



# YOU ARE SENT

*Devotions for Short-Term Trips*



# YOU ARE SENT

*Devotions for Short-Term Trips*



[summitrdu.com/shortterm](https://summitrdu.com/shortterm)



Thank you for responding to the gospel and the Great Commission by going to serve the nations. Your obedience is a true encouragement to us, and we pray that God will richly bless you to be a blessing to others! God has given us, as a church, the vision of planting one thousand churches in our generation. We will do this by intentionally living out the gospel in our daily lives and by sending missionaries locally, nationally, and internationally. As you go, rejoice that you are part of the grand mission of God and part of the vision he has given our church to see one thousand churches planted among the unreached!

These devotions will help guide you as you seek to know Jesus more deeply, serve those on your team like Christ served you, and serve the nations through serving your field partner and their city. Use these devotions as a team or as individuals in any way you would like. Each day, you'll read a passage, reflect on what God wants to say to you through it, and respond in prayer to what you've read and considered.

Continue to ask God to do more than we could ever ask or imagine and to give us the nations for his glory. Pray that you are part of the answer to that prayer as you respond in obedience. You can go in confidence knowing that the Spirit's power is within you and the Body of Christ is behind you. You are sent!

*Until all have heard,  
Summit Missions Team*

**READ:** “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58 ESV)

**REFLECT:** After graduating from college, I was able to spend two years living and serving in Tanzania. Although I had been on mission trips before, this was the first time I had traveled outside the United States.

I grew up in a small town in a family that expected everyone to always live on the same road in that same town. When I got to Africa, I realized that my view of God was too small and my view of myself was way too big. I learned that God was moving in the hearts of people in Tanzania long before I arrived. I met people who taught me what genuine faith looks like—faith that endures suffering and persecution. I realized that I had never suffered for my faith.

Early in my time in Africa, the Lord gave me a simple motto to live by. I wrote it on the cover of the journal I kept as a constant reminder: “It’s not about you.” God didn’t send me to Africa for me to have a great adventure. My time there wasn’t about me getting to lead lots of people to Christ—I didn’t. I believe that one of the primary reasons I was there was to be a friend and a brother to a believer from a Muslim background who was an outcast in his own family. It was nothing extravagant or adventurous, but it was never about me in the first place.

While God was teaching me these lessons, the pastor of the church I grew up in sent me a letter of encouragement with a verse I had never really noticed before. It became my favorite verse while on the field and it has since turned into my life verse: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” My time overseas was not playing out like I thought it would, but I was confident that God was accomplishing his purposes in my life and in the lives of those around me.

During your time on this trip, I encourage you to give your expectations to the Lord and ask for faith to trust his plans. God is in control and he is working to bring you and those around you closer to himself. Submitting your time, dreams, plans, and efforts to God is never in vain. He promises to build his kingdom among all nations, and nothing can stop him!

**RESPOND:** Thank God for allowing you to be a part of his mission today, and ask him to help you surrender your own expectations completely to his plans. Ask God to do a great work in your heart as you join what he is doing among the nations.

*by Matt Clark*

**READ:** “And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.” (Mark 3:13–15 ESV)

**REFLECT:** Each day, in an effort to live by faith for the sake of Christ among the nations, we are often confronted with an overwhelming amount of things to consider, figure out, plan for, and accomplish.

From the very beginning of Jesus’ time with his disciples, he made their first priority very evident. In this chapter we see Jesus call his disciples together for the first time, and Mark makes it extremely clear what Jesus’ intentions were for them: Jesus called his disciples first to be with him. Jesus didn’t call them first to accomplish a list of tasks but rather to be with him, and only out of their being with him would the disciples be sent to preach and do the work of the Kingdom.

This means that Jesus is calling you, as his disciple, to be with him. It means that your first priority today—before anything else—is to be with Jesus, to sit at his feet and commune with him. You can do that by spending time with him, allowing him to speak to you through his Holy Spirit and his Word. Place your faith again in the finished work of Christ and know that there is nothing you can do today to make God love you any more and nothing you can do to make him love you any less.

Today is a success or failure based only on whether or not you walk with Jesus—not on how many times you share the gospel, how many things you accomplish, or how many good deeds you do today. Even if everything you touch today seems to fail, today is a success if you abide in Christ and spend the day walking in the marvelous light of the gospel. For it is only by being with Jesus that we can truly preach the gospel, believing that it alone has the power to move men and women from death to life. So before anything else today, be with Jesus. Everyone you share with might reject the gospel, and everything around you might crumble and fall apart; however, Christ has called you to be with him above all else!

You don’t have to wonder what God is calling you to do first today. He is calling you to be a disciple and walk with Jesus in hard places. He wants you to know Jesus, love him, follow him, and live with him. So abide in Jesus, marvel in the gospel, and sit with your Creator, the Sustainer of your soul. Allow this time with him to guide you to preach the gospel and do the work of the Kingdom.

**RESPOND:** Confess your dependence upon the Father and pray these truths: **a)** in Christ, there is nothing I can do to make you love me any more, and there is nothing I can do to make you love me any less; **b)** You are all I need today for everlasting joy; **c)** as you have been to me, so I will be to others; **d)** as I pray, I’ll measure your compassion by the Cross and your power by the Resurrection.

*(These four prayer points were adapted from Gospel by J.D. Greear.)*

**READ:** “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’” (Isaiah 6:1–5 NIV)

**REFLECT:** These verses precede Isaiah’s famous response to God: “Here I am, send me!” In that verse he volunteers himself to be sent by God, but these previous verses are really important to understanding why Isaiah does that. If you read the whole chapter, you’ll notice that God never calls Isaiah specifically to go. Isaiah does not volunteer because he feels called, but instead because he has seen God in his glory. For just a brief time, Isaiah gets to see God clearly: he is “high and exalted,” “seated on the throne,” “holy, holy, holy.” This vision compels Isaiah’s response. He is so overwhelmed by the revelation of God that he eagerly answers the question “Who will go for us?” God’s glory motivated Isaiah, and his response was obedience.

I served for a few years in a Muslim country that is closed to the Gospel. Most people there do not know the truth about Jesus, and relatively few people believe in him even today. It wasn’t always easy or comfortable to live there, and some days I doubted whether I had really been called there. God did not give me a sign to assure me, but he did reveal more of his glory to me through Scripture and through his work in people’s lives. Having my eyes fixed on him—rather than myself—compelled me to pursue his mission like Isaiah did.

**RESPOND:** Pray that God opens your eyes to see him as he truly is—high and exalted, of greatest worth, the King of every place on earth! Thank him for his promise that the knowledge of his glory will fill the earth as the water covers the sea, and that his name will be exalted among the nations. Pray that God gives people faith to believe his promises. Ask him to overwhelm you with his ultimate worthiness so that you will respond like Isaiah did. Ask him to use you to proclaim good news to those who are far from him.

*by Matt Mig*

**READ:** Mark 5:1–20.

**REFLECT:** Today's reading is the story of the possessed man. On the first pass, the average American would probably think, "That's a cool story, but it doesn't really apply to me." In our society, it's not every day that we encounter demon possession. We might go an entire lifetime never actually seeing it with our own eyes, only hearing stories about it in some distant land. However, don't just pass this story by. Let's make it a little more personal.

Read the story a second time and think about the struggles in this man's life, besides the fact that he was possessed. Verse 3 tells us that he was an outcast; he lived in the tombs and had no friends or community. Scripture says that he was very strong; when people tried to bind him with chains, he would break them. The people of his town were likely terrified of him. He had no peace or joy in his life, as evidenced by his self-destructive behavior of cutting himself with stones. He would cry out day and night. The man was in great distress, and he had no power in himself to cast out the demons and come back to his right mind. Have you ever experienced a struggle in your life that was too great for you to overcome by yourself?

At the end of the story we see the man in his right mind, completely healed, begging to follow Jesus. If you could think of one word that describes what Jesus did for this man, what would it be—healing, joy, peace, community, hope? Think about your own experience of coming to Jesus and the things that he has delivered you from. What one word would describe it? Although your story may look very different from that of the man in Mark 5, you have certainly been delivered from something, if you are a follower of Christ. We all, like the demon-possessed man, are in desperate need of the mercy and power of Jesus.

**RESPOND:** Spend some time meditating today on the powerful work that Christ has done in your own life. Thank him for the mercy that he has shown you. As you encounter new people to share the gospel with today, remember that there is no sin or struggle or "religious" devotion too powerful for Christ to overcome.

*by Alyson McCaskell*

**READ:** “The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. . . . for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” (Isaiah 52:10, 12b ESV)

**REFLECT:** You are not alone. Let me say that again: you are not alone. Even your team isn't alone. But let's be honest, sometimes we can really feel alone when serving Jesus. It can be hard when you are in an area where many people don't believe the truth about Jesus or the Bible. Maybe you're missing your family. Maybe one of your friends has frustrated you or maybe you just want some Chick-fil-A! Or maybe you ate at that shop on the corner and you're regretting that decision, and the fact that I even mention food grosses you out. Whatever you are experiencing right now is not a surprise to God. In fact, he planned this moment for you. He has been leading you toward this very moment!

When I was in Central Asia I would walk outside my house every day and see a culture that was not the one I grew up in. Every conversation I had was with people who thought differently, spoke differently, and believed differently from me. I would hear the call to prayer five times a day from the local mosques and think to myself, “God, what could I possibly accomplish here?” Being on the field has a way of making you feel really small. It was difficult to see how or even if I was accomplishing anything, but God reminded me that it was not I that was doing the work, but that God through me was working out his purposes.

Thankfully, the promise that all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God doesn't depend just on your or my ability to accomplish something. He has already promised that salvation, and he allows us to be a big part of the process. It's not that complicated. If you were at the mall and a huge muscular guy walked in and started flexing, you would probably tell your friends to look. God's work in the world is like that; he is the one who is saving people. Look at him flexing his holy arm that is powerful to save. Be in awe and point people to him!

This verse in Isaiah was written when God's people were leaving exile in Babylon and returning to Jerusalem. They had been delivered from captivity, but it could have been tempting for them to forget in this difficult season of life that they were not alone. God was surrounding them on both sides. His promise for them is his promise for you. He wants to save people and he wants to use you. He will go before you so that you can follow him and come behind you so you won't have to fear. I'm grateful that in God's work to save the nations, he constantly surrounds his people.

**RESPOND:** Spend time thanking God that he is mighty to save. Thank him for being willing to use you in the process of drawing men and women to himself. Ask God to empower you today to share boldly!

*by Lance Michels*

**READ:** “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:35–38 NKJV)

**REFLECT:** You are exposed to endless needs. The needs all around you can be overwhelming. Be blessed today to know that even Jesus was burdened when he saw all the needs around him. He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion, saying they were harassed like sheep without a shepherd.

Let his compassion flow through you today. Feel the pain of those around you. Cry if you want. Let it move you. But respond like Jesus did—pray! And recognize that Jesus didn’t pray just any prayer. He specifically prayed for God to send more laborers into the field. Think about this. He could have prayed for anything, but he asked for more laborers. Actually, you’re an answer to that prayer!

**RESPOND:** Now be a follower of Christ and pray the same prayer. Look around. Walk around. Pray for God to send more laborers. Do you get it? Do you understand what Jesus is teaching us? The greatest need isn’t for more food, clothing, or physical resources; it’s for more missionaries, more pastors, and more shepherds.

*by Kevin White*



**READ:** “I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:10–13 NIV)

**REFLECT:** I’ve heard many people list Philippians 4:13 as one of their favorite verses. I’m not surprised, because it appeals to our desire to be invincible—to be able to do anything. However, I believe that if you simply read that single verse out of context, you miss much of what Paul is trying to share with us.

Paul penned these words to his beloved church in Philippi—a church he helped plant—while he sat in a Roman prison, waiting for the death sentence he faced to be carried out. I doubt that Paul was, at any point during his imprisonment, physically comfortable. I wouldn’t be surprised if he, at times, felt anxious and afraid. But he talks about how he has learned to be content in all circumstances. Later, he refers to the secret that enables him to not only endure but also find joy. How is this possible?

My family spent three years working as church planters on the island of Sumatra. We moved there after the massive earthquake and tsunami of 2004 that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, the majority of which were from the province we moved to. At that time the electricity was spotty, the heat and humidity were oppressive, and some places in town still smelled of death. In addition, we were surrounded by a culture that was violently opposed to the gospel that could save them. It was, by modern American standards of comfort, unpleasant.

Those years were both the most amazing, joyous, and thrilling years of our family’s lives as well as the most difficult, painful, and terrifying ones. But we wouldn’t trade a moment of those years, because during that time we learned the same secret that Paul refers to. Stripped of the comforts that we had become so dependent on, we placed our joy in the hands of the one who had endured unspeakable suffering in order to show us unfathomable love, grace, and mercy.

That secret compelled us—and continues to compel us—to live lives poured out for those around us who had never heard the gospel and to seek to model the likeness of the one we follow. It also provided us contentment in the midst of circumstances that would have previously devastated us.

I turned to Philippians 2 many times during our life in Sumatra. I pray that your time on mission will help you learn the secret of that same contentment that Paul wrote about thousands of years ago.

**RESPOND:** Ask God to help you rely on him today in times of discomfort and even suffering that you may face. Thank God that he is always with you, and ask him to help you, like Paul, surrender completely to him so that in every situation you are able to rejoice because of the hope of the gospel.

*by Curt Alan*



**READ:** “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 NIV)

**REFLECT:** True freedom is a by-product of God’s amazing grace. Perhaps you’re serving right now in a culture that is extremely religious. The fact is that all of us want salvation. We all want to fill this God-shaped void within us.

Allow God to show you any ways in which you are burdened by the yoke of slavery. Live confidently today in your identity in Christ. Because you are alive in Christ you are one hundred percent secure, significant, and accepted. Now that is a reason to worship! Ask God to open your eyes to this freedom.

One expression of this freedom is that you are free to care about others. You don’t have to worry and work to be secure, significant, and accepted. Today you are free to serve. You are free to minister. You are free to experience God and to join him in his work in and through you. Let freedom ring today!

Allow God to break your heart for those who are burdened by the yoke of slavery. Many people subject themselves to unbelievable bondage trying to find the security, significance, and acceptance that can only be found in Christ. Observe the religious activities all around you; let them compel you to intercede. Perhaps even mourn with those who are burdened. Don’t judge. Don’t condemn. Be confident that true freedom is found only in Christ and that he wants to set captives free today. Celebrate the freedom you have in Christ. Share it with others. Let God use it to initiate conversations about the gospel with those around you.

**RESPOND:** Ask God to help you live today from the freedom you’ve been given through Christ. Thank God for this freedom and ask him to open the hearts of those around you to it as well!

*by Kevin White*

**READ:** “Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18–20 NLT)

**REFLECT:** Regardless of where you are in the world today, you will encounter countless distractions from the real reason you’re there.

Perhaps you’re mentally or physically challenged today with jet lag or you’re experiencing the discomforts of “mission belly” from something you ate. Perhaps you’re experiencing sensory overload as your body, mind, and spirit all try to adjust to the culture shock. Perhaps it seems that you’re a million miles away from your loved ones and you feel lonely.

No matter what challenges you are facing, rest assured that you’re not in this geographic location on planet earth by mistake. You are here on purpose! Keep in mind today that God’s purpose for calling you to go into all the world is to advance the gospel.

Whether your day goes as planned or not, know that God is in control and that he is always at work revealing himself and his love to people. Be encouraged to experience him today and to let him work in and through you to accomplish his great purpose.

Make it a point today to be constantly praying for God to use you to advance the Gospel. Be on call and receptive to this core purpose. Keep your yes on the table and live knowing that you are sent today!

**RESPOND:** Ask God to help you live out your faith intentionally today in response to the good news of the gospel.

*by Kevin White*



**READ:** “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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9–10 ESV)

**REFLECT:** In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul shares his past accolades to demonstrate his bragging rights as a righteous and intelligent person. However, he goes on to explain how much he has suffered for Christ and how God allowed a particular issue to remain in his life in order to keep him humble. Through these struggles, Paul learned to rely on God’s grace to sustain him. Like Paul, I used to find my identity in my achievements, particularly in my grades and musical abilities (I was a straight-A student and a music major in college). Although I grew a lot in my understanding of the gospel during college and knew that my identity should be in Christ alone, I still took pride in those things. As a part of that journey of growth, I went on a summer mission project to Argentina after my sophomore year of college. By the end of the six-week trip, I knew that God was calling me to return to Argentina for a longer commitment.

After two years of dreaming about Argentina and longing to go back, I finally graduated college and started my adventure, as well as a two-year process of being humbled and refined. Although I had minored in Spanish, I struggled to communicate. I felt like a child, unable to express myself beyond broken sentences. I would find myself wanting to tell the other person, “I promise I’m smart. I just don’t know how to say this in Spanish.” Besides the language barrier, working in full-time college ministry and adjusting to cultural differences also stretched me. I love structure and organization, but I had to adapt to constantly changing plans (or no plan at all!) and laid-back people who value relationships over efficiency. I was completely out of my comfort zone. While I didn’t face persecution in Argentina, and what I experienced would be better described as discomfort than suffering, I was certainly made aware of my many weaknesses. Becoming weak and uncomfortable taught me to depend on God in a profound way. I grew to appreciate the cultural differences and I learned to enjoy Spanish so much that when I started coming to the Summit, I decided to make Summit en Español my home campus. I learned firsthand that his grace is sufficient, and that is my prayer for you today. Through serving in unfamiliar places, may you grow deeper in the gospel, realizing that his grace is truly sufficient for you today and every day!

**RESPOND:** Thank God for taking us out of our comfort zones so we can learn to be dependent on him. Thank him for sustaining us through trials. Ask him to continue teaching us to be content in our weaknesses and in difficult circumstances in order to bring him glory and demonstrate his strength.

*by Rachel Flores*

**READ:** “I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” (2 Corinthians 7:4b ESV)

**REFLECT:** I served as a missionary for two years in a poor village in Central Asia, and those were the hardest two years of my life. Coming from the United States, life in a developing nation was certainly a shock. Every day I found myself speaking somebody else’s language, eating truckloads of rice, and relieving myself in a hole outside. Even though I wore the appropriate local attire, I stuck out like a sore thumb as I walked through the local bazaar, attracting stares and gaping mouths. In the summer my wife and I tried to keep cool and in the winter we tried to keep warm, but neither attempt was very successful. Since bathing was such a chore, most days we were pretty dirty. Add the persistent stomach illnesses I had for over a year and the constant security threats in my city, and it made for a rough time.

It sometimes seems that to really sacrifice for the sake of the gospel, you’ve got to be so happy about it that you don’t see the affliction and difficulty. That’s why I love what Paul says: “In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.” Paul knew the secret to gospel-centered joy. It doesn’t come by avoiding sacrifice, but by pressing through sacrifice to the greater joy beyond. Paul understood that afflictions are real, but the joy of the gospel is more real. And only when we feel the joy of God’s acceptance can we be filled with comfort amidst affliction and overflowing with joy in a broken world.

A missionary life is often an uncomfortable one—who in his right mind prefers a hole for a toilet to a nice porcelain one?—but to follow God is to experience the joy of obedience. Take a step outside of your comfort zone and you’ll learn what I did: bringing Christ to the lost is meaningful and often exasperating, but always joyful. Is joy in short supply in your life? Perhaps something is standing in the way of your obedience to God, preventing you from giving your all for the gospel. Maybe, just maybe, God wants you to lay aside your American dreams and plant your life overseas or in a more strategic place in America. Whatever it is he’s calling you to, I can assure you that following God fully is more joyful than clinging to your comforts. I might not have believed it myself until I experienced being filthy, tired, far from home, and absolutely content.

**RESPOND:** Thank God today that despite any circumstance, we can be joyful! Ask God to work in your heart today and draw you deeper into his love. Ask him to show you how he wants you to be a part of his global mission today.

*by Chris Pappalardo*

**READ:** “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:18-21 ESV)

**REFLECT:** I was in South Africa working with a local pastor on an outreach to several villages. One morning, he asked me to go for a walk with him. We walked through a village of small homes, many consisting of one or two rooms. This pastor reached out and took my hand as we walked. I had never held hands with a man before, but it didn't bother me. I was honored because I knew it was a sign of friendship. We came to a small, empty piece of property. The pastor told me he hoped to build a house there someday for his family and he asked me to pray with him for God to make this dream possible.

Whenever I have the privilege to serve with local believers overseas, I always learn so much more about God's family. I am reminded how the Holy Spirit makes us one. I'm reminded that I didn't bring the Spirit with me, for he has already been working long before I arrived. I'm just thankful that he has invited me to join him in what he is doing. It's encouraging to know that the work doesn't depend on me. Because it belongs to the Lord I know there will be victory. God will be glorified.

**RESPOND:** Thank God today that he is at work in places and cultures around the world. Confess that God does not in any way need you but thank him that he chooses you to be part of his mission. Ask him to work today through the Holy Spirit as you seek to share the good news of the gospel with the nations!

*by Rick Langston*

**READ:** “So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor the one who waters, but God who causes the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:7 NET)

**REFLECT:** We all looked at each other with defeat in our eyes. After months of sharing the gospel, studying the Bible, and praying daily for our city and our university campus in West Africa, we felt like failures. The same calls to prayer from the mosques and the same sights of a city wrecked with poverty and broken systems made us feel like things would never change. These are the thoughts that haunted our minds: “If only we spoke the language better,” or “If only we were more culturally perceptive,” or “If only we knew more about Islam and how to relate the Bible to their beliefs,” then we would see fruit.

At that team meeting, we were forced to confront our disappointments and failures and examine our hearts. What was our motive for being there? What was our definition of success? Were we only willing to labor for the sake of the gospel when we could see measurable results? One of my teammates shared 1 Corinthians 3:7 and asked us a thought-provoking question: who did we believe could make people understand the gospel? Paul also says, “My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NET).

We were overconfident in our own abilities to share the gospel with clever speech or persuasive arguments, and we lacked confidence in God’s ability to open people’s hearts to hear and receive the gospel. We had tricked ourselves into believing that we cared more about seeing lives changed in West Africa than about God himself. We had somehow come to believe our worth and success were measured by the results of our work rather than our faithfulness and obedience to God. As a result, we felt defeated and discouraged. Perhaps American culture has influenced us to believe that if we work hard enough and do all the right things, then we will see results. But with that mindset we end up focusing on our own abilities and creating followers of ourselves rather than followers of God. We can be encouraged that God is using us where we are to spread seeds of the gospel or to water seeds that are already there. He is doing the work, so our souls can rest in his faithfulness to bring his work to completion.

**RESPOND:** Take time to pray for your heart as you share the gospel with those around you today. Pray for eyes of faith and a humble heart of perseverance. Continually petition God for the souls of those around you who do not know Jesus, because he causes the growth. Confess to God that only he has the power to bring the lost to salvation. Ask God to help you to simply be faithful to share. Ask God to save the lost today!

*by Michelle Wijaya*

**READ:** “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” (Romans 12:3-6a ESV)

**REFLECT:** By the time I graduated college I had taken almost 20 personality and spiritual gift tests. I found out way more about myself than I ever wanted to know. I think we’ve overcomplicated the whole idea of spiritual gifts and created more requirements and obstacles for them than they need. Before Paul talks about what some of the spiritual gifts are, he tells us exactly why they are important.

Paul spends the first 11 chapters of his letter to the Romans explaining the gospel in great detail: what it is, who it’s about, and why we can’t live without it. But in chapter 12 he changes direction; instead of helping us learn theology, he helps us live theology. He tells us how to live out the gospel, and all of it hinges on grace. When God looked down on a world full of people who had turned their backs on him, it was his grace that caused him to make a way for us to come back to him. Grace changes our lives, rearranges our priorities, and gives us a fundamentally new way to view ourselves.

We serve because God has served us. We love because he has loved us. And when we do those things, we point people to Jesus.

**RESPOND:** Ask God to help us be confident and unified as we engage in his mission together. Pray that we see people making huge strides in their personal walks with him and in turn leading others to him. May we continue to advance his Kingdom here on earth as he helps us push back our enemy, for we know that the ultimate victory is already his! Pray that the gospel bears much fruit as lives are changed in our city and around the world. This task is huge, but we are confident in the one who promised to complete the good work that was started in each one of us until Christ returns!

*by Ryan Doherty*

**READ:** “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” (Isaiah 55:1–3 ESV)

**REFLECT:** This passage gives the greatest invitation in all of history. A great invitation is one that connects something we want with the thing that will satisfy those wants. An invitation is only as good as the hunger it satisfies. The invitation given in this passage connects the greatest gift God ever gave to the deepest need we have ever experienced. This invitation connects our souls’ great hunger with God’s great feast. The passage lays it out this way: We are all desperately hungry, God’s feast is abundant, and the gospel invites us to dine.

We are all desperately hungry. Every soul on planet earth is feasting itself on something, looking for what will really make it happy, searching for what will really satisfy. Isaiah asks, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” Before we can truly feast on God’s provision, we have to identify what we are really hungering for.

God’s feast is abundant. Isaiah describes a lavish meal with the best food and drink imaginable, but what God is inviting us to is even more profound. Verse 1 says, “Come to the waters,” and verse 3 says, “Come to me”! All those other delicacies are found in God. It is not all of God’s good gifts that we need most; it is God himself. The water that you crave is not found outside of him. The food that you hunger for does not exist apart from knowing him.

The gospel invites us to dine. If we are desperately hungry, and God’s feast is abundant, how do we actually partake? Notice something strange about this passage. It says we can buy food and drink without money. How can we do that? Perhaps someone else has already paid for it. This whole passage, this great invitation, is the result of an event. If you look two chapters earlier, you’ll see that Isaiah tells us that a suffering servant, the Messiah, will take our punishment upon himself. Isaiah says, “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. . . . and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5, 6b ESV). Jesus’ death paid the price that our sinful souls owed. Now God freely invites us to dine, because the work is finished. God’s greatest gift has met our deepest need.

**RESPOND:** Thank God for the gospel and ask him to help you to live out the appropriate response: a life of worship and of being with Jesus and sharing his abundant feast with the nations.

*by Logan Dagley.*

**READ:** “But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!” (Jonah 2:9 ESV)

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9 NIV)

**REFLECT:** No matter where you find yourself today, rest assured that:

1. Jesus has already been working long before you arrived.
2. Your opportunity today is to know Jesus and to join him in his work.
3. Your mission today is Jesus—not evangelism, discipleship, or church planting. He invites you to experience him as he works in and through you to advance his gospel.
4. Evangelism is a natural by-product of experiencing Jesus.

Be confident today that salvation is a gift. It is the gift of God, and it is a gift that He wants to give. Salvation belongs to the Lord!

*Only God can open a person's eyes to see him.*

*Only God can open a person's mouth to call upon him to be saved.*

*Only God can open a person's heart to receive him.*

You can be his messenger, but you can't do the work apart from him, so rest and rejoice! Determine today to be a worshipper. Determine today to experience God and to let him work in and through you.

**RESPOND:** Thank God for the confidence you have in the gospel today, and ask God to help you share and serve boldly out of the power of what Christ has already accomplished.

*by Kevin White*

**READ:** “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15–16 ESV)

**REFLECT:** Often on mission trips we are excited to get away from the busyness of life and devote ourselves to making disciples overseas. We imagine this amazing time of just devoting ourselves to Jesus and his work. But what we often find is that the same struggles and temptations we left in America follow us to the mission field. So many things tempt me—success, popularity, sex, security, fear, health, money, family, and revenge—and I can fall into them easily. Jesus was tempted just like you and I are, yet without sinning. It brings great comfort to know that our high priest conquered sin.

The second part of the passage is even better. Because Jesus was without sin, the writer of Hebrews tells us to draw near with confidence. I think this is a huge step in our lives. So often we go to God scared and embarrassed about our sin. Or we just try harder to stop sinning. The problem is that no matter how hard we try, we just keep sinning. The reason that we draw near with confidence is not because of our own work, but instead because of Christ’s work on the cross. God loves us because of what Jesus has done, and there is nothing we can do to put that in jeopardy. Jesus wants us to stop trying harder and instead come to him and let him fix us. He will shower us with grace and mercy, which changes our hearts to allow us to obey him. Jesus can sympathize with our weakness, and he is our strength. If you are struggling with temptation and sin, stop trying harder and instead draw near to Jesus with confidence. There’s only grace.

**RESPOND:** Confess your sins to God and rest in the gospel today. Ask God to renew your understanding of the great news that he has done everything necessary for your salvation and for the salvation of the nations! Ask him to help you find your motivation for ministry in that alone—the glory of God and the eternal forgiveness he has offered to you freely through Jesus Christ.

by *Wes Smith*



**READ:** Hosea 1:2-3, 3:1-5

**REFLECT:** Today we consider the relentless pursuit of an unlikely character. God commanded the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, love her, have a family with her, and then take her back after she was unfaithful to him with other lovers. His marriage mirrored the forgiveness and patience of God's love for Israel. Hosea learned the power and the pain of God's love for humankind. As a prophet, he expressed to the Israelites God's anger over their disloyalty to him as well as God's relentless pursuit of them.

I spent one summer in the most populated city in India. Twenty-two million people in one city, most of whom have no idea what the gospel is and how it can change their lives. As I walked through slum after slum and saw both the material and spiritual devastation of those precious people created in the image of God, I asked a lot of hard questions. Why would God create them to live in a place of darkness? Why is there so much suffering in one concentrated area of the world? What role did I have there?

After much prayer and time in the Word, I saw how relentlessly God had pursued me and was pursuing these people. I didn't deserve to grow up in a relatively comfortable Christian home. I didn't deserve to hear about Christ from such a young age and be called out of death and into life. But God pursued me relentlessly, and in the same way he was pursuing these beautiful people in India. He was working through his local church body to spread the gospel. He is making his name famous in that city and it was my choice to get involved or to sit on the sidelines.

Choices in life don't make character, they reveal it. As in any great love story, love must be tested. Your relationship with Jesus helps you through the difficult times in your life that test your faith. It is the hope, faith, and love that you have in the Master that will get you through life's challenges. There will be times of joy and times of sorrow. Sometimes things do not go your way because you are disobedient to God; other times, struggles may occur because God has a different plan for your life than you thought. Either way, times of struggle are opportunities to show through your faithfulness that you value your relationship with God and His mission to reach the nations above all else.

Is there a sin in your life that you have difficulty overcoming because of selfish ambition? Have you tried to work through it with prayer, time in the Word, and time with fellow believers? Now is the time to surrender your life, acknowledge him, and wait for the Lord to make your paths straight.

**RESPOND:** Spend some time thinking about what God did through his prophet Hosea. Dig deep into these passages and remember the ways in which God relentlessly pursues His people. Thank him for that.

*By Amanda Springer*

**READ:** “Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” (Matthew 16:18 NLT)

**REFLECT:** Jesus could have determined to build anything. We need many good things—hospitals, orphan homes, schools, child development centers, and food pantries, to name a few. Yet Jesus made it very clear that the one thing he is building is the church—the body of his followers. The church is not a building. It is the people of God.

God’s strategy is to accomplish the Great Commission that Jesus gave us in Matthew 28 through the local church. Obviously, orphanages and hospitals have their place, but nothing can ever replace the local church. Be encouraged today to fall in love with Jesus by falling in love with his church. How committed are you to building it? Because Jesus is building his church, we can’t truly follow him if we aren’t joining him in building it.

Make sure that you connect with a local pastor and a local church this week. Get to know them. Pray for them. Serve them. Seek to empower them. Ask God how you can encourage and strengthen them. Partner with them in the Great Commission. Honor them by tapping into what God is already doing in and through them. Long after you leave they will still be laboring on behalf of the gospel. Be careful to elevate them rather than replace them in how you serve.

Also be encouraged to connect people first to Jesus and then to his body. Going and making disciples requires the local church. As much as people need to call upon the name of Jesus to be saved, they also need to experience him daily through the community of believers.

**RESPOND:** Ask God to show you how Jesus is building the church, and ask him to use you in that work. Ask him to help you fall in love with Jesus and his church today. Seek to become friends with brothers and sisters in Christ. Ask God for the grace to live like family today with your team and those you have gone to serve. Pray that you will be able to experience God today through his church.

*by Kevin White*



