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VIRTUAL CAMP DEVOTIONS

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YOUR VIRTUAL CAMP DEVOTIONS

We are thrilled to embark on this journey of preparation for your virtual mission trip with Impact! In a time when a lot feels uncertain and plans have had to change, we're grateful that you're willing to explore God's call with us.

We hope that resources such as this devotion guide will be helpful to you as you prepare for the experience. Our goal is that your summer experience with 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. We have developed the devotions around the focal scripture passage for Impact this year and God's gifting us to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, with a different approach before, during, and after Impact.

1. **Before** – we will reflect on each gifting from God, and when we ourselves have needed people to fill that role in our lives and what that teaches us about God's mission for our lives.
2. **During** – we will ask you to wrestle with how you have been aware of God's call in your own life and how you express each of these gifts.
3. **After** – we will ask you to consider how you see the world after your camp experience, and how you can use the gifts God has given you to share Christ's love in the world.

Each devotion includes a passage to read, devotional thoughts, a reflection question, and a prayer prompt. You will also find a space for writing your thoughts at the end of each section (before, during, after).

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

BEFORE YOU GO

How have you received God's grace through others' gifts?

THE SHEPHERD

- Luke 18:35-42

It's such an easy pattern to get into, if we're not paying attention to what's going on inside our own hearts. A man who was blind was asking for help, and most of the people with Jesus just wanted him to be quiet. Maybe they'd seen him day after day, maybe they saw "beggars on every corner," maybe they didn't know how Jesus would react and were embarrassed, or maybe they were just having a bad day. But Jesus, in that moment, surprised them all. He decided to show care – to be the Good Shepherd to the man, who knew what he needed and was asking for help.

Many of us have had experiences with needing something and people not being willing to help. Hopefully we've also had times when people chose to help us. For many of us, our faith journey begins with a time of need where we found (or often were shown by someone else) that God was there for us. Seeing that an individual cares for us in our time of need, and seeing that God cares for us through people who show care, is one way that we learn who God is.

REFLECT

When has someone shown care to you? What did that teach you about God? How have you provided and received care while social distancing?

PRAY

God, help me to remember that you care for me, and that others have as well. Help me to see others and offer care to them in Your name.

THE TEACHER

- Romans 15:4-6

In this passage, we read that everything that has been given to us is meant to teach us. That feels like a huge statement. The people who have been in our lives teaching us about faith are there to teach us endurance and encouragement for when we face challenges. Everything we know about God and what it means to follow Christ is something we have learned from others – they have taught us, whether intentionally or unintentionally. God’s purpose for teachers is that they teach us so we will be able to stand strong in our faith and with our community.

Spend some time thinking about what you have been taught. What did you learn from what your teachers said to you? What did you learn from how people acted? How has what you have learned from others helped you in times when you have needed to lean on your faith? What do you still have to learn?

REFLECT

Who is a teacher that is a model of faith for you? How did social distancing and isolation affect the way you learned over the last few months and affect your thoughts about what teachers mean to you?

PRAY

God, help me to listen to the lessons that you offer me through others and learn the lessons you have for me so that I can remain strong in my faith when challenges come.

THE EVANGELIST

- Acts 9:15-19

Paul was in a pretty difficult situation – he was known as an enemy of the faith and was now being sent to the people he had persecuted to ask for help and serve them. But fortunately, he had Ananias there who could speak for him and help him join the group. Ananias was directly called by God, in a dream, to do that for Paul. For us, it's always a little less clear, but our default response should be the same.

Think of a time when you were new to a place, new to a group, or just didn't feel completely safe and secure in a situation. If there was someone there to welcome you, and help bring you into the group, that person probably felt like the biggest gift you could have received in that moment. If you didn't have such a person to help you make connections, you probably would have given almost anything to have someone like that "in your corner." When have you needed that kind of support? What did the person do to help you feel welcome? An evangelist does more than just share the gospel (though of course they do that), they help people who need something connect with others who can offer it. They keep a group going, and they're aware of what each person needs and how to bring them in. If ever there was a gift we all need to embrace now, it's that of connecting to one another.

REFLECT

When have you needed help connecting to others, and how did a person make you feel welcome? What was it like to have someone do that for you? How have you stayed connected to others while maintaining physical distance?

PRAY

God, help me to remember what it feels like to be on the outside and to be welcomed by someone who knows what I need. And help me to do the same for others.

THE PROPHET

- Luke 21:1-4

The widow must have felt so vulnerable – making this small gift while others gave such large amounts. You can imagine people looking down on her, wondering what she could even afford to give, if they even noticed her at all. It's not what we typically think of as injustice, but it certainly was. But Jesus saw what was going on, and he spoke in her defense, showing that not only was she giving a precious gift, but that her gift, small as it was, had a greater value than all others given that day.

The prophet is one who speaks out against injustice and speaks for those who don't necessarily have a voice. The prophet sees the world in ways others can't and understands more of what is going on in a situation. Think of a time when you have needed someone to speak on your behalf – defending you, or giving voice to what you were feeling, or even taking your side (even when it wasn't the popular side). Think of a time when you've been in what felt like an unfair situation. The prophet's role is a hard one to fill, but a gift to have when you need one to support you.

REFLECT

How has God used a person with a prophetic voice to defend you or others you know? How might you be able to do the same?

PRAY

God who sees, help me to be willing to see others and be seen as you see them. Thank you for those that speak up for others. Help me to grow into one of those people too.

THE APOSTLE

- Matthew 4:18-22

It must have been such an amazing experience to be called directly by Jesus. That was an opportunity none of these fishermen were expecting when they went to the nets that day. And yet the call was so compelling, they went immediately, not looking back, and changed not only their own lives, but the entire world, each of them becoming apostles that led the church after Jesus ascended to heaven.

The apostle is the kind of person whom others will follow. Yet each of these leaders of the early church started off as a follower. You have probably spent a lot of time in training on how to be a leader and encouraging you to “be a leader, not a follower.” Yet these apostles of the early church started by following their leader and teacher, Jesus. Maybe there is something about leading that starts with learning from other leaders and learning to follow them. Maybe we need that time of following before we can truly respond to the call to lead ourselves.

REFLECT

When have you needed someone to lead you? What have you learned about how you can lead from those around you? How does crisis affect your ability to follow? To lead?

PRAY

God, thank you for calling us to follow and to lead. Help me to follow well and look for places where you are calling me to do more.

THE SHEPHERD

- Ephesians 4:32

If you are like most people, you have probably had times when you have needed forgiveness or kindness from others and received it. There have probably also been times when you needed or wanted kindness and did not receive it. But one thing that is central to our faith is that we should love and forgive others the same way that God has loved and forgiven us.

During this week of virtual camp, you have the opportunity to show kindness and love in a variety of ways to people you do not know. Showing love to people we don't know can also help us to be willing to show love to people we do know. Think of people who could use a kind word from you – in your group, your school, or your community. Start praying now about how God may be calling you to be a shepherd – a person who cares for – to the people you encounter.

REFLECT

When are you most comfortable showing care to others? How can you embrace kindness with people back home? What new ways have you found to offer care?

PRAY

God, thank you for calling me to a ministry of caring. Help me to show care to people just as you have shown care to me.

THE TEACHER

- Colossians 3:14-16

Have you ever been in a group of people and had someone who acted as if their job was to teach everyone else, but they didn't have anything to learn themselves? Or maybe you've been the person who thought they had nothing to learn. We all have something to learn from each other, and we all have something to teach. In this passage, it's clear that love is the key to bringing unity, which makes it possible for us to learn from one another.

It's probably challenging this summer to think of yourself as having something to teach. You almost certainly don't know everything that's needed to do mission work – especially construction work – someone has to teach you. You almost certainly don't know everything that's being said in worship – someone is teaching you during that time. You almost certainly have relied on others to accomplish everything this week. And the people that are teaching you are doing so because of love. But there are also things you know that those who are teaching you do not. You understand other people your age and what life is like for you better than any of your traditional teachers. You understand parts of our culture that are a mystery to others. As you learn, reflect on what you may have experienced that you can teach others. Can you communicate that in love?

REFLECT

In what ways has God equipped you to teach others? How can you show love to others as you show them what you have to offer? In a time when no one is sure what needs to happen next, what ideas might you be able to share?

PRAY

God, thank you for the people who have taught me and people who are willing to learn from me. Give me the courage to share what I have learned from you, and help me to do so in love.

THE EVANGELIST

- Matthew 28:19-20

Go and preach the Gospel. It's one of the first scripture passages a lot of us learn, and it tells us to go and tell our story – the good news of God's work in our lives – to everyone we meet. This year, there are probably a lot of stories you can tell. You can tell people in your group about what you have experienced in the last few months. You can tell people you don't know as well about your own life and how you have seen God active in your life. You can start thinking about the story you will tell others over the next few months – the story of what God has done in your life this summer.

We are the ones entrusted with the Gospel story. Everything you have experienced and learned through a life of faith is part of that story for you. As you think about all the fun, challenging, and new things you have done this year, we're sure you want to share them with others. It's maybe a little scarier to think about telling people about where you have seen God. But each time you tell people about how you saw God, it becomes easier to do so again. God has called us all to "tell the good news." What good news will you share?

REFLECT

How can telling your story of faith help others in their faith? What are the easiest and hardest parts to tell? What would help you tell that story?

PRAY

God, help me to see the work you have done in my life and give me the courage to share how you have loved me with the people that I love.

THE PROPHET

- Proverbs 31:8-9

One of the hardest things in the world to do is to confront people who need to change what they are doing. But one of the things we see again and again in the Bible is God calling us to do exactly that – to speak for those who are vulnerable. It can feel hard to speak up because we also feel vulnerable. It can be hard to speak up because we feel it won't make any difference. It can be especially hard when we are speaking up to our own friends for someone we don't know as well.

Speaking up doesn't always have to be a confrontation. We can begin by speaking to those who are vulnerable because they are also probably people who feel pretty alone. We can show people who seem to be struggling that we are their friend and care for them. Even our presence can encourage and offer protection to them. As you near the end of your week at camp, it has probably been easy to identify who is vulnerable or in need. But as you look toward home, who are the vulnerable people there? How can you speak up for and stand with them?

REFLECT

Who is someone you can speak up for? How can you offer a voice to those who feel voiceless?

PRAY

God, I thank you that you hear my voice when I speak to you. Help me to hear those who feel they don't have a voice and find ways to speak for them and help them to speak for themselves as well.

THE APOSTLE

- Hebrews 13:6-8

We learn to lead from the people who lead us. Everything we know about leadership we learn from our own leaders. And that is probably the place to start as we each try to discover our own leadership voice. We can imitate the faith of those who taught faith to us, but we also can remember that God stands with us. That is why the writer of Hebrews reminds us we do not need to be afraid.

This year, you've probably had opportunities to get out of old habits – to almost be a different person for a while. You may have found yourself providing leadership to people when usually that isn't a role that you feel comfortable with. You may have found new people that you were comfortable following. What have you learned about your own potential as a leader this year? What have you seen in other leaders that you can make part of your leadership voice as you start to return to normal life? Where has God shown you opportunities for your youth group and your church that you can speak to in the future? Whom do you need to join you to help make that happen?

REFLECT

How might God be preparing you to lead others as summer ends?

PRAY

God, thank you for those whose example has taught me how to lead. Help me to be willing to lead others as you have called me and prepared me.

THE SHEPHERD

- James 1:27

You've completed your Impact Mission Camp experience, and this year you had a very different experience than you'd have expected. As we return to what a lot of people call "the new normal" over time, what will have changed? A lot of times when we return home from any kind of mission experience, we come back feeling completely different, but seeing everything else looking the same as when we left. We come home wanting to serve God in a new way – wanting to continue deepening our own faith. Or maybe we just want to keep the high from camp. It's like the experience at camp seemed more real than anything we experience back at home. But as this passage reminds us, the truest expression of our faith is caring for those in need.

As you look to the future and what comes after the pandemic, try to see the world through a new set of eyes. Try your best to see your own community the way you have seen others when you have served there. And try to see everyone in light of what we've all experienced together. The people are different, the needs may be different, but the image of God in them is the same as the image of God in the people you served with last week and in you. If you want to deepen your faith and have a truer experience of who God is, begin by finding the people who need you and sharing God's love with them.

REFLECT

Where are the needs in your community that you can meet? What have you missed seeing in the past?

PRAY

God, help me to embrace the "new normal" with new eyes to see and a new heart to share your love with the people I see.

THE TEACHER

- 1 Timothy 4:12

There are few things harder than getting people who remember you when you were a baby to listen to you. This summer you have had an experience that other people – family, friends, other church members, can learn from. You can teach them so much about how you have seen God and what God can do through you. But it's scary to try to teach people who used to (or still do) teach you. So you begin by showing an example of how you have been changed.

If you go back to regular life speaking, trusting, and loving a little differently, people will see that in you. If you can work together with other people in your youth group, whether they were part of camp and other youth events or not, your example can spread throughout your community. You are young – there's no way around that. But you can be an example of how to love your neighbor, and others can learn from what you show them. If you participated as part of your church group, then they have invested in you becoming part of God's mission. Don't hesitate to show them what that really means.

REFLECT

What does your community need to learn? What do you still need to learn from people around you?

PRAY

God, help me to be confident in the example you have made me to others. Help me to trust that you are teaching people through my actions, and help me to remember that even as I teach others, I still have much to learn from you.

THE EVANGELIST

- Romans 10:11-15

If there is one word that rarely comes to mind as a group returns from a week at camp, it's beautiful. We tend to come home tired, dirty, maybe a little grumpy, and hungry for regular food. But if there's one word that homeowners have used in the past about the kids that have worked on their homes, it's beautiful. When a person needs to know God's love, the person who shares that with them is beautiful. They're beautiful because of what they bring, not because of how they look.

You and your church can be beautiful to your community for the same reason. You have a story to tell them, Christ's love to offer them, and a relationship and family to invite them to join. Look at the community where you live and try to see the people who are looking for just the beauty you have to offer them. Once you see those people, show them in every way you can that you love them. That is how you preach the gospel to them. And after the last few months, our communities will be ready for some good news!

REFLECT

How can your story and your experiences change the world?

PRAY

God, help me to see those who need to hear your story. Help me to share that story with them through my actions, my attitude, and my words.

THE PROPHET

- Matthew 25:31-45

A lot has been said about this passage over the last several years at Impact. The passage reminds us who Christ has sent us to serve. And there doesn't seem to be a particular place that we should look for them – it seems we may even encounter them without realizing it. This means we need to come home with our eyes open to the world around us. With all the distractions that are vying for our attention, it's easy to miss those who are hungry or thirsty. With all the responsibilities we have, it's easy to leave those who are strangers or naked to someone else. With all the limitations we have, it's easy to think we can't really help those who are sick or in prison. But Christ seems to see them all and identifies them closely with himself.

We can speak for them by making sure people are aware they exist. We can speak for them by speaking to them and showing others that they are part of our community. We can speak for them by working to make sure they have what they need. And we can speak for them by recognizing Christ in each one of them.

REFLECT

Where does the world need people to stand up and speak for those who can't speak for themselves? Who are those people in your community?

PRAY

God, give me the eyes to see your image in the lives of others. Help me to remember that I am created in your image as well. Help me to love everyone because we are all your children.

APOSTLE

- Ephesians 4:11-16

In the end, none of us is just one thing. We are all a little bit shepherd, teacher, evangelist, prophet, and apostle. All those traits are things that God can use in each of us, if we are willing to be used. If we value any of these gifts above another, we start to feel that we are either more important or less important than everyone else. But the fact is, we need all of us in order to live out the mission God has for our lives and our churches.

The challenge we want to leave you with is to do your best to view people with these gifts (and the gifts God has given you) as pieces of the puzzle. When they all come together, united in peace and love, they make us as individuals, our community, and our world better. Look for people who also want to share Christ's love with the world, and work together with them. Lead when you should lead, speak out when you need to, share your story when you can, teach when you are needed, and show love and care always. If you find people who have that same goal and sense the same call of God, you'll realize how much better you all are when you can do those things together.

REFLECT

How can you bring people together for doing the work of God's kingdom? What role do you tend to take most easily? Where is God leading you from here?

PRAY

God, help me to see the people and places you have called me to and trust that you are with me bringing me together with those who can help bring me closer to you.

