

# ON THE JOURNEY

## Field Teams Devotion

# BEFORE THE FIELD: LAST-SECOND THOUGHTS

*"By faith Abraham, when called...obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).*

*"I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).*

### Let the Trip Begin

You've left home; you're on the way. Thank you for your sacrifice of time and treasure. Thank you for loving the people you're about to serve, even though you've likely not yet met them. And thank you for loving God enough to join Him on His mission. Only God could write the stories that led to the team He's put together for this Field Teams journey. He's writing a beautiful story now, and you're in it.

How do you feel? What concerns you? What excites you? What do you wonder? What do you anticipate? Do you feel ready?

Take a few moments to write some answers to these questions below:

### The Practical

On the journey towards the field, here are some important last second reminders:

- Listen to your leader.
- If on an international trip:
  - Don't lose your passport. Please.
  - Only drink purified water.
  - You'll get off the plane and then go to the immigration line where you'll get your passport stamped. Your leader has the necessary information.
  - After immigration, you'll get your luggage, then go through customs and exit the airport where Convoy of Hope Field Teams staff will meet you and the team.
- While much planning has gone into this experience, please be prepared to "ride the slide!" Flexible things can break. It's time to be more than flexible; the field requires a team that's fluid with plans and expectations.
- Be sure to connect with people and culture, not just tasks.
- You've started an awesome journey.

### The Emotional

You love the idea of helping people and caring about those in need. Thank you. However, leaving home to serve in an unfamiliar place presents some challenges. In the midst of this journey, you're normal if:

- You feel some anxiety.
- You feel somewhat out of your comfort zone.
- You've thought to yourself, "What have I gotten myself into?"
- You're anticipating an incredible time on the field.
- You've been praying for this day for a long time.

How would you describe your emotions right now?

### The Spiritual

We're not the first to take steps of faith, but we're the first to take this specific step of faith. I'm grateful for encouraging stories in Scripture that guide the way.

As Abraham stepped out in faith, he had some of the same questions you may have. Questions are okay. God blessed Abraham's obedience, and He'll bless yours.

God knew Joshua needed courage, so He repeatedly told him He would **never** leave him nor forsake him. He won't leave you either, and promises a holy "withness." Whatever is ahead, God is there.

### Almost there

You're almost there. Through this experience may you boldly join God's mission of revealing Himself to people through compassion as He reconciles them to Himself. May you love magnificently, serve with passion and sweat, embrace a new culture, connect with people created in His image, bond with your teammates, learn, grow, soak, and smile. Along the way, may you give Him space to work not only through you, but in you as He continues to write the story of your life.

## Field Teams Devotion

# DAY 1: SPENDING OURSELVES

*“And if you spend yourself in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness and your darkness will become like the noonday” (Isaiah 58:10).*

### Why We Do This

In a coffee shop doing devotions before my official interview at Convoy of Hope, I read Isaiah 58 as part of my Bible reading plan. Though I'd seen the chapter before, each word leapt from the page and I heard God's voice confirming the opportunity to serve with this organization.

Filled with conviction and encouragement, Isaiah challenges people to join God's mission and live a life full of compassion. Read Isaiah 58. What truths do you find the most challenging or encouraging?

As you begin to show compassion in a place of extreme need, what emotions fill your heart and mind?

### Living the Fast

While reading Isaiah's insights regarding the true fasting God intends, consider the following, among other truths:

- **God wants our hearts to impact our actions.** Verse 2 *“...they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.”* Beyond eagerness, He commands action.
- **God loves unity.** Verse 4, *“Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife...”* As hearts come in line with His, His followers will live in unity rather than strife.
- **True fasting attacks injustice.** Verse 6, *“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...to set the oppressed free...”* Fighting human trafficking, extreme hunger and malnutrition, the oppression of women, slave labor, preventable disease and spiritual darkness comes from the heart of God.
- **All are created in God's image.** Verse 7, *“Is it not to share your food with the hungry...and not to turn*

*away from your own flesh and blood?”* While all people are unique, all people are created in God’s image. As part of God’s family, His followers must work to help others in practical ways.

- **Showing compassion leads to influence.** Verse 8, *“Then your light will break forth like the dawn...”* As you help others, often they’ll listen more intently, leading to greater influence and opportunity.
- **Showing compassion helps the healing process.** Verse 8, *“...and your healing will quickly appear.”* After Sophia’s\* husband was killed in an act of gang violence in her country of El Salvador, she told me her healing started as she served at the Convoy of Hope outreach.
- **As you show compassion, God has your back.** Verse 8, *“...and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.”* If He’s got your back, that means He has a plan for you to move forward! He’ll take care of you along the way.
- **Showing compassion changes us.** Verse 10, *“...then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkness will become like the noonday.”* Deep things can happen in your heart as you serve on His compassionate mission.
- **God guides and provides for the compassionate.** Verse 11, *“The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs...you’ll be like a well-watered garden.”* When I’m searching for guidance from God, I ask myself if I’m living with the right heart and actions, knowing He guides those who stay connected with Him.
- **The compassionate find joy.** Verse 14, *“Then you will find your joy in the Lord...”* Showing compassion doesn’t always lead to happiness, but it leads to a deeply-rooted joy.

### Spending ourselves this week

As you spend yourself on behalf of the physically and spiritually hungry this week, God’s at work in and through you.

What other truths challenge or encourage you from this chapter?

May you and the team serve with eager hearts and sincere actions, seeking to please Him while joining this part of His mission.

# DAY 2: HOPE CHANGES EVERYTHING

*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19).*

In the 1950s, a scientist performed a somewhat sadistic experiment. He dropped a rat into a pool of water with no escape options. The rat swam for about 15 minutes, then gave up and drowned. After seeing the same results in multiple experiments, the scientist tweaked the next round by pulling a weary and fearful rat out of the water just before that key 15-minute mark. That rat then ate a good meal and got some rest. Later, the scientist dropped the rested and experienced rat into the water again. After 15 minutes, the rat continued to swim. In fact, the rat swam not just one or two hours; it swam 60 hours! The rat kept swimming 240 times longer than the others with an enduring hope that help would come! What was true for that creepy rodent is true for people all over the world; hope changes everything!

### Hope Changes Everything

People all over the world respond when hope enters their lives. Job interviews, winning streaks from favorite teams and unexpected opportunities lead to smiles and a hope that changes everything.

When hungry parents find healthy food for their children, farmers learn techniques that can greatly increase crop yields, or women with few opportunities learn trades that can provide income for the future, hope changes everything.

When in your life have you experienced a hope that changed you?

### Hope Can Lead to Disappointment

Much of the time, interviewees don't get the job, lottery tickets lead to more debt and the team doesn't win the big one. Hope can disappoint.

People around the world misdirect hope towards false promises or man-made religion. Hindus and Buddhists offer sacrifices to their gods with hopes of a better afterlife, Muslims pray towards Mecca hoping to enter paradise, and voodoo priests create potions with animal parts to heal sickly children. Some people even think money will solve all of life's problems. These hopes will ultimately lead to devastating disappointment.

Describe a time when your hopes led to disappointment.

## Hope in Jesus

As you and your Field Team join God's mission to share hope for today with people in need, the hope includes the potential for a better life on earth with nutritious food, the opportunity to learn, life skills and more. As you work hard with love and strategy, the hopes people have can lead to the reality of a healthier and stronger life.

Beyond a healthier and stronger physical life, you're sharing hope for today and the future found in Jesus. With Jesus, people can discover freedom, joy, courage, strength, and the ability to endure suffering. His love stretches beyond our imagination, redeeming people from the most difficult of circumstances. Hope in Him can anchor the soul.

How has Jesus given you hope?

## **Conclusion**

The hope you share isn't false; it's real. This hope isn't temporary; it's eternal. This hope includes hands of love from Jesus that reach into the world to rescue when nothing else can. You can serve confidently knowing that the hope you share this week, the hope that changes everything, is hope found in Jesus, the hope of the world.

## Field Teams Devotion

### DAY 3: CREATED IN HIS IMAGE: FROM PITY TO OFFENSE

*“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).*

Every person you’ll encounter throughout the Field Teams journey is created in the image of God. This understanding affects how you’ll treat other people, and how you’ll view lostness and poverty.

#### The Image of God

Men and women are created in His image to:

- Create
- Relate with God
- Work
- Flourish

Unfortunately, in communities around the world and in this place you’re serving, many don’t understand He creates them with such opportunities. As you look out the vehicle window, interact with local people, meet leaders and those in need on the field, and explore this place of service, what are some emotions you’re experiencing?

#### Pity

Online or on TV, celebrities stand among the extremely poor in developing world countries, sharing tragic stories. They hold sickly children and, with good intentions, ask for action. Now, *you’re* in a place where the poor live. You hold them, laugh with them, work alongside them and perhaps cry with them.

What emotions do you feel as you watch commercials or read such articles, or now, as you spend time with these beautiful people?

#### Offense

I always felt a measure of sadness or even pity. Knowing I never want to be pitied, I’m guessing they don’t want to be pitied either. I wonder if there’s a better emotion. As I better understand God’s love for people and the truth that those children are created in His image with an opportunity to have relationship with Him, I feel offended on His behalf. Offended...on God’s behalf? Yes.

He made them in His image, yet too many live in tragic conditions with little access to food, water or health care, and often with little access to truth. I feel a measure of sadness for them, but I'm offended on His behalf at humanity's disregard of His creation.

Do you believe you should feel offended on God's behalf? If so, why?

What is a good response to this feeling of offense?

### Motivation

If someone came to my family's home for dinner and threw my wife's home cooked meal on the floor, saying it's the worst meal he or she has tasted, I'd be understandably upset. I'd feel pity at the lack of appreciation for the food and its culinary potential. I'd also be offended on behalf of my wife, seeing that her creation could be treated with such disregard!

This absurd example can illustrate potential dual motivations for this trip. While serving through this Field Teams experience, you'll share hope with some beautiful people, many who live in extremely difficult circumstances. May love for hurting people and an understanding of their potential motivate all to serve with passion and to pray with vision. Additionally, may love and respect for God the Creator cause offense to rise up, leading to a lifetime of continuing action.

May you serve out of love for them and Him.

## DAY 4: THOMAS: MORE THAN A DOUBTER

*“Thomas said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28).*

People know the disciple Thomas as the man in the Bible who doubted. Did he ask some skeptical questions and even doubt? Sure. Despite his doubt, Thomas lived with other important characteristics that led to great influence.

Read John 20:19-29. Why were the disciples gathered? Was Thomas with them? When Jesus did appear to Thomas, how much later was it?

### *Beyond his doubts: Thomas the courageous*

Before his conversation with Thomas, Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples, who were holed up in a home while full of fear. Verse 19, *“...when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came...”* Who wasn't locked in that room with the disciples out of fear? Thomas.

Thomas lived courageously. In fact, in John 11, in the story of Lazarus, John shares how Jesus faced danger and possible death. Thomas responded in verse 16, *“Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”*

Courage isn't necessarily the lack of fear, but it's moving forward with faith regardless of fear. Thomas lived courageously.

Has this Field Team experience required courage from you? How?

### *Beyond his doubts: Thomas the patient*

After Thomas heard the disciples' account of the resurrection, he said in John 20:25, *“Unless I see the nail marks...I will not believe.”* Jesus then appeared to Thomas—a week later.

While a week may be a short time if that's how long you have until taxes are due, for Thomas I believe it may have seemed much longer. Though Thomas served close to Jesus as one of the 12 disciples, Jesus took a week to reconnect with him. A week!

John doesn't record stories of Thomas frantically searching for Jesus, but instead explains how he stayed connected with the disciples to wait for Jesus. Thomas lived patiently.

On your Field Teams journey, you've served in a cross-cultural environment in close quarters with your team. Has this Field Team experience required patience from you? If so, how?

### *Beyond his doubts: Thomas the missionary*

Scripture doesn't record much more from the life of Thomas. However, most church historians believe that Thomas later went on a mission towards the east, reaching present-day India. Some even believe that Thomas traveled to the very south of the subcontinent to the city now known as Chennai. He needed to tell people about the resurrected Messiah!

If this is true, then Thomas took the Gospel farther than any known person mentioned in the Bible! Yet, he's known simply as a doubter.

How could one get so far on land and sea without the modern transportation or communication tools available today? Perhaps his courage in the midst of the unknown, patience in the midst of an extremely long journey, and the mindset to ask skeptical questions from the people he met along the way helped his mission.

On this Field Teams journey, may you serve with great courage and a supernatural patience that helps you fulfill this mission!

\* Her name has been changed.

## Field Teams Devotion

# DAY 5: GROWING THROUGH THE LAB AND MIRROR

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts" (Psalm 139:23).

Spending intense time with others in close community while seeking and serving God in a cross-cultural environment often causes some beautifully important changes to take place. Growth comes through the lab and mirror.

### The Mirror

Among my wife's many talents, she's a professional makeup artist. She's even done makeup for Johnny Cash! Her spa makeup table includes a mirror surrounded by lights, magnifying every pore and blemish. I learn things and cringe every time I look at it.

The mirror:

- Shows a close-up view not often seen.
- Can magnify blemishes (or the best features).
- Creates awareness in the midst of insecurities.

This Field Teams experience can be a mirror that magnifies insecurities, highlights emotional and relational limits, and helps illuminate strengths and weaknesses with more clarity.

Questions:

What are you learning about yourself through this experience?

What's the most challenging aspect of this trip for you?

Have you been pushed to any limits? How?

What aspect of this trip brings the most life and excitement?

### The Lab

Dr. Flores, my high school chemistry teacher, would often walk around with a bottle of water so he could squirt anyone sleeping. We paid attention.

While working in his class, which doubled as a laboratory, he'd often require us to wear safety glasses, white jackets, and gloves. The Bunsen burners and chemicals brought risk, but the safety tools allowed for experimentation.

In the lab:

- Adrenaline
- New Discoveries
- Wonder
- Real life experiments
- Sometimes things worked, sometimes they didn't
- Some Risk
- Safety measures

The Field Teams experience, though challenging on multiple fronts, can serve as a safe place to allow God to create new things as He works through new discoveries, emotions and our wonder.

Questions:

How is God working in you?

How is God using you to help provide a safe place for other members of the team to grow?

## Conclusion

This Field Teams experience provides opportunities for both greater personal clarity and opportunities for growth. My prayer is all will look in the mirror, and learn new things about personality, God, the world, and interaction with others. Discovering new truths may at times be thrilling, but at other times perhaps frustrating or even hurtful. I pray that in the midst of this learning process, the team and time with Jesus will provide a wonderful laboratory where you can grow as a person in a very safe place. Hopefully along the way, no one will get squirted with Dr. Flores's water bottle.

## Field Teams Devotion

### DAY 6: FINISHING STRONG

*“So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then” (Joshua 14:10b-11).*

Millennia ago, a missions team of 12 went out under Moses’ command to explore the land God promised. The details of their mission differ from ours, but the challenges those men experienced somewhat resemble challenges today. Most of the men struggled as the mission concluded, but two finished strong. How can you live among those who finish strong on this Field Teams journey, and more importantly in life?

#### Some background

In Numbers 13, Moses chose 12 men, one from each tribe, to explore the Promised Land. After 40 days of exploration, the men returned to give their reports. Of the 12 sent, 10 spoke of giants, fortified cities and their fear. Only Joshua and Caleb shared a courageous and encouraging report of a flourishing land in the midst of difficulty.

Unfortunately, the crowds listened to the fearful and decided not to enter the land God promised. As a result, the children of Israel wandered for another 40 years in the wilderness before entering the land. Only Joshua and Caleb saw the Promised Land again. As Joshua 14 records, a grizzled Caleb speaks with courage as he continues toward the promise of God.

Read Numbers 13. What are some of the situations that raised concerns for the fearful team members?

#### The Team

The end of the field portion of the Field Teams experience is closer than the beginning. Perhaps fatigue, glimpses of culture shock, sickness, frustration, overwhelming questions, or deep sadness are marking your journey or that of your fellow team members. Hopefully smiles, hugs, joy, hope, opportunity, new perspectives, memories, bonding, learning, big questions, space for God’s work, compassion and passion for God’s mission and the people He loves stand out throughout this experience.

What are some of the words you would use to describe the field portion of the journey so far?

What's the best part of the experience for you so far?

What's the most difficult thing you've experienced so far?

### *Finishing Strong*

Joshua and Caleb saw the same challenges as the other team members, but they followed God wholeheartedly, giving them the physical, emotional and spiritual strength they needed to finish strong. Their mission with the 12 concluded with strength and courage, and years later they continued with those same qualities.

As the field time begins to conclude, I pray all on the team will remember the reason for the commitment to this journey, the mission of God you're joining, the future He's preparing for the ones whom you're serving and the joy that awaits. I pray for extra strength and courage, a deepening passion for those in need and a focus to help the team finish strong.

When you return, I pray for all of these same things in the context of home as well! May everyone finish strong.

## Field Teams Devotion

### DAY 7: SEE THE BEAUTY

*“God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).*

Towards the end of a long week of creating, God admired the beauty of the world He made. As the end of the field portion of this Field Teams journey approaches, I encourage you to follow His lead and connect not only with the visible needs but also with the beauty that surrounds you and the team.

What’s beautiful about the people you’ve seen this week?

What’s beautiful about the setting?

#### *Guilt Free Rest and Admiration*

When time and opportunity allow, most Field Teams spend some time sightseeing, enjoying a special meal and perhaps souvenir shopping. During these special excursions, the mission doesn’t stop so the team can have fun; the mission continues in a different setting!

It’s holy to connect with the beauty of His creation. Throughout Scripture, God commands rest. Also, it’s culturally appropriate to notice not only the struggles and the need, but the rest the place offers as well.

How has your Field Team connected with the culture and setting of the team beyond working on projects or sharing hope with people? What new things have you experienced through time to shop, visits to an historical location or unique cultural experiences?

People from other places often share with me the joy they experience when Field Team members visit places or cultural events that make their region special. To connect with the perspective of local people, consider your hometown. When people visit you, what places must they visit to better understand what makes your town unique?

### *The Mission Continues*

God continues His mission of revealing Himself while reconciling people at all times everywhere. His mission includes revealing Himself to you! Perhaps the beauty around you and the team can help you understand Him better, encouraging you to continue serving on His mission.

Whether days include hard work, rest, sightseeing, shopping, or even flying on airplanes, God's mission continues. The challenge includes finding opportunities to join His mission in any scenario.

How can the mission continue during sightseeing, a special meal or souvenir shopping?

As the field portion of this journey approaches the end and preparations for the trip home begin, continue to look for the beauty of God's creation. May you and the team habitually take time to rest, enjoy His creation, and recognize the beauty of the world He created. As He said when the world began, it is good.

## Field Teams Devotion

# DAY 8: FRUIT THAT REMAINS

*"...I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last..." (John 15:16).*

### What You Set In Motion

On my first trip to South America, as I explored a future in missions, I visited Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a place where my grandparents served as missionaries in the 1940s. Though my grandfather passed away much earlier, I looked forward to telling my grandmother about my time in the city. I missed her 80th birthday party to be on the trip, but knew she'd understand.

Among many local leaders, I met Roberto, a man about my age. When he learned I was Earl Wilkie's grandson, he told a story from his father's childhood. In the late 40's, when my grandfather pastored in the city, the church held an outreach. A church member visited Roberto's grandparents and their young boys to invite them to the meetings. His grandparents and future uncles and father attended and their lives were changed.

The family soon joined the church and grew in influence. My grandfather helped teach his grandfather, and my grandmother served the children, including his father. His grandparents taught mine about culture, language and life in Bolivia. First, Roberto's grandfather became a deacon in the church, followed by his father, and at the time I met him, Roberto served as a deacon in the church. We continued our conversation and then moved on to discuss the original purpose of the meeting—future opportunities to share hope in Santa Cruz.

When I returned, I shared this story with Grandma. Though initially quiet, she later explained that on the same day of that connection, her 80th birthday, she made her traditional trip to my grandfather's grave. As she sat at his grave she prayed for fruit to remain from their years of ministry, though he was gone and she was aging.

The day she prayed for fruit to remain, Roberto and I strategized a season of sharing hope in Santa Cruz.

It's not just what you do and see; it's what you set in motion.

### Their future

This week, you've served with sweat and heart. Beyond seeing a project progress, you cared for the futures of children and their families. Beyond the impact you've witnessed, influence continues.

Write the names of some of the people with whom you've connected on this Field Teams journey. Share the names of children, workers, interpreters, fellow team members from your group and even Convoy of Hope staff.

What hopes and prayers do you have for these individuals, each of whom was created in God's image?

As time on the field comes to a close, perhaps you've seen a glimpse of the impact you made on this trip, but this is only the beginning. May the impact on the field continue for years to come as part of what you've helped set in motion. And may this trip continue to impact your life and the lives of other team members as God writes His story in lives around the world.

## BEFORE YOUR FRONT DOOR: FINAL FIELD THOUGHTS

"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah" (Psalm 3:8, KJV).

### Let the trip home begin

Your bags are packed, photos taken and memories made. It's time to head home. The next few moments and days may prove to be the most important of the journey. May home continue to provide space for God to move and help you soak in everything possible from this Field Teams journey.

### Selah

In the Old Testament, the psalmist often uses the word Selah. Scholars say a good translation of this word is, "think about it." Looking back on the field experience, here are a few questions to ponder. Perhaps your team can discuss these questions as a group another time.

The questions:

What was the funniest moment of this journey for you?

What was a "God Moment" where He spoke something deeply to you, or worked in a powerful way in your life?

Is there someone on the team that stands out to you for his or her courage, commitment, outlook, or impact? Who? I encourage you to find a time to verbalize your “shout out” to this person!

Perhaps the biggest question of them all: How will you be different as you return?

That last question, about any differences when you return, may be the most important of the trip. All worked hard together to serve strategically on the field this week. While powerful things were set in motion on the field, perhaps as God writes this story, the growth He’s planning for you may prove the most impacting of this Field Teams experience.

What He’s setting in motion in your life could change generations to come.

### *A New Normal*

After big life events, tragic or celebratory, psychologists explain that though things can’t be as they were, it’s important to find a “new normal.” As you return, what new normal awaits you?

Leaving home required you to set down some things, many of them good! During the time on the field, you didn’t serve at your local church, eat at your favorite diner, spend time with the neighbors, or drive anywhere. Also, perhaps the time away kept you from unhealthy habits or relationships, time-wasting or purposeless endeavors, or overwhelming busyness. As you return, what should you purpose to pick up again?

What are some things that time on the field forced you to lay down?

Which of those things should you pick up again?

Is there anything you shouldn't pick up again?

### Almost Home

This devotion includes many questions. Answers may not seem clear now or even in days to come. Perhaps some of the answers to the above questions will emerge years from now! The concept of Selah proves important as you think about the Field Teams journey and what it means for you.

As you return, please consider the following:

- Continue to give God space to work in your life as you reflect on this journey.
- Place a reminder (photo, souvenir, etc.) of your time on the field somewhere where you'll encounter it.
- If God spoke something specific to you on the field, know that American culture or what we've known shouldn't discount His message to you.

Another thank you

Thank you for your sacrifice and service. Thank you for sharing yourself and the love God's given you with Him and people on the field. Thank you for joining His mission and allowing God to continue to write your story. Thank you for your part in the Convoy of Hope family. I'm grateful for your partnership and the things you helped advance and set in motion on the field.

God's writing a beautiful story, and I'm thankful we're all in it!

# FIELD TEAMS

A CONVOY OF HOPE EXPERIENCE

*Helping communities flourish.*