraham Lincoln once said, "God must love the poor because He made so many of them." Many of you will go to third world countries where there is unbelievable poverty, poor housing, inadequate food, lack of education and physical needs that abound. You will be shocked and appalled! You may want to close your eyes and withdraw as you witness these unpleasant sights. You may identify with the hurts and needs, and may long to reach out and touch people with the good news of Jesus Christ. You will view the world differently after such poverty.

We do not go as the blessed to judge others. We go to share a message of hope and deliverance. We go to touch and care for the broken-hearted. We go to proclaim freedom through forgiveness. We go to become involved-to say we really care.

We look through the eyes of a loving Jesus and see how beauty can replace ashes, the oil of hope and gladness can replace mourning and despair. God wants us to help change the hopelessness and plant the seeds that will grow and display the beauty of God's splendor.

Remind yourselves that the people we see, regardless of their social, economic or educational status, are children of God. They can grow and blossom into beautiful fruits of His transforming grace.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Twenty-Nine

# God's Love Breaks Through Barriers

*John 4:5-42*

There are many reasons that you might fail as a short-term volunteer. Even missionaries who learn the language and show sensitivity to cultural differences never fully become assimilated in a foreign culture. How, then, can we expect inexperienced volunteers to accomplish anything useful and eternal within a few days when so many barriers exist?

- Language variations occur
- Racial differences exist
- Economic barriers are present
- Political systems differ
- Family customs vary

You go ready to help, love, give, share, accept, laugh and serve. You go ready to do things differently, to smile and to cry. And what happens?

- Friendships are formed
- Common concerns are expressed
- Common frailties are confessed
- Common joys are shared
- Common problems are discussed
- A common Savior is victoriously proclaimed
- Barriers are forgotten

Christ's love bonds you together as one. This is a miracle you can experience as a volunteer.

What God is saying to me through His Word:

People & needs for which I am praying today:

Next steps I need to take in personal preparation to be used by God:

Key thought for today:

Day Thirty

# Serve with Inner Strength

## *John 15:1-16*

Have you ever tried to blow up a balloon until you were almost dizzy? Sometimes fear of the unknown can make us feel rather uneasy and dizzy. We've never done the things we are expected to do now and never have been in such a different setting.

We need to feel a sense of worth, competency and acceptance if we are to do our jobs overseas. All the skills in the world, unless permeated with the presence of God's spirit, will not bring victories.

You plan to do God's work. You certainly desire it to be fruitful. A volunteer who goes in his own strength will wither like a severed branch. The following sources will determine whether your work will succeed or fail.

1. Cleansing of God from all known sin
2. Abiding in the power and presence of Christ
3. Working in the spirit of love
4. Keeping the commandments of Christ
5. Knowing God has chosen you to bear fruit
6. Asking the Father to bless the mission and honor His name

The strength of a Christ-centered life will energize you, and you can say with Isaiah, "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40; 31).

What God is saying to me through His Word:

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Key thought for today:

Day Thirty-One

# Serve with Love

## *John 21:1-23*

My wife and I had gone to the overgrown village of Katcha, Nigeria, to spend a week in an associational meeting. This crowded town, located on the Niger River (one of the great rivers of Africa), was steamy hot. Malaria-carrying mosquitoes were everywhere, sand flies attacked and water from the shallow wells had to be boiled for safe drinking. While I only lived there for a week, many of these people were called upon to spend a lifetime in these circumstances. These people had many needs, but the greatest was to see and hear the love of Jesus.

With the overwhelming needs and hurts in the world, we are mandated to love and show mercy to the disenfranchised. They should say about you- I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was not an American and you accepted me; I had ragged, dirty clothes and you shared your clothes with me; I was sick and you came to see me; I was a prisoner to sin and you showed me the open door of hope in Christ.

Followers of Christ do not simply search for those who look like, speak like and live like them. Christ will touch the unloved and unloving when we are willing to reach out and give a loving touch in His name. Love is not acceptable at a safe distance; love is involvement and risk. When Jesus said, people were in need, He was moved with compassion and care. This mission trip gives you the opportunity to minister to the lost and hurting of our world.

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