
Prepared by Appalachian Mountain Ministry
Edited by Volunteers
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Foreword

What an exciting journey these past seventeen years have been for me while serving as a National Southern Baptist Convention Missionary to the Appalachian Mountain Region. From the first day till now, each day has dawned, filled with anticipation of what God is going to do next. The story of Appalachian Mountain Ministry is a story of God working through His people in a variety of ways across the mountains. It is the story of redemption and grace, the story of God meeting physical needs that results in the hearts of hurting people opening to hear the gospel story. It is the story of men and women, churches, and associations making tremendous sacrifices so that the love of Jesus would be demonstrated through His followers.

From the beginning, the purpose of Appalachian Mountain Ministry (AMM) has been to mobilize Southern Baptists and their resources to meet the physical and spiritual needs of persons living in Appalachia by focusing on four key areas:

1. **By sharing the gospel**, the good news of Jesus. As short-term mission volunteers have come and shared the gospel as they served, literally thousands of people have come to faith in Christ and new churches have been born.

2. **By supporting new church starts.** ARM does not start new churches or become directly involved in church planting; instead we come alongside a church planter and assist him with finding resources, short-term volunteers, and long-term partnerships.

3. **By strengthening existing churches.** From the beginning a key component of our work has been to come alongside an existing church that is struggling and through short-term mission volunteers and partnerships assist them in once again penetrating their community with the gospel. Our goal is to work through the existing pastor and church leadership.

4. **By serving the poor.** The Appalachian mountain range contains some of the deepest poverty in America. Across the region churches and associations have formed Compassionate Ministry sites that exist to minister to and assist those who are in poverty. For some the poverty is generational and for others it is a new era in their life brought about by the shifting world economy and government regulations that are being placed on industry. This area of responsibility is a major part of our work.

As you study the book of Acts and read through this revised edition of “Living Out the Book of Acts,” it is my prayer that God will use these devotionals to prepare you spiritually, relationally, and emotionally to be effective during your mission trip.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

*Bill Barker*
Appalachian Mountain Region Served by
Appalachian Mountain Ministry
The Book of Acts:  
A Training Manual for Twenty-first Century Christians

The Book of Acts is not an ancient book of the past, filled with stories of yesteryear; instead, it is a fascinating record of God at work and the advancement of His kingdom. The Book of Acts is a “training manual” for modern Christians, a contemporary guidebook for how the Christian faith most naturally speaks across cultures and around the world. In preparation for your mission trip to Appalachia, let me encourage you to repeatedly read Acts, not as some relic of the past, but as the living Word of God that will speak to you today. Seeing what worked so well almost 2,000 years ago will directly apply to your service to God today and can provide a welcome power boost to your Christian life. A serious study of Acts will bring new intimacy with the Father and new joy in doing His will.

Suggestions for Reading Acts

The book of Acts contains 28 chapters, making it easy to assimilate into daily Bible reading. For example, if you read

- 1 chapter a day, you will read through Acts once a month.
- 2 chapters a day, you will read through Acts twice a month.
- 4 chapters a day, you will read through Acts once a week.

Your study of the book of Acts will be enriched by reading it with pen and paper in hand. Each time you read through Acts look for key words, phrases, or ideas. Mark them in your Bible and note them on paper. Like a sociologist and anthropologist, look for the cultural issues. Like a missiologist (one who studies missions), observe how the Gospel was carried to the ends of the earth. Like a church planter, examine how Paul started and developed new works. Like a theologian, scan for key words and explore their usage. Like an evangelist, check for the methods used to declare the good news of Jesus and the results. Like a pastor, discover the process God used to mature His church and move it into ministry and missions. Finally, like a child, come asking the Holy Spirit to teach you the “truth” of God’s Word (John 16:13).

Ideas to Get You Started

1. Look for key words or phrases. For example, note Luke’s use of the words all, believe, prayer, the expressions used to identify the church, the various names used to refer to Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Circle or highlight each word or phrase.
2. Acts is a great book on cross-cultural evangelism. Mark each occasion and note how the Gospel is taken across cultural barriers.

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” – John 16:13
3. Identify the various types of ministry taking place in Acts: church starts, assistance for widows, relief for the poor, a clothing closet, etc.

4. Identify the different ways the Gospel is shared, the way Paul used his personal testimony to share his faith and reflect on how you can share your personal story of coming to faith in Christ.

Suggestions for Using This Devotional Guide

In the revised edition of “Living Out the Book of Acts,” we have added two additional devotions, a reflection, a prayer focus, and room for journaling. The forty-two devotions will allow you to follow one of two plans:

1. The Six-Week plan—reading one of the daily devotions each day, you will read through this guide in 42 days or six weeks.

2. The Seven-Week plan—reading one of the daily devotions daily, Monday through Saturday and using Sunday as a day to reflect on what you have already read, you will read through this guide in seven weeks. If you are reading this devotion as part of a group, this will allow you to use Sunday as a time to talk through what God is teaching you during this time of preparation for your mission trip.

   In the weeks ahead, as you get ready for your mission trip to Appalachia, spend time in prayer daily and in studying the Word of God. It is my prayer for you that God will use these daily devotional thoughts to spiritually prepare you for the wonderful missions opportunities you will soon experience. Thank you for joining me in reaching my people for Christ.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Bill Barker
Director of Appalachian Mountain Ministry

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel [my people] is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:1). (Bracketed words inserted for clarification.)

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Acknowledgements

The original “Living Out the Book of Acts” devotional guide was made available in digital form in January 2002. Since that time it has gone through a number of revisions. I am grateful for the many volunteers, who over the years who have assisted with the editing process. I am grateful for my wife of over 40 years who has read and reread these devotions, editing, correcting, and making multiple suggestions. Other volunteers who have assisted in the process have been Debbie McDowell, Jean Rabon (deceased), Terrie Hannah, and Kathie Aiken.

Two years ago it was suggested that we rework the existing devotional guide, narrowing down the content and making some changes that mission volunteer teams had been requesting. Kathie Aiken introduced me to Georgia Herod, an editor who volunteered her time and services. We are deeply indebted to Mrs. Herod for all her hard work and for the suggestions that she made as we walked through this process.

We are also indebted to those who have emailed or called telling us how this devotional guide helped to prepare them for their mission trip to Appalachia. To date over one million copies of the guide have been downloaded.
Prayer Journal Page

The location of our mission trip _________________________________________________________
Daily pray for the location where you will be serving on your mission trip.

The name of our contact person(s) _____________________________________________________
Daily pray for your contact person and those you will be serving with as they get ready for your team.

The name of our team leader ___________________________________________________________
Daily pray for your team leader as they prepare your team to be on mission.

List below the names of those on our mission team.
Daily pray for your team—for health, for wisdom, for spiritual growth, and for God to use them on this trip to share the good news of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you” (2 Thessalonians 1:11; 3:1).
Day 1
Missions Is Contagious

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . . (Matthew 28:19-20).

You are about to embark on an adventure that could change the direction of your life. Luke, the writer of the Books of Luke and Acts, was a Gentile medical doctor and historian, who set out to research the life and teachings of Christ for Theophilus, a Gentile convert (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). By Acts 16:10, Luke is no longer a mere observer of the early church growth movement; he has become a participant. Luke joins Paul at Philippi and then stays there until Paul returns from Jerusalem.

As you prepare for your mission trip, be forewarned that a mission trip to Appalachia will change your life. It is something more than the beautiful mountains and clear flowing streams; it is something more than the friendly people and smiling children; and it is something more than the vast unreached cities, small towns, and rural communities in Appalachia. It is an act of obedience to Christ, who has called us to be on mission for Him, a calling which is a contagious venture.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded every believer to witness (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) at home, to our neighbor, to the next city and state, our nation, and around the world. We are to witness to everyone—while conducting a Backyard Bible Club, while painting a house or church, or while building a new church.

Mike and Phyllis Watson were a happy Christian family living in South Carolina—until their pastor called, explaining that the church was sending a team to West Virginia to help construct a new church building, and they needed an electrician. Mike, an electrician, testifies that his family was so content with life that it did not take as much religion for them as most Christians; an occasional Sunday morning worship fix was adequate.

Reluctantly Mike and Phyllis agreed to help with the mission project. But something happened during that week—they caught the missions “bug” and found that they could not shake it. Returning home, they discovered that occasional church no longer filled the void in their lives. Soon they were attending every available activity at church and talking about the next mission trip. The Watsons were forever changed by missions: they would later return to West Virginia, where Mike served as a pastor. Later the Watsons...
served as missionaries with the North American Mission Board in the northern part of the state. In 2014, they relocated to Texas, where Mike now serves as a pastor.

The story of the Watsons is repeated numerous times across the many mission fields in our world. Something happens as we begin to serve with the unique gifts God has given us—whether we teach, do drama, or use our hands in servant evangelism. Something happens when we see a lost man or woman, teenager, or a boy or girl come to faith in Christ. Something happens when we repair the home of a widow on a fixed income, and she, with tears streaming down her face, gives praise to God for answered prayer. Something happens when we paint the face of a child at a block party and hand her a back-to-school pack and she says, “Thank you.” Yes, something happens that will forever change your life because missions is contagious!

**Reflect:** How has God drawn you to participate in this trip? What are your reasons for going on this mission trip?

**Pray:** Ask the Father to use you and your team in a special way. If you are brave and daring, ask the Heavenly Father to let you catch the “mission fever.” Isaiah caught it. To learn more, read Isaiah 6.

**Journaling:**
Day 2

The Kingdom of God

“He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

Preparing to go on a mission trip can be as exciting as the actual trip itself. First, there is the discovery stage when you sense God calling you to be on mission for Him. Then you (or your church) begin to gather information about the mission project and the people you will be working with.

Next comes the preparation stage, when a sense of excitement grips you and your team. Materials are gathered, team members recruited, money raised, and the whole church is involved through prayer. You begin your journey through the Book of Acts, preparing yourself spiritually for the “mission” God has called you to do. Your mission is about the Kingdom of God.

The Book of Acts opens and closes with the Kingdom of God. It starts with a description of the ministry of Jesus during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension to Heaven, telling us that Jesus spoke to His apostles “of things concerning the kingdom of God” (1:3). At the end of Acts, we find the apostle Paul under house arrest in Rome, receiving visitors and preaching to them with urgency the Kingdom of God (28:31).

What is the Kingdom of God? Peter Wagner, in his book, Acts of the Holy Spirit, says, “The kingdom of God is present, first and foremost, wherever Jesus Christ is acknowledged and served as King. It is essentially a spiritual kingdom; it also has tangible, visible manifestations.”

He continues, “In another sense, the Kingdom of God is future as well as present. There will be a day when Jesus ‘delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death’ (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). As long as death is with us, the future Kingdom has not yet arrived.”

Until that day comes, God has enlisted us to advance His Kingdom by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

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Your mission trip is kingdom business. Whether you are driving nails in a new church building, going door to door surveying a community, teaching a Bible class, or passing out food boxes, you are advancing the Kingdom of God. You will be pointing men and women, teenagers, boys and girls to Jesus, who offers them a life better than they ever dreamed of, abundant life (John 10:10). However, keep in mind, as you advance the Kingdom of God, you will be invading Satan’s kingdom. Every time you become salt and light, every time a lost person is saved, you extend the Kingdom of God. Therefore, during this time of preparation be alert to Satan’s tactics to keep you from invading his kingdom (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19).

Reflect: How may you best prepare yourself to be “on mission”? How do you see yourself as a citizen of the Kingdom?

Pray: In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Today, and every day, in the weeks ahead, make this your prayer.

Journaling:
Day 3
You Are a Missionary!

“You shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8)
“Simply put, you will tell everyone, everywhere, about Me.”

With tears streaming unashamedly down his cheeks, a middle-aged man approached me at the end of a presentation on ministry in Appalachia. That evening, in a middle Tennessee church, I had felt led to focus on building construction and home repair as a way to be engaged in missions.

I had stated that each man, woman, and teenager who worked in construction and home repair was a witness and their witnessing role was just as important as the preacher who preached, the teacher who taught a Backyard Bible Club, or the door-to-door surveyor who witnessed and invited the community to Christ and the local Southern Baptist church. The uniqueness of missions is that God takes our abilities, talents, and spiritual gifts and uses them to His glory. I concluded by challenging the congregation to take their skills and offer them to God to be used as a witness.

With an obvious speech impediment, the man explained to me that nine years earlier he had felt God calling him to the ministry, yet with his speech difficulty, he had wondered how he could ever witness for Christ. That evening it had become clear: as a professional house painter, he saw the value of his witness with a paintbrush. He could do servant evangelism. He could be a witness. A church from Asheville, North Carolina, had taken on the task of repairing a church building in North Georgia. Though the church was in a growing community, it lacked the funds to repair their facilities. Now a sister church had come to help. While the men painted and repaired the building, the women and youth had been busy with Backyard Bible Clubs and a community survey. Each evening revival services were held, and the community responded by attending.

In Eastern Kentucky and Southern West Virginia, Southern Baptists were arriving to repair the homes of flood victims, often in communities that had no Southern Baptist church. The homes belonged to families on fixed incomes. As teams replaced leaking roofs, repaired sagging porches, and restored damaged walls, they all shared the Good News of Jesus, and people were trusting Christ.

Witnessing for Christ by sharing the glorious salvation found in Him is the great task of every believer.

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2Author’s paraphrase.
Jesus said, “You,” meaning each one of us, “shall be witnesses to Me.” We shall tell His story to everyone. Witnessing for Christ by sharing the glorious salvation found in Him is the great task of every believer. Because of Christ, men and women can be delivered from sin, death, and hell—and live forever.

Jesus did not use the word “witness” as a command. Rather, He implied that it is a natural result of the Holy Spirit within a person. Jesus says very simply that a Spirit-filled person has power and becomes a witness for Him throughout the world. Power and witnessing are trademarks of Christian believers. A genuine believer possesses both the Spirit and power in his or her life and becomes by nature, a witness for the Lord.

**Reflect:** Write out your story of salvation (your testimony) and practice sharing it with someone.

**Pray:** Ask God to provide an opportunity for you to share your testimony today. Surrender your talents, skills, and abilities to Him and ask Him to use them as a witness. Looking ahead to the mission trip, ask God to provide opportunities for you to witness for Him through the power of His Holy Spirit. Then pray for over 19 million individuals living in Appalachia who are lost and in desperate need of salvation. God is calling you to be His witness in Appalachia.

**Journaling:** See Appendix C on page 99.
Day 4
Missions Begins at Home—Discovering Jerusalem

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In His final statement to the disciples, before His ascension back to Heaven, Jesus gave a simple strategy for spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. The believer is to begin witnessing right where he or she lives (their Jerusalem) and move progressively outward (Judea and Samaria) until he or she is having a part in reaching the ends of the earth. That is, every believer is to see to it that Christ is well known throughout his or her home and community as well as being engaged in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Thus, each believer is to go as far as they can personally go, give as sacrificially as they can for others to go, and to use and support every means they can to reach the world with the Gospel.

Today, twenty-one centuries later, many Christians are still trying to discover their Jerusalem. They give to the mission offerings, support the Cooperative Program Missions, and brag about the 1,000s of Southern Baptist career missionaries serving across North America and around the world. Yet, many have not discovered their own Jerusalem.

Every believer is to see to it that Christ is well known throughout his or her community as well as being engaged in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Today, North America is the largest English-speaking mission field in the world with over 260 million unchurched people. Many of our churches are in communities that are 70 to 90 percent unchurched; where 9 out of every 10 people are lost and headed into eternity—without God and without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12).

We must reach out with the gospel into metro cities like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where close to two million people are unchurched; we must reach rural counties like those in West Virginia that are 85 to 90 percent unchurched; and we must reach the community where you live. One person lost without Christ, is one person too many.

Recently, I went trout fishing for the first time and made some interesting discoveries. First, it was a bit expensive. I had to purchase a rod and reel, lures, a fishing license, and several other items the clerk said I would need. Second, I had to go to where the fish were located. Strange as it may seem, the fish did not come up to where I parked my vehicle. Instead, I had to climb (slipping, sliding, and falling would better describe my descent) down a steep embankment to the river’s edge. Then swatting gnats and mosquitoes, I fished. For over an hour I fished and caught nothing. Then I noticed that the men who were catching the trout were wading out into the cold mountain stream. So, climbing over the jagged,
slippery rocks, I joined them. It wasn’t long until I had a nibble, then a strike, and finally I pulled in a very small trout.

Churches and individuals that experience effective mission trips are already active doing missions at home. They have discovered their Jerusalem and are effectively reaching it for Christ as they progressively move out into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

One such church, First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia, is literally reaching around the world through volunteer missions. During a visit to the church, toured the church facilities with their Minister of Missions, who explained that everything they did locally was targeted to reaching their community: the health clinic, the food pantry, the family life center, and on and on the list went. It was no surprise when I later learned that FBC Jonesboro was one of the leading churches in Georgia in both evangelism and missions. It is my observation that churches and individuals who are reaching those around them are effective in reaching the unchurched in Appalachia. Why? God honors obedience.

Reflect: Have you discovered your Jerusalem? Are you doing all you can to reach those around you who are unchurched?

Pray: Ask God to use you to reach your community for Christ. Remember, to catch fish you must go to where the fish are located. To reach the lost, you must go to where the lost live, play, and work. Ask God to open your eyes to see the lost around you and reveal to you ways that you can effectively share the gospel with them.

Journaling:
Day 5
All Kinds of People

“And when [the apostles] had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James” (Acts 1:12-13).

God calls people with different skills, experiences, and backgrounds to accomplish His mission. Look at the disciples Jesus chose. Peter, James, and John were businessmen. All three were fishermen with rather large businesses (Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:2-3). One apostle was perhaps wealthy: Matthew, the tax collector. His house was large enough to handle a huge crowd for a feast (Luke 5:27-29). Simon the Zealot was a political nationalist, an insurrectionist pledged to overthrow the Roman government and to assassinate as many Roman officials and Jewish cohorts as possible (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). One was evidently deeply religious: Nathanael (John 1:48).

Their personalities were also a strange mixture. Matthew, a tax collector ostracized by the Jewish community, was bound to be a hard-crusted, non-religious individual (Matthew 9:9). The fishermen James and John were a rough breed with thundering personalities (Mark 3:17). Simon the Zealot possessed a fanatical, nationalistic spirit (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Peter was a loud, rough-hewn personality (Mark 14:71). The power of Christ to give purpose and meaning to life and to bring peace among men is clearly seen in His ability to bring so diverse a group together under one banner. They came together with singleness of purpose: to follow Christ and be on mission with Him (Matthew 4:19; 9:9).

When we become involved in missions, personalities, culture, and ambitions become blended together for a common cause. That does not mean that there will not be misunderstandings, but it does mean that the common goal of being on mission for Christ takes priority over personal agendas and personalities. When Christians become totally involved in His ministry, individual needs and desires fade away.

A mission team came as one of twelve construction teams building an educational unit for a church in West Virginia. As I became acquainted with them and watched them at work, I discovered a wide mixture of personalities and skills: a petroleum engineer, a building contractor, a retired military officer (he was their Peter), a supervisor, a preacher, a nurse, two businessmen, a secretary, and several homemakers. Yet, with singleness of mind, they were working together. While the men worked on the building, the youth were busy conducting Backyard Bible Clubs throughout the community. By Friday, the team had accomplished its assigned task and celebrated with a “community fair” (Block Party). Over 300
people from the community joined in the fun, though the pastor had assured them that he would be surprised if they had more than 30 people.

Recently, I revisited that church which had averaged fewer than 30 in Sunday School before the twelve mission teams came and constructed the educational unit. That Sunday, 77 people gathered to study the Bible, worship God and fellowship together. Twelve diverse teams, bound together with singleness of purpose, and focused on being on mission for God, accomplished their goal of sharing the gospel and advancing the Kingdom of God.

**Reflect:** How do you anticipate God using your gifts, background, and personality on this project? What is your purpose in going on mission?

**Pray:** Ask the Father to enable your mission team to become so focused on Him and the mission project He has called you to do, that personalities and personal agendas fade away, and His cause becomes the only thing that really matters.

**Journaling:**
Day 6
The Secret to Missions, Part One

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said . . .” (Acts 2:14).

When Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood and delivered his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he launched New Testament missions. Three years earlier, he had heard the call to missions when Jesus said to him and his brother Andrew, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). The Bible says, “They immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Mark 1:18). God honored their availability and obedience.

Over two thousand years later, God calls every Christian to be on mission for Him. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) was not a command given just to the eleven disciples who were with Jesus that day; it is a command for all believers, in every generation. At the heart of the Great Commission is this truth, “Every Christian is a missionary and every sinner is a mission field.”

Evangelical Christianity in America needs to rediscover that truth. Today the United States and Canada form the third largest mission field in the world with over 224 million people lost without Christ. Twenty-first century Christians need to rediscover the heart of missions, which is God’s passion announced in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, also clearly declared God’s heartbeat: “The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Availability. When God calls us to be on mission for Him, He never asks about our ability; He asks for our availability. In fact, if we go on mission for Him and trust in our ability to accomplish the assigned task, we will fail. We are to go where He sends us, trusting Him to take our abilities and to use them for His glory. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, an unschooled fisherman, speaking in a heavy Galilean accent, “raised his voice” and declared to a crowd of thousands the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He addressed Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from many nations for the Jewish religious festivities—men and women from every lifestyle, including scholars, businessmen, and religious leaders. “That day about 3,000 people [believed and became disciples]” (Acts 2:41).

Like Peter, our availability should never be an issue when it comes to obeying Christ by being on mission. When you trusted Christ for your salvation, at that moment you surrendered and dedicated yourself to serve Jesus Christ throughout all your life, no matter the cost. To “call on the name of the Lord” means total surrender and dedication of all you are and have (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; 12:1-2; Luke 9:23;
When I acknowledge His Lordship, I also recognize He is Master and I am His servant, that He is the Potter and I am the clay to be molded according to His plan (Romans 1:1; 9:20-24; Isaiah 64:8).

While God calls some to a specific task or mission field, He has called each of us to be on mission for Him, sharing Christ right where we are, in whatever we do day by day. God is more interested in our availability than our abilities.

Reflect: On a scale of one to ten, rate your “availability” to be used by God. How do you respond to God’s passion for the world?

Pray: Ask God to increase your availability for His glory. Then, be ready to respond today to His call.

Journaling:
Day 7
The Secret of Missions, Part Two

“Peter . . . said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men’” (Acts 5:29).

It is easier to talk about missions than to do missions. It is easier to study missions than to do missions. In fact, it is easier to give to missions than to do missions. The typical Southern Baptist is very missions minded. However, Christians are not called merely to be missions minded. God has called each one of us to be on mission for Him. When we understand His call on our life, recognize His Lordship, and make ourselves available, God can and will use us to reach a lost world with the Gospel and bring glory to Him.

Obedience. When God calls us to be on mission for Him, we have two choices: obedience or disobedience. Abraham, at seventy-five, heard the call of God to be on mission—leave the city of Ur and move to a land he knew not, living out of a tent. Abraham obeyed God (Genesis 12:1-5). Moses heard the call of God to be on mission—to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of bondage. While Moses expressed reluctance at first, he understood the importance of obedience and returned to accomplish God’s will (Exodus 3:1-4:23).

The Bible is filled with the stories of men and women who heard the call of God and in obedience went out on mission. In every generation, God calls men, women, and teenagers to be on mission for Him. Jesus spoke of the cost of obedience, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:26-27). John’s Gospel records other occasions when Jesus spoke of obedience. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (10:27). “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor” (12:26).

Don Deel knows the importance of availability and obedience. Like many native West Virginians, Don left the mountains, went off to college, vowing never to return except to visit family. In the middle of a successful career as an engineer, God called Him to be a preacher. Returning to school, he prepared for the ministry. Later, while serving as a pastor, the call of God again came, this time for Don and his wife Cathy to go to Russia and serve through the International Mission Board (SBC). Then, after five years of service, the telephone rang, and Don was asked one simple question: “Isn’t it time you came home to West Virginia?” Even though Don had firmly stated he had no desire to return to West Virginia, whether or not to return to the mountains was not the question. The question for the Deels was “Do we obey?” After a time of prayer, they called the Mountain State Baptist Association and began the process of returning home. Don would serve for fifteen years as their Associational Missionary before retiring in 2013.
Similar stories of obedience are repeated throughout Appalachia as men and women come to be on mission in reaching the over 19 million unchurched people who live in the region. Each year, pastors, like Bill Mason, pastor of the Morris Hill Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, involve their congregation in missions in Appalachia, where they make an eternal difference in the lives of people. When we step out by faith, God honors our availability and obedience.

Reflect: Recall times when God has called you to serve. What was your response each time?

Pray: Ask God to give you a sensitive heart to His will and to prepare the hearts of those you will be working with and ministering to during your mission trip.

Journaling:
Day 8
Discovering Your Judea

“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. [They were] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-45, 47).

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded the church to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, beginning in Jerusalem and then moving out to Judea. If we understand Jerusalem to be people just like us and Judea to be people similar, but different from us—a different ethnic group, culture, or class with minor differences, then who is our Judea? The neighbors down the street, the community across the mountain, or the town at the other end of the county?

Discovering your Judea is exciting, especially if you desire to reach “your Judea” with the Good News of Jesus. Three groups of people inhabited Jerusalem. The first group consisted of the Judean and Galilean Hebrews, Jews who were similar, but distinctively different. They spoke Aramaic and worshiped regularly at the Temple. The second group was the Hellenistic Jews, a part of the “Jewish dispersion.” Because they desired to worship God at the Temple or for business reasons, they lived in Jerusalem, but had come “from every nation under Heaven” (Acts 2:5). This group spoke Greek as their trade language; if they spoke Aramaic, they spoke it with an accent. The third group was the Gentiles who were there either with the Roman government or for trade.

As the early church began to emerge, they discovered their Judea, the Hellenistic Jews. On the Day of Pentecost, hardly any Hellenists, even though they were full-blooded Jews, had become followers of Jesus as the Messiah. However, by the time we get to Acts 6, we see a sizeable portion of the membership coming from this group. What had opened the door for them to be receptive of the Gospel? The early chapters of Acts reveal that the church ministered to needs in their Judea (Acts 4:32-37; 6:1-3).

The Powell River Baptist Association in Lee County, Virginia, under the part-time leadership of retired associational missionary Larry Eakes, discovered their Judea through ministry. That year during a monthly associational meeting, fifteen lay men and women and three pastors discussed over twenty-five ongoing ministries that addressed the needs of Lee County, including home repair, food pantries, clothing closets, medical clinics, hot meals for the elderly, youth-related activities, job training, and marriage enrichment.
I listened tearfully as each person talked about reaching unchurched people for Christ. One Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) Director told of a food box ministry to needy families that had resulted in two families and several children and youth coming to Christ. The youth, dividing into four groups, had marched across the county, each carrying either a cross or a Bible. They walked for a week from the extreme corners of the county towards the county seat, stopping to visit and witness at every opportunity. In the process, they raised enough money to put handicap ramps and porches on several homes using mission volunteers. Another church shared how many senior adults in their section of Lee County were shut-in and lonely. They started a hot meal program that feeds nearly forty elderly people once a week. The church prepares meals based on the dietary needs of the individuals, and when they are delivered, the person making the delivery stays to visit and assist with any needs the family might have, such as emptying the trash or picking up a gallon of milk. Is it any wonder that lost people are now showing up, wanting to help?

Reflect: Who is your Judea? What needs do you observe just “down the street”?

Pray: As you prepare to come to Appalachia on missions, ask the Heavenly Father to open your eyes to your Judea.

Journaling:
Day 9
Sowing Seeds of the Gospel

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14).

At the heart of missions is the passion to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ. On your mission trip, you will be involved in one or more stages of reaching people with the Good News of salvation.

In the parable of the Seed and the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:1-20), Jesus illustrated the importance of sowing the seed of the Gospel. In the parable, Jesus taught truths that apply to volunteer missions. First, Jesus assumed that those listening to Him understood that the soil must be cultivated before the seed could be sown. Second, in order to have a harvest, seed must first be sown. You cannot reap a harvest where the seed of the Gospel has not been sown; you cannot reap a heart that has not been seeded with the Gospel. The third truth is that only some of the seed you sow will be harvested. While some will respond to the Gospel, others will not. Still others will respond, but in time will fall away and return to the old life. Your responsibility is to sow the seeds of the Gospel to the best of your ability. Fourth, Jesus taught that the sower of the seed and the reaper of the harvest are equally important (John 4:36-38). The apostle Paul emphasized this truth to the church at Corinth when he explained that “[he] planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Missions in Appalachia is multifaceted. One mission team may be involved in home repair, another in a community survey project, another in passing out light bulbs, with each event designed to cultivate the soil. Another team may be involved in Vacation Bible School, passing out “I Care” packets to white-water rafters, or organizing a block party, all of which are seed sowing events. Then comes the harvest. The cultivating, seed sowing, and harvest may occur within the same week, or you may be involved in cultivating and seed sowing and never see the harvest this side of eternity. For example, when a church in South Carolina traveled to Lynch, Kentucky, to do a home repair project and other mission activities, they had the privilege of leading eight boys and girls to faith in Christ. Another team also traveled to do home repair, and while they shared the Gospel with several in the community, they saw no results.

Several years ago I led a mission team to serve with a church in Southern West Virginia, where we saw little response to the Gospel. I left discouraged. However, a few years later I revisited that church and listened as members explained how that summer had been a turning point in the life of their church. They had grown from a church averaging in the low 30s to averaging in the high 70s. Once they had few children

Whether planned or unplanned, acts of kindness are great ways to reach out to lost people and show them God's love in a practical way. Each act of kindness done in Jesus’ name is sowing another seed of the gospel.
and no youth, but that Sunday, babies, children, youth, and young couples were in the service. Did the forty-five mission volunteers from our church fail when we went home with no glowing report of professions of faith? No! God used us and other teams that summer to prepare the soil and sow the seed for the harvest. We planted, another mission team watered, but God gave the increase.

Reflect: How was your heart soil cultivated? Who was significant in cultivating, then sowing the seeds of salvation in you? Who led you to accept Jesus as Savior?

Pray: Thank God for those you mentioned above. Then ask God to use you and your mission team effectively in cultivating the soil for Gospel sowing and to effectively sow the seed.

Journaling:

Random or not-so-random acts of kindness might include a free car wash (no donations accepted), giving away cold drinks on a hot day at a park, washing car windows at an intersection, blessing needy families with bags of groceries, raking leaves for neighbors, or cleaning restrooms at local businesses.
Day 10
The Impact of Missions

“And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him” (Acts 3:9-11).

Missions has a direct impact on three groups of people: the doer, the receiver, and the observer. Likewise it opens the door to the sharing of the good news of Christ. In the healing of the lame man who sat at the Temple gate begging for money (Acts 3:1-26), we can see each. First, the healing directly affected the lame man. His feet and anklebones were healed and strengthened, and he, “walking, leaping, and praising God, went into the temple with them” (3:8). Second, it had an impact on Peter and John. This miracle clearly affirmed to the disciples that Jesus was alive and that His power was just as active upon earth at that moment as it had been when they had walked across the Palestinian countryside with Him. It also affirmed that Jesus was now working through His followers to save and heal the world. His followers were now His instruments and His witnesses to a world lost in suffering and death, sin and shame. Third, all the people who had gathered at the Temple for the three o’clock prayer service observed the miracle, which opened the door for Peter to present the Gospel (3:12-26).

Today, Jesus’ presence and power are still working through His disciples. His great love for the world is still flowing through the lives of His followers. In fact, Jesus has . . .

- no feet but our feet.
- no hands but our hands.
- no voice but our voice.

If we do not go . . . and do not act . . . and do not speak, His work does not get done.

Rocky Fork Baptist Church in Iva, South Carolina, decided to be “the hands and feet of Jesus,” after I presented the mission opportunities available in Appalachian, they began to collect food for West
Charleston Baptist Church, an inner city ministry. A list of staple food items for a family of four was compiled and taped to a cardboard box. Each family was encouraged to take a box home and over the next couple of weeks fill it with the listed items. The idea quickly caught on. Soon families living in the community, who did not attend church, were coming by and asking if they could participate. Attendance on Sunday morning increased, and a sense of excitement permeated the congregation. Finally, the day came when the pastor and two men from the church loaded the largest U-Haul truck they could rent with food boxes and drove to Charleston, West Virginia, to deliver the food, leaving behind half a truck load of food to be taken later. Then, “in Jesus’ name,” the boxes of food were passed out to needy families, thus opening a door to share the Gospel.

Your mission opportunity will affect you, those you help, and those who are observing you, both at the mission site and at home, and the door for sharing the Gospel will open. You may not know until heaven the full impact your obedience had in bringing lost men, women, teenagers, and children to faith in Christ.

Reflect: Imagine you witnessed the healing of the lame man. What would be your response?

Pray: Ask God to use your mission activity as an open door to share the Good News of Christ with those who are lost, both at your church and at the mission site. Pray that God will enable you to be a faithful witness for Him.

Journaling:
Day 11
A God-Sized Opportunity Results in Devil-Sized Obstacles

“Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:1-4).

Problems, obstacles, and setbacks will undoubtedly come as you prepare for your mission trip. Whenever we advance the Kingdom of God, we invade Satan’s kingdom and difficulties begin to crop up. Occasionally Satan uses church members to discourage us; at other times he uses his arsenal of weapons, which include discouragement, misunderstanding, or financial difficulties to keep us from sharing Jesus with those who are lost.

In the name of Jesus a lame man had been healed (Acts 3:6-8), and “all the people saw him walking and praising God” (3:9). One would think that everyone would join in praising God for this miracle. Not so. The response of the Jewish leaders was to incarcerate Peter and John.

Throughout the year many churches contact me (bbarker@gabaptist.org) looking for mission opportunities. When a church agrees to join with another church or ministry to reach a community for Christ, and then fails to follow through with their commitment, disappointment and discouragement grip the receiving church, and a mad scramble is made to find a replacement. Often no team is found. Some churches and associations, though, see the difficulties as bumps to climb over, and the challenges as opportunities for God to demonstrate His greatness.

Beacon Baptist Church in Georgia explored the possibility of bringing a summer mission team to Northern Appalachia; eventually, they focused on an opportunity in Ohio. When the pastor introduced the idea to the leadership team, several opposed the idea because of the cost and distance. As the missions committee moved forward, the church experienced conflict due to a building program. Several families left; the associate pastor resigned, and the pastor became ill. When it was suggested that perhaps the mission trip be cancelled, a member asserted that if they had felt God had called them to be “on mission” in Ohio, then that same God was still calling them to be on mission in Ohio. “Perhaps,” he suggested, “this would be a time to exercise faith and obedience.”

The church maintained their commitment to the Ohio mission trip. The teams began to prepare and raise the money needed to accomplish the mission opportunities.
During the week in Ohio, missions took various forms: Vacation Bible School during the morning hours, home repairs and community survey work in the afternoon, and revival services at night, culminating on Friday with a Community Fair (Block Party). During the course of the week many lives were touched in the community, friendships were developed, and several adults, youth, and children made professions of faith.

As you prepare for your mission trip, do not let the difficulties discourage you. Remember that God-sized opportunities result in devil-sized obstacles. In the middle of reporting on the setbacks facing Peter and John, Luke informs us of the salvation of thousands. He is also reminding us that when we invade Satan’s kingdom there will be problems, but God is greater, and when we trust Him, the Kingdom of God is advanced.

Reflect: What obstacles or difficulties have come your way? How have you responded to them?

Pray: Ask God to enable you to encounter problems as steppingstones to greater faith and increased prayer.

Journaling:
Day 12
The Heart of Missions Is Jesus

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name . . . by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Alma shared with me the Meals on Wheels outreach ministry of her church, and then she said, “And we do it all in the name of Jesus.” Olinger First Baptist Church (Virginia) each year prepares homemade apple butter and delivers a jar to every home in their community. Each jar has a label that reads, “Given in Jesus’ name.” All across Appalachia, ministry centers provide assistance to hurting families “in the name of Jesus.” From time to time, I find a plaque on a church building constructed by volunteers that reads, “Built in Jesus’ name.”

In Acts 4, Peter and John were called before the Council to explain their actions in the healing of the lame man. In response to their inquiry, Peter shared the source of his power, the name of Jesus Christ, and He proclaimed salvation that is in Jesus alone (4:8-12).

At the heart of all that happens in missions is Jesus. As you prepare for your mission experience, it is not about you, your preacher, your church, your association, or Southern Baptists; it is all about Jesus. It is not about the physical needs of Appalachia, though there are places where the physical needs are overwhelming; it is all about Jesus. It is not about the spiritual needs of Appalachia, though parts of Appalachia are over 85% unchurched; it is all about Jesus. It is not about your personal search for a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment; it is all about Jesus. If your primary motivation for doing missions is anything other than Jesus, you will become frustrated and return home disillusioned at the conclusion of your missions experience.

The motivating force in the life of the early disciples was Jesus. They were convinced that the decisive, redemptive act of God had taken place in Jesus Christ and there was no other hope for lost humanity. Therefore, they boldly declared Him as both Savior and Lord (Acts 2:36, 4:12, 10:36) and the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 3:20, 4:12, 5:31; 1 Timothy 2:5). They were also convinced that all who had not entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the miracle of the new birth (John 3:3-8) were lost “without God and without hope” (Ephesians 2:12). Thus, driven by the Great Commission, the
early disciples went forth believing that the Gospel was for all who would repent and by faith come to Christ, trusting Him and Him alone for salvation (2 Peter 3:9; Ephesians 2:8-9).³

The early disciples endured hardship, persecution, and even death because of their firm conviction that their only hope for lost humanity was Jesus—no other name, no other way, no other hope. Every Bible lesson that is taught, every sermon that is preached, every nail that is driven, every mile that is walked in prayer, every gift that is handed out is about Jesus. If you are motivated by any other calling or desire—do not come to Appalachia for missions until your motivation changes.

Reflect: Search your heart to make sure that you are motivated by Jesus alone. How is He drawing you to Himself?

Pray: If you find you are motivated by guilt or the manipulation of a friend, confess that to God and ask Him to fill your heart with a passion to do missions “in Jesus’ name.” Then, ask the Heavenly Father to use you to sow the seeds of the Gospel and to lead a lost person to faith in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to prepare not only the heart of the lost person you will encounter but also your mind so that you can share the Gospel effectively with him or her.

Journaling:

³See Appendices A and B for more information on how to receive Christ and how to get started in your Christian life. A careful study of these two sections will better equip you to share the gospel with others.
Day 13
No Cost Is Too Great

“No when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. . . . So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:13; 18-20).

Like thousands of Americans, I sat glued to the television waiting for the latest news on the nine coal miners trapped 240 feet beneath the surface of the earth in Pennsylvania in July 24-28, 2002. While working a seam of coal, they had broken into an abandoned mine filled with water, and in moments, they were trapped. Within hours the focus of the nation was on Somerset, Pennsylvania, as television crews arrived and live coverage of the recovery operation was reported all across America and around the world. Special prayer meetings were held, particularly in the coal mining communities throughout Appalachia.

The nation watched as rescue personnel from across the southeastern United States worked tirelessly around the clock in an effort to reach the stranded miners. First, a smaller air hole was drilled into the area where the miners were thought to be located in order to pump in air, and then they began drilling a larger hole through which to save the miners, if they were still alive. No cost was spared in the recovery operation. The lives of nine men was the consuming passion and paramount concern for the moment. Then early Sunday morning, July 28, 2002, the nation watched and exhaled as all nine miners emerged alive and in good condition, considering the ordeal they had just endured. Prayers of thanksgiving and praise were uttered in churches all across the land. Nine men had been spared a horrible death. No one complained about the costly rescue operation, the man-hours put into the task, or the personal inconvenience the ordeal put him or her through. They rejoiced in the rescue of nine men.

Appalachian Mountain Ministry serves over 19 million lost people for whom Christ died. These are not individuals who are in danger of perishing in a mining accident; they are people who are perishing without Christ in Appalachia.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;
Tell the poor wand’rer a Savior has died.

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

— Fanny Crosby
Every mission project provides an opportunity for Southern Baptists to “rescue the perishing.” Like the mining rescue--

- No cost should be spared. The soul of a lost person is priceless. Jesus died for the lost (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- Total dedication and focus should be given to rescuing the perishing.
- Every resource should be made available.
- Tireless energy and effort should be put into the opportunity.

While thousands prayed and families gathered in hope of a successful rescue, there was no guarantee that the coal miners would be rescued alive, in spite of the countless hours of labor and the millions of dollars spent. Likewise, as you prepare to go on your mission trip to rescue the perishing, you have no guarantee. Like the disciples, we boldly go in the name of Jesus; like Paul we go tirelessly with tears (Acts 20:31; Psalms 126:5), taking the gospel message to those who are lost in the darkness of sin. We go, sharing the gospel as effectively as we can, trusting God for the salvation of those who are lost and perishing.

Reflect: How do you respond to the story of the miners’ rescue? How does it connect with sinners trapped in sin?

Pray: Ask the Heavenly Father to kindle the hearts of the lost people in Appalachia. Pray that God will use you to share the Gospel with passion.

Journaling:
Day 14
The Power of Prayer

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

When God’s people pray, God acts. When God moves, amazing things happen! As the Spirit of God moved upon the early church, ministry and evangelism occurred. As the Spirit of God began to move in Eastern Kentucky, ministry and evangelism began to take place. Eastern Kentucky is the heart of Appalachia, and like the surrounding region, it has immense poverty and high unemployment. Meeting the physical needs of hurting people is critical if you are going to talk to them about their spiritual needs.

In the mid-1990’s Southern Baptist leaders across Eastern Kentucky intentionally and collectively started praying for revival. When the prayer meetings started, Kentucky Baptists had four ministry centers serving Eastern Kentucky, each often struggling to find volunteers to operate the facilities. As the Spirit of God moved, a grass roots movement began with churches and associations looking for ways to address the physical needs of the people. Ministry centers were established, food pantries opened, literacy classes started, home repair programs began, and creative ways to do ministry came forth. By 2002, thirty-eight ministry centers operated in Eastern Kentucky with thousands of mission volunteers involved, and churches across the region reported an increase in baptisms and church attendance. At the July 2002 Mountain Mission Conference, as pastors shared about the number of people being saved, David Aker, then Regional Mountain Missionary for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, observed, “It is as we touch lives and meet needs that we earn the opportunity to share the gospel.” Earlier Aker had reported that in 2001, the total additions by baptism in Eastern Kentucky by Southern Baptist churches had exceeded additions by transfer and that the region had one reported baptism for every twenty-eight active church members (Nationally it is one for every 48 active church members.).

A college girl came to Kentucky as a Summer Missionary to serve in Pike County. One spring day, while she was in prayer, the Spirit of God spoke to her, telling her it was “the time of the harvest.” She understood this to mean that God would use her to win someone to Christ. During her first seven weeks, she personally led 138 people to Christ. Carl Boyd, the Director of Missions during this same time, personally led 45 others to faith in Christ. Another report told of five children and five adults being saved

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4Carl Boyd has since retired as the Director of Missions for the Pike Baptist Association.
in a Vacation Bible School in Beattyville. A report from Hazard told of a mission team from Anderson, South Carolina, taking 11,000 pounds of food and distributing them in one of the “hollers” (that’s a hollow for city folk), then following it up with a “holler party” (block party), where five people trusted Christ. Then the same mission team borrowed a front yard and showed the Jesus film. Over 100 people showed up and for two hours they listened intently to the story of Jesus. When the invitation was given, several more trusted Christ. A mission team from South Carolina reported that during a home repair project in Lynch, Kentucky, people were saved; still other reports told of new church starts, growing churches, and renewed hope as the Spirit of God moved across Eastern Kentucky.

**Reflect:** How might you serve a lost person today in order to open the door for sharing Jesus? Plan and do an act of kindness.

**Pray:** Daily pray for the area and church or ministry center where you will be serving. Pray for the leadership and for the specific project your team will be doing. Pray that God will tenderize the hearts of lost people and that He will use you to point those folks to faith in Christ.

**Journaling:**
Day 15
Cultures in Collision

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1).

How do we deal with cultural issues? In Acts 6:1, we read of two cultures colliding within the church. The first culture was the Hebrews, who were Jews born and reared in Palestine. They spoke Aramaic, the language derived from their ancient Hebrew language. They used only the Torah and other scriptures in the original Hebrew language. The Hebrews, or Palestinian Jews, were so exclusive that they despised all Gentiles and the Gentile culture. They actually cursed the Gentiles, believing that God had cursed them for eternity.

This hatred also spilled over onto the second group—Grecian Jews, who had adopted the Greek culture, spoke the Greek language, and used the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. Known as the Hellenists, these Grecian Jews had been deported and dispersed all over the world by the Romans. Many of them would return to Jerusalem for the great Feasts of Pentecost and Passover. Apparently, some had been converted on the day of Pentecost, or thereafter, and had either delayed their return home or decided to re-settle in Jerusalem.

In all probability, this cultural divide lies at the root of the problem mentioned here. The Hebrew Jews, having always been taught to reject and despise anything Grecian, were likely having difficulty getting rid of all their prejudice. No doubt, God had worked in their hearts to cleanse them of prejudice, but they apparently were still hanging on to some feelings against the Hellenists. Perhaps they felt that the Hellenists were not due as much attention or as many rights as they were. Whatever the problem, Luke records for us the account of the two cultures colliding and how the issues were resolved.

The Appalachian region is tied together by certain economic, political, and sociological factors that fashion the Appalachian culture. Within that region, there are multiple cultures and subcultures. While most Southern Baptists relate well to larger cities and the southern portion of Appalachia, many have trouble relating to the central and northern sections, especially the coalfields in Eastern Kentucky or Southern West Virginia, where life has been hard and, until recently, isolated. We can allow our cultural differences to divide us, or like the early church, we can look for ways to build bridges that will allow us to effectively do ministry together.

Reflect: As you prepare for your mission trip, add these items to your packing list:
• A toothpick—to remind you to pick out the good qualities in other people (Matthew 7:1).
• A rubber band—to remind you to be flexible; things might not always go the way you want, but it will work out (Romans 8:28).
• A Band-Aid—to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else’s (Colossians 3:12-14).
• An eraser—to remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's OK (Genesis 50:15-21).
• Chewing gum—to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything (Philippians 4:13).
• A candy kiss—to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday (1 John 4:7).
• A pencil—to remind you to list your blessings everyday (Ephesians 1:3).
• A tea bag—to remind you to relax daily and go over that list of blessings (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Spend a few minutes going over this list and preparing to use them today.

Pray: Ask God to reveal any prejudice you may carry; confess it; then ask Him to give you an open heart for those you will encounter on your mission trip.

Journaling:
Day 16
Ordinary Believers Make Extraordinary Evangelists

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:5).

God has chosen and called every believer to take the message of the gospel into the world (Acts 1:8). Every believer . . . no exceptions. While some have received a specific call to a specific type or place of ministry, every believer has received the general call to fulltime Christian service. In God’s plan to reach the world with the gospel, the primary responsibility of His work rests on the shoulders of the ordinary folks in the pew (laity). The priesthood of all believers—meaning that all believers have equal access to God and need no human mediator in approaching Him—is a bedrock belief of Baptists. While Baptists employ this truth as they study their Bible and pray, they often neglect the truth that all believers are called to be ministers, and with that call comes responsibility and accountability to be obedient. At the heart of that call is evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20) and a reminder that one day each of us will stand before God and give an account of our obedience to that call.

When God was ready to do evangelism in Samaria, he used ordinary people—an unnamed woman (John 4:28-30) and Philip, a Hellenistic Jew (Acts 8:5). Philip, a layman, carried out the first great evangelistic thrust outside Jerusalem after Pentecost. The first time the term evangelist is used, it is used of Philip, a true servant of the Lord, who preached Christ.

Cameron is a rural community nestled in and surrounded by beautiful hills in northern West Virginia. Ron McCoy, then a deacon at Temple Baptist Church in Moundsville, was asked to serve as interim pastor for Cameron Baptist Church, a small, struggling congregation. At that time, the church was located on the side of a hill. Ron notes, “You had to climb 100 steep steps to get from the parking lot to the front door of the church, and that eliminated a lot of preachers.” Over the next few years, Ron would repeatedly serve as the interim pastor. The church would call a pastor who would stay for a short period and then leave for greener pastures and fewer steps. Each time Ron served as interim, the church grew. In the mid-1990s, the call came again, asking Ron if he would be interim pastor. As he drove across the mountains, he sensed God’s call to serve as their pastor. He took early retirement from his job and became the pastor of that small, struggling congregation in a town of fewer than 400. Soon he led the church to relocate on a piece of property in the valley.

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5Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 26; 7:17-24; Ephesians 1:17-19; 4:1-4; Philippians 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Hebrews 3:1; 2 Peter 1:8-10
6Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:14-46
One summer day I visited with Ron in Cameron. Everywhere we went, he was networking, pastoring, counseling, encouraging, and talking with people about Jesus. In this small town, with six other churches, Cameron Baptist Church had 170 in their Easter service and was averaging over 100 in attendance each week. In addition, the church had started two church plants, both of which would become established churches. The following summer, Southern Baptist mission volunteers joined Cameron Baptist Church members to construct a new building to accommodate the growing congregation and assist this “deacon turned preacher.”

Reflect: “You are either a missionary or a mission field,” the visiting missionary declared. Which are you? What evidence can you provide?

Pray: Thank God for His call on your life to missions, and specifically thank Him for the opportunity to serve at the place you are going on your mission trip.

Journaling:
Day 17
Mission-Minded to Mission-Active

“As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:3-4).

An older couple was stopped, waiting for the red light to change, when a young couple, obviously in love, pulled up beside them. The young lady was seated in the middle of the front seat, snuggled up close to the young man. The older lady said, “Look at that young couple! Remember when we used to sit together like that in the front seat, so passionately in love?”

“Yes,” replied her husband, “and may I point out, I’m not the one who moved.”

Many churches are like that older couple, they look out, see younger churches involved in missions, and reflect on their rich mission history, their gifts to mission projects, the Cooperative Program, and special offerings, but they are not actively engaged in doing missions. It happened to the Church at Jerusalem. Absorbed with the ministry in Jerusalem, they forgot about reaching the world with the gospel of Christ. Undoubtedly they discussed the Great Commission, for when persecution broke out, those who left the city became engaged in preaching the word. The word “preach” means “to evangelize, to declare, to proclaim” the Word of God, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem with the church in Jerusalem was that while they were mission-minded, they were not mission-active.

Note that the believers who were preaching and sharing the Word were ordinary believers (laymen), not the ordained, not those especially set apart for preaching. This set the pattern for all time. Most preaching and witnessing was to be done by the lay believers who were to scatter the seed wherever they went, wherever duty or circumstances placed them. Jesus said, “As you are going, wherever you go, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). It took the death of Stephen and the persecution by Saul to awaken the church to its primary purpose.

Many Southern Baptist churches are mission-minded. They have mission organizations that provide training, promote the special offerings, and give a percentage of their offerings to Cooperative Program missions, yet they have never personally engaged in missions. However, that is changing.

All across Southern Baptist life, churches are rediscovering hands-on-missions. Youth groups, men’s ministries, and whole families are becoming involved in missions across North America and overseas.
They are moving from being mission-minded to being mission-active, and in the process, they are discovering exciting new ways to do ministry.

The Potomac Highland Baptist Association in West Virginia took a mission team to North Georgia to do a variety of mission projects. For many it was their first mission trip. This trip not only created an awareness of the needs in their area back home, but also motivated them to begin planning for the next year. A ministry center in eastern Kentucky took a youth group into northern Ohio on their first mission trip. I listened as the director gave a report of how God moved through the teenagers to touch lives and how they were already planning for the next year’s mission venture.

For too long the church has taught about missions without leading the church to become actively engaged in doing missions. Today, like the church in Jerusalem, the church is becoming not only mission-minded, but mission-active.

**Reflect:** How has your attitude changed about your involvement in missions?

**Pray:** Ask God to call out more laborers to join you in being “mission active.” Thank God for your team members by name and for your church that supports your missions involvement.

**Journaling:**
Day 18
Discovering Your Samaria

“When Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:5).

Remember E.T., the 1982 science fiction movie in which Elliott, a 10-year-old boy befriends the “extra-terrestrial” creature stranded on earth? Without a doubt Elliott and E.T. had to cross many cultural boundaries to communicate and develop a relationship. Crossing such boundaries to do missions is exciting for some people, but intimidating for others. You may never meet an “E.T.,” but you may participate in E-1, E-2, and/or E-3 as you serve on your mission project.

E stands for “evangelism,” and the numbers stand for cultural distances from you or the group initiating the evangelistic process. Thus, E-1, or “evangelism-one,” signifies evangelism among people who are similar to you. In contrast, both E-2 and E-3 represent the kind of evangelism necessary to share with people of a culture different than yours. E-1 is monocultural evangelism, and E-2 and E-3 are both cross-cultural evangelism.

E-2 and E-3 differ only in degree. Both are cross-cultural, but E-3 signifies a culture more radically different from that of E-2. This can be illustrated easily by using cultures in various parts of North America as examples.

You do not have to leave America to find situations calling for E-2 and E-3. An Anglo-American from Jackson, Ohio, evangelizing Hispanic Americans in Dalton, Georgia, would be doing E-2, but evangelizing Cherokees in North Carolina would involve E-3. In many urban areas in the United States, it would be possible to be E-1, E-2, and E-3 in the same neighborhood, and sometimes on the same block. The essential difference is not geographical, but cultural.

Before Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ, he knew he would encounter cultural barriers fed by prejudice and history. Samaritans were racially mixed Jews—and orthodox Jews separated themselves in every way to remain pure. Philip, a Grecian Jew, was God’s man to break down those obstacles.

When Mike Watson, an electrician by trade in South Carolina, was called to pastor North Fork Baptist Church in Riverton, West Virginia, he understood he was entering a different culture, even though he was an Anglo-American reaching Anglo-Americans. Mike was told that averaging 50 people each week in worship would be a major accomplishment. Quickly, Mike realized that in order to reach the people surrounding this rural, Appalachian congregation, he would have to find a way to identify with them. So,
he started going door to door, visiting with each family for hours at a time, asking questions and searching for ways he could help them. Over the next two years he chopped firewood, cut timber, slaughtered and butchered livestock, bailed hay, plowed gardens, repaired houses and barns, and rode shot-gun with 18-wheelers. He ate a lot of pinto beans, fried potatoes, and cornbread and drank a lot of strong black coffee. He built relationships with each family, and then he shared with them the gospel.

Don Ertel, the Director of Missions in that region of West Virginia, states, “During Mike’s time at North Fork, every Christian church in the county experienced growth.” Two years after Mike became the pastor, the church was averaging 150 in Sunday School and Sunday morning worship. What happened? In part, it was Mike’s recognition that he was going to be ministering cross-culturally, and he set out to learn the culture and identify with the people.

Reflect: Take time to investigate the region of Appalachia where you will be on mission. What do you need to learn? How can you identify with the people? Will you be doing E-1, E-2, or E-3?

Pray: Ask God to help you and your team members to become sensitive to people of different cultures and to discover ways to effectively relate to them.

Journaling:
Day 19
Missions: Heartbeat of New Testament Churches

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word . . . as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21).

Jesus clearly taught that His mission to “seek and save the lost” was to continue after his ascension. Each Gospel and Acts contain an account of His mandate telling his followers to go into all the world, make disciples, baptize them, and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8). This commission brought a dramatic change in the life of missions: Jesus intended for all the believers to go out and tell others what they had seen and heard, no longer waiting for the world to come to Jerusalem.

The scope of missions is inclusive. The church is to cross all barriers—to reach out to all people everywhere. The Good News of Jesus is exclusive. Only those who truly believe are truly saved and become an authentic disciple of Christ. The new disciples were to be baptized and taught. The purpose of the teaching was to do more than share information. It was to provide nourishment in the faith as well.

Since the Great Commission is a mandate, the church is expected to be obedient. Yet, it doesn’t do the job alone. Christ promised that He will be with the church until “the end of the world.” With this assurance, the church was obedient, for the Gospel was presented first in Jerusalem (Acts 1-8), then in Samaria (Acts 8-12) and finally to all the world (Acts 13-28).

Jesus’ presence would be felt through the Holy Spirit. In fact, the disciples were not to go out into the world until the Holy Spirit had come upon them (Acts 1:8). This is the only time in the Bible that a church is told to wait before going on mission. The reason is clear. The Holy Spirit empowers the church. He also convicts and converts sinners (Acts 5:14; 11:21, 24; 18:8), performs mighty works of grace in believers (Acts 4:8-10), disciplines the church (Acts 5:13-14), sends forth workers (Acts 8:26; 13:1-3), presides over the missionary council (Acts 15), restrains and contains workers (Acts 16:6-10), and exercises supreme ecclesiastical authority (Acts 20:28).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church did missions by preaching Jesus (Acts 2; 8:35; 10:36-44; 1 Corinthians 2:1-2). The church’s mission to the world was strengthened through its intimate fellowship and unity (Acts 2:44), and every effort was made to maintain this bond (Acts 6:1-7; 15). A study of Paul’s
letters to the churches in Corinth and Galatia, for example, reveals the importance of intimate fellowship and unity within the church.

Paul, one of the early missionaries to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18; Romans 1:5; Ephesians 3:1), was sent out by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). The Holy Spirit led him in his ministry (Acts 16:6-10). He preached Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:1-2), met people on their own level (Acts 17), established autonomous, indigenous churches (Acts 14:23), and worked with others—often training them to do the works of the ministry (Acts 16:1-3).

Just as Jesus called the early disciples to be on mission, He has called and empowered you to share the Good News of the Gospel.

Reflect: Create a list of people you know who are unchurched. You may be the only Christian they know—how will you share the love of Christ with each one?

Pray: It is God’s desire that none perish. Pray for each name on your list to come into relationship with Jesus.

Journaling:
Day 20
Missions Through the Eyes of Jesus

“But the Lord said . . ., “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you’” (John 20:21).

You have been chosen by God to be “on mission” with Him. Your assignment: to reach a lost world for Christ. While Jesus could have won the world by Himself, He was not content to do that. Instead, He activated the Father’s plan to involve each born-again believer in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth—to all people. The call of God on the life of Paul is the call of God on the life of every believer: take the Gospel to everyone, regardless of his or her ethnic origin.

You cannot accomplish your mission by yourself. Consequently, God has given you the Holy Spirit, to work in and through you (Acts 1:8). The early believers realized their need and allowed the Holy Spirit to work through them, and as a result, “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

God has also given you a plan of action—be a witness, believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-17). God’s game plan has not changed. Just as the disciples were commissioned and empowered then, the Holy Spirit commissions and empowers you today to be His witness in your family, in your neighborhood, in your city, in your state, in your country, and around the world. You are a believer “on mission.”

“God has not only chosen you, but He also has chosen the church, which means the called-out ones. Everyone in His body is chosen for His purpose. Think about the church of which you are a member. For what purpose has God chosen you? Each church is to be a world-mission strategy center. Each church has distinctive local and global roles to play.”

As you prepare to come to Appalachia, remember God has chosen you for this assignment; it is not by accident or chance. Whatever your mission opportunity involves—construction projects, home repair, community survey, block parties, sports clinics or another task, foremost you are coming to be a witness for Christ. Your attitude, your conduct, and your willingness to be flexible all reflect on your witness. “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

North Columbia Baptist Church (South Carolina) has discovered this truth. Repeatedly they have come to southern West Virginia to do missions, often in isolated communities that are difficult to reach. Their mission assignments have ranged from assessments of needs to actually completing a project. No request has been seen as too small or too great. They arrive, often sleeping on church pews or on the floor. They approach each task with a vision of what God is going to do through them to reach the lost in that community. Yet, wherever they go, they are able to experience God working through them as lives are changed and a positive witness is left behind.

**Reflect:** Take a few minutes to write out what it means to be saved, to be reconciled to God, to be His child. Look again at your testimony—prepare to share it today.

**Pray:** Thank God for your salvation. Then thank God that He has called and empowered you to be on mission for Him. Pray for your mission project, asking the Father to effectively use you and your church as a witness.

**Journaling:**
Day 21  
Tell Me about Jesus

A man in bright clothing said to [Cornelius], “Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ So I sent to you [Simon] immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God” (Acts 10:30-33).

Prejudice is “any preconceived opinions or feelings, either favorable or unfavorable,” as defined in Random House Dictionary. We tend to think that others are prejudiced, not us. But it is everywhere in the world—in every nation, state, city, and neighborhood, in every family.

Prejudice exists for two basic reasons. First, people differ—in nationality, color, belief, religion, speech, appearance, behavior, ability, energy, position, status, possessions, wealth, birth, and heritage. Prejudice arises when people feel they are better than others. Second, mistreatment causes prejudice, both mistreating others and being mistreated. When a person mistreats others or is mistreated by others, he tends to become prejudicial and judgmental.

Jews, like all other people, were steeped in their own culture and looked upon other nations with suspicion. The Jewish people had always been mistreated, enslaved, and persecuted much more than other people of the world. Even in the day of Jesus, they were enslaved by Rome. Their religious beliefs and their rules had kept them from being swallowed up by other people through intermarriage. Their religion was the key to their distinctiveness as a people and as a nation.

Because of their prejudices, the Jews had misunderstood God’s purpose for them: they were indeed to be His people and His witnesses. God had given them His Word to be a “light to the world.” They were to bear witness that God does exist—and that men are to worship and serve Him alone. However, Israel failed. Instead of proclaiming God and His Word of righteousness, Israel separated itself from the world, claiming that God and His law were theirs and theirs alone.

The incident in the passage above (Acts 10:1-48) strikes a fatal blow against prejudice. Cornelius was a Gentile; Peter was a Jew. For Peter to reach beyond his prejudice took divine intervention. Jesus broke down those barriers by sending Peter to share Christ with Cornelius. Consequently, Jew and Gentile became one in Christ Jesus.
We must be careful that prejudice does not keep us from sharing the Gospel with others who are different from us in any way. The central and northern regions of Appalachia are areas that are often overlooked in missions. The culture, mannerisms, and worldview of the people in these areas are different and can at times create barriers to sharing the Gospel. Moreover, it is difficult to reach many of the inner, isolated areas of Appalachia. Yet, people in Appalachia need Christ. Whole counties and many towns and cities do not have a Southern Baptist church. Over 19 million people living in the Appalachian region are unchurched, and many of those who are churched understand salvation as something one earns by good works or church membership. Many people living in Appalachia have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through “salvation by grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-13).

Reflect: Think about your own prejudices. Lay them before the Father. Seek His heart.

Pray: Ask the Father to let you see Appalachia through His eyes, to see the people as He sees them and to love them as He loves them (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9). Ask the Holy Spirit to stir the hearts of the people with whom you will be sharing.

Journaling:

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” – 2 Peter 3:9
Day 22
Knowledge Lessens Prejudice

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (Acts 10:44-45).

Prejudice can blind us to people and truth. The six men who came with Peter were astonished that God was saving and pouring out His Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles. All their lives these leaders had been taught and steeped in bitterness that bordered on hatred for the Gentiles. What a radical course of events to see their God pouring His Spirit upon the Gentiles, just as He had on them on the day of Pentecost.

Likewise, often those living outside Appalachia have preconceived notions toward Appalachians. Most people living outside the mountains of Appalachia think of the area as one particularly singular place. While the old stereotypes of the male mountaineer as a bibbed-overall-clad, moonshine-snorting, hound-dog-loving, welfare-dependent, lazy man, and the female as a bonnet-wearing, pipe-smoking, toothless, weary-to-the-bone piece of background scenery have been, for the most part, put rightfully to rest. The misconception that one Appalachian is pretty much like the next one still holds sway, due in part to the misconception portrayed by such films as “Deliverance,” such television shows as “The Beverly Hillbillies,” and the comic strip, "Li'l Abner."

Three types of Appalachians live in the region: the town and city dwellers, the valley farmers, and the branch water mountaineers. The city dwellers8 live in incorporated places of 1,000 or more residents and, resisting the term “mountaineer,” tend to separate themselves from their more rural neighbors. The valley farmers, largest of the three groups, are those living along main highways or river valleys or at the mouths of creeks. This group is more or less typical of people living in other parts of the country. The third group, the branch water mountaineers, live up the hollows and coves, on the ridges and in or on any other inaccessible part of the region. This group has become the stereotypical mountaineer of fiction and has received media attention.

Today, as many cultural differences exist between rural Appalachians and Appalachian townfolk as between Anglos and Mexican Hispanics who live in the same city. The people living in Ashland, KY, or Beckley, WV, have more in common with people of similar small towns in Georgia or South Carolina than

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” – Isaiah 52:7 (See Romans 10:15)

8This classification would include those who live in the metro and micro cities in Appalachia.
they do with their cousins living up Six-Mile Hollow or in the small dying coal towns, isolated in the mountains.

Across Appalachia, the towns and cities with deserted and decayed centers, are slowly merging with the valleys and main roads to create almost continuous strip malls, shopping centers, trailer lots, restaurants and bingo parlors. However, still branching off the highways are the dirt and crumbling asphalt roads of the hollows. Here can be found the last lingering traces of the real mountaineer—that rugged, determined, free-spirited isolationist who became so unfairly stereotyped. Today, “holler” Appalachians come into the light of day on a regular basis, making up a huge portion of the customers frequenting the Walmarts, Lowes, Dollar Generals, and restaurants.

Whether in the large cities of Appalachia, the small towns, the rural communities, or up the “hollers,” people in Appalachia need Christ. As Southern Baptists move into the twenty-first century, God is opening doors of opportunity to present the Gospel and grow churches in Appalachia as never before. Will you come determined to love and share the Gospel with Appalachians—city folk or “holler folk”?

Reflect: What images do you have of Appalachians? How will those images interfere with your serving and sharing?

Pray: Ask God to give you a heart set on loving the Appalachian people. Ask Him to effectively use you.

Journaling:
Day 23  
Linking Arms

“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles” (Acts 9:26-27a).

“They then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26).

Working together as a team is essential. Barnabas understood teamwork and the importance of using the abilities and spiritual gifts of others to enhance the team. Barnabas, a Levite, was from the Island of Cyprus; his name means “Son of exhortation” or “Son of consolation.”

Barnabas was an extremely important person in the life of the early church and an example to follow today.

Saul of Tarsus, archenemy of Christians, had become a Christ follower. When he began preaching Christ, he returned to Jerusalem and repeatedly tried to join the believers there, but they did not accept him. Because of his fierce persecution of the followers of Christ, the disciples probably felt that this was just another tactic to invade their fellowship, identify them, and then launch a new wave of persecution. Paul’s past as murderer of believers haunted him; the believers would not believe his testimony.

Finally, Barnabas befriended Saul. Somehow, Barnabas began to sense Saul might be telling the truth. Apparently, he sat down with Saul and had him relate his experiences with Christ. Thoroughly convinced that Saul was truthful, Barnabas took Paul to the apostles, Peter and James, the half-brother of Jesus, who was the leader of the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-19).

Several years later when the Gospel reached Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman world, many Gentiles came to faith in Christ. Hearing the report of the great numbers who were saved, the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help the new believers. Barnabas realized he needed help. A unique person was needed, a person who not only had a Jewish background, but who knew the Greek.

As you prepare to come to Appalachia for your mission trip, building a team is very important. Take time to get to know the others who are going with you. Pray together, plan together, and discover how you can effectively work together for the glory of God. Ask God to enable you to be a team player and a team builder.

For an interesting study, read through the Book of Acts marking each time you find Barnabas and noting his role or activity. You can begin in 4:36-37.
language and culture and could relate to both Gentile and Jew alike. The person also needed to be fearless and bold in his witness for Christ because of the godless, immoral society of Antioch. Barnabas knew such a man—Saul of Tarsus—and he set out to find him.

As you prepare to come to Appalachia for your mission trip, building a team is very important. Take time to get to know the others from your church who are going with you. Pray together, plan together, and discover how you can effectively work together for the glory of God. Simultaneously, include the receiving church or association in your praying and planning. Make the pre-site visits, discover ways to involve the church in your project, seek their advice and guidance. Regularly communicate with them by telephone or email. Plan some fellowship or fun activities while you are on your mission trip which will include them. Incorporate them in your mission project while you are working alongside them. Be a Barnabas, build a team, be part of a team, and let God receive all the glory.

Reflect: Are you a team player? In what ways? How can you help build your team?

Pray: Ask God to enable you to be a team player and a team builder. Ask Him to set in motion opportunities and circumstances that will bring your team and the receiving team together to effectively serve in reaching the place where you are going with the Gospel.

Journaling:
Day 24

Off to Antioch, or Wherever You Are Going

“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas . . . [who] encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (Acts 11:20-23).

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). This passage is one of the most crucial segments of Scripture for genuine believers because Jesus charges every believer with the responsibility of evangelizing the lost, discipling and teaching new believers. Too often we obey the command of Christ to evangelize the lost, but we fail to disciple and teach those who respond to the Gospel.

The Jerusalem church understood the command of Christ to disciple and teach new believers, as well as evangelize the lost. When the church at Jerusalem heard that people were being saved in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to encourage, disciple, and teach the new believers (Acts 11:22-26). The early church understood the importance of discipling and teaching. Repeated studies show that new believers, who are not discipled within the first year of their Christian faith, seldom develop into committed believers.

As you prepare to come to Appalachia for your mission project, reflect upon your ultimate purpose: to evangelize the lost and disciple the saved. Often mission teams come to Appalachia, do their project and leave. The next year they come back, repeating the same process and wondering why no change has taken place. Usually the solution is to move on to another place and repeat the process—come, do the project, leave. One church recently called, concerned that in the four years they had conducted Vacation Bible School at the same small church, the same group of children and youth had made professions of faith each year. Receiving church members need training also. When I suggested they teach and train the church in the process of VBS preparation and then allow them to participate in the teaching, they rejected the idea. They said they would go elsewhere next year. As I hung up the telephone, I said to myself, “And probably repeat the same process and ask the same questions in a couple of years.” Which they did.
How different it was with a team from a church in South Carolina. They agreed to assist a small, rural congregation in West Virginia with their Vacation Bible School for four years. Each year they shared more and more of the responsibilities with the receiving church, involving them first in the planning, progressing each year until at the end of four years the church conducted VBS without any outside assistance. One day after they had conducted their VBS without outside assistance, the pastor shared with me his goal of taking his church to do missions—to help another church learn to do VBS, which they did the following year. Missions is more than just going and doing a mission project; it is sending volunteers to come alongside a sister church to help with the work.

Reflect: How familiar are you with the plan of salvation? Study it and then practice sharing it with teammates. (For additional helps, see Appendices A and B.)

Pray: Ask the Father to show you ways that you can work alongside the receiving church to advance the kingdom of God in Appalachia.

Journaling:

\[\text{Missions is more than just going and doing a mission project; it is sending volunteers to come alongside a sister church to help with the work.}\]

\(^{10}\)The name and location are not given to protect the identity of the congregation.
Day 25
We Still Have Variety

“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20-21).

“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews” (Acts 13:4-5).

From Jerusalem to Antioch a diverse group of people made up the early church. In Acts 2:9-11, Luke records that people from all over the known world heard the Gospel of Christ and returned home with news of all they had seen and heard. Then Luke reports that about 3,000 were saved that day (Acts 2:9-11). From the beginning, the church included Galilean and Judean Jews and “converts to Judaism” (2:11), the God-fearing Gentiles.

Throughout Appalachia you will discover that Southern Baptist churches are as diverse as the early churches. They vary in size and worship style—from the megachurch to the smallest congregation; from traditional to contemporary; from blended to shaped notes. Some churches use the piano and organ, others a praise band, and still others, no musical instruments. Some use CD players, while others use a full orchestra or guitars, fiddles, and banjos. Some churches use modern translations of the Bible; yet others recognize King James Version (KJV) as the only acceptable translation of the Bible.

An effective mission trip means adaptability. The way you do church at home may not be the way they do church where you are going. Always remember the goal is to bring unbelievers into faith in Jesus Christ, and if this requires an adjustment in the way we do church, so be it.

One Sunday, I spoke in a mountain church where the pastor greeted me in the parking lot, requesting that I not wear a coat and tie, which I gladly removed. Then he wanted to see my Bible to make sure it was KJV without notes. I passed the test and had a meaningful worship experience. Incidentally, this pastor baptized one person that year for every two resident members. The next Sunday I preached in a church where the pastor called to remind me that he always wore a suit and preferred that I use a modern translation. In addition, I used sermon notes while preaching and had another meaningful worship experience. This church is also reaching many people for Christ.

Recently I preached at a new church plant designed to reach unchurched boomers and busters. The atmosphere was relaxed – few men wore ties, several modern translations were being used, the music
was cutting edge, with drums, guitars, and a keyboard, praise singers, and PowerPoint. The worship was vibrant with active congregational participation. No pulpit and no pews. Over 100 people attended this new church plant which is reaching many people for Christ.

That evening, one mile away from the church above, I spoke at another Southern Baptist Church. Earlier the pastor had called to request that I use the KJV and wear a coat and tie. When I arrived at the church, every man wore a suit and every woman a dress. Approximately 100 people gathered. The music was from a shaped-note hymnal, accompanied by only a piano. While the congregation sang vigorously, there was no hand clapping or verbal expresses of praise. This church has just experienced a year of growth and is very effective in reaching people for Christ.

An effective mission trip means adaptability. The way you do church at home may not be the way they do church where you are going. The issue is not what translation of the Bible you use, the type of music you sing, or how you dress to come to church. The goal is to bring unbelievers into faith in Jesus Christ, and if this requires an adjustment in the way we do church, so be it.

**Reflect:** In which of the above churches would you be most comfortable? Least? On a scale of 1-10, what is your “adaptability” index? What attitude changes are necessary?

**Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to give you an openness to His presence as you worship in the coming weeks.

**Journaling:**
Day 26
The Cold-Water Committee

“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:1-3).

Cold-water committees? You know, the ones who “throw cold water” on any idea that stretches their thinking or mindset. With religious piety they attempt to distract you from your mission. In Pisidian Antioch and Iconium (Acts 13:42-52; 14:1-7), when Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel, many Jews and Gentiles believed. At the same time, they experienced intense and violent opposition from the Jews. Finally, expelled from Pisidian Antioch they were forced to flee to Iconium to avoid being stoned to death.

Who were these Jews? They were Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and stirred up trouble over the preaching of the Gospel. The word “unbelieving” means disobedient, implying that they were unwilling to believe or to be persuaded. They deliberately withheld belief, disobeying God. They went about stirring up the city against the Lord’s servants, making a deliberate attempt to arouse the people by spreading rumors, making false suggestions and insinuations. Their goal was to embitter and provoke the people and the officials of the city to get rid of the preachers.

As you pray and prepare for your mission trip, don’t be surprised if good, religious church folk oppose what you feel God is leading you to do. When you become engaged in missions, it creates either a positive or a negative reaction from fellow believers for several reasons. First, it reminds them that the United States is a mission field. For many years, the United States has been considered the great missionary-sending nation, not the largest English-speaking mission field that it is today. Recently during an “On Missions Celebration,” after I had shared that statement, a member of the congregation strongly objected. He wasn’t receptive to mission facts or further evidence. In the end, he still believed that the United States was not a great mission field. Second, when you begin talking about missions and evangelism, you remind others of their responsibility to reach the lost with the Gospel, and for many, that is disturbing. Too often many Baptists believe that evangelism is the work of the spiritually-gifted and the pastor, not the church member. Third, as you talk about doing a mission project in Appalachia, it draws awareness to the needs in your community. It is easier to talk about the needs in South America, for example, than to talk about

In the book, The Power of Stories, Leighton Ford says, “North America is now the largest mission field in the English-speaking world.” The reality is that with over 259 million secular North Americans we are now the third largest mission field in the world—after China and India. In a real sense we are back where we started.
the needs down the road. Missions close to home reminds believers of their responsibility to be on mission for Christ in their Jerusalem.

When the cold-water committee throws water on your mission trip, remember God has called you to be on mission for Him, He has a place for you to serve, and He has a people waiting for you to come. Your faithfulness will influence the harvest. This past summer two churches cancelled their missions trips to Appalachia because of opposition of cold-water committees. We were unable to find replacement teams for the two rural, mountain churches. Consequently, the boys and girls in those communities had neither a Vacation Bible School nor a Back-to-School Fair. I could not help but wonder how many boys and girls were lost because folks failed to complete their mission.

Reflect: Opposition? How have you responded? In what is your confidence?

Pray: Ask the Heavenly Father to give you and your church determination to see your mission opportunity through to completion and that whenever obstacles come before you, He will prevail.

Journaling:
Day 27
Don’t Forget the Follow-up

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:21-22a).

The church has three primary ministries: preaching the gospel, making disciples, and strengthening believers. Discipleship and strengthening the church are often neglected. However, Paul and Barnabas were not content to just travel through a town, preach the gospel, evangelize the lost, and establish a new church. They knew the importance of returning and strengthening the new disciples—doing follow-up. The reasons are clear.

First, a new work with large numbers of receptive people and conversions taking place creates much excitement. Paul knew that the longer a church waits to reach out to others, the more difficult it becomes for them to reach people with the Gospel. Nevertheless, the work of day-by-day ministry in the same community, preaching to and teaching the same people is not as exciting as reaching out into new areas and establishing new works.

Second, strengthening and making true disciples of the new converts is much more demanding than leading them to Christ. Leading people to Christ involves a one-time decision, but strengthening and making disciples involves many decisions over a long period of time.

Note that Paul and Barnabas did not require full maturity in the believers’ lives when they returned to the cities. As outsiders, the apostles did not assume the leadership of the churches. They did not offer a financial subsidy to support the new leaders and congregations. Instead, their goal was to make sure that the fruit of evangelism remained. In contrast, in modern missions we tend to go to one of two extremes: we tend to take over or we come and do the mission project without any follow-up.

Every mission trip has three important phases: preparation, the trip itself, and follow-up. Usually we prepare thoroughly and conscientiously complete the mission project, but occasionally we fail to follow-up. Sometimes promises are made to the receiving church or ministry center in Appalachia which are not kept.

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” – 1 Peter 2:2-3

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” – 2 Peter 3:18
Follow-up is important in missions. Many of the churches in Appalachia which request mission projects are small, struggling congregations with limited financial and human resources to do the work God has called them to do. While they rejoice in mission teams coming and are grateful to God that they receive assistance from fellow Southern Baptists, they often are unable to follow-up effectively on the decisions made during the mission project. You can join with them in the follow-up efforts.

- Keep a list of the names of those who make decisions during the project and daily pray for them. Ask your church to add them to their prayer list.
- Provide follow-up materials which communicate clearly in an age-appropriate level.
- Be available and willing to answer questions. For example, the central and northern sections of Appalachia are strongly Armenian, that is, they do not fully understand the security of the believer in Christ. Helping new Christians understand not only assurance of their salvation, but the security they have in Christ will enable them to grow.
- Keep in contact with those who make decisions, either by telephone or by mail. Send birthday or holiday cards.
- Suggest that your church make a long-term commitment to a church or ministry center. Effective ministry in Appalachia usually begins in the fourth or fifth year of a partnership.

Reflect: Think of ways you can become effective in following up with those who make decisions once you’ve returned home. Be specific about being involved with follow-up.

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare hearts to receive the Gospel and be saved. Then ask Him to prepare your heart to be faithful in follow-up.

Journaling:
Day 28

Youth Are Important

“And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy . . . well-spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. . . . And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:1-5).

Mission opportunities contribute to the spiritual development of youth. As teenagers prepare for a mission trip, a new level of maturity grips them as they see the eternal significance of their involvement. Paul understood the importance of using young people, even though he was not always patient with them.

In Acts 15:36-39, Luke records the controversy over John Mark, who had joined Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey out of Antioch. For unknown reason, John Mark had left them in Perga and returned to Jerusalem. Paul saw him as a quitter; Barnabas saw him as a youth in the process of “growing up” and wanted to give him a second chance. When Paul refused, Barnabas took John Mark and went in one direction and Paul, the other.

However, at Paul’s first stop in Lystra, he found a young man named Timothy, whose mother and grandmother had likely introduced him to Christ. The word “behold” (Acts 16:1) conveys the idea of looking and gazing at a wonderful discovery, at an unexpected surprise. Timothy’s love and maturity in the Lord struck Paul.

At some point, John Mark was able to make amends with Paul, who later called Mark a fellow laborer. Near the end of Paul’s life, he asked Timothy to “get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). With the positive influence of Barnabas, his cousin, John Mark would later write the Gospel of Mark. Time and maturity had made a difference.

That Paul mentored Timothy is significant. Timothy was a youth destined to become one of the great servants of the early church, the one to whom Paul wrote two letters of the New Testament.

God has continued to use young people in missions. My passion for missions developed during the three summers I served as a summer missionary while a teenager growing up in West Virginia. For eight weeks, a group of us would divide into groups of two and teach four to six Bible clubs daily, with each club

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” – 1 Timothy 4:12

11Philemon 1:24
12Colossians 4:10
lasting one week. Riding bicycles, walking, or catching a ride with a local pastor, we would travel across the Kanawha Valley—going into isolated communities, city parks, up hollows, and to small churches teaching boys and girls about Jesus. Only eternity will reveal the hundreds of children and youth who came to Christ during those exciting days. During that first year of summer missions, when I was 14, God called me to be a preacher and placed in my heart a passion for missions that grew with time. Though I was not called to be a career missionary until 34+ years later, my passion for missions was born while serving as a summer missionary.

As I go from church to church encouraging Southern Baptists to be on mission in Appalachia, I often hear stories of pastors and missionaries who felt the call to career ministry or missions while on a summer mission trip. Remember, missions is contagious!

Reflect: As an adult, how may you disciple a “Timothy” on your trip? As a “Timothy,” who might you ask to mentor you?

Pray: Adults, ask God to use you to influence your young teammates in a positive way towards missions. Teenagers or young adults, ask God to use you effectively on this mission trip.

Journaling:
Day 29
“Come Over to Appalachia and Help Us”

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9-10).

When God closes one door, He opens another. Certainly, Paul experienced that on his second missionary journey. As he prepared to go into Asia (modern Turkey) to preach, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit from entering. Then attempting to go into Bithynia, the Holy Spirit again did not allow Paul to enter. With closed doors all around him, Paul could have quit, but instead he moved on to Troas. There God spoke to him through a vision and Paul received the Macedonian call, “Come over and help us!”

The cry of desperation is emphatic, declaring both to Paul and to all succeeding believers that the door of the whole world is wide open. Souls are crying for help. The harvest is truly ripe; the need is great. It is not only one man who needs help, but all of us in Macedonia (Appalachia, the United States, Europe, the world).

Today, the Holy Spirit is generating a fresh new call to missions in the hearts of God’s people. No longer are true believers content just to send money and let the “professional” missionary do the work of ministry. Having heard the Macedonian call, thousands of mission volunteers are now serving around the world, giving both money and time to serve alongside career missionaries. Some volunteer for extended periods, while others serve in short-term mission opportunities. Others have completely changed their life direction in response to the “Appalachian call” to “come over here and help us.”

After years of ministry in other states, Lonnie and Belinda Riley heard the “Appalachian call” and came home to Lynch, Kentucky, to start Meridzo Ministries, which reaches Harlan County, Kentucky, and sees lives changed that long ago had been marginalized.

Like the Rileys, hundreds of people in recent years have heard the “Appalachian call” and responded. The direction of their life was changed and today they are serving in Appalachia, some for an extended period of time. Some have left behind successful careers; others have come to serve out their retirement years, and still others seek meaning and purpose in life. They have heard the “Appalachian call” from God and they have come to serve.

Year after year, thousands of others have come as short-term volunteers serving in the big cities, small towns, and rural remote sections of Appalachia, telling the wonderful Good News of Jesus. As a result of
Christians listening to and obeying the call of God, thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, new churches have been started, existing churches have been strengthened, and thousands of children, teens, and adults have had physical needs met.

**Reflect:** Who are the “missionaries” that you know? How might you encourage them?

**Pray:** Thank God that you are a part of those who have heard the “Macedonian call” and are joining Him on mission in Appalachia. Pray for the members of your team and for the thousands of others who will be coming this year.

**Journaling:**

“**And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”** – Matthew 10:42

“**And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me . . . . They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”** -- Galatians 2:9-10
Day 30
“Blessed Are the Flexible”

“And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:23-25).

“Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape!” Flexibility and creativity are two essential ingredients for volunteer missions. Without them, you will quickly grow frustrated and hinder the Kingdom work of Christ.

The apostle Paul, by nature, was not very flexible. However, Paul quickly learned in missions you have to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who does not always tell you, in advance, what He has planned. He had to learn to work with people who were not always prepared and who did not always share his passion. Moreover, he had to learn to adapt to the changing situations he encountered. His second missionary journey was filled with challenging circumstances.

- Acts 15:36-41—Paul and Barnabas have a sharp disagreement over John Mark; Paul has to put together a new mission team.
- Acts 16:16-40—After Paul delivers a young girl from a demonic spirit, he and Silas are stripped, beaten, and put in prison. Instead of crying out, “Why me, Lord?” they started singing praises to God, resulting in the salvation of the jailer and his whole household.
- Acts 17:1-15—For preaching the Word of God, Paul and his mission team are run out of Thessalonica and Berea.
- Acts 17:16-32—In Athens, while waiting for his mission team to join him, Paul reasoned with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks and debated with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who made fun of him.

Paul had learned a valuable lesson: be flexible. As you prepare for your mission trip, purchase a rubber band for members of your team to wear on their wrists to remind them that flexibility is essential. When circumstances change, we can allow them to hinder the work of Christ, or we can exercise flexibility and creativity and allow them to bring glory to God.

“Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape!” As you prepare for your mission trip, purchase a rubber band for members of your team to wear on their wrists to remind them that flexibility is essential.
A mission team from Fort Worth, TX, introduced the “rubber band” to me while I was visiting a mission site in Pennsylvania. Two vanloads of senior adults had traveled for two days to conduct four Backyard Bible Clubs daily in subdivisions surrounding the receiving church. When they arrived, they discovered that the week before, another Southern Baptist church had come, unannounced, and conducted Bible Clubs in the targeted areas, with the same material they were using. What should they do?

The leader quickly identified two other areas that needed Backyard Bible Clubs and assigned the responsibility to part of the team. The rest of the team met with the pastor and learned that the church had an unfinished basement, but limited educational space. After a survey of the basement, a call to Fort Worth, and a trip to a local building supply company, the team went to work hanging and finishing sheetrock. When I arrived, I listened as they excitedly told me about how God was using them to prepare Sunday School space for all the boys and girls that were being reached through the Backyard Bible Clubs. Men and women with aching muscles and bruised hands wept as they shared their experience with me. All of them wore wide rubber bands on their wrists. Several of them were fiddling with their rubber band. Noticing my curious glances, they explained they each had a rubber band to remind them to be flexible. One man explained, “Missions and flexibility are synonymous terms.”

Reflect: Think of a time when flexibility was demanded of you. How did you handle that?

Pray: Ask the Father to help you and your teammates be flexible throughout your mission trip.

Journaling:
Day 31
Who's Watching You?

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

When faced with difficult circumstances or even persecution for your faith, you never know who is watching you. Confronted with a hostile environment, Paul and Silas could easily have called it quits, said that mission work was too difficult, and went back to Antioch. After all, everyone would have understood. That thought may even have crossed their minds. They could have reasoned, “Let someone else tell these people about Jesus. Let's plan a new mission trip to a friendlier place, like a beach town on the Mediterranean Sea.”

Thank God, they did not quit, for when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Certainly, that was true of Paul and Silas. In Philippi, a man had been observing these two men. He had heard the stories of Paul’s preaching, listened as they gave praise to God in spite of their suffering and discomfort, and witnessed the power of God revealed through the earthquake that opened the prison doors and caused the chains to fall off every prisoner. Then assured by Paul that no one had escaped, the jailer cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Paul and Tracy Curry, a young couple from Georgia, came to Oceana, West Virginia, to start Harborlight Baptist Church. They converted a former furniture store into a ministry center, visited in hundreds of homes, attempted to conduct Bible studies, all without response. Then came the floods. The Currys, setting aside their own comfort and safety, began to assist the flood victims. They provided shelter to the homeless, passed out clothing and food, and worked with Disaster Relief volunteers to clean the mud out of houses. Incidentally, the day before the floods, a trailer load of clothing had been delivered to Harborlight Baptist Church. As the floodwaters came through the front door and started rising, the Currys prayed that God would spare the clothing. Just inches from the boxes, the water stopped. While the water continued to rise outside the building, inside the building it stopped, and not one box of clothing was damaged.

As disastrous as the floods were, they opened the door for ministry in Oceana. In the spring after the Currys arrived, Paul baptized five new converts and other baptisms soon followed. People were watching, wondering if the Jesus Paul and Tracy talked about was real.

Similar reports have come in from other areas of Appalachia. The Columbus Baptist Association, Columbus, Georgia, had been coming to Oneida, Kentucky, for three years. During their third summer of...
missions in the area, they witnessed fifty-four professions of faith. For eight years, Carl Boyd had faithfully served in Pike County, Kentucky, spending long, hard hours developing ministry opportunities and seeking ways to assist the churches to better share the love of Jesus. After eight years of faithful service, a reaping of the harvest occurred as he witnessed in one summer over two hundred professions of faith. He personally had the joy of leading forty-five people to faith in Christ.

As you prepare for and carry out your mission trip, people will be observing you. Some will offer words of encouragement; others, discouragement, while still others will want to see if your faith is genuine. Remember, your actions speak louder than your words. People won’t care about your Jesus until they see Him in you.

Reflect: Imagine that you’re the only Jesus some people will ever encounter. What do people see?

Pray: Confess to God when you have been unfaithful, when you have complained about your circumstances, or those times when you were discouraged and wanted to quit. Ask the Father to strengthen you when you are weak, encourage you when you are discouraged, and empower you with the Holy Spirit to be an effective witness.

Journaling:
Day 32
Ready, Set . . . Change!

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16-17).

Even with all the planning, praying, and communicating you do, sometimes the mission trip will not go as you intended. The apostle Paul experienced such on his second missionary journey. Look at it–

- He prepared to depart on the journey, only to have a sharp disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark, which resulted in their parting company (Acts 15:36-41).
- Leaving Lystra, Paul and his companion headed towards Asia, preaching the Gospel, only to be restrained by the Holy Spirit from going there (Acts 16:6-7).
- Taking a new direction, they arrived at Troas, where Paul had a vision of the man of Macedonia begging him to “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:8-10).
- Concluding that God had called them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia, Paul and his company headed straight for Philippi, where, after they had preached the Gospel, Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in prison (Acts 16:11-40).
- Bruised, sore, and in pain, they left Philippi and traveled to Thessalonica, where, in just a short while, they were driven out of town because of the message they preached (Acts 17:1-9).
- Arriving in Berea, they began to preach and teach the Word of God, where it was received with great eagerness. However, Paul was soon driven out of town again. Some men escorted him to Athens, where he waited for Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:10-15).

Facing all the difficulties, changing plans, and persecution, many would have returned to Antioch and reported to the church that they had cancelled the trip due to the circumstances. Surely, the church would have understood; after all they had tried. Perhaps the thought of quitting crossed Paul’s mind. However, in Athens, while waiting for his friends to arrive, he observed the idolatry and was deeply troubled by it. Soon he was debating publicly with philosophers, and soon, while some sneered, others wanted to hear more of Paul’s message (Acts 17:32-34).

We serve a sovereign God who uses the difficulties we encounter for His glory and our good. God may have orchestrated the changes so that someone, unknown to us, might hear the Gospel and be saved. Or that He might teach you or your team key lessons on trust and obedience. When we give our best, no mission trip is a failure.
Paul’s second missionary journey nullifies two assumptions volunteer mission teams often make. The first is that “every mission trip will go just as planned.” In a perfect world . . . perhaps. However, in volunteer missions, that is rarely the case. For example, at the last minute a key member of the team cancels out, or you arrive at the mission site, planning a week of outdoor activities, and it rains—all week. On the other hand, you arrive on the site prepared to paint, only to discover that the team before you did not finish the sheetrock. Or perhaps you arrive at the mission center, anticipating a series of early morning activities, only to find out the children do not get up early, and you have to adjust your schedule.

The second false assumption volunteer mission teams often make is this: “When things do not go as you had planned, the mission trip is a failure.” We serve a sovereign God who uses the difficulties we encounter for His glory and our good. God may have orchestrated the changes so that someone, unknown to us, might hear the Gospel and be saved. Additionally, He may teach you or your team key lessons on trust and obedience. When we give our best, no mission trip is a failure.

Reflect: Prepare for the unexpected. Rest in God’s sovereignty. Memorize a Scripture that you can claim related to trusting God.

Pray: Ask God to use you in a mighty way regardless of unforeseen circumstances. Also pray that God will nurture believers and draw the hearts of pre-believers.

Journaling:
Day 33
A Tent-Making Missionary

“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:1-3).

Paul is frequently referred to as a “tentmaker” missionary. Today that means he was bivocational. The term “tentmaker” implies that such a missionary earns a living by working in secular employment while doing missionary work in the country or city in which they serve. Paul regularly worked with leather, making tents. Besides Corinth, he did so in Thessalonica, Ephesus, and possibly in other places. Although he did it out of financial necessity, it freed him from asking for material support from the new believers, although he had a basic right to request it.

Today the term “bivocational” is frequently used to describe a missionary or pastor who earns a salary by working in secular employment while serving in ministry. Across the Appalachian region, there are many bivocational pastors. These men work in a variety of occupations in order to serve a church or a particular ministry. As you prepare to come to Appalachia, find out if a bivocational pastor serves in the place where you are going. If so, keep in mind the challenges facing the pastor and his family and the privilege you have of serving alongside him on this mission trip.

If the mission project you have prayerfully undertaken involves a bivocational pastor, you will need to include him in your planning because many of these pastors schedule their vacation time to coincide with the week of mission activities. If the pastor is not available during the day, find out who in the church will be responsible for relating to you and include that person in your planning. A key to a successful mission trip is including the receiving church in planning and implementing the mission project.

Because of the busy schedule of bivocational pastors, do not start a project that he cannot handle or finish once you leave without carefully discussing it with him first. Follow-up is critical, especially if professions of faith were made out in the community. Offer to assist the church with the follow-up by telephoning or writing those who made decisions. Perhaps a follow-up trip would be beneficial. Several

1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 20:34
2 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Corinthians 9:6
churches that I am acquainted with plan a follow-up trip in the fall usually the last week of October when they have a “harvest party,” as well as visit those who made decisions during a summer mission trip.

Whether you work with a bivocational pastor or a full-time pastor, take time to discover the needs of his family. Visit with them, put them on your prayer list, find out their birthdays and send cards, and communicate with them often during the year. Let them know that you care.

**Reflect:** What can you do to bless your pastor and his family? Prepare now to bless the pastoral family at your project site.

**Pray:** Ask God to bless and use over 10,000 bivocational pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention in effective ways. Pray for the churches they pastor to reach the lost and disciple the saved. If your mission project involves a bivocational pastor, ask God to enable you and your team to be especially sensitive to him and his family during your mission trip.

**Journaling:**
Day 34
Long-Term Commitment—Part I

“No, the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:9-11).

“And this continued for two years (in Ephesus), so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Paul was anxious to get the message of the Gospel to the ends of the world as Jesus had commanded. His method was to visit a city, locate the local synagogue, and there teach the Gospel. If a synagogue was not available, he found an audience and declared salvation. Never staying long in one place, Paul and his friends carried the Gospel to a number of strategic cities. However, when Paul got to Corinth, the Lord slowed him down, gave him a word of encouragement, and left him there for eighteen months. After Paul arrived in Ephesus, he stayed for two years.

Modern-day volunteer missionaries still follow Paul’s model through short-term and long-term missions. A short-term mission trip may last one day to six months. A long-term mission trip is longer than six months. Many are also following Paul’s example by entering into partnerships with the church or association where they are doing missions. This is a possibility your church might consider.

Each year many churches come to Appalachia and participate in mission opportunities. Some go back to the same area year after year, while others, like a butterfly, move from place to place, seldom going back to the same area as before. Although both types of churches are important in missions, the church that makes a long-term commitment to do missions at the same church year after year has proven to be more effective.

Just what does a long-term commitment look like? A long-term partnership is a three-year or longer commitment to work with a church or association in missions in a given area. Most long-term partnerships involve a covenant that clarifies the responsibilities of each party. Your state convention or Appalachian Mountain Ministry can assist you in developing a long-term partnership in Appalachia. If this is your first mission trip to a specific area, you and your team might serve with the possibility of returning for at least the next three years. If this is a return trip, anticipate meeting new people, but also renewing and strengthening relationships you’ve established before.
Be ready to show the love of Christ each day that you serve. Wear a smile; keep your eyes open for lonely people and speak to them. Ask how you may help someone in the community or on your team. Give thanks as you walk through the day. Verbally bless those whom you encounter.

Reflect: Make a list of at least ten ways you can show the love of Christ each day. Begin practicing today!

Pray: Ask God to pour out His Spirit on the place where you will be going on your mission trip. Ask the Father to provide opportunities for you to begin building relationships with the people you will be serving with in Appalachia.

Journaling:
Day 35

Long-Term Commitment: Part 2

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3-6 NIV).

“Let’s have coffee.” In every culture and every country around the world, the invitation to share a cup of coffee or tea is essentially an invitation to share in a person’s life. It’s no different in Appalachia, except that we acknowledge the “four cups of coffee” rule.

Year 1: I will share a cup of coffee with you out of obligation, for you are a stranger and the conversation will be superficial.
Year 2: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a guest, but I am still not sure about you or why you are here.
Year 3: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a special guest. The conversation will still be superficial.
Year 4: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a friend. The conversation may move beyond being superficial.

This “rule” reveals the significance of entering into a long-term partnership, which provides benefits that will enable you to be more effective in your mission work. In Corinth and Ephesus, Paul discovered these benefits. The first is relationship building. Going back to the same church year after year, you get to know the people and they get to know you. A bond of trust, so critical to successful relationships, begins to develop.

The second benefit is leadership development. Paul’s time in both Corinth and Ephesus allowed him the opportunity to train and develop leaders to do the work of ministry, thus multiplying himself. A mission team that seeks out potential leaders and assists them in developing their skills will not only enhance the mission project, but the local church. A key objective of any long-term partnership must include leadership development.

A third benefit is the encouragement you are able to both give and to receive. In both cities, Paul encountered individuals who became encouragers to him as he encouraged them. Read Acts 18-19 and note the mutual encouragement that took place.

Growing relationships, developing leaders, and steady encouragement will enhance effective ministry by the local church so that they may boldly share the Gospel of Jesus in their community.
A fourth benefit is that a long-term partnership enables you to do year-round missions. You get to know the needs and the people, and out of that come opportunities to work together during the year. For example, as your team leads a VBS, you learn that many residents need dental work and that children need shoes, winter jackets, hats and gloves. After consulting with the local pastor, when you return to your church, you share those needs. A dentist suggests taking a small team to provide a free dental clinic in September. Then your church holds a clothing drive and determines to deliver collected items at a fall block party another mission team will produce in October.

Growing relationships, developing leaders, and steady encouragement will enhance effective ministry by the local church so that they may boldly share the Gospel of Jesus in their community. As your mission team serves and blesses others, you will be blessed as well. Paul’s benediction to his ministry partners will become yours (Philippians 1:3-6).

Are you ready for another cup of coffee? Consider entering into a long-term partnership with a church, association, or ministry center in Appalachia.

Reflect: How will you help move through the “four cups of coffee” rule with the new folks you will be working alongside?

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to go before you and your team and open hearts to relationships, raise up potential leaders, and develop the gift of encouragement in all who are participating in the mission project.

Journaling:
Day 36
20/20 Vision

“I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21).

Paul never lost his vision. He saw himself as an evangelist, having a mandate to reach sinners with the truth of the Gospel. Even after enduring years of hardship and persecution, Paul remained faithful to the vision Jesus had given him on the Damascus road. Paul was so passionate to reach the lost that he cried out, “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.” He even made the shocking statement that, if possible, he would be willing to give up his own salvation to see unredeemed Jews saved.

In Acts 20, Paul, on his way to Rome, stopped to meet with the elders of the church in Ephesus in Miletus. By including this meeting, Luke gives us an insight into Paul’s personal approach to sharing the Gospel. Paul taught both publicly and privately, using every opportunity to teach, even going from house to house, the homes of believers as well as non-believers. He showed no favoritism or partiality to color, nationality, belief, status, poor or rich, Jew or Gentile—nothing mattered. The driving passion in Paul’s life was to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ.

When you come to Appalachia for your mission project, your motivating passion for being here must be to reach the lost. Whatever your project involves—construction, home repair, servant evangelism, or any one of the many different types of ministry taking place—the focus of all we do must be to share the Gospel. Lonnie Riley, with Meridzo Ministries in Lynch, Kentucky, constantly reminds volunteers that no matter what they are doing, they are to do it in such a way that they can share the gospel. For example, he states, “If you are passing out food boxes, tell the person receiving the food box that you are doing this because of Jesus, and then tell them about Jesus. If you are painting a house and someone stops to watch, tell them you are doing this because of Jesus, and then tell them about Jesus. Whatever you do, point people to Jesus.” One summer he had youth teams cleaning the streets and sidewalks of Lynch in the name of Jesus. At the end of the summer, people were asking Lonnie to reopen the local Baptist church that had closed several years earlier.

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19 1 Corinthians 9:16
20 Romans 9:3
In many parts of Appalachia, homes are being opened, barriers are coming down, and people are softening to the Gospel. In the Potomac Highland area of West Virginia, a senior adult couple went door to door through a small town and discovered 40 unchurched adults who were willing to hear the Gospel.

Many of the mission projects available through Appalachian Mountain Ministry may give you the opportunity to visit in the homes of people living in Appalachia. While you are there, focus on Jesus and the wonderful Good News of salvation.

**Reflect:** Outline the plan of salvation, memorize it, and be ready to share it.

**Pray:** Ask the Father to open doors during your mission trip for you to share the Gospel. Ask Him to make you sensitive to the opportunities He places before you and to give you the right words to say at the right time. Start with the story of how you came to faith in Christ and then invite folks to relationship with Jesus.

**Journaling:**
Day 37
Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

“You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:18-21).

It is easy to get sidetracked. A key person at the last minute cannot make the mission trip. A problem develops or a situation changes right before departure, and suddenly you are more focused on the difficulties than on the main purpose of the mission trip.

Paul knew the danger of allowing circumstances to divert you from your main task. Read the Book of Acts, marking each time he faced a diversion—persecution, rejection, misunderstanding, loss of friends, or imprisonment. Paul understood that when you invade Satan’s domain, he responds. Thus, Paul states to the Ephesian elders, “I have kept the main thing the main thing. In spite of the difficulties, I never shrank from telling you the truth, either publicly or in your homes. I had only one message for everybody: turn from sin and turn to God; place your faith in our Lord Jesus.” He continues, “I’ve done my best, I’ve given you my all, therefore no one can blame their damnation on me because I declared to you everything you needed to know about God’s will.”

If Paul had focused on his trials, he would soon have become discouraged and possibly quit, or at best gone back to his friends and talked about how difficult it was to serve the Lord. Rather, as Paul spoke to the elders, he shared three things that enabled him to stay focused on Jesus in spite of the hardships he endured. First, he stated, “I served the Lord.” The word “served” comes from the Greek root word used for “bond slave.” Paul constantly called himself the slave or bond-servant of Jesus Christ.21 A bond-servant or slave was owned by his master, was subject to the master’s will, had no personal rights, and existed only for the purpose of service. So it was with Paul: he lived only to serve Christ. Second, Paul served with humility, always putting the needs of others above his own. Thirdly, with a tender, compassionate heart, he served as he wept over lost people and the immaturity of believers.

21Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1. James was a slave of God (James 1:1); Peter was a slave of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1); Christian believers are to be slaves of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:22; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:24).
As you prepare for and go on your mission trip, expect difficulties to arise that will keep you from the main thing: telling others about Jesus. A mission team from Georgia arrived to do Backyard Bible Clubs, only to discover that four of the six locations had cancelled. Instead of being discouraged, they quickly found four new locations, one of which was a health care facility for senior adults. In each of the locations people prayed to receive Christ. A North Carolina team came prepared to paint a widow’s house, but at the last minute she declined, so they roofed the house of an elderly couple. A team from northern West Virginia was headed to the coalfields to do VBS for a small church, but learned a second team from Ohio was also coming. The two teams talked, and the West Virginia team quickly discovered a request for a VBS in Kentucky that had not been filled. With a quick change of plans, they left for a successful mission trip.

**Reflect:** Keep an attitude log this week. When difficulties arise, how do you respond? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the heart and attitude of a servant.

**Pray:** Ask the Father to empower you to keep the main thing the main thing and to help you stay focused on Him. Remember, He’s the Master; you are the slave.

**Journaling:**
Day 38
Tell Your Story

“Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now” (Acts 22:1).

Witnessing is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. Another definition is one person telling another person about the greatest thing that has ever happened in his/her life. You do not have to memorize a lengthy presentation, nor do you have to remember all the key verses in the Bible. Just tell your story of coming to faith in Christ. (See Appendices A and C for help in knowing and sharing your story of coming to faith in Christ.)

Luke records two occasions when Paul, while under arrest, shared his story with others (Acts 22:1-21; Acts 26:1-23). Each time Paul’s passion was for the salvation of the lost, especially his own people, the Jews. That is why he wanted to speak to the mob that was screaming for his death (Acts 21:39-40). He was willing to face death to see as many people as possible saved. He had been saved and he desperately wanted everyone to know the same salvation. On both occasions, Paul told his story in three parts. Like Paul, your testimony is unique to you and can be shared using the same basic format.

First, Paul briefly shared his life before he was converted or saved. He shared his roots, his personal heritage, and his personal struggle to find God. He even shared about that part of his life, which had been hostile to Christ (Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2). While he did not glamorize his past, neither did he hide it.

Second, Paul told of the circumstances surrounding his conversion. He recounted how he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of the Way. He said a bright light from heaven blinded him and Christ personally confronted him, and he came to believe by faith. He related how Ananias came as a messenger of God to confirm his call to bear witness to the Lord and to baptize him.

Third, Paul told of his life since his conversion. On both occasions, Paul shared a brief account of his life following his conversion. He told how the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel, calling all people to repent and turn to God and to show evidence of their repentance by their deeds. He concluded his testimony to King Agrippa with these words, “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23).
What is your story of coming to faith in Christ? Your story is powerful because it is God’s story of grace to save you. It is a story you can tell wherever you go. As you share how you came to faith in Christ and what being a Christian has meant to you, God will use your story to draw others to Himself.

Several groups have told me they use one evening of their mission trip for team members to share their personal testimonies, their stories. They invite community members to join them for the testimony time and a time of fellowship. Without exception, I have heard how, following the testimony time, people were saved. So tell your story, tell it often, tell it prayerfully, and let God use it to draw others to Jesus.

Reflect: When was the last time you shared your story? Practice with a friend today.

Pray: Thank God for sending Jesus into the world to die on the cross for your sins in order that you, by grace through faith, might have eternal life. Then ask the Father to give you opportunities to share your story with someone today.

Journaling:
Day 39
Do Your Best

“Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, ‘My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day’” (Acts 23:1).

In Acts 21 Paul arrives back in Jerusalem with a love offering for the impoverished believers. While some were glad to see him, others were not, especially his former Jewish friends who had not believed in Jesus as the Messiah. At an opportune time some Jews from Asia stirred up the crowd with the intent of having Paul killed. When the angry crowd would not hear Paul’s explanation, the Roman commander arranged for a hearing the next day to hear the Sanhedrin’s charges against Paul.

Then, standing in a Roman court, facing his former friends of the Sanhedrin, Paul made one of the greatest claims possible—that he had lived “in all good conscience before God.” Apparently referring to the years since his conversion, he was saying to the council that his conversion to Christ and his life since that day had been pleasing to God. He was innocent of breaking the law of God and Moses. His conscience was pure. As those who knew him could attest, he had always been motivated by a desire to please God. A week later, standing before the governor in Caesarea, Paul again affirmed, “This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16).

As you prepare for your mission trip to Appalachia, God does not expect perfection, only obedience. Your availability, not ability; your faithfulness, not accomplishments will determine the success of your mission trip. If your mission trip in the eyes of others is less than successful, remember: when you have done your best, followed the will of God, and been faithful, that is all He requires. God honors faithfulness, and whatever God honors is success.

Recently a team leader called to discuss what he perceived to be a wasted mission trip to Appalachia. Nothing had gone as planned. The host pastor revealed that it had been one of those kinds of weeks when nothing went right. Miscommunication led to misunderstanding, which in turn led to tension. Then on Monday morning, when the mission team arrived on site, with the materials to repair and paint the house of a widow, without explanation, she told the team she had decided not to allow them to do the work. Unable to change her mind, the team left, frustrated. For the rest of the week they did servant evangelism—like passing out bottles of cold water to joggers and giving donuts and coffee to people on the streets.

“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.” – Vince Lombardi
Several months later, after I had spoken in a church in western North Carolina, a teenage girl came to me and told me about her mission trip to Appalachia. She told me how she and the other teens with her had been able to witness to other teenagers while passing out coffee and donuts on a street corner and how at a city park they had given cold bottles of water to joggers “in Jesus’ name.” With excitement in her voice, she told me how she anticipated returning next year to the same place to do the same thing. Not once did she mention the change of plans, the frustration, or the disappointment the group had experienced. She was excited that everywhere she went, people were eager to hear the Gospel, and that she had been able to see lost teenagers come to faith in Christ.

Reflect: How do you perceive success? Compare your view to God’s perspective?

Pray: Ask the Heavenly Father to give you a sensitive spirit to what He will do on this mission trip. Ask Him to shape a flexible, teachable attitude in you and ask Him to use you to tell others of Jesus.

Journaling:
Day 40
When Your Motives Are Misunderstood

“Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day’” (Acts 24:17-21).

Accused of being a troublemaker, Paul is on trial before Governor Felix. To defend himself, Paul explains that he had come to Jerusalem to bring an offering from the Gentile churches for the needy Jewish Christians and to make offerings in the Temple. While doing that, Paul informed Felix, they had found him quietly in prayer, with no crowd around and doing nothing to create a disturbance.

As you become involved in volunteer missions, occasionally your motives will be misunderstood. Perhaps your motive, based on your pre-site visit was to organize a food drive. During the visit, you observed clear signs of poverty in the community and you envisioned a food pantry as a way to minister to needy people and open the door for sharing the Gospel. Consequently, you arrive with a truck loaded with groceries. To your astonishment, the pastor of the church does not get excited; instead, he becomes distant and uncooperative. Only after prayer and several conversations, you discover that he is concerned not with the food you have brought but with the long-term impact on the church and the community. Who will maintain the food pantry? He is concerned about starting something and not being able to keep it going, especially in view of limited finances. Because he is active in the community, he also knows that several other agencies adequately meet the food needs.

When you come to Appalachia and your motives are misunderstood, as a team, ask these four questions: Did we communicate clearly with the receiving church? Did we discover their needs? Did we discuss the project with them? Did we really hear what they were saying? Secondly, ask yourself, Did I come with a personal agenda? What is God trying to teach me through this experience and what have I learned?

During a pre-site visit to a church in central Appalachia, a church from the South determined that this small congregation could better serve their community if they had central heat and air conditioning. Without talking to the pastor or the congregation, they raised the money to purchase the needed equipment, and in June arrived, installed the equipment, had a dedication Sunday, and went home, never once having asked the church if they needed the central heat and air conditioning. In August they received

Good motives without prior planning and clear communication can lead to ineffective mission projects.
an electric bill for $283.00, with this note attached: “We cannot afford the gift you gave us, and since we didn’t ask for it, please pay this bill.” The note continued, “We have disconnected the thing.”

Sadly, the above story is true. This story and similar incidents often occur in Appalachia. Good motives without prior planning and clear communication can lead to ineffective mission projects.

**Reflect:** Think again about your motives for going on mission. List and submit them to the Father.

**Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to help team leaders clearly communicate with everyone involved.

**Journaling:**
Day 41
Ready, Set, Go with the Gospel

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31).

The Book of Acts ends where it began—preaching the Kingdom of God. Acts begins with Jesus gathering His disciples together and “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3) and commissioning them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In thirty years, this handful of believers had spread the Gospel throughout Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria, and into many parts of the Roman Empire. Now, as Acts closes, the gospel has reached the center and capital of the world, Rome itself.

2,000 years later thousands are still proclaiming the gospel. Sometimes the message flows freely without opposition; at other times, it is threatened with violent attempts to silence it. Sometimes false ministers and teachers have infiltrated the church and have counterfeited the message. Others have added to or subtracted from the message, but it has never been stamped out.

As you leave for your mission trip, you join with thousands of other Southern Baptist mission volunteers who are literally taking the gospel around the world. Using Acts 1:8 as their strategy, churches of all sizes are preaching the Kingdom of God by sending out mission volunteers to people groups and cities all over the globe, and you are a part of this mighty host of volunteers. You are an important part of God’s plan for world evangelization. The mission volunteer who comes to Appalachia is just as important as the one who goes to China or Romania. The mission volunteer who leads a Backyard Bible Club is just as important in advancing the Kingdom of God as the volunteer who helps constructs a new church building. The volunteer who repairs a widow’s house is just as important as the one who does street evangelism. God is using each to advance His Kingdom.

After a team of volunteers left, a fourteen-year-old girl said, “I feel God is calling me to be a missionary.” When Gateway Baptist Church came to West Virginia to assist Little Birch Baptist Church, they did not realize how God would use them to revive a struggling congregation that was desperately needed in the Little Birch community. Wherever you go in Appalachia, mission volunteers are making an eternal difference in communities, churches, and most importantly, in the lives of people as they experience the power of the Gospel.

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

– Acts 1:8
While you may not fully understand what God has in mind for you on this mission trip, you can rest assured that you are a part of “fulfilling the Great Commission” as you bring the Gospel to Appalachia.

**Reflect:** Read again your “marching orders.”

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20).

“So Jesus said to them . . . “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

**Pray:** Ask God to empower your mission team. Call each member by name and ask God to use each of you to share the gospel. Ask that the team and those you are going to serve with will work together in unity and reflect the love of Christ throughout the mission trip.

**Journaling:**
Day 42
Reporting on the Progress

“From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:26-28).

There is a time to work and a time to relax, a time to do ministry and a time to celebrate what God has done. At the completion of their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch to report on their mission trip and to celebrate with their sending church all that God had done with them. The church at Antioch was undoubtedly overjoyed at the return of their two beloved pastors. Their work, commended at the outset to the grace of God, had been very successful. As the missionaries began to report, they detailed how God had used them to open the door of faith, so that the people of all nations could walk through and be saved.22

When you return from your mission trip, you will want to do the same, reporting on how God allowed you to be a part of the door of faith He has opened in Appalachia. Just like Paul and Barnabas, you will want to share all that God has done through you and your mission team.

A Missions Celebration is Biblical and is a key theme running through the Book of Acts, a report by Luke to Theophilus concerning the events surrounding the early church as it advanced across the Roman Empire. In Acts we read the following reports.

- Peter and John report to the church after the healing of the lame man and their subsequent trial (Acts 4:23).
- Peter reports to the church in Jerusalem on how God led him to reach the household of Cornelius (Acts 11:1-ff).
- Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch to share after delivering a special offering to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:25).
- In Acts 15:4, Paul and Barnabas gave a mission’s report to a sister church. However, in Jerusalem they encountered opposition instead of rejoicing—opposition so deeply entrenched that it resulted in the first major doctrinal council and, although resolved in the church council, it was never fully accepted by the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:17-ff).
- Paul returns to Antioch and reports on what God is doing (Acts 18:22).
- Paul tells the church at Jerusalem the things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry (Acts 21:19-ff).

22Acts 9:15-16; 13:2-4
Luke records an interesting moment in the life of Christ when the seventy-two disciples returned and gave their report, telling us that it filled Him with joy (Luke 10:21). Jesus reminds us that the same thing occurs in heaven every time an unsaved person comes to faith in Him (Luke 15:7, 10). As you give your report, remember heaven is listening in and rejoicing with you and your church over every life that has been eternally changed because you were obedient to the Father.

**Reflect:** Why am I going on this mission trip?

**Pray:** Whether you are repairing a house, constructing a building, conducting Backyard Bible Clubs, or doing any of the many different mission opportunities, God will bring people into your path that need to be saved. Pray to the Lord of the harvest for their salvation and anticipate the rejoicing that will take place in heaven.

**Journaling:**
Appendix A

How to Accept Christ

Do you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die?

God wants you to be sure. The Bible says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). Suppose you were standing before God right now and He asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?" What do you think you would say? You may not know what to reply. But you do know God loves us and has a purpose for our lives. The Bible states it this way, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting [eternal] life" (John 3:16).

God's purpose is that you have eternal life.

You can receive eternal life as a free gift. "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23b).

You can live a full and meaningful life right now. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly [to the full]" (John 10:10b).

You can spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven, for He promised, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

Our need is to understand our problem.

God's purpose is that we have meaning in life as we direct our lives and hearts toward Him. Then why is it that people seldom find true meaning in life? Our sinful nature keeps us from fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

- We are all sinners by nature and by choice. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- We cannot save ourselves. "Not by works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).
- We deserve death and hell. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).
- We can receive what we do not deserve. God is holy and just and must punish sin, yet He loves us and has provided forgiveness for our sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
The good news is... God's provision is Jesus Christ. Becoming aware of our sinfulness, we may desire a remedy. God offers that remedy in His Son, Jesus Christ, who became like us to show us how we might become like Him.

- Jesus is God and became human. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14a).
- Jesus died for us on the cross. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18a).
- Jesus was resurrected from the dead. [He] “was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25).

The only way Jesus can affect our lives is for us to receive Him. The Bible says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

How We Receive Jesus

Realizing that Jesus is the solution to our rebellion against God, we may desire to establish a relationship with Him. To do so the Bible says:

- We must repent of our sin. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19a).
- Repentance is not just feeling sorry for our sin. “They should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting [proving their] repentance” (Acts 26:20b). Repentance is turning away from our sin and turning to God through Jesus. It’s like making a U-turn.
- We must place our faith in Jesus. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).
- Faith is not just believing facts about Jesus. “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19). Faith is trusting in Jesus.

Trust Totally in Jesus

We must surrender to Jesus as Lord or Master. "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is not just words we repeat. Jesus warned, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but [only] he who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is giving Jesus control of our lives.

To give Jesus control of our lives is like driving down the highway with another person. As long as you are driving, you are in control. If, at some point, you realize you do not know the way, but the other person
does, and you say, "You take the wheel and drive," then the other person is in control. The two of you will take the route that person chooses.

As evidence of giving Jesus control, you will want to identify with Him. The New Testament way is to confess Jesus publicly (Matthew 10:32-33) and to follow Him in baptism and church membership (Acts 2:41).

**Three Important Questions**

1. "Does what you have been reading make sense to you?"
2. "Is there any reason why you would not be willing to receive God's gift of eternal life?"
3. "Are you willing to turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus right now?"

The Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Please read this prayer and see if you want to say something like this to God.

Dear Lord, I believe you are the Son of God and that you died on the cross and were raised from the dead. I know I have sinned and need forgiveness. I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for saving me.

Call upon the Lord in repentance, faith, and total trust using these or similar words of your own. Jesus will become your Savior and Lord.

**Welcome to the family of God** (See Appendix B, page 96).

You have just made the most important decision of your life. You can be sure you are saved and have eternal life. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

Appendix B

Welcome to God's Family

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16). As a newborn babe in God's family, you will find assurance and direction from the following truths as you begin to grow in Christ.

1. You entered God's family by a **SPIRITUAL BIRTH**. Jesus taught, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'” (John 3:6-7).

You can be certain you have eternal life:
- Because birth in Christ is a onetime experience (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Because of your commitment
  - You placed your faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).
  - You committed your life to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).
  - You prayed asking Jesus to forgive and save you.
- Because of God's record (1 John 5:11-13).
- Because of God's nature (1 John 5:1-9).
- Because of God's promise (John 5:24).

I have assurance I am a Christian and have eternal life because on ___________________ (date)

I committed my life to Christ. ________________________________________________ (signed)

2. **GOD's WORD** is essential for spiritual growth just as food is for physical growth. “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

- God's Word will help you grow: READ IT DAILY.
- God's Word will guide you: HEAR IT TAUGHT AND PREACHED.
- God's Word will keep you from sin: MEMORIZE AND OBEY IT.
- God's Word will teach you how to live: STUDY IT.
- God's Word will inspire you: MEDITATE ON IT.
- God's Word will work: PRACTICE IT.

My best time to read God's Word each day is ______________________________________
3. **PRAYER** is essential to spiritual growth just as breath is to physical growth.

   Praying is like breathing:
   - As you exhale, talk to God.
   - As you inhale, listen to God.
   - Talk to Him any time:
     - You want to worship Him.
     - You need help.
     - You feel lonely.
     - You need strength.
     - You want guidance.
     - You are tempted.
     - You sin or fail.

   “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

4. **THE CHURCH** is essential to spiritual growth just as the home is to a baby's growth. What a good home and family are to a baby, the church is to a new Christian.

   God's people, the church, are your new family.
   - They will rejoice that you have been born again.
   - They will accept you and love you.
   - They will encourage you and give you support.
   - They will teach you and train you how to live.
   - They will worship God with you.

   You declare your acceptance of Christ and your new family by being **BAPTIZED**. “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41, 47b).

   **BAPTISM** is a symbolic witness of your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It does not save you, but it shows your obedience to the example and teachings of Christ. Jesus walked sixty miles to be baptized. Since He placed that much importance on it, will you request baptism? Baptism is the first physical act you can do to show your gratefulness and obedience to God.

5. **COMMUNICATING YOUR FAITH** to others is just as important as a baby's learning to talk. As a baby tries to communicate, he learns and grows. You will grow as you share your new life with others. Who would be the happiest person to know about your new birth?

   Write that person's name. ____________________________________________________________
Who else could you tell that needs to have this same experience? Write that person's name.

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**Summary: Steps to Growth**

1. Feed on God's Word daily.
2. Breathe a prayer regularly.
3. Join your new church family Sunday.
4. Communicate your faith soon.
Appendix C

Guide to Giving Your Personal Testimony

A disciple has an experience to share with others. Sharing your experience is the first step in your discipline of witnessing. This section will help you take the facts of your life and write them in a clear, concise way so you can give your personal testimony to a non-Christian. Writing your testimony will help you clarify your experience in your own mind, provide a form others can help you sharpen and make more effective, give you confidence that you have a testimony and can share it with others, and provide a beginning point from which you can depart according to the reactions of the person(s) with whom you share.

God commissioned Christians to share the knowledge of His love with others (Matthew 28:18-20). As Christians, we benefit from thinking through our experience with Jesus Christ so we can share with others in a clear, concise way. Consider the following suggestions for preparing a personal testimony:

1. Write your testimony in about 250-500 words. Write in a conversational style which resembles the way you talk with a friend.

2. Write in first person. Use "I" and "me." Emphasize that this is your personal experience, your story, not a sales presentation someone else has written for all people to use.

3. Choose the approach most fitting your experience.
   a. The chronological approach emphasizes what happened before and after conversion. This approach is most appropriate if, prior to your conversion, you had significant experiences with which your audience can easily identify. The chronological approach allows you to center on the drama of your conversion experience.
      
      The chronological approach begins at a significant point of your life prior to conversion, tells the conversion experience, and then tells its effects on life up to the present. (See illustration.)

   b. The thematic approach is most appropriate for those saved as children, those who recall few events prior to conversion, or those who cannot remember the exact sequence of events in their conversion experience. The thematic approach focuses on an experience, problem, issue, or feeling with which the other person may identify and stresses how salvation has influenced that concern. Your concern may be fear of death, desire for success and happiness, an addiction, relationship problems, a character flaw, a search for identity, or a crisis experience. Conversation with the person may reveal a concern evident in your life and of
present concern to the other person. Your theme may be ignorance of any need or problem until you met Jesus. You may begin with testimony to your current situation, such as,

- I have discovered how not to worry.
- I have found a purpose for living.
- I am so happy because ____________________________ .

**Two Kinds of Testimony Outlines**

Use the flashback techniques to tell how you solved your problem. Bridge the theme to your conversation by saying: "I had a problem similar to yours. If it had not been for an experience I had several years ago, I could not have solved it. May I tell you about it?" This allows you to discuss a problem which arose even after conversion and can take the place of telling your experiences before conversion. You do not have to tell when something happened. Tell how you came to your present situation. You can build your testimony around the four facts of the gospel—sin, sin's penalty, Christ's payment, and receiving Christ. You may say, "Although I did not realize everything that was taking place at the time, I later discovered that. . . ." Work in the four facts with your personal experience.

**Consider the following outline as a form to use in developing your testimony.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Interesting life-related event or fact identifying with the other person's situation.

I. Before I Met Christ
   A. Chronological Approach: My Life and Attitudes Before Conversion
   B. Thematic Approach: Problem or Need Conversion Solved

II. How I Realized My Need for Christ

III. How I Became a Christian
   A. Realized my sin
   B. Knew sin's penalty
   C. Learned of Christ's payment for sin
   D. Received Christ by repenting of sin, putting faith in Christ, and surrendering to Jesus as Lord of life

IV. What Being a Christian Means to Me Now

V. Closing Question or Invitation

Begin your testimony with an interesting introduction that helps the person see you as a real person. Give a few, brief facts about your life before you became a Christian. Use only details of interest to the person. If possible, relate details to the other person's situation.

Highlight the events that led to your salvation. Sum up the events that led you to realize your need for Christ. Avoid using specific places, names of churches or people, or dates unless the person hearing
your testimony has the same background. If you keep these facts general, more people will be able to identify with you. Do not use religious jargon or church words that might not be understood by those with little religious training or with different religious backgrounds.

Summarize the facts of salvation and how you became a Christian. Tell how you became aware that you were living an "I-controlled life." State how you felt when you realized the nature of sin and the penalty of sin. Tell your joy when you learned Christ paid the penalty for your sin. Summarize how you received Christ. Be sure to emphasize repentance or turning from sin and faith in Christ as the way to salvation. You will want to use some of the information and Scriptures in "How to Accept Christ" (Appendix A, page 93).

Share what knowing Christ as Lord and Savior has meant to you. Summarize specific differences Christ has made in your life. Mention continuing struggles and how Christ helps you daily. Maintain focus on Christ and salvation, not on present problems. The non-Christian can best identify with the need for and experience of salvation through Christ.

Close your testimony so that further conversation focuses on salvation. Use questions as a transition device from you talking to the other person to you listening to the other person. Ask: "Has anything like that ever happened to you? Does that make any sense to you? Have you ever wanted such an experience? Have you ever made the wonderful discovery of knowing Jesus as your personal Savior?"

**Helps in Sharing Your Testimony**

1. Check your written testimony to see if the story line is clear, if the important issues have been covered adequately, and if an invitation to know more about Christ has been extended. Is the tone right for conversation with a friend? Have you concluded with a bridge question to involve the other person in talking about salvation? Is your testimony true? You may discover a need to talk with God about your own experience and gain new assurance of your own salvation.

2. Practice giving your testimony to Christians before sharing it with non-Christians. Ask them to help you sharpen it so you can communicate more powerfully to non-Christians.

3. Give your testimony to a non-Christian. Do not worry about memorizing the testimony. Adjust to the situation. Your writing will have helped you clarify your testimony so the Holy Spirit can use it more effectively.

4. Ask God to give you opportunities to give your testimony to others.

5. Your responsibility is to share your testimony and pray for the salvation of others. The Holy Spirit's task is to convict sinners and convert them.
6. Remember the goal is to lead a person to know Christ in salvation. Telling your experience is not the end. Engaging in conversation that gives the other person opportunity to accept Christ is the final step.

Witnessing is sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.