

BELONGING

CCCD [virtual] L.I.F.E

TEAM DEVOTIONAL

2021

The purpose of this devotional is to help guide your thoughts, conversations, and actions as you prepare for, serve in, and process your virtual mission trip in Jamaica with the Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf (CCCD). It is our hope and prayer as a CCCD staff that this trip will be an opportunity for you not only to serve others, but also to grow in your own faith and understanding of who Jesus Christ is as risen Savior and Lord.

On the following pages you will find three sessions to work through prior to you [virtually] leaving for Jamaica. The intention is to begin the conversation and set the stage for some of what the experience will entail for you. You will receive more pieces of the devotional over the course of your three-week trip. Finally, we will send a guide so you can begin to process and unpack your experience after your trip. Throughout this devotional there is plenty of room for notes, comments, journal entries, doodles, memories, and prayers!

We pray that this is helpful for you and your team - know that we highly encourage lots of questions along the way!



Reach, Teach and Nurture
1 Peter 4:7-11



Name: _____

Pre-Trip

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- Session 2 – Language
- Session 3 – Culture

Trip

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- Week 1.2 – Posture
- Week 1.3 – Perspective
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- Week 3.1 – Belonging
- Week 3.2 – Empowerment

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Pre-Trip: Session One – Community

What comes to mind when you think of community?

What is your community?

A community is not just a church or the places we live, play, work, or go to school; a community is where real life happens. It doesn't even have to be a place, because community can be a person or a group of people. In short, a community is when we share life together.

Who would you say is your community?

God created community.

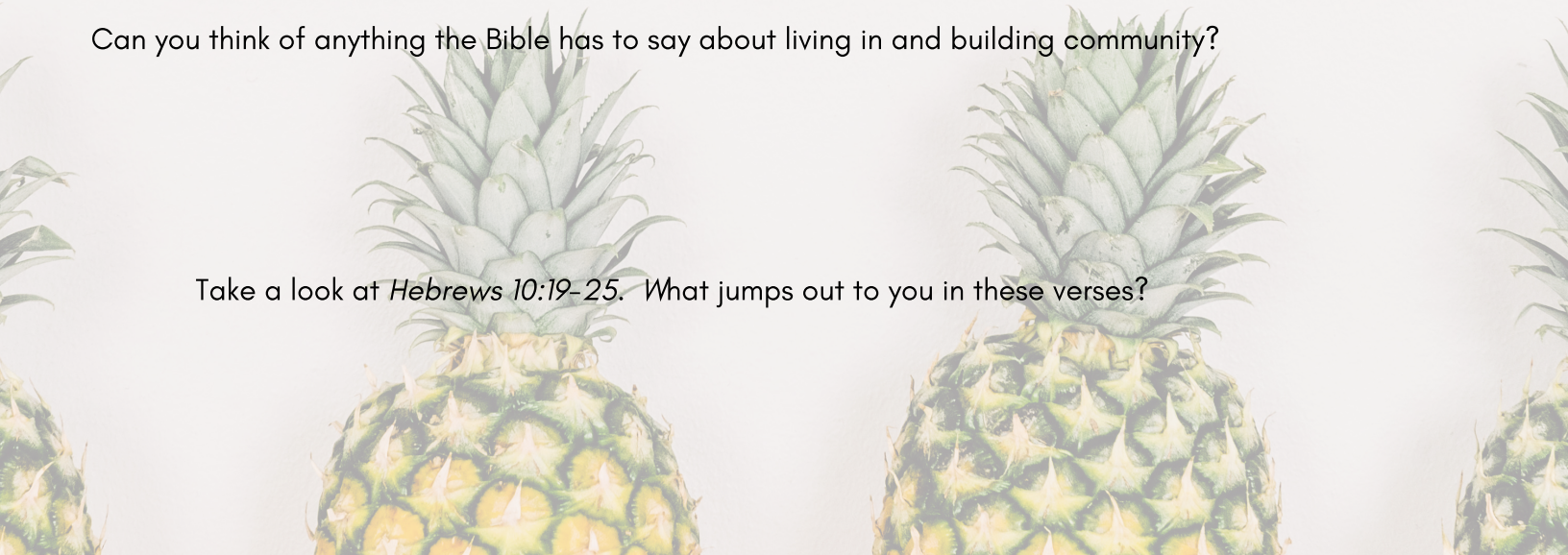
He was so intentional about us not being alone that it is talked about in the Bible time and time again. Still, how tempting is it for us to constantly try to handle things on our own? We believe lies like, "I don't need anyone else," or "I don't want to be a bother," or "I'm strong enough alone."

The reality is we were never made to be alone, but rather, to experience life together – to struggle together and to share joys together. Scientific studies even show that we as humans were made as relational beings – it actually physically shows in the makeup of our brain (how cool is that?!).

Community is one of God's most generous gifts to us.

Can you think of anything the Bible has to say about living in and building community?

Take a look at *Hebrews 10:19-25*. What jumps out to you in these verses?



So what does living in community with one another look like?

If we seek to live like Jesus did, let's think about how He created and lived in community.

- Was His time spent only with those who were just like Him?
- Did He ask what each of His relationships had to offer Him?
- Were His relationships projects for Him to fix?

The answer to all of these – No. Jesus simply loved all He came in contact with, no exceptions. So just because this trip will be virtual and we are experiencing a global pandemic, it doesn't change that we are to be in community and love one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Romans 12:16 – Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low positions. Do not be conceited.

One of the most beautiful things about community is the way God places each of us in them for specific purposes. A community is made up of people who have at least one thing in common (job, location, language, religion, interest, etc.) and then come together with their own gifts and experiences.

1 Peter 4:8-11 – Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

On the notes page, try and answer these question:

- What are some of your gifts that you think God has given you?
- How can you be a blessing to your community with your gifts?
- What are some ways that you can use these gifts to impact your community during your virtual trip? (This does not just have to be with those who are also on the trip.)

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Pre-Trip: Session Two – Language

What comes to mind when you think of language?

Language is actually the main defining factor of people groups around the world.

How do you feel about engaging a community and culture that has formed and developed around the manual language of Jamaican Sign Language?

It is possible that as you are reading this, you are thinking, 'I have been surrounded by multiple languages and dialects all my life.' It is also possible that engaging a community which uses sign language brings feelings of nervousness or anxiety.

Journal for a moment on how you are feeling about the upcoming trip and communicating in a manual language with the Deaf.

First off, we at CCCD want to say, there is no need to be nervous! Different languages can often be viewed as something that would exclude groups, but here at CCCD we want language to be inclusive! Sign language is so unique when compared to verbal languages, and the Deaf in our organization are used to teams not knowing Sign. We often hear people describe their own sign language attempts as “glorified charades” – and that’s ok! The Deaf are comfortable with finger-spelling and gesturing, and are happy to teach you signs throughout your conversations with them. Time and time again we have experienced the Spirit moving and supporting in weakness – helping with communication in amazing ways!

Romans 6:26-28 – In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The Spirit is going before you and preparing your heart for what you will experience on your trip, and we hope that you can come alongside what the Spirit is doing by beginning to learn a little sign language yourself! Doing so can radically enhance your trip experience.

Did you know that in sign language, each letter of the English alphabet has a unique and corresponding hand shape? Finger spelling is a key component of sign language and a great place to start your learning.

Take 20 minutes today to learn the alphabet – this will be huge for your future relationships.

***See following page for sign alphabet**

How did that go? Keep working on the alphabet. A great way to practice is to spell things you see, and as you get the hang of it add a few more simple words / phrases.

- My name is _____ (fingerspelling).
- Good morning.
- How are you?

If you would like to keep learning, YouTube has some wonderful basic sign language videos that you can watch and familiarize yourself with.

The reality is, language creates community, and you are about to engage a community that is formed around sign language. No matter how you feel about engaging this community, it is our prayer that you can put in a little work. This work will only help your relationships to come – both with your mission team from the States and the Deaf near and far.

Ask God to help you as you study and learn, praying that He goes before you in your preparation. As you see your community who will be taking this trip with you, have some fun with it and practice sign language together!

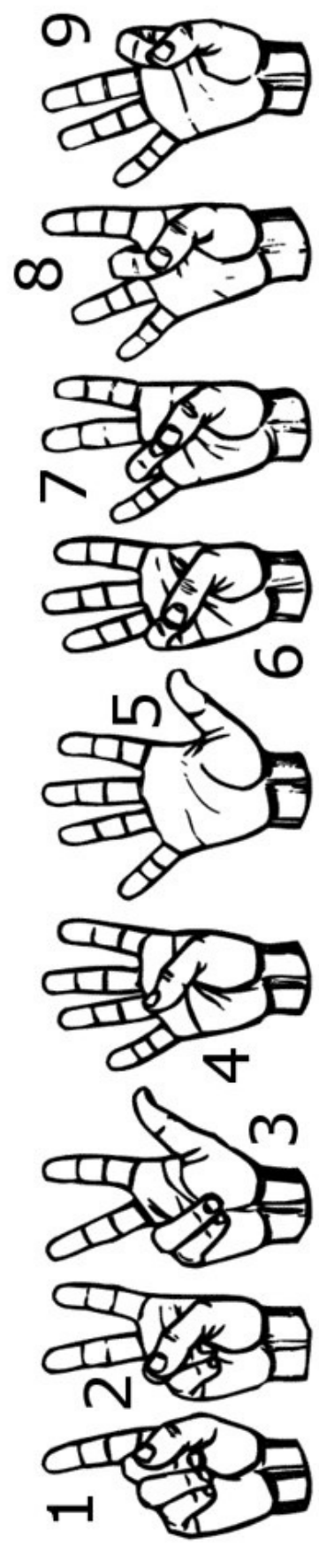
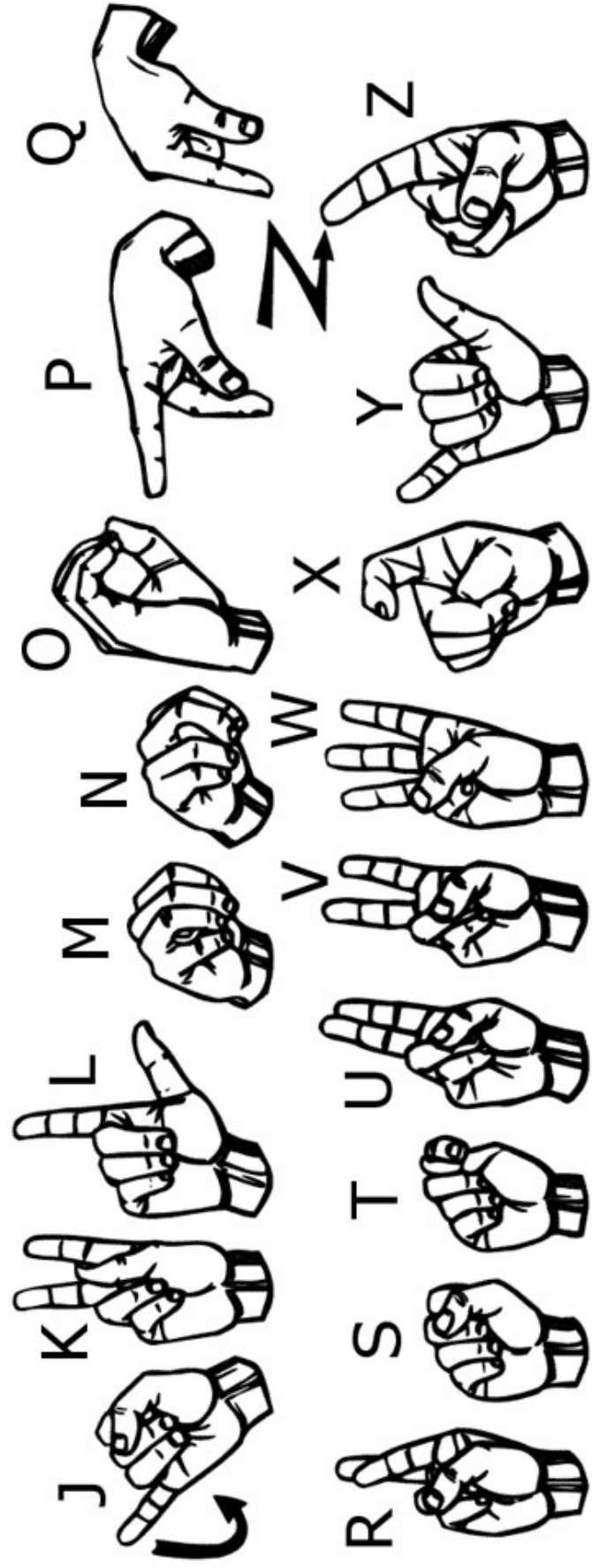
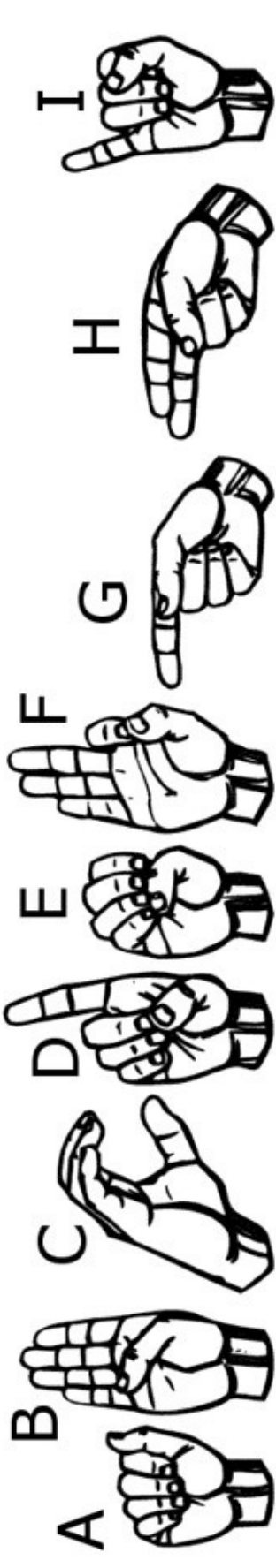
Ultimately, language brings people together. Language is tied deeply to one's identity and can bring out powerful emotions. Words can have the effect of a gentle touch or a cannon blast. Scripture uses language in amazing ways to express the astounding richness of faith, love, and life.

To learn another's heart language is to care for them deeply. It portrays your belief that they are worth your time, energy, and love.

Other ideas for phrases to learn:

- What time is it?
- When is breakfast / lunch / dinner?
- How is your family?
- I have ___ (#) siblings / kids.
- Where is the toilet?
- Do you want to play cards?
- Good night.





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Pre-Trip: Session Three – Culture

What comes to mind when you think of culture?

What are a few things that define your culture?

What cultures (other than your own) have you experienced? What makes these cultures unique?

For our final pre-trip session, we want to focus on culture. Culture, in many ways like community, refers to what a particular group of people has in common (connections) but adds to it in the ways that a group is different from other groups (disconnect).

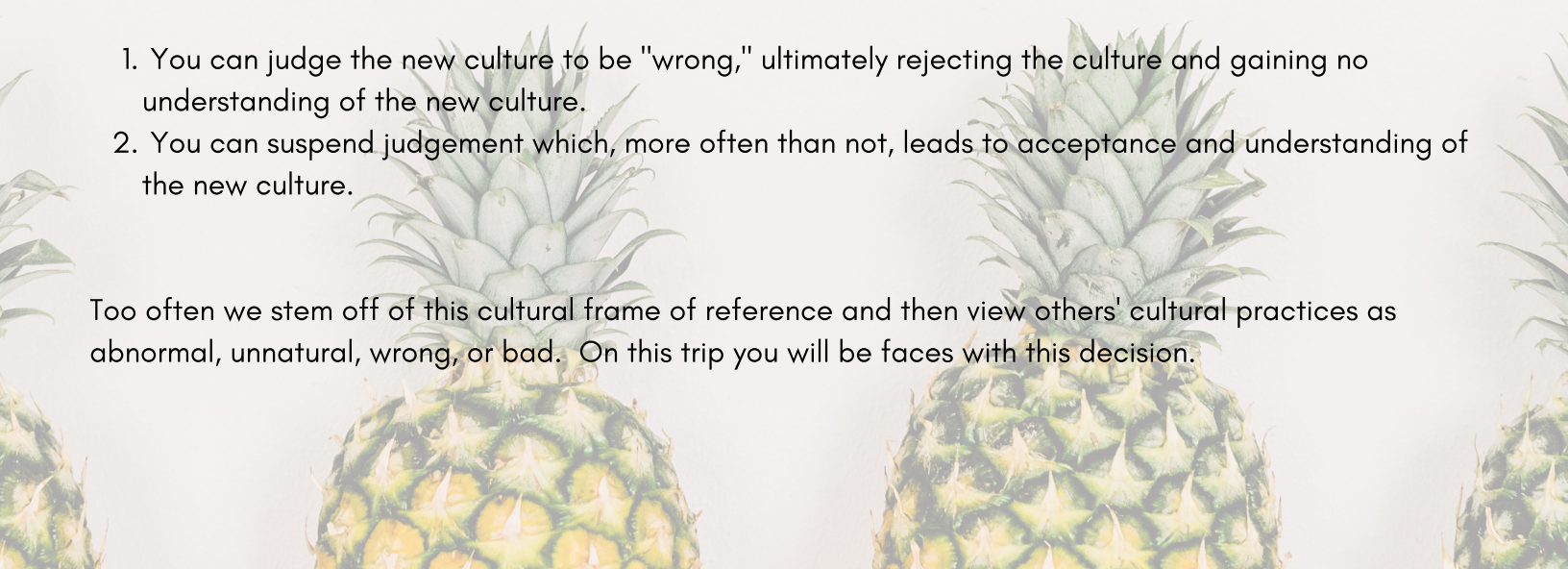
You have your own culture, which has many defining characteristics as you named above. Now you will be engaging with a completely different culture. In fact, during your trip you will not just be experiencing one new culture, but two – Jamaican culture and Deaf culture.

This is important to talk about because entering a new culture, even for a short time, can often bring discomfort or confusion. This is because we all interpret or judge our own cultural practices from our own culture's frame of reference – and we often view ourselves as being normal, natural, right, and good.

When you reach the point of discomfort or confusion, you are left with two options:

1. You can judge the new culture to be "wrong," ultimately rejecting the culture and gaining no understanding of the new culture.
2. You can suspend judgement which, more often than not, leads to acceptance and understanding of the new culture.

Too often we stem off of this cultural frame of reference and then view others' cultural practices as abnormal, unnatural, wrong, or bad. On this trip you will be faces with this decision.



Imagine for a moment that you have just traveled to Jamaica. Immediately, you are exposed to cultures different from your own. As you are driving away from the airport, you quickly realize that the steering wheel of the vehicle is on the right side, and we are traveling on the left side of the road. Is this wrong, or is this merely different?

The way that you approach these new cultural realities will help you throughout the trip – it is our prayer that you approach them with openness, genuine curiosity, and understanding.

Once you reach the CCCD campus, you then begin to experience Deaf culture – what do you think Deaf culture means? Did you know that Deaf culture is prevalent all over the world?

Take a few more moments to write down what you think you may experience and what makes Deaf culture unique. We will talk about this a lot during your [virtual] time in Jamaica.

Finally, God calls us out into the world – you have responded to His call to come [virtually] to Jamaica and He has so much in store for you on this trip.

Read *Ephesians 4:1-5:2* and write down what sticks out to you –

Take some time to pray, individually or with your team, about having an open heart during your trip. Pray for your community and the community you will be engaging with. Pray that you will be open to all that God has for you while on this trip. Pray He will use this trip to open your eyes to new realities and perspectives!



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Week 1.1 – Welcome

Welcome to your first [virtual] day in Jamaica! We are so glad you are here, and we have been praying for you in your preparation – we believe you will experience the presence of God in a whole new way through this trip. God is always at work, but because the clutter in our lives can be so distracting we often miss what God is doing in and through us. To see God at work and hear His voice requires the ability to quiet ourselves and learn to listen.

Each day, it is our hope that you will take some uninterrupted time with our God who created you and loves you. Together we will be talking about what it means to belong – to belong to a community, to a culture, and to God.

To start off today, we are only asking one question – put some good thought into this because it will be revisited throughout the week:

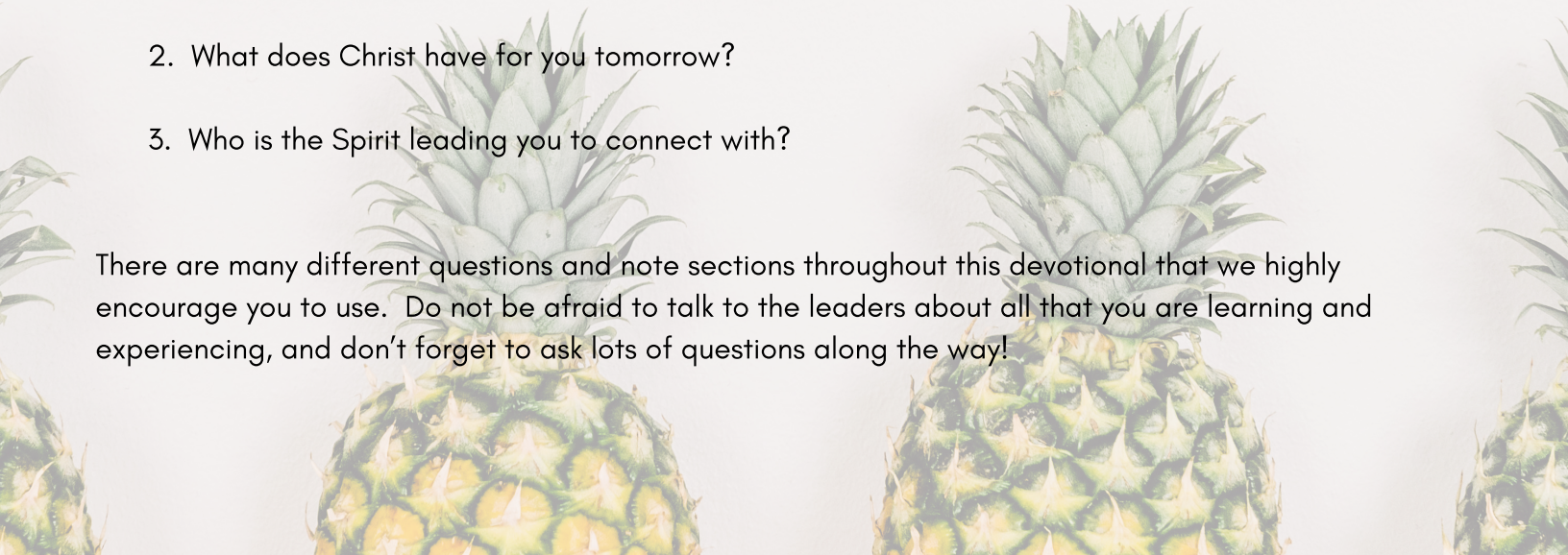
What does it mean to belong?

Remember, as we journey through this together, what you put in is what you will get out. If you take your time with God seriously, you will be so much more aware of how He is moving. We believe He has called you (not just your team, but YOU) on this trip for a specific purpose. Wouldn't you like to know what that purpose is?

Try answering these questions at the end of each day:

1. Where did you see God moving today?
2. What does Christ have for you tomorrow?
3. Who is the Spirit leading you to connect with?

There are many different questions and note sections throughout this devotional that we highly encourage you to use. Do not be afraid to talk to the leaders about all that you are learning and experiencing, and don't forget to ask lots of questions along the way!



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Week 1.2 – Posture

Rhetorical question to think about – what is your posture towards God and His mission?

What do you think of when you hear the word ‘posture’?

Think about it in the context of band, choir, or orchestra – what is the point of having good posture?

Think about posture in your daily life – how do the ways that you act and carry yourself impact your life and the lives of those around you?

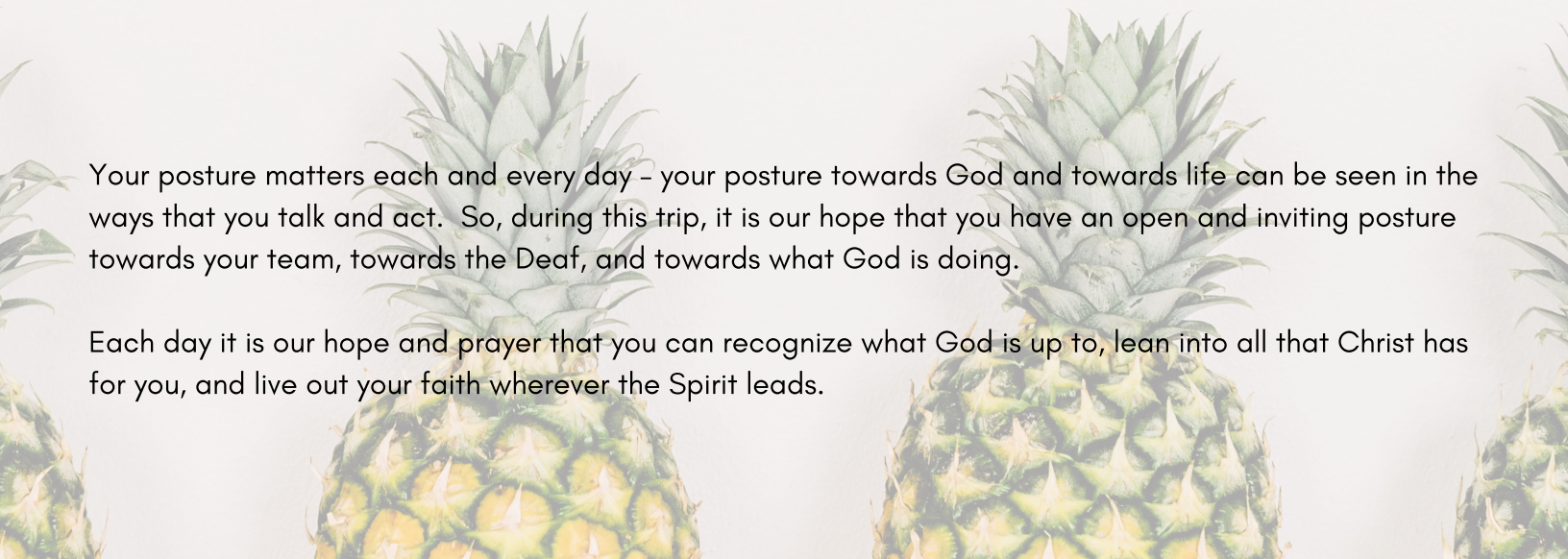
What is your posture towards this trip?

What is your posture towards building relationships with your team?

What is your posture towards the Deaf?

Your posture matters each and every day – your posture towards God and towards life can be seen in the ways that you talk and act. So, during this trip, it is our hope that you have an open and inviting posture towards your team, towards the Deaf, and towards what God is doing.

Each day it is our hope and prayer that you can recognize what God is up to, lean into all that Christ has for you, and live out your faith wherever the Spirit leads.



How can you do each of these during this trip the next few weeks? Give a few examples:

1. Look to see what God is doing in and around you -
2. Lean into what Christ has for you today -
3. Live out your faith wherever the Spirit leads -

Each of these three requires you to slow down and reflect on all that you are experiencing.

Our posture matters - a good posture towards this trip, team, community, and Jamaica will open your eyes to the beauty surrounding you.

What are a few practical ways that your posture towards others (team members, Jamaicans, and the Deaf) can be inviting today?



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Week 1.3 – Perspective

Today we are focusing on perspective –

Just as our posture impacts the way we approach each situation, our perspective deeply impacts our unique view of the world.

You have a perspective that is unique and individual – only you have your perspective.

Perspective is the way you see what you are looking at. This is not as simple as just the angle in which you approach a physical object: your perspective is deeply impacted by your community, language, culture, and past experiences.

Take some time and jot down what comes to mind when you read these words:

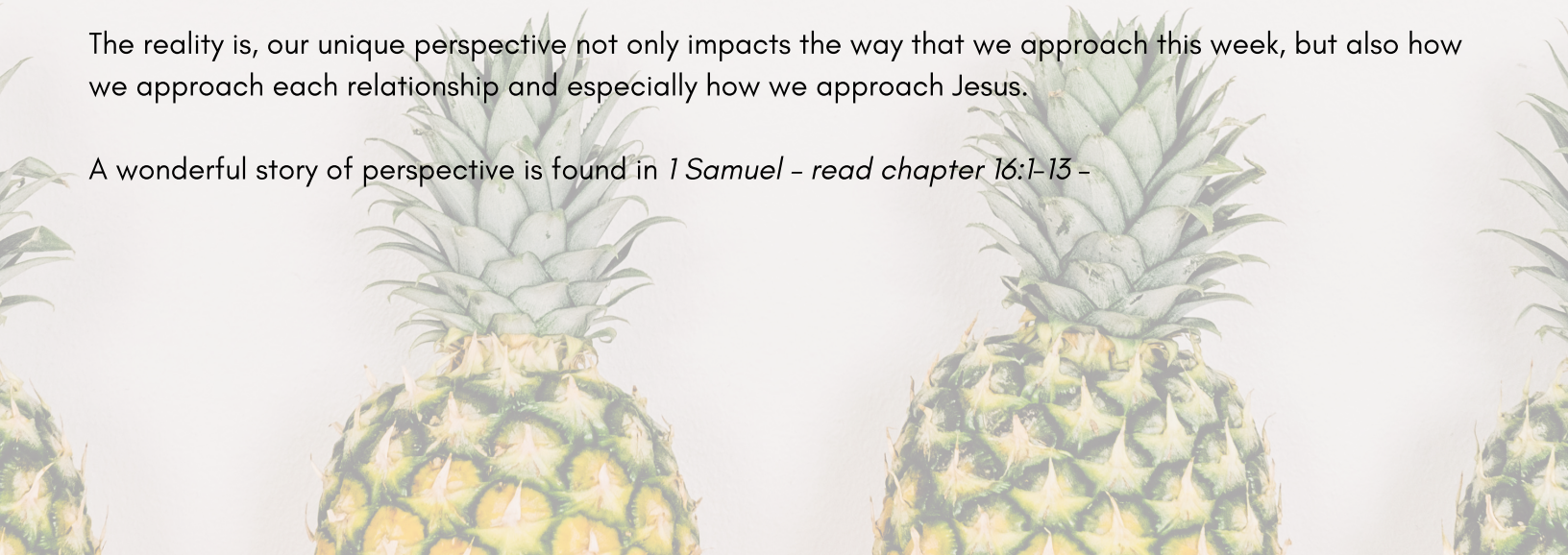
- Community –
- Language –
- Culture –
- Bible –
- Jesus –
- Deaf –
- Lack –
- Inclusion –
- Belonging –
- Empowerment –

I bet that none of your team member's answers are exactly the same as yours – this is because you approach these words with your circumstance, history, and perspective.

This week, compare what you wrote with a few teammates and see how these differ.

The reality is, our unique perspective not only impacts the way that we approach this week, but also how we approach each relationship and especially how we approach Jesus.

A wonderful story of perspective is found in *1 Samuel* – read chapter 16:1-13 –



What was Samuel's perspective of who the next king of Israel would be?

Samuel came with a perspective and the Lord calls him out in verse 7 where it says:
But the Lord said to Samuel, *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

The Lord is calling for Samuel to shift his perspective and the Lord is also calling you to shift your perspective – this is not to say that you need to change who you are, but that you need to be willing to see from another's point of view. Every one of us can improve on this!

Do you think your perspective could impact your feelings of belonging? How?

How do you see your perspective already shifting this week?

How has your perspective of the Deaf shifted? Of Jamaica?

What may still need some work so you can see from another's perspective?



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Week 2.1 – Authenticity

What is authenticity to you?

We at CCCD believe that before being excellent, or professional, or polished – authenticity should be most important in our lives. It is always better to be real and honest, and not put up a façade to attempt and hide our authentic selves. We never want our lives or ministries to be sloppy, but it is authenticity that drives us – not perfection. Ultimately, authenticity is the quality of being true, genuine, or real. It is being your original created self, and not being corrupted from who you truly are.

Do you ever put up walls or a façade in your life? How so?

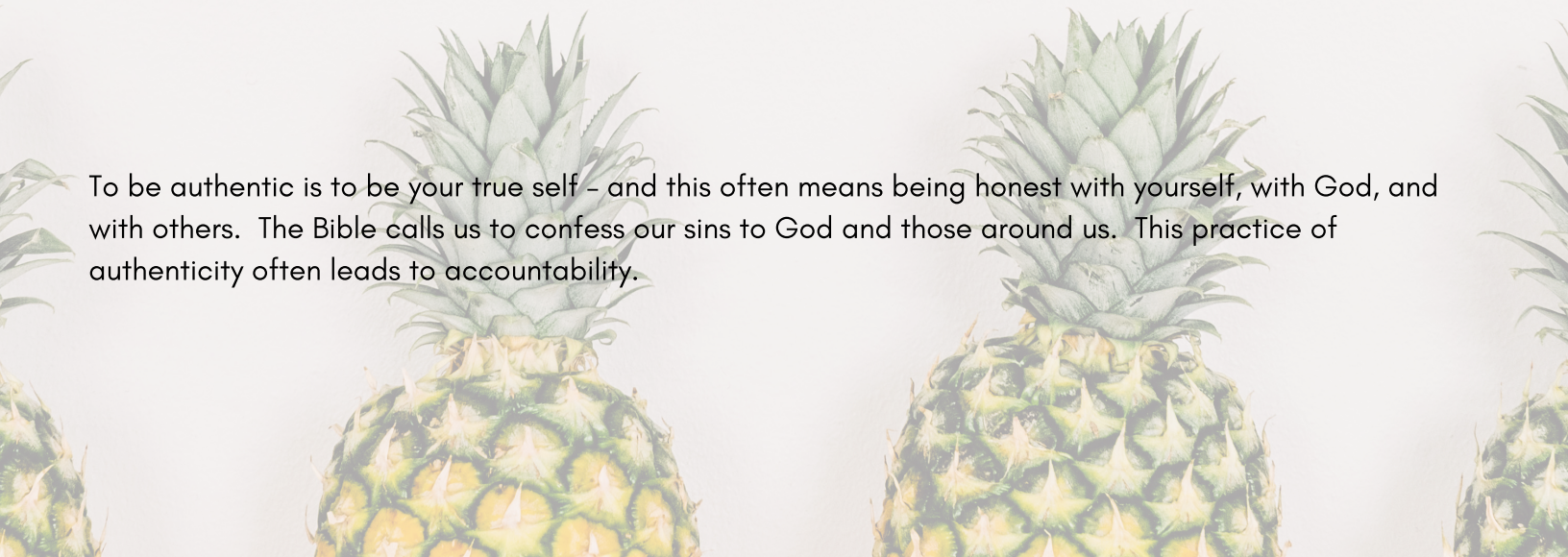
Authenticity truly takes place when you are willing to be real and honest with the people who surround you.

What do you think it means for you to be authentic this week? (Come up with some concrete ideas that you can practice.)

Read the story of Zacchaeus – *Luke 19: 1-10*

Explore this passage and write down your thoughts on the value and importance of being authentic.

To be authentic is to be your true self – and this often means being honest with yourself, with God, and with others. The Bible calls us to confess our sins to God and those around us. This practice of authenticity often leads to accountability.



Who can you be honest with in your life? Who really knows you? Who knows your stuff?

Who do you think you need to be honest with going forward?

Talk with God and ask Him to help you be more authentic. Yes, we do need boundaries – but we need to be able to share our life and baggage with those around us, and we need to accept others when they do the same.

BONUS reading: *1 John 1: 1-10*



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Week 2.2 – Inclusion

What do you believe inclusion means?

What do you think inclusion looks like? Give some real examples (bonus if they are personal). It might help to think about what exclusion looks like...

Inclusion is typically thought of as acceptance or being included in a group or community. This can obviously happen in many different ways, but at its foundation, inclusion is all-embracing, giving equal opportunities to each and every person.

A quote from the founder of a summer camp in Michigan says this about inclusion – “Like Jesus, we accept children as they are. Not because of their appearance or athletic ability, not because of their academic ability or how talented they are, but because they are created in the image of God.”

What does this quote speak to you? What do you grab onto?

What do you think it means to be created in the image of God?

What do you think being created in the image of God means for us regarding being inclusive to others?

Read *1 Corinthians 12: 12-27* – what jumps out to you in this passage?



Over the course of this trip, you have had many opportunities to learn and immerse yourself in Jamaican and Deaf culture.

What are some strengths you have seen in yourself this through this trip?

What are some weaknesses you have seen in yourself?

What are some strengths that you have seen in others?

Regarding your personal weaknesses, have the strengths of others been able to cover those weaknesses? How so?

The Bible is clear that we all have gifts and talents, but we do not each have ALL the gifts and talents. That is a huge reason why we are called into a community with others. This is also a huge reason we are called to be the Church.

To live as an inclusive community is to give equal opportunity. How have you seen inclusion happen during this trip?



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Week 3.1 – Belonging

Remember back to the welcome devotional week 1.1? I said we would revisit belonging, and here we are.

Without taking a look at what you wrote previously – what do you believe belonging means?

Now, go look back to what you wrote on 1.1 – has your definition of belonging changed? Why do you think that is for you?

Belonging at its foundation is more than posture, perspective of others, authenticity in relationship, or inclusive community – it is all of these and more. While these previous topics have been choices you and I can make each day and in each relationship, belonging at its core is a feeling.

To know you belong is to know that you are needed and that you are truly missed when you are not present.

Belonging is a fundamental human need in community – it translates across language and culture, ultimately capturing your heart and changing the way you view yourself and others.

God and His message to us as His children is one of belonging.

God invites us into a relationship that is rooted in belonging, where all people regardless of culture, language, or ability are equally part of the community.

Adding to the 1 Corinthians passage we read in the previous devotional, take some time and read the following verses. Write down what jumps out at you:

- *Psalms 139: 1-18* –

- *Galatians 3: 26-29* –



As we are all made in the image of God, we are all on the same level. When we are in Christ there are no distinctions because we are all a reflection of the One who created us and loves us so dearly! And now we are called to live a life worthy of this call – a life of belonging that is seen through all of our relationships, words, and actions!

How have you seen belonging in action during your trip?

God calls us into belonging – why do you think that is?



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Week 3.2 - Empowerment

The Scriptures are clear – when you are in Christ (when you put your faith in Him and accept Him into your heart) you are claimed and renamed! When you are in Christ you are no longer the old you, but the new you!

2 Corinthians 5: 17 says – “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Ephesians 2: 19-22 says – “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

This is amazing news for all of us! Because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, we no longer need to pay the price of eternal death for our sins. Due to the FACT that the tomb was empty, we now serve a LIVING God who is preparing a place for us in Heaven!

But, what do you think that means for us now?

It means that we are to love and to serve others – much like you have done throughout this trip. But this experience and lifestyle should not just begin and end with this trip or devotional. This time of loving, serving, and being in relationship with the Deaf should also continue.

As you have learned from your time with CCCD, the Deaf are not just in Jamaica but all around the world. You have Deaf in your community, whether you know them personally or not.

So you can take what you have learned here – building on a foundation of belonging – and go back to your own communities as advocates for belonging for all people. Why? Because we are ALL made in the image of God.

What are a few goals you have going forward?



How has this trip impacted your faith journey?

What can you do to keep this trip from simply becoming a good memory?

Faith is a journey – we stumble, we grow, we misunderstand, we fail, and we succeed. Sometimes we will be faithful and sometimes we will falter – but all of these experiences that you have in life are used by God to make us more authentic, open, inclusive, transformed, and selfless.

Without making a plan for your return, it can be pretty easy to slide right back into life as you left it. *Proverbs 16:3 says, “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”*

Commit a plan to the Lord – taking all that you have learned to the Lord in prayer.

Ask for His wisdom and guidance as you return home, so that you can continue to grow in your relationship with Christ and move forward on this journey of faith that is marked by ALL belonging as children of God.

Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



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Post-Trip: Reflections - What Now?

*It is our recommendation that you meet as a team a few weeks after the trip. Take this time to talk about what you learned over the trip, what has become clearer now that you are a few weeks out, and any questions that you have about where you can go from here.

What has been sticking out to you when you think back to your [virtual] time in Jamaica?

What is the Lord revealing to you about yourself?

What may the Lord be calling you into now that you have had this experience?

Have you engaged with any Deaf in your community? If not, how could you as a group begin to do so?



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