



**WASHINGTON DC
2024
DEVOTIONAL
PACKET**

Welcome to the Washington DC 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 21 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, it's up to you if you want to text them)

***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 9. If you haven't done the devotionals and texted everyone by then, you will have to spend some time alone at the beginning of trip writing out prayers to the people you missed.**

Serving Others With Others

Kendall DeLeon (616) 570-1462

Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Relationship with others is something the human heart craves. If done right, relationships can lower rates of anxiety, and depression, and give people a purpose.

At the core of building relationships is full commitment. Jesus was fully committed to every person he walked with. It wasn't about convenience or what made him look good. It was about being intentional and actively involved with those around you. In missions, it's important to follow that. Be all in. Intentionally building those relationships with a full commitment that betters the group's goals—having humility and leading by love.

I think mission trips are amazing for serving God and growing in faith. But I've seen firsthand that those experiences can evolve friendships like no other. The time spent together in the vans, in lodging, serving others, during meals, and debriefing at the end of each day grows these relationships. You get to see each other in vulnerable states and work together for the good of other people.

As the week goes on and relationships grow, the group's dynamic shifts and our work is even more impactful. When you work together to serve others, the message of what we stand for comes out. We are all God's children who unite to show his love and bring others to His kingdom. Together, we become examples of compassion and unity, embodying the love and kindness of Jesus. Each interaction becomes a beacon of hope, drawing others closer to the life he brings. As we journey together, our collective efforts resonate to spread love and light to all who cross our paths.

Listen to [Together by Chris Tomlin](#). Think about what the Lord does for us and how we can do those things together to building each other up during our week so we can be our best while serving.

Prayer

Dear Lord, as we head into a week of serving others, I pray that we would all be intentional and fully committed to growing relationships with people we're surrounded by. I pray that we would listen to each other and never shy away from getting to know one another. That way we can full serve just as Jesus did. – Amen.

Ask, Seek, Knock

Lauren Bosma 616-368-1017

We are getting ready to go out on the mission field. We are going to be serving the kingdom and shining a light for Jesus. But it's not just others' lives that can be transformed, ours can too. Are you open to that?

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

This verse talks about the requests we make to our father. It calls us to make those bold prayers. God can and will transform your life through the Spirit, but you need to let him in. Are you willing to go all in for Jesus during this mission trip and beyond? I promise you won't regret it. Open your heart, open your soul. Ask, seek, knock. Ask God to speak to you through this experience, don't hold back in your bold prayers. Seek him by seeking others. Everyone is made in the image of God. Seek the characteristics and beauty of God in everyone you meet, and you will find it. This also means focusing on the best in people, not their worst. Especially on long days when we may be sick of each other, ask God to point out things to be grateful for each person. Knock. Be BOLD. Knock on those doors. Take that chance. Reach out to that person. Smile at that person on the street. Pray that God would give you boldness to share your faith, not just on this trip, but beyond. Lastly, but most importantly, put your faith in Him. Trust that he will open the right doors. Trust that he will show you the right path. Trust that he will answer your prayers the way that you need and that honors Him. All praise be to the King of Kings. Amen. Let's pray:

Dear Lord, you are so good. You are the sovereign Lord over our lives. You supply all of our needs. Please bless this mission trip and everyone on it. Help us to shine your light for the whole world to see. Give us strength to pray those bold prayers, be bold in our faith journeys, and trust you above all else. We love you and praise you, in your son's name we pray, Amen.

Be A Team Player
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I enjoy playing soccer. It's a game of skill, constant motion, and teamwork. I can't play soccer by myself. Even the most talented soccer players are nothing on their own. They need the help of all the other players on the team to be successful.

1 Peter 4:10 says "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." As I prepare to go on my first mission trip I recognize that I need to be a team player. Everything we have is a gift from God and we need to use the gifts he has given us to serve others to the best of our ability. I am excited to see how God uses us in DC as we serve together as a team!

1. What gifts has God given you?
2. How can you use your gifts to strengthen our team as we serve together in DC?
3. Are you committing to be a team player?

Dear God,

Thank you for the opportunity we have to serve you and the people of DC on this mission trip. Thank you for making each of us unique and gifting us with talents. Give us humble hearts to see the needs of others. Empower us to serve as a team player with joy and bring honor and glory to you. Help us to show your love to those we serve through our actions. Amen.

Andrew

Written by: Adam Eriks
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Read John 1:29-42.

From the passage we read: “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”). Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus.

During my daily devotional reading last week, the lesson centered around Andrew and I thought it was particularly relevant as we get ready to go on a mission trip together. We often think about famous people from the Bible like Moses, David, Paul and Peter. They are known for big things such as miracles, healings and courageous deeds. Who doesn’t want to have the faith to walk out towards a giant and slay him? Or part the waters of a sea? How would it feel to walk on water or preach sermons that brought thousands to Christ?

However, if we look at the passage from John, we see that a person like Peter was first introduced to Jesus by someone he was close to and someone that we honestly don’t hear much else about in the Bible. Andrew had the courage to first of all step out in faith and find out more about Jesus. Maybe this is where you are at right now. Take that step. Reach out to God and ask Him to show you the life that only He can bring.

Or maybe, you have spent time with Jesus and are wondering what to do next. Again Andrew gives us a great example of what to do. Find someone in your life that you are close to and who might not know Jesus and let them know how Jesus has impacted your life. It doesn’t need to be fancy or elaborate, just authentic. For me, this can feel very daunting and scary but I need to trust that God will give me the words that I need for the moment.

Hopefully, we can all be “Andrew” to someone in our lives.

Prayer: Lord help us to explore who you might be calling us to reach out to in our lives. Help us to have the courage necessary to share the good news of Jesus with people who are important to us in our lives. Amen

Jesus's Humility and Motivation to Serve

Aiden Jarka

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Scripture:

Philippians 2:1-8

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

Prayer ideas:

Pray for God to give us a serving attitude and to serve with humility like Christ.

Passage Meaning:

Paul starts this passage with giving an illustration of how we are unified as believers. He also writes about characteristics of what we are unified in like finding comfort in Christ's love, sharing the Spirit as well as having tenderness and compassion. Those are all characteristics of humble servants and believers. Then in verse three Paul writes about our attitude and motivation to serve. We should not serve to make ourselves look better but simply to care for others and show them Jesus's love. These are important to remember when serving, we do not want to elevate ourselves, just Jesus's name.

Song:

[Less Like Me by Zach Williams](#)

Lyrics:

Oh, I have days I lose the fight
Try my best but just don't get it right
Well, I talk a talk that I don't walk
And miss the moments right before my eyes

This Devotional is 2 Pages

DAY 5 – MAY 23 – READ, PRAY, TEXT AIDEN THAT YOU PRAYED

Somebody with a hurt that I could have helped
Somebody with a hand that I could have held
When I just can't see past myself
Lord, help me be
A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love, and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me
Yeah, there's no denying I have changed
'Cause I've been saved from who I used to be
But even at my best, I must confess
I still need help to see the way You see
Somebody with a hurt that I could have helped
Somebody with a hand that I could have held
When I just can't see past myself
Lord, help me be
A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love, and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me
Oh, I want to feed the beggar on the street
Love to be Your hands and feet
Freely give what I receive
Lord, help me be
I want to put you first above all else
Love my neighbor as myself
In the moments no one sees
Lord, help me be
One, two, three
A little more like mercy, a little more like grace
A little more like kindness, goodness, love, and faith
A little more like patience, a little more like peace
A little more like Jesus, oh, a little less like me
A little more of living everything I preach
A little more like Jesus, a little less like me
Oh, a little less like me

He's Always By Your Side

By: Hope Eriks

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Listen to the song

"I Lift My Eyes- Psalm 121", by Ellie Holcomb

Have you ever just felt afraid? I think all of us have had that feeling of fear that overpowers us and leaves us helpless. Recently, I've struggled with fear regarding this mission trip. Mission trips are my favorite thing in the world, but this year, knowing I will be going on a weeklong trip full of busy days right after a surgery, I have been feeling nervous. What if I can't do what I want to do? What if God can't use me in the way he's supposed to?

I'm not sure what in your life is causing you to be afraid, but whatever it is, I hope you can remember that God has you. We are not able to do anything by ourselves, and when we look for where our help comes from, I hope that on this mission trip we can all remember it comes from God and God alone. He is watching over us, providing for us, and meeting us where we everyday. No matter what fears we have, they are not bigger than Him. I pray that all of us can lean into him and trust him on this mission trip with our fears, worries, or anxieties.

In that vein, reread Psalm 121, and underline the verses that stand out to you. Write a line or two in the margins explaining what that verse means to you and how they can apply as the mission trip gets closer.

Prayer- Surrender to God one thing that you have been struggling with recently. Ask him to help you trust fully in him and in his plan for us on this trip. Pray that he would show himself to you and remind you that he is with you always.

Decluttering.

By: Rachel Verbrugge

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My current guilty pleasure is watching decluttering videos on tiktok and old episodes of Hoarders. It is so much fun to watch a chaotic and dirty space turn into something beautiful using lots of elbow grease and some new storage containers. I always get motivated to clean up and organize our house after watching these.

Recently, I watched a video where the person was talking about how she decides on whether or not to keep (or buy) something. She said, “Don’t ask the question, ‘do I need this item?’, because we can always justify holding onto something. Instead, ask yourself, ‘Can I live without this item?’” Similar, but different questions.

Part of the reason that I think mission trips are so impactful is that we strip away the “things” in our lives. Sometimes those “things” are literal things, sometimes they are worries/stress, sometimes they are people. We are putting ourselves into a situation of just having what we need; Food, clothing, shelter, healthy friendships and work. Removing everything except the necessities (and maybe keeping one luxury item like an inflatable mattress) means there is less of our mental energy spent managing stuff and more energy put into self reflection and helping others. With open minds and willing hearts we surrender to whatever God has planned for us, and in turn are more easily able to reconnect with what we can’t live without...God Himself.

While sharing our devotion ideas with each other at home, Emily suggested adding in the song [Make Room by: Meredith Andrews](#). It’s the perfect song about this topic. Decluttering our space, our minds, our attitudes and our expectations. Laying all the “things” down in surrender to God so there is mental and emotional space for us to hear His voice and what He wants to do in us and through us.

- **Ecclesiastes 3:1 & 6** “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven...a time to keep and a time to throw away.”
- **I Peter 5:7** “Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.”
- **Philippians 4:8** “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”
- **Matthew 6:33** “Seek the kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to willingly and wholeheartedly throw away all the things that are keeping us from focusing on you. Not only on this mission trip, but every day. Amen.

Being *All In* for Jesus

Erin Eriks

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“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)

This past year, I had the privilege to go to a Renaissance Conference with my High School Student Council. While we were there, there was a speaker named Gian-Paul Gonzalez. He explained that every day, we are faced with decisions where we can decide to be fully committed--or all in. During the New York Giants’ 2011 Super Bowl run, much of their inspiration is attributed to Gian-Paul Gonzalez. Gonzalez delivered the now famous “ALL IN” rally cry message and is now widely recognized as having inspired the New York Giants to their Super Bowl victory. To illustrate the concept of commitment Gonzalez handed each football player a poker chip, instructing them to write their number on one side of the chip and write what they wanted to be committed to on the other side. He then shared with the team the meaning behind the poker phrase “All In.” He inspired them to be committed and put all their “chips” on the table. At the end of the conference, we were all given a poker chip with the words all in on it, and challenged to pick one section of our life to be fully committed to.

Although it's not the easiest thing to do, being all in for Christ is exactly what Jesus has called us to. Matthew 16:25 says “ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” A life lived all in is a life fully surrendered to Jesus—a life full of joy. The opposite of all in, a life of simply being aware of who Jesus is, always leads to disappointment and disillusionment.

Barnabas is a great example of what it looks like to go all in for Jesus. The first time we see him in scripture, he is selling his field and giving the proceeds to the apostles. Barnabas went on to preach and teach alongside Paul for many years, helping start churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe. Because Barnabas went all-in, he was able to make a huge impact on the world and became known as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith”.

A life fully surrendered to God is a life of taking the next step, no matter what the cost. Barnabas was able to go all in because he understood that Jesus went all in for him. Jesus held nothing back; He bet His life against sin and death and He won! Our God is an all-in God, and He has called and empowered us to be all-in people.

This devotional is 2 pages

When we go all in for Jesus, it not only changes our life but the generations that come after us. What legacy do you want to leave?

Listen to *Clear the Stage* by Jimmy Needham

Dear God,

I pray that during this experience, you would fill me with compassion, generosity, kindness, and respect as I interact with the people I encounter. Teach me to look at the heart of people – the way you do – instead of judging by outward appearances. Enable me to understand and appreciate the situations I am walking into at worksites this week. Give me humility, wisdom, and respect as I interact with others. Empower me to work with all my heart for you, Lord. Help me grow in the fruits of the spirit during this week and carry these lessons home so my faith will continue to grow and strengthen in the coming months. Finally, I pray that I will remember to be *all in* for you in everything I do.

Amen

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

AYLA GERKEN
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VERSE: "A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE TO YOU, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER: JUST AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, YOU ALSO ARE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER" *JOHN 13:34*

PRAYER: DEAR GOD, ON THIS TRIP WE HOPE TO GROW CLOSER AND CLOSER TO YOU AND TO OTHERS AROUND US AND FORM GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM. HELP US TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON OTHERS LIVES AND HELP THEM GROW IN LOVE. LET THEM KNOW THAT THEY WILL ALWAYS HAVE A HELPING HAND WHEREVER THEY GO AND THAT THEY SHOULD FOLLOW YOU IN LOVING OTHERS. GODS LOVE IS ENDLESS AND LET US BE REMINDED OF THIS EVERYDAY AND HELP US TO TEACH OTHERS OF HIS LOVE FOR US. AMEN

SONG: GOODNESS OF GOD

QUESTIONS:

IN WHAT WAYS WILL YOU SEEK GOD'S LOVE TO HELP OTHERS WE ENCOUNTER ON OUR TRIP?

HOW WILL YOU CONNECT WITH OTHERS IN OUR GROUP AND/OR GROW CLOSER TO GOD?

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE CAN SHOW GOD'S LOVE TO OTHERS?

Abandoned

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“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

I recently went to see Brandon Lake in concert with my dad and Benjamin William Hastings was one of his guests. Benjamin has written many amazing songs you probably have heard before as he was a part of Hillsong United. He sang one of his newest songs called “Abandoned” and I loved it. When I listen to it, it reminds me to surrender everything to God.

So, what does surrender look like on a mission trip? It's about letting go of always wanting things to go your way or to give you glory and embracing the adventure God has planned for you. It's stepping out of your comfort zone and into His amazing plan.

Sure, it might be scary at times. You might wonder, "What if I'm not good enough? What if things don't go as planned?" But here's the thing: God's got your back. He's not asking you to have it all figured out. He's just asking you to trust Him and be willing to go where He leads.

So, as we get ready to leave for Washington DC and get ready to serve, remember to surrender it all to God – your fears, your doubts, your expectations. Lay them at His feet and watch as He turns your trip into something incredible. It's hard but abandoning every worry at home will give us the best experience.

As you surrender to God's adventure, don't forget to enjoy the ride. This mission trip isn't **just** about what you can do for others – it's also about what God wants to do in and through you.

Let's pray,

Dear God, as we embark on this mission trip, help us to surrender everything to You – our fears, doubts, and expectations. Guide us with Your loving hand and fill us with Your peace and joy. Use us to spread Your love wherever we go. Amen.

Courage Through God

Owen Verbrugge

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I found out yesterday that I was invited to go along on the mission trip to Washington DC this year. A very unexpected but very exciting thing. However, I am super nervous. I will be the youngest person going. A 6th grader along with a bunch of high school students.

I know that I need to trust God when I am feeling afraid.

When Joshua in the Bible was afraid of becoming a new leader, God told him:

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you.... Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1: 6 &:9)

If that advice is good enough for Joshua, a mighty leader - it's good enough for me, and anyone else feeling nervous on our trip.

Prayer

Dear God, I pray for others who are feeling nervous to find courage in the promises that you told Joshua in the Bible. Amen.

Courage

By Abby Ursiny

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Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

This verse is saying that no matter what you do or where you go you should be strong and not be afraid to step up even if it terrifies you because God will always back you up. He will be with you every step of the way.

This verse I feel fits well with this mission trip for me. To me it's saying to not be afraid to go farther outside my comfort zone. I tend to inch out of my comfort zone rather than just dive in headfirst. This week I want to not be afraid to jump right in rather than inch my way in.

Questions

- 1. In what ways have you been afraid to step out of your comfort zone?**
- 2. What is a way you could go the extra step to go beyond your comfort zone this trip?**
- 3. How has God been with you during fearful times?**
- 4. In what ways do you think God shows his strength to help us be strong and courageous?**

Faithful to His Call

Rachel Eriks (616.403.4317 and reriks@jpsonline.org)

I was reading the book of Amos the other day and was struck by what a cool—and faithfully courageous guy—this ancient prophet was. Amos lived during the time of Isaiah, many hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth. He lived in Judah (the southern part of God’s kingdom), but would eventually preach to the northern kingdom of Israel about social justice issues and about the insincerity of the people’s worship as they “went through the motions.” God’s chosen people in Israel were totally absorbed in selfish living, unaware that destruction was right around the corner for them. They deliberately ignored the poor all around them and focused on getting richer for themselves. In addition to this, the regular “church” attenders were coming to worship, but their hearts were far from God. They were just going along, doing their own thing, not living with integrity, and happily doing exactly—and only—what they wanted to do.

I wonder how much I am just living for myself?

So God, still loving his people despite their choices, decided to send a person to tell his people that they were making some terrible choices, that they needed to turn their hearts toward Him and lead lives of integrity in their words and actions. Enter Amos. This guy’s vocation was in fig tree farming and shepherding. You read that right. Amos was a fig tree farmer and shepherd! He was certainly not a trained pastor or prophet when God called him to prophecy to Israel! Every time I have read Amos, I have skimmed over the fact that Amos had a perfectly great vocation, spending his days outdoors taking care of plants and animals. *But when God called him to do this really hard thing and tell people they were not living in the way God wanted them to, he left what he was doing and did what God asked him to do.*

On our mission trip and in our daily lives, I wonder, are we willing to do what God asks us to do, even when we didn’t choose it for ourselves and it isn’t part of our own “plan” for our lives?

Amos leaves his land and his farm because God asked him to, and then he treks up to Bethel, a big city in Israel. He starts telling the people there the hard things, things that would make all of us uncomfortable and defensive, because, if you’re anything like most of us, we don’t like to be told we are wrong or that our hearts are not in the right place. Of course, as expected, this indeed makes people angry and defensive in Bethel. Amaziah, the head priest there, aka, the guy who is supposed to be a top God-follower, condemns Amos and literally tells him to get out of town so that God’s people can keep doing what they are doing and not feel bad about it.

Amos 7: 14-15 MSG - “But Amos stood up to Amaziah: I never set up to be a preacher, never had plans to be a preacher. I raised cattle and I pruned trees. Then God took me off my farm and said, ‘Go preach to my people Israel.’”

I wonder, what words and actions do we take, if any, when we know things are wrong? Could God be calling us to more than staying silent, even though this is hard?

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for showing us the courageous faithfulness of Amos. Thank you for loving us in our weakness and for sending people and messages where we need to change. As we go to Washington DC to serve you, and as you walk in our everyday, ordinary lives, help us to be willing to go wherever you send us and do whatever you ask of us, even when it is hard. Help us to have open hearts to where we need to make changes in our own lives. We are grateful for your grace that allows us to live and have hope! -Amen

Power Through Christ

Emily Verbrugge
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2 Corinthians 12:8-10. “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me, But he said to me ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Psalms 46:1-3. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

Mission trips are stacks of a range of difficulties that can bring out weaknesses. In small difficulties like being in a van with people for long periods of time or realizing half way to your destination that you forgot something fairly important to have. There are also big difficulties like having some sort of family/ friend problem that impacts your entire trip or having any sort of medical verdict that makes you feel like you can’t push yourself in the way you want to.

It’s easy to feel strengthened in the small difficulties, but the larger hardships can be extremely difficult to feel like you have strength during times. But faith in God is perseverance, not just when things are going great in your life, but also when your life feels so far from perfect and you’re in a sea of weakness.

God strengthens and empowers. Even in the small moments of difficulty, to the hardships that feel like they consume our lives. Our God knows that we are weak, but never once has he left our sides, God has always been there empowering us even if we can’t see it.

The perfect song to remember that God is strengthening us in our hardships and that he is always present we’re going through difficult times: *Battle Belongs- Phil Wickham*

Prayer: God as we set out for our mission trip this year, help us to all feel your power through any hardships that we may be facing. Help us to give us the strength to push ourselves and try new things.

How They Remember You
Bronson Swan
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"A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." - Proverbs 22:1 (NIV)

Do you ever remember being told about how what you say out loud cannot be taken back? Many times, people will say to empty a tube of toothpaste onto a paper towel and using only a tooth pick, put the tooth paste back into the tube. This is as you can imagine would be very difficult to do and likely impossible. However, it makes a great point, whatever you verbally say out loud you cannot take back. The possible damage is already done at that point.

Now what about our actions? What about the impressions we leave on others weather it be waiting in line at the coffee shop, or siting down for an interview for your dream job? Of course, we are going to be on our best behavior and work hard to sell ourselves to someone who is interviewing us for a position in their organization. But, what about all the other interactions that many of use will not even notice others are watching?

What kind of Legacy do you want to leave behind for not only your family to be proud of hopefully, but for everyone that had the opportunity to know you to remember? As the passage states "A good name is more desirable than great riches..." sure money can make many things in life better in many aspects but how would that reflect on your name? Will your name be remembered as building a bridge to close the gap or building a wall to keep others out?

We will meet many people from all walks of life on our upcoming mission trip.... Why does it have to be on a mission trip? Don't we always meet other people from all walks of life here at home? We go on these trips to make a difference and for us to grow as Gods children, and we can do that here at home as well. Every interaction we have on this trip ask yourself these questions:

1. How do I think this person will remember me?
2. How do I want this and every person to remember me?
3. Do I think God would be satisfied with the image I portrayed in each interaction?
4. What areas do I feel I need to improve on to leave the best impression?

Please Take a couple minutes and listen to this song.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zi3CkmEAnc>

Youtube – How they remember you by Rascal Flatts.

Dear heavenly father,

Thank you for this wonderful group of youth that we get to work with each week. I ask for your wisdom to be bestowed upon each of us as we go into this mission trip to have each of us learn exactly what your mission is for us. I pray that we can all spend a bit more time thinking about the way our interactions develop with one another and with those we are to serve. I pray that we can leave a lasting impression on anyone we encounter.

Amen.

Living Hope

Mason Hart

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Listen to the song “Living Hope” By Phil Wickham

A few lines in the chorus say “You have broken every chain. there's salvation in Your name. Jesus Christ, my living hope”

A bible verse I found relating to this is Jeremiah 29:11 “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”

This means that God promises to provide for us and walk alongside us in our situations, whether it be good or bad.

Lets pray,

Dear God, I pray we have a good time in Washington D.C. I pray that nobody gets sick or injured whilst we are there. And I pray we can all grow as a person and as a follower of Christ. Amen

Developing Compassion & Empathy
Jeremy Zoet - 616-886-1620

Compassion is the deep awareness of the suffering of others, coupled with a desire to alleviate that suffering. Empathy, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.

In Scripture, we see countless examples of Jesus demonstrating compassion and empathy. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted the brokenhearted. One powerful example is found in Matthew 9:36, which says, "When he saw the crowds, he had *compassion* for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

As we prepare for our mission trip, let's ask ourselves: How can we develop a heart of compassion that mirrors Christ's love for others? How can we develop empathy to better understand the struggles and needs of those we'll encounter in Washington DC?

Colossians 3:12-14 says:

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

In these verses, we're reminded of our calling as followers of Christ to embody compassion, kindness, and love in all that we do. Our mission trip is not just about physical service but also about sharing God's love through genuine compassion and empathy.

Compassion moves us to action, prompting us to reach out to others with open hearts and hands. Empathy enables us to see beyond the surface and truly connect with others on a deeper level, acknowledging their humanity and inherent worth.

As we prepare to serve in Washington DC, let's commit to:

- Listening actively to the stories and experiences of those we meet, seeking to understand their perspectives and challenges.
- Responding with kindness and compassion, offering a listening ear, a helping hand, and a heart full of love.
- Praying for God's guidance and wisdom as we navigate opportunities to show empathy and make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank You for the reminder of Your compassion and empathy towards us. As we get ready to go on this mission trip, fill us with Your love so that we may be vessels of Your compassion to those we encounter. Help us to see others through Your eyes and to respond with empathy and kindness. May our actions reflect Your heart for the broken and marginalized. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

God (*I Am*) is with you.

Kimberly Verbrugge - Phone: (616) 238-2515

Scripture: Exodus 3: 7-14

⁷ The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you^[b] will worship God on this mountain." ¹³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM.^[c] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Moses is a very important character in the Bible. In this passage, God calls Moses from the burning bush to lead God's people out of Egypt, which was under Pharaoh's control. As you may have noticed in the scripture, Moses is caught off guard by God's request that he lead the people out of Egypt. He is unsure if he is the right guy for the job.

Despite being chosen by God, Moses still doubted that he was worthy and able to be a leader of God's people. Sometimes, it can feel like we are not good enough to be leaders in God's kingdom. We may feel like we are too sinful, too shy, too dumb, or too untalented. Moses likely felt all these things too but he trusted that God was with him, and he became one of the greatest leaders of all time.

As we prepare ourselves for our trip to D.C. I hope you know that it doesn't matter if this is your first mission trip or your 50th. God is going to use you in new ways and will likely push you outside of your comfort zone to do it. Embrace the uncertainty and trust that God will be with you every step of the way. No matter where you are in your walk with God, God wants to use you for his kingdom work during this trip.

Let's Reflect!

What is something you are nervous/hesitant about going on this trip?

What is one way you hope God will use you during our time in Washington D.C.?

Time to Pray: After you have had a chance to reflect on the questions above, pray with God. Pray over what may be making you nervous about this trip and ask God for help in working through it. Pray that God may open your eyes to new opportunities and give you the courage to put your full trust in Him and His plan for you on this trip.

Now Go Listen to these songs to connect it all ☺

- Use Me- Josiah Queen (Listen to this for Sure!!)
- Trust in God- Elevation Worship
- Another One- Elevation Worship

All for God's glory

Nico Garcia

(502) 298- 2943.

- Acts 19:2-6 “ Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you beloved? Paul asked the new believers. “No” they replied “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. “Then what baptism did you experience?” And they replied “the baptism of John” Paul said “John’s baptism was a call for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.” As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.
- Matthew 28:18-20 “ 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- Reflection: Although stepping out in faith may be a little difficult or even scary at times its important to remember that you are never alone. It is Jesus’s promise to be with you always forever. Cast your worries and fears on him. He takes the glory and honor. He releases his Holy Spirit to guide, protect, and work through and with you. God is by your side through it all, through stepping out in boldness and sharing his word to those who have never heard.
- Prayer: Lord, thank you for the opportunity of reading your truthful word. Please help us remember that we are never alone. That every step taken in faith for your work is one you take with us. Please guide and protect us as we step out in boldness for you. Knowing it’s for your glory and honor. Thanks for being a comforter and faithful friend. Amen!

Unconditional Love

Noah Brower (616-727-0173)

(Matthew 22:36-40) **36** “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” **37** Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

I have seen these few verses many times, and that makes a lot of sense: it’s a declaration by Jesus, it clearly answers a question (without hyperbole or parable even, which differs from Jesus much of the time), and it answers a very important question: what is the greatest and second greatest commandment? Now, I always assumed this merely meant the commandment of most importance, perhaps a “If you were to follow one command, what would it be?” kind of deal. However, it took a pastor from Fair Haven to show me a new perspective on this (shoutout to Pastor Jeremy Cruz).

There was a debate going on in Palestine in the first century regarding the “second greatest commandment”. Most agreed upon the first command, which is to love the Lord your God, but there was a debate regarding the second. There were two primary schools of thought. One group believed the second greatest commandment was to love your neighbor. Another group believed adherence to the Torah’s rituals was the second greatest commandment. Jesus firmly stands ground with loving one’s neighbor above ritual duties. He even claims the first and second commandments are the foundations for the rest of the Law. He is claiming that if one must choose between ritual or love, one should choose love.

This is reflected numerous times in Jesus’ ministries. Touching a leper would make one ritually unclean, and yet Jesus does it. Handling unclean animals such as pigs would make one ritually unclean, and yet Jesus does it. Interacting with a corpse would make one ritually unclean, and yet Jesus does it. And he does it for the sake of love. While some Jewish scholars in the first century claimed Jesus was breaking the Law, he was fulfilling it, and for the sake of love. A leper was healed; a possessed man was freed; a girl was raised from the dead. Jesus loved despite it breaking social and religious customs. He didn’t magically find a way to fulfill all the laws at once. He chose love, and he calls us to do the same.

So when we are in DC learning and volunteering, may we also not forget loving. When each of us must make a choice between what is socially acceptable and what is loving, may we choose loving. Unconditionally.

How can I love others on this trip? _____

What things may be holding me back from loving others on this trip? _____

Dear God,

We pray for love on this trip. We pray we will love no matter the time, place, or circumstances. We pray we will love all we meet so that they may see your glory.

Amen.

You are the Light

Abby Hart
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Scripture

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16 NIV

On this mission trip you are not only going to help people in need, but also to show them the love of God. In order to do this you have to live in a way that others can see God through you.

Questions

How have you seen God through others in your past week?

How do you plan to show others the love of God during this trip?

What things should you not do that might shed a negative light on God?

Things to pray for

- An open mind
- A growing relationship with God
- People who do not yet know Jesus
- “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:13)