

Training Devotionals

You may start each day of with a small devotional. Here are several suggestions:

Devotional 1

Theme: You are here on purpose.

Scripture Reference: Acts 17:24-28

In Athens, standing before a statue of an unknown God, Paul declared,

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:24-28)

From one man, God created all nations.

And from those nations, He appointed the times and places in which each person would live.

It is not by accident or chance that you are alive today, during this day in history, and here in this country, this city.

It was His plan that each one of us would find ourselves here. He appointed it.

He did it, so that we would seek Him and find Him, though He is not far from us.

Our individual lives and stories are aligned for this moment – a moment where we could together embrace a new vision and strategy for how we disciple the children in our homes and the students in our classroom.

As we listen and learn, let us do it with a heart that is open to discovering and learning what God planned before the creation of the world. Let us have ears to hear.

Let me pray for us:

Father, Thank You that You rule over every nation of the earth. Thank You that You are a God of purpose.

You have purpose for each one of us in being here. And You want to invite us to join You in the global purposes You are working throughout all of human history.

We stand before You with open hearts, ready to receive and hear from You. Come, Lord Jesus. Lead us in what You have for us. Amen.

Devotional 2

Theme: Be a dreamer. Think of all the possibilities

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 3:20-21

When I was child, I loved to dream. It is part of who we are as children.

We play in a world of make believe, dreaming of new lands and creations, dreaming of growing up to be someone strong or brave or famous.

As we get older, we lose our ability to dream. We are confronted with the realities of the life around us – aware of the challenges we face and the realness of our struggles.

In Ephesians 3, we find a beautiful truth about the God we serve and our dreams.

Ephesians 3:20-21 reads,

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or dream, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 2:30-21)

Did you hear that?

Our God is able do immeasurably more than all we ask or dream! Not only is He *able*, but He *wants* to do it – not for us, but for His glory!

During this training, we have put a grand vision before us. Perhaps you have started to dream of how this would change your family, your students, your community.

But then the realities sink in. You think of all the obstacles you will face. The lack of resources you might feel you have. The condition of the kids you work with.

Can I give you permission, for the rest of our time together, to set all those worries and doubts and fears aside? Can I give you permission to dream?

And not just small dreams, but *big* dreams – dreams that will change the future of the Church and advance the Kingdom of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

Let us dream, knowing and trusting that God wants to do immeasurably more.

Father, we want to be people who dream. We want to be people who will bravely ask You to do immeasurably more than we think is possible because we truly believe You to be a great God.

We lay down our fears, our doubts, and our obstacles at the foot of Your cross. Allow us to see with Your eyes what You want to do with the children in our lives.

Amen.

Devotional 3

Theme: We can't; He can.

Scripture Reference: John 15:5, 16

As we learn new ways of teaching and discipling our children, we can rest in the truth that God does not expect us to do everything on our own.

In fact, apart from Him, we cannot do any of this.

In John 15:5. Jesus tells us,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

As we begin to live out and implement God's mission in our lives and in the lives of our children and students, we must draw from God's strength. Abiding in Him is key!

When we rest in Him, trust Him for the outcome, and rely on His empowering strength in everything we do – it is then that we begin to bear fruit in the Kingdom.

Jesus continues in verse 16:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

He chose *us*. Remember, we are characters in *His* story!

And He chose us so that we will bear fruit. He wants our ministries to have true impact. But the kind of fruit He desires in our lives is fruit that will last. Fruit that will carry into eternity.

When we align our lives with what God is doing, when we abide richly in Him, He provides the things we need to accomplish the tasks before us.

Close your eyes and bow your head. I would like you to visualize laying at the foot of the cross every endeavor you are attempting, every plan you have been making in your head while at this training, every dream that seems out of reach, every fear that threatens to hinder you. Lay them all down.

(Pause for a moment while participants reflect.)

Jesus, You are the vine. We are only the branches. We acknowledge that without you, we cannot do anything. So we lay all our plans and all our fears at Your feet. We come with open and willing hearts. Work though us for your glory. Amen.

Devotional 4

Theme: God Fulfills His Purposes

Scripture Reference: Isaiah 46:9-11

We serve a God of purpose.

The things He has set in motion continue. They are not thwarted by human history, by natural disasters, nor disobedient men.

Isaiah 46:9-11 says,

*Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, "My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please."
From the east I summon a bird of prey;
from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that I will bring about;
what I have planned, that I will do.
(Isaiah 46:9-11)*

When God promises Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed, it will happen.

When John says he sees people from every nation, tribe, and tongue standing before the throne of Jesus, it will happen.

We know it will happen because God says that is what He is doing and will do. His purposes stand. As Isaiah tells us, what God has planned, He will do.

In this we find hope. Every unreached people group that seems too far away to reach will be reached. God is actively pursuing His purposes each and every day, regardless of all the evils around us that might cause us to believe otherwise.

And He invites us, and our children and students, to partner with Him in His glorious purpose.

Let us take a moment to praise God for who He is, to praise Him for His faithfulness.

*Father, we thank You that You are a faithful God.
Thank You that Your purposes stand against time, against all human history.
Thank You for Your unconditional love for all the peoples of the earth.
We praise You, for You are great and powerful. There is no one like You. Amen.*

Devotional 5

Theme: Never Give Up

Scripture Reference: Luke 5:1-7

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Peter, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Peter, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Peter answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." (Luke 5:1-5)

Notice Peter's response. He is a trained fisherman, but he looks to Jesus and says, "Though I am tired from working all night, though I do not think You know much about fishing, and though it makes no sense at all in human terms ... *because You said so, I will do it.*"

How often we feel like Peter. We are working and working in our ministries, in our homes. We want so badly for the children in our lives to get it – to know Jesus, to obey and love Him, to live godly lives.

But Bible story after Bible story, after craft, after program, we notice no change. They still fight. They still disobey. They still desire worldly things.

We lose heart. We start to believe what we do does not matter. It is not going to work.

But what if Jesus is saying to you, try one more time? Peter thought the lake was empty. There was no use in letting his net down one more time. Surely that action would yield the same results it always had.

Yet, because Jesus Himself said it, Peter obeyed. Look what happened in verses 6 and 7:

When [Peter] had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. (Luke 5:6-7)

Peter's obedient heart led to such an overflow that others were called in to help.

It is easy to grow weary when working with children. Do not lose heart and give up. Keep teaching them. Keep discipling them. Keep pointing them to Jesus.

Peter did not know that something as mundane as lowering his net into the water for fish would eventually lead him to a new calling as a fisher of men.

That is what is remarkable about obedience. You do not know where it will lead. You do not know how God will use it.

Let us pray together:

Father, we know that You have called us to be fishers of men just like Peter. You have put in each of our lives little children who need to know You. And You have called us to be their teachers, to be their parents, to be the ones who point them to You.

Help us to be obedient to Your calling. When we are weary or lose heart, strengthen and encourage us. Give us the courage to never give up on what You are doing or on the children that seem too impossible to ever change.

We trust you with their lives. Amen