

Day 1 - MAKING GOD OUR FIRST PRIORITY

Song

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, as we work together, renew our love for You. Strengthen the faith in our hearts and souls and enlighten our minds with Your Word. Amen.

Gathering Time

Respond to one of the following:

- What is one activity or hobby you would have a difficult time giving up? Why?
- If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be and why?
- Tell about a challenging experience with a neighbor.

Biblical Reflection

Immediately following Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the religious leaders confronted Jesus with challenges and questions, concluding with this often-debated one:

"Which commandment is the first of all?"

Jesus' answer echoes Moses' message to the people of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy, commanding them to choose the God of Israel and cast away all other gods.

Read Mark 12:28-31: ²⁸*One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the discussion. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*

²⁹*Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: `Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. ³⁰And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. ^[a] ³¹The second is equally important: `Love your neighbor as yourself. ^[b] No other commandment is greater than these."*

- 1.) What are some concrete ways in which Christians seek to love God with all their "heart...and soul...and mind...and strength"?
- 2.) In most Christians' lives, what do you think competes with God for their love and attention?
- 3.) In what ways does our Team struggle to keep God as the first priority in our work?
- 4.) What actions can our Team take to help each of us keep God as our first priority?
- 5.) What effect will keeping our priorities straight this week have?

Closing Prayer

Holy Trinity, One God, we are tempted to give other things priority over you...(pause for personal reflection).

Help us to love You first of all. Help us to love You most of all. Help us to love You with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength. Amen.

Song

Day 2 - RECEIVING GOD'S PEACE

Song

Opening Prayer

Jesus, our Protector, like Your first disciples we sometimes become burdened by the worries of this world. Embrace us with Your peaceful spirit and set our troubled hearts at rest. Amen.

Gathering Time

Share with us one of the following:

- Tell about one of your childhood fears.
- What one thing do you think most people are worried about? Why?
- Describe one of your favorite peaceful places.

Biblical Reflection

Jesus spoke the words recorded in John 14:27 to His disciples at His last meal with them. He had just promised His followers that He would send His Holy Spirit to guide and teach them. At the end of the meal, Jesus was arrested, tried, and put to death.

Read John 14:27 ²⁷*"I am leaving you with a gift--peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid.*

- 1.) How does the peace that Jesus gives differ from "worldly" peace?
- 2.) When has our Team needed to hear Jesus' words about peace?
- 3.) What are the fears that currently trouble our group?
- 4.) Tell about a time that you, alone or as a part of this group, experienced the peace that Jesus talks about.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, sometimes I fear _____.

Jesus, give me your peace. Amen.

Song

Day 3 - BEING LEADERS WHO GUIDE OTHERS

Song

Opening Prayer

Leader: We gather as children of God.

Jesus, light of the world,

Group: Let Your light shine upon us.

Leader: Warm us with your words of hope.

Jesus, light of the world,

Group: Let Your light shine upon us.

Leader: Ignite in us the yearning to lead others to you.

Jesus, light of the world,

Group: Let Your light shine upon us.

Gathering Time

Share with one another one of the following:

- Describe a time when you saw a glorious sunrise or sunset.
- Tell about a time when the lights went out.
- Tell about an experience with candles or fire.

Biblical Reflection

In John's Gospel, Jesus describes Himself as "the Light of the world." In this passage, from Matthew's account of Jesus' sermon on the mount, Jesus commands His followers to share in the task of reflecting God's love in their words and actions.

Read Matthew 5:14-16 ¹⁴*You are the light of the world--like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see.* ¹⁵*Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all.* ¹⁶*In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

- 1.) Why is the image of shining as a light an especially important description of what Christian leaders do?
- 2.) In what ways can we or do we guide others and give glory to God?
- 3.) What are ways Christians might hide their lights under the bushel basket?
- 4.) What are some ways that you are currently "hiding your light"? What can you do to "let your light shine"?

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, Sun of Righteousness, you have filled us with the new light of your Son, Jesus Christ. Let the light of our faith shine in all that we do.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Song

Day 4 - SERVING GOD IN ALL WE DO

Song

Opening Prayer

Jesus, Lord of the vineyard, plant in us the desire to faithfully serve You, no matter how small or large the task. Amen.

Gathering Time

Tell us about one of the following:

- Describe a time when you were honest even though it was difficult.
- Tell about one of your first jobs.
- Describe the most fulfilling part of your daily work or routine.

Biblical Reflection

In Jesus' parable of the dishonest manager, He uses the saying in Luke 16:10 to highlight the meaning of the story. In the parable, a manager (in order to clear his reputation for the future) settled his accounts and won the favor of his employer. Jesus presents several explanations of the parable, including this one which encourages followers to serve God in every aspect of their lives.

Read Luke 16:10 ¹⁰"Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities.

- 1.) In this text, what is Jesus asking of the hearer?
- 2.) From your own experience, share some examples that illustrate Jesus' message in Luke 16:10.
- 3.) What are the small and large tasks of our Team?
- 4.) In what ways are the small tasks that our group does significant?
- 5.) How can we better acknowledge the small tasks that each of us does (both now and when we return home)?

Closing Prayer

LORD, help us to cheerfully accept all the responsibilities You give us today. Open our eyes and ears to discover and joyfully carry out the tasks You place before us as a pleasing offering to You. Give us a heart that looks for ways to support each other today. May we be your faithful servants, Lord. Amen.

Song

Day 5 - MAKING THE BEST USE OF OUR RESOURCES

Song

Opening Prayer

Leader: *God of both little and plenty, we pray,*

Group: Help us to be content.

Leader: *God of the hungry and well fed, we pray,*

Group: Help us to be content.

Leader: *In any and all circumstances, we pray,*

Group: Help us to be content.

Gathering Time

Respond to one of the following:

- Tell about a time when you needed to be resourceful.
- Tell about a time that you bought something you really didn't need.
- Tell about a free or inexpensive activity you enjoy.

Biblical Reflection

Paul wrote to the beloved people of Philippi from prison. In this passage, he thanks the Philippians for the gift of money they sent to help him. Paul reminds the Philippians that he has learned to be content in every situation and consequently does not depend on their gifts.

Read Philippians 4:11-13 *¹¹Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. ¹²I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³For I can do*

everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.

- 1.) Tell about someone whose life illustrates Paul's philosophy of being content in all circumstances.
- 2.) Paul managed to proclaim the gospel despite limited resources. Resources can be defined as money, time, abilities, and support of others. How can making the best use of one's resources be a way of serving God?
- 3.) What are the resources that help our Team do its tasks?
- 4.) What resources are we lacking?
- 5.) What can we do to meet our needs for the resources we lack?

Closing Prayer

God of power and might, remind us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Amen.

Song

Day 6 - BEING LEADERS WHO SERVE OTHERS

Song

Opening Prayer

Humble Jesus, Helper of the weak, as we minister here in Guatemala, remind us that You have called us to follow Your example of serving others. Amen.

Gathering Time

Respond to one or more of the following:

- Tell about a time when you were sick and someone took care of you.
- Tell about a time when you served another and received an unexpected blessing.
- Tell about a humorous dining experience.

Biblical Reflection

According to Luke's Gospel, a dispute arose in the middle of Jesus' last supper with His disciples. The disciples argued about which one among them could be considered the greatest. Jesus' teaching about servanthood reflects His actions of caring for those who were poor and outcast.

Read Luke 22:25-27 ²⁵*Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called 'friends of the people.'* ²⁶*But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.* ²⁷*Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant.*

- 1.) In what ways do you think of Jesus as being one who served others?
- 2.) Why are Jesus' words in Luke 22 important for our group to hear, even though we may not think of ourselves as having authority?
- 3.) In what ways is God calling us, through this mission trip, to be leaders in our congregation?
- 4.) What are some of the ways that we, as leaders, can serve others with respect to this trip to Guatemala?

Closing Prayer

Gentle God, we serve You and others through these tasks... (pause).

Gentle God, help us to be leaders who serve others. Amen.

Song

Day 7 - RECEIVING GOD'S STRENGTH

Song

Opening Prayer

Leader: We worship You, life-giving God.

You give power to the faint,

Group: And strength to the powerless.

Leader: We worship You for lifting us up when we are weary. You give power to the faint,

Group: And strength to the powerless.

Leader: We worship You for renewing our hope.

You give power to the faint,

Group: And strength to the powerless.

Gathering Time:

Respond to one of the following:

- Tell about an experience that required your physical strength and endurance.
- Tell about an experience on an airplane.
- Tell about a time when you felt totally exhausted but needed to keep going.

Biblical Reflection:

Isaiah 40 was written to the Israelites who were living in exile in Babylon in the sixth century BC. The hymn in Isaiah 40:12-21 celebrated God's glory and denounced the existence of others gods. The writer asserts that the God of Israel created the world and has the power and compassion to save the people of Israel.

Read Isaiah 40:29-31 ²⁹He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; He offers strength to the weak. ³⁰Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. ³¹But those who wait on the LORD will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

- 1.) What do you think Isaiah means by the phrase, "those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength"?
- 2.) What do you find (or have you found) most exhausting about our Team work?
- 3.) In the past when has God's strength enabled our group to complete tasks despite our weariness?
- 4.) For what situations does our group currently need God's strength?

Closing Prayer

O Lord God, Hearer of those who call on You, we name before You the tasks and duties which, though important, tire us ... (pause)

All-powerful God, renew our strength and bless the ministry You have given us. Amen.

Song

Day 8 - SHARING WITH ONE ANOTHER

Song

Opening Prayer

God, Source of all good things, deepen our connection with one another, so that we might be of one heart and soul. Amen.

Gathering Time

Share with each other one of the following:

- If you could live in any period of history, when would it be? Why?
- Tell about a possession you would be glad to get rid of.
- Describe an experience buying or renting a home or apartment.

Biblical Reflection

The book of Acts, written by the same person who authored the Gospel of Luke, records the history of the early Christians. After Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit descended upon the first believers, marking the birth of the Christian church.

Read Acts 4:32-35 ³²All the believers were of one heart and mind, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had. ³³And the apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great favor was upon them all. ³⁴There was no poverty among them,

because people who owned land or houses sold them ³⁵and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need.

- 1.) What are the characteristics of the early church as described in the passage from the book of Acts?
- 2.) Some people claim that this passage is a description of the ideal church community. Describe your concept of the ideal church.
- 3.) What do you think it means to be of "one heart and soul"?
- 4.) How is the group described in this passage similar to/ and different from our Team? From our home congregations?
- 5.) What are some of the resources that our Team members can share with one another as we do our work together?

Closing Prayer:

Take a few minutes to silently ask God to help you consider ways you can better share your own resources, abilities, and insights with other members and those we've come to serve.

Song

Day 9 - HELPING THOSE IN NEED

Song

continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, Living Bread from heaven, feed our hungry spirits and quench our thirst for You. Awaken in us the desire to care for others and motivate us to share our blessings with those in need. Amen.

Gathering Time

Tell us about one of the following:

- Share a gardening story.
- Tell about a time when you desired something you couldn't afford.
- If you had five thousand dollars to give to a charity, which would you choose and why?

Biblical Reflection

Throughout their history, God called the people of Israel to care for those in need (strangers, poor people, widows, and orphans). The prophet Isaiah challenged the people of Israel to share their resources with others. He promised them that their good deeds would be rewarded. In the New Testament, Jesus ministered to many who were neglected by society and encouraged His followers to do the same.

Read Isaiah 58:10-11 ¹⁰*Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day.* ¹¹*The LORD will guide you*

- 1.) In this text, what does the prophet Isaiah ask of and promise to the hearer?
- 2.) In our congregation and community, who are those in need?
- 3.) In what ways does our Team's work help those in need?
- 4.) What are the blessings our Team received when we have helped others?

Closing Prayer:

We now offer up prayers for groups that minister to the needy ...

Jesus, bless all who serve.

And all God's people said:

Amen.

Song

Day 10 - EXPANDING OUR GROUP

Song

Opening Prayer

God of strangers and friends, throughout history You have visited Your people. Release our hearts and minds from prejudice and fears so that we may not miss You when You come to us. Amen.

Gathering Time

Share with us one of the following:

- Describe a positive experience you have had with a stranger.
- If you could entertain three guests at your home, who would you invite and why?
- Tell about an encounter with someone who spoke a different language.

Biblical Reflection

In the desert land where Abraham and Sarah lived, residents were expected to extend hospitality to visitors. The writer of Hebrews, who used this story to encourage Christians to welcome strangers, wrote, "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" (Hebrews 13:2).

Read Genesis 18:1-4 ¹The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his

tent, ²he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the ground. ³"My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet.

- 1.) After welcoming the three strangers, Abraham and Sarah were blessed with the news that they would become parents. What risks did Abraham and Sarah take in welcoming these strangers?
- 2.) What blessings and risks may our next mission Team encounter in welcoming new members?
- 3.) Does our next Team need to add new members? Why? or Why not?
- 4.) What concrete actions can we take to invite and welcome new people for our next Team?

Closing Prayer

Take time to share what blessings you have experienced being a member of the Team.

LORD God of surprises, we thank you for the many blessings you have showered upon us. Amen.

Song