

Congratulations on your commitment to responding to the Holy Spirit's call to go. And you have chosen to go into the mission field in a faraway country. A country much different from our own. The people may be poor but their poverty does not extend to the spirit. Because there they are rich. Faith and family is the central part of their existence.

Promise Land Ministry ministers to believers and nonbelievers around Lake Atitlan. Their ministry is one that shines the love that God has for all His people. Our role is to support them in this ministry.

If this is your first trip with LPC or your fifteenth, the committee feels it is critical to prepare spiritually for this important ministry. The following two-week pre-trip devotional is designed to help you prepare spiritually for your time in Guatemala.

Where are we in our spiritual journey?
How much of our "old" nature have we replaced by being born again?
Why do we go on mission trips?

Each day you will be asked to read a devotion from *The Daily Bread* (various authors) or *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. Please take the time to open do each day's devotion. It will only take a few minutes and we feel that God will speak to you and your part in this important ministry. You may find some of the readings challenging. If you do, don't skip over it. Read it again, and pray over it. Ask the Holy Spirit to interpret it for you. The other portion each day's devotion is prayer! Prayer is vital to the success of the trip and your part in it. You are asked to lift specific team members in prayer each day. Once we leave, the entire congregation will be lifting you in prayer according to your specific prayer request.

A Missionary's Prayer (I Will Go and Do)
Father, I hear thy call,
I turn my thoughts to thee, forsaking all;
Recalling promises we all must keep.
I put my hand in thine and go to feed thy sheep.
Lead me to those who seek,
and give me faith and strength to boldly speak.
In humble dignity I will proclaim,
that men may come to know and love thy holy name.
Father, I clearly see that every lasting joy has come from thee.
Help me to serve thee well and thus repay,
Thy loving kindness I receive from day to day.
Knowing that thou art near, and I may seek thy help through daily prayer.
I'll walk in confidence that I will see thy Spirit touch the lives of seeking men through me.
If there be trials, Lord, to help me grow,
If thou wilt guide me I will conquer, this I know!
I will go and do the things which the Lord commandeth,
for I know that He giveth no commands to His children,
except He prepare a way, except He prepare a way.
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Saturday, January 12

Submitting to God's Purpose
By Oswald Chambers

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. —1 Corinthians 9:22

A Christian worker has to learn how to be God's man or woman of great worth and excellence in the midst of a multitude of meager and worthless things. Never protest by saying, "If only I were somewhere else!" All of God's people are ordinary people who have been made extraordinary by the purpose He has given them. Unless we have the right purpose intellectually in our minds and lovingly in our hearts, we will very quickly be diverted from being useful to God. We are not workers for God by choice. Many people deliberately choose to be workers, but they have no purpose of God's almighty grace or His mighty Word in them. Paul's whole heart, mind, and soul were consumed with the great purpose of what Jesus Christ came to do, and he never lost sight of that one thing. We must continually confront ourselves with one central fact— "...Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

"I chose you..." (John 15:16). Keep these words as a wonderful reminder in your theology. It is not that you have gotten God, but that He has gotten you. God is at work bending, breaking, molding, and doing exactly as He chooses. And why is He doing it? He is doing it for only one purpose— that He may be able to say, "This is My man, and this is My woman." We have to be in God's hand so that He can place others on the Rock, Jesus Christ, just as He has placed us.

Never choose to be a worker, but once God has placed His call upon you, woe be to you if you "turn aside...to the right or the left..." (Deuteronomy 28:14). He will do with you what He never did before His call came to you, and He will do with you what He is not doing with other people. Let Him have His way.

Prayer:

Father God you have chosen us to be your people and have given us each a purpose here in Your Kingdom on earth. Let us be open to Your purpose and not a purpose that we desire or seek. As we work out that purpose have us remember, even in the midst of our work for you, to completely focus on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified".

Pray for team members: Raissa Alves & Bill Brown

Think about it:

Think about the purpose(s) God has for you?

Can you name it/them? How did you discover that purpose?

If you don't know God's purpose for you, how can you find it?

Is it truly God's purpose for you, or one you chose?

Sunday, January 13

The Method of Missions
By Oswald Chambers

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... —Matthew 28:19

Jesus Christ did not say, “Go and save souls” (the salvation of souls is the supernatural work of God), but He said, “Go...make disciples of all the nations....” Yet you cannot make disciples unless you are a disciple yourself. When the disciples returned from their first mission, they were filled with joy because even the demons were subject to them. But Jesus said, in effect, “Don’t rejoice in successful service— the great secret of joy is that you have the right relationship with Me” (see Luke 10:17-20). The missionary’s great essential is remaining true to the call of God, and realizing that his one and only purpose is to disciple men and women to Jesus. Remember that there is a passion for souls that does not come from God, but from our desire to make converts to our point of view.

The challenge to the missionary does not come from the fact that people are difficult to bring to salvation, that backsliders are difficult to reclaim, or that there is a barrier of callous indifference. No, the challenge comes from the perspective of the missionary’s own personal relationship with Jesus Christ— “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” (Matthew 9:28). Our Lord unwaveringly asks us that question, and it confronts us in every individual situation we encounter. The one great challenge to us is— do I know my risen Lord? Do I know the power of His indwelling Spirit? Am I wise enough in God’s sight, but foolish enough according to the wisdom of the world, to trust in what Jesus Christ has said? Or am I abandoning the great supernatural position of limitless confidence in Christ Jesus, which is really God’s only call for a missionary? If I follow any other method, I depart altogether from the methods prescribed by our Lord— “All authority has been given to Me....Go therefore...” (Matthew 28:18-19).

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for selecting me to go into the mission field in Guatemala. Have your Holy Spirit guide me along this journey and help me maintain a right relationship with Jesus, strengthen our faith and truly believe that you are in every situation and are with us every step of the way. That no matter what happens your will be done.

Pray for team members: Junio Candeia & Bill Brown

Think about it:

If we aren’t to rejoice in successful service what are we to do?

What is the missionary’s one and only purpose?

Think about the questions Chambers asks: do I know my risen Lord? Do I know the power of His indwelling Spirit? Am I wise enough in God’s sight, but foolish enough according to the wisdom of the world, to trust in what Jesus Christ has said?

Monday, January 14

The Key to the Missionary's Devotion
By Oswald Chambers

...they went forth for His name's sake... —3 John 7

Our Lord told us how our love for Him is to exhibit itself when He asked, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:17). And then He said, "Feed My sheep." In effect, He said, "Identify yourself with My interests in other people," not, "Identify Me with your interests in other people." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 shows us the characteristics of this love— it is actually the love of God expressing itself. The true test of my love for Jesus is a very practical one, and all the rest is sentimental talk.

Faithfulness to Jesus Christ is the supernatural work of redemption that has been performed in me by the Holy Spirit— "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit..." (Romans 5:5). And it is that love in me that effectively works through me and comes in contact with everyone I meet. I remain faithful to His name, even though the commonsense view of my life may seemingly deny that, and may appear to be declaring that He has no more power than the morning mist.

The key to the missionary's devotion is that he is attached to nothing and to no one except our Lord Himself. It does not mean simply being detached from the external things surrounding us. Our Lord was amazingly in touch with the ordinary things of life, but He had an inner detachment except toward God. External detachment is often an actual indication of a secret, growing, inner attachment to the things we stay away from externally.

The duty of a faithful missionary is to concentrate on keeping his soul completely and continually open to the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. The men and women our Lord sends out on His endeavors are ordinary human people, but people who are controlled by their devotion to Him, which has been brought about through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit I ask you to work in my life so I am completely and continually open to Jesus. To be completely devoted to Him. Help prepare my life, and guide me in such a way that when Jesus asks me "Do you love me?" I can answer without hesitation that I do love Him and I am completely faithful to Him.

Pray for team members: Michael Costa & Mark Heuckroth

Think about it:

Jesus asks each of us, "Do you love me?" Do you? Completely? Without any hesitation?
Have you opened every room, closet and drawer in your home/your life to Christ?
What steps can you take to completely and continually be open Jesus?
Does your devotion to Jesus control you or does your "old nature" sometimes creep in?
How can you prevent that from happening?

Tuesday, January 15

What is a Missionary?

By Oswald Chambers

Jesus said to them again, "...As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." —John 20:21

A missionary is someone sent by Jesus Christ just as He was sent by God. The great controlling factor is not the needs of people, but the command of Jesus. The source of our inspiration in our service for God is behind us, not ahead of us. The tendency today is to put the inspiration out in front— to sweep everything together in front of us and make it conform to our definition of success. But in the New Testament the inspiration is put behind us, and is the Lord Jesus Himself. The goal is to be true to Him— to carry out His plans.

Personal attachment to the Lord Jesus and to His perspective is the one thing that must not be overlooked. In missionary work the great danger is that God's call will be replaced by the needs of the people, to the point that human sympathy for those needs will absolutely overwhelm the meaning of being sent by Jesus. The needs are so enormous, and the conditions so difficult, that every power of the mind falters and fails. We tend to forget that the one great reason underneath all missionary work is not primarily the elevation of the people, their education, nor their needs, but is first and foremost the command of Jesus Christ— "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19).

When looking back on the lives of men and women of God, the tendency is to say, "What wonderfully keen and intelligent wisdom they had, and how perfectly they understood all that God wanted!" But the keen and intelligent mind behind them was the mind of God, not human wisdom at all. We give credit to human wisdom when we should give credit to the divine guidance of God being exhibited through child-like people who were "foolish" enough to trust God's wisdom and His supernatural equipment.

Prayer: Holy God it is with joy that your example of being a servant to the needy. The needs are enormous and the conditions are difficult but let us remember that our reason for going is because you are a sending God and we are commanded to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."

Pray for team members: Beth & Doug Jenkins

Think about it:

Are you completely prepared to do God's will for you on this mission trip? Or have you formulated your own plans and your own definition of a successful trip?

What is the one great reason for mission work?

What might we learn from those we will serve?

Wednesday, January 16

The Key to the Missionary's Message

By Oswald Chambers

He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. —1 John 2:2

The key to the missionary's message is the propitiation of Christ Jesus— His sacrifice for us that completely satisfied the wrath of God. Look at any other aspect of Christ's work, whether it is healing, saving, or sanctifying, and you will see that there is nothing limitless about those. But— "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"— that is limitless (John 1:29). The missionary's message is the limitless importance of Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins, and a missionary is someone who is immersed in the truth of that revelation.

The real key to the missionary's message is the "remissionary" aspect of Christ's life, not His kindness, His goodness, or even His revealing of the fatherhood of God to us. "...repentance and remission of sins should be preached...to all nations..." (Luke 24:47). The greatest message of limitless importance is that "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins..." The missionary's message is not nationalistic, favoring nations or individuals; it is "for the whole world." When the Holy Spirit comes into me, He does not consider my partialities or preferences; He simply brings me into oneness with the Lord Jesus.

A missionary is someone who is bound by marriage to the stated mission and purpose of his Lord and Master. He is not to proclaim his own point of view, but is only to proclaim "the Lamb of God." It is easier to belong to a faction that simply tells what Jesus Christ has done for me, and easier to become a devotee of divine healing, or of a special type of sanctification, or of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But Paul did not say, "Woe is me if I do not preach what Christ has done for me," but, "...woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). And this is the gospel— "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Prayer: Dear Lord as your missionaries have us maintain our focus on Jesus Christ. Help us to work alongside PLM as they focus on preaching the clear and beautiful message of forgiveness of sin through Christ Jesus. Let us tell all that Jesus Christ is "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Pray for team members: Chet Marshall & LaMont Noble

Think about it:

What is the key to the missionary's message?

Are you prepared to give your testimony if the occasion arises?

Are you willing to take time from your task to connect with someone?

Thursday, January 17

The Key to the Missionary's Work
By Oswald Chambers

Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." —Matthew 28:18-19

The key to the missionary's work is the authority of Jesus Christ, not the needs of the lost. We are inclined to look on our Lord as one who assists us in our endeavors for God. Yet our Lord places Himself as the absolute sovereign and supreme Lord over His disciples. He does not say that the lost will never be saved if we don't go— He simply says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...." He says, "Go on the basis of the revealed truth of My sovereignty, teaching and preaching out of your living experience of Me."

"Then the eleven disciples went...to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them" (Matthew 28:16). If I want to know the universal sovereignty of Christ, I must know Him myself. I must take time to worship the One whose name I bear. Jesus says, "Come to Me..."— that is the place to meet Jesus— "all you who labor and are heavy laden..." (Matthew 11:28)— and how many missionaries are! We completely dismiss these wonderful words of the universal Sovereign of the world, but they are the words of Jesus to His disciples meant for here and now.

"Go therefore...." To "go" simply means to live. Acts 1:8 is the description of how to go. Jesus did not say in this verse, "Go into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria," but, "...you shall be witnesses to Me in [all these places]." He takes upon Himself the work of sending us.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you..." (John 15:7)— that is the way to keep going. Where we are placed is then a matter of indifference to us, because God sovereignly engineers our goings.

"None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus..." (Acts 20:24). That is how to keep going until we are gone from this life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to be the best emissary for you that I can possibly be. I ask that your Holy Spirit be strong in my life and that your spirit direct my actions and words. I want to be completely yours during this trip and afterwards.

Pray for team members: Cathy Reese & Mark Reese

Think about it:

Why are you going on this mission trip?

What will you do if you become tired, frustrated by something. or discouraged?

How will you keep going?

Friday, January 18

Missionary Weapons (1)

By Oswald Chambers

When you were under the fig tree, I saw you. —John 1:48

Worshiping in Everyday Occasions. We presume that we would be ready for battle if confronted with a great crisis, but it is not the crisis that builds something within us— it simply reveals what we are made of already. Do you find yourself saying, “If God calls me to battle, of course I will rise to the occasion”? Yet you won’t rise to the occasion unless you have done so on God’s training ground. If you are not doing the task that is closest to you now, which God has engineered into your life, when the crisis comes, instead of being fit for battle, you will be revealed as being unfit. Crises always reveal a person’s true character.

A private relationship of worshiping God is the greatest essential element of spiritual fitness. The time will come, as Nathanael experienced in this passage, that a private “fig-tree” life will no longer be possible. Everything will be out in the open, and you will find yourself to be of no value there if you have not been worshiping in everyday occasions in your own home. If your worship is right in your private relationship with God, then when He sets you free, you will be ready. It is in the unseen life, which only God saw, that you have become perfectly fit. And when the strain of the crisis comes, you can be relied upon by God.

Are you saying, “But I can’t be expected to live a sanctified life in my present circumstances; I have no time for prayer or Bible study right now; besides, my opportunity for battle hasn’t come yet, but when it does, of course I will be ready”? No, you will not. If you have not been worshiping in everyday occasions, when you get involved in God’s work, you will not only be useless yourself but also a hindrance to those around you.

God’s training ground, where the missionary weapons are found, is the hidden, personal, worshiping life of the saint.

Prayer: Holy Spirit put on my heart to worship in everyday experiences. To build my personal relationship with the Almighty. Prepare me to be ready to face the challenges that will be placed before me, on this mission trip and after it.

Pray for team members: Mila & Vic Rivera

Think about it:

Did you worship yesterday? How?

Have you worshiped today? How?

Are you ready for the spiritual and physical challenges of this trip?

Saturday, January 19

Missionary Weapons (2)

By Oswald Chambers

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. —
John 13:14

Ministering in Everyday Opportunities. Ministering in everyday opportunities that surround us does not mean that we select our own surroundings— it means being God's very special choice to be available for use in any of the seemingly random surroundings which He has engineered for us. The very character we exhibit in our present surroundings is an indication of what we will be like in other surroundings.

The things Jesus did were the most menial of everyday tasks, and this is an indication that it takes all of God's power in me to accomplish even the most common tasks in His way. Can I use a towel as He did? Towels, dishes, sandals, and all the other ordinary things in our lives reveal what we are made of more quickly than anything else. It takes God Almighty Incarnate in us to do the most menial duty as it ought to be done.

Jesus said, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Notice the kind of people that God brings around you, and you will be humiliated once you realize that this is actually His way of revealing to you the kind of person you have been to Him. Now He says we should exhibit to those around us exactly what He has exhibited to us.

Do you find yourself responding by saying, "Oh, I will do all that once I'm out on the mission field"? Talking in this way is like trying to produce the weapons of war while in the trenches of the battlefield— you will be killed while trying to do it.

We have to go the "second mile" with God (see Matthew 5:41). Yet some of us become worn out in the first ten steps. Then we say, "Well, I'll just wait until I get closer to the next big crisis in my life." But if we do not steadily minister in everyday opportunities, we will do nothing when the crisis comes.

Prayer: Heavenly Father prepare me to face my everyday opportunities as your ambassador. Have me face the menial tasks in the same way Jesus did. Give me the heart of Jesus so I can minister to others as Jesus did.

Pray for team members: Ademar Rosa & Barbara Sauers

Think about it:

What did Jesus do for you that you should do for others? Do you do it?

If not, how can you start?

What do you think he means when he says, "We have to go the "second mile" with God?

Do you minister to people you meet? How will you do this in Guatemala?

Sunday, January 20

The Missionary's Goal
By Oswald Chambers

He...said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem..." —Luke 18:31

In our natural life our ambitions change as we grow, but in the Christian life the goal is given at the very beginning, and the beginning and the end are exactly the same, namely, our Lord Himself. We start with Christ and we end with Him— "...till we all come...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:13), not simply to our own idea of what the Christian life should be. The goal of the missionary is to do God's will, not to be useful or to win the lost. A missionary is useful and he does win the lost, but that is not his goal. His goal is to do the will of his Lord.

In our Lord's life, Jerusalem was the place where He reached the culmination of His Father's will upon the cross, and unless we go there with Jesus we will have no friendship or fellowship with Him. Nothing ever diverted our Lord on His way to Jerusalem. He never hurried through certain villages where He was persecuted, or lingered in others where He was blessed. Neither gratitude nor ingratitude turned our Lord even the slightest degree away from His purpose to go "up to Jerusalem."

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (Matthew 10:24). In other words, the same things that happened to our Lord will happen to us on our way to our "Jerusalem." There will be works of God exhibited through us, people will get blessed, and one or two will show gratitude while the rest will show total ingratitude, but nothing must divert us from going "up to [our] Jerusalem."

"...there they crucified Him..." (Luke 23:33). That is what happened when our Lord reached Jerusalem, and that event is the doorway to our salvation. The saints, however, do not end in crucifixion; by the Lord's grace they end in glory. In the meantime, our watchword should be summed up by each of us saying, "I too go 'up to Jerusalem.'"

Prayer: Father God prepare me to do your will in everyday life and in the mission field or wherever you place me. Have me treat all people with the love that you have shown to me. If our good intentions are met with resistance, have us love that much more. Have us not rush from any opposition Satan places in our way, but linger there and fulfill your purpose for us in that situation.

Pray for team members: Dave Schaebler & Pastor Bill Teague

Think about it:

What are you doing to reach the goal of a Christian life?

Do you daily do the will of God?

How will you do God's will on this trip?

Are you at the point where you are going up to Jerusalem?

Monday, January 21

The Key of the Greater Work
By Oswald Chambers

...I say to you, he who believes in Me,...greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. —
John 14:12

Prayer does not equip us for greater works— prayer is the greater work. Yet we think of prayer as some commonsense exercise of our higher powers that simply prepares us for God’s work. In the teachings of Jesus Christ, prayer is the working of the miracle of redemption in me, which produces the miracle of redemption in others, through the power of God. The way fruit remains firm is through prayer, but remember that it is prayer based on the agony of Christ in redemption, not on my own agony. We must go to God as His child, because only a child gets his prayers answered; a “wise” man does not (see Matthew 11:25).

Prayer is the battle, and it makes no difference where you are. However, God may engineer your circumstances, your duty is to pray. Never allow yourself this thought, “I am of no use where I am,” because you certainly cannot be used where you have not yet been placed. Wherever God has placed you and whatever your circumstances, you should pray, continually offering up prayers to Him. And He promises, “Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do...” (John 14:13). Yet we refuse to pray unless it thrills or excites us, which is the most intense form of spiritual selfishness. We must learn to work according to God’s direction, and He says to pray. “Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:38).

There is nothing thrilling about a laboring person’s work, but it is the laboring person who makes the ideas of the genius possible. And it is the laboring saint who makes the ideas of his Master possible. When you labor at prayer, from God’s perspective there are always results. What an astonishment it will be to see, once the veil is finally lifted, all the souls that have been reaped by you, simply because you have been in the habit of taking your orders from Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Almighty God have your Holy Spirit strengthen my prayer life so that it becomes an integral part of who I am. Have me come to you as a child, open and honest. Remind me to have a time of silence during my prayer so I can hear from you. As I pray over scripture have the Holy Spirit interpret your word for me so I can clearly understand its meaning for my life.

Pray for: Promise Land Ministries and Mission Director Jorge Santizo as he organizes all the many details needed for a successful trip. Also pray for Roberto & Ita Santizo and their ministry.

Think about it:

What does Jesus mean in John 4:12?

Think about your prayer life. What does it include? What should it include?

What should you include in your prayer to prepare for this trip?

Do you labor in prayer? What does that look like?

Tuesday, January 21

Do You Worship the Work?

By Oswald Chambers

We are God's fellow workers... 1 Corinthians 3:9

Beware of any work for God that causes or allows you to avoid concentrating on Him. A great number of Christian workers worship their work. The only concern of Christian workers should be their concentration on God. This will mean that all the other boundaries of life, whether they are mental, moral, or spiritual limits, are completely free with the freedom God gives His child; that is, a worshiping child, not a wayward one. A worker who lacks this serious controlling emphasis of concentration on God is apt to become overly burdened by his work. He is a slave to his own limits, having no freedom of his body, mind, or spirit. Consequently, he becomes burned out and defeated. There is no freedom and no delight in life at all. His nerves, mind, and heart are so overwhelmed that God's blessing cannot rest on him.

But the opposite case is equally true—once our concentration is on God, all the limits of our life are free and under the control and mastery of God alone. There is no longer any responsibility on you for the work. The only responsibility you have is to stay in living constant touch with God, and to see that you allow nothing to hinder your cooperation with Him. The freedom that comes after sanctification is the freedom of a child, and the things that used to hold your life down are gone. But be careful to remember that you have been freed for only one thing—to be absolutely devoted to your co-Worker.

We have no right to decide where we should be placed, or to have preconceived ideas as to what God is preparing us to do. God engineers everything; and wherever He places us, our one supreme goal should be to pour out our lives in wholehearted devotion to Him in that particular work. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might..." (Ecclesiastes 9:10). From *My Utmost for His Highest* Updated Edition

Prayer: Heavenly Father as I prepare for the work you have given me to do have me totally focus on you and your will for my life. Have nothing interfere with my spiritual preparation for this mission trip. Grant me the mindset that your will be done, not mine. Allow me the flexibility to do the work you place before me, especially if it is different from what I expect to do.

Pray for: Every soul that God will put in our path while in Guatemala. Every patient to be seen by the doctors, every child that will be shown the love of God and the families who will have new homes to live in.

Think about it:

What does it mean that, "We are God's fellow workers?"

What does it mean to concentrate on God?

How can you prevent the work from becoming more important than the mission?

Do you have preconceived ideas as to what God is preparing you to do?

How willing are you to change your ideas if God engineers something different for you?

Wednesday, January 22

The Faith to Persevere
By Oswald Chambers

Because you have kept My command to persevere... Revelation 3:10

Perseverance means more than endurance— more than simply holding on until the end. A saint's life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, but our Lord continues to stretch and strain, and every once in a while the saint says, "I can't take any more." Yet God pays no attention; He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, and then He lets the arrow fly. Entrust yourself to God's hands. Is there something in your life for which you need perseverance right now? Maintain your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the perseverance of faith. Proclaim as Job did, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

Faith is not some weak and pitiful emotion, but is strong and vigorous confidence built on the fact that God is holy love. And even though you cannot see Him right now and cannot understand what He is doing, you know Him. Disaster occurs in your life when you lack the mental composure that comes from establishing yourself on the eternal truth that God is holy love. Faith is the supreme effort of your life— throwing yourself with abandon and total confidence upon God.

God ventured His all in Jesus Christ to save us, and now He wants us to venture our all with total abandoned confidence in Him. There are areas in our lives where that faith has not worked in us as yet— places still untouched by the life of God. There were none of those places in Jesus Christ's life, and there are to be none in ours. Jesus prayed, "This is eternal life, that they may know You..." (John 17:3). The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we will take this view, life will become one great romance— a glorious opportunity of seeing wonderful things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power.

Prayer: God grant me the willingness to be stretched and go outside of my comfort zone. Holy Spirit help me to completely trust God.

Pray for: Team unity and that each member would represent our Lord in the best way possible. That each of our lights would truly shine. That our actions, words and deeds would leave no question of who we represent.

Think about it:

Are you truly willing to let God stretch you until His purpose is in sight?
How might God be stretching you preparing for this trip? While on the trip?
Is there something in your life for which you need perseverance right now?
How should you approach it?
What places in your life are still untouched by God? (Be honest with yourself.)

Thursday, January 23

Some thoughts on Mission by Bill Graham

Q: Some of the youth in our church are going on a missions project. They are going to help a small church in Central America with a construction project, but to be honest, what good can they do? I haven't said anything, but I'm not sure if projects like this are worth the effort.

A: Any project like this needs to be carefully planned, but I strongly support such efforts. I hope you'll openly encourage those who are going, and that you'll be praying both for them and the people they'll be with.

They will be an encouragement to the people in that church. They probably have very limited resources, and even a small amount of help can accomplish much. They also may feel isolated, and need to know that they are not alone. In addition, meeting people from another part of the world who take their faith seriously will be a good example to them. But I predict that this project mainly will have a great impact on your young people (and your whole church). Many of them have never seen the hardships and poverty that millions face every day, and witnessing it firsthand could be a life-changing experience for them. Remember: Christ gave His life for "persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Pray that this experience will deepen the commitment of these young people to Christ, and that God will put within them a strong desire to seek His will for their lives.

Q: Do we still need evangelists and missionaries? I respect what you were able to do, but the world has changed because of technology, and I'm not sure if evangelists and missionaries are needed now.

A: We do live in remarkable times; today almost no corner of the world is unreachable because of technology. I often think of Jesus' words: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

Every week, for example, our organization hears from people all over the world who are coming to Christ through our internet ministry. Many live in places that are not open to missionaries or evangelists, or that have very few Christians. Almost everywhere someone can open their smartphone and read the Bible or hear a Gospel message—something unheard of only a generation ago. Yes, we live in a remarkable age, and we should make use of every new technology God gives us. Jesus' command is still in force: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

But the need for evangelists and missionaries is just as great as it ever was—if not greater! Technology is limited, and there is no substitute for personal contact. People who are open to the Gospel often have questions that only an evangelist or missionary can answer. New believers also need someone to help them understand what it means to follow Christ.

Pray that God will raise up a new generation of evangelists and missionaries. Pray too that God will make you a witness for Christ right where you are. Jesus' words are still true: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37).

Prayer: Lord Jesus have me experience spiritual growth on this trip. To see mission as you would have me see it. To learn from others on the trip and to come back to LPC and my neighborhood and share the importance of mission in the life of a Christian.

Pray for: The team's safety and health. That our journey will be smooth and without delay or interruption. That the team will be blessed with good health.

Think about it: Did any of the devotions really challenge you? If so, why not take a few minutes and re-read them.

Friday, January 24

Is There Value to Short Term Missions

By: S. Rouse

I understand that short-term missions –if not done correctly or are not closely tied to the long-term goals –can do more harm than good. But, I also believe that they can be a tool that helps fuel the fire of missions around the world! I have seen and experienced how God can use short-term missions as an on-ramp to a life of leading others in a growing relationship with Jesus while loving and serving them well.

Who God is calling today who will only encounter His purpose for their life through the experience of going on a short-term missions trip?

Faith Produces Works

. . . *doing service as to the Lord* . . . —Ephesians 6:7

A true sacrament is not a mere creed, or ordinance, or form, but it is a life of service to God and to man. The most eloquent prayer is the prayer through hands that heal and bless. The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.

There must be a practical outworking of our faith here in this present world, or it will never endure the world to come. The Pharisees majored on show but minored on service. We need fewer words and more charitable works; less palaver and more pity; less repetition of creed and more compassion.

Is your faith life producing fruit? Prayer for the day

Talk so often drowns out the cries for help—I am guilty of this, Lord. I would worship You in everything I do. Extend my hands with Your mercy, Lord.

The Hands of Jesus

. . . *I was hungry, [and] you gave me food* . . . —Matthew 25:35 (NEB)

During the war a church in Strasburg, Germany, was totally destroyed; but a statue of Christ which stood by the altar was almost unharmed. Only the hands of the statue were missing. When the church was rebuilt, a famous sculptor offered to make new hands; but, after considering the matter, the members decided to let it stand as it was—without hands. “For,” they said, “Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work on earth. If we don’t feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, entertain the stranger, visit the imprisoned, and clothe the naked, who will?” Christ is depending on us to do the very things which He did while upon earth. My friend, if the gospel we preach does not have a social application, if it will not work effectively in the work-a-day world, then it is not the Gospel of Christ.

Prayer: I look at my hands, Lord Jesus, and ask You to use them every day. Make me conscious of the needs of those who hurt.

Pray for: Those we leave at home. That our loved ones would be comforted knowing that we are doing God’s will and he will be our constant guide and companion.

Think about it: Did some of the “Think about it” questions really challenge you? Were there some you didn’t know how to answer? Why not go back over them once more?

Extra if needed

The Habit of Rising to the Occasion

By Oswald Chambers

...that you may know what is the hope of His calling... Ephesians 1:18

Remember that you have been saved so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in your body (see 2 Corinthians 4:10). Direct the total energy of your powers so that you may achieve everything your election as a child of God provides; rise every time to whatever occasion may come your way.

You did not do anything to achieve your salvation, but you must do something to exhibit it. You must “work out your own salvation” which God has worked in you already (Philippians 2:12). Are your speech, your thinking, and your emotions evidence that you are working it “out”? If you are still the same miserable, grouchy person, set on having your own way, then it is a lie to say that God has saved and sanctified you.

God is the Master Designer, and He allows adversities into your life to see if you can jump over them properly— “By my God I can leap over a wall” (Psalm 18:29). God will never shield you from the requirements of being His son or daughter. First Peter 4:12 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you....” Rise to the occasion— do what the trial demands of you. It does not matter how much it hurts as long as it gives God the opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus in your body.

May God not find complaints in us anymore, but spiritual vitality— a readiness to face anything He brings our way. The only proper goal of life is that we manifest the Son of God; and when this occurs, all of our dictating of our demands to God disappears. Our Lord never dictated demands to His Father, and neither are we to make demands on God. We are here to submit to His will so that He may work through us what He wants. Once we realize this, He will make us broken bread and poured-out wine with which to feed and nourish others.

From My Utmost for His Highest Updated Edition