



FROM THE FRONTLINES

*30 devotionals written by missionaries shining
light in the world's darkest corners*

EAST-WEST MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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THIRD EDITION

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To our ministry partners and worldwide workers who help make East-West's work in the world's spiritually darkest places possible.

We are thankful for your willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

FOREWORD

God saves us and sends us into a world desperate for peace with Him. Throughout history, He has used the people He changes to change the world. And I'm encouraged that God continues to see it fit that His light would go forth in spiritually dark places through East-West.

Just as the Church is a compilation of individual believers, East-West is a compilation of individual missionaries, trip participants national partners, office staff, and ministry supporters. Together, with our distinct and divine gifts and talents, we are a small representation of the larger, global Body of Christ that has the great privilege of pleading with the lost, "be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Sitting in the front row, witnessing God orchestrate our organization for His glory among the unreached is a measure of His grace towards me. It is truly a gift I don't deserve.

Today I am thrilled to share this gift of grace with you through this book filled with the stories, thoughts and reflections of some of the people I revere most—East-West's frontline workers.

Next to Jesus, they are the unsung heroes of our ministry, and I hope you are deeply encouraged—as am I—by the words they've shared on the following pages.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kurt", written in a cursive style.

Kurt Nelson
Chief Executive Officer



LIVE FOR THE DAY YOU SEE JESUS

from John Maisel, Founder and Chairman Emeritus

READ JOHN 17:4-8.

Jesus' earthly ministry lasted about three years. From what He shared in this brief time, His activities included ...

- Work to do (John 17:4)
- People to reach (John 17:6)
- Words to speak (John 17:8)

I think these points are reflected in our responsibility as those who've been captured by Christ. We have a mission to bear fruit and that involves work to do, people to reach, and words to speak. Jesus told us that we are His witnesses and that we're supposed to go and make disciples (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19). This should be the focus of our daily activities.

Everything we do—every word, every action, and every attitude—plays forward. The works we do, the words we speak, and the people we engage daily have huge implications.

Could this be why the Apostle Paul wrote, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him ... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (Colossians 3:17, 23)?

So, my brothers and sisters, may we live today for the day we see Jesus. May we work and speak the message of His great love to those God places in our lives today.

Precious Jesus, may we be faithful to be Your witnesses in the work we do, the people we reach, and the words we speak today. Amen.



SUFFERING AND HOPE

from a missionary on our Diaspora Team

READ ROMANS 5:3-5.

As followers of Jesus who are “justified by faith,” we have a loving Father who is able to work out all things for our good, especially suffering (Romans 5:1, 8:28). We are not trained by the world to desire suffering. Our instinct is to pursue ease, comfort, and prosperity. These things are not inherently wrong, but when chosen as more valuable than God, they are sin.

As we seek first the Kingdom of God, we will experience suffering (Acts 14:22). But this suffering is a gift because it produces in us precious perspective, wisdom, and hope. Rejoicing in suffering is rejoicing in God and His hope and love (Romans 5:2, 5).

There is a war being waged within us, and we must fight the fight of faith everyday (Romans 7:23). This fight is about seeing God as beautiful and His promises as trustworthy, and suffering helps us in this fight because it equips us with endurance and character. Every bit of suffering ultimately produces in us hope in the glory of God and our opportunity to partake in this glory (Romans 8:16-17).

As we suffer in this life, we can hold onto a great hope. The hope the world has is fleeting, but the hope of the Christian is rock solid and indestructible. Paul teaches us that our hope is so magnificent that suffering actually enhances it. So let us rejoice in suffering as we grow in endurance, character, and the glorious hope of God’s steadfast love in our hearts.

Father, give us this perspective as we experience suffering, so that we can rejoice in Your love that produces in us endurance, character, and hope. Amen.



RIPE FOR HARVEST

from Bob L., a missionary to Southeast Asia

READ JOHN 4:1-41.

Over the last 15 years of ministry in Southeast Asia, God has taught me many rich truths. One specific lesson about evangelism stands out most to me.

In today's passage, Jesus engages the woman at the well. Overcome by His prophetic words and divine insight into her life, she hurries back to Sychar and declares to her people what she discovered—the Christ!

This is a teachable moment for the disciples and us as Christ said, "Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!" (John 4:35).

What a contrast between nature and grace! In an ordinary harvest, men sowed and waited. But among the Samaritan people, Southeast Asian people, and people all around us, divine suddenness can happen. Spiritual harvests are not limited by agrarian cycles. Salvation can come through the Spirit's convicting and convincing work that draws people to place their trust in Christ!

When Christ tells the disciples to see the field is ripe for harvest, what does He see? He sees people—hundreds from Sychar—coming through the unripe fields with a longing to know the One the woman at the well told them about!

Many of these people believed in Jesus, and our day is no different than their day. Divine suddenness still occurs. This passage is meant for you and me as we courageously share the Lord with thirsty souls!

Father, open our eyes to see the fields ripe for harvest around us and give us the boldness to declare Your goodness and grace to all people. Amen.



PRAYER

from Bob W., our Vice President of Evangelism

Prayer is simply a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God. The words pray, prayer, and prayed are used 539 times in the Bible in reference to calling or crying out to God. Here are a few examples of prayer in the Scriptures:

Prayer as a call:

- Psalm 50:15
- Psalm 86:7
- Psalm 145:18

Prayer as a cry:

- Psalm 55:17
- Psalm 18:6
- Psalm 34:17

The above Scriptures represent two kinds of prayers. One is a call or request to God while the other is a much more demonstrative way of seeking and pleading earnestly—even loudly—with God by shrieking or crying or being moved to the point of being in an uproar.

When I reflect on my prayer journey, I have a long history of calling out to God in prayer but a much shorter history of crying out to God. Where are you in your prayer journey today? I suspect all of us are calling out to God for some specific prayer requests, but have you considered crying out to God, asking Him to move those big mountains in your life?

Father, we cry out to You with loud shouts to move the big mountains in our lives, trusting that You can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Amen.



WAITING FOR THE LORD

from a missionary to Central and Southeast Asia

READ PSALM 27.

As I sit down to write these words, it is Cyber Monday—the day that supposedly has the best deals on the Internet.

Imagine you do all of your Christmas shopping online through Amazon. Imagine you receive multiple messages of your products being delayed. Imagine that days before Christmas, the President of Amazon shows up at your door and tells you that instead of all of the gifts that you ordered, he will take you to a very nice restaurant for a meal so that you can spend several hours getting to know him.

Most of us would be very disappointed. We don't want to get to know the President of Amazon, we want the products we ordered. We prefer the products to the person. And sadly, we are often that way with God. We prefer the products resulting from our life with God to the Person of God. We desperately want circumstances to go our way on a daily basis.

Psalm 27 corrects this wrong thinking. The antidote is the command to “wait for the LORD” (Psalm 27:14). When LORD is written in all capitals, this is an indication that the personal Hebrew Name of God is in use. This is a call to wait for the presence of a very specific Person, rather than waiting for our circumstances to change. Because this is very difficult for us to do, we are reminded of Who we are waiting for and are encouraged to be strong and take courage.

Lord, remind us daily that You are the true Light, the thing that we should be the most drawn to. Give us strength to wait for You and not accept any substitute. Amen.



GRATITUDE

from our Executive Vice President of Field Ministries

READ EPHESIANS 5:20.

If you visit www.globalrichlist.com, you'll probably find you are one of the richest people in the world. I did this exercise and discovered that, even as a missionary, I rank in the top one-percent of the global rich. This should make us grateful.

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful. It is the readiness to show appreciation for blessings and kindness received. In spiritual terms, gratitude is far more than this.

1. Gratitude is spiritual sanity that connects us to the reality that everything we have is a gift (1 Corinthians 4:7).
2. Gratitude is spiritual humility. The very ability to earn money is a gift (Deuteronomy 8:18).
3. Gratitude is a sign of spiritual maturity (Colossians 2:6-7).
4. Gratitude is spiritual modeling (John 11:41-42).
5. Gratitude affirms others (Philippians 1:3).
6. Gratitude is spiritual contentment (Philippians 4:10-13).
7. Gratitude is spiritual worship (Hebrews 12:28).

Please be clear, without God, we are like a helpless child without a penny to our name. With God, we are like Solomon at the height of his glory!

What is our application for today? Be thankful, always (Ephesians 5:20).

Father, please grow gratitude in our hearts for the things—big and small—You've blessed us with. Amen.



THE END OF THE STORY

from Gary G., a missionary to Africa

READ REVELATION 19:1-2 AND REVELATION 21:1-4.

“Spoiler alert!”

We usually don't want to hear the end of a story because it ruins the fun of getting engrossed in the narrative. There are times, though, when knowing the end of the story enables us to endure the full range of emotions it conjures up.

When my wife started watching the first *Jurassic Park* movie, she wanted to stop it because she was so overwhelmed with fear that the children were going to die. So I leaned over and whispered to her that the children would survive. Only when she knew the ending could she endure the middle.

In the same way, our knowledge of how God's story ends helps us endure the difficulties in our own story. He is good and His plan will prevail.

Father, thank You for giving us a glimpse into how our stories end with an eternity spent with You. Give us strength to endure difficult times. Amen.



LOVING INTERNATIONALS LIKE JESUS

from Janet R., our ESL Coordinator

READ MARK 11:15-17, ISAIAH 56:7, AND LEVITICUS 19:34.

Why should we care about internationals living in our land? Because Jesus really cared about foreigners living in Israel.

In today's passage, take a careful look at what happened when Jesus saw Jews discriminate against foreigners. It says, "He taught them saying, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?" You have made it a place of robbers"' (Mark 11:17).

When we read this story, we often concentrate on the fact that there were robbers in the house of God, but the problem runs much deeper than that. Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 56:7, which talks about God gathering those from foreign lands and giving them a place to worship.

Jesus was upset that the Jews were discriminating against the foreigners. The place where they were doing business was the Court of the Gentiles, the only place in the temple where those from other countries could come and pray to God. They made it impossible for the foreigners to worship God in the temple. The people of Israel did not obey God and love the foreigners in their land.

Jesus took extreme measures to make a place for the foreigners to worship the One True God. How can we do the same for the internationals living among us today?

*Father, grow our hearts for the foreigners.
Help us reflect Christ's love for the Gentiles—like many
of us—that He came to save. Amen.*



THE ONE WHO JUDGES JUSTLY

from a missionary to Southeast Asia

READ PSALM 64:10.

Psalm 64 discusses the various attacks the enemy uses to bring us down. All around us, evil seeks to overcome and make us captive to fear. The presence of this evil produces tension, and no matter where we live, our lives—at any given moment—can be filled with it. Maybe we have stress at home, or difficulty at work, or perhaps a large amount pressure or strain on certain relationships. I have found that oftentimes this tension is intensified in life on the mission field.

However, when the attacks of the evil one seem especially strong and the tension feels overwhelming, I take much joy in the truths of Psalm 64:10. I am reminded the necessity of a pure heart before the Lord. In the face of oppression by the wicked, the righteous rejoice as they find their refuge in God who judges the heart. With a pure heart we can exult in our Lord, sing, and rejoice.

As Proverbs 29:6 states, “An evil man is ensnared in his transgressions, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.” When we walk in purity, we have nothing to fear.

Our response to the evil and tension around us turns from retaliation to refuge because it is God’s to avenge. This turning is only by the grace of God, for we all once lived in the flesh. Now we live by the humility given by God’s love and forgiveness.

When we understand the gospel’s power and the humility salvation brings, we are free to rejoice and take refuge in our God. The tension brought about by evil ceases to paralyze us, and we respond in grace by following the example of Christ as we entrust ourselves to the one who judges justly.

Father, we praise You for Your just judgment. Thank You for the reminder that we can rejoice in the midst of life’s tension. Amen.



BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

from a missionary on our Equipping Team

READ PSALM 46:10.

The Lord recently convicted me of my need to be quiet and just listen to Him. I am a visionary and a workaholic. My need is to just stop and ask God to speak to my heart.

Sometimes I leave the radio off for some time while I am driving and just talk to Jesus. Sometimes I take time early in the morning just to sit and read His Word, asking Him to speak to my heart. And other times I sit and contemplate the magnificence of His creation—the spectacular cloud formations, the sunrises and sunsets, the moon and stars, the creatures, and the diverse people groups around the globe.

These practices help me ...

- Be still and know that the God of creation loves me.
- Be still and know that I will never face any condemnation from God. I will always be loved. He always works everything together for good in my life.
- Be still and know that my little part—if I am obedient—can and will have enormous worldwide impact, through the multiplication of the gospel and disciples of Jesus.
- Be still and know that I am privileged to be a part of God’s magnificent, all-wise plan to take the gospel to every creature.

Through these still moments, I understand why David exclaimed twice, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1, 9).

Father, thank You for still moments in life that remind us of Your excellency. May we prioritize time to be still and know You more. Amen.



VOLUNTEERING

from a missionary on our Mobilization Team

READ 1 CHRONICLES 12:23-40.

All ministries need volunteers, including King David's army. He needed volunteer soldiers. I believe there are similarities between David's army volunteers and ministry volunteers today.

Some soldiers have previous experience (1 Chronicles 12:33, 35, 36). Some soldiers are ready to serve with a brave heart (1 Chronicles 12:25, 30). Some soldiers are ready to take the lead (1 Chronicles 12:32). Regardless of their experience or zeal, all the men in David's army were ready to go to battle and volunteered to do so (1 Chronicles 12:38).

David's volunteers and ministry volunteers have two important characteristics in common: they came on their own free will and God put the desire in their heart. Today when believers volunteer to join the army of a ministry for a common cause, there will be joy indeed.

*Father, it is an honor to be a part of Your gospel army.
Help us to bravely follow the desire to make disciples that
You have placed on our hearts. Amen.*



PREPARED TO ANSWER

from our Director of Missionary Care

READ 1 PETER 3:15 AND GALATIANS 2:20.

“What has God done in your life this week?”

The group of new believers looked eagerly, even anxiously to hear my answer to this question. They had just shared their stories of answered prayer, of suffering and doubt, and of new life being discovered with child-like wonder. Each person sitting with me in the small house church had recently left the darkness of Islam to find new hope in Christ. And now it was my turn. What had God done in my life this week?

This question continues to challenge me today. We are called to something so much bigger than ourselves. Being on mission with God, living out the gospel daily and functioning as part of the Body of Christ is not a human enterprise. When I'm left to my own resources, I get human-sized results. They may look impressive to some, but I am called to crucifixion with Christ. Submission to Him is the only way I can answer, “What has God done in my life this week?” in a way that gives a defense for the hope I've found in Jesus Christ.

*Lord, may we always seek Your face and presence.
Keep us close to Your heart so that we will
always be prepared to give an answer for the hope
You've graciously given us. Amen.*



SMALL STEPS

from a missionary to the Middle East

READ EXODUS 4:1-9.

I must remind myself of this simple truth daily: God does not call us to a life of ease and comfort, but He does promise He will provide for us and be our comfort in times of trouble.

In the beginning of Exodus 4, Moses is asked repeatedly to take steps of faith so that God can show His might and power to the Israelites and Egyptians. As long-term workers, we do this constantly.

God calls us to a life of faith and obedience that He honors by showing His power. We are witnesses to the great power of the Almighty God. Regardless of how much fruit we see, we are able to see God's power in the midst of darkness. Just like Moses, we are asked to take small steps of obedience, so that God may use it for His glory and the salvation of sinners.

God, You do not call us to an easy task, but You do promise to provide for us and glorify Your Name. It is a privilege to be a witness to Your great works. Amen.



FINDING OUR MACEDONIA

from Scott P., a missionary on our Mobilization Team

READ ACTS 16:6-10.

It could have been a demoralizing trip. Instead of leading a team on a mission trip to an unreached region as I had planned, I was denied entry to my final destination and sent home. And then, the team—which continued under alternate leadership—was ejected from our intended field.

But strangely, I was never discouraged. I found myself reflecting on my paraphrased version of Nik Ripken's words, "The enemy has never stopped doing what the enemy has always done, but God has never stopped doing what God has always done."

And that thought took me back to the experience of Paul who wanted to visit the province of Asia, but was prevented from doing so by the Holy Spirit. Instead, he was called to minister in Macedonia. The result of this divine redirect was the conversion of Lydia in Philippi and the Philippian jailer.

It should not be a surprise when things go wrong in our ministry efforts. We have a real and active opponent, but God uses our hardships and "Plan Bs" to bring about the greater good!

Oh, and that team that got displaced? They found their "Macedonia" and presented the gospel to more than a thousand people, over 400 of which made professions of faith in Christ. It is true—God is still doing what God has always done!

God, You are not surprised by the schemes of the enemy and constantly use trials to show Your goodness and glory. Amen.



POPULARITY OR PURPOSE

from Terry S., our Southeast Asia Field Leader

READ MARK 1:35-39.

In this passage I was struck by ten very important words, the first five of which are, “everyone is looking for you” (Mark 1:37).

All of us long to be popular, to be in demand. In this verse, we see clearly that Jesus was immensely popular. He had huge crowds clamoring for His attention. But popularity was not what Jesus was after. He was after fulfilling the Father’s purpose. This was His driving passion. In fact, Jesus’ response to the pull of popularity is stunning.

The next grouping of words in this passage to me is, “Let us go somewhere else” (Mark 1:38). Jesus knew God’s purpose for His life was to preach the gospel everywhere. He was not driven by worldly popularity or fame.

He truly lived a purpose driven life. That kind of life is not easy. It is hard! But my prayer is that God will grant each of us a passion to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness ... ultimately choosing God’s purpose over our popularity!

Father, we want to seek to earn Your applause over the praises of people. Please redirect our hearts to pursue Your purpose over our popularity. Amen.



WHAT A SACRIFICE

from Vicki M., our Director of Children's Ministry

READ ROMANS 8:1.

On a recent trip to South Asia, our team visited a temple where goats and chickens are sacrificed. The animals are brought to the priest to receive a blessing, and then their throats are cut. So much blood is shed as their life is taken.

In our western culture we are far removed from this practice, but it was commonplace in Biblical times. They understood that for forgiveness to be granted, blood had to be shed. Life had to be taken.

This is hard to for us to understand and it was difficult to watch these innocent animals being killed. But it doesn't even compare to Christ's final sacrifice and death. He was beaten, mocked, nailed to a cross, and stabbed. And that's just the physical. Witnessing these animal sacrifices, in small part, helped me realize how atrocious Christ's death was. The cost for my sin was His life. And yet, if He hadn't done it, I would still be lost and wallowing in the muck that is my sin.

The enemy can accuse me, and most of the time he is right. But then I am reminded that, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). He has chosen to save me and call me His child. What a sacrifice. What a Savior.

Jesus, thank You for Your great sacrifice on our behalf. We are forever grateful that You endured the pain and suffering that we deserved so that we can be called children of God. Amen.



DO I REALLY BELIEVE THAT?

from a missionary to East Asia

READ EPHESIANS 4:32 AND ROMANS 12:21.

One of our teammates does an amazing job of asking the question, “Do I really believe that?”

True belief is where the rubber meets the road. If we really believe God is who He says He is throughout Scripture, it will affect our life. We will act according to this belief.

Here are two Scriptures that have challenged us greatly when we’re asking, “Do I really believe this?”

- “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” –Ephesians 4:32
- “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” –Romans 12:21

Do we really believe that we are fully forgiven in Christ? If yes, we have to forgive others just as much. Do we really believe the best way to overcome evil is with good? If yes, we have to respond to the injustices of our world with good, not vengeance.

We are in this fight to believe these truths, and I want to encourage you to keep pressing on in belief too.

Father, Your ways are not our ways and Your thoughts are not our thoughts. When Your Word challenges us, help us truly believe what You say. Amen.



FINDING SATISFACTION IN GOD

from a missionary on our Diaspora Team

READ HOSEA 13:4-6.

As part of our work, my team equips believers to study their Bibles using a series of six questions. I want to share what God revealed to me in these verses from Hosea using this method.

What do I learn about God from this passage? He is the self-existing One and He is personal to us. He has revealed Himself to us. He expects to be the only God worth acknowledging. He is the only Savior. He cared and cares for us in trial. He sustains us. He deserves worth and acknowledgement. He is all-satisfying.

What do I learn about man from this passage? We need God. We need Him to save us. We sometimes experience difficult times. When other things satisfy us, we become prideful and forget God.

Is there a sin(s) to avoid in this passage? We need to avoid pride, our tendency to forget God, and finding satisfaction in other things besides God.

Is there a promise(s) to trust in this passage? The Lord is our God. He is our Savior. God cares for us.

Is there an example(s) to follow in this passage? We're warned not to find pride in God's gifts, but find delight in the Giver.

Is there a command(s) to obey in this passage? The command is implied in this passage. We are to find sufficiency in God and acknowledge Him as all sufficient. We are supposed to enjoy the blessings of God without depending on them more than we depend on Him. We are to love God, not His gifts. He knows what's best for us ... Himself.

God, thank You for being all-sufficient. Forgive us for the times we've found satisfaction in Your gifts rather than You. Amen.



BURNING BUSHES

from a Short-Term Mission Trip Participant

READ EXODUS 3:1-15.

When Moses saw a bush up in flames, burning without burning up, he was in awe. It was just a piece of shrubbery—a plain, otherwise unnoticeable bunch of twigs. But it was lit with fire that did not destroy it. The flames did not turn its branches black or shrivel its leaves. That must have been something. It scared him but drew him. He took off his shoes because it was holy ground.

We're so like burning bushes: plain, not worth looking at. Breakable. Sometimes sad. Trying to be tall and sturdy like trees but usually feeling feeble and small.

But when the Holy Spirit rushes to fill our lives, how bright we become! We are so consumed with His awesome presence yet wonderfully not destroyed. Our feebleness is infused with His holy flame, sending out light to the world that others may see it and say, "He is nothing, but what is happening to him is something holy."

We are burning bushes, always in His presence because His presence is in us. And we're raising our limbs as high as we can to let people see the glow. And we're declaring that where He moves, we follow, and wherever He goes, that place is holy ground.

Praise His name for the joy of witnessing to unreached nations and remote villages—for the joy of carrying His holy flame to the ends of the Earth.

*Father, You alone turn our weakness into strength.
Thank You for using us, Your children, to send
light into a dark world. Amen.*



TRUST ACCOUNT

from a missionary on our Equipping Team

READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:2.

Paul had a valuable message and shared it with many witnesses. They all heard it. So did Paul's cherished disciple Timothy. But it was to Timothy that he entrusted this special message. This was not because Timothy was smarter or somehow more able. It really had very little to do with him or his worth.

No, Paul recognized the power and treasure of the message of Christ and wanted to ensure that it would continue to be disseminated. Timothy, just like the many around him, heard what Paul had to say, but he was different ... he showed his faithfulness to the task of sharing this treasure with others.

Timothy was not alone either. Paul saw and trusted that others, people with whom Timothy had relationship and influence, would also be able to join in the labor. In fact, Paul foresaw not only the first generation with Timothy (and let's not forget about Titus and Luke and Mark and others) but also a second and even a third. He saw those who were able to teach others also.

Each of us—sons and daughters of the Most High God—have benefited from this “trust account” passed down from generations of faith, not bloodlines. We have been enriched in an unmatched way. We have heard.

Will we be faithful to pass it on? Can we be trusted?

Father, we pray to be counted faithful to pass along the greatest news in the world—that Christ came to reconcile people to God. Amen.



DO THE MATH

from our Associate Director of GoHere

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6.

This past spring, I went to Lowes and let my kids pick out a set of flowers to plant at home. They were steeped in anticipation by the time we got home ... then I realized I seriously underestimated the amount of potting soil we needed. The good news: I took a solo trip to Lowes 10 days later and got more potting soil. The bad news: After sitting on a porch with no water, half of the flowers were dead.

Today's Scripture talks about the spiritual seeds we sow and reap. God has called every believer to share the gospel and make disciples of all nations. Every Christian knows that, and I believe every Christian even feels that they ought to be sharing the good news as much as possible.

If you're anything like me, though, you feel guilty about not sharing your faith as much as you should. I like the simplicity of today's verses, because it basically says, "Do the math!" If you want to see more people become disciples of Christ, you have to start talking to more people about Christ. As my old mentor would say, "Make disciples, not excuses."

I dare you to take a 100-day challenge to share the gospel with someone once a day. When you do, you're not leaving a bunch of flowers on the porch with no hope like I did. My guess is that you will gain a lot of evangelism experience and have several really cool stories of people trusting in Christ. You can do it!

*God, we pray to be faithful in proclaiming
the gospel each day in a way that leads to spiritual
fruit that glorifies You. Amen.*



RUNNING WELL

from a Short-Term Mission Trip Participant

**READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27, HEBREWS 12:1-3,
ACTS 20:24 AND 2 TIMOTHY 4:7.**

In college, I despised marathon days and the individuals that blocked me from freely moving around the city. Traffic was unpredictable. Roads were closed. My impatience rose. Then in an irony of ironies, I became one of the half marathon runners, and it was one of the most worshipful experiences of my life.

For months I trained with other believers to discipline and strengthen our bodies to do something that seemed unattainable. In the process, we were called brave, strong, and more. Frankly, I most often thought we were crazy. I left my house on race day thinking, “I will only finish this race by the grace of God.” Dozens of training miles and a little over two hours later, I crossed the finish line.

As wonderful as it was to complete the course, the greatest moment wasn’t finishing, but the unique opportunity to tangibly experience the Scriptures that compare life to a race. Each stride turned the black and white pages to color. By mile 12, I didn’t want to finish the race with any energy left, and I think that is our aim in life too. Anything less leads to regret.

After years of focusing on Christ and the proclamation of His gospel, we should cross the finish line of eternity echoing the Apostle Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

Father, teach us to run the race of faith You’ve called us to well, throwing off the sin that entangles us and focusing on Christ for the spread of Your glory. Amen.



THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FORGETTING

from our Associate Director of Church Partnerships

READ PHILIPPIANS 3:13.

Anxiety, that old foe, seems to be the adversary I most often combat. Selfish acts, untimely words spoken, and the underappreciation of family and friends all send my mind reeling and pronouncing harsh judgments against myself. This aim at self-made perfection seems to do me no good.

For those like me, there is hope in this verse. Paul says that it was his discipline to forget what lay behind. Oh, how I've wanted sweet release in my mind from past mistakes, and here is the permission to let them go. It's a simple fact that we cannot change what we've done in the past. What matters most now is our present identity.

Dear reader, are you in Christ? There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Do you feel as if you lack something? In Christ, all things belong to you. Are you worried about the acceptance of others? You already have His love, which He passionately displayed as He took up the cross on your behalf.

All these are ours presently, with glory still yet to come! Dear reader, forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead in Christ.

*God, grow us in the spiritual disciplines
of forgetting the past and looking forward to
what You've promised us forever. Amen.*



JOY IN JUDGMENT

from missionaries to East Asia

READ PSALM 93:1-13, PSALM 97:1-8,
PSALM 98:7-9 AND PSALM 99:1-8.

Many overseas workers have a burden for the lost and pine for more time and opportunities to share the good news. They want every person to hear and respond with, "Yes, I'll follow Jesus Christ!" and believe judgment should be postponed as long as possible. This idea is celebrated in our culture because we do not think that seemingly good people should face consequences for choosing a different life than following Jesus Christ.

So often I think the hope of Christ's coming was to make everything wrong in the world right, but I ignore the fact that making everything right requires judgment of His enemies. Recently while reading the Psalms, I noticed an interesting theme. God's judgment brings joy. In all four psalms listed today, creation is happy to expect judgment!

Our hope is in Jesus Christ returning to make everything right and establishing His rule. We are urgently compelled to share the bad news of coming judgment and the good news of forgiveness with students, colleagues, and local friends. We hope you will do the same.

*God, help us understand that eternal joy in
Your rule and reign comes paired with judgment
of those who've sided against You. Amen.*



GOD WITH US

from a missionary to Europe

READ MATTHEW 1:23 AND LUKE 2:10.

Immanuel means "God with us." Think about how amazing it is to have God with us!

And He is with us through the Person of Jesus Christ. How much more amazing is it that He even wants to be with us. Today do you feel that He is with you?

Most of the time, I know God is with me. But there are times—especially while living in a different culture with a different language and different customs—that I feel very alone. Then I think about those who long to know God and do not know Jesus as Immanuel—God with us.

In Luke 2:10, the angel tells the shepherds, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." From His birth, Jesus—God with us—is good news for all people ... everywhere.

Is there someone in your life that needs to know that today?

*God, gives us opportunities and winsome
words to share the gospel with people who do not know
You as Immanuel—God with us. Amen.*



KEEP PRESSING ON

from a national partner in Central Asia

READ JUDGES 21:25 AND MARK 4.

A while back I saw a question on Facebook: Which book of the Bible do you identify with most? This actually prompted me to ask myself another question: Which book of the Bible portrays the time and place we are living in?

I believe the book of Judges portrays what our life on the mission field is like in Central Asia. The reason is simple. In Judges, the nation didn't conquer the land, just like the church in Central Asia hasn't conquered our land.

We have a small presence in this region, but most of Central Asia remains unreached and resistant to the gospel. In fact, some missiologists believe that the soil of Central Asia is the hardest.

Recently, Mark 4 reminded me that the Sower keeps on sowing gospel seeds despite the conditions of the soil. This has encouraged our team to keep pressing on and trusting God to make the impossible happen in this region!

Father, we know that You can do more than we could ask or imagine for Your glory among the nations. Please soften the soil in the world's spiritually darkest places. Amen.



EVERYONE PLAYS A PART

from Mark F., our Vice President of Mobilization

READ ROMANS 10:13-15A.

When I was young, I looked forward to the postman's daily visit. I hoped—with a child's enthusiasm—that he would bring something for me. Perhaps a letter from a faraway destination? Or maybe a gift? The mail carrier was my favorite person ... a Santa Claus of sorts.

But eventually I realized that the postman was delivering that which someone else had sent. He was an important part of the process but without a sender, I would never receive that special gift! In fact, for the whole thing to work—for the U.S. Post Office to exist—there needed to be a sender, messenger and recipient.

And so it is with the missions endeavor, as articulated by Paul in Romans 10:13-15a. As the missionaries of East-West faithfully go abroad, there are a slew of people who remain behind and fulfill the sender's role. Whether it's a prayer warrior, a mobilizer, a financier, an equipper—or whatever—we all have a role to play in sending the good news to the spiritually darkest places on earth. And even as we send others, we are simultaneously sent to carry the good news to our neighbors, family, and friends. Every believer is both a sender and messenger.

In total, each role is essential! Every child of God has an important part to play in His plan to proclaim the Name of Jesus wherever He is unknown! What are you doing to ensure that the good news is known from your neighborhood to the nations? Are you fulfilling your God-given role as both a sender and messenger?

*Father, thank You for giving all
believers the joy of participating in Your
mission both near and far. Amen.*



THE TRUTH ABOUT MISSIONS

from Michael G., an Area Director of Short-term Trips

READ LUKE 10:17-20 AND MATTHEW 28:18-19.

As we train teams and send them to the field, the most common anxiety I hear is “I do not have the skills or qualifications to lead someone to Christ.” But the truth is that being on mission is more about being a disciple of Jesus than being a qualified evangelist.

Jesus did not call each of us to save souls; He called each of us to make disciples. The joy of saving souls is His job. Our first priority is to be disciples ourselves and to believe that Jesus really can do what He says He can do. We have a tendency to look at a lost person and try to measure whether or not we have the ability to lead them to Jesus. But I’m reminded that when David fought Goliath, he did not look at the size of the giant. Instead, he turned and looked to the Lord and believed God would lead him to victory.

So in the end, making disciples is about our relationship with Jesus and walking in the truth that He really does save souls. It is not about the backslider, the hardhearted friend, the guilt ridden loved one, or the spiritual aptitude of the evangelist. It is about Jesus and the depth of our belief in His holy power to transform lives forever. All authority is His and He’s transferred this power to you ... therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

Jesus, help us walk in belief that You have given us the authority and ability to effectively make disciples of the nations. Amen.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

from Mario Zandstra, President

**READ ROMANS 3:23, ROMANS 6:23, ROMANS 5:8 AND
EPHESIANS 2:8-9.**

Recently, I had the privilege of evangelizing in Latin America. Local church members set up appointments with people in their communities, one of which happened to be with a grandmother and her son.

I asked them about their life and family. The son mentioned that he was a security guard and spoke English. He politely asked to be my interpreter. I agreed and started sharing about the time a college friend shared the gospel with me using verses from Romans. He was curious and asked me to repeat the verses. He took our conversation seriously as a smile crept across his face.

Lastly, I shared Ephesians 2:8-9. As he translated this message to his mom, his smile grew. My new friend trusted in Jesus while proclaiming Him to his mom who also came to faith ... what a great God we serve!

He then said he was going to share with his wife and kids. As I began to leave, I asked them if I could take their picture. Amazingly he mimicked me by placing his hand over his heart like I had done while describing the moment I trusted Jesus as my Savior 39 years ago. He clearly understood the magnitude of the heart change he just experienced.

I am grateful for the fact that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). My new friend and his mother are now “the righteousness of God!”

God, it is a measure of Your grace that we get to be a part of reconciling people to You. Thank you for the opportunity to do this in the world's spiritually darkest places. Amen.



WHAT IS AN AMBASSADOR?

from Kurt Nelson, Chief Executive Officer

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:9-6:2.

Ambassador: an official envoy; especially: a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment.

We are Christ's Ambassadors—His appointed and empowered diplomats in a foreign land. This Scripture teaches us about God's design for fulfilling the Great Commission. Line by line, Paul reveals how we spread His glory among the nations.

- Our **motive** is to please Him (2 Corinthians 5:9).
- Our **mission** is to persuade men to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:10).
- Our **moxie** (passion + boldness) is the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14).
- Our **ministry** is to reconcile people to God (2 Corinthians 5:18).
- Our **message** is the gospel that leads to reconciliation between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:19).
- Our **manner** in delivering the message is humble and persuasive (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- Our **mandate** is one of great urgency because “now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

I'm convicted of the great urgency of our Lord's mandate. We must preach the gospel today because we are never guaranteed tomorrow. As we encounter the lost, we must assume that this is our only opportunity to implore them to be reconciled to God.

Father, thank You for letting us serve as Your ambassadors in a foreign land. May we be bold and faithful in this role. Amen.

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