**Day 1:**

**Scripture:** *Since God chose you to be holy people he loves; you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Colossians 3:12*

**Devotional:** In Colossians 3, we read that God chose us to be his people. And in order for us to honor and glorify God and serve him faithfully, we must be selfless and show the characteristics of who God is. This verse helps us to make a checklist of good qualities we have going, but to also make a list of improvements that we can strive to make. As we reflect on this chapter in Colossians and verse 12 take a few moments and write out a list of where you are right now in your life. Think of areas you have accomplished, struggled, and areas of improvements. Doing this it will allow you to be real with yourself and see the moments where God has worked, is working, and will do work. When we love God, we become more and more like him every day. Are you striving for that in your relationship with him?

**Today’s Reflection**: Loving God means becoming more like Him.

**Action Steps:**

1. Read Colossians 3 sometime today in your quiet time.

2. Choose one area of your life to focus on the rest of our mission trip – how can you become more like God in this area?

**Day 2:**

**Scripture:** *It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and the late rain, that you may gather your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.* Deuteronomy 11:13-15 NASB

**Devotional:** God is so generous! His message so simple; He wants all of us and yet we are sometimes so reluctant to see that in return He wants to give it all back to us. In essence, we lose nothing and gain eternity.

The Israelites tested, even provoked, God repeatedly on their journey to what God had sanctified for them, yet God was merciful and met their petitions. In Deuteronomy, we see Him call out for their obedience by providing not just for their basic needs but also for their sustenance. All God required in return was their obedience, unconditional love and faithful service.

What is it about our nature that makes us believe we have control over our lives? Haven’t we all witnessed enough throughout our lives to assure us that truly God has more say in the outcomes? So if we see all God offers, how can we back away?

In his book “Love Does” Bob Goff challenges Christians to recognize all the good God has done in their lives. He makes a keen argument that the very best God has given us is NEVER something we have planned. It is almost always a spontaneous, unexpected event that profoundly changes who we are and how we see Him.

**Today’s Reflection**:

1. Do you love your God? Do those closest to you know it?
2. Will you serve Him with all heart and soul? What does that look like?
3. Do you really believe that He is capable of bringing you more than you need? Or are you trying to plan it for Him?

**Day 3:**

**Scripture:**

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13 NIV*

**Devotional:** Two things challenge me from this one verse, and I’m sure there will be more in days to come. First, the Lord commands us to seek Him – not what He can do for me…simply seek Him. Some people say “Seek His face not His hands.” I know that often I only come to Him with things I need when He simply wants me to know Him better as all I need is found IN Him. The second convicting part is “with all your heart.” What else is taking up space in my heart? What is distracting my heart from Him? What parts am I holding back from Him…and why? Such incredibly important questions…and only the Lord can help me answer them.

**Today’s Reflection:** God desires us to seek Him with our whole hearts by being intentional in our thoughts and actions.

**Action Steps:**

1. What is keeping me from giving my whole heart to Him? Scripture-doodle (sketch) this verse in your journal, including the answer to this question.
2. Make time today to pray today without asking Him to do anything for you – simply a prayer of praise for who He is and seeking to know Him better.

**Day 4:**

**Scripture:** *“Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?”* Job 4:6 NASB

**Devotional:** How often do we put our confidence in ourselves, in our own abilities, skills and knowledge? Daily we rely on ourselves and others to get through a task at work, drive home safely and solve the problems that pop up on a regular basis.

As humans we sometimes place our confidence in the wrong things--whether ourselves or others --when we should be humbly handing over to God our inability to control all that is His to begin with.

Job 4 is an intimate reply directed at Job’s suffering from his close friend, Eliphaz the Temanite. Eliphaz, having listened to Job speak to others about God’s goodness, clearly calls him out on his impatience with God at a specific moment in Job’s life when he feels a loss of hope. Eliphaz questions Job’s resolve to the beliefs that Job so freely shared with others--yet refuses to hold onto in the rough patches of his own life. Eliphaz reminds Job that he has spent his life walking in integrity and that his upright fear of the Lord should be his ultimate confidence regardless of the current circumstances.

If we respect that God does everything according to His purposes (Ephesians 1:11), we can safely pass over authority in our lives to the One who is and has always been in control. We can look back and see that even the ugly parts of our lives have been reconciled to Christ for the sake of our own godliness. We can then turn our attention to the items we do have control over – the integrity of our ways!

**Today’s Reflection:**

1. Take a few moments to ask yourself is your respect for an all-powerful God your confidence?
2. And is the integrity of how you live your hope?
3. Who in your life is an Eliphaz like friend? Do you have people who know your values and will hold you to them in tough times?
4. Is there an area in your life where you, like Job, need to be challenged to practice what you preach?

**Day 5:**

**Scripture**: *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. Ephesians 5:1*

**Devotional:** At first glance, this passage might not seem like an obvious choice for a team of adults serving the people of Togo. But look again – we are to be imitators of God. Why? Because we are his beloved children. And if God is a good, loving Father, how much more does he deserve our love in return? In fact, love is a natural part of imitation. When we were growing up, we imitated our fathers and mothers in many things. Now that we are adults, we have discovered that some of those things have become part of our identity: the way we talk, the words we use, the way we stand and carry ourselves. Our imitations of earthly fathers are based in love for them. It is the same with our heavenly Father: you cannot imitate God without loving him. How many of us imitate someone we hate? If we are really going to become more like God, we have to love him first. Loving God is a precursor to a godly life and we are merely fooling ourselves if we believe differently. Are you imitating God? Is it rooted in love for him?

**Today’s Reflection**: Imitating God by loving others as He loves us shows that we really love Him.

**Action Steps:**

1. Think of one way that you can imitate God today by showing love to someone *(be specific in who that is and what action you can take to accomplish this).*

**Day 6:**

**Scripture**: *“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.”* Luke 10:19

**Devotional:** We are on a mission! We are in a foreign land and we know the authority of the One who has sent us!

I remember my first knowledgeable encounter with spiritual warfare. My mother and I were working in youth ministry together and shared a bond with a junior high girl, Lee. Lee and her mother were going through the process of a social services intervention and she had been spending a lot of time with our family. He mother had repeatedly warned us that Lee had authority defiance disorder and may be bi-polar.

One afternoon as I got home from work I received an urgent call from Lee’s mother. She had locked the girl in the house because she was “acting up” but she could not find her. She said “the devil is in her” and she asked if I could come over. I immediately called my mother who lived four doors down and we set off to Lee’s home. We were armed with anointing oil and God’s word. My mother rehearsed me in prayers of binding and rebuking spirits while we pulled up in the driveway. We knew the authority we carried with us in Jesus name.

When we entered the house we went to Lee’s room to find it utterly destroyed! It looked like someone went through with a sledgehammer. Furniture was broken and overturned, there were holes in the drywall and we could not find Lee anywhere. My mother sat down with the girl’s mom in the living room to talk about what had happened while I continued to search for her. I stood at the closet door and looked repeatedly in the bottom but could not see her. There were roaches crawling around and clothes up to my knees but finally, there in the very darkest corner I could see the outline of her dark face. She appeared to be in shock, blankly staring ahead. I crawled in until I could touch her, all but her head was covered in clothes, and I explained to her what I was going to do. She nodded in approval. I prayed, rebuked and anointed and when I was done it took me about fifteen minutes to unbury her and get her out. She was coherent but her eyes were glazed and shifty. She recognized me but would not look at me. She was shaky, pale and a little sweaty. And God gave discernment! I asked her if she had eaten, she said that she had NOT eaten at all. She had some water and that was it!

My mom and I pow-wowed for a minute to make a plan. My mother told Lee’s mom that we were taking her to eat, that she was not possessed but was sick from not eating. Out of nowhere Lee’s mother started acting intensely angry. As we were walking Lee out the door her mother was calling her daughter Satan and screaming at her! My mother put her hand up in a gesture of spiritual protection and claimed, “Satan I bind you in Jesus name, you may not speak!” Lee’s mothers’ lips quivered and jerked but said nothing as we walked Lee out the door.

We need to be discerning as the Holy Spirit has gifted us to do so at any given moment. But we also need to be aware that sometimes the enemy can come from a direction we were not expecting. I was so glad to have had my mother with me because while I was prepared for dealing with Lee I would not have had the presence of mind to speak Jesus’ authority on our way out the door. In my mind the battle was over, which leads me to my next point – the battle is never over. We need to always be prepared, be strong in our faith and knowledgeable about the tools of the Spirit that are at our disposal.

**Action Steps:**

Read Hebrews 5:13-14 and 1 John 4:1-6

1. Pray that God will give you discernment into what spirits are influencing our actions and focus.
2. Pray that He will allow you to distinguish the differences between the spirits of good and evil.

Read Luke 10:2-3, 18-20

1. Do we believe that the same power given to the disciples by Jesus while on their mission is the same power that is guiding us on this mission?
2. If we truly believe this to be the same power, what is God calling you to use this power to do?

**Day 7:**

**Scripture:** *“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26-27*

**Devotional:** Anger is something that’s not wrong by itself, but is easy to let fester and grow until it produces bitterness and un-forgiveness in our hearts that poison us in far greater ways than anything that could ever happen to the person we’re angry at. Staying angry with a person and harboring un-forgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to get sick. The Bible tells us that the key to addressing anger is: (1) acknowledge it, (2) to not sin in our anger and (3) to address it as soon as possible! Paul says to not let the Sun go down on our anger, meaning do not let anger stay overnight without doing something about it. Sometimes we want to just “sleep on it” but it’s often still there when we wake up. Address whatever it is that’s gotten you so angry! Allowing anger to stay around is just giving the enemy a chance to tempt you into sinning against people.

**Today’s Reflection**: Loving others means addressing our anger rather than allowing it to stew within us.

**Action Steps:**

1. Have you gotten angry or frustrated with someone about something that has happened on our mission?...maybe a Seacoast or Togolese teammate?...maybe even God? Is there an area of your life at home where you are holding onto anger towards someone for something they may have done? Make a point to get with your prayer partner today to talk and pray this through. And then take actions to resolve these frustrations in love and forgiveness.

**Day 8:**

**Scripture:** *Neither do people pour* ***new*** *wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour* ***new*** *wine into* ***new*** *wineskins, and both are preserved.* Matthew 9:17 NIV

**Devotional:**The parable of the old and new wine skin is repeated in Mark 2 and Luke 5. Spiritual elders in public were questioning Jesus because he and his disciples were not adhering to customary fasting and ritual prayer appointed under Jewish law. Jesus gives two different illustrations: cloth and wineskins, so we know he impressed on his disciples the importance of what he was teaching. Jesus taught this parable to describe the resistance to change in the Jewish community--the change of the new age that He was about to usher in.

As Christians, in every stage of our walk we have to commit to asking ourselves if we are guilty of the same thing. By holding onto old patterns of behavior, old theologies, old habits and even old dreams, we can be like the new wineskins and become damaged along with ruining the very essence of what is being taught to us.

When Christ ushered in a new era of spiritual challenge, He echoed His Father’s desire to connect to the heart of His people through intention and purity of motive, genuine love and devotion to goodness. The old law was to have trained a new heart that was spiritually responsive.

**Today’s Reflection**:

1. Where in your life do you do what is “right” but rarely out of true intention?
2. How can you get the new wine (Christ’s teachings) in your new wineskin (you are a new creature in Him) and protect it from the old?
3. In what ways are you attached to your “old” ways? Why does this not work?

**Day 9:**

**Scripture:** *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” -Matthew 28:18-20*

**Devotional:**This scripture represents some of Jesus’ last words to his best friends and disciples before he left the Earth to return to Heaven. *Why should we GO?* Because Jesus has chosen us to carry out the mission of restoring all to Himself by not keeping to ourselves the things we have experienced through His power…an amazing responsibility! We have already answered the call to “go” by being on this mission, but *how can we MAKE disciples?* The command to make disciples means to share the Good News with people and help them learn how to live for Jesus. This requires an action on our part. Sometimes we must step outside of what we are comfortable doing (don’t allow clinic to become to “clinical”) in order to share Jesus with someone. If you’re not feeling qualified, take time today to read Jeremiah 1:5-10 and remember Jesus said, “I am with you ALWAYS.”

**Today’s Reflection:**Being the change means accepting the call to go AND taking steps to share your faith with others.

**Action Steps:**

1. Be intentional in taking time to share the Gospel message with at least 1 person (outside of our team) today then journal about the experience tonight.

**Day 10:**

**Scripture:***“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.”* Philippians 1:27-28

**Devotional:**Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi repeats the theme of Unity in Christ. Written from prison, Paul’s physical inability to be present does not hinder his leadership, guidance and oversight to his mission. Paul states over and over again the unity of the body of Christ as one of his chief complaints and here in the mission field these words are even more applicable.

Our conduct, in word and deed, must convey Christ. Furthermore, together we must strive to work as one complete unit.

It is important to remember that it is not just the people we will meet and talk to daily that we are ministering to but as we reveal Christ to a nation our conversations and conduct will leave a legacy. Our words will have generational impact of how the Gospel influences people’s daily lives.

While the cultural differences may be obvious and we may struggle with frustrations in this nation, it is important to remember we are not here to turn people into us! We are here to share God’s gifts and the knowledge that Christ has changed our hearts.

We must also remember we are here to serve each other, our teammates. It can be a struggle to work so closely with so many different types of people whom you are just getting to know. But by encouraging each other and seeking out each other’s strengths, we will create this unity, grow as believers and show our host nation that God is bigger than our differences.

**Action Steps:**

1. Take a few minutes to catch up on your team members compliment cards. Can you see their individual gifts and talents? What might God be doing in their lives that they cannot see but you have insight into?

**Day 11:**

**Scripture: “***You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5*

*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8*

**Devotional:** We know that we are supposed to love God with all our hearts. When we talk about love in the Western world, we use the imagery of a heart, so thinking in that way comes naturally to us. But have you ever thought about loving someone with all your soul and might? It sounds sort of strange to put it that way. Yet we are to love God in all those ways. What does it mean to love God in those three different ways? It means we are to love God *with every fiber of our being*. It isn’t enough to simply have strong feelings for God. And it isn’t enough to do good things. Truly loving God means loving him with everything that we are. And, as we see in the 2nd Scripture, truly loving God means that we must KNOW God.

How do we know God? We seek wisdom and understanding in His Word and by taking time to study and increase our intellect when it comes to identifying God’s character, understanding His commandments and living out His moral will for our lives. R.C. Sproul says in an article *The Sensuous Christian* that “we turn to feelings rather than to our minds to establish and preserve our faith.” Sproul defines a *Sensuous Christian* as “one who lives by feelings rather than through his understanding of the Word of God.” This person experiences joy when they have God encounters but also experiences depression or distance when not having those encounters.

**Today’s Reflection:** Are you striving to know God so that you can love and live like Jesus’ example or are you living the life of a *Sensuous Christian?*

**Action Steps:**

1. Read the article *The Sensuous Christian* today (last page in devotional). Do you relate with Sproul’s definition of this type of Christian?
2. Sproul states “the secret to human happiness is found in obedience to God.” Where are you most struggling to live in God’s obedience? Use the index in your Bible to look up a verse on that topic and work on memorizing it today with the intent to reflect, repent, and strive to be more like Jesus in that area of your life.

**Day 12:**

**Scripture:** *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: “Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.”* Isaiah 12:3-4 NIV

**Devotional:** This verse is part of the Israelites’ songs of praise. God was giving them something to look forward to, a word about what the future held and how they were to respond. Praise is an important part of acknowledging God’s work in our life. Here in Togo we have experienced many things to praise God for and witnessed many different forms of praise that exist in the culture here.

As we get closer to home and transition into our normal routine, it is our duty to never let what God has done for us go without acknowledgement and praise. Part of our responsibility as a team member is to report to our family, friends, and church body what God did while we were here.

It is equally important that we hold onto the ideas God has challenged us with as to how we might praise Him in new ways. Whether that is through a regular quiet time now that it is an established habit for you or if it is through stretching yourself in worship or contemplative prayer, God has given each of us new tools to step closer to Him.

**Today’s Reflection:**

1. Ask God to reveal how He would have you share what He has done in Togo.
2. Ask God to show you ways you can give Him glory in your daily life.
3. Was there a particular incident on this trip where you felt God used you to do something huge for His kingdom? Now that we’re heading home, what is God calling you to do about it?
4. Ask God to reveal to you what the next step in your life of ministry is?

**The Sensuous Christian** by RC Sproul

Adapted from *Knowing Scripture: Why Study the Bible?*

I often have been tempted to write a book by the title The Sensuous Christian. *The Sensuous Woman, The Sensuous Man, The Sensuous Divorcee,* ad naseam, all have become best sellers. Why not *The Sensuous Christian?*

What is a sensuous Christian? One dictionary defines sensuous as , “pertaining to the senses or sensible objects: highly susceptible to influence through the senses.” The sensuous Christian is one who lives by her feelings rather than through her understanding of the Word of God. The sensuous Christian cannot be moved to service, prayer or study unless he “feels like it.” His Christian life is only as effective as the intensity of present feelings. When she experiences spiritual euphoria, she is in a whirlwind of Godly activity; when he is depressed, he is a spiritual incompetent. They constantly seek new and fresh spiritual experiences and use them to determine the Word of God. His or her “inner feelings” become the ultimate test of truth.

The sensuous Christian doesn’t need to study the Word of God because he already knows the will of God by his feelings. She doesn’t want to know God; she wants to experience God. The sensuous Christian equates “childlike faith” with ignorance. He thinks that when the Bible calls us to childlike faith it means a faith without content, a faith without understanding. She doesn’t know that the Bible says, “In evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Cor. 14:20). She doesn’t realize that Paul tells us again and again, “My brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (Rom. 11:25).

The sensuous Christian goes his merry way until he encounters the pain of life that is not so merry and he folds. She usually ends up embracing a kind of “relational theology” (the most dreadful curse on modern Christianity) where personal relationships and experiences take precedence over the Word of God. If the Scripture calls us to action that may jeopardize a personal relationship, then the Scripture must be compromised. The highest law of the sensuous Christian is that bad feelings be avoided at all cost.

The Bible is addressed primarily though not exclusively to our understanding. That means the mind. This is difficult to communicate to modern Christians who are living in what may be the most anti-intellectual period of Western civilization. Notice, I did not say anti-academic or anti-technological. I said anti-intellectual. There is a strong current of antipathy to the function of the mind in the Christian life.

To be sure, there are historical reasons for this kind of reaction. Many laymen have felt the result of what one theologian has called “the treason of the intellectual.” So much skepticism, cynicism and negative criticism have spewed forth from the intellectual world of theologians that the laymen have lost their trust in intellectual enterprises. In many cases there is the fear that faith will not hold up under intellectual scrutiny so the defense becomes denigration of the human mind. We turn to feelings rather than to our minds to establish and preserve our faith. This is a very serious problem we face in the twentieth-century church.

Christianity is supremely intellectual though not intellectualistic. That is, Scripture is addressed to the intellect without at the same time embracing a spirit of intellectualism. The Christian life is not to be a life of bare conjecture or cold rationalism; it is to be a life of vibrant passion. Strong feelings of joy, love, and exaltation are called for again and again. But those passionate feelings are a response to what we understand in our minds to be true. When we read in Scripture, “Take courage; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33), “ho hum” is not an appropriate response. We can be of good cheer because we understand that Christ has indeed overcome the world. That thrills our souls and sets our feet dancing. What is more precious than to experience the sweetness of the presence of Christ or the nearness of the Holy Spirit?

God forbid that we should lose our passion or go through the Christian pilgrimage without any experience of Christ. But what happens where there is a conflict between what God says and what I feel? We must do what God says, like it or not. That is what Christianity is all about.

Reflect for a moment. What happens in your own life when you act according to what you feel like doing rather than what you know or understand God says you should do? Here we encounter the ruthless reality of the difference between happiness and pleasure. How easy to confuse the two! The pursuit of happiness is regarded as our “unalienable right.” But happiness and pleasure are not the same thing. Both of them feel good, but only one endures. Sin can bring pleasure, but never happiness. If sin were not so pleasurable, it would hardly represent a temptation. Yet, while sin often “feels good,” it does not produce happiness. If we do not know the difference, or worse yet, do not care about the difference, we have made great strides to become the ultimate sensuous Christian.

If there is a secret, a carefully guarded secret to human happiness, it is that one expressed in a seventeenth-century catechism that says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” The secret to happiness is found in obedience to God. How can we be happy if we are not obedient? How can we be obedient if we do not know what it is we are to obey? Thus, the top and the tail of it is that happiness cannot be fully discovered as long as we remain ignorant of God’s Word.

To be sure, knowledge of God’s Word does not guarantee that we will do what it says, but at least we will know what we are supposed to be doing in our quest for human fulfillment. The issue of faith in not so much whether we believe in God, but whether we believe the God we believe in.