

ROBES OF

HOPE

IMPACT MISSION CAMPS 2018



IMPACT

MISSION CAMPS

Pre-Project Devotions

We are thrilled to embark on this journey of preparation for your mission trip at Impact! Thank you so much for your willingness to respond to God's call and your willingness to serve with us.

We hope that resources such as this devotion guide will be helpful to you as you prepare for your experience. Our goal is that your time at Impact will be more than a short-term experience – that it will be a new chapter in a life of mission. Obviously a few devotions cannot provide everything you need to be spiritually prepared for your Impact experience. So we have focused on three main areas that we hope you will consider as you prepare to go. These areas are:

Mission – we will ask you to consider how God relates to the world and how any missional activity of ours is really just a part of God's greater mission.

Call – we will ask you to wrestle with how you have been aware of God's call in your own life and how this experience will inform your sense of call before you leave and also when you return.

Worldview – we will ask you to consider how important it is that we see others appropriately and how our own preconceptions may color our experience.

The final devotion will help you to understand the theme for Impact this year – *Robes of Hope*.

We pray God's peace on you as you prepare to take on a new challenge as part of God's worldwide mission.

Mission Focus

Read 1 Corinthians 3:7-9

One of the most common statements heard after a mission experience is “I went there to be a blessing to others, but I ended up being more blessed myself.” In fact, we (the Church in the United States) have sometimes left ourselves open to the criticism that we do Mission for the benefit of the one being sent. While we never want to objectify the partner with whom we serve, there does seem to be room for growth for all involved – especially if we are truly engaged in God’s Mission. This passage highlights different roles that emerged in Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. Using an agricultural metaphor, he identifies himself as the planter, Apollos as the waterer, and the Corinthians themselves as the field. But God is working through all, and they are only successful because God has blessed their actions.

As you prepare to go and serve, you certainly have expectations about what you will experience and what role(s) you may fill. In the passage, Paul was clear about who had played what roles in the founding of the Corinthian church, but in most of our experiences, those roles can be much more fluid. At times during your trip (and in the times before and after), God may plant a seed through you. God may use you to water a seed that has already been planted. And at times, you may find that you are in fact the field where God is growing something new. Be open to fulfilling any of those roles, or all of them at once. Be open to what God may do through you, with you, and even to you. You are a part of the work God is doing. With that as your focus, you will surely be blessed, and you will also be a blessing to others.

Reflection

What are you hoping God will show you during your mission experience?

How has God blessed others through you in the past? How might God work through you to bless others during your trip?

How has God blessed you on previous mission experiences? How might God bless you during this time?

Prayer

“God, help me to embrace all the roles you will ask me to fill during my mission experience. Help me to be just as open to the roles that come easily as well as the ones that challenge me to grow.”

Call Focus

Read Ephesians 4: 7-8, 11-13

It happens to the best of us: in the midst of a great experience, we begin pondering what's next.

Where will we go? What will we do? What will happen?

When all is said and done, your bags are unpacked and your experience is over, what's next? "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."

God has gifted each of us in our own way. When we put together our talents, our abilities, our passions and our gifts, we each will live out God's call for our life in our own way.

Apostles: one who is "sent out," likes starting new initiatives

Prophets: listens to and hears God, has a clear vision of what is happening

Evangelists: brings Good News, shares life with non-Christians, highly relational

Pastors: cares for people, comforts and encourages in times of need

Teachers: good at explaining truth and sharing knowledge.

When you return from this experience, God will continue to mold and shape your path. From this moment, we want to invite you to prepare for this call.

Keep an eye out for what God wants to teach you. Make notes of your highlights from the experience. Ask yourself throughout, "What is God teaching me?"

Reflection

Spend some time reading about each of these gifts. Which one do you think God might have given you? Ask a trusted friend for their perspective.

How have you used this gift in the past? How might you use it through this experience?

Prayer

"God, open my eyes so I may see what you want me to see through this experience. Open my ears so I may hear a story which will show me how you are at work.

Open my heart so my compassion may grow toward people who are different from me.

Open my hands so I may serve with the gifts you have given to me.

Open my mind so I may understand how your ways are higher than our ways. Open my future so I may follow where you are leading.

God, I trust you and will follow where you lead me."

Worldview Focus

Read Psalm 139: 7-10

We often read this Psalm as an assurance of God's presence in our own lives, but what does it mean for those already "on the far side of the sea"?

We know that no matter where we go or what decisions we make, we cannot escape the presence and guidance of God's Spirit. However, as you prepare to go on mission, consider not only that you will meet God where you are going, but also that God is already at work in that place. God's Spirit will not only guide and protect you as you travel, serve, and make relationships, but that same Spirit is already guiding and protecting our partners around the world as they seek to love and serve their own churches, neighbors, and communities. We do not bring God's presence when we go; when we arrive, we are joining in God's ongoing work and enjoying that presence with our partners.

As you make preparations and pack your bags, consider this: will your upcoming journey be more like a supply mission or a scavenger hunt? Do you presume to fill a backpack with carefully prepared messages, answers, and solutions to hand out and share, or do you instead pack eyeglasses, binoculars, and magnifying glasses to look carefully for evidence of God already at work?

If God is already present in the heavens and the depths, on the wings of the dawn, and on the far side of the sea, then God is already present anywhere you may go. This knowledge is a great reminder to pay attention when we are on mission. In what ways do you feel God's presence as you prepare to go? Where do you see evidence of God's Spirit at work as you are on mission? How is God's hand guiding you, as you prepare to return home?

Consider the miracle of God's presence, that God could be at work in your own life as well as in the lives of the partners and people you are about to meet "on the far side of the sea."

Reflection

Have you ever tried to flee from God's presence? What happened?

In what times or places have you been surprised to find that God is already present?

How do you look for evidence of God's presence in your everyday life?

How might God's Spirit be working in the place where you are going?

Prayer

"God, thank you for sending your Spirit that is capable of finding me anywhere and guiding me always. Please help me to see the ways in which that same Spirit is at work in the place I am going on mission. Please hold me fast as I seek to recognize your presence and join in your work where I go."

Robes of Hope – For Those Who Are Vulnerable

Read: Matthew 25:31-45

Every year at Impact, we have a theme that we build the experience around. You've completed Bible studies with your group expanding on the theme, and worship during camp will center on that theme as well. So for you to prepare for your experience, it's important for you to understand vulnerability. It's easy to think of people today who are much like the hungry, thirsty, stranger, sick, and imprisoned – those were needs then that are often needs today. But the naked – that's a bit more of a challenge if we take it literally. But if we understand "naked" as vulnerable, we can think of groups of people (including even ourselves sometimes) who might feel vulnerable.

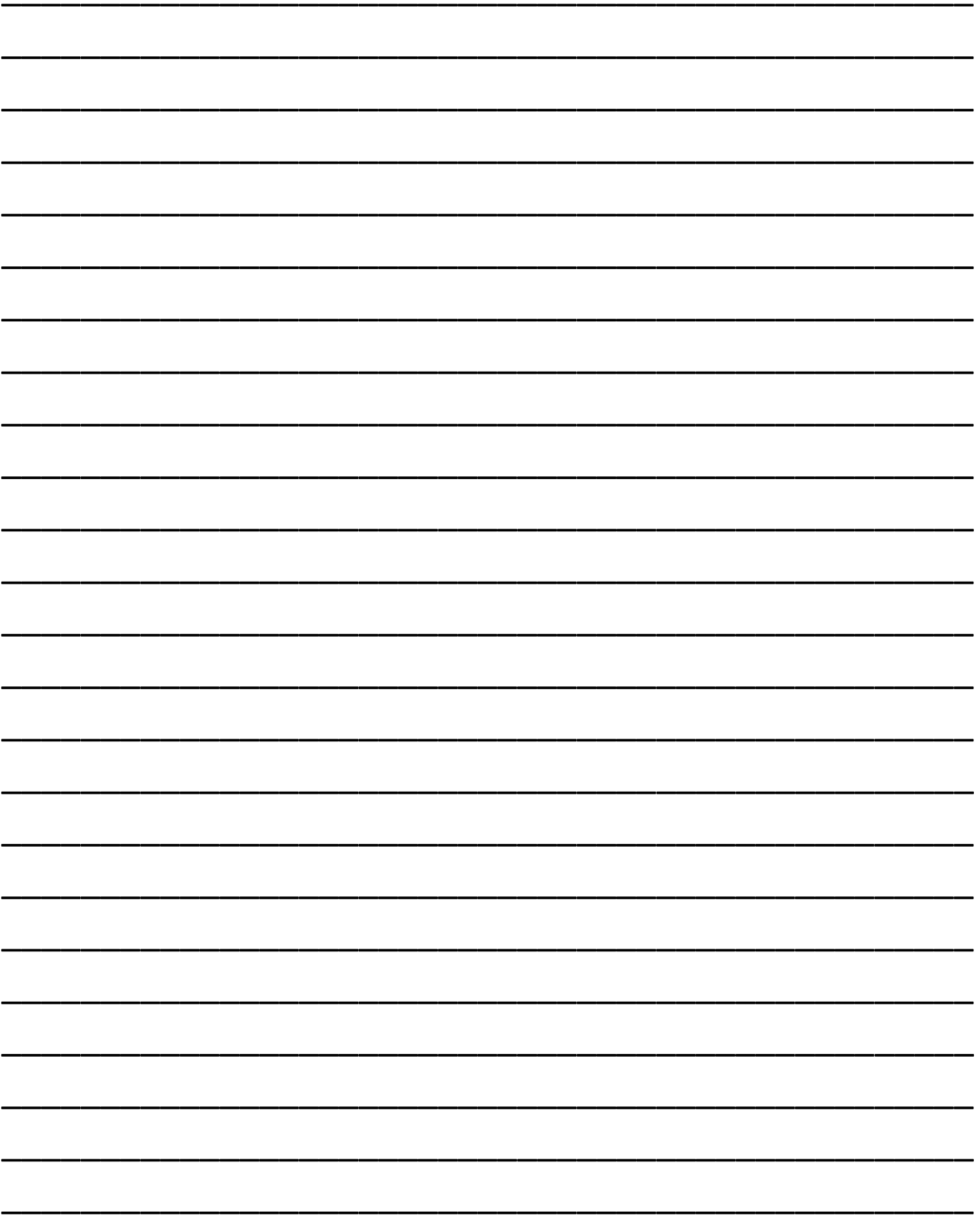
Being vulnerable in our world means more than just not having clothes. A person can feel exposed because they don't fit in with the larger crowd. A person can feel threatened because the culture doesn't think she has anything to offer. A person can feel exposed because other people aren't comfortable around him or her. In the parable, Jesus called us to offer clothes to the naked. Maybe what we can offer to people in need – people who feel vulnerable – is a robe of hope.

Reflection

When have you felt vulnerable? What are you open to questioning about yourself and God during your week at camp?

Prayer

Loving God, as I prepare to go, help me to love others – just as you have loved me.



During the Week

Welcome to Impact! We're excited to have this opportunity to serve together this week. We hope this devotional guide will continue to help you as you work through what God may be calling you to do while you serve here. The schedule is below, and we have 4 devotions for you to work through on your own time during the week. We hope this will help you focus on your personal experience at Impact in the midst of all that goes on. Blessings during this week!

Weekly Schedule:

Rise and Shine and Breakfast - 6:00 or 6:30

Morning Celebration - 7:00

Work on Job Site - 8:00-4:00 (lunch around 12:00)

Free Time/Shower Time - 4:00-6:00

Dinner - 6:00

Worship - 7:00

Devotions - 8:30-9:00

Free Time/Fun Activities with Staff - 9:00-11:00

Lights Out - 11:00

Wednesday (or Thursday during Kings Fest week) will be a free day after lunch. Your leader will let you know what you will do that afternoon and for dinner that night.

Mission Focus - God Loves and Restores Us

Read: John 21:15-17

We come to Impact with a lot of different expectations. We come with a lot of different experiences and a lot of history that may make us feel unworthy to share the love of God with others. But this week, we come together as a community of people who have known joy and sorrow, confidence and doubt, courage and fear. We come together as a community of people that God loves, God forgives, and God helps.

In the passage from John, Jesus offered Peter forgiveness for giving in to his fear – for denying him. And He restored him to new life. Even more, Jesus restored Peter to the Mission He had given him. No matter what is distracting us this week, we can leave it behind and focus on what God is planning to do through us. God will work through us whether we feel worthy of that privilege or not. Focus this week on what God may be revealing to you about what true justice looks like. Focus this week on what God has done for you and plans to do through you.

Reflection

What expectations do you bring to camp this week?

Prayer

God of Justice, thank you for offering restoration to me – to us all. Thank You for Your love, Your mercy, and the amazing privilege of offering that same love to others – both this week and when it is time to leave.

Call Focus – God Calls us to Mission

Read: Micah 6:6-8

We present many offerings to God. We are called to offer money, time, talents, and our praise to God. It can be easy to think that when we give what we have, we are earning God's love. This week, you have had the opportunity to offer all those things to God. You paid to come, you gave up a week to be here, you offer your physical labor throughout the day, and you offer your praises to God each morning and evening. It is easy to think that by offering these to God, we are earning God's favor, or even God's love.

But as the passage in Micah shows us, the truest offering we can give to God – the one God wants most – is justice, mercy, and humility. Every other gift we present is nothing compared to ensuring that others receive justice. Everything we have to give is meaningless if we don't show mercy. And if our gifts do not come from a sense of humility, we have already "received our reward in full." As you serve and give this week, remember that you are offering justice and mercy – and that when you offer them to God's children, you offer them to God.

Reflection

If the greatest gifts we can offer God are justice, mercy, and humility, how can you offer those here? How can you be better about offering those at home?

Prayer

God of Mercy, help me to open myself to being an instrument of your justice and mercy, and to remember that the glory for all that I do belongs to You.

Worldview Focus – What We Have to Offer

Read: Philippians 2:3-4

In humility count others more significant than yourselves. It's amazing how hard that is to do, and how easy it is to think we're doing it. When we go on a mission trip – and we spend our time helping other people, it's easy to think that we're blessing people. But it's possible to do the exact opposite. If we “help” others in a way that makes them dependent on us – giving ourselves all the power – we're really helping ourselves as much as we're helping them.

It's easy to give people food and get annoyed if they don't seem to like the food we have to offer (while we throw away something if we don't like it). It's easy to go to help children and post pictures of all our great work (and receive accolades for our servant heart). It's easy to go to serve the poor and think about all the amazing things we're going to do for them (without considering that they have as much or more to teach us). This passage calls us to do more than that. Seeing people as more significant than ourselves doesn't just mean that we are uncomfortable for a time so we can help them be more comfortable. It means seeing them as having as much to offer us (or even more) than we have to offer them. It means seeing them as partners in God's work of justice. God is working through what you're doing this week. But God is also working through the people you serve – they have as much to offer God and you as you have to offer them. Are you listening?

Reflection

What have you received from God through the homeowners and the community this week?

Prayer

Holy God, help me to think less of myself and what I do and more of what others can do and what you can do through them. Help me to be mindful of how Christ can speak through others to me.

Robes of Hope – Seeing the Most in the Least of These

Read: Matthew 25:31-45

Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you? It's such a haunting question. In this parable, people are divided into two groups – those who did help the least of these, and those who did not. And the thing is – neither group even took much notice of who the “least of these” were. And it certainly didn't occur to them that when they saw the least of these, they were also looking at Jesus. It seems that they didn't spend their lives going on mission trips. It appears that whatever they did or didn't do for the least of these, they did it in the course of their daily lives.

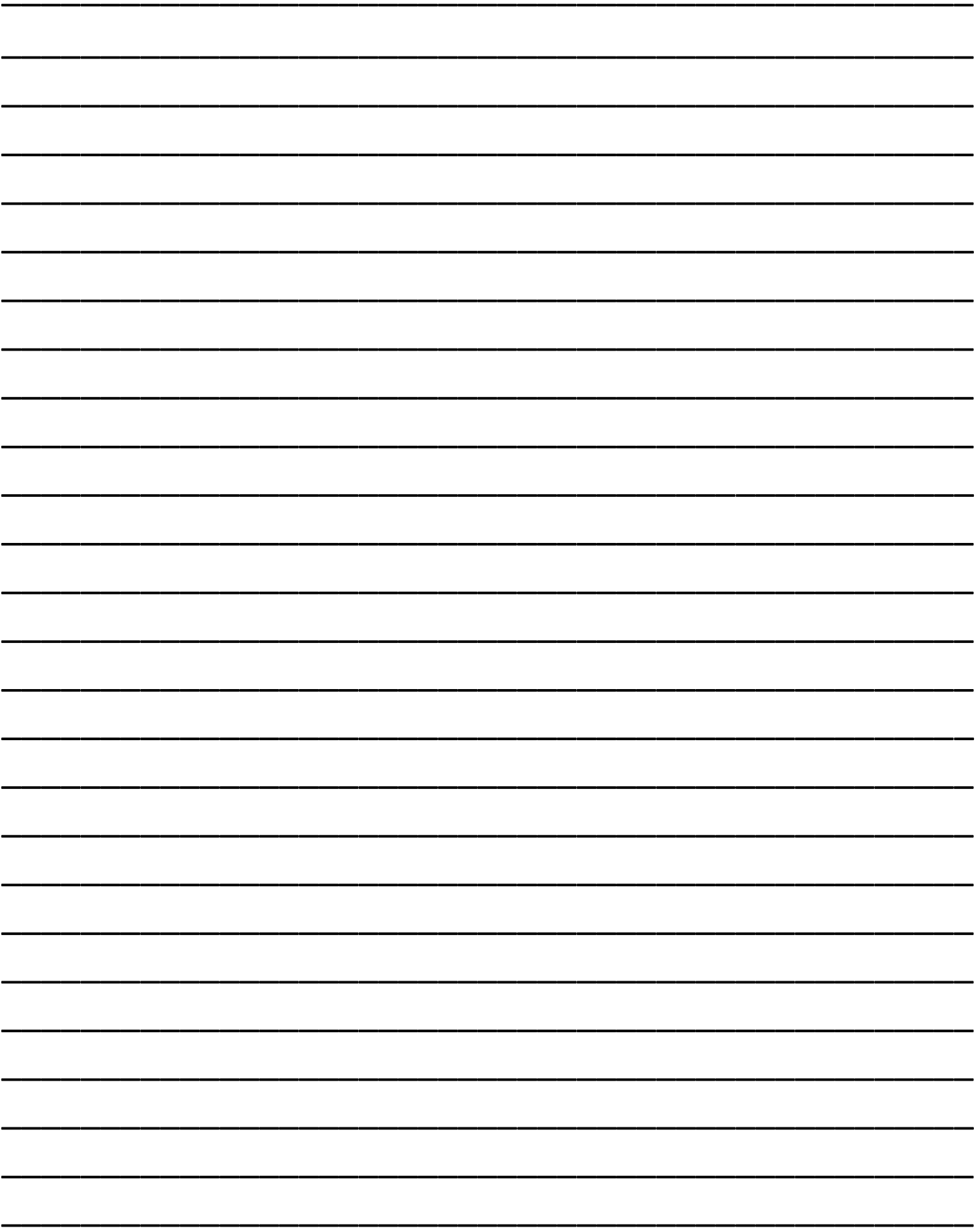
And if we're really honest, most of what we do “for the least of these” we do in the exact same way. At least, hopefully we do. There's comes a point during every mission trip that you have to start thinking about what happens when you go back home. It's easy to identify the people Jesus was talking about when you're at camp. It's easier to miss them when you go back home. In order to see those same people at home, we have to go with eyes open to see them. It's easy to look for the negative – the needs – in a community where we tend to serve. But can we go first into any community and look for the great things they can do and the children of God that they are? Can we go into their world planning to love them? Planning to see Christ in them?

Reflection

Who are the “least of these” that you encounter? How can you serve them without making them feel like “the least?” What do they have to offer you?

Prayer

God of the least of these, help me to attune my mind and heart to yours, so that when I go home, I have eyes that can see you in others. And help others to see you through me as well.



Welcome Home

The following devotional material is for you to work through after you return home. We hope that your experience at Impact wasn't just a one-week thing. As we say a lot during camp, Impact is not primarily an experience where you do mission, it's where you go to get the energy and excitement to prepare you to go back home, where your real mission is. Thank you so much for serving with us this summer and for ministering to others through your time at Impact!

And be sure to check out camp videos, pictures, and the blogs of the Impact staff. Find us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/VB.Impact) and Instagram (@impactvirginia).

Worldview Focus – Going Home

Read Luke 4 16-30

"You can't go home again." It's a popular saying that gets at one of the difficulties you now face. You've left camp and returned to real life, where people are going about their normal routines. They haven't spent a week in daily worship, prayer, and service. And it's hard for them to get as excited as you are. Hopefully you've come home with passion - ready to change the world – starting with your hometown, or your church, or maybe even your family. Know that even Jesus struggled at home. While your friends and family are unlikely to try to throw you off a cliff, you will face challenges. Even in these challenges, Christ went before you, and Christ goes with you now. Just as it was on Him, know that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon [you]."

Reflection

What is the biggest challenge you face on your return home? What do you need to do that might change the way people at home see you?

Prayer

Ever present God, thank You for walking beside me. Thank You for being with me as I return to regular life. Help me to feel Your Spirit upon me as I go about my daily life and trust You to guide me on the way.

Robes of Hope – Hope We Have and Hope We Offer

Read Romans 5:2-5

As you know, through preparation for Impact, worship during Impact, and even the shirt you brought home from Impact, our theme for this year is "Robes of Hope." It's easy to focus on a theme while you are at camp, but now that you're home, not everyone around you knows what you did or why you did it. If there's one thing you need to be able to do, it's to tell people WHY we love others. When you are home, a lot of people will ask you how camp was. Tell them about more than the nails you drove, the saw you got to use, and the fun you had. Tell them about how you saw God at work - about how you were the hands and feet of Christ. And if they ask you why you did it, tell them that you were sharing hope with others.

Tell them about the hope you have as well.

Reflection

We talk a lot about why you should show love to others. But in your words, and in your life, why do you do it?

Prayer

Loving God. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for loving us all. Help me to show love to others because You first showed love to me.

Mission Focus – Incarnation

Read John 1:1-14

The theme for your week at camp, Robes of Hope, really had two areas of focus. We had to consider who might feel vulnerable in our community and why. But we also had to consider ourselves what ways we might need to make ourselves more vulnerable – thinking about ways that we have maybe been wrong.

One of the greatest lessons God has offered our world about how our expectations may have been wrong was Jesus. When Jesus came as God's presence on earth – the incarnation – he showed us that God's love is a gift of God's presence. In order to be the presence of Christ to others, we may have to consider what that means. We may need to look at new ways that we can share our love and our faith at home. We may need to be more vulnerable than we have been and may need to consider that we have more to offer and to learn in the communities we call home.

Reflection

Who are some people that would partner with you in being God's presence in your community?

Prayer

God who is present among us, help us all to be willing to be your presence in the world and to feel your presence in places where we might not expect it.

Call Focus – What Now?

Read Matthew 4:18-20

What are you fishing for?

Think back to the beginning of your faith journey: how did God call you? Did you leave something behind? Why did you respond? Take a look at this invitation Jesus offered to his first disciples: “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

The invitation was simple and straightforward. There were no lofty ambitions, no prizes or celebrations, just a simple call: “follow me,” and “I will send you out.” God has called you and every follower of Jesus to the same thing as Jesus called these first disciples. It is not a complex call. But that does not mean it’s easy. As you prepare to go and participate in this mission experience, ponder this:

Come, Follow Me

Jesus calls us to follow Him. Take a minute and think about what Jesus did. In a nutshell, he met spiritual needs and physical needs. Together. He pointed people toward God spiritually in everything He did physically for them.

How will you follow Jesus? Because that’s the first call. Think about how you will point people toward Jesus by doing the things Jesus did and living the way Jesus lived. I will send you out

Jesus gets right to the point: follow me, then I’ll send you out. We don’t read about a significant training experience. The disciples don’t appear to have spent time in a classroom getting ready to follow Jesus. They followed Him. And He sent them out. You may not feel equipped. You may not feel experienced enough. And that’s ok! God is going with you, and God is preparing the way for you. You’re already ready. Why? Because you’re following Jesus.

Fish for People

Focus on the people and the community. Point them toward Jesus, invite them to experience Jesus through you, because God wants to send them out, too. You had a specific task at Impact, and a much more challenging task now that you’re returning home. But the task is not the primary goal: people are.

Meet a new friend, hear their story, and ask them what God is teaching them right now. Even if they don’t know Jesus yet, this can be a good conversation starter to lead into a conversation about your faith and why you are here. Your experience will likely be a significant one, and God is preparing you right now to take in every moment.

Prayer

God, as I look ahead to what you have in store for me, show me the way.

