

Five Weeks Before Departing (June 10th) Preparing to Hear God.

This passage lays out a model for ensuring that you are hearing God.

Luke 8:4-15. ⁴While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

⁹His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

‘though seeing, they may not see;
though hearing, they may not understand.’”

¹¹“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

Listen!

Luke 8:8b: When he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

† *Am I earnestly listening to how God might be trying to speak to me?*

† *How have I prepared myself to hear Him?*

Cultivate Your Mind!

. . . some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up . . . Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

† *Has my mind been well cultivated to hear God?*

† *How is my mind like a hardened path, due to pride, fear, bitterness or anxiety so that God’s word cannot take root in my life?*



Four Weeks Before Departing (June 17th) The Importance of Hearing God.

It assures me that I’m in God’s family!

John 10:14: [Jesus said,] “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . . They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.”

It protects me!

Job 33:14a, 16-18: For God does speak . . . he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.

It’s the secret of a productive life!

John 15:5: I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

† *Do I listen to God’s voice? Do I recognize it the way I recognize my earthly father’s voice?*

† *Am I feeling a sense of belonging to God’s family? How so? How not? Pray about this!*

† *Is God’s voice warning me? Turning me from wrongdoing? Keeping me from pride? Preserving my soul? Have I asked God for help?*

† *Where in my life have I become self-reliant, rather than relying on Jesus?*

Remember, self-sufficiency is insufficient, because it denies us God’s grace.

2 Corinthians 12:9: My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.



Eliminate Distractions!

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants . . . The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

- † *What are the distractions in my life that are keeping me from hearing God?*
- † *Am I too busy? Beware of the barrenness of a busy life!*
- † *Are life's worries encroaching? Worry is a sign of being pulled in different directions, sometimes known as a divided mind.*
- † *What about riches and pleasures? Am I so busy making a living that I don't make a life? Am I too busy having fun that I can't hear God speak?*
- † *Remember, weeds grow without any work; they need only neglect. How have I been neglecting my spiritual life? What are the weeds that are growing in my life as a result of my neglect?*

Cooperate with God!

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. . . . But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

James 1:22: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!

- † *God talks to people who decide in advance they will do whatever he asks.*
- † *Am I ready to say "Yes, Lord, Yes," and then ask the question, "Now what do you want me to do, Lord?"*

Three Weeks Before Departing (June 24th) Is God Talking to Me?

God speaks through His Word!

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalm 119:105: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

- † *Am I spending time in God's Word so that He can speak to me and light my path?*

God speaks through gifted teachers.

Ephesians 4:11-12: It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

1 Corinthians 2:13: This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

- † *Is God speaking to me today through others? Teachers? Pastors? Other believers?*

God speaks through impressions from the Spirit.

John 14:26: But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Job 33:14-15: For God does speak – now one way, now another – though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds . . .

- † *Is God speaking to me today through impressions from the Spirit?*

God speaks through pain!

Psalm 119:67, 71-72: Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Proverbs 20:30: Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being.

- † *Is God speaking to me today through pain?*

Hebrews 3:15b: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts . . .



Two Weeks Before Departing (July 1st) Requesting God's Guidance.

God cares about all the details of your life!

Matthew 6:31-32: "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

† *Scripture tells me that God knows the hairs on my head. What detail of my life have I failed to take to him?*

Ask God specific questions!

Philippians 4:4-7: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- † *Am I asking Him specific questions?*
- † *Can I ask God today, "God, is there anything you want to tell me?"*
- † *Can I ask God today, "What's next, Lord?"*
- † *Can I ask God to show me the way.*

Psalm 25:4-5: Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Believe God wants to answer!

James 1:5-6: If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

- † *Expect God to answer!! When we expect an answer, we really pray!*
- † *God honors faith!*

Six Days Before Departing (July 9th) Servanthood/Humility

"I don't know what your destiny will be but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." Albert Schweitzer

So here we go! Next week this time, we will be ready to land in Addis Ababa to start our adventure together. Over the past four weeks, we have been spending time preparing and listening to God and requesting His guidance.

What did you hear?

Do you need to spend a little more time listening? Then these next few days might be a good time to do that, especially amidst the hustle and bustle of packing and preparing to leave.

But we also need to prepare ourselves to serve. Our time together will definitely result in a more significant experience for each of us, if we can stay focused on serving the teachers of HOPE Enterprises, serving the others with whom we come into contact, and serving each other. Over the next few days, take some time to review the materials that are designed to help us focus on servanthood.

Matthew 25: 34-40 – ³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'"

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

Matthew 23: 10-13 – ¹⁰"Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

¹³"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."

Philippians 2:1-11 – ¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

- ⁶Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
- ⁷but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,



One Week Before Departing (July 8th) Receiving God's Guidance.

"I want to know God's thoughts. Everything else is a detail."
Albert Einstein

We've spent the past several weeks preparing our hearts, minds and spirits to hear God. Now, it's time to receive the guidance He has for us. Review the devotions of the past four weeks, and then contemplate these words.

Habakkuk 2:1: I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

† *I can receive God's guidance, if I withdraw, wait, watch, write and worship.*

Withdraw! Stand watch!

Luke 5:16: But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

† *Where are my lonely places? Do I withdraw there to be with God? Or are my lonely places simply places where I withdraw from others?*

Be still and wait! Station myself!

Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalm 62:5: Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

2 Kings 3:15: But now bring me a harpist. While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha.

† *When do I take time to "be still?" To rest my soul? Can I use music to help?*

Watch for what He will say to me!?!

Habakkuk 2:2b: I will look to see what he will say to me . .

Ephesians 1:18: I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

† *I often sing for the Lord to open the eyes of my heart. But am I watching for Him to speak to me visibly?*

Write it down!!

Habakkuk 2:2: Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it."

Worship God's faithfulness!

Habakkuk 3:2a: LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.

being made in human likeness.
⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The values of God's Kingdom are different from the values of the world. In the world, greatness is judged by the power a person exercises over another. In the Kingdom, greatness is judged by service to people. As children of the King, we follow Kingdom values.

When God chose to connect with humans He did so as a servant. It was a most unlikely way, for servants are usually invisible. People look past them and rarely acknowledge them until needed for a chore. Their rights are few, their power negligible.

† *Why would Jesus choose to come as a servant?*

† *What examples has Christ given me for being a servant?*

† *What attitudes must I feel overcome to become a humble servant?*

† *How can I put my pride away and become a humble servant to my teammates and to the people I meet in Ethiopia?*



Five Days Before Departing (July 10th) Welcoming others into your presence

Luke 15:2 – This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.

Openness is the first step of servanthood. In discerning the process for becoming a servant, we can look to Jesus and see the steps he modeled – starting with the last.

- † **Serving** – You can't serve someone you don't understand.
- † **Understanding** – You can't understand someone until you learn about, from and with them.
- † **Learning** – You can't learn important information about and from someone until trust develops in the relationship.
- † **Trusting** – To build trust with someone, they must know that you accept and value them as a person, which often means you must trust them.
- † **Accepting** – Before you can communicate acceptance to someone, they must experience your openness – your ability to welcome them into your presence.
- † **Openness** – Openness with someone different from yourself requires that you willingly step out of your comfort zone and initiate and sustain relationships in a world of cultural differences.

Openness is the ability to welcome people into your presence and make them feel safe. In fact, many of the one-on-one interactions that Jesus had with people were relationships where he allowed himself to be served – to receive – so that he could “breathe bigness” into them. Jesus understood something about how to serve others and make them comfortable and safe in his presence: it all starts by welcoming others into his presence and often, the easiest way to do that was to allow them to give something to him – the drink from the woman at the well, dinner with Zacheus, or the woman wiping his feet with perfume and her hair.

The cross may be the single greatest symbol of openness. On the cross Jesus' arms were open wide, ready to receive anything, anyone and everyone in this world. In His dying breath, Jesus still signaled his openness to receive those who would come to him in repentance. In this respect, openness is grounded in the very nature of God.

Scripture warns that our unwillingness to be hospitable may cause us to miss out on a divine encounter. As the letter to the Hebrews advises, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2)

- † *What obstacles must I overcome to become more open?*
- † *How can I show openness to my teammates and those I encounter in Ethiopia?*
- † *What examples of openness has Christ modeled for me?*



Three Days Before Departing (July 12th) Building Confidence in Relationships

“The most important step in entering a new culture is to build trust. Only when people trust us will they listen to what we have to say.”

Marvin Meyers

Relationships travel best over strong bridges of trust. Trust binds us together, and we function best when that bond is strong. We can define trust as the ability to build confidence in a relationship so that both parties believe the other will not intentionally hurt them, and will always act in their best interests.

Trust must be built from the other person's frame of reference, but let's face it, this is hard. When I wake up, the first thing I typically think of is me. Then, there are those good days, when I wake up and think first about what others are thinking of me. But rarely, do I wake up and think first about someone else. Yet, as human beings we must connect with each other in order to survive.

Perhaps you can remember a time when you were first in love with someone. When you couldn't stop thinking about them. Did you ever write a poem for them? Did you ever call them and talk for hours, then moments after hanging up, all you want to do is call them back. If this has ever happened to you, then you know what it is like to love someone so much that you can't stop thinking about them.

It's a little different on a trip like this. Learning to think of people we don't know well is tough. But, when we don't know the language of the local people, learning and trying to speak their language actually signals our desire to know them and build relationships of trust with them. Our inability to value culture and ethnic diversity increases the complexity of building and maintaining trust. Yet God wants that diversity to be respected and harnessed in such a way that together we strive for the glory of God and unify around the work of his kingdom.

So, this is our challenge – to build trust with our team members, with the teachers we are working with from HOPE Enterprises, and with our hosts.

Ephesians 4:3-6 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:2 – The prerequisite for such oneness is: “to be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

- † *What can I do to build trust with my teammates, our hosts, the teachers and the other Ethiopians I encounter?*
- † *Where did Christ show complete trust in his father?*
- † *How can I show complete trust in Christ?*



Four Days Before Departing (July 11th) Communicating Respect for Others

“If we do not accept as good, God’s shaping our person and life in our own culture, we will never be able to accept his work in the lives of others who are culturally different from us.”

Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers

Romans 15:7 – Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Acceptance and its opposite, rejection, are among the most powerful behaviors in the human race. Cherished experiences probably are a result of feeling completely accepted – one of “the group,” trusted, secure, respected, wanted, valued, desired. Life is good when we feel accepted.

Acceptance, rooted deeply in the character of Christ himself, must be more prevalent in our relationships if we are going to grow into his likeness. Our acceptance by Christ and our acceptance of others have enormous implications for all of life.

Something amazing happens when the people of God become accepting people. Accepting one another may be among the most powerful acts of love we can offer to each other because it promotes oneness and, in some small way, it reveals the glory of God.

Think of an example for a moment. Certainly you can think of one person with whom you’ve spent time and when you walk away you almost always feel better than when you came. Whether you knew it or not at the time, that person did something to make you feel comfortable, significant, valued and loved. In all likelihood, you have been able to do that for someone as well.

Blessing, a major theme in the Old Testament, is a way of communicating acceptance. To bless someone is “to bow the knee” before them as a sign of honor and respect. Even more importantly, blessing is a showing that you “highly value someone.” Sometimes, it is easy to bless someone, perhaps because we like them, they have status, or they are charismatic. But what about blessing people who might not be quite so likeable? What does it take to do that? Maybe there is even someone on our team that you find difficult to accept. What would it take to accept them completely?

In the Bible, by blessing humankind, God is telling us how highly he values us. When we bless one another, we remind one another how important and significant our lives are to each other. And when we bless God as in worship, we are telling God how important he is to us. When this triangle of love and blessing moves effortlessly, then we are living in God’s pleasure.

- † *What does it mean that Christ has accepted me?*
- † *Can I really accept Christ’s acceptance of me?*
- † *How can I show acceptance to those around me while on this trip – team members, hosts, the Ethiopian teachers and other Ethiopians I encounter?*
- † *What Bible passages come to mind when I think of Christ’s acceptance of the people around him?*
- † *How can I bless the people around me?*



Two Days Before Departing (July 13th) Seeking What Changes You

“A missionary friend of mine once said, “Things were simple before I went to Africa. I knew what the African’s problem was, and I knew the answer. When I got there and began to know him as a person, things were no longer simple.” Elisabeth Elliot

Matthew 20:25-28 – ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 23:5-12 – ⁵“Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’”

⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Learning about others - their history, culture, values, religious practices, language, families, organizational structures and other facets of life – is a good place to start, but learning “about” someone is insufficient. We can learn “about” a person without building a single relationship. Learning “from” someone is considerably more powerful than learning “about” someone.

When we **learn from someone**, it is an honor we bestow on them. When we ask questions, seek understanding and probe their thoughts, we are saying in effect: “I need you to teach me. I can’t do this alone. I may even fail unless you help me with your knowledge and insights.” Asking others to teach us not only honors them (showing acceptance and building trust), but also gives them permission to tell us what they actually see, feel, know and experience. By learning from them we affirm them as human beings. They are people who love, hurt, play, dream – like us.

And learning from someone actually prepares us to **learn with them**, a position that yields authentic partnerships where each person probes deeply the mind and heart of the other, bringing interdependent growth and culturally sensitive ministry. “Us /them” categories are replaced with simply “us”.

Serving people is not just doing what seems good in our culture, but seeking knowledge of the people, learning from them, knowing their cultural values and acting in support of the fabric of their culture, as much as possible. After taking these steps, we will have served them.

- † *For me, learning in Ethiopia is . . . ?*
- † *What do I want to learn about people while I’m in Ethiopia?*
- † *How would Jesus interact with the people he would encounter? How can I model His example?*



One Day Before Departing (July 14th) Seeing Through Other's Eyes

"The key for successful relationships and ministry is to understand and accept others as having a viewpoint as worthy of consideration as our own." Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers

Understanding is the ability to see patterns of behavior and values that reveal the integrity – or the wholeness and completeness – of a person. People's behavior generally fits within a cultural pattern that works for them and gives them meaning and control in their lives. Too often we assume others are foolish or illogical simply because their reasoning is not self-evident to us. Often, we can find ourselves wanting to teach them about the error of the way they do things or how to handle a situation "better."

A tapestry can be used to illustrate the process of understanding another culture. A tapestry is made from pieces of cord or yarn that are woven together to form a picture or design, which when finished adorns a wall as art. When we look at the front side of the tapestry, we can appreciate the handiwork of the artist. But when we look at the backside, we see a confusion of dangling threads that, at first glance, yield no pattern or theme. And yet, the backside of the tapestry is the side that reveals the "real work" of the artist. Entering a new culture can be like seeing the backside of a tapestry – there's may be no obvious pattern or picture to help us understand the culture immediately.

We must discipline ourselves to see the patterns of the new culture. Cultural understanding emerges slowly, over time. Occasionally we get a peek at the front of the tapestry, where bits of pattern emerge. It may take months or years to see them clearly. Nevertheless, we must continue to work at it even if our stay is short.

Biblical Perspectives on Understanding – The Bible exhorts us to understand God and his ways. For example, Job declares that God is so great he is beyond understanding. (Job 36:26). Yet he graciously gives understanding to many things. (Job 32:8; I John 5:20). The book of Proverbs tells us to apply our hearts to understanding (Prov. 2:2) while being careful not to rely on our own understanding. (Por. 3:5). The understanding of God is priceless (Prov. 4:7). It's the fountain of life (Prov. 16:22).

- ✦ *How will I increase my understanding of the Ethiopian people in my short time there?*
- ✦ *How will I increase my understanding of my fellow teammates?*
- ✦ *How will I increase my understanding of God and His purpose for my life?*



Introduction

The following materials are intended to be devotional aids for our time in Ethiopia. There's one for each day of the trip, including the days spent traveling.

There's obviously no way to know what God has in store for us during the next several weeks. One of the great things about a trip like this is how little control we have over our environment. With that in mind, what we'll see in this guide has less to do with the specific work we'll most likely be doing, and more to do with paying attention to God and paying attention to people other than ourselves – our teammates and the teachers and students we are learning alongside.

We're leaving our country, we're leaving our culture, we're leaving our friends and (perhaps) our family, and we're leaving almost everything else we rely on during an average day. If you've been on a trip like this before, you know that the experience of going this long without all the things that are familiar and comfortable can be extremely jarring. It can also be a **great** time to pay attention to God in ways you normally wouldn't.

A dear friend of mine, Ben Pierce, describes this as the opportunity to experience the "God gap." Typically, in our day-to-day lives, there just aren't that many times when we have to rely on God. If someone is sick, we take them to the doctor or the hospital, or we buy some medicine. If someone is hungry, we run to the grocery store. In Africa, things are a little different – when people are hungry or sick, often times the only thing that can be done is pray. But when people are in need and they pray, they tend to see how God shows up. As my friend John Sage says, "self-sufficiency is insufficient, because it denies us of God's grace."

So, what are you going to do during this trip so you can recognize God when he shows up?

Even if you've never done it before, might I suggest that you take some time each day and let your journal be a centerpiece for some quiet time of reflection. Write down what you're feeling and learning each day and you'll have a lot more to take back with you. Give yourself ample time to be with God and reflect on what he's teaching you. And, if you feel as if you are not hearing what he is teaching you, then take a little more time to reflect on your day each day.

If you find the quotes, verses and questions on these cards useful for your devotional times, great. If there are days where you just need to journal what God is doing and the card that day isn't helpful, skip it . . . but do spend time with God in quiet reflection every day. Remember, He's up to something or you wouldn't be on this trip!

These devotionals are designed to help you listen to the world around you, and to the still small voice within. Look for God's hand everywhere, and every time you think you might see Him, take a moment to let that revelation sink in. The new world we are entering provides us with a rare treat to step out of all that is "normal" and prepare us to encounter God. In that respect, we're especially well-equipped to see him, so long as we take the time.



Read This!

So, we spent time with some short devotions before we left. Perhaps you didn't have time to reflect on them in the weeks leading up to the trip. That's understandable, with all of the rushing around getting ready for a trip like this.

But now things are about to change. Just the 26 hours of travel time presents you with an opportunity to slow down, change the dynamics and get ready for this adventure. Each day on the trip we will emphasize the need for each of us to take some quiet time. These devotional cards might prove useful for that time to spur some questions and thoughts for reflection.

Mostly, however, the important experiences will be understood as you write in your journal each day, reflecting on what you have seen and what it means. As part of that, we encourage you to take the 10-15 minutes needed each evening to practice the prayer of examen.

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The whole prayer should take you about 15–20 minutes.



Serving: Becoming Like Christ to Others

In the weeks leading up to our departure, we focused on (1) our role in actively hearing God, and (2) how to conform our thinking to that of a servant.

Isaiah 41:9 – You are my servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.

Serving is the ability to relate to people in such a way that their dignity as human beings is affirmed and they are more empowered to live God-glorifying lives. Serving is "breathing bigness" into others.

The servanthood model that we pondered this last week progressed along the following steps: Openness, Acceptance, Trust, Learning, Understanding, Serving. Now let's look at the steps backwards to see how each depends on the previous one.

Serving: You can't serve someone you don't understand. At best you can only be a benevolent oppressor – like forcing someone to say "I'm sorry" when that is an unnatural way to apologize.

Understanding: You can't understand another person until you have learned from them and eventually with them. A learning attitude signals humility and willingness to identify with a person.

Learning: You can't learn from another person until you have built trust with them. People won't share important information with someone they don't trust, especially cross-culturally.

Trust: You can't build trust with another person until they feel like they have been accepted by you – until they feel that you value them as human beings.

Acceptance: You can't communicate value and esteem to others unless they feel welcomed into your presence and find themselves feeling safe.

Openness: Openness with people of another culture requires that you are willing to step out of your comfort zone to initiate and sustain relationships in a context of cultural differences.

Each element builds upon the other to help mold us into humble servants like Jesus Christ demonstrated while he was on earth. Here are a few questions that can help provide a "gut check" for you as the trip progresses.

- † *How will I serve with humility today? Tomorrow? During the rest of this trip? In what way?*
- † *What will be most difficult for me when serving others as a servant of Jesus Christ? Can I receive the way He received? Can I receive forgiveness? Can I forgive?*
- † *How did Christ demonstrate each element discussed above as he interacted and served others?*
- † *Which teammate presents the greatest opportunity for me to overcome a bias, a barrier, or a bad feeling? How can I serve that person and what are the steps I can take at each level towards service?*
- † *How can I demonstrate the elements of service to the teachers of HOPE Enterprises? How can I learn "from" them and "with" them?*



Day One – Departure Wednesday, July 15th

This might be a good time to think about where things are in your spiritual life right now. Don't worry too much about having the right answers, but rather, focus on asking good questions. The questions below will get you started. Try to be as honest as you can so you can look for ways that you grow while you're on the trip.

Grab your journal and take some time to reflect on the following:

- † *What are my desires for this trip? What do I hope to learn? What do I want to do? What am I afraid of?*
- † *What (good and bad) are you leaving behind? What is nice to get away from? What will be hard to live without?*
- † *Where in your life, if anywhere, do you see God? What is God like? What is your relationship (if any) with God like?*
- † *Who am I and what can I learn about myself on this trip?*
- † *Who is God and how can my understanding of God grow?*
- † *Who are we as a team and as a community and what can I learn about community and the church?*
- † *What is the impact of culture on faith? How can I see life and the gospel differently because of what I've experienced?*
- † *What's wrong with the world? What can I learn about justice, poverty and the causes of suffering?*
- † *What does it mean to be a follower of Christ? What can I learn about discipleship?*
- † *What's of value? What can I learn about my lifestyle?*
- † *Where am I going? What might God call me to be and to do as a result of this experience? What can I learn about my vocation?*

Finish your time by talking to God. (Even if you've never done it before, go ahead and try it. It really isn't that weird and you might be surprised by what you learn.) Tell God what you've told your journal – tell him about your expectations for the trip, about your hopes and fears. Be honest – after all, what's the harm: it's just you and God.

As we've emphasized throughout our time together, there are multiple journeys happening here. One is your inward journey. On this journey you learn about yourself and your relationship with God. This journey draws you to spend some time quietly reflecting and talking to God.

You're also on an outward journey. Here you see yourself interact with locals and with teammates. You may see your compassion and love for the needy grow. This part of your journey drives you to spend time quietly reflecting and talking to God, too.

A challenge: From now until the end of your trip, try to pay attention to the two parts of your journey – inward and outward. Watch and listen and see what God does in you and through you, and in others and through others.



Day Two – Travel Thursday, July 16th

As you wing your way across our world, you are going as an ambassador of the King of the Universe. You are also going to love others out of the overflow of God's huge, lavish, unsurpassable love for you.

Wait a second! What was that again?

If you are anything like me, then you probably have a wimpy sense of God's love for you. Perhaps that's natural, given the way we often view ourselves as "falling short," "failing to measure up," "guilty of things done and undone," and "filled with shame." [If any of those feelings seem to fit your own view of yourself, then welcome to the club!!]

With those feelings as a backdrop, it is easy to understand that we might not fully understand how "The Creator of heaven, earth and life itself," "The Maker of the Universe," "The Master of all that was, is and will be," could possibly have time or inclination to love "me."

"Me?"

And yet, precisely because God's love for us is beyond our understanding, we miss this essential point: the same God that is all those amazing things and who knows what is good, knows you and loves you deeply, richly and beyond any love you have ever known or will ever know on this earth. If you are like me, then you are probably in constant need of a deeper experience of God's love for you.

So, take a few minutes right now and try – try to understand how great that love might feel. In fact, try spending ten minutes just thinking about and bathing in God's love for you. After all, He has called you His "beloved."

Zephaniah 3:17 says, "The Lord your God is with you; He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing."

Jeremiah 29:11-13 makes clear that He has really good things in mind for you, if you seek him with all your heart.

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. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

- † *How does it feel to be loved by God in a manner that is beyond your wildest imagination?*
- † *How would experiencing this love change the way you interact with family? Friends? Strangers?*
- † *How/when do you experience God's love?*
- † *How can you experience it more?*

Remember that God loves everyone around you, too, including your teammates, your trip roommate and everyone you will interact with on this adventure, every bit as much as He loves you.



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Day Three – Our Job Description Friday, July 17th

How are you doing this morning? Overwhelmed? Exhausted? Excited? Take some time and check in with your journal, write down what you've already learned. Has anything surprised you.

Luke 4: 16–19 – ¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Here Jesus reads from the Old Testament scroll of Isaiah (Isaiah 61). We might consider this Jesus' job description. What did Jesus see His job description to be?

In Jesus' day, disciples were not mere groupies. To be a disciple meant that you wanted to become *just* as your master. You wanted to talk like he talked, act as he acted, do what he did, and think what he thought.

So then, let's spend a few minutes thinking about Jesus and how he interacted with others. If you were to sit down and read all four gospels right now, you would find that there were three ways Jesus dealt with others, depending on the circumstances and the people.

First, there were the elite and the religious leaders of the day – the men who were hard of heart and absorbed in power and status that came with position. To these people, Jesus spoke truth – unvarnished, painful and sometimes harsh truth. See for example, John 7:10-31,

Second, there were the crowds of people who came for healing and to hear Jesus teach. Jesus often spoke to crowds (and even to his disciples) in stories that were sometimes perplexing. But Jesus did this to protect them and to protect himself, knowing that they would all surely die if he spoke the unvarnished truth in public.

Finally, there are those amazing one-on-one interactions where lives are transformed. In so many of those cases, Jesus begins by receiving from others – the drink of water from the woman at the well, the woman who wiped his feet with her hair and perfume, or Zacchaeus who Jesus asked to invite him to dinner.

- † *If we are to be Jesus' disciples, what does that mean for our own job description in the world?*
- † *How does that mean we should behave with the new people we're meeting?*
- † *How does that mean we should behave with our teammates?*

Take a moment to write down what it might look like to participate in what Jesus came to do. Take note as you go through your day where you see these things happening. What is your job description?



Day Four – Community Saturday, July 18th

Today, we are really beginning our time together as a team. Let's stop for a moment and consider what our adventure together has been and what it might be over these next two weeks.

John 13:34-35 – ³⁴A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

“Here we are in a world that did not invite us, in which we can hardly express ourselves and which constantly reminds us of our powerlessness. And still, we know that we are sent here, that God wants us here, and that it is here that we have to work out our salvation.

The more these strong and often conflicting feelings come to the surface, the more I realize how much we need each other. Mission work is not a task for individuals. The Lord sent his disciples into the world in small groups, not as individual heroes or pioneers. We are sent out together.

Many of us are eager to go out and to start working as soon as possible, with or without words! It is certainly a sign of zeal, good will, great energy, and generosity. But maybe we should first of all look at each other, recognize each other's suffering, and come together as a living body to pray, and to share our joys and hopes, our fears and pains. This experience of belonging to each other by our common love is the first and most important witness to them who can say of us: “See how they love each other.”

From Henri Nouwen, *Gracías*, 43

That's a tall order, to love each other. Some of us barely know each other. And yet, who can deny that something special has been occurring in our little group, even as we came together for a meal and some limited time over seven Sundays. But now it's time to take the real plunge. Time to serve up the last remaining remnants of hesitation, reservation, timidity and masks. It's time to get real with each other, which mean confronting the good, the bad, and the ugly of each other and (yes, because of it, not in spite of it), love each other.

- † *As we begin our time with the team, what do you find yourself grateful for among your teammates?*
- † *How can you love them better so that the local people can see that you love one another?*
- † *Are there ways that you can be more positive or encouraging on your team?*
- † *Some of us interact regularly outside of this trip. What does it look like to enter into a relationship of love, instead of simply a professional relationship?*
- † *What are the obstacles you face in fully loving members of this team? Is there someone that you find hard to love? How can you discuss that openly with that person?*
- † *In order to keep an attitude of love going and growing, it is important that we all spend our time focused on gratitude, rather than complaining. Where might this prove challenging for you?*



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Day Five – Love Sunday, July 19th

Luke 10:25-37 – ²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

As you go through your day today, seek to make neighbors, loving others in every way you can.

“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are all mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of the kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind), which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously – no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feelings for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner.”

From C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

The way we look at and how we treat people are very powerful. Jesus says that what you have done for the least of these, you have done for Him. As we go through our day, try to see each teammate, each local leader, and each teacher as the face of Jesus. How are you helping them toward becoming all that God created? You might consider using this prayer, the daily prayer of Mother Theresa’s Missionaries of Charity:

“Lord Jesus, when I meet you today in your unattractive disguise of the irritating, the exacting and the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, ‘Sweet Jesus, what a privilege it is to serve you today.’”



Day Six – Gratitude Monday, July 20th

Have you noticed people who seem to have little reason to be grateful, and yet are extremely grateful people. Read **Psalms 103**:

¹Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

²Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – ³who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

⁶The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

⁹He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

¹⁷But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children – ¹⁸with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

¹⁹The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

²¹Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

²²Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

“Gratitude is one of the most visible characteristics of the poor I have come to know. I am always surrounded by words of thanks: ‘Thanks for your visit, your blessing, your sermon, your prayer, your gifts, your presence with us.’ Even the smallest and most necessary goods are a reason for gratitude. Not only are the poor grateful for life, but they also celebrate life constantly. A visit, a reunion, a simple meeting are always like little celebrations. Every time a new gift is recognized, there are songs or toasts, words of congratulation, or something to eat and drink. And every gift is shared. ‘Have a drink, take some fruit, eat our bread’ is the response to every visit I make, and this is what I see people do for each other. All of life is a gift, a gift to be celebrated, a gift to be shared.” Henri Nouwen

✠ *What are you finding yourself thankful for on this trip? Are there more things you should be thankful for?*

As you go through your day, notice where you see Ethiopian being grateful. Then choose to adopt an attitude of gratitude and see if it makes a difference in your experience or . . . the way others experience you!



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Day Seven – Compassion Tuesday, July 21st

Philippians 2:1-11 – ¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

That is thought to be the world's first Christian hymn, quoted by Paul from the early church. As you read it, think about how Jesus loves, paying particular attention to verses 6-11:

“Instead of striving for a higher position, more power, and more influence, Jesus moves, from ‘the heights to the depth, from victory to defeat, from riches to poverty, from triumph to suffering, from life to death.’ Here we see what compassion means. God's compassion is total, absolute, unconditional, without reservation. It is the compassion of the one who keeps going to the most forgotten corners of the world, and who cannot rest as long as he knows that there are still human beings with tears in their eyes.”

From Henri Nouwen

Pay attention to the way you love and serve those around you today. Compassion literally means to “suffer with” – not to fix, not to solve, not to pity, but to be with the other in their suffering. Remember, as we were preparing to depart, we read about the importance of learning “from” those we are trying to serve and learning “with” them, as the ultimate way to have compassion.

- † *How can you be with others in their suffering today?*
- † *Where are you being called to learn “**from**” those we are serving, including our fellow teammates?*
- † *Where are you being called to learn “**with**” those we are serving, including our fellow teammates?*

You may want this to be the focus of your prayers and reflection time this morning.



Day Eight – Dependency Wednesday, July 22nd

By now we have likely experienced some frustrations; or perhaps even many frustrations. Some of us may feel “in the way” rather than helpful. You have likely met someone that you find frustrating and they may be someone you came to serve or one of your teammates.

“Every group includes and “EGR” – someone that requires extra grace or an “extra grace required” person. If you can't figure out who that person is in your group, it is probably you.”

Rick Warren

- † *How have you handled frustrations so far? How might you improve your handling of frustration?*
- † *Are you allowing friction to cause your eyes to look to God for help?*
- † *How are you working to extend extra grace to members of your team? Teachers? Others?*

Scripture tells us that apart from God we are nothing. We all struggle to be Christ-like.

Philippians 4:4-7 – ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

So what if that were our goal today? What if, instead of running away from scary feelings, we were determined to live through them together and learn that our true value as human beings is far beyond competence and accomplishments. Notice, the passage above says “in everything . . . with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” Typically, “everything” means everything. So are we then to assume that in frustration, in anger, in pain, in longing, in suffering, in joy, in sadness, in despair, in everything, we present our requests to God?

Again, what if that were our goal today?

One of the most rewarding aspects of living in a strange land is the experience of being loved not for what we can do, but for who we are. In the presence of God, we are totally naked, broken, sinful, and dependent, and we realize that we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, without him.

And it also offers us the opportunity to see others more authentically as well. Suddenly, we may recognize what we thought was anger, is really pain from loneliness. Frustration may arise from a sense of being under-appreciated, under-recognized, or under-loved.

Write down your frustrations. Give them to God. Now ask God to help you look to Him at times of frustration so that irritation becomes a reminder to depend on Jesus and a reminder to offer a little more love and grace in the face of frustrating people or circumstances.



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Day Nine – Love Thursday, July 23rd

This morning, focus on your own ability (and inability) to love and be loved.

† *Where have you seen yourself capable of love and receiving love on this trip? Where have you failed in this regard?*

Love is the heart of the Christian faith – it is the embodiment of the gospel.

I Corinthians 13:3 – If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

John 15:9-17 – ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

Several days ago we read **Psalms 103**, which makes an effort to describe God's love for us. Take a moment and re-read those words.

Try letting love be your subject in prayer and quiet reflection this morning. Start by letting God love you – not just the “good parts,” the way we know how to love, but try letting him love you fully.

† *Can you imagine a God that loves you more than you love yourself? Who cares more about your future than you?*

† *God has lived for all eternity and yet there is one thing He has never done – have a relationship with you! God made you unique and He loves you that way, so let Him!*

1 John 4:7-16; 19-21 – ⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Ask God for the capacity to love others, and open yourself to the overabundance of love from God waiting for you.



Day Ten – Incarnation Friday, July 24th

As we come to love those whom we came to serve, we begin to ask what it means to truly be with them. To identify with them.

Matthew 19:16-31 – ¹⁶Another day, a man stopped Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁷Jesus said, “**Why do you question me about what’s good? God is the One who is good. If you want to enter the life of God, just do what he tells you.**”

¹⁸⁻¹⁹The man asked, “What in particular?”

Jesus said, “**Don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you do yourself.**”

²⁰The young man said, “I’ve done all that. What’s left?”

²¹“**If you want to give it all you’ve got,**” Jesus replied, “**go sell your possessions; give everything to the poor. All your wealth will then be in heaven. Then come follow me.**”

²²That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crest-fallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn’t bear to let go.

²³⁻²⁴As he watched him go, Jesus told his disciples, “**Do you have any idea how difficult it is for the rich to enter God’s kingdom? Let me tell you, it’s easier to gallop a camel through a needle’s eye than for the rich to enter God’s kingdom.**”

²⁵The disciples were staggered. “Then who has any chance at all?”

²⁶Jesus looked hard at them and said, “**No chance at all if you think you can pull it off yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it.**”

²⁷Then Peter chimed in, “We left everything and followed you. What do we get out of it?”

²⁸⁻³⁰Jesus replied, “**Yes, you have followed me. In the re-creation of the world, when the Son of Man will rule gloriously, you who have followed me will also rule, starting with the twelve tribes of Israel. And not only you, but anyone who sacrifices home, family, fields—whatever—because of me will get it all back a hundred times over, not to mention the considerable bonus of eternal life. This is the Great Reversal: many of the first ending up last, and the last first.**”

From Eugene Peterson’s translation in **The Message**.

Jesus’ words to this man seem really harsh. But they are good words to wrestle with.

“Can we truly identify with the poor? Although I live with them and share their life to some extent, I am far from poor. Living here not only makes me aware that I have never been poor, but also that my whole way of being, thinking, feeling, and acting is molded by a culture completely different from the one in which I live now. I am not as poor as my neighbors are.”

From Henri Nouwen, **Gracias**, pp. 115-116

† *What kinds of things have you given up to serve and really be among the poor while you are here? What does that mean to you?*



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Day Eleven – Preparing for a Debrief Saturday, July 25th

Debriefing is:

- † *Emotional unpacking*
- † *Sorting out*
- † *Being heard*
- † *Making sense of the experience*
- † *Listening*
- † *Identifying issues*
- † *Being aware and in touch with one's feelings*
- † *Empathizing with others*
- † *Reviewing and recalling God's work*
- † *A time to look back and to look forward*
- † *Not only a place and a time, it is an atmosphere*
- † *And a time for closure.*

-- Lisa Espineli Chin

Now that your field experience is nearly over, you'll want to prepare to maximize the benefits of this experience as much as possible. Take some time to thoughtfully complete the questions for tomorrow.

Remember, unless you intentionally plan to do something as a response to this experience, upon returning home, you will most likely unintentionally do nothing.

Day Twelve – Poor in Spirit Sunday, July 26th

Luke 6:17-26 – ¹⁷⁻²¹Coming down off the mountain with them, he stood on a plain surrounded by disciples, and was soon joined by a huge congregation from all over Judea and Jerusalem, even from the seaside towns of Tyre and Sidon. They had come both to hear him and to be cured of their ailments. Those disturbed by evil spirits were healed. Everyone was trying to touch him—so much energy surging from him, so many people healed! Then he spoke:

*“You're blessed when you've lost it all.
God's kingdom is there for the finding.
You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.
You're blessed when the tears flow freely.
Joy comes with the morning.”*

²²⁻²³*“Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like!—for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.”*

²⁴*“But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made.
What you have is all you'll ever get.*

²⁵*And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself.
Your self will not satisfy you for long.*

*And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.
There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.”*

²⁶*“There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests—look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.”*

From Eugene Peterson's translation in *The Message*.

Again, these are hard words. (If you want to read further, read **Matthew 5 – 7**, the most full version of the Sermon on the Mount.) This passage has been called the Beatitudes, or you might like to think of it as the “BE-attitudes”.

Here are some tough questions:

- † *How are you poor?*
- † *Are there things you could change that could benefit those who are less well-off than you?*
- † *How are those you came to serve wealthy in comparison to you?*

Take some time and write about your own inner poverty and about your outer wealth. Then take it into prayer.



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Day Thirteen – Always Now Monday, July 27th

2 Corinthians 6:1 – We urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.

The grace you had yesterday will not do for today. Grace is the overflowing favor of God; you can always recon it is there to draw upon. “In great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distress” – that is where the test for patience comes. Are you failing the grace of God there? Are you saying – Oh well, I won’t count this time? It is not a question of praying and asking God to help you; it is taking the grace of God **now**. We make prayer the preparation for work, it is never that in the Bible. Prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of God. Don’t say – I will endure this until I can get away and pray. **Pray now**; draw on the grace of God in the moment of need. Prayer is the most practical thing, it is not the reflex action of devotion. Prayer is the last thing in which we learn to draw on God’s grace.

“In beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work” – in all these things manifest a drawing upon the grace of God that will make you a marvel to yourself and to others. Draw now, not presently. The one word in the spiritual vocabulary is **Now**. Let circumstances bring you where they will, keep drawing on the grace of God in every conceivable condition you may be in. One of the greatest proofs that you are drawing upon the grace of God is that you can be humiliated without manifesting the slightest trace of anything but His grace.

“Having nothing . . .” – Never reserve anything. Pour out the best you have, and always be poor. Never be diplomatic and careful about the treasure God gives. This is poverty triumphant.

From Oswald Chambers, ***My Utmost for His Highest***.

Day Fourteen – Why Can’t I Follow? Tuesday, July 28th

John 13:37 – Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now?”

There are times when we cannot understand why we cannot do what we want to do. When God brings us to a blank space, we have an urge to fill it in, rather than wait. But blank spaces often arrive with a purpose. Public speakers and teachers often use a long silence, as a way to force those listening to think, to process and to learn. Waiting can be a time of great learning.

If that’s true, then filling in the blank spaces ourselves could be the worst thing possible, because we miss what God is teaching. Ideally, we would never run before receiving God’s guidance. If there is the slightest doubt, then He is not guiding. So, whenever there is doubt we must work to fight the urge to act and instead – **wait!**

In the beginning we might see clearly God’s will – the severance of a friendship, the breaking off of a business relationship – something distinctly God’s will, but it is important that we work to avoid getting caught up in the impulse of that feeling. Why?

I don’t know about you, but when I act impulsively on something (which is especially easy when I feel strongly that it comes from God) it ends up making difficulties that sometimes take years to put right. So, I’ve learned the hard way to wait! Wait for God’s time to bring it round and He will do it without any heartbreak or disappointment. When it is a question of the providential will of God, waiting for God to move is always the best thing.

Peter did not wait on God, he forecast in his mind where the test would come, and the test came where he did not expect it. “I will lay down my life for you.” Peter’s declaration was honest, but ignorant. “Jesus answered . . . Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!” This was said with a deeper knowledge of Peter than Peter had of himself. He could not follow Jesus because he did not know himself of what he was capable. Natural devotion may be all very well to attract us to Jesus, to make us feel His fascination, but it will never make us disciples. Natural devotion will always deny Jesus somewhere or other.

Adapted from Oswald Chambers, ***My Utmost for His Highest***.

Here are some tough questions:

- † *Where do you feel an impulse to act?*
- † *Where might God be calling on you to wait?*
- † *How long would God want us to wait, and why?*
- † *Why is waiting so hard? Does it seem harder in the US or in Ethiopia?*

Take some time and write about your impulses and the places where you might need to wait. Then take it into prayer.



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Day Fifteen – Preparing to Remember Wednesday, July 29th

Your time is coming to a close. You have given much. You have given of your time. You have given of your skills. You have given of your heart and your being. But you are not the only one who has given. When we give, we receive as well. But we don't always recognize how we've received, unless we purposefully reflect.

Romans 5:5-8 – ³⁻⁵There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

⁶⁻⁸Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

From Eugene Peterson's translation in *The Message*

"When we serve, we find Jesus there. That is what Jesus tells us when he says: 'Insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' (**Matthew 25:40**). Our care for people becomes the way to meet the Lord. The more we give, help, support, guide, counsel, and visit, the more we receive, not just similar gifts, but the Lord himself.

As long as we live, the Lord wants to reveal to us more of himself. As long as we minister, we can expect the Lord to make himself known to us in ways we have not yet experienced."

From Henri Nouwen, *Gracias*, pg. 20

You'll be heading home soon. And as much as you don't want to forget a thing, soon the details will blur. This WILL happen! So writing things down now takes on an urgency – it must be done before what you've received is lost!

- † Write down some of the things you received during this trip. What are some of the blessings? What are the lessons you would like to never forget and to incorporate into your life at home? Write about it with the urgency of now!
- † How has your soul been touched by your time here? Write about it with the urgency of now!



Day Sixteen – Journal Reflections Thursday, July 30th

In your time of solitude and quiet reflection, journal on the following questions:

- † When I think of leaving I feel...
- † My experience has been...
- † For me, Ethiopia means...
- † Things I will miss...
- † Things that are easiest to leave...
- † Most stressful part of leaving will be...
- † I will be going back home to...
- † Going back will enable me to...
- † I think the hardest part of going back will be...
- † I think the easiest part of going back will be...
- † I am really looking forward to...
- † What will my prayers include when I get back home?
- † How have I seen God work in my teammates, and what have I come to appreciate about them?

REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU

(Answer at least three questions that you most relate to)

- † An area I have seen God work in my life is...
- † Important changes I have noticed in myself since I left home...
- † What surprised me about myself while I was on this trip? What do I perceive now to be strengths and gifts that God is developing in me?
- † How do I see the good news of Jesus differently because of what I have experienced?
- † What was the main message God taught me on this trip?
- † Some of the ways I have seen God working in others around me are...

FOCUS ON YOUR PRESENT FEELINGS

(Answer at least two questions that you relate to)

- † The things about my experience I want to share most with others when I get home are...
- † If I could relive my experience over again, I would...
- † Prayer requests I have concerning my return home are...
- † I want the same sense of community at home as I had on the trip. How can I ensure that this happens?

LOOK AHEAD AS YOU PREPARE TO RETURN HOME

(Answer at least three questions that you relate to)

- † Because of this experience, how might God be nudging me to examine or adjust my:
 - Spiritual life
 - Family life
 - Relationships
 - Finances
 - Schedule
 - Values
 - Serving
- † Because of this trip, when I get home I plan to . . .



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The whole prayer should take you about 15–20 minutes.

- † *How can my life count for the Kingdom of God? I want to make a difference in the world now! If I could dream a big dream for how I think God might want to work through me, what would it be?*
- † *In order to better understand what God has done in my life, I need to . . .*

HOW WILL YOU TELL YOUR STORY?

(Answer all 3 questions)

- † *How will you answer the question: "How was Roggie, Dese or Ethiopia?"*
- † *What will be your one-sentence version?*
- † *What will be your two-minute version?*
- † *What will be your thirty-minute version?*

Things to think about as you write your story:

- † *How will you elaborate beyond two minutes if given the opportunity?*
- † *Based on the impact of this trip, what do you think God would have people do back at home in response to the needs and lives of people you met?*
- † *How can you encourage others to join you in prayer for the ministry and/or join you in going next time?*

Guidelines for preparing your story:

- † *Focus in on one or two events or highlights that can help you tell your story*
- † *People like stories about people; share a personal story about someone from the culture*
- † *Share how this experience (or person or culture) has impacted you personally*
- † *Avoid giving too much unnecessary detail*
- † *Avoid giving a day-to-day narrative of your trip*
- † *Keep your stories simple. You can answer questions if your listener is really interested.*



Day Seventeen – Return Friday, July 31st

If you're reading this and you're not skipping ahead, congratulations: you've made it, you're alive, and you've had some interesting experiences and hopefully some time to begin reflecting on them. That's something to be thankful for, even if you might be exhausted, emotionally drained or (hopefully not) a little bit sick.

You're probably tired of these cards and they may have worn thin their welcome. (That's okay, you can admit it!)

Well, you're in luck! All that's left is reflection on your time here in Ethiopia and in preparing for your two journeys. So, how shall we reflect.

Let's start here:

- † *Has God (and his "still small voice") grown louder in the past two weeks?*
- † *Have you found yourself paying attention to God's presence in ways you haven't seen before?*

If there is doubt, go back and read your first journal entry from your "departure" day.

- † *Spend some time thinking about where you were when you began this trip and where you are now. What have you learned?*
- † *Where have you seen God?*
- † *Where have you grown?*
- † *Where can you now see the need for growth more clearly?*

Spend some time writing about the differences, focusing on the changes during the trip.

Finally, take some time to pray and reflect on these changes. (Even if your trip has been too busy to take time like this, imagine how much reflection time you can accomplish during 26 hours of travel beginning tonight!)

Thank God for his blessings during this trip, both the kind we always consider blessings and the kind where they can be harder to notice. And ask God to help you continue this growth when you get off the plane and back into your "real" world.



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