

**St. Luke's Hilton Head Island
Honduras Short Term Mission Trip Devotionals
January 26 – February 2, 2014**

There are six with us who have never been with us to Honduras before. Welcome to Kyle, Dan, June, Bob, Chris and Tom!! This trip just might be a turning point in your lives. Each one of us who have been to Jericho Villas previously can testify to God's call that brings many of us back...year after year. As we have talked about in our team meetings, God is totally in charge of this trip (as He is in charge of everything that touches us no matter where we are). Things may happen that we don't like, but let us all remember that God wants us to be changed into His image and that cannot happen if we always get our own way. Get ready for the adventure of your life. Our prayer is that we all come away with a new understanding of discipleship and what it means to follow Him where-ever He leads. Please read the next couple of pages carefully.

You will see on the next sheet that each of us has been assigned a day to present our morning devotions, complete with choice and placement of any songs you wish to use. The devotions are a bit different this year and it will be exciting to see what God is doing within each and every one of us. For those of you new to St. Luke's mission trips, songs can be inserted at the beginning, middle, end or anywhere you choose in the devotions. We shall have some old St. Luke's Sings Books to use (that is if we have luggage room). In the schedule of who does the devotions when, the first name is the leader for the day. Some of you will get the blessing of doing them more than once!

The games are added just for the fun of it.....in case you get bored on the plane.....but let me warn you, there may be one or two of us who are a tad bit competitive. Enough said!

Instead of writing all new devotions for this trip, I have used some of the ones we used last summer in Tanzania. Last spring God brought four books to my attention, besides the Bible, that have played a big role as these devotions came into being. I had been (and still are) reading them for several months, not with the intention of using them in the devotions but with the intent of fostering my own formation into God's image. All too often as I read scripture, it is clear to me just how short of the mark I fall. These books are Invitation To A Journey and Shaped by the Word by M. Robert Mulholland; The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard and Life with God by Richard Foster. You may want to purchase these books for your own edification.

As you read the scripture this week, please try reading it in a new way. Specifically in North America (but also in other countries) we are taught to read in a very culturally specific way that puts us in control of what we read. If we are reading something that does not engage us in the way we have been programmed to like, then we often put the book we are reading down, never to pick it up again. Anyone of you ever do that? This type of reading is not helpful as we seek to read Scripture with God in control. Our reading is usually to gather information, even if we are reading a novel, and we are in

control of the information we find within the pages of a book. It might be illuminating if we try a different type of reading this week. To keep it simple:

1. First priority: to listen for God. Listen for God to speak in and through, around and under and over, within, behind and in front of everything we read. Keeps asking what God is saying to you specifically in the particular scripture you are reading.
2. Respond to the text with our hearts and spirits and not with our normal, rational, cognitive intellects. We want to let Jesus go deeper into areas of our hearts that have been closed because we have been in control.
3. Let our response take place in the deeper levels of our being. Ask ourselves questions like: How do I feel about what is being said? How do I react? How do I respond deep within? What is stirring deep within my spirit? And then let's ask the same questions with why instead of what and how. We might want to jot some of the answers down in our journal at the back of the devotions.

You are also receiving two copies of these devotionals, one for you and one for your prayer partner. Choosing your prayer partner is one of the most important parts of this experience. Knowing someone back home is doing these devotionals with you and is praying for you can be very comforting, especially as we step into the unknown of what God has for us in Honduras. Ask someone close to you who you know will follow the devotionals and will be in consistent prayer for you while you are on the trip. When you return to home, take some time to share about the trip with your prayer partner.

Our devotional time is the first thing after breakfast to gird us up for the day. Usually we stayed seated at the dining room table and gather together for our devotions. Betsy usually joins us and any others are also welcome. We try to bring several extra copies to have for them. At the Villas, often the children get up early (5:30 if I remember correctly....but maybe it is 5:00), for their prayers and devotional times to get them prepared for the day. It is NOT mandatory to join in these times, but if you do, feel welcome to join in still dressed in your PJ's, with a sweatshirt on and wrapped in in a warm blanket....it can be cold at that time of the morning! This morning time with these precious children is a special blessing.

Pages have been added for journaling at the end of the devotionals. I strongly encourage you to journal, even if you have never done it before. If you don't know what to write, just stop and pray and ask the Lord to speak to you...and then write down whatever comes to your mind in the next few minutes. Write down your reflections of what you have experienced during each day. Then, at some point in the future when God brings this journal to mind, go back and read it and let Him speak to you afresh about discipleship and His call on your life.

May God richly bless each and every one of us as we take off into unknown territory. God has something new for each of us during this time in Honduras. Let's open our hearts and spirits to hear and see what He has for us.

With His love for you all,
Kathie

Devotional Groups

Monday, January 27:	Meredith and June
Tuesday, January 28:	Ron and Nathan
Wednesday, January 29:	Bill and Bob
Thursday, January 30:	Dan and Tom
Friday, January 31:	Kyle and Kathie
Saturday, February 1:	Chris and Ron
Sunday, February 2:	Kathie and Meredith

Monday, January 27, 2014: What does it mean to be transformed in His image?

Scripture: Genesis:1:26, 27; Genesis:9:1-6; 1 Corinthians: 11:7; 2 Corinthians 4:4-7, Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:13-15

Wikipedia states, "The desire to repair the *Imago Dei* in one's life can be seen as a quest for wholeness, or one's "essential" self, as described and exemplified in Christ's life and teachings. According to Christian doctrine, Jesus acted to repair the relationship with the Creator, and freely offers the resulting reconciliation as a gift."

So....we are all created in the image of God....every last human being. That means Judas, Hitler, Lee Harvey Oswald, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your mother your father, your boss, your teacher, the person who cuts you off at the Sea Pine's Circle, the police officer who is waiting just over the hill, and all those in-between. Basic concept accepted.

OK, now we all know something happened at the fall. A seven year old once said that even though Adam took the first bite, it really was Eve's fault that they were kicked out of the garden because she gave Adam to fruit to eat. Now it really doesn't matter whose fault it was. It happened and the truth is that if any of us had been either Adam or Eve, we would have done the very same thing. The larger issue is that something was lost in mankind when that event transpired. Because man chose to reject the relationship they had with God, because they choose to go their own way and do their own thing, their relationship with God was totally changed. We know that from before time began God's plan was to send Jesus into the world to restore that relationship to what God had originally intended. And that relationship cannot be totally restored unless we are transformed into His image....into the image into which we were created.

Back to the opening question: What does it mean to be transformed in His image? And, maybe, even more importantly, how are we transformed into His image?

Now, have any of us ever gotten really angry and expressed that anger either in a way that left no doubt to the people who were present that you were obviously very angry, or maybe showed your anger in a more quiet passive get even way? Passive people don't usually show their anger, that might ruin their image of being quiet and peace loving, so, whether consciously or subconsciously they somehow get their message across and you know they are angry. We all get angry and we are only talking about anger now....other character traits will surface later on. How does it make you feel inside when you get angry and do not handle it appropriately? Share only if you are willing.

Would you like to be able to get rid of your anger (and other sins) and react or act in the way that would show you are being transformed into the image of God?

Prayer: Dear Lord, during this time away from the stresses and strains of our daily lives, please grant us ears to hear and hearts willing to follow where you are leading. In your precious name, we pray. AMEN.

Tuesday, January 28, 2014: Do we really want to be transformed into His image?

Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 25:10-13; Luke 6:46-49

Do we really want to be like Jesus? Before we go too much further, let's sit back a minute and prayerfully ask these questions. Some of us are young, in your middle teens, some of us are in what we like to call the middle years.....and there are some of us who are just plain old. Many would think that our age might have a lot to do with how we might answer this question. But is that true?

Those who are young might be tempted to think, "Heck, I haven't even really experienced life yet, do I really want to give up all that is out there in the world for the 'narrow' life of being transformed into the likeness of Christ? Ya, I believe in Jesus, I know He died for me, I've even accepted Him as my Savior, but isn't that enough?"

Those with a bit more experience in life may have learned that we really can't live life by ourselves. We have tried and found wanting, but it is so tempting (and most of us do) to try and do it by ourselves. Oh, we are believers and we love Jesus and have given our lives to Him.....or have we really? Many would say, yes that is enough. You are saved, you know the Lord, you go to church every (or almost) every Sunday, but isn't that enough?

Think again about the scriptures we read earlier? They are some of the scariest verses in Scripture. It does not matter our age or where we are in our walk with the Lord, He is very clear in these passages that if our heart is not right with Him, if we do not prepare for His coming and if we do not put His teachings into practice in our lives, He will one day say, "I never knew you, away from me, you evil doers!" Is this what we want Jesus to say to us when we come before Him face to face? If we love Him, truly love Him, our hearts deep down within us let us know that there is more.....so much more to truly following Him.

Sometime it seems that when life in some ways is so much easier for us North American's, it should be easier for us to follow Jesus in the way He has commanded. But that is so far from the truth. Our culture has often blinded us to the truth that God wants to speak into our hearts. The path that leads to spiritual formation is not an easy one. And the most difficult obstacle we face is ourselves. From even before the time we can say, "Me do it MYSELF!", our will control is in play and we think we can do it ourselves....whatever the "it" is.

The truth is, though, we cannot do it ourselves. To be transformed into the image of God, to be what He created us to be is a **process** of *being conformed*. It is not a process of conforming ourselves. The huge difference between these two is the major issue of control.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for what you are teaching us. Work so in our hearts that we want to know you more, serve you more and most of all, love you more. Please send your Spirit to help us to digest what it is that you are saying

to us in these scriptures. And Lord, please us hear your voice as you lead and guide us today. In the name of Jesus, AMEN.

Wednesday, January 29, 2014 How are we being transformed and who is transforming us?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:1-68; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 12:1, 2; John, 13:13-17; John 14:15; Ephesians 4:22-24

Is being transformed in God's image something we can follow a program to obtain? There is a lot of information out there about Spiritual disciplines, so can I just read these books, follow what they say and presto! I'll be like Jesus? If that sounds too good to be true, well, you are right. If we read the long Deuteronomy reading with the eyes and heart of a Pharisee, we will totally miss what God is saying. It takes more than reading about Spiritual disciplines, more than just reading the Bible, more than going to church every Sunday, more than doing the right things.....oh so much more. What is the more that it takes? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.....Matthew changes it is bit to change strength to mind (but they really are not all that different).

Learning to love the Lord with all of our heart and soul is very difficult for North Americans like us. It is very easy for us to love Him with all of our strength and mind. It is so much easier for us to 'DO' than it is for us to 'BE'. And as was mentioned earlier it has very much to do with control. If you really don't think control is a problem for us, just stop and ask God to show you how you react to having your plans for the day interrupted. Or how you either have reacted or would react if you had your life all planned out and something or someone totally changed your plans.

Dallas Willard once wrote that everyone is being spiritually transformed, transformed by either the Holy Spirit or the unholy spirit. We either choose to follow Jesus or automatically we are following the enemy. Most Christians do not intend to follow the enemy, but if we are not following Jesus, there is only one other choice. All of the thoughts we hold, all of our decisions, all we do and all we feel, all of the responses we make, all of the reactions we have.....all of these things, little by little are shaping us into some kind of being. What/who is shaping you? Is that the person you think God wants you to be? The person He created you to be? We can become agents of God's healing and grace, or we can become carriers of the sickness of the world. It is our choice, and a choice we all make.....either by inactive passivity and/or active disobedience to God's living Word, or we make the choice to be obedient to His Word.

Search your heart this week. Take time and listen to God's voice. How is He calling you to a closer walk with Him? How is He calling you to carry your cross and follow Him.....are you listening? He is calling you to love Him over and above all else in your life.....are you listening? Your positive response to Him will lead you in areas you would never ever dream of going without His calling and enabling. A negative response will do the same...only I'm not sure those areas would be fulfilling. And even though we have been known to step off the path from time to time, the ultimate blessings that go with obedience to His call are more precious than life itself. The way is not easy, nor is it meant to be, but we can be assured that He will be with us every step of the way.

Prayer: Father, we just praise you for creating us in your image. Give us grace to be constantly transformed into the person you created us to be. We love you, Lord and we

thank you for loving us. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Thursday, January 30, 2014: What is Christian formation?

Scripture: Mark 12:30-31; 1 John 2:6; 1 John 4:17; 1 John 3:2-3John 14:15

"Christian spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others." M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

There are three parts of the quote above:

Process: There is no way we are going to be transformed into the image of Christ overnight. That would be nice.....wouldn't it.....no more losing our temper, no more lack of patience, no more judgment of our peers and or family members, no more sarcasm or snarky remarks.....and on and on. Our instant gratification culture affects us so that we want it NOW! But in actuality, this process takes a lifetime. It can be frustrating to undergo long periods of spiritual discipline before we see any major change in our lives. Formation is not an option, it is a part of being human, but it is an option as to who you choose to allow to form you. What kind of spiritual formation are we engaged in? Are we being conformed to the evil and brokenness in our world or are we being conformed to the image of Christ?

Being conformed to the image of Christ: Our culture is made up of a predominately materialistic and humanistic worldview. Everything that surrounds us is there for us to manipulate and control for our own purpose. By 'being conformed', we give up our control and willingly come under the control of our heavenly Father. This is very difficult for those of us who are graspers, controllers and manipulators. The instant gratification in our culture is a result of our grasping, control and manipulation. It is very difficult for us to wait patiently and trust while God strives to show us the joy of perseverance as He reveals His agenda for our lives. Instead of controlling, our role is reversed to being the one who is controlled by allowing the Spirit act in our lives to bring about wholeness in us.

For others: So, all of this learning to read in a different way, going through disciplines, learning patience, how to control our temper, giving up self indulgence.....so all of this is not even for us...for ourselves! So why are we being spiritually conformed into the image of Christ? Let's read the text from Mark again. Mulholland gives a better translation of this is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Another way to say the same thing is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This translation totally goes with 1 John. In 1 John we read about how we need each other. We cannot walk this walk of spiritual formation alone. Our culture would like us to believe that our faith is a private matter. It is not something to be discussed in polite company. Well, Jesus is telling us in the above scripture that in our relationships with others we *are* to become more like Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, we come to you in awe of your greatness and your power that wants to transform our lives so that we are formed in your image. By the power of your Holy Spirit we ask you to guide us into the transformation of our lives so that others will see and come to know You. In your Holy Name. Amen

Friday, January 31, 2014: Do we really want to open ourselves to what God wants to do in our lives?

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-30 (especially 6); 2:5; Psalm 139; Romans 12:1

This question is a difficult one for us? We will say that we do want God to form us in His image, to be the person He created us to be, but are we really eager and ready to give up everything we want. But is discipleship, being transformed in to what God created us to be really an option for believers? Over these past few days, as we served here at Jericho Villas, and enjoyed His creation all around us, have we been thinking and praying about what God wants to do in our lives? For the most part, it is way too easy to revert back to our controlling, grasping and manipulative way. Giving total control of our lives to God is not easy. There is an old hymn by Frances Havergal, that talks about consecrating ourselves to Jesus:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
*Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.2. Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.3. Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.5. Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.6. Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee. |
|--|---|

As you read these words, remember that the old hymns were once the contemporary music of the day in which they were written. We could easily change some of the words to make it more up to date, but I think we can all get the meaning of what the composer was trying to say. In the same way that this hymn needs to be read/sung in the spirit in which it was written, so too, does the Scripture. We will never understand Jesus, or Paul, or David if we do not give up our control and give ourselves to God and let Him do with us as He pleases. And we will like the results.

God knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb. He knew us before time began.....He has had a plan for our lives.....and that plan is to follow Him and allow Him to shape us into His image. It is His plan for our lives and we can refuse to let Him in when He stands at the door of our hearts or we can submit to His love and His will for our lives. It is our choice.

Two of you are in your teens and it might seem easy to you for the rest of us to look at you and tell you to open the door of your heart to Jesus, open it wide and let Him in to change you.....to allow Him to transform you into His image. But we are still in the process of being transformed, and Nathan knows some of us well enough to know that we aren't there yet. But listen to the

word of our testimony and make your choice. We all need to make our choice. Do we seek to be transformed or do we go our own way.....the way of the unholy spirit?

Prayer: Lord, Jesus Christ, tear down the barriers that we have erected that we think will keep us safe and let us see the glory of the freedom we have in You when we consecrate ourselves to You. Thank you Lord, for all we have shared in You and may all we do be to your Glory now for forever. Amen

Saturday, February 1, 2014: Now, how do we become transformed?

Scripture: Proverbs 1:2-7; 5:11-23; 16:31-33; Titus 1:7-9; Philippians 2:12-18

Discipline is a word that evokes strong emotions and opinions. Children are not fond of being disciplined, and for that matter, there are not too many adults who savor discipline either. We tend, especially in our culture, to look at discipline in a negative way, but the scriptures we read this morning show us that God has a very different view of discipline.

We have been learning about how to be formed into the Image of God. How do we do that? Right.....we don't do it ourselves. God transforms us into His image and He gives us tools to help in this process. These tools are called disciplines. We do not do these disciplines to transform ourselves, but God does use these tools/disciplines in His transformation of us.

One of the most loved books on this topic is Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline. In his book, what Foster writes about is contrary to the self-loving and self indulgent culture of North America. The 80's were characterized as the "me generation" and instant gratification was supposedly what life was all about. Since that time, our culture seems to have gotten much more decadent and self discipline is not favorably looked upon.....but.....let's look at the people the world calls 'successful'. Did they just get there without any discipline in their lives? In some areas our culture has grabbed onto the idea of discipline as people work to transform themselves into what they want to become. They do the hard work, and success follows.....right? As we look at the lives of the so called successful, what do we see? Brokenness, pain, sorrow..... Are those people formed into the image of Christ or have they been formed into their own image?

In his book, Foster lists the disciplines for inward transformation as those of meditation, prayer, fasting and study. As we discipline ourselves to read scripture, meditate on it, study it, and fast from those things of the world that prove to be distractions to our disciplines (food, television, computer games, texting, Facebook, instantgrams, etc., etc.), God will do His work of transformation, in spite of our fallen nature. Our part in our transformation is to be obedient to what God calls us to do and to practice the disciplines he is asking you to take up.

It could be very easy here to fall into self-righteousness and turn our discipline into a rigid structure that allows no room for the little serendipities that God sends our way when we are listening and being obedient to Him. Mulholland says in his book, Invitation to a Journey, "Somewhere between the extremes of avoidance of discipline and the imprisonment of discipline is the holistic practice of balanced spiritual disciplines which becomes a means of God's grace to shape us in the image of Christ for others. Paul seems to intimate this is his seemingly contradictory statement: *"Work out your own salvation...for God is at work in you"* (Philippians 2:12-13). Which is it Paul---am I to work or am I to wait for God to work? Paul's response would be "Yes!" (p. 103). As we look at God's work of transformation in our lives, it is not either or, it is both and.

Prayer: Lord, Jesus, it is so easy for us to get this mixed up.....and we will blow it time and time again. We thank you for your patience with us and for your love, mercy and most of all your forgiveness. Draw us ever closer to you as you continue to transform us into your image.
AMEN

Sunday, February 2, 2014: Going home.....are there any changes in you?

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3:10-18

Let us Pray: *"Our gracious and loving God, we thank you that you have been touching our lives; illuminating us; opening us at deep levels of our being; stretching us at points of narrowness; confronting us where we are distorted; challenging us to become the word you speak us forth to be; but in every way working in it for all your good purposes in our lives. As we begin to encounter ways of coming to scripture that will enable it to become your living Word in our lives, help us, God, to remain open to the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Amen"*

(p, 123, Shaped by the Word)

Have you ever thought of yourself as "the word you (God) speak us forth to be"? That we are a "word that God is speaking forth into the world".....that is very powerful. We were created in God's image and since the fall, God has been in the business of forming us into the image we were created to be. That is why He sent Jesus, so that we can have the same relationship as Adam and Eve had in the garden.....He loves us THAT much! It is His desire that we be transformed into His image. God is opening us to the "shaping power" of His living Word. We do not have to stay the way we are.....sinners tainted by the fall. We can choose to allow Him to shape us to become the person He created us to be. We can open ourselves to His probing that penetrates our deepest being.

Through His Word, He shows us how different His values and structure are from those of the world. This is the difference that He speaks forth into our lives as He touches our wounded beings and transforms them into His image for all to see. As we saw in Philippians yesterday, scripture can become "the agent of God's work in our life rather than your self-generated effort to work God's changes according to your own agenda." (p. 163, Shaped by the Word) It is so easy to get caught up into doing, rather than letting God "do" and for us to just "be". The spiritual disciplines of reading scripture and the obedience that follows are not things/actions we "do" to bring about a change in our lives. They become love offerings to God as we allow Him to transform our lives.

These devotions have just been a peek into what God wants for us in His approach to His scripture. As we seek to further allow God to transform us into His image, let us respond to His Word in His way so we may become the "fully mature word that God is speaking you (us) forth to be in the world and in the lives of others." (p. 163, *ibid*) This may become a whole new ball game in our hearts and lives as we really and truly seek to follow Him His way.

Prayer:

This morning, let us each consecrate ourselves anew to the One who created us in His image.....either silently or aloud. Let us commit to allow God to change us, to transform us in such a way that all will see Jesus in and through the gifts and personality that God gave to each of us. Let us pray: In a few minutes we will close with the Lord's Prayer.