



WEST VIRGINIA VIM TRIP BLESSING



Commissioning the
West Virginia Mission Trip

Celebration MEDITATIONS

GOD HAS PROVIDED.
WE ARE CALLED TO MOVE FORWARD.



SEPTEMBER 20-SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

WEEKLY THEME

The Spirit leads us forward beyond our comfort zones,
equipping us to reach new people.

PREAMBLE

As you use these meditations, offer a prayer for all who wrote them, God has given us a wealth of talent to serve God in this way. Please thank them.

All meditation passages are from NRSVUE except as noted.

Samuel

The Word. 1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Meditation.

Samuel was looking for someone who looked like Saul to be Israel's next king but God was warning him against judging his outward appearance. A person's looks differ from what's in the heart.

We, like Samuel, are guilty of judging people by their outward appearance before searching for their inner attributes. Only God knows our true selves and judges by our faith and works.

JOY Prayer.

Holy Spirit help me reach out to people who need to know that Jesus is with them through all the storms of their lives. Holy God please help me to be there for those who need to know that someone cares about them, to assure them that God feels their pain and is only a breath away. Amen.

~ Gloria Taylor

Nathan

The Word. 2 Samuel 12:9

Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

Meditation.

Confronting authorities can be difficult and uncomfortable. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah, her husband killed in battle, God sent Nathan to rebuke David. Nathan told David a story about a rich man who stole a poor man's beloved pet lamb. When David became angry at the injustice, Nathan told David he was that man. Not all tragic plans have a similar plan but this story illuminates four key ways David's plan exposed his sin. This story started with (1) David's momentary unfaithfulness to God's word. There was an overall (2) root of ingratitude and David's forgetting all that God gave him. (3) Covering up sin leads to many compounding actions, that lead to a chain of destruction. Although God exposed David's sin, we see a final way that God's (4) merciful confrontation can bring about a life-modifying heart change, leading one away from destruction and toward an authentic deep repentance.

Through Nathan's admonishment, we see God's overwhelming grace that is a catalyst for bringing David into a real and authentic repentance. We see in this story God's amazing mercy along with the consequences of David's actions. David wrote his confession in Psalm 51

JOY Prayer.

Dear God, create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Don't take me away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Use me when you are ready to teach others your ways so that sinners will turn back to you. With my lips, I declare you are great and deserve all praise. Continue to shower me with mercy, your unfailing love, and Your great compassion. All Your ways are right. I delight in You. I delight in You. I delight in You, Lord. Amen.

~ Uriah J. Moore

Isaiah

The Word. Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Meditation.

Isaiah heard God's call to prophesy to the people. Like many of us, he felt inadequate, afraid to take on the task God was calling him to do. God knew his feelings and equipped him for his task. He was with Isaiah to give encouragement and the words he needed. Isaiah now had a choice – answer God's call or ignore it. "Here I am, send me" was his answer.

How often do we hesitate or ignore God's call to reach out to people? How often do we invite them to church and share how His love and presence has made a difference in our lives? Our God knows and loves each one of us and is always on call for us. He calls us to share his presence, to serve others, and to respect, love and respond to the needs of all people. Are you willing to answer God's call with "Here I am, send me?" Say yes and feel God's love, joy, and peace in your soul.

JOY Prayer.

Lord, you have created us in love, and you call us to share your love and presence in our lives and your saving grace to all. Encourage us when we hesitate, guide our decisions and actions, and give us courage to answer your call with "Here I am, send me." In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

~ Joy Felty



Amos

The Word. Amos 7:14-15

Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet nor a prophet's son, but I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.

Meditation.

I have always liked the prophet Amos since I had a chance to study him in an Old Testament class in Seminary. He was as blue collar as they come. One day, Amos believed God had a job for him. So, he left his home in the southern kingdom of Israel to seek an audience with the priest of the northern kingdom to tell him a message from God of hollow religious practices and injustices.

When the priest asked about Amos' qualifications, he said, "I'm just a fig picker and a shepherd." By using this description, Amos showed that he was not a professional anything, but a simple working-class man called directly by God to "prick the conscience and pride of Israel."

Whether tending to the needs of the church or the needs of a tree, there is God's grace and calling in every day. What are you called to today?

JOY Prayer.

Jesus, give me the courage to be used by You today in any manner you choose. You have given me all I need for each day, both for myself and for others. Help me to set aside thoughts only about myself to follow wherever You lead. Amen.

~ Rev Jim VanZandt (retired)

On Sunday, September 23, 2018, CUMC broke ground
on the Worship Center.

Jonah

The Word. Jonah 4:11

And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

Meditation.

For much of my life, I believed that Jonah fled from God's command to spread His message to Nineveh because he was afraid. In fact, Jonah had every right to be afraid to go into the capital city of an empire that would conquer the Northern Kingdom of Israel around 722 B.C. Ultimately, Jonah was tasked with saving the Ninevites from God's divine justice, something Jonah understood well. After Jonah preaches throughout the city and the Ninevites repent of their wicked ways, Jonah sits and waits for God's divine justice to wipe out the city. However, God has different plans, plans that Jonah was afraid would happen and the REAL reason he fled from God's command.

Jonah was fearful that God's chesed (Hebrew for steadfast love or mercy) would be shown on the Ninevites, and it was. Yes, after many attempts, Jonah eventually trusted God's spirit to lead him beyond his comfort zone to reach new people, but he couldn't accept the basic sacred truth that God's compassion and love is for ALL, even after God was merciful to Jonah many times! Fortunately, at CUMC our congregation understands that God's love and compassion is for ALL, and ALL means ALL, no exceptions. May the Holy Spirit give us the courage Jonah lacked, so that we can rejoice when God's love reaches ALL—even the Ninevites.

JOY Prayer.

Jesus, help me to live more like you by loving and accepting all, even when it seems difficult or uncomfortable. O Holy Spirit, give me the courage to spread your love and kindness to new people and places, allowing me to move forward beyond my comfort zone. Father God, give me clarity to understand your sacred and holy truth that your love and mercy is for everyone, no exceptions. Amen.

~ *Parker C. Heberlig*

Daniel

The Word. Daniel 6:25-26 (excerpts)

Then King Darius decreed that the God of Daniel is the living God, whose kingdom shall endure forever.

Meditation.

If someone told me God's plan involved a den of lions, I'd probably want a less exciting option, like designing a church newsletter.

Anything but lions (or spiders).

Yet, Daniel faithfully followed God, even when it landed him in a place he never would have chosen. What amazes me is that God didn't just **rescue** Daniel, God used his uncomfortable situation to **reach an entire kingdom**. Instead of signing Daniel's death warrant, King Darius issued a royal decree declaring that Daniel's God is the living God whose kingdom will never end.

That's often how the Spirit works. We like comfortable and familiar. But the Spirit has a habit of nudging us into uncomfortable places where God can do something beyond our imagination.

Is your "lion's den" something you'd rather avoid: a difficult conversation; serving in a new ministry; inviting a neighbor to church, or introducing ourselves to someone but still don't know by name? It may feel awkward in the moment, but God specializes in turning uncomfortable situations into opportunities for His Will.

Because Daniel trusted God in an uncomfortable place, an entire kingdom heard about the living God. The Spirit still works that way today. When we step out of our comfort zone, God can use our simple and faithful acts to reach people we never expected. And thankfully, most of our lions are less likely to roar and more likely to be named "change."

JOY Prayer.

Dear Jesus, show me how I can live more like you in dealing with persons who make me uncomfortable. O Holy Spirit, open my eyes and my heart to be a blessing to someone who looks like they could use a bit of Jesus. Heavenly Father help me patiently to trust in Your intervening Grace. Amen.

~ Rhonda Dyson

Nehemiah

The Word. Nehemiah 2:5

Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, so that I may rebuild it."

Meditation.

Nehemiah and most of the Jewish people were exiled to a foreign land after the Babylonians captured and destroyed Jerusalem, the spiritual and political center of Judah, and the city wall in 586 BCE. One day after Nehemiah had heard this bad news he went to the king Artaxerxes in the Persian palace very sad and despondent while serving the king as cup bearer. The king noticed this and asked why.

Nehemiah was in a position of responsibility trust and confidence as an advisor to the king. Because he had frequently prayed to God about his home country the king released him for the time of rebuilding the city wall sending him back to Jerusalem with provisions and protection. Nehemiah took a bold step of faith as he challenged his people to **Rise up and build**. It took a man of much prayer, faith, vision, courage, boldness, and mission to accomplish rebuilding the city wall, despite opposition from within and without. Nehemiah 6:15 records that "All the enemy nations were disheartened for they perceived this work was done by God." Has God-given you a vision, a mission, a plan, a purpose? Is your life characterized by a prayerful dependence upon God? God uses any circumstance to promote his Kingdom to **Rise up and build**.

JOY Prayer.

Lord Jesus give us the vision, courage, and boldness like Nehemiah to love you, your church, and all its people, and to **Rise up and build** your Kingdom. For the only saving hope we have is in you. Amen.

~ *Linda Hooper*