FROM THE FRONTLINES

30 devotionals by missionaries shining light in the world’s darkest corners

EAST-WEST MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
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When I joined East-West, I was captivated by the bold, tenacious, pioneering spirit of this ministry. After more than 20 years, that same spirit continues to ignite movements for Christ … taking the gospel where it’s never been, in ways it’s never traveled.

Our missionaries live on the frontlines of these movements. Their work among the lost encompasses everything from coaching American football in the Middle East to hiking the Himalayas for the sake of multiplying followers of Jesus in every tribe, tongue, and nation. The diversity of ministries, the people who lead them, and the words they share in the following pages reflect the ingenuity of our Creator and Paul’s words to the church in Corinth.

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”
-1 Corinthians 12:4-6

While their gifts, services, and work varies, our missionaries are unified by the same Spirit-led conviction to share the gospel with people far from Christ. Each brings a unique perspective to the Christian life that is rooted in Scripture, and we’ve packaged a few of their thoughts for you in this booklet.

My hope is that the Scriptures, quotes, insights, and prayers from those serving on the frontlines of our ministry inspire and challenge you to use your unique, God-given talents for the growth of His Kingdom.

In Him,

Kurt Nelson
President & CEO
I think most of us will agree that until Jesus is the centerpiece of our hearts, telling others of His redeeming love in the midst of a hostile environment will not be a top priority of our life. Once we are filled with Christ Jesus Himself, we don’t mind disturbing our own peace and security. When we really see Jesus, our hearts mirror that of Paul’s and everything becomes nothing in light of knowing the Lord (Philippians 3:8).

Oh, how Jesus longs to use people just like us for the glory of His name! People that are broken, messed up, and confused, but adopted and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Everyone outside of Christ wears a mask, searching for meaning and longing at the deepest level of their soul for what God alone can give to each of them. And that’s all they need. Nothing more.

The world is hungry for what Christians have to offer … the grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, acceptance, faithfulness, and presence of the living God.

So remember the mandate of Christ in Acts 1:8: “You shall be my witnesses.” Why? Because “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

We have such a great Savior! Don’t keep Him to yourself today.

Father, compel us to share Your great love with others today. Use our stories of redemption to bring people into relationship with You. Amen.
How has God blessed you through trials? As my students responded to this question with stories of their families abandoning them because of their faith in Jesus, they rejoiced knowing they were adopted into the body of Christ. With no blood relatives willing to claim them, these believers cling to their church family and the Truth found in Psalm 27.

• *The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?* … gives them strength for the journey ahead as they trade Islamic beliefs to follow Jesus.

• *Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me …* reminds them of their Heavenly Father when their earthly one disowns them.

• *Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors …* gives them courage when they’re smuggled across borders to survive.

• *I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living …* encourages them when family members disappear because they chose to follow Jesus.

• *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord …* gives them hope when they’re strangers in a foreign land and withheld basic rights because of their faith.

The students’ use of Scripture reminds me that God’s Word truly is living and active … inspiring believers as they journey heavenward no matter the consequences.

*Lord, give us faith like these students who are willing to give up everything to follow You. Awaken Your Word in our lives to strengthen us as we walk in Your will. Amen.*
In the early days of our work in Southeast Asia, we were taught “feet etiquette.” In a land where everyone leaves their shoes outside, we were taught to never show our feet in public! This cultural tradition makes me think of two things—Mary of Bethany and feet.

These Scriptures in the gospels of Luke and John document portions of Mary’s life and have a common thread—Jesus’ feet—that illustrate our spiritual walk. In the first story, Mary is the hungry disciple. In the second, she’s the disillusioned disciple. In the final story, Mary is the worshipping disciple. Our spiritual lives tend to mirror these stages. We learn by sitting at His feet, we’re tested while crying at His feet, and we worship when we anoint His feet.

“Either we will live under a cloud of despair, believing that God has abandoned us […] or we will live with hope, even in the midst of pain, knowing that a good and loving God has marked out the race we are running. He has done it for our good and his glory.”

–Carolyn Custis James

Father, we’re grateful for Scriptures that we can relate to as we walk with You. In every season—good or bad—remind us that You are working for our good and Your glory. Amen.
It amazes me that Jesus chooses to learn obedience through suffering. And in doing so, He reveals that obedience is faith in action. By faith we hear the Father calling us, but it is through obeying that we let the Father lead us. Sometimes obedience leads us to places of suffering, and through that suffering we learn to trust God more.

In many of the countries we serve, believers suffer because of their faith in Christ. Their families abandon them, their government threatens them, and their friends mock them … and yet they choose to be obedient in their suffering by boldly sharing the hope they’ve found in Christ. They’ve truly learned to trust God more through their suffering.

With our own Lord’s example and the example of brothers and sisters around the world before me, I am learning to obey in suffering because His grace is sufficient and will lead me closer to Him.

Lord, teach us to obey like Christ, who laid aside His privileges to take on suffering so that we can know You. When we suffer, strengthen us to trust and obey You more. Let those of us who have suffered be voices of compassion, comfort, and courage to others walking in suffering. Amen.
I didn’t realize how much patience I would need to get established overseas. Learning a new language, finding housing, getting Internet, and planting ministry roots takes time. During a season of adjustment, Paul’s words and prayers for endurance and patience with joy and thanksgiving offer me encouragement.

Not only are we to endure and wait on the Lord, but we are to do so with thankfulness and joy. Sometimes it’s a challenge to remember this truth and apply it, but I have found that the gift of gratitude is able to change any situation.

It is easy for me to grow anxious or frustrated while waiting on God to act or move, but I’m learning to be grateful for all that has happened and rejoice in the hope of what is to come.

*Father, we ask for divine patience and endurance in seasons of change and establishment. Help us joyfully give thanks while we wait for You to move. Amen.*
So often my work in missions seems daunting. Day after day I encounter people far from Christ who are unwilling to forego their gods to follow the True God. It’s heartbreaking to know their hardened hearts are on a trajectory towards eternal separation from the One who created them and loves them.

In these moments of despair, I’m encouraged to move forward in obedience to Jesus’ commission by a voice whispering, “I am able to do immeasurably more than you ask or imagine. I am working in you to bring people to Me. I will be made known throughout all generations. Take heart, my faithful servant.”

The whisper entices me to pray bigger—asking God to do far more than I can dream up because He is able.

*God, we pray for you to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine … confident that You are able to penetrate the hardest hearts with the sweetness of Your love. Amen.*
TARNISH AND LASTING TREASURE

from a missionary on our Mobilization Team

READ ACTS 20:24.

The older I get, the more I realize the power of these words in this verse. I turned 50 this year, and it’s clear I’m not in the first quarter of the game anymore. Every year seems to pass faster than the last, and my children have become adults in the blink of an eye. My progressing time has led me to prioritize treasures. I can relate to Paul as the most glamorous things in life that once held a valued place in my heart continue to tarnish the more I see God work among the nations.

Anything I can buy pales in comparison to seeing a life changed by God. And with each new mission comes an increased sense of urgency to invest wisely in eternity. Each cracking bone that sings to me in the morning serves as a reminder to finish strong because time is short.

Paul understood what it means to finish strong. God brought him to the point that nothing mattered more than finishing the magnificent work of "testifying to the good news of God’s grace." I pray my own journey will take me to that place too.

Lord, reveal to us ways we can invest in lasting treasure. Refocus our aim on what ultimately matters as we labor to finish our race well. Amen.
ALLOWED TO SEE
from a missionary to Central Asia
READ MATTHEW 13:1-17.

Eighty-five percent of the people I work with don’t make it. Instead of turning from their old ways to Jesus, they go back to drugs and alcohol. After causing much devastation to themselves and others, their end is not good. My weeks often conclude with burials rather than success stories.

In Francis Chan’s YouTube video, “If Jesus were the Pastor of your church, you wouldn’t go!” Chan cites the Parable of the Sower. Jesus spoke to thousands of people and told many of them they would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The word “not” stands out to me throughout the parable because it reminds me that my successes and failures aren’t dictated by my ability to minister. God controls who can and cannot understand His teachings. I sometimes wish I were more successful in what I have been called to do, but in those moments I’m reminded that:

1. I can do this ministry because He allowed my eyes to see.
2. I am as successful as He allows me to be.
3. I am successful because He allows me to be.
4. I am very successful indeed!

Father, we thank You for opening our eyes to the Truth of who You are. Remind us that You are the Giver of life and success. As we work to make You known, open the eyes of others so they can understand Your goodness and grace. Amen.
In one verse King David declares three incredible blessings that are given to those who are close to God:

- To know the path of life ... In other words, believers can walk on the one path characterized by life. The path of God is life-giving to us and to others. It is living—not dead or dying or decaying. It is an abundant way of living even in a fallen world.

- To have fullness of joy in the presence of God ... As humans, we crave joy. The only reliable source of joy is found in the presence of God.

- Pleasures forever at the right hand of God ... The purest, most wholesome, and life-giving pleasures are given when we are in the presence of God.

Bottom Line: The amount of joy in my life is determined by my nearness or distance from God.

Lord, we want to draw nearer to You and experience the joy of Your path, presence, and pleasures. Amen.
Verses like these have always been compelling to me, but the significance of this passage has taken on new meaning as I transition into full-time ministry. I find myself overwhelmed when I consider the responsibility these words imply and often I wonder if I’m really up to the task.

As I read Matthew 10, I quickly realize that Christ’s disciples—whom He entrusted to escort people into eternity—were pretty ordinary men. In fact, God constantly uses ordinary men and women with a lot of character flaws—untrained, unqualified, uncertain—to do extraordinary things for His Kingdom. This gives me hope and confidence in God’s ability to use me for His glory as I surrender to His will.

Jesus, thank you for choosing us and giving us the privilege of serving You. Thank you for giving us the power of the Holy Spirit to complete Your work. Help us faithfully follow You wherever You lead. Amen.
Many of us know what it’s like to get entangled in a religious debate like the one the Pharisee tried to start when he asked Jesus about the greatest commandment. Instead of engaging in conversations on the importance of honoring the Sabbath versus abstaining from unclean meats, Jesus responds with a message on love.

Through His response, Jesus forever links loving God and loving our neighbor. I find these verses transformative in the Christian walk because we can let our entire being concentrate on harnessing the power that comes from love instead of spending time caught up on rules.

By straying from rule-abiding legalism, we can turn our attention to doing the work of showing God’s love by caring for others. Will we love God so well that our neighbor is loved? Will we love our neighbor so well that we love God well? These two questions are inextricably linked together in the liberating words of Jesus.

_Father, thank You for eternally linking love. Reset our hearts to walk in freedom as we love You and Your people. Amen._
I found this Psalm while navigating a rough patch. The words blessed and hope stood out to me as I wondered, “What is a blessing? Is it being healed or trusting God in the illness? Am I blessed either way?”

In earlier times, people knelt to receive blessings. When life is difficult, I should be in a kneeling position to receive whatever God has for me. In a bowed stance—fully surrendered to the Lord—I find hope. Hope that He sees, that He knows, and that He will do what is best … no matter how difficult the journey may be.

Lord, draw us to our knees. Remind us in our sufferings that You see, know, and are faithful to work things out for good. Amen.
I gripped my Bible tight as I nervously shared the gospel house after house in Latin America. My translator gently urged me to use Scripture to share God’s message of salvation, but my Bible remained shut firmly between my hands as a protective shield, rather than a sword cutting through darkness to bring forth Light.

After two days, I finally conceded to my translator’s nudging and loosened my grip. I opened the pages of my Bible and walked people through the life-giving words of God. One after another people came to know the Lord.

I was reminded of the power found in the gift of God’s Word. These ancient Truths contained in the Bible have not lost their strength. They are still powerful, sweet, mighty, captivating, and unchanging … just like the God who breathed them.

Father, we praise You for the provision of Your Word and the unchanging power it holds. Give us boldness to know and use Your Scriptures as a weapon to battle darkness. Amen.
The Hebrew word for “God’s steadfast love for us” is *hesed* and is sometimes translated as loving-kindness. The Word is rich with meaning and used all over the Old Testament to describe God’s constant, faithful, freely given, unfailing love for Israel. In the moments I wrestle my emotions while preparing to move to the Middle East, this word overwhelms me with the magnitude of God’s love for us.

God repeatedly uses *hesed* in the context of morning, reminding me to bask in His love at the dawn of each day. I’m prone to focus so much on God’s sovereignty and working with Him to fulfill the Great Commission that I look past the first thing that drew me to Him—His radical love! His love came after me when I was a wandering sheep … lost, helpless, and without hope.

The love God showed Israel time and time again is the same love He revealed to me when I was so far from Him. His love displayed at Calvary is the reason for the sweetness and joy of our daily walk with Him. I rejoice in His love as I prepare my heart to move to a foreign land. He really is all we need.

*God, thank You for Your overwhelming Calvary love that refreshes us each morning. Amen.*
Working among Muslims has many interesting challenges. One particular challenge is getting them to reproduce their faith in others. This passage in John is a great reminder that fruit is produced when it stays connected to the Vine.

Hudson Taylor once said, “The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine, and at the right time, and in the right way is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus.”

The Vine delivers sustenance, strength, and nourishment for fruit to grow. No one can bear fruit without the Vine. As I train Muslims to bear fruit, I’m reminded that I can’t bear fruit, but Jesus can through me if I’m plugged into Him.

*Father, we know fruit is only produced when connected to the Vine. Give us the desire to depend more on You for sustenance, strength, and nourishment as we seek to make disciples. Amen.*
ARE YOU LISTENING?
from a missionary on our Mobilization Team

READ LUKE 10.

In Luke 10, “go” is an active command in response to a field that needs to be harvested. I think it’s amazing how Jesus tells us to go and immediately provides three pictures of what going can look like.

First, He tells the appointed 72 to go to different cities to spread the word of God to those who have yet to hear of Christ. A few verses later, Jesus talks about a Samaritan who remained in his town, saw someone in need, and acted to help. And lastly, He introduces Martha and Mary to teach us that investing in relationships is far more important to Him than the number of tasks we complete.

The 72 were commissioned for the unreached. The Samaritan’s ministry was among his community. Mary and Martha served those who entered their home. It seems to me that God intends for us to go and respond to needs both near and far. He is calling you to a need somewhere. Are you listening?

Father, reveal to us our ministry to the lost. Quiet us so we can listen to You without distraction and respond to Your call to go. Amen.
ONESIMUS was Philemon’s runaway slave that encountered Paul in prison and transformed from a thieving servant to a co-laborer for the gospel. Paul’s appeal to Philemon asks him to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ.

The name Onesimus carries the connotation of “useful” or “profitable.” Paul emphasizes that before finding forgiveness in Christ, Onesimus was a useless servant, but after choosing to follow Christ he became a useful vessel for the gospel message.

My testimony echoes Onesimus’ story. I sought my own interests and was absolutely useless to others. After experiencing the love and forgiveness of God through Jesus, my life dramatically changed. I learned how to be a useful brother in Christ and co-laborer for the gospel. My transformation was the catalyst for a life-long journey toward my work in Russia. My hope is to be useful to the Great Commission of Christ all the days of my life.

Lord, we praise You for making useless things useful to Your Kingdom work. Continue using us for Your Great Commission all the days of our lives. Amen.
TOTAL RELIANCE
from a missionary to the Middle East
READ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5.

I find these verses to be incredibly relevant today. It seems like our westernized faith has caused temporary amnesia when it comes to relying on the power of Holy Spirit. Are we trusting in the power of God or the wisdom of mankind to seek and save the lost? This Scripture challenges me to focus on joining God’s way of doing things rather than expecting Him to follow humanity’s way of operating.

In my prayers I constantly ask God to help me rely on His power alone in the mission field. I ask Him to show me what it looks like to let the Spirit infiltrate the fabric of reality—in whatever culture I find myself—so that men and women trust in God’s power rather than human wisdom.

Lord, help us rely on You alone in our mission fields. Show us what it looks like to be completely led by Your Spirit rather than our wisdom. Amen.
The sheer number and size of opportunities for East-West in South and Southeast Asia are overwhelming. How can we engage and impact so many unreached people with limited personnel? How can we expand our capacity to meet pending needs?

I think the Israelites could relate to being overwhelmed in the face of a daunting adversary. Pinned between Pharaoh and his army and a huge body of water, Scripture tells us they directed great doubt and despair toward Moses and God. Moses reminded them of the Lord’s protection and impending deliverance, and God spoke to Moses to tell His people to move toward the sea so He could act.

For God to move on their behalf, the Israelites had to stop despairing, trust God, and move forward. God was in control. He knew the situation, had a plan, and was working things out to save the Israelites and display His glory.

I’m both encouraged and confident that God knows the needs in South and Southeast Asia. As big as they are—He is bigger. He is able to meet needs and enable us to be a part of His plan. I’m constantly challenged to trust God and go forward when I’m overwhelmed with the tasks ahead. He is faithful to provide a way as we follow Him!

Lord, we’re grateful to be on mission with You and are confident You know and will meet the needs of Your people. Increase our trust in Your provision when we’re overwhelmed. Amen.
My wife and I had been working overseas for more than 20 years when we decided to take a one-year, stateside furlough. At the time I remember feeling that I was in a pretty good place spiritually because I fed myself the Word and people in my life considered me the “Bible guy” and a fairly good teacher.

Looking back, I now realize there weren’t many people exhorting and encouraging me to go deeper in my walk with the Lord. Many times missionaries serve with few other believers and little—if any—good Bible instruction. During our furlough, we found a church to antidote the poor teaching and lack of iron-sharpening Christian fellowship we had on the mission field.

Throughout Psalm 119, we’re told that God revives us through His Word, and that is exactly what I experienced on furlough … a soul revival I didn’t know I needed. Weekly my wife and I sat under sound Biblical teaching. My fire for the Lord was further flamed in home groups centered on the Word and fellowship with men and women whose lives were revived by it. I was hungry for more alone time with God, and—as the Scriptures saturated my life—the Holy Spirit applied it to my heart.

My revival was inexorable and inevitable. Difficult to measure and clearly evident. When we set out on our next missionary adventure I was a changed person—my soul was revived by the Word of God.

God, revive the weary through Your Word. Show us where to create margin in our busy schedules to spend alone time with You and in fellowship with our brothers and sisters. Amen.
NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN
from a missionary to Central Asia

As the Lord calls us out of our comfort zone to follow Him, sometimes we are led away from places and people we love. We’re inundated with contrasting emotions of sadness as we leave the known and excitement as we adventure into God’s unfolding plan for our lives. Honestly, it can be a stressful time.

That stress can weaken us, and in the end we’re left empty.

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.” –Charles H. Spurgeon

But God has given us the promise of His strength.

When my heart is unsettled, I turn to the assurances found in Isaiah 40:28-31. I’m thankful for a Lord that provides strength and comfort to navigate the unknown.


Father, thank You for comforting us when we’re in unchartered waters. Steady our hearts when we leave people we love and give us courage to walk boldly into Your plans for our lives. Amen.
JUST SPEAK
from a missionary on our Mobilization Team
READ ROMANS 1:16 and 1 CORINTHIANS 1:17-18.

Slogging in the world of Islam can be challenging. Many deceptions seem “oh so close” to the truth and lead down rabbit trails of questions. I’m often countered by well-schooled Muslims who tenaciously cling to the words of the Quran and the teachings of the Hadith. This ministry field sometimes bears little fruit. In flashes of frustration, “the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” echoes in my mind.

When we stare into the face of someone resisting faith, when fatigue overwhelms us, when our circumstances appear chaotic, when our wisdom fails and our knees are weak there’s one thing we need to do—speak the gospel!

There is immeasurable power when the gospel is breathed out because the Truth of Jesus Christ resides in it. We do not have to be eloquent. We do not need to be trained apologists. We do not even need to be bold. We only need to speak the gospel in faith and God’s power will do its work on the hardest hearts.

Father, convict us to use the power of the gospel when it’s hard to speak and we’re weary of sharing. Tune the hearts of those we engage with to respond to the grace You offer to all who believe in You. Amen.
Churches in East Asia love Isaiah 49. In their Bible translation, Sinim is used to describe a people group seemingly located at the end of the earth that were once bound by darkness. East Asians living in the Light of Christ are confident they are the people of Sinim. In this chapter, Isaiah predicts that the ones once in darkness will journey back to the home of the original Light source—Jerusalem.

East Asians have embraced this text to mean God will use them to take His light back to Jerusalem through the Muslim countries that separate them from the Holy Land. Convicted that they are to show God’s compassion to these people, East Asian missionaries journey to Islamic strongholds for the sake of the Great Commission.

I train missionaries at East Asia’s first missionary training school and daily witness the fruits of their labor. Over 70 workers are delivering the gospel to these Muslim countries and more are training to go. The obedience of Sinim to their call in Isaiah 49:12 is precious to me. It perfectly depicts how God can take what was broken, lost, and enveloped in darkness and make it new … purposing it for His good. With God’s help as described in Isaiah 49:10, they are striving to complete the Great Commission as they voyage back to Jerusalem.

Lord, we praise You for equipping Your followers in East Asia to take the Light of Christ to the broken and lost. We ask that You continue raising up more laborers to take the gospel into Muslim countries. Amen.
“Now after this” is a phrase God often uses to refer to a trial that someone endured that allowed them to walk more intimately with Him. After teaching the 70 disciples several lessons at the end of Luke 9, Jesus appointed them to missions. They weren’t perfect followers, but Jesus taught them lessons from their trials, knew their strengths, weaknesses, and fears, then appointed them to go ahead of Him … even promising that He was going to follow up spiritually in the places they ministered.

The same is true for us. God has appointed us to missions—at home or abroad—and we should be confident that the King of kings wants us on His team! We are not perfect followers of Christ, but He’s taught us lessons through our trials that have prepared us for how He wants to use us for His glory. When we go where He calls us, He will follow up.

God, give us confidence in the call to join Your team despite our imperfections. We thank you for the lessons You’ve taught us through trials and ask for You to use them for Your glory. Amen.
KNOWING HIM
from a missionary in our Diaspora Initiative
READ PHILIPPIANS 3:8 AND COLOSSIANS 1:9-10.

I’ve learned several key Truths from this scripture that I work to embrace as I labor among the unreached in Texas.

- We seek spiritual wisdom and understanding to walk more intimately with God, not simply for the sake of knowledge.
- We walk in a manner worthy of the Lord … always seeking to please Him, not earn favor.
- We seek knowledge and understanding, faithfully obeying for the joy of knowing God.
- He is the beginning and the end, the ultimate goal for every labor of love.
- We should seek both knowledge and wisdom.
- Knowledge and obedience are essential in a relationship with the Father and the Son.

As co-laborers in the gospel, we are to pursue pleasing obedience, counting “everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.”

Lord, allow us to count everything as loss in comparison to knowing Jesus. As we seek wisdom and understanding, use it to bring us into closer communion with You. Amen.
WITHOUT A BUCKET

*from a national partner in Central Asia*

**READ JOHN 4:1-14 AND HEBREWS 11:1.**

Sometimes it’s a challenge to have faith God is moving when we don’t see the tangible evidences of fruit. Like the woman at the well, we question if Jesus can really give living water when there’s no proof of hearts changing from our ministry efforts.

Our natural inclination is to force someone to place their faith in Jesus for a glimpse of measurable success, but these efforts are in vain. At these crossroads, we have to place our faith in the One who promises to give living water even when we don’t have a bucket … remembering “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

*God, give us faith even when cannot see how You are working. When our vision is impaired, assure us in who You are. Amen.*
These days news from the Middle East is seldom cheery. The war-torn countries in this region are in a constant state of attack or counterattack. This trend is traceable to Old Testament times where we see many of the same players—with different borders and names—regularly challenged each other.

The People of God were often caught in the middle of sweeping changes of regional power. Sometimes, under the reign of Kings like David and Solomon, a united Israel was the wielder of power; at other times Israel was nearly helpless to stop the push and pull of foreign armies.

Much of the book of Isaiah details God’s judgments for faithless actions—with some blessings for obedience mixed in—for both Israel and the surrounding nations. Isaiah 19:22-25 breaks up messages of condemnation and rebuke to shine God’s grace.

This passage brought my wife and I peace and joy while we lived and ministered in the Middle East. It reveals Egypt and Assyria—compiled of modern day Iraq, Syria, and Turkey—will repent, turn to the Lord, and be blessed. A highway of blessing will run through the very heart of the Middle East. Most remarkably, Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will fellowship and worship God together.

News from the Middle East is seldom celebratory, but one glorious day that will all change.

Father, we eagerly wait for the day You establish a highway of blessing through the war-torn Middle East. As we anticipate this coming day, empower believers in these places to unashamedly live as Your ambassadors. Amen.
For several years, I felt an intense desire to serve in East Asia. While praying through this desire it became evident that I needed to stay stateside. My kids needed me around to support them, teach them to drive, and offer wisdom as they approached adulthood. When they graduated college, I felt a graduation from raising them, and my passion for East Asia was rekindled.

I spent time researching and asking others about employment opportunities in East Asia, and I found a teaching position at a university. Immediately, I knew this was the opportunity God had prepared for me over all these years. Although there were several teaching opportunities throughout the region, I only applied for one. After months of processing paperwork, I was approved for the teaching position.

I’ve since spent a semester teaching at the university, engaging with students, learning the language, and enjoying the Asian culture. God’s plan for me in East Asia took time to unfold, but in His perfect timing I am now sharing my life experiences and faith with my East Asian students. The journey is just starting, and I am anticipating an incredible ride as He continues to unfold His plan to use me in this region of the world.

Father, we’re grateful that Your plans far exceed the ones we create. Grant us patience when You tell us to wait and steadfastness when You tell us to go. Amen.
Life as a missionary is not as glamorous as it may seem. We are often categorized as the lucky believers who get to travel the world for the sake of the gospel, but traveling also means there’s a constant stream of hard goodbyes.

I’m always migrating from city to city, leaving pieces of my heart with people I’ve come to love. As I prepare for yet another move to a new city, I’m reminded that I don’t have an enduring residency on this earth. The changing nature of missions is hard on my spirit, but in moments of despair I’m reminded to fix my eyes on the coming city where I’ll be reunited with all those who’ve trusted in Jesus that I’ve loved along my missionary journey.

I’m comforted in the endless transitions … knowing that I have a Savior who understands what it is like to leave the comforts of home to travel to new places to proclaim God’s goodness and grace.

Lord, thank You for leaving the comforts of Your heavenly home to seek and save the lost. When we’re reluctant in seasons of change, remind us that we’re on a journey to our eternal home with you. Amen.
Peter and Boaz are valiant men of God who made distinct impacts for the Kingdom, so I made lists documenting why they’re awesome.

Peter: Full of boldness and faith; No fear of man; Performed many miracles and healings; Gifted evangelist; Articulate communicator and effective public speaker; Big Duke fan (ok…maybe not this one).

Boaz: Owned a local business; Stood up for the weak/oppressed; Modeled compassion for his employees; Generous; Integrity-filled; Wise and shrewd; Respected in the community.

It makes total sense that we uphold Peter and Boaz as prime examples of what looks like to wholeheartedly follow God … but when I reflect on the lives of these two men, I’m haunted by a question: “Why do I try to make an impact like Peter when I have the ministry of Boaz?”

Peter was a full-time minister who visited churches, healed people, and spread the gospel. In contrast, Boaz had a business to run, a community to engage with, and a family to love and care for.

Recently I’ve realized that a lot of my Christian life I’ve felt like I don’t do enough because my ministry has different results than Peter’s … but maybe I’m not supposed to have Peter-like results. Maybe I’m called to be like Boaz—a hard worker invested in his community and family.

If my ministry reflects the words of Jesus in John 13:35—by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another—that sounds like a true sign and wonder in today’s society.

Lord, allow us to walk freely in the ministry you’ve given us. For those of us like Boaz, help us be generous and compassionate to our community and family. Strengthen those you’ve called to be like Peter to boldly share the gospel, pray, and impact the multitude. Amen.
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