



## Prayer Journal

As World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers, we challenge you to build up your relationships with Individuals, Communities, the World, God, and His Global Church.



It is our hope that this devotional will enhance your volunteer experience, challenge you, and stimulate your reflective process. This devotional serves as a tool to focus on different relationships to shape your experience.

### + In the morning:

Take a few minutes of quiet time to read the Bible passage and paragraph for the day and reflect on it by answering the questions and praying. Each day there is a list of ways to strengthen relationships. Pick one of these to focus on for the day and write it in the "Focal Point" section. (Note: the first day doesn't have a list, so a focal point is written in for you.) This is important! It is hard to focus on a lot of things at once, which is why you will just pick one thing to focus on, and then reflect on it as you go through the day.

### + In the evening:

Take a few minutes to answer the "Unpacking" questions individually, reflecting on the day and how your focal point shaped your day.

Then, as a group, discuss the devotional and unpacking questions. You don't need to go through it question by question. The purpose is to have discussions about what you've been reading, thinking about, and experiencing during the day. Be open to the Spirit's guiding.

Please know that we are praying for you. Thank you again for embarking on this volunteer journey and may God bless you richly as you take this next step in serving Him and His children.

## We are challenged to build up our relationships with Individuals, Communities, the World, God, and His Global Church.

To improve our relationship with **Individuals**, we will strive to:

- + Listen to, respect, and affirm the diversity of others
- + Spend time with community members
- + Find ways to be mutually interdependent

To build our relationship with **Communities**, we will strive to:

- + Look for strengths, beauty and hope
- + Listen and learn before speaking
- + Act in ways that are culturally appropriate
- + Learn about, support, and encourage local ministries

To expand our relationship with **the World**, we will strive to:

- + Appreciate the beauty of God's creation
- + Be good stewards of our resources and live simply
- + Become more aware of what is happening in another part of the world
- + Appreciate the diversity of cultures
- + Wrestle with complex issues like poverty, racism, and disease
- + Develop an understanding of charity, relief, development, and missions

To strengthen our relationship with **God**, we will strive to:

- + Spend time daily in His Word
- + Trust in His guidance
- + Be willing to hear Him speak and be changed
- + Worship Him

To enrich our relationship with the **Global Church**, we will strive to:

- + Be open to seeing the Church in a new way
- + Worship together as brothers and sisters
- + Step out of our denominational comfort zones



## DAY 1

### + Matthew 22:34-40

Our faith is based on *love*. It motivates us, calling us to action. Love is what has brought us here. But it is not easy. C.S. Lewis said, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” Let’s choose to love.

- Individuals
- Communities
- World
- God
- Global Church

### + Reflection

Why do we need to be *intentional* about building relationships?

What does it mean for you to deeply live out Matthew 22: 34-40 in your every day life?

*Father, I dedicate this day and this trip to You. Please help me to learn more about living out my love for You. Give me an open spirit to learn, love, and be changed by this experience. May You be honored through everything that happens. Amen.*

### + Unpacking

What are you looking forward to about this trip?

What expectations do you have? Is it good to have such expectations?

What are you nervous about? What concerns do you have?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

**“Following Jesus is simple, but not easy. Love until it hurts, and then love more.”**

—Mother Theresa



## DAY 2

### + Ephesians 2:11-22

Walls are constantly being built, separating “us” from “them,” like those separating Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s time. We are jealous of some people while we look down on others. In either case, divisions occur, stopping us from getting to know each other. Christ came to tear down those walls that separate us. He is a peacemaker, calling us also to be one through His power and grace.

#### Individuals

Communities

World

God

Global Church

### + Reflection

With which individuals will you be building relationships on this trip?

In what specific ways can you strengthen these relationships?

Here are some ideas that we thought of. Do you agree?

- + *Listen to, respect, and affirm the diversity of others.*
- + *Spend time with community members.*

How can you respect and affirm someone today?

What are walls that could hinder your relationships with:

- + your teammates?
- + the homeowner/community members?
- + your housing hosts and/or construction coordinator?

*Father, I commit this day and everything in it to You. Thank you for the relationships that will be built during this trip, with teammates, homeowners, community members, our housing hosts, and coordinators. Tear down anything that would hinder them, and help us instead to build each other up. May we experience together the beauty of being one. Amen.*

### + Unpacking

In what ways did you succeed in pursuing your focal point today?

In what ways could you have done better?

What do you want to remember most about today?

What were you challenged by today?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

From the reflection section, pick one of the ways to strengthen relationships with individuals.



## DAY 3

Individuals

**Communities**

World

God

Global Church

### + Ephesians 2:11-22

It can be very easy to focus on the problems in a community, particularly when you see so much devastation, poverty, and sadness. But, focusing on the negative takes away the hope and dignity of those involved. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, Paul encourages us to look for what is good.

Jay Van Groningen from Communities First Association explains it this way, "Consider what often happens when the discussion...starts with 'needs and deficiencies' instead of with 'assets and gifts'. It often is de-energizing. It can lead to loss of hope. It can overlook gifts so abundantly present." Let's lookout for what is *lovely*.

### + Reflection

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Why is it important to look at the gifts within a community?

Why is it sometimes easier to focus on the problems?

What assets and gifts have you noticed about the community you are in?

How can you act in supportive and encouraging ways? Here are a few examples we thought of.

- + *Look for strengths, beauty, and hope.*
- + *Listen and learn before speaking, avoid judgments and criticisms.*
- + *Act in ways that are culturally appropriate.*
- + *Learn about, support, and encourage the partner ministries.*
- + *Adopt an attitude that assumes each person has something to offer and something to teach you.*

*Father, thank You that You are at work in every community around the world. Open my eyes to see the beauty that is here, even amidst sadness and destruction. Continue to work in this community and may You receive all of the glory. Amen.*

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### + Unpacking

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In what ways did you see beauty, strength, or hope today?

In what ways was this difficult to see?

What do you want to remember most about today?

What were you challenged by today?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

I will look for strengths, beauty and hope in this community.



## DAY 4

Individuals  
Communities  
**World**  
God  
Global Church

### + Psalms 19:1-6

It is easy to become so preoccupied with the tasks at hand that we do not take the time to appreciate the beauty of creation and to care for it. In so doing, we miss out on an opportunity to learn more about who God is. St. Augustine said, "Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?" Take some time today and every day to see the beauty in creation, and let that spur you on to worship the Creator.

### + Reflection

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How can you strengthen your relationship to the world?

Here are some ideas that we thought of. Do you agree?

- + *Appreciate the beauty of God's creation.*
- + *Be good stewards of our resources and live simply.*

How can you be a good steward of God's creation and your resources?

What can hurt your relationship with the world?

*Creator, thank You for the beauty of Your creation, which proclaims Your glory and power throughout the world. We are so small in comparison to Your greatness, and yet You still love us. Teach us to be good stewards of Your creation. Amen.*

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### + Unpacking

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In what ways did you succeed in pursuing your focal point today?

In what ways could you have done better?

What do you want to remember most about today?

What were you challenged by today?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

From the reflection section, pick one way to strengthen your relationship with the world.



## DAY 5

### + I John 4:7-21

This passage explains the reason that we are committing to building relationships with Individuals, Communities, the World, God and His Global Church—when we know God, we are transformed by His love and are motivated to love others. Verse 13 says that we know that God is with us because we have His Spirit. But how do we know that the Spirit is with us? Take a look at the fruit that comes from the Spirit living in you, Galatians 5:22-26.

Individuals

Communities

World

God

Global Church

### + Reflection

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How has God's love impacted you?

What does it mean that you cannot love God and hate your brother?

Which of the fruits of the Spirit do you see in your life?

Which ones do you need to work on more?

What have you learned about God this past week?

*Jesus, thank You for Your consuming love and how You loved me long before I could love You in return. Help me to understand more of Your love that is so "deep and wide and long and high", and let that love pour out of me as I seek to love other people. Amen.*

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### + Unpacking

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In what ways did you succeed in exhibiting your focal point today?

In what ways could you have done better?

What do you want to remember most about today?

What were you challenged by today?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

From Galatians 5, pick one of the fruits of the Spirit to meditate on today.



## DAY 6

Individuals

Communities

World

God

**Global Church**

### + Colossians 4:2-6

In many of his letters, Paul asks for prayer for himself and for his ministry. People in ministry are constantly under attack—they are fighting in a spiritual battle.

Since we are members of a Global Church, we are connected to believers around the world. One way that we can support them is by interceding on their behalf, for their personal needs as well as for their ministry. Dick Eastman, president of Every Home for Christ, said, "In no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God's work, especially the work of world evangelism, as in intercessory prayer." Let's lift each other up in prayer.

### + Reflection

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What is the importance of prayer, specifically *intercessory* prayer?

Reflect on a time you have seen the power of answered prayer.

What are some of the areas that you need prayer for yourself?

Could other Christians, specifically those in ministry around the world struggle with this too?

What else could they use prayer for?

*Father, pour out a blessing on your servants around the world. For their:*

- **B**ody — health, protection, strength
- **L**abor — work, income, security
- **E**motion — joy, peace, hope
- **S**ocial — love, marriage, family, friends
- **S**alvation — faith, grace

*May You receive the glory from all that they do. Amen.*

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### + Unpacking

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How was your experience of praying for others throughout the day?

Did you think of any new prayer requests for missionaries?

What do you want to remember most about today?

What did you learn about the Global Church today?

Prayer requests and/or answers to prayer:

### + Focal Point

Pick three people in ministry that you know, write their names and pray for them throughout the day.



## DAY 7

### + Matthew 25:31-46

“A beautiful paradox of serving that I’ve experienced is that while I am trying to be the hands and feet of Christ to bless someone, I see the face of Christ in them, because it is Christ I am serving. However, in our busy lives it is easy to just give money for other people to “do unto the least of these” and avoid doing it ourselves. I don’t believe Jesus is going to say ‘When I was hungry, you gave a check to the United Way and they fed me’.... Jesus is not seeking distant acts of charity. He is seeking concrete actions: ‘You fed me,....you visited me...’ The church becomes a distribution center, a place where the poor come to get stuff and the rich come to dump stuff. Both go away satisfied (the rich feel good, the poor get clothed and fed), *but no one leaves transformed*. No radical new community is formed,” cautions Shane Claiborne, a founding member of The Simple Way.

It *is* important to support ministries at work among the poor. They know the people they are serving and are equipped and able to serve effectively. But this does not excuse *us* from serving.

Mother Teresa says, “Calcuttas are everywhere if only we have eyes to see. Find your Calcutta.” Let’s dare to continue to give of ourselves and our time when we return home, remembering that it is Christ we serve.

### + Reflection

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What does it mean that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me”?

Have you experienced the paradox described above? When?

What does it mean that God “is seeking concrete actions”?

What does Claiborne mean by describing the church as a distribution center? Do you agree? Why or why not?

What is the importance of giving through an organization?

How can financial giving become an excuse not to serve? Do you see this in yourself? Can the opposite also be true?

What is the importance of building relationships with the Individuals, Communities, World, God and the Global Church when you are back at home, in your own “Calcutta”?

How easy or difficult is this for you to do?

What are some specific ways that you could become or are already involved in service in your community?

### + Focal Point

In what specific ways can I serve back at home?

*Father, as this trip comes to a close, I want to thank You for the blessings and challenges it has brought me. Thank You for calling me to a deeper faith and closer walk with You. Please help me to process what I have seen and experienced and apply it to life back at home. Help me as I transition home and share what I have learned with others. Please continue to bless the ministries and people that we have connected with. May we be Your hands and feet – and also your eyes, ears, voice, and heart - to this broken world. Amen.*

## + Returning Home...

It is important to reflect on how God has allowed you to see and experience many new things and a variety of ministries. You have been blessed in this way so you may in turn be a blessing to others. It is important to record some of what you have learned and how you will be different in the future because of the experiences you have had.

### *For each of the following,*

- + the place I visited...
- + these experiences...

### *ask yourself...*

- How was/were \_\_\_\_\_ different than I expected?
- How was/were \_\_\_\_\_ the same as I expected?
- What did I learn from \_\_\_\_\_?
- How is God working in \_\_\_\_\_?

## At Home

One of the greatest benefits of this type of experience is what can happen inside yourselves and how you can infect your friends and family with a renewed commitment to missions. Missions multiply as you tell your story, so it's important that you tell it well. You will be going home to people who likely haven't had the same experience, won't understand what you've been through and often won't seem to want to listen to you or your story. The following suggestions should help you readjust to being home again.

- + Keep your expectation level low about friends' response, but don't let that dampen the excitement of sharing your experience. Try to stay in touch with some of the people you met and got to know on the trip.
- + Review your journal. This will help you remember the growth you experienced on the trip and will bring specific instances to mind that you can tell your friends when they ask about the trip.
- + Contact prayer partners and supporters; thank them for their prayers during the trip and ask them to keep praying for you as you let the Holy Spirit keep working through you.

## Make the Most Out of "Small Talk"

Plenty of times you'll be asked, "How was your trip?" It can be hard to answer that in two minutes or less! Here's a tip: **Pick three key points of interest and say one sentence about each.** For example, "It was amazing. The homeowners showed incredible faith in God even through difficult times after the disaster, the church we stayed at was so hospitable and provided meals for us, and we really bonded as a team as we talked about what being a servant of Christ really means."

## Speaking From the Heart

You've had an amazing experience, volunteering your time to help others in need. Now you're home again, brimming with the wonder of the experience and eager to share it with others. But where do you begin? How do you condense your experience into a short summary, or 3-5 minute presentation?

Below is a rough speaking outline that you can use to develop a short presentation. Use this as a starting point, adapting it as needed to fit your situation.

### *Provide some background*

- + Your name, where you went, and when.
- + Why you went.
- + Briefly describe World Renew—a disaster response and development organization (an agency of the Christian Reformed Church) at work in 30 countries, focusing on:

**Disaster response** —providing for the immediate needs of disaster survivors and helping to repair and rebuild survivors' homes.

**Development** — helping men and women work together to overcome illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, child mortality, injustice, and other issues affecting them. Or, World Renew "teaches men and women to fish." As the adage says, "give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime."

### *Tell a story*

- + Briefly introduce a person that you encountered.
- + Talk about what his/her life or the community was like before and after the disaster.
- + Explain how you were a part of the rebuilding efforts.

### *Impact and thanks*

- + Express how the experience impacted you.
- + Let them know how to find out more about what you did and the ministry of World Renew.
- + Thank them for their time, and if applicable, prayers and financial support.

## + Keeping the Momentum

### Continue Journaling and Discussing

You will get more meaning out of the experience if you reflect on and discuss things like the following:

- + What was the most meaningful thing about the trip? The hardest thing? The most fun thing?
- + What are the most significant lessons God taught you?
- + What did God enable you to do that you didn't think you could do?
- + What did God teach you about Himself?
- + What did you learn about your own strengths and weaknesses during the project?
- + What was your greatest contribution to the project? To the team?
- + What did you learn from the people you met? What do you admire about them?
- + How would you describe your relationship with the Lord before and after your trip?
- + What are you going to do to continue growing your relationship with the Lord?
- + If given another chance, would you change the way you conducted yourself? How?

### Stay Practical and Realistic

If your excitement leads you to say, "I am going to pray for every disaster victim and other volunteers every day, and I'm going to memorize every verse in the Bible on missions," you are probably headed for failure. Instead, make one or two realistic goals to incorporate what you experienced into your daily life and what steps you can take to reach your goals. Write them down and refer to them often.

### Centering on God's Mission in the World

For centering your heart on God's mission in the world, start with one or two ideas below.

**Scripture:** Spend quality time in God's Word; let God show you his heart for the world.

**Pray:** Pray for the staff at the local organization you worked with, DRS staff, disaster victims, and other volunteers. Prayer was the first priority when Jesus saw the multitudes who were in need (Matt. 9:35-38).

**Reach out at home:** Pray regularly for one or two people who are not Christians and become intentional in your witness to them. Educate yourself on the needs in your community and find a way to volunteer.

**Learn:** Seek knowledge of current world events with a response of prayer and involvement. Devote yourself to learning more about one or two missionaries, ministries, or countries.

**Fellowship:** Have your small group work together on a service project or study a global need.

**Join:** Visit [facebook.com/WorldRenewDRS](https://www.facebook.com/WorldRenewDRS) to stay connected with others like you and find out about upcoming opportunities and needs.

**Give:** Be a good steward of your talents, time, and money. Make intentional lifestyle choices so that you have more to give and can share freely what God has entrusted to you. Create a personal financial strategy with targets for giving and stick to it.

**Encourage:** Continue to encourage the homeowner you met by writing letters and letting them know you are praying for them.

**Read:** Read missions biographies, newsletters, and websites. Look for resources to inspire and grow your vision, allowing you to see the people God uses. As you learn more, God will increase your ability to influence others for missions.

**Church:** Support missions in your church. Join the missions committee, attend mission's events, etc.

**Experience:** Prayerfully consider other opportunities to serve at home and on another DRS trip.

### Good Reads

*When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...or yourself*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. Christian perspectives on providing the "right" help to the poor, not in a way that promotes their dependence or feelings of inferiority.

*What Can I Do? Making a global difference right where you are*, by David Livermore. Learn about global issues, God's invitation to bring his redemptive love to the world, and how to realize this in your everyday life.

*Deep Justice Journeys: 50 Activities to Move from Mission Trips to Missional Living*, by Kara Powell and Brad Griffin.

*The Hole in Our Gospel*, by Richard Stearns, President of World Vision. Convicting and inspiring book about the realities of poverty and hurt in the world, and the opportunity (duty?) Christians have to "change the world."



## + A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with **discomfort** at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with **anger** at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with **tears** to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough **foolishness** to believe that you can make a difference in the world so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

## + Personal Reflections



+ **Personal Reflections**

+ **Personal Reflections**

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do.

—Ephesians 2:10



+ **Personal Reflections**

+ **Personal Reflections**

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion  
until the day of Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 1:6

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