

Summer Devotions 2017



Love In Action

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with action and in truth.”

1 John 3:18

This year's devotions have been prepared by the 2017 Chaplains that will serve to support our summer staff, volunteers, and families. Each chaplain has provided a short devotional you can use while traveling or on the worksite with your group, individually, or perhaps even with the family you will be serving. Elsa Hurtado – Sunday, Carson Tucker - Monday, Judy Ritts - Tuesday, Doug Wood - Wednesday, Barb Kelley - Thursday, Gary Ritts - Friday, and Tim Bomgardner – Saturday.

Sunday

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
And he will make straight your paths.”*

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NRSV)

Volunteering for a week with ASP is going to be difficult work, but also a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to God. You may be afraid of not having what it takes to complete the work so a family in Central Appalachia can have a better a warm, safe, dry house. Yet your desire to show love in action moves beyond that fear in order to serve them. You care, you showed up, and you will make an impact on this place.

So, trust in the Lord with all your heart, because God knows you perfectly and will clear away any doubt and fear from your mind. Maybe you do not know where you are in your faith and have many questions you would love to explore. Or maybe you feel that you are already connecting with God and are excited to deepen your relationship. No matter where you are on that spectrum, you are encouraged to think about why you are doing ASP; what is your motivation?

Serving others is a great experience and most of the time we end up receiving more love than what we could offer. God has awesome things in store for you this week, take them! Show your love in action and let others show it to you, too!

Questions:

1. Has fear ever shut you down to the point of quitting? What did you learn from that experience?
2. Can you think of a time when you overcame a deep fear? How did you do it? Do you have anything that you learned that you would like to share?

Prayer:

Dear God, please help me to acknowledge you every day, show me the paths in order to reach you more everyday. We all have fears, fear of the unknown, fear of not seeing, fear of failing you. Help us to see the perfect love that you have for us, so we can transform our lives and be an example to others. Thank you for overcoming fear, death and hatred, for we are free now and want to be a witness of your love to others. Amen.

Monday

*“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;
cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.
Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your
spiritual fervor, serving the LORD.
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:9-13

We all know how to pretend to love - how to speak kindly and not hurt others’ feelings. Most of us are pretty good at it, and it’s nice enough on the surface, but God calls for our love to be real and sincere. Sincere love is not easy. It requires effort (you traveled a long way to get here), it demands our time and resources (maybe you fundraised a bunch, too). Sincere love makes people better. I guarantee, you and everyone else on this trip are better off because of your love and service.

I believe each of you are here to love sincerely. You gave up a lot of your time and resources to love these families and their homes this week. Look for people who need your love and look for ways to share it. Everyone has something on their plate that your love and care will repair, besides their home. Maybe you don’t have the answers, but your presence is more than enough. Take what you will learn this week and show sincerity to your home communities as well!

Questions:

1. What is your definition of love?
2. What is your love language?
3. How have people showed you love?
4. What are some tangible ways that you can love on others?

Prayer:

Lord help us to love boldly and recklessly. We love because you first loved us, we strive for good because you are good. God, you set an example that we desperately want to follow and even if we fall short you continue to love us sincerely. Help us be joyful, patient, and faithful. This week let us not only practice hospitality, but receive it as well. Help us keep an open mind when we walk into these families’ homes and help us to learn from them. Thank you for your love. Amen.

Tuesday

“Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his world and delighting in mankind.”

Proverbs 8:30-31

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

Matthew 19:14

*“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

Matthew 7:7

Today is devoted to ‘being curious’. Unleash your curiosity and be open to the experiences the day may hold for you. The hope is that you may experience a sense of awe as you travel the roads of Central Appalachia and talk with the good folks who call these mountains ‘home’. Keep in mind that wonder and awe give us moments of cherished and transformative experiences.

Reflect on the moments today when you were truly intentionally curious and present to God’s presence. Also, reflect on the findings from recent research on the phenomenon of awe by Dachner Keltzer and Jonathan Haidt. “Somewhere at the intersection of joy, fear, mystery and insight lies awe, that ineffable response to the amazing world around us.” In addition, “Research indicates that awe also prompts us to think in more transcendent ways, shifting our focus from inward concern to an outward sense of universality and connectedness. Awe sends the signal to move closer, and that clears the way for altruism, generosity, and acts of kindness.”

Questions:

1. Were there moments when you felt closer to the presence of God as you focused on being in the moment?
2. Did you notice a connection between being in a sense of wonder and awe with the kindness you extended to others?
3. As a curious volunteer, were you able to listen more intently to the stories being shared by family members?

Prayer:

Ever present God, help me to ponder and reflect on the moments today when I choose to be curious and to be in the moment. Help me to see the beauty of your creation here in Central Appalachia, and hear the truth of the stories others share with me on my ASP journey. Amen.

Wednesday

*“Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,
if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit,
if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete
by being like-minded, having the same love,
being in one spirit and of one mind.”*

Philippians 2:1-2 (NIV)

It's Hump Day! Your week is now half over! What have you seen? What have you learned? Did you get some sleep last night? This is a good time to check yourself. What will the rest of your week be like? What do you want it to be?

One area you can focus your examination on is in the concept of compassion in your ASP life this week. Compassion is defined as a *feeling* of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a *strong desire* to alleviate that suffering. “Love in Action” means stepping beyond a feeling for the people we see who are struggling to find ways to understand and ease the hurting. Look around your center, your work site, in your car - is there someone who could use your smile, some assistance hammering a nail, some time reading a book to the littlest ones on the site, or help in your own creative way?

When the week ends this Friday, will you be able to say, as God's hands, feet and heart in Appalachia, that you showed compassion when you saw hurting? Please don't wait until the end of the week.

Questions:

1. What are some ways you have shown compassion to others?
2. When you go home, how can you find ways to share your heart and hands in your own community?

Prayer:

Lord, I ask that you give us eyes to see those who are struggling or hurting around us and the heart to respond to them. We know you will support us as we care for each other this week and when we return home. Amen.

Thursday

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*

Psalm 34:8

The theme of food, eating, feasting, and breaking of bread together is a huge theme in scripture. In fact, according to the Bible, the story of humanity starts with a Garden full of all good things to eat (Genesis 1:9), moves through history filled with people being rescued by God from the Egyptians, marked by a Passover Feast (Exodus 12). God feeds the Israelites for forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Exodus 16). Those Israelites are instructed by God to structure their years with Feasts. Later, Jesus miraculously feeds thousands of people two different times (Mark 6, Mark 8). All this leads up to the practice of the Lord’s Supper done in remembrance of Jesus and the sacrifice of His life (Matthew 26). Ultimately our feasting culminates in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb at the end of time (Revelation 19). The theme of eating, breaking bread, and feasting runs widely from Genesis to Revelation. I have to believe that God loves good food!

In most communities, sharing a meal is considered the highest form of fellowship. Indeed, eating together is a sacred activity that builds relationships in ways unlike any other activities.

It comes as no surprise that the early church in the book of Acts considered breaking bread together to be one of its top four functions (Acts 2). To this day, sharing a meal, whether it’s Holy Communion consisting of a wafer and wine, the potluck in the church basement, a picnic in the park, or a simple meal around the table. Nothing brings our hearts together like eating.

Food is a good gift from God and we are so blessed to share time around the table.

1. What kind of occasions do you take to break bread together?
2. What good things happen when people take time to share a meal?
3. What things keep us from eating together?
4. What can we do to cultivate the practice of breaking bread together?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the abundance of good gifts you give us. We acknowledge that many in this world are hungry and don’t have enough; let that awareness weigh heavily on our hearts. Stir us to find ways to open our homes and our hearts to feed those around us. Give us the faith to feed our small crowd, like Jesus fed the 5,000 in Galilee. Thank you for providing for us and giving us the strength, energy, and creativity to carry out the sacred task of hospitality.

Friday

*“I do not call you servants any longer,
because the servant does not know what the master is doing;
but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you
everything that I have heard from my Father.”*

John 15:15 (NRSV)

In this passage, Jesus is speaking with his disciples at the Last Supper. Most of them have no idea what is about to happen. His main concern is to give them comfort and courage to face their forth-coming separation.

Today, we too may need some comforting as we take leave and say goodbye to our worksites and families. We planned, studied and worked all year long for this week of service.

On Monday, we walked onto our worksites as servants, meeting our families for the first time. During the week, we began to know them better, know our crew better, meet and know others around us, and perhaps even ourselves better. Connections were made, fed and blossomed; and a deeper truth began to emerge.

We are no longer servants to these people. They have become our friends. Embrace and celebrate your true feelings today as you share your farewells.

Suggestion – play the song “For Good” from the musical *Wicked*

Questions:

1. Share a special memory/God-moment from this week in which you felt a sense of true connection; with your family, your crew and perhaps even yourself and God.
2. What activities/experiences contributed to and fostered this transformation from servanthood to friendship?
3. Take time today to make note of the truth and beauty inherent in your connections, recent and past, with all of God's creation.

Prayer:

O God, we are so very grateful that our hearts have been opened to the truth of your love in the true connections we have experienced this week. May our beloved families continue to know the power of your love working in their lives. Thank you for enabling us to put your Love into action, opening our hearts to the truth of loving connections. In the name of Love we pray. Amen.

Saturday

“I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:18-19

This week you have been filled with the fullness of God, the love of Christ. It’s been all around you in the midst of your service in Central Appalachia. You have seen it in many ways – through a quiet chat on the side of a hill with an old friend, someone volunteering to be the one to crawl under a house in the mud, a meal shared with a new acquaintance, in the sweat dripping from your clothes as you worked in the heat. All of these actions of love have filled you with a tangible experience of the love of God.

Now there exists within you an even greater potential to do good, to show love in action, than when you arrived. Just when you thought school was over for the summer, here’s a science illustration to get you through until school starts again. An object has the ability to store energy as the result of its position. For example, a drawn bow can store energy as the result of its new position. When it is pulled and stretched from its normal resting state, the bow can store energy due to its new position. This stored energy of position is referred to as potential energy.

You have been stretched and pulled this week in ways you might not have thought were possible. You were challenged by construction projects, witnessed poverty in a new way, tested in your relationships, your faith was pushed, and your heart has likely grown. You are full of potential energy after ASP. The next step is for you to become kinetic energy, to be sent out into the world again, to release your love in action like an arrow into the world.

May these words of John Wesley inspire your energy, “Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as you ever can.”

Questions:

1. What has filled you with potential energy this week? Was it easy or painful?
2. How can you release this kind of love into your own community?

Prayer:

God, we are filled to the point of overflowing, our cup is full. We are worn out and exhausted after having done your great works this week and we are tired. Despite our being worn out physically, our spirits are filled with love and we couldn’t be more excited about what we’ve been a part of this week. Help us to transform this experience into new acts of love that show the love of Christ to the world. Amen.