



**NASHVILLE 2023
PRE-TRIP
DEVOTIONAL
PACKET**



Welcome to the Nashville 2023 Pre-Trip Devotional Packet. Each devotional is written by a mission trip participant. It's so exciting to think that each person going on the trip has already started thinking and praying about the trip (by writing their devotional), and that each of us will be preparing for 14 days leading up to this trip! I expect God to bless this preparation in huge ways!

Instructions for using this devotional packet:

1. Read each devotional on the date at the top of each page.*

2. Pray for the person who wrote the devotional. Prayer tips:

That God would speak through these devotionals and prepare them for this trip.

That this trip would be an encouragement in their spiritual life.

That they would connect with God in deep ways during worship.

That they would give all of themselves to God in service.

That they would be an encouragement to others.

That they would see God in other people and tell them that.

That they would deepen their relationships with people in our youth group.

That they would develop, even more, a caring, compassionate heart for others.

That this trip would lead to life change after the trip.

That they would have SO much fun.

That they would keep a positive attitude and help others to stay positive too.

That they would understand God in a new way.

That God would speak to them through others.

That they would be willing to try new things.

That other people would enjoy their company.

That they would find times to connect with adult leaders.

For safety and good health.

That they would be hungry spiritually for God before, during, and after the trip.

3. Text the person who wrote the devotional, letting them know you prayed for them. This can be as simple as saying, "I prayed for you today" or you could write out what you actually prayed for them. (parents & shareholders, its up to you if you want to text them)

***Students, if you get behind doing these devotionals, don't quit. Simply catch up.**

You need to do them all and text everyone before departing on June 11.

Wrestling with God
Noah Brower: (616) 727-0173

Genesis 32: 22-30

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. **24** So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. **25** When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. **26** Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Sometimes life takes strange turns, and it becomes easy to grow angry with God, and this is a good reminder that it's okay to wrestle with Him. After all, Israel's name is based around the idea of a battle between God and His beloved people. The people of Israel faced a great many difficulties that caused them to grapple with the God they worshiped: being enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years, living in the desert for forty more, feeling allured to other gods from neighboring kingdoms, being pulled into exile for seventy years. During all these times people questioned their relationship with God, and God still remained faithful to His people through times of darkness. He rescued them from Egypt; He granted them the Promised Land; He granted them military victory over the Philistines; He brought them back from exile in Babylon. Despite people's frustration or confusion, God stayed faithful. And this will stay true. Even if we don't see the fruits of the seeds planted (I mean, 400 years in Egypt is a long time), we know God still remains faithful. Whatever you're feeling in regards to your personal and communal relationship with God, this is just a reminder that wrestling with Him is part of following Him in the first place.

Dear God, we pray for the mission trip. We pray that the people would be served and be benefitted by our presence, and that we would grow in our faith and grow closer to You. Amen.

Only today

Abby Hart
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34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:34 NIV)

During this mission trip there will be a lot going on and you might get stressed or worried trying to plan everything at once. Focus on today. In the present, today is all that matters. Tomorrow's problems are for tomorrow.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6 NIV)

Let God handle your stresses and worries. When you feel worried or stressed about the week we will have, pray. Again, worry only about today and pray for guidance from God.

Questions:

What worries you about mission trips?

What do you do when you feel stressed or worried?

What are you going to do during the trip in order to control your worries?

Dear God,

Thank you for guiding us through the stress and worries in our life. We can place our trust in you and focus on the current day rather than worrying about the days ahead. I hope everyone here today is able to place their trust in you to help them with the struggles in their lives. Thank you for being there.

Amen.

SELF LOVE/CARE

Abby Ursiny
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Matthew 7:4

Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?

This verse is circled around the common saying that you can't love someone else fully until you love yourself. It states that you can't help someone with a lesser issue if you haven't dealt with your own.

Unfortunately I learned this lesson through multiple occasions. I had a friend. They were not doing the best and I wanted to help and "fix" the issue. It turns out through self reflection I realized I hurt them because I was trying to help them by projecting what I needed for myself onto them. Which is not that they needed. I hurt them because they had a speck in their eye but I had a log in mine.

The meaning around this verse is you have to love and take care of yourself first if you want to help others.

That Jesus was able to love others With such unconditional love.

What are some aspects you need to learn to love about yourself?

Dear God, thank you for this day and keep everyone safe. Help us on this mission trip to take care of ourselves so we can help others to our utmost ability. Amen.

Worry

Kim Verbrugge

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In our world today, it can be hard not to worry. Responsibilities are piled a mile high, and unknown circumstances can surprise us without warning. We are overworked and over-exhausted, and sometimes it can feel like we will never catch a break. In scripture, God reminds us of our need to trust Him and not worry about the things we cannot change or control. When we seek first the kingdom of God, we will be provided with everything we need, so worry becomes unnecessary. God has got us, and he will provide for our every need.

Scripture: **Matthew 6:25-6:34**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow, reap, or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life?”

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that 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, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Songs:

Sparrows and Lilys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMv6R5-LLF8>

This is the Kingdom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEFHy-NSW8I>

Reflection Questions:

What is something you often worry about?

What is something that may be worrying you about going to Nashville?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for being a God who endlessly provides for my needs. When I get worried about _____, help remind me of your provision and love. As we prepare for Nashville, help me place all the worries from back home and about the trip in your hands so that I may be able to serve you with my whole heart and mind. Amen.

Beautiful things

Olivia Zoet

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He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

“Beautiful Things” by Gungor is a song I used to listen to when I was younger. Recently it came up on my Spotify and the cover photo looked so familiar so I decided to listen to it. All of the nostalgia came flooding back to me and I loved how it sounded. I listened again and this time I really paid attention to the lyrics. My two favorite lyrics in the song are the chorus and the bridge. In the chorus of the song it says “You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of the dust. You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of us.” And then the bridge which is pretty similar “You make me new, you are making me new” I love this song not only because I love the musicality of it but also because of the message.

I think winter and spring are great examples of God making things beautiful. By the end of winter I am sick of the cold air constantly blowing in my face whenever I step outside and the cloudy skies ruining a happy day. But then spring rolls around and all of the green leaves start growing back on the trees. The tulips in downtown Holland all pop up and show their beautiful colors (by the way if you have never driven or walked around the southside of Holland during Tulip Time you should because it's gorgeous). The warm weather comes back and the sun is shining. God makes the gross cold weather from winter into beautiful new life for spring.

It doesn't matter what our pasts look like because God creates new beautiful things from the bad things and forgives our sins. No one can fathom what God is doing, has done and will do in the future.

Nashville is a pretty large city. It's not gonna be beautiful or gorgeous like Alaska. But through God, we can help to bring new beautiful things to others. No matter their past. No matter their living situation. No matter if they have addictions, or if they are lustful or greedy. God can make beautiful things out of any circumstance. Not only in Nashville but in our own day to day lives at school, work or even just getting groceries.

Here is the music video for the song- I really like the story it tells and how it shows new things being made “out of the dust”.

[Beautiful Things - Gungor Music Video](#)

Let's pray:

Dear Lord, as we prepare for our mission trip to Nashville this summer, help us to be a light to people. Thank you for always making us new. Thank you for everyone who has supported our youth group and is helping us be able to make beautiful things and spread your love. Amen.

Same God

By: Mason Hart

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Exodus 14:26-31

²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” ²⁷Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward^(a) it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. ²⁸The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

²⁹But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Listen to the song “[Same God](#)” by Elevation Worship (FT. Jonsal Barrientes)

A few lines in the verse says “I’m calling on the God of Moses, the one who opened up the ocean, I need you now to do the same thing for me”

How can you open up this week to others or to God about what you feel?

How can you trust God on this trip?

When was a time that you have felt accomplished/proud of yourself?

Lets pray:

Dear God, I hope that we have a good time in Nashville. I pray that nobody gets hurt, ill, or anything else. I pray that we all have fun helping others and talking with friends or making new friends. Amen.

Unity in God's Kingdom

Kendall DeLeon

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“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 15:5-6

Listen to [Build Your Kingdom Here](#) by Rend Collective

1. How can you be encouraging during the week?

2. What does it mean to you to be unified in God's kingdom?

Prayer: Dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunity we have to go to Nashville and spread your light through our works. We pray through the trials we face, we would remember why we were brought there and who we were brought there with. That you would help us to be unified with our common values and goals. In your name we pray, amen.

DAY 8 – JUNE 4 - TEXT THEM AFTER YOU PRAY FOR THEM

“Do you have the courage to follow your Leader?”

Bronson Swan

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“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” -Deuteronomy 31:6

It's 3 am in the middle of the hottest part of summer. You know the nights when it's still 75 degrees outside? Fire department tones drop and 24 of the 30 firefighters rush to the station half awake, some half-dressed scrambling to get their heavy bunker gear on, the strap to their air masks strung around their necks, helmets on and loaded into the trucks. We arrive on scene five minutes after our Fire Chief who has already established command, performed a 360 degree walk around the burning structure. At this time, we have heavy smoke showing from the A-D corner (fancy fire talk for front right if looking at the home from the street). Even in the dark of the night we can all see how dark and thick the smoke is which tells us it's a very hot but also a ventilation limited fire. This means any accidental opening to the structure that can provide oxygen to the fire will cause this fire to spread rapidly. There are vehicles in the driveway indicating people are home and based on the time they are likely sleeping. Our first priority is always rescue in any situation. My name is called along with two others. We are tasked with advancing a hose line into the front door of the home and performing a search and rescue. This means I'm going into my very first actual fire. Once inside, it's pitch black, the light from my flashlight is reflecting off of the dense smoke in the home and blinding me. I literally cannot see anything. It takes strength, it takes courage, it takes every bit of will power to fulfill my duty to enter such a situation. What about the courage I had to have in my leader? The fire chief standing outside, constantly monitoring the situation. Knowing he's sending firefighters into a very dangerous and toxic environment with temps reaching nine-hundred plus degrees...

In this moment of my life I not only needed to be strong and courageous to cross into that home, I needed to have courage in the Chief leading me in the direction needed to save lives. Same is true for Israel when Moses was going to die soon, and God told him he won't be able to cross the Jordan; Israel needed to be strong and courageous to follow Joshua across the Jordan to take back the land God had promised.

It takes a ton of courage to step up and do anything that you aren't comfortable doing but God tells us to “Be strong and courageous.” “Do not be afraid...for the Lord your God goes with you...” That night I had all the strength and courage in my Fire Chief to make the right decisions at the exact right times but in the end, God was with me as God is always with all of us.

1. Do you have the courage to follow your leader our God? _____
2. Do you have the courage to step out of your comfort zone even if it feels like the flames are rolling hot above your head to make a difference in someone's life even if it's for just a moment?

3. Can you be strong and courageous and take that step forward to do something completely foreign to you? If so, make a list of the things you'd like to try while on our mission trip to connect to another person.

Dear Heavenly Father,

thank you for the amazing youth that we have in our youth group. I pray for every member of our group to find the courage to go one step further out of our comfort zones during this trip to really connect with someone. Give us the strength to trust in you and to follow in your ways.

- Amen -

Build a Boat

Samantha Eriks (616-337-0200 & samantha.e.eriks@gmail.com)

As I was listening to the radio, Colton Dixon’s song “Build a Boat” came on and I was struck by the power of the Bible story “Noah and the Ark.” And then, as I read the passage in Genesis 6 & 7, I noticed a pattern: God commands Noah and he obeys (4 times, to be exact).

“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” -Genesis 6:22

Here we have an ordinary man doing something that at the time seemed extraordinary--maybe even incredibly crazy (building a massive boat when there had been no rain) with complete obedience.

And you know what felt like the best part? Noah trusted God even when he couldn’t see what was next and God then used his faith and obedience to help preserve creation.

I don’t know what our time in Nashville is going to hold. I don’t know what our experience will be like. I don’t know if God will ask me--or you--to do something that feels “crazy” and hard. But I do know that God has a plan for each of us everyday and sometimes commands us to go on big adventures with Him.

Will we have faith like Noah to do “everything just as God commanded”?

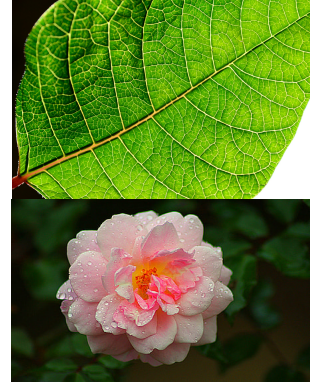
[Listen](#) to Colton Dixon’s “Build a Boat.” Then, re-read the chorus lyrics and prayer.

<p>Lyrics from Coloton Dixon’s Song “Build a Boat”</p> <p><i>I will build a boat in the sand where they say it never rains</i></p> <p><i>I will stand up in faith, I'll do anything it takes</i></p> <p><i>With Your wind in my sails, Your love never fails or fades</i></p> <p><i>I'll build a boat in the desert place</i></p> <p><i>And when the flood and the water starts to rise, yeah</i></p> <p><i>I'll ride the storm 'cause I got You by my side</i></p> <p><i>With Your wind in my sails, Your love never fails or fades</i></p> <p><i>I'll build a boat, so let it rain</i></p> <p><i>You're the map, You're my compass</i></p> <p><i>You help me navigate the currents underneath</i></p> <p><i>Take the lead, I surrender.</i></p>	<p>Dear Lord,</p> <p>As we go to Nashville, help me to stand up in faith and remember that Your love never fails.</p> <p>Help me have bold faith like Noah--</p> <p>even when things get hard or when what</p> <p>You ask me to do feels scary.</p> <p>I don’t know what type of boat you will ask me to build this week, but help me to surrender our time in Nashville to You.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
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God of Wonders

Rachel Eriks (616.403.4317 and reriks@jpsonline.org)

- Assignment #1: Yes, I'm giving you a tiny assignment. 😊 Please go outside and find a living leaf or flower you can safely pick. If you can't get outside and have a houseplant, you can use that too.
- Please be in a place and space away from other distractions for the next few minutes. Suggestion: set a timer for 2 minutes and just sit in the quiet while you examine the living plant you chose. What do you notice? Write down a few of your observations below:



- Isn't it just amazing to notice some of the intricacies and details of a single living plant? The complexities of the system that weaves through a leaf in order to provide nourishment and support to the leaf itself (look up leaf venation if you are curious), the beauty of a flowering plant as it unfolds its delicate petals, showing its wonder in color and design; indeed, there is unbelievable variation in the flowering plants and trees that surround us just here in Michigan alone!
- We have an amazing God of WONDERS! The Bible tells us that through what we see in His creation, we must acknowledge this God of WONDER. It even says that because of what we can see, we have no excuse:

Romans 1:19-20 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

- Please watch this video of [God of Wonders](#) - It's an oldie but a goodie!!
- Prayer: *Dear God of Wonders*, in a universe that declares your majesty, from the minute details of a single leaf to the towering Sequoia trees, from the heights of the highest mountains down to the Mariana Trench, from the crashing ocean to the serene meadow, may we recognize and be in awe of you as our Creator God. As we journey to Nashville and enter into new experiences and unknowns, may your creation be an ever-present reminder to us that YOU are our God and you are with us. May the beauty and complexity of your creation compel us to share the HOPE we have with any people God places in our lives on this trip and every day. Amen.

Preparation
Hannah Frost
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1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Preparation: the action or process of making ready or being made ready for use or consideration.

We as humans prepare for all sort of things, even when we unknowingly do it. We prepare for school, college, work. Maybe your an artist, you prepare for supplies, and projects. Prepare for going home, chores, and schedules. We prepare for so much.

But for this instance it is time we prepare ourselves for the work, and trip we are about to go on. We can prepare spiritually. We must prepare our minds for actions. And to prepare here are some questions to think about:

- 1) How can you prepare spiritually?
- 2) How can/will you prepare for the trip overall?
- 3) What do you hope to take back with you after this trip?

Dear God, thank you for this great opportunity we have. I pray you allow us to make most of all the opportunities we have on this trip. Help us prepare in any way that we need. I pray we all open our minds and hearts for your word and wisdom in order to take what we learned back with us. Amen.

Seasons
Hope Eriks
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“To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance” Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

Song- [“Seasons” By: Madison Ryann Ward](#)

After reading this verse and listening to this song, answer the following questions-

- Which seasons of the year are your favorite, and which are your least favorite and why?
- Name one lesson you can learn from each of our four seasons
 - Ex. Spring has taught me that new growth can happen even after hard winters
 - Summer-
 - Autumn-
 - Winter-
 - Spring-

As you can tell, the focus of this devotion is seasons. And not just seasons, but God’s timing. In our lives, we all have seasons: our highs and our lows, our goods and our bads, our hope and our sorrow. When we look at our lives, usually we can pinpoint eras and times when we felt like we were on cloud nine, and eras where we felt like the darkness would never end. I don’t know what era in your life you are in, but trust God’s plan. We are all made for a different purpose; trees that will bear fruit in different seasons. Whatever season you are in as we approach this mission trip, look to God and see how you can grow in your faith and how you can approach where you are at in life with trust and faith in God and his plan.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for this day. I pray that no matter what season I’m in, I would put my trust in you and that I would be able to grow in my faith through this mission trip and this devotional. Amen.

Serving With Your Heart

Emily Verbrugge

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Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the LORD, not for human masters.

Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Thoughts:

As we're getting ready to go to Nashville, how are you getting ready to serve God? How will you find ways to serve God after the mission trip to Nashville is over? How are you already serving God before this trip has even started?

Prayer:

God, while we're preparing to start this trip to Nashville, help us to serve You with all of our hearts and give it our all, both at home and in Nashville. Help all of us to serve you and share the glory of your kingdom while on this mission trip. Amen.

Lord, All I Am Is Yours
by Jeremy Zoet
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As you prepare for this mission trip, you may be feeling excited, nervous, and even a bit overwhelmed. You may wonder about what you will have to offer to the group, how well you will sleep, and what God might ask you to do.

In Acts 1:8, we read of Jesus' promise to those he is sending out on mission. Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jesus sends us on mission as well with the power of the Holy Spirit. We can trust that God will equip us with the gifts, skills, and resources we need to serve on this trip. My hope is that we will all experience the power of the Holy Spirit and at first be surprised by God's power at work in and through us, but then later realize: Ohhhhhh, that was the Holy Spirit, duh!

We should also keep in mind that mission trips aren't just about us serving others. A mission trip is also a lot of learning. We will be learning about the culture of other groups of people, learning about the problems and struggles of real people, learning about the systems that can trap people in poverty or homelessness, learning about ways we can partner with organizations and ministries that are making a difference, learning about how God views the world and us, and learning way more than we expected about each other as we spend time in close proximity with one another.

So as you prepare your heart for this trip, keep bringing God your anxieties and excitement. And ask God to turn it all into a readiness to learn, grow, stretch, and experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

To help prepare your heart, listen and reflect on the lyrics of Came to My Rescue by Hillsong United:

Verse 1: Falling on my knees in worship, Giving all I am to seek Your face, Lord all I am is Yours

Verse 2: My whole life I place in Your hands, God of mercy humbled I bow down, In Your presence at Your throne

Chorus: I called You answered, And You came to my rescue, And I I wanna be where You are

Bridge: In my life be lifted high, In our world be lifted high, In our love be lifted high

Prayer: God, may we give all of who we are to you on this mission trip. Ease our anxieties with the knowledge of YOUR power at work in and through us. Give us an excitement and readiness to serve, learn, grow, and experience you. Amen.