



COMPELLING LOVE
ministries

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Devotional Preparation

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

This package is designed to help prepare you for your cross-cultural missions experience. Perhaps you've been involved in trips like this in the past, or, maybe this is your first time. We want you to be well prepared so that you will be a blessing to those you are going to serve and so that you will learn and grow in your own journey with the Lord. In order to be most effective, we recommend buying a journal or notebook and responding to these reflections within the notebook. Then bring the book along to Guatemala and use for your daily reflections, too.

Time to Take a Look

I love New Year's Resolutions – I know, many people don't. I love the chance to take a good long look at my life, in particular the past year, and identify what is working well and what needs to change. I think it is healthy. Obviously you don't have to wait until December 31st to do this – any time is the right time!

One area in particular that I tend to struggle in is my self-image. And so, it is good to look at how the Lord sees me before I begin to examine myself.

Read Psalms 139:13-16

Paraphrase this passage of scripture (write it out in your own words)?

How should knowing this truth affect the way you live your life?

When you look at your day, where are you spending the majority of your time. Chances are it is at school or work, right? What about the rest of your waking hours? Take a good look. Where does God fit into your day?

Read Psalm 5:1-3

According to this passage, how is the psalmist David recommending you begin your day?

What does this tell you about the character and nature of God?

So, did you see anything that you need to change? It's okay. We all have room to grow and advance in our walk with the Lord!

What goals do you have to improve your daily walk with God?

How do you expect this ministry experience to help you grow spiritually?

Ask the Lord...

Pray that God would light a flame within you for His Word. Pray that as you seek Him in the morning that you would find Him faithful. Ask the Lord to show you His desires for your life and specifically for this missions trip. Ask the Lord for a fresh understanding of who you are in Him.

Our Part

I love knowing that nothing happens that the Lord didn't already know about. Scripture tells us that when we seek Him in our lives, He prepares the way for us, sets straight out path. That includes this cross-cultural adventure you are getting ready to embark on.

Read Isaiah 42:5-9 and 61:1-3

How do these two passages make you feel?

It is a good idea to take a look at what your expectations are for this missions experience.

What are you expecting of yourself, personally? How do you think this experience will cause you to be stretched?

What expectations do you have for your team? What role do you play in helping to fulfill this/these expectation(s)?

What are you expecting of your missionary hosts? What about the Guatemalans?

Ask the Lord...

Tell God about your expectations. Ask Him to prepare you for all that He has planned. Ask the Lord for opportunities to witness to others about what He is teaching you.

Poverty

Seeing material poverty first hand is very different than seeing it on TV or in photos. Unless you are completely disconnected with your heart and spirit, it will affect you. It can be uncomfortable and somewhat overwhelming. It may spark in you the desire to "fix it" and your first impulse may be to try and figure out what you can do to make it all better. Or, it could make you feel guilty about all that you have and how ungrateful you are. It is hard to see people suffering.

When you think about poverty, what are the first five words that come to your mind? Write these down.

From a North American perspective, sometimes we equate poverty with a lack of material wealth. But, this is an incomplete definition, and if this is our starting point, we will miss the bigger picture.

I remember reading a reflection written by Mother Teresa. I am paraphrasing, but in essence, she said, "Poverty, real poverty, is not the absence of food or housing, but the absence of love and right relationship with the Lord." Many years later I read *When Helping Hurts* and found a

similar idea there: poverty is rooted in broken relationships (relationship with God, with self, with others and with creation).

How does this definition of poverty differ from the one you expressed above?

Can you think of 5 new words to describe poverty?

How does viewing poverty as the result of broken relationships, primarily between us and God, affect what you will do on a short-term missions trip?

Ask the Lord...

Ask the Lord to open up your eyes so that you can see this broken world the way that He sees it. Ask the Lord to remind you of your poverty before you came into right relationship with Him so that your heart would be humble and your motivations pure. Pray that God would prepare you to walk alongside your brothers and sisters who are already working in Guatemala.

God's Already Here!

There is no place on this earth that you can go where God is not already there! When we embark on a mission experience, sometimes we get this mixed up. We somehow think that we are bringing God to the mission field.

Sorry to burst your bubble! God's already here! He is alive and well even in the backwoods of northern Guatemala. Even in a village where there is no church and not one professing believer...God is there. As Christ followers, we have the amazing opportunity to look around and point out where we already see Him at work and then share this with those around us. We celebrate what He has been doing and we introduce others to this Creator Redeemer God who loves us all and desires to be in relationship with us.

Have you ever had the opportunity to share with someone who isn't already a Christian a little bit about your faith journey and experiences with the Lord? Write about your experience.

Write out a scripture that has been important in your life recently. Why has it been important?

Ask the Lord...

Pray that you would be able to see the gifts and abilities that God has already given to those you are coming to serve. Pray that you would see opportunities to encourage them and walk alongside them. Pray that you would be a blessing to the community where you will be working. Pray that as the opportunities arise you will point out and celebrate how God is at work!

We are in this Together!

Read Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12

What does Paul say about the body of Christ?

How does this apply to a missions team?

When we work together as a team, we all draw on one another's strengths. We don't all have to be good at public speaking or at mixing concrete by hand. Each one of us has a unique and important talent or skill that we bring to the "body" or team. When we focus on the positive

aspects of each team member and choose to celebrate their giftings, amazing things can happen.

What are your strengths that you will bring to the body and your service while on the trip?

What areas may be weaknesses or cause a struggle for you?

What might some of the challenges be that your group experiences on the mission field?

How can you, personally, commit to building team unity before, during, and after the trip?

If you haven't already done so, prepare your testimony and share it with your team. This will further develop unity and understanding amongst your team.

Ask the Lord...

Pray for each member of your team by name. Ask the Lord to knit you together into His body to do His work in unity. Pray that the team might be a living testimony of Christ. Ask God to do a work in you and then through you. Submit yourself to him, and be willing to do whatever it is He leads you to do. Ask Him to empower you with His Holy Spirit, so that you will be equipped and ready.

Relationships

When you think back on times that you really enjoyed, usually it is the people you were with, more than the activity itself that makes it memorable. Our relationships with others make a lasting impact and the short time you will spend in Guatemala will leave an impression both on you and those you interact with.

How do you want to be remembered by your missionary hosts and the Guatemalans you serve? What about your teammates?

How did Jesus model relationship for us?

Read Mark 10:45 and John 13:2-18

What personal attitudes do you need to adjust in order to have a servant's heart?

List several ways that you can be of service on this trip to your fellow team members, your missionary hosts, and the nationals.

Ask the Lord...

Pray that the Lord would enable you to take your eyes off of yourself and truly be a servant to others while on your missions trip. Ask that your heart would be broken for what breaks His. Pray for a spirit of love and compassion for each member of your team and those you are serving.

Into the Unfamiliar

Every culture has its own unique qualities. We are often unaware of our own country's culture, because...well...it is our own. But, when we enter a different, unfamiliar culture, we can often feel awkward and uncomfortable. The truth is, cultures are not right or wrong, they are just different. And, sometimes what is totally acceptable in one culture is not at all okay in another.

It is good to spend some time preparing to cross over into the unfamiliar before you actually arrive in Guatemala!

When you get off the plane, the first thing that you will notice is no more English! This may cause you to feel a little panicky! Keep breathing! It will be okay.

Some cultural differences between North America and Guatemala are really clear. For example, it is culturally normal for teenage girls to walk hand in hand when they are friends and for women and men to publically bathe naked in a river right next people doing laundry and swimming. Others will be more subtle. For example, Guatemala is a relational culture which means people take priority over tasks and arriving somewhere on time is not really that important. Because you are the one visiting Guatemala, it is your responsibility to adjust and make the necessary changes.

It helps to remember that the Guatemalan people desire our friendship first; our help is of secondary importance to them. So, relax and enjoy whatever is happening at the time without worrying about things that cannot be changed.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 and Philippians 2:1-11

What choices must we make as we experience a new culture?

If you have not already done so, spend some time researching the country of Guatemala – its history, people, geography, religions, culture, languages, etc.

Ask the Lord...

Pray that you will emulate openness, trust and acceptance to the Guatemalans. Ask God to give you understanding and compassion for the nationals you will meet. Ask God to help you connect with the people through your smiles and the love of God. Love always transcends cultural differences!

Put Yourself In Their Shoes

Sometimes it is helpful to think about how you would feel if a group from another country, say Belgium, decided to come to your hometown on a cross-cultural missions trip. How would you feel if they didn't attempt to learn to say "hello" in English? What if they would come to your home, knock on the door, and through a translator explain that they wanted to come in and meet your family? Would you let them? What if once they were inside they didn't really appear very interested or were too busy talking with each other and snapping photos to pay attention to what you were saying? What if you offered them something to drink and/or eat and they either refused to receive it or made funny faces as they struggled to consume the peppermint herbal tea and chocolate chip cookie you gave them? I mean, who doesn't love peppermint tea and cookies, right?

It is good to remember that the people you are going to meet in Guatemala are first and foremost people. They may not live exactly as you do, eat the same food that you eat, or have all of the stuff that you have, but inside they are really not very different from you and me. They are generally proud of what they do have, very hospitable, and very relational.

They are thrilled when you make an attempt to say something in Spanish or even Kekchi. It shows them that you value them and their culture and language. You don't have to be fluent; you just have to try!

They want you to see their home and share some refreshments. They are giving you what they would like most to have! Eating chicken soup and tortillas in someone's home may be the most important thing you do to show them love and to receive the love they have for you.

Here are some scriptures that talk about love. Read through them and ask the Lord to put this kind of love inside of you for all those you meet – before you leave for Guatemala, while in Guatemala and after you return home. It is this kind of love that can change the world!

Romans 12:9-13

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (I love the Message version)

2 Corinthians 5:14, 15

Galatians 5:13, 14, 22, 23

Write out in your journal the characteristics of love that stand out to you in these passages. Look for other scriptures that describe the love we, as believers, are to have for others.

Ask the Lord...

Pray that the Lord will give you opportunities to express His love to those around you. Pray that He will allow you to practice love now so that you will be better prepared to show love when you are feeling a little out of your comfort zone. Ask God to give you a heart of love for the Guatemalan people.

It is our prayer that these reflections/devotionals have helped a little to better prepare you to be the most effective possible in the short time you will have in Guatemala. We are excited to have you come and are praying that the Lord will use this experience in amazing ways!

Rocky & Karren Chupa