



Ask your questions!

WELCOME

This devotional was created in 2021 by younger voices, who are already leaders at God's table. The goal is to invite and make an intentional welcome to other young voices who serve alongside older adults. All are welcomed on the mission field, whether you are a pre-teen, teenager, late teen or young adult.

This devotional journeys with you for twelve days. Each author accompanies you along the way. Each voice offers a reflection, a story, a song, a poem for you to reflect on. We pray you will meet God's whisper through these pages.

You may enter with a multitude of questions or you may enter with only one. We ask that you allow the Holy Spirit to move through the crevasses of your heart. Stay open to receiving the Holy Spirit. May God's invitation be your welcome to the Table of plenty.

Here is an excerpt from a prayer the Franciscan contemplative priest, Richard Rohr, shared in a devotion earlier in 2021:

"Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see. Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility, and greater care for one another. May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts, trusting in your eternal presence and love. Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking. In all the holy names of God we pray. Amen"

May you find comfort, questions, gentleness, encouragement, mercy, hope and love in the pages that follow.

Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil, Director of Short-Term Mission & Minister Nicole Cox, Associate to Short-Term Mission & Emerging Leaders



OBSERVE

Matthew 6:26. "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

I am going to cut straight to the chase with you on this one. Jesus focuses on nature a lot.

Check it out as you read through the ministry of Christ.

It is so important to observe nature, in understanding the way that God has designed His good earth and kingdom.

Our attention can be focused on many things; information, time, morals, feelings, settings, opportunities, ourselves, and so on.

All of this can be useful, and we could learn and accomplish a lot from them all.

But sometimes, the best we can do is to relax and just observe the nature of things.

God bless.

By Anthony Ratzel Resolve, The Trailblazers



ASK

When you think of the word ask, what first comes to mind? If you're like me, you might've thought of a toddler asking their mother for a snack. Or a teen asking their parents if they can spend the night out.

How often do you ask God for something? Again, if you're like me, probably a lot. Asking for healing, to be able to do this or that.

But how often do you ask what God wants? When we think of asking God for something, it usually doesn't involve asking his opinion first on what we should ask for. But what if the things you're asking for aren't what God wants for you? Well, the first thing I do is I pull out my Bible and I say to God, "You said right here in Matthew seven, God, that if I ask you for what I want then you'll give it to me." And then I angrily shut the book and glare up at heaven, as if that's going to get me what I want.

I think that this reaction is normal. We're human, and we can forget a few things.

Like the Matthew seven? The full verse is actually, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." It's not directed at us, but at the disciples. There's actually a lot more to the verse than what we take away from it.

When my mom asks me to go and get my siblings for dinner, the first thing I do is yell across the house, instead of seeking them, finding them in their room, and knocking on their door. And in a way, I see that as what we do when we ask God for something *before*, we intentionally seek him out and knock on the door.

How effective is yelling across the house for your siblings? Not very. How effective is yelling at God to do something for us? Not very. We skip the crucial parts. If you seek God out, you'll know what you're supposed to ask. When you knock on the door, He (Jesus) opens and starts interceding; and then, it's finally time to ask.

Asking is not a sin. Not by far. Jesus teaches us that asking is okay. "Give us this day, our daily bread," is asking. It's asking for God to supply our needs for the day.

Go ahead and ask. God loves to hear our requests; He takes joy in granting our requests. But remember to first seek and knock, because if you yell at Him through the house, it won't be effective.

Keep in mind that God wants the best for us, so if He says no, you're either asking the wrong question, or asking the question wrong.

So, stand at the door and knock. Cause what's the worst that can happen? He says no? Ask again in a different way. Still, no? Ask Him what He wants. I think you'll find that God answers us a lot more when we first ask what He wants.

By Emma Witmer, Missionary Kid in Thailand



LISTEN

Incline your ear to hear His voice
His voice is still and small
You may miss it
If distracted you will not hear it
If busy you will not perceive it
Silence your world
Lean in to hear
His voice
He wants to speak to you
So, open your ears to
Listen

Revelations 3:20

“Listen I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and have dinner with him and he with Me.”

1 Kings 19:12

“After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord does was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper.”

Hebrews 3:15

“As it is said: ‘Today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts’.”

By Melanie Mitchell, The Trailblazers



PRAY

Jesus prayed.

That has always stuck out to me, as I continue on my faith journey and attempt to grow in my own belief and prayer life. Jesus prayed. If He, of all people, needed to pray, I know for sure that I do.

But how am I supposed to pray? Well, Jesus said it fairly plainly in Matthew 6:9-13

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread! And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.”

I want to focus on how this prayer begins, firstly with acknowledging who God is.

Acknowledging that He is the Father. Our Father. And, in acknowledging that, it acknowledges how beautiful it is that we sit here in prayer to Him, though we don't deserve it. It acknowledges that we have been adopted into sonship, as Romans 8:15 states when it says “...rather the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father.”

Secondly, this prayer opens with calling God's name Hallowed. Dictionary.com defines “Hallowed” as regarded as Holy; venerated, sacred.”

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/hallowed>)

This prayer opens with acknowledging first God's position as our Father, and secondly His position as holy, venerated (to be revered or respected) and sacred. It emphasizes the fact that God is good, because He has allowed us – small sinful human beings – to come into the presence of a Sacred and Holy God. Not only to come into His presence, but to be regarded as His children.

Isn't that awe-inspiring? That God would give us a second thought is, in itself, a beautiful reflection of His kind and merciful nature. But that He does not give us a second thought, but a third and a fourth and a fifth and so on and calls us His children.... that is simply breathtaking to me.

So, as you sit down and pray, remember these things. Open your prayer in awe and reverence to God. With a humble heart, thank Him for who He is. How He loves you. And then move on to praying in accordance with His will, for what you feel He has led you to pray for.

Prayer is a conversation. It's the perfect chance for you to fill the conversation with humility of heart and reverence to God. To remind yourself of how amazing He really is.

By Julia Witmer, Missionary Kid in Thailand



HONOR

I was asked to choose a word and reflect on it in prayer. After taking some time to look over the words, I chose the word **honor**. What is honor? The google definition of honor is great esteem, high respect, or adherence to what is right or a conventional form of conduct. I would define honor as respect or an appreciation that you or anyone can hold. Honor is an important part of my day-to-day life.

In 1 Peter 2:17 the bible says “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” The bible tells us to not only honor those that honor us but to honor everyone. I understand that for most of us this can be hard, especially when others do dishonorable things to us. However, God says that we are to still honor those people and turn to Him.

I think that it is important for all of us to remember that we can turn to God when we are struggling and even during times of great joy in our lives. Respecting and Honoring others can be difficult, especially when we enter into different cultures where their idea of honor and respect can differ from our own.

When it comes to short term missions, honor plays an important role. Not only is it important to honor your hosts, but it is also important to prepare yourself and learn about what is seen as honorable or respectful in that country's culture. Before embarking on my recent short-term mission trip to Costa Rica, I had to learn about what is seen as honorable or respectful in their culture. I tried to prepare myself as much as possible. Even though I tried to be prepared, I remember that on the first day of the trip I was late to breakfast. One of the Costa Rican kids came to the cabin door to fetch me. I waved her on and told her that they could just start without me. Little did I know that it is seen as disrespectful to not wait for everyone to arrive before eating. The entire camp waited for me to finish getting ready and arrive at breakfast. I felt awful when I arrived at the dining hall and realized that everyone there was waiting for me to arrive. I was worried that I had been disrespectful and felt horrible. I immediately started apologizing to everyone. Thankfully everyone was very kind and told me that it was fine. I was not disrespectful, I simply didn't know. They all assured me that they were simply happy to see me and glad that we could now all eat together.

Honor is important. It is how we decipher what is right and wrong. It allows us to understand each other and to lift each other up. As God says, Honor everyone.

By Jessamine Greuter, The Trailblazers



ASSUME

I sat in the back of the van, hoping the driver would arrive back, if for no other reason than to turn on the air conditioning system. I thought about cracking the windows in the front seat but I didn't want to wake the baby strapped up in the passenger seat. The temperature of the van became the least of my worries when the real heat arrived. Without warning, the van door burst open, and a police officer yelled, "Where are the guns?", drawing his own weapon...

I can look back on this day and chuckle, but at the time, I was afraid for my own safety. Many assumptions were made that day. The baby in the front? That was my younger sister. The driver? That was my mom, who was grocery shopping during this incident. And the work van that I sat in the back of, with the out-of-state plates? That was my dad's, who is contracted by an out-of-state employer. But to the police officer, it looked like a baby carelessly left in a hot van without the windows cracked, likely travelling from a state away in a wild kidnapping spree.

We are all guilty of making assumptions from time to time. There are a couple of ways to think of the word "assume" - sometimes it's taking on a role or responsibility, other times it is supposing our own thoughts. In any case, it requires our participation. Assuming on its own isn't necessarily wrong, but we are prone to incorrectly assume when we take on more responsibility or "fill in more blanks" than we ought to. So how do we make safe assumptions?

Read Acts 2:1-21.

Not only does the one and only Holy Spirit of God assume its presence in the form of fiery tongues upon the followers and believers, but onlookers falsely assume that they're just drunk! What a privilege to be a believer consumed by the Holy Spirit, and how unfortunate that onlookers could only incorrectly judge one of the most remarkable witnesses of God's presence simply because they didn't have faith!

In the scope of missions, there are times when you will assume a role and responsibility as directed by the movement of the Holy Spirit, but take care not to "assume" where God is or isn't without first listening and letting God show up in God's own mysterious and marvelous way. Whether it's the cultural landscape or the call of God, consider how we rightly assume.

REFLECT ON THESE QUESTIONS:

- Whether they are right or wrong, what assumptions have you made about the mission field?
- What role or responsibility do you feel the Holy Spirit guiding you to assume?

By Leta Williams Resolve, The Trailblazers



SERVE

I love to help others; I've been doing it my whole life. If anyone asks me to help, I'll say 'yes'.

When our church started their English Bible Study ministry, they asked if we could help. It was exciting and new. I helped set up every week, made dozens of cupcakes, and worked a lot behind the scenes. I loved it; it was 'my thing'. When I was there, the best parts of me were showing: my bubbly side, my outgoing side. My relationships grew and I met new people. However, as our group grew, we needed more help. That's when my siblings started helping out. As I had fewer responsibilities, I felt less needed.

Then I came across Romans 12. As I read it, I felt as if God was thinking of me. He saw my heart. He knew what I was going through. I accepted that I was called to serve. I found new ways to help. Sure, it was no longer 'my thing', but I still looked forward to it every week. It was going great until lock-down. Because of COVID-19, we had to move online.

Again, I felt purposeless. There was nothing to set up, nothing to cook. It was a very difficult time. Somewhere in the midst of my troubles I read or heard something that made me think 'for Him, I need to do everything as if I'm doing it for Him'. That really stuck with me.

Later, in the second lock-down, I found the verse that goes with what I thought. Colossians 3:23 "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." It became my favorite Bible verse.

Do it all for Him, whether it's studying, working, or even cleaning. Do it as if you're doing it for Him. Try not to find your sense of purpose in what you do, but who you're doing it for. Even if you feel like you're not doing enough, if you're doing it for Jesus, you're right where you need to be.

By Sarah Good, Missionary Kid in Hungary



HOPE

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1(KJV)

What strong words to begin a chapter! Romans 8 is, I think, one of the most hope-filled chapters of the book of Romans. I can't say that it's the most hope-filled chapter in the entire Bible, as the chapters which contain Jesus rising from the dead absolutely overwhelm me with feelings of hope and adoration as I read...

...Well, most of the time. There is something to be said for “been there, done that.” As unfortunate as it is, the more I read something (whether it be Biblical or a fictitious story), the less I feel the impact of it. This is especially prevalent in my reading of my own stories.

As a published author, I re-read my own stories before ever sharing them with another person at *least* three times. I then go on to re-read the same stories again up to thirty times in total after sharing them with a few trusted readers to see if the story is any good. Needless to say, although I'm incredibly proud of my stories and feel led to write and share them, I become a little tired of them by the time that I finally write the *actual*, complete, “The End.” The truth of the matter is, however, that God deserves much more admiration from me, no matter how often I read His Word.

Do you sit down to read and find yourself tired of it sometimes? “I've read this already,” you may say. “I know what's going to happen. I know Christ died for me. I'm thankful, but do I really have to read it *again*?”

I understand that feeling. But I also want to encourage you to remember the Hope of the Scriptures.

Hope is something we as individuals *need* to survive. And thankfully it is something that was freely given to us. Our God is a God of hope.

I highly encourage you to read the entirety of Romans 8 to truly understand and remind yourself of the hopeful words of this chapter, but for now, I'm going to include two more verses. Two verses that fill me with hope every time I read them, without fail - no matter how much I *think* I “know” the scriptures:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39 (KJV)

There is not a single day that I read that and am not filled with the confident hope of salvation (Romans 5:4). Remember, when days are dark, or reading the Word is just a habit, that nothing can separate you from His love. You don't stand before Him condemned. You can have a confident hope in this, above all else: that you are not separated from God, because of Jesus Christ.

By Julia Witmer, Missionary Kid in Thailand



RECEIVE

“Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV, 1984)

Every day we receive many messages. Think about it for a moment. You receive e-mails, text messages, phone calls, letters in the mail. We learn what is happening within the world on the news and on social media. Sometimes, the information we receive fills us with excitement, like a promotion at work or the announcement of a baby being born. Other times, when something unexpected happens, we are left feeling disappointed, frustrated, anxious, or sad. God has revealed to me that while the information we receive is meaningful, our response is even greater.

Last September, I began my second virtual missionary teaching experience with International Ministries. I was partnered with Ketly and Rev. Vital Pierre, Global Servants in the Dominican Republic, to teach English to a group of new Christian believers. My teacher's brain immediately started going to work, as I planned out basic English lessons and activities that had worked well during my first virtual missionary teaching experience in Spain. However, I received information about this placement that I was not expecting. I was asked to lead a discipleship group instead of an English class. The students didn't speak English, and I didn't speak Haitian Creole. If I am being completely honest, my initial reaction was hesitancy and fear. I felt that there were high expectations of me, and I was worried I would not be able to fulfill them. More than that, I was afraid that the people I would be working with would be disappointed when the classes ended up as a complete disaster. After lots of Godly counsel and prayer, my reaction began to change. God was showing me that my agenda is not always His agenda in life. He would not ask me to do something and let me fail. I had to trust Him.

The two months I taught the discipleship class with Ketly were truly life-giving to everyone involved. I spoke in English, and Ketly translated for the students. Personal stories and testimonies of God's goodness were shared as we learned about the Fruit of the Spirit together. Looking back, if I had completely ignored Ketly's vision for a discipleship class and taught how I thought was best, I would have missed out on receiving spiritual growth in my own life. As I continue to teach English, both virtually and in the states, I now have more of a Kingdom perspective instead of a practical perspective.

Trust the Lord with all of your heart and know He will never fail you. By choosing to trust God, you will receive more than you could have ever imagined.

By Kadie Henry, The Trailblazers



RELATE

“I CANNOT relate” said the hip young Black man to an out of touch White guy who was in crisis over the fact that he was useless to help lead his old friends and countless others out of drug addiction and suicidal ideation. In an uneasy emotional and mental break down, that young Black man whom I only knew from a month-long work relationship, sat with me and assured me that I was not alone in a very vulnerable moment.

With the full weight of stereotypes, bias reporting social patterns, and many other variables I could’ve come to the conclusion that our two worlds could never come together... but by his actions, his faithful presence, and in his undeserved grace towards me, his actions spoke to me and said, “I CAN relate”!

In scripture God came to earth and dwelt among us.

In His earthly Jewish heritage, background and life, it was common for the Jews to not associate with other people of different ethnicities, religious background, lifestyles, and physical conditions. Jesus relates to humanity as a human, as well as God.

He touches the untouchables, healing those who are contagious. Jesus helps people from opposing nations to become well. He feeds those who are looking to exploit, use and betray Him, and yet, holds on to His innocence and purity.

And He lives with the people He encounters.

He shares his life with others, and they become well.

Let’s get closer to Christ, and in time, we may see the effects of His shared life within ourselves and others.

By Anthony Ratzel Resolve, The Trailblazers



SEPARATE

In a world where we are all so divided, why would we focus on separation?!

Have you done your own laundry? I don't particularly enjoy it. I especially dread sorting through it. I try my best to imagine I'm witnessing the beginning of creation itself when "the light is separated from the dark..." though admittedly, it's a bit less epic. Even if you are not someone who separates the laundry by light or dark, you'll at least deal with sorting things into neatly folded piles to end up in the respective drawer, closet, and room. In some cases, separation is necessary! Even Jesus separated himself to rest and pray - multiple times through scripture!

As the church, though we live in this world, we are also called to be separate from it (*See most of 1 John 2*). Separate doesn't mean secretive or exclusive by any means, but rather that we shouldn't be confused with any other society, religion, club, or group. In fact, the *one thing* that we will never separate *from* is the one thing that distinguishes us from the world!

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8:38-39(NIV)

REFLECT ON THESE QUESTIONS:

You have made it to Day 11 of your devotions (out of 12)! Congratulations!

How will you continue to separate yourself to spend time in God's presence?

Are there habits or choices you need to separate yourself from in order to do this well?

Which traits has God given you that will help you "stand out" as you answer your missional call?

TRY THIS!

Other than where you are right now, try to find a separate space today where you can be totally alone for a solid five minutes with no interruptions. It may surprise you how easy or difficult this may be.

REPORT BACK:

Where did you end up going?

How was it?

What did you learn about your discipleship journey from this exercise?

By Leta Williams Resolve , The Trailblazers



RE-ENTRY



Welcome to day 12!

When you started on day 1, did you imagine experiencing half of what you have? Meeting so many new people, exploring new foods, living in a different culture, and serving God in this way? This is the beauty of Short-term mission trips; you get the chance to see the world through different lenses.

What comes next will be just as impactful as the last 11 days have been. You will be returning home. Now this may not seem very impactful because it has been the culture you have spent your entire life in but after this trip you will see your home in a new light.

You may see the abundant restaurants, stores, and shops in a different light. You may even have a different reaction to the length of time you spend in the shower. After experiencing locations with little food and little access to necessary supplies it can be a bit overwhelming to be surrounded by them all, and in such abundance. Be gentle with yourself.

Embrace this new way of seeing the world around you. You will learn lessons you never imagined you would. The work that takes place on the mission field joins forces with the work that is happening in the depth of your heart. By God's grace and love, you will walk with a different pace on life's journey. Again, be gentle with yourself.

As you re-enter your community, do ponder on how you can make a difference at the various tables you sit at or are invited to sit at. Who is not at the table?

God had already been where you traveled to. Jesus sent you where He had been. The Holy Spirit is now your companion as you discern next steps. For God works in every country, city, town, and village. How have you seen God at work?

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6

By Minister Nicole Cox, STM Staff



COVER US FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Holy Spirit of the **East**, sweet spirit of air,
Be with you and I in the sun rise.
In the beginning, welcoming and acknowledging these new adventures.

Holy Spirit of the **South**, sweet spirit of fire, Be with you and I at the warm noontime hour.
In the fermenting, seen and unseen strength of the work God has set before us.

Holy Spirit of the **West**, sweet spirit of water, Be with you and I in the crisp sunset colors.
In the joys, the harvest brings us
To pause and quiet our worries of the unknown.

Holy Spirit of the **North**, sweet spirit of earth,
Be with you and I in the heart of frigid temperatures. In the calm of renewing breath
To gather and prepare us for the Divine journey ahead.

Holy Spirit be with us.

Inspired by *Native American Prayer to the Four Directions*

By Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil & Minister Nicole Cox

