

BEYOND THE HORIZON

A spiritual and intercultural journey
of discovery in your voluntary service



»Leaving footprints in freshly
fallen snow. Envisioning what I do
not yet see. Thinking out of the box,
against my mind. Steering my steps
towards undiscovered land.

Entering new lands, I want to take
new risks, dare, hope, pray, and then
boldly move forward.

No sticking to the armchair,
but setting off cross-country. Living
the unlived, being open for miracles.
Overcoming frontiers, even against
resistance. Finding new shores behind
the asphalt beach.

Paths into the distance, what shall
happen to me? With God by my side,
He will go with me.«

CHRISTOPH ZEHENDNER

LOOK BEYOND THE HORIZON WITH GOD

Great, you have decided to do voluntary service among people from another culture. In the coming months, you are going to experience many new things. You are going to win new friends, you will get to know new cultures and enjoy brilliant moments. At times you will be excited and happy, and at other times you may also be confused, frustrated or annoyed. That's why we've put this booklet together for you.

It is designed to help you observe life around you during your voluntary service and to reflect on your new experiences from God's perspective. No matter where you go, He is already there. And He is at work in all cultures.

GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The booklet contains a colorful potpourri of topics from our own experiences abroad. Not every assignment is the same. Some topics probably won't come up in your host country, but others will.

CHOOSE A TOPIC

So, for each week of volunteering, choose a topic that appeals to you and seems relevant. You may also revisit topics that you reflected on at an earlier time. Feel free to read the subjects in the order you prefer. Only you know which subjects are relevant to you and when.

OBSERVE

Intentionally take time this week to make observations about the topic at hand. For this purpose we have prepared some questions to help you. Allow local people to explain to you what they do and what they think. Feel free to ask people in your host country or even your teammates.

In doing so, be sensitive and open-minded. It is best to take a notebook (diary) to write down what you notice and your related personal thoughts. This will enable you to recognise, black on white, which way God was leading you during your voluntary service, how He blessed you and what new insights you may have gained.

READ

The Bible contains all our human experiences. That is why we have selected biblical texts which allow you to explore the topic from a biblical perspective, and to also ask yourself what those texts have to say about the topic.

THINK

For your reflection on biblical texts, we have prepared questions to help you see a topic through God's eyes i.e. from God's perspective.

DISCUSS

Discuss with your mentor what you noticed and what spoke to you, or perhaps what questions the subject triggered in you.

PRAY

Our power and strength are the result of our heart's connection to our heavenly Father. God wants us to "cast" all our worries, thoughts and concerns on Him (Ps 55:22; 68:19; 1 Pet 5:7). It pleases God when you talk to Him about what is troubling you and consciously invite Him to enter into your thoughts or situation.

GOING DEEPER

We have added a few suggestions in case you want to explore the topic further. You might also want to explore one or the other subject in more depth after your return.

The authors Cynthia Beyhl, Dr. Tabea Binder, Anna Kaufmann, Martin Sachs, Dr. Verena Schafroth and Martin Seidl-Schulz wish you many exciting moments and valuable insights that will broaden your horizon.

ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLICAL BOOKS

Old Testament

Genesis	Gen	Song of Songs	SS
Exodus	Ex	Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Leviticus	Lev	Isaiah	Isa
Numbers	Num	Jeremiah	Jer
Deuteronomy	Deut	Lamentations	Lam
Joshua	Jos	Ezekiel	Eze
Judges	Jdg	Daniel	Dan
Ruth	Ru	Hosea	Hos
1 Samuel	1 Sa	Joel	Joel
2 Samuel	2 Sa	Amos	Am
1 Kings	1 Ki	Obadiah	Ob
2 Kings	2 Ki	Jonah	Jnh
1 Chronicles	1 Ch	Micah	Mic
2 Chronicles	2 Ch	Nahum	Na
Ezra	Ezr	Habakuk	Hab
Nehemiah	Ne	Zephaniah	Zep
Esther	Est	Haggai	Hag
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi	Mal
Proverbs	Prov		

New Testament

Matthew	Mt	1 Timothy	1 Tim
Mark	Mk	2 Timothy	2 Tim
Luke	Lk	Titus	Tit
John	Jn	Philemon	Phm
Acts	Ac	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	2 Peter	2 Pet
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1 Jn
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2 Jn
Philippians	Phil	3 John	3 Jn
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Th	Revelation	Rev
2 Thessalonians	2 Th		

[RECOMMENDED BIBLES ONLINE](#)

www.bibleserver.com | contemporary translations
www.bibel-online.net | older translations
www.bible.com/de | Bible App

HOW DO I FIND A PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE?

Example:

PS 23:1-2

- The abbreviation for the biblical book is stated first i.e.

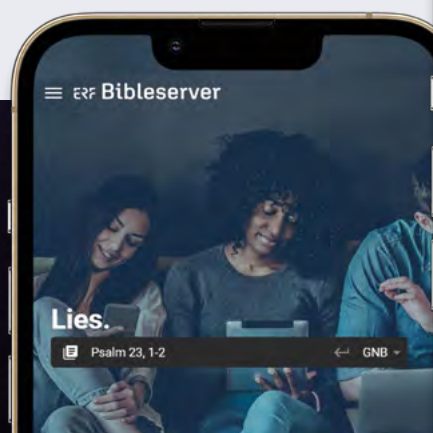
'PS'

You will find it with the help of the
ABBREVIATION INDEX of the biblical books:

THE BOOK OF PSALMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Search for the book of 'Psalms' in the table of contents of your Bible in the Old Testament.
- After the biblical book is the chapter '23'.
Large numbers in the Bible book indicate the chapters.
- The chapter '23' is followed by the verse or verses in the chapter, here the verses '1-2'.
- Each chapter in the Bible is divided into verses, which is the smallest unit.
- By the way, 'ff' after the verse number means: And the following verses.

With an online Bible you can copy the Bible passage directly into the search window: copy - search- find; for example on www.bibleserver.com



HOW CAN I STUDY THE BIBLE?

»Recite the commandments to yourself over and over again!
Think about them day and night so that you can live your life according to them.
Then you will succeed in everything you set your mind to.«

Joshua 1:8

»Early the next morning, Jesus went to pray alone in a lonely place.«

Mark 1:35

Your 'quiet time' with God can be organised in many ways. In addition to Bible reading also silence, songs, adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, praise and intercession have their place. Keep a diary to record your personal impressions, thoughts, insights from your study of the Bible as well as any encouragement and comments. In our quiet time we come before God as we are: with our thoughts and feel-

ings, in body, soul and spirit. It is important to have an inner attitude of wanting to listen to God so that we can experience a meaningful encounter with Him. It is always an exciting to see how Jesus meets you.

Practical tips:

1. Prayer: Lord, please open my eyes for me to understand the miracles in your word. Ps 119:18.
Try to be clear about what you

actually expect from God. Jesus asked the blind man in Mark 10:51, "What do you want me to do for you?" Just tell him in your own words and expect Jesus to act.

2. Prayer for cleansing and guidance by the Holy Spirit. Thank Jesus for His presence; He is pleased when you tell Him how you are feeling.

3. Take a short Bible text, e.g. Psalm 23:1: The LORD is my shepherd.

The EPA Principle

Read the Bible text three times, slowly, aloud or silently:

- 1) **E**xplore (observation)
- 2) **P**erceive (understand; interpretation)
- 3) **A**pply (application)

EXPLORE:

What do I notice in the text? What does the passage say? What are key words or important ideas? Is there a commandment or a promise? What facts, information and emotions are noticeable in the text?

PERCEIVE (UNDERSTAND):

What did the content mean at the time and today? What is Jesus trying to tell me? You might like to look up Bible lexicons. Read parallel passages. Compare your Bible version with other Bible translations. Consider the overall message of the book or letter.

APPLY:

What does the content mean to me personally? Is there a promise I can claim? A statement I can give thanks for? Are there any examples I should follow? Any sin (thoughts/deeds) that needs to be confessed? An inner attitude or way of life that I need to change?

SMS: Try to summarise the main message of the text or what has become important to you in a 160 character SMS.

A prayer of thanksgiving: Intercession for other people and situations.
Close off by telling Jesus what is on your heart and what moves you.

39 REFLECTIONS WITH A BIBLE AND PRAYER

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REFLECTION 01

BEING A STRANGER



OBSERVE

Even before you become a foreigner yourself: Consciously observe foreigners, old and young, well and less well integrated.

- How can you tell they are foreigners?
- What do they do to belong?
- What kinds of reactions do you notice among the locals?

READ

»Jesus has always been in this world, but the world that was created through Him, did not recognise Him. He came into his own, however, his own people did not want to know about Him. Still, to all who received Him into their lives, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. ... So Jesus, the Word, became man and lived right among us.«

John 1:10-14

»When the Son of Man came into this world, he ate and drank as all men do.«

Luke 7:34

»Jesus said: "In the world, the rulers have their say over their peoples, and the powerful are glad to be described as "charitable". With you that should be different. On the contrary, let the greatest among you put himself on the same level with the least, and let the leader be like a servant. Who then has a higher position: the one who sits at the table or the one who serves him? Of course, it's the one at the table! But I am among you as a servant.«

Luke 22:25-37

THINK

- What did Jesus do to adapt to the culture (visible world) he came into?
- Yet he was still different. In what way?
- What exactly led to his rejection?

PRAY

- What do local people need in order to live in harmony with one another?
- What do foreigners need?

PRAYER

"Father in heaven, thank you for allowing me to live here in this culture that is so different from my own. Thank you for these wonderful people here. Help me to empathise with them. Show me how to give them what is good for them and what they need. Thank you, Jesus for coming to earth yourself and becoming one of us."

A M E N

SAFETY



SOME IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS COMPILED BY A FORMER VO- LUNTEER:

- What's important when you're not feeling safe is that you take that feeling seriously, even if there may be no obvious reason.
- Many people tend to be polite at all times, never cancelling anything even in unpleasant situations. Be aware that you can and should also say no when you feel uncomfortable.
- Never meet up with individuals you do not know very well. Impressions of them like 'He/she looks quite nice' can be deceptive. Better to look for public places to meet and take a friend with you, if necessary.
- If you sense someone might be following you, look for the nearest public space and ask for help, for example, shopkeepers or other people on the street. Call up your team or agency and describe the situation.
- Be sure to talk to a trusted person if a situation seems strange and you feel uncomfortable; the same applies when you notice someone else feeling uncomfortable and distressed by some other person.
- In case of theft: Allow the thief to run away. If you try to hold on to your belongings, the situation could end up quite dangerous for you, for example, if the thief gets rough and threatens you. Remember: Things may be replaced, but not you!

- Avoid protests and large crowd of people.

- Find out about the security situation in the country you are visiting, for example, on the website of the German Foreign Office. Don't forget to sign up for the crisis prevention list and the newsletter according to the country of your choice.
→ The better you are informed, the safer you will feel.

Safety is one of our basic needs. According to Maslow's pyramid of needs, safety is second only to food and sleep. We want to feel safe. Perhaps safety in the country of assignment was one of the reasons why you chose an organisation that will accompany you during your assignment and answer your questions. During your placement you may find yourself in situations where you either feel unsafe or you actually are unsafe. For example, you may be harassed, robbed in the street, pickpocketed or there may be (violent) protests in the country you selected. To prevent you from getting into such situations in the first place, your team or organisation has set up some guidelines for your protection that you should follow. For your own safety it makes sense, even though you might not like to hear it now, to follow the guidelines of your mission office. The locals have gained a lot of experience over the years and simply want you to feel safe, too.

GIVING UP YOUR FREEDOM TO GAIN SAFETY INSTEAD

Sometimes it can be quite frustrating to give up your freedom in favour of safety. You've finally finished school or training, you are in a new place, full of curiosity and with great expectations of what you are going to experience. Then comes the disillusion: the guidelines of the site assigned to you. You are not allowed to go out alone at night. You always need to sign out if you want to go somewhere, and you have to be home at certain times, etc... This is probably not how you imagined your life over there. "And what about my freedom?", you may ask yourself.

OBSERVE

- What does freedom mean to you? How would you define freedom in general?
- How important is freedom to you (if highly important, why?)?
- What is worth giving up freedom for (e.g. a mother gives up a lot of freedom so that her child is well)?
- What guidelines do you receive from your mission office? What particularly annoys you about the safety guidelines of your mission office? Why? Can you think of reasons why those guidelines might be useful?



»Only through Jesus Christ have we become truly free. Fight now not to lose this freedom again! You no longer need to be under the thumb of the laws.«

Gal 5:1

»Dear folks, God's plan is for each of you to have total freedom! Yet you should not abuse this freedom by giving yourselves over to corrosive things. It would be better if you used it to love and respect each other.«

Gal 5:13

THINK

- Gal 5 deals with our freedom. We are totally free! But what does Christian freedom really mean? Freedom from what? Freedom as...?
- How do you interpret a statement like this: "Christian freedom is expressed in self-discipline and servant love"?
- Where should I possibly give up my freedom for the sake of a higher cause, e.g. to experience safety or to honour God?
- How can I preserve an inner freedom when I give up my outer freedom?
- What do you do when you realise you are in an unsafe situation?

PRAY

Prayer: "Thank you, Heavenly Father, that I may be your child, beloved and cherished by you.

Thank you, Father, that I am free and may live freely. Thank you for granting me the freedom to renounce sometimes in order to serve others and yourself."

DISCUSS

Is there a person in your team who has been in your host country for a long time? Or perhaps a local who could give you advice on how to behave in certain situations to avoid putting your foot in your mouth, or to get out of such situations in an acceptable way? Is there someone in your team with whom you can talk about the

guidelines and your feelings concerning them, and then pray together?

PRAYER

"Lord, thank you for being my safety. I pray for your protection in all dangerous situations. Give me wisdom to behave responsibly. Show me where it is helpful to give up some of my freedom for the sake of a higher purpose. Thank you for always being there, morning and evening, day and night, 24/7. You are my protective umbrella and my fortress, with you I am safe. How wonderful!"

A M E N



FEAR

FEAR

FEAR

FEAR

FEAR

REFLECTION 03

OBSERVE

- What in the mission field scares you? Which situations generate fear in you? When do you feel unsafe? What specific situations have you already experienced?
- What do you do when you are afraid?
- When is fear a good thing, when does it become a problem?
- How do locals behave in unsafe situations that can prompt fear? What do they avoid at any cost? Where are you more at risk as a foreigner (e.g. how do local women behave towards harassment?)?

READ

Isa 41:10

Isa 50:9

Ps 112:7

Jn 14:27

(Ps 94:18–19; Isa 40:11)

THINK

- What are the promises and pledges of God in these passages of the Bible? Can we rely on them?
- What might be meant by the peace that Jesus wants to give you? What distinguishes this peace from the peace of the world?
- Think about how you would like to act in fearful situations in the future and how you can overcome the fearful situation with the help of Jesus.

PRAYER

- Bring your thoughts, weaknesses and fears to God, trusting Him to guide and keep you.
- Thank Him for His promise to always be with you.
- Often fears do not immediately disappear when we pray about them. However, we can trust that our God is greater than our worries and fears as we fix our spiritual eyes on Him.

PRAYER

Based on Psalm 56:4-5: When I am afraid, I trust in you, God. It is In you, God, and your word that I trust in. I trust and am not afraid: Can men do any harmful thing to me?

»The LORD is my good shepherd, I miss nothing: He takes me to lush green fields and leads me to water that is always fresh. He gives me new strength again. And because his name stands for it, He always guides me along the right path. Even on the way through the darkest possible valley, I am not afraid, for you are by my side. Your staff of defence and your shepherd's crook, they offer me comfort and encourage me. Before the eyes of my enemies you provide a table for me, you receive me with a warm heart, pouring me a full cup. Only goodness and love will follow me every day, and I will return to the house of the LORD forever.«

Psalm 23

DISCUSS

Talk to a person you trust about your fears. It is good to be open and sincere about them and to bring them before the Lord together. You might also explore together what you could practically do to counteract your fears.

GO DEEPER

Listen to the song 'Our God Is Greater':



PROTECTION

OBSERVE

- What do we (what do you) do to protect ourselves? Is it enough?
- What options do people in your host culture have to protect themselves? Are they different from your home country?
- What does safety mean in your host country or host culture? What do people hold on to? What anchors of security and stability do people have in your host country? Where do these differ from the certainties in your home country?
- Collect stories from your environment where people have experienced God's protection and safe-keeping.

READ

Ps 91:1–6

(Actually, it is worth reading the whole Psalm.)

If you want to dig deeper into the topic:

Jn 10:29

Ps 121

Isa 43:2

Ps 46:2–3

2 Sam 22:2–4

2 Cor 4:8–9

THINK

- Psalm 91 contains many metaphors or figurative words. What metaphors are used to describe the dangers and what do they mean in 'plain language'?
- What metaphors are used to describe God's protection? What aspects of God's protection are expressed?
- What promises can you take away for yourself from the texts given?
- And if something happens: Has God abandoned you? Does God not keep His promises?
- Something that helps our faith to grow is to be aware of where we have experienced God's intervention in our lives. For example, God wants His people to remember again and again how He delivered them from Egypt. Where has God preserved and protected you?

PRAY

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please protect me and my team in all dangerous situations. Thank you for the preservation and protection that I experience daily in my life.

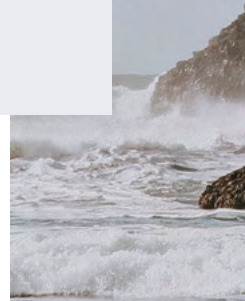
DISCUSS

If you wish, tell your team or someone where God has protected

you, where you can feel His protection very concretely. In this way you will not only encourage yourself, but you can also be a testimony and encouragement to others!

GO DEEPER

If you like, you can write out the Bible verses with God's promises or represent individual verses visually, for example, on your cupboard, a personal wall or on a mirror. In this way you will be constantly reminded of and encouraged by the promises that God has for you. Why not write down what you have experienced with God and let it encourage you again and again.





COMFORT ZONE OR GIVING UP CERTAINTIES?

Comfort zone is where we feel comfortable and safe. This includes our familiar surroundings, our friends and family, a safe place to live, thinking and acting in familiar ways, etc. An assignment in a different culture, a call to a different and new place bring changes with them. You leave a familiar environment where you usually know how things work. Suddenly you are asked to do things you have never done before and which may cause you real fear and anxiety. Here are some examples: Suddenly you're supposed to tell an encouraging Bible story to a group of children, or lead the music group even though you've never done such a thing and have always been a silent observer. Or you are supposed to find your way in a new area or negotiate with traders in the market. You may leave your comfort zone also spiritually but: You get a chance to experience God anew and to mature as a person.

OBSERVE

- What is your comfort zone? Where and when have you ever given up on certainties and dared to step out of your comfort zone? How did that make you feel? (What certainties have you just given up? How does that make you feel?).
- Who comes to mind as people who have given up their certainties and comfort zone?

READ

There are many examples in the Bible of people who have left their home. Choose one person or group and let their story challenge you:

- Abraham, Gen 12:1
- Moses, Ex 2 and 3
- The Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt: Ex 14:15–31
- Queen Esther: Est 4:10–17
- Peter: Mt 14:22–33 or Acts 10:1–48
- Paul: Acts 9:1–31 (and Acts from chapter 13 onwards)

THINK

- What was the comfort zone of each biblical person?
- Why does this person leave his or her home? What part does God play in this?
- And what (positive/difficult) experiences does the person have when they leave their comfort zone?
- What would have happened if this person had not left their comfort zone?
- Where do you feel that God wants you to leave your comfort zone? Where should you walk on water? Where should you step into the unknown?
- Is it possible that you are secretly passionate about certain areas, but your fear is too overwhelming for you to do anything about it so you stay in your comfort zone?
- What could help you leave your comfort zone?
- Important: A comfort zone is not the same as the safety guidelines of your place of work! In any case, please follow the instructions of your organisation.

PRAY

- Ask for courage to leave your comfort zone. Ask God to show you where he wants to walk on the water with you.
- Give him your fears and doubts about not being good enough for a certain thing. And ask Him to believe you where you cannot believe. Thank him for His promise to be with you, to guide you and never let you down.
- Ask God to increase your trust in His promise to be with us and to grant us security.

PRAYER

“Lord, you are my security. You are powerful and good, greater and stronger than my fears and doubts. Please give me the courage to take steps in trusting you, even steps that are difficult for me. Together with you I can accept the challenge, Jesus. Thank you for helping me.”

A M E N

GO DEEPER

Read biographies of people who God called out of their comfort zone: e.g. **Wilberforce**, **Corrie ten Boom**, **Yassir Eric**, even though they are famous today, they used to be very simple, ordinary people.



Listen to worship songs like ‘**Oceans**’ and ‘**Egypt**’ (by Bethel Music):



CONFUSED, SURPRISED AND AMAZED

REFLECTION 06

WHY?

I've been waiting now for an hour and the church service still hasn't begun or the bus still has not left. But the timetable stated the bus was leaving at 10.00 h. Why do they simply throw their rubbish on the street? Why am I not allowed to wear short trousers in this heat? How can a leader (or a person) behave the way they do?

When dealing with people from other cultures, we are often confronted with situations we find difficult to categorise or understand. In English we would say: "I am puzzled". In other cultures, we feel like faced with a jigsaw puzzle in which some pieces do not fit, others confuse us and where we cannot (yet) put things in an order.

Many behaviours that seem strange to us have to do with underlying values, norms or attitudes to life that may be quite different from yours. Every culture and every person has very individual values by which they shape their lives. Values are what is most important to us. Norms develop from values. An example: hospitality is a value. It gives rise to the norm "If someone is standing at your door, invite them in, even if you don't actually have time."

OBSERVE

- Which values are particularly important to you (or in your home country's culture)?
- What incomprehensible situations or behaviour do you encounter in your host culture or with your team colleagues? What gets on your nerves the most? Why?
- What values and norms lie behind the frequently incomprehensible behaviour you mentioned above?
- What values are most important to the people in your host culture? How does this show in everyday life?



culture and its values?

- Which values are central to us and cannot be renounced? Which values can we and should we be generous with?
- How can you interact with people whose values are so different from yours?

PRAY

Prayers:

“Lord Jesus, help me to consider that what matters to you also matters to me. You live inside of me! Please become ever more visible in me and through me to the people around me.”

“Lord, in view of the cultural differences between here and home, please give me a generous, patient heart that is eager to learn.”

“O God, help me to see the good not only in my host culture but also in my own culture. Help me to understand that there is no better or worse between these two cultures; they are merely different.”

GO DEEPER

What are values? What values do we know? Why not google the following keywords: ‘list of values’ or ‘values’, ‘norms’, ‘cultural value’. You might find this site helpful:

www.ikud.de/glossar/werte-und-kultur-definition-werte-normen.html

READ

- Jesus’ values: e.g. Mt 5; Lk 6
- Acts 15 (Should non-Jewish believers be circumcised?)
- Daniel 1 and 3

THINK

- What values are important to Jesus? Where did these values put Him at odds with the religious leaders of His time?
- What values did the scribes in Jerusalem have in contrast to Paul and the apostles? What values of the different cultures did they accept as they are?
- What values did Daniel and his friends not compromise on? Where did they get involved with the foreign

General cultural value differences:

- **Six cultural dimensions** by Geert Hofstede. On Google, you can also link ‘Hofstede’ to a country and find out how that country is assessed.



- Fons Trompenaar: **Seven cultural dimensions**



FEELING FRUSTRATED: BEING LONELY

SCALE OF LONELINESS

On a scale of 1 to 5, what applies to you?

1 not at all, **2** seldom, **3** sometimes, **4** frequently, **5** definitely

1	2	3	4	5	"I miss people who make me feel comfortable."
1	2	3	4	5	"There is no one locally I can discuss problems with."
1	2	3	4	5	"I feel left alone."
1	2	3	4	5	"I have no one around here I can rely on."
1	2	3	4	5	"I feel like I don't belong."
1	2	3	4	5	"At the moment, I have no one around here I feel an inner connection with."

The higher you score, the more lonely you probably feel

Loneliness can hit anyone: In a country like Germany, for example, about 10% of people of all age groups feel lonely. Among young people, loneliness is often triggered by major changes, such as moving to a new city to study. A foreign assignment may also make you feel lonely, perhaps for the first time in your life. You may not be able to communicate with many people, and your family and friends are far away. You may have to renounce some of your regular activities, and so on.

OBSERVE

- How does it emotionally affect you when you feel lonely?
- What do you do to escape loneliness? Are those strategies helpful or 'numbing agents'?
- If people in your host culture feel lonely, what could be the reason? How can you know?

READ

Loneliness:

You are in the best of company

1Ki 19:3-14; Ps 22:2-3; Mk 8:27-34; Mt 26:36-56

So all of the disciples left him behind and fled...

Mt 27:46: "Later that day, at about three o'clock, Jesus cried aloud, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" This translates as, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

THINK

- Why is Jesus a good person to talk to about loneliness?
- How did Jesus deal with loneliness?
- Loneliness and being alone are not the same thing: In English, the difference becomes clearer with words like loneliness and aloneness. Loneliness is painful, but being alone can be viewed as positive. Periods without people around may be blessed times (Luke 5:16). How can you embrace loneliness for profitable solitude?
- Who can I confide in besides Jesus?
- What steps could I take to get more in touch with people in my host culture?

PRAY

- You may lament before God about your loneliness, just as the Psalmists did (Ps 25): Maybe you write your own 'Psalm of lamentations' in which you pour out your heart to God. Why not describe your situation to Him, inviting Him to not only share your loneliness but to change it, too.
- Pray for surprising encounters and conversations: Lord Jesus,

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, please open my eyes to the people around me. Let me see and give me opportunities to serve them with your love and attention today.



REFLECTION 08

BEING FRUSTRATED: THE DAILY MADNESS

OBSERVE

Life in your country of assignment is often marked by many daily challenges that can easily push you to your limits: e.g. the climate, dangerous or annoying animals, chickens still alive when you go shopping, traffic chaos, your team, different concepts of time, power failure, no water again, etc.

- What special challenges does your everyday life in your host country hold for you?
- How do the locals deal with these challenges?
- How do these challenges affect you? How do you react to them?

READ

- 1 Th 5:16-18: "Just be always in a good mood! Simply don't stop talking to God! And don't forget to thank him for everything! That's what He wants from us." (VOLX Bible translation)
- Mt 6, 25-35 or Lk 12, 22-30

THINK

- The VOLX Bible translation states: 1Th 5,16 "Always be happy!" with "Just always be in a good mood!" Is that realistic in the midst of daily madness? Where did Paul, as the writer of these verses, derive such confidence from?

- How may I face my challenges with (more) serenity? What strategies could help me deal with them?
- Where is my safe haven? Where do I easiest come to rest? With a person? With Jesus? When I hear a certain song? How can I feel at peace again in that place and, from there, calmly face one challenge after another?
- Living in dependence on God: The Bible knows that everyday life can be challenging. Mt 6:34: "The many troubles of today are enough for this day!" What perspective does Jesus show us in the Sermon on the Mount?

PRAY

- Prayer: LORD, please come into my confusion and speak your "Be still and be silent!" so that I might find peace.
- Prayer: LORD, give me strength for this day. Lord, I ask only for this one day!
- Martin Luther is credited with the following quote: "I have much to do today, therefore I must pray much today." What challenges do you want to ask God's help for today?

BE GRATEFUL FOR ALL THING!

TIP: Keep a "Diary of Gratefulness": Note down every day, ideally first thing in the morning, what you are grateful for today.

IF YOU BELIEVE IN GOD YOURSELF:

EXPERIENCING GOD

OBSERVE

- Are there moments in my mission where I experience GOD?
- Have I ever talked – that is, prayed – to God during my mission?
- With whom could I talk about questions of faith?
- Who is God or Jesus for me? What significance does He have in my life?

READ

Jesus: The Gospel of John, chapter 3:1–21

THINK

- What might Nicodemus have reported at home about his experience with Jesus? What areas of his faith were challenged? How does Jesus reveal his weaknesses to him, and how does He build him up?
- In what areas do I live out my faith or my relationship with God, and where would I like to do so?

PRAY

- What experiences, moments of protection and biblical promises

of God can I thank God for today?

Prayer: Thank you, God, for ..., ..., ...

- Share with God what you appreciate about your relationship with Him. Prayer: Father in heaven, I think it's just cool that you ...
- Where do I need God's encouragement today? Talk to him about difficult situations as well as your questions and doubts. Prayer: Lord

Jesus, I need you today especially at ..., ..., ...

GO DEEPER

Your relationship with God is cultivated by reading His Word, listening to what He says and praying. Here is a simple way to bring God's Word to life for you:

THE 5-FINGER EPA METHOD

Choose a Bible text (e.g., Psalm 23) and engage in conversation with God about it

Thumb: **E**xplore

What does it say? Read the Bible with curiosity: who, what, where, how, when, why ...

Pointing finger: **P**erceive

What did the text mean at that time? How did the first listeners/readers understand it?

Middle finger: **A**pply

What does it mean to me? Family, work, leisure, community, ...

Ring finger: **P**romises

What does God promise me? On which promises of God can I rely on / give him thanks?

Little finger: **E**xperiencing

Where do I want to experience God in my own life and can ask him for it or do something concrete for it?



RELIGION AND FAITH IN PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY LIFE

OBSERVE

- In everyday life, what role does religion play for my new friends?
- What does a 'private' life of faith look like?
- In your host culture, what values, rituals, superstitions and taboos shape everyday life? What do my new friends think and feel when practising their faith? What does it mean to them? What values do they associate with it? Why do they practice certain things? What are they hoping for? (Tip: Ask questions, do not speculate).

READ

Acts 2:42–47

1 Pet 3:8–17

THINK

- Do we as today's Christians live like the first Christians in the Bible

text? If we do or don't do so, why might that be the reason?

- How is my life with God different from that of my friends? Where can you see parallels?
- How do I feel when I see my new friends practicing their faith?
- What lifestyle would my non-Christian friends appreciate more?
- Where might I "take a leaf out of my non-Christian friends' book"? What can I learn from them?

• What elements of their faith or what needs can I address in conversation and explain my faith to them?

- How or where can your friends' questioning of your faith strengthen your own faith or inspire you to "dig deeper" into it?

PRAY

- Where do I want God to touch and change me?

Prayer: Father in heaven, please meet with me and change me, especially in this area of my life:

- Who do I want to pray to God for? Prayer: Lord Jesus, I pray for ... Help ... to know your love and to be richly blessed by you. And if I may be your instrument toward this end, let me be a joyful one.

GO DEEPER

- What else can and do I want to know about my new friends' religion and faith? Make a list of questions you want to ask your new friends about their religion and ask them in an interested way.
- How and what can you tell or share about your faith that is important to you?
- Book tip: David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*.



READ

Gospel of John, chapter 4

OBSERVE

- What does the place of worship (temple, mosque, shrine, church, sanctuary) of my host culture look like? What external elements does it have? What do they signify? What is the interior of the place of worship like? What is the central element?
- How does a 'service' conducted in the mosque, temple, shrine or church of my new friends present itself? What rituals are there?
- How often and on what occasions do people visit the place of worship?
- Which aspects of religious experience and practice are recognisable, strange, attractive or repulsive to me?

THINK

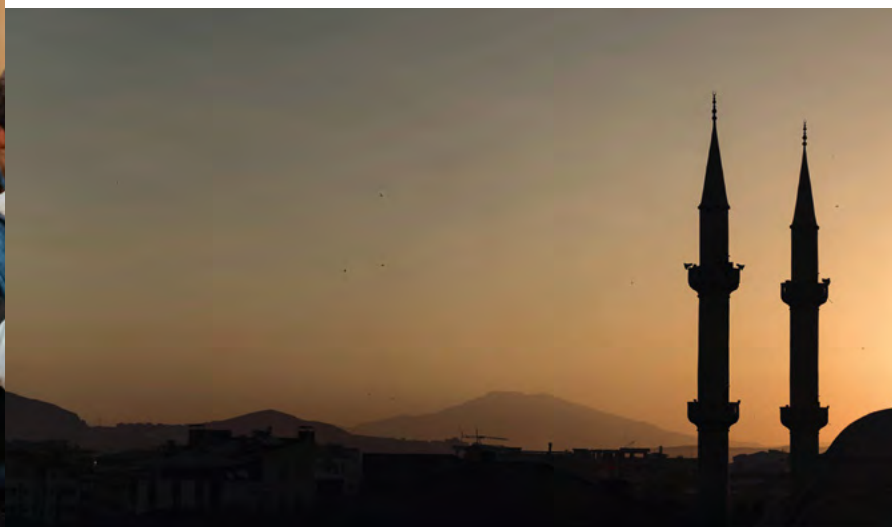
- Jesus abroad: How does Jesus meet the Samaritan woman? How does Jesus deal with differences in faith and relationships? What tensions arise?
- What is the nature of a 'biblical' service?
- Which elements of a church service are universal, which are cultural or individual?

PRAY

Prayer: "Father in heaven, please grant me your wisdom and make me sensitive to living together with people of other religions and beliefs. Please give us good opportunities to share with each other about matters of faith."

GO DEEPER

What might a culturally appropriate Christian church service look like in my host culture?



RELIGION AND CHURCH SERVICE

PRAY PSALM 117 (VOLX BIBLE TRANSLATION):

»All, just everyone, is to praise
God forever, even those who don't
care about God should try it.
It's not to be postponed. Why?
Because He speaks the truth!
And because He rises lovingly above
all times. Thank you, God, you are
magnificent, great, phenomenal, not
to be measured by any earthly thing.«

**EVERYONE
SHALL
PRAISE
G O D**

In all cultures and countries people like to celebrate. Celebrations may differ, e. g. they may be of a personal nature (life transition celebrations), or festivities with a religious background, or national bank holidays. Let yourself be invited and celebrate with everyone! It is a special right to celebrate and be merry with local people.

OBSERVE

- What (religious) festivals are celebrated in your host culture? What are the most important and central ones?
- What are the customs and rituals? How long does the festival last? Where does it take place? What type of food is enjoyed? Are there any presents?
- Find out: Are there any religious or historical stories on which the celebration is based? How do locals tell these stories?
- Are there differences in celebration styles between your own culture and the host culture? If so, what exactly are they?

READ

- Feasts in the Old Testament: Ex 23:14-19; Lev 23-25; Num 28-29, Deut 15-16
- Feasts in the New Testament: Jn 2:1-11; Lk 23:7-20; Ac 2:11 ff; Eph 5:25

THINK

- What are the roles and functions of feasts in the Bible? Why did God ordain feasts?
- What are the themes in the festivals of your host culture that may also indicate people's longing for God's grace and blessing?
- How do Christians in your host culture behave towards the festivals of other religions (rejecting, accepting, syncretistic, mixing re-

ligions)?

- In some cultures certain treats at feasts are first offered to the gods and then given to all friends. This raises the question for some: Should I accept and eat this food? This problem also existed in the early church. Read what Paul has to say about it (1 Cor 8).

PRAY

- Prayer: Lord, many religious festivals here are new to me. I do not know them. Please give me good contacts with local people through the festivals here.
- Prayer: Oh Lord Jesus, I would be so happy if you could satisfy the longings of the people here who don't know you yet!

Pray with Psalm 150
(VOLX Bible translation):

THANK YOU, GOD

»Thank you, GOD, you are the greatest! Tell Him so in the temple! He has the power, God can do everything, He is the master in heaven. 2 Thank him because He has done incredible things. He can do anything, nothing is impossible, He has the power. 3 Say 'thank you' with a jagged up guitar and amplifier, even harder with an electric bass and loud sound distortion. 4 Make music for him with the fattest drum machine. Pogo and breakdance with loud bass solo please him. 5 Hit the cymbals, make the hi-hat vibrate. 6 Everything that breathes should honour God with a loud voice. Thank you, God, yes, you are always there as the great boss, you are gigantically good, one shouts "Hallelujah". «

GO DEEPER

- The Chinese graphic designer Yang Liu (who has lived in Germany since 1990) graphically depicted cultural differences with witty spade programmes. Just google: **East meets West Party.**
- Which major religious festivals (e.g. Ramadan in Islam) do people in your neighbourhood celebrate?
- Christians also celebrate festivals: How can we design Christian festivals in the new culture so that they fit in culturally without changing the emphasis on content? Who could you invite to Christmas or Easter?



RELIGIOUS CELEBRA TIONS

REFLECTION 12

THE HINDUISTIC DIWALI FESTIVAL IN INDIA

The Diwali festival in October-November is a beautiful festival of lights in South Asia. Everywhere people decorate their houses with oil lamps and fairy lights. Fireworks are set off for two nights. Diwali represents the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. One reason for the many lights is that people believe that Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of fortune, rides on an owl through the world on Diwali nights and that she is naturally inclined to enter a house that is brightly lit to bless the family rather than a house that is dimly lit or shrouded in darkness.

OBSERVE

In the understanding of your host culture (and the local religion):

- What comes after death?
- Is there a vision of 'heaven' and what does that vision look like?
- What should the path of life look like for life to end well? What do you have to do or believe?
- How do the people you work with understand salvation or redemption? Is it even important to them?

READ

Salvation:

Letter to the Romans, chapters 3 - 5

See also:

Gal 1:3-4

Gal 2:16

1 Cor 15:10

Rev 3:14-21

Heaven:

Rev 21 and 22, Rev 4 and 5

THINK

- How does the Bible describe salvation? What is the biblical way to be saved? What are central concepts and key terms?
- What happens in salvation according to the Bible? Tell the story in such a way that it can be understood by the people of your host culture.
- What characterises heaven in the Bible?
- What is the fundamental difference between the biblical concept of heaven and that of my (non-Christian) environment where I am right now?

PRAY

- Prayer: Father in heaven, give me courage to ask people here about their faith.
- Prayer: Lord Jesus, let me meet people who would like to talk to me about their faith and explain it to me.
- Prayer: O Holy Spirit, let me be able to explain well how I believe in you when I am asked.

GO DEEPER

How do I need to change (contextualise) my statements of faith so that people in my host culture can understand them?



REFLECTION 13

WHAT DOES HEAVEN LOOK LIKE IN OTHER RELIGIONS?

RELATIONSHIPS: FAMILY STRUCTURE

OBSERVE

- What is the family structure in your own culture? What are the main relationships? Are there any rights and duties?
- What is the family in your host culture like: extended family, patchwork, single parent, nuclear family, etc.? Who belongs to the entire family? Who also shares the apartment? How big is the apartment or house?
- How does the family interact in your host culture: parents with children (and vice versa), grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc.? How do your friends in the host country interact within their families (observe, ask your friend if necessary)?
- What is familiar to you? What surprises you?

READ

The story of Jacob and his sons: Gen, chapters 27–35; Gen 1:27–28; Gen 2:18–24

Rom 12:1–2; Rom 12:9–18, Gal 5:13–26; Gal 6:1–2; Eph 6:1–3; Prov 22:6

THINK

- What went wrong in Jacob's family?

- What understanding of family and roles do we find in the Bible? How does this differ from your home culture and your host culture?
- What is family good for? What makes family life successful?
- What can you learn from your host culture about a happy family life?

PRAY

- Prayer: Thank you, God. It's so cool that I can have a family. Thank you, for my ... (family, parents, brothers and sisters or whoever else belongs to your family).

- Prayer: Father in heaven, this concept of a family you have really thought out so well. Each of us is so different, yet we also complement each other. That's the great thing. But it's not always easy. Give peace to my family and the families here. Grant that we may not only get into each other's heads but that we may also be reconciled. And grant that you'll hold us together. Be our centre point because only then will it work. Amen.

- Bring specific families from your host culture to God in prayer, together with their individual needs and prayer requests.



RELATIONSHIPS: MAN & WOMAN

OBSERVE

- Watch how men and women in your host culture interact with each other in public.
- Observe married couples (couples in general) in your host culture. How do they interact? What about being intimate in public (e.g. kissing or holding hands)?
- What are the differences between the roles of men and women in your host culture? Who goes shopping? Who takes decisions? What rights or duties do men or women have?

READ

Gen 1:27–28

Gen 2:18–24

Eph 5, 25–33

Prov 31:10–31

Gal 3:28

THINK

- Why did God create man and woman differently? What was God's purpose in doing so?
- The relationship man-woman is a very emotional topic: On the one hand we see patriarchy and on the other women's quota, emancipation and feminism. How does God

see the relationship between man and woman? (See also recommended books on the topic of womanhood.)

PRAY

Pray for marriages where you notice tensions. Ask God for His protection of Christian marriages.

Prayer: "O Father in heaven: Someday I may want to get married. Who is the right person for me? You can give me guidance in this regard and I am asking you to do that. In addition, however, I'm asking you to prepare me for marriage. I want to be a good spouse for my future partner. Please help me to be just that, Father in heaven. You know what it takes to make a good marriage. I thank you for that now."

A M E N





REFLECTION 16

RELATIONSHIPS: SEARCH FOR A PARTNER AND GETTING MARRIED

OBSERVE

- Let your new friends tell you how to date and get married in their culture, and if you get the chance, let them invite you to a wedding!
- How do couples find each other? What role do their families play in this? Who gets to be married?
- How is a wedding celebrated? Is there a dowry? Who is invited? What are the customs?
- What changes for the new wife after the wedding? Where does the couple live? What are the expectations of the young woman? What are the expectations of the man?
- What differences do you notice between your view and perception of marriage and partnership and that which you discover in your host culture? What is the focus in each case?

READ

Eph 5:21–33

(Eph 5:25: “Hey guys, love your wives in the same way Jesus did, as the bridegroom who loved his church and even gave up his life for her.”)

Phil 2:1–8; 1 Cor 13:4–7

THINK

- What are key biblical points about partnership and marriage?
- What is ‘love’ anyway? How is love expressed in marriage?
- What new positive aspects of marriage do you learn in your host culture?

PRAY

Prayer: “Lord Jesus, blessed marriages are so beautiful. When husband and wife love and complement each other, when they do good to each other: It’s like heaven on earth. That’s exactly what you, Father in heaven, wanted at creation. But things often don’t go as smoothly as we think. Please, Lord, help Christians in this country to have solid Christian marriages. Preserve those marriages, bless them and build them up. Help marriage partners to love and accept each other and, as a result, may they radiate your love to those around them.”

A M E N

GO DEEPER

- David Brooks (Feb. 23, 2016). ‘**Three views on marriage.**’ (Paid article) www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/opinion/three-views-of-marriage.html?smid=url-share
- Jörg Berger: ‘**Den Partner fürs Leben finden – Beziehungsfähig werden und klug wählen**’, Francke Publishing, 2016
- Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller (2011). **The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the complexities of commitment with the Wisdom of God.** London/UK: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Über den Kern von Liebe, YouTube: **True Love. Christi Commission Fellowship 2021**



OBSERVE

- Are there rules of behaviour between younger and older people in your own culture (e.g. use of first name or family name)?
- Notice how younger people interact with older people in your host culture. Are there differences with your own culture?
- Ask someone from your host culture or your supervisor about the status and importance of older people in your host culture. Are they respected, cared for or seen as a burden?
- How many generations live together in one house?
- How does the coexistence between the generations work in the host community?

READ

Ruth 4

Ex 20:12

Prov 23:22

Ps 119:9–16

Prov 2:1–15

Eph 6:1–3

1 Tim 5:1–2

THINK

- What roles do the elders in the community of Ruth and Boas have? In Old Testament times, what was the established basis for becoming an elder?
- Why does the Bible exhort us to honour older and old people in our families?
- As a young person, how can I lead a God-pleasing life? In what way does that benefit my life?
- Who are role models for me to follow and what am I learning from them?

BETEN

Prayer: “O God, have mercy and grant your help and blessing.

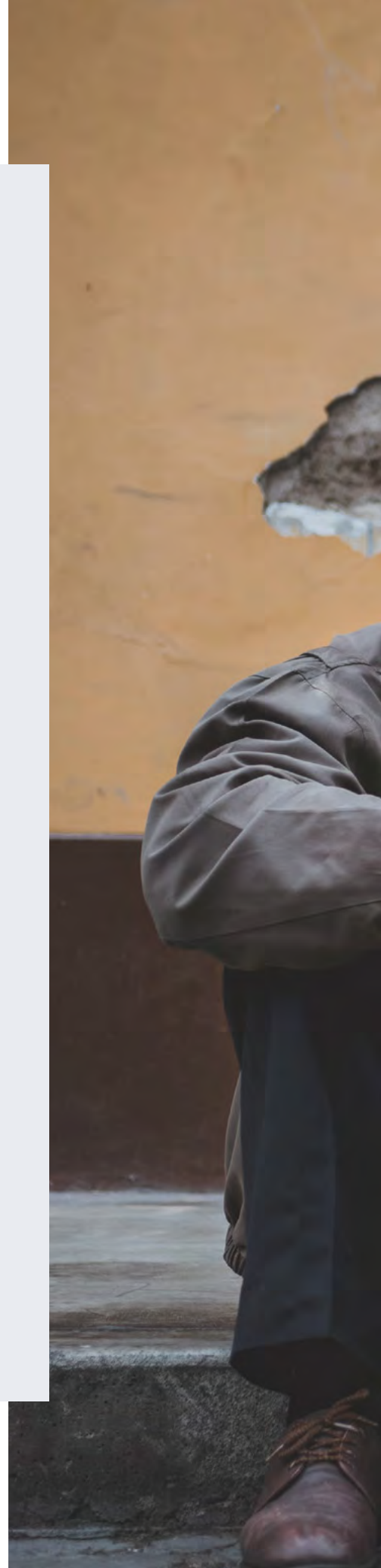
... for a good cooperation between the generations in society and in the churches and congregations.

... for the elderly in my environment who are sick and lonely, for them to be noticed and visited and cared for.

... for children and young people to be loved, to have good role models and to have opportunities for development.

... the mid-agers, for them to find work and income while also having and taking the time for each other and for other people.

.... (your prayers)”



RELATIONSHIPS: THE OLD & THE YOUNG



WOMEN IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

REFLECTION 18



OBSERVE

- What are the roles and status of women in the public sphere? How do you feel about this? What might you consider strange?
- What are the positions, roles and responsibilities of women in the home and household?
- What social rules apply to women?
- Women in the local Christian community or church: What is their role there? Does the church community reflect the indigenous culture or are there differences?

READ

Encounters between Jesus and women:

e.g. the woman at Jacob's well:

Jn 4

The woman who anointed Jesus' hair:

Lk 7:36-50

Mary and Martha:

Lk 10:38-42

The bleeding woman:

Mt 9:20-22 etc.

(Pick one incident, but feel free to look at all of them)

THINK

- How does Jesus meet with those women?
- In what way does Jesus give those women new freedom? (See also Gal 3:28)
- What are important issues that women in your host culture face at a very basic level?
- What would Jesus say to women in your host culture?
- What aspects of the Gospel might be of particular interest to these women?

PRAY

Prayer: "Jesus, you had courage on earth to say everything that mattered to you. And, Jesus, the first witnesses of your resurrection were women. And how courageously did they tell others about you when they met you, resurrected and alive from the grave. Please grant that women of the churches in this country also share your liberating love so courageously!"

Prayer: "O Father in heaven, have mercy on these women who live here in sometimes unbelievably difficult circumstances. Help them! Protect them! Help that something new will happen in society. Please help these women to be respected and honoured! Thank you that you can bring that about. You are gracious and love all women so much."

A M E N

GO DEEPER

• Smith, Lynn and Kern, Ingrid (2005): **Ohne Unterschied? Frauen und Männer im Dienst für Gott.** 2nd edition, Giessen: Brunnen Publishing

• Peppiatt, Lucy (2018). **Unveiling Paul's Women: Making Sense of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.** Eugene or: Cascade Books. (Also available for Kindle)



THE FEMALE VOLUNTEER: YOUR POSITION AS A WOMAN

OBSERVE

- How are you personally doing as a woman in your host country? (This section is especially for women working in non-Western countries).
- How do the locals see you? Where do they place you in society?
- What are your personal challenges as a woman in your host country?
- What kind of church community background and social influences do you bring along?
- Which cultural differences in the topic of women do you experience as challenging? Perhaps in your host country you have to give up some of the freedoms you are used to in your home country. What do you find most difficult?

READ

»Yes, I have learned to make do with what I have. While I am able to live in poverty, I also know how to deal with having a lot. I am familiar with all kinds of situations and I know what it feels like to have a full stomach or to go hungry. From my own experience I know about lack and abundance. But through Him who makes me strong, I can cope in any situation.«

Phil 4:11–13

THINK

- Does Paul's attitude in Phil 4:11–13 also speak into your situation as a woman?

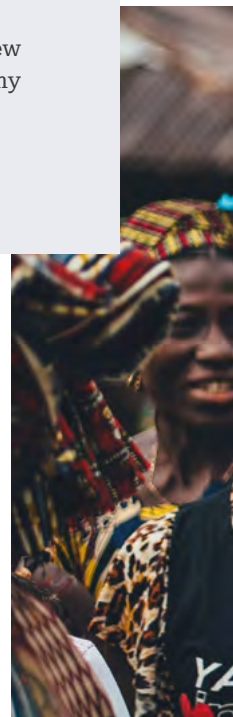
- Where do strength and motivation come from to give up certain freedoms? What motivates you to adapt to women's habits in your host country?
- What do you learn from the women in your host country?

PRAY

Prayer: "Father, please give me wisdom: I want to be sensitive and wise. I want to be and give a good witness."

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, I ask you to watch over me. Protect me in a special way from the dangers I face as a woman in this place."

Prayer: "Holy Spirit, let my new experiences here enrich me in my identity as a woman."



SINGLE WOMEN IN HOST COUNTRIES

OBSERVE

- Are there unmarried, single women in your host country? Why are they unmarried or single?
- What is the position of unmarried women in society? Are there certain rules of conduct for them?
- What are the hardships and difficulties that unmarried women (in your host country and in other countries) face?

READ

Read in the Old and New Testament:

Ruth 1–2

1 Cor 7

(compare verse 32: The unmarried woman cares for what is important to the Lord)

THINK

- In the story of Ruth and Naomi, what are the needs of these women? Where is this comparable to the situation of single women in your host country? In what ways does God care for these two single women?

- What are the advantages of being a single for the ministry? What does God promise to give you according to Isaiah 54:1-3? What do you not need to renounce?

PRAY

Prayer: “God, I pray that women (and men) who live alone may discover the blessings you have for them and may they pass them on.”

Prayer: “Father in heaven, I pray for the singles here in this country. I pray especially for in her / in his situation ... and for”



REFLECTION 21

BEING A FRIEND

Making new friends is one of the best things about your short-term placement or volunteer service!

OBSERVE

- What is friendship for you? What aspects are most important to you?
- Describe your friends in the host culture!
- How is friendship understood in your host culture? What is meant by friendship in your host culture?
- What commitments form part of a friendship in your host culture?
- Where does the locals' understanding of friendship differ from your own?

READ

»A friend shows love at all times; he is born as a brother in times of need.«

Prov 17:17

»Better to have a neighbour near than a brother who is far away.«

Prov 27:10

»Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If one of you goes to see his friend in the middle of the night and asks him, 'Please lend me

three loaves of bread. I have an unexpected visitor at my home and I have no food to offer him in the house'. And then imagine the other shouting from inside his house: 'Leave me alone! I have already locked the door and gone to bed, and my children too. I can't get up now and give you what you want.' I tell you, in the end he will give it to him, even if not because of their friendship. But simply because of his friend's impudence, he will get up and hand those loaves over to him.«

Luk 11:5-8

THINK

- What image of friendship is developed in the Bible in these two verses from the book of Proverbs? To what extent does it reflect your

host country's understanding of friendship?

- What aspects of friendship are alluded to in Jesus' parable?
- How (and for whom) can you be a good friend in your host country?
- In friendships, where is your 'comfort zone' challenged?

PRAYER

Prayer: "O GOD, please give me deep, enriching friendships here."

Prayer: "Father in heaven, I pray for wisdom in my friendships across cultural boundaries, that I/we may clarify misunderstandings in our friendships, e.g. when we have different expectations..."





BEING POOR: WHAT IS POVERTY?

In your host country you may be confronted with poverty in ways you never could imagine. Visible poverty, beggars, dirt, etc. and also spiritual, mental and social poverty that only become apparent later. Our first reaction is to help. But how? The problem is too elusive and, amazingly, the solution to poverty is not money since material poverty is merely a symptom of deeper causes. Even if we can't solve the problem, we can learn to deal with poverty. The following reflections are meant to help you.

OBSERVE

- What outward signs of poverty do you recognise?
- Can poverty be identified in facial features, posture, gestures, facial expressions?
- Can poor people laugh, sing, dance, etc.?

READ

Mt 11:5 (= Isa 61:8)

THINK

- What is 'good news' for the poor? (Jesus did not lavish money on those around Him.)
- How might Jesus' interaction with the poor have made it clear to John that Jesus is the Messiah?

BETEN

Prayer: "Please God show me how to give dignity to the poor and in what way this can be done."

God is for the poor and the weak!
Pray with Hannah (VOLX Bible translation, 1 Sam 2:1-10):

Bete mit Hanna (VOLX Bibel 1 Sam 2:1-10):

»Hanna was very happy, so she immediately began to sing a song to God: "I am very happy inside about my glorious God because he has raised me up, he has helped me in my time of need. I am so full of joy, I can laugh at my enemies, God has helped me, God can do such things. God is different, He is holy, apart from Him there's no one else you can rely on, He stands like a rock in the sea. Don't talk and don't brag, don't show off, for God knows every deed of yours, He doesn't just test you loosely. Musclemen he breaks the bones, baseball bats become soft like clay. He helps weak people up, He gives strength to the despondent. Rich people and millionaires suddenly live on state subsidies, the poor and the homeless are fat and party like animals. The woman without children suddenly gets seven babies, and the one with many children is already getting older and older. God is in charge, he decides about death and about life. And He makes poor, and He makes rich, that's just the way it is. Some He makes fall, and others he makes famous, one becomes unemployed and poor, the other gets busy. The finished, broken-down guy is brought out of trouble by God, He takes care of him, He brings him up, He makes him a celebrity. For God owns the universe, He carries the earth on his hands. And God protects who trusts in him, the enemies will end up in darkness. For no one has sufficient strength in himself, is strong enough to stand. Everyone who quarrels with God will perish. He allows the thunder, He creates lightning, all will be judged by Him. God will look for a king, and He will set His anointed on top of all the world."«

DISCUSS

Share your practical experiences with the poor: What did you experience and feel when you gave alms or when you talked to a poor person?

BEING POOR

BECOMING POOR

OBSERVE

How does poverty affect different groups of people?

In your eyes: Who is poor? What makes someone poor?

Most poor people will always have been poor. Are there also some who have become poor?

Are there any poor people you might like?

READ

Lk 15:13-17

THINK

How will the younger son have regarded his father's day labourers when he was still a son? And how did that change when he himself was poor?

A strange coincidence: When the son had no more money, a famine hit the whole country. But it didn't affect everyone equally.

How do you feel about this son? On your scale between contempt and sympathy, where do you see him?

Where on that scale are the poor people you meet? Where does the difference come from?

PRAY

Thank God for what you are and what you have, even if you were suddenly destitute.

Prayer: "O GOD, please show me what really matters in life."

A M E N

DISCUSS

Have you met a poor person whose name you know, and maybe you also know a bit of their life story? What would need to happen for them to leave their poverty behind?



STREETS BEGGARS

You are going to come across different kinds of beggars: beggars sitting on streets, with or without disabilities, with or without small children. Beggars who approach you on the street are usually different from those who come to your house. You may only see individual street beggars once. You can't get to know them and they can't get to know you, unless they sit in a place you come to again and again, in which case they are also 'regular beggars' as in no. 4.

OBSERVE

What kinds of street beggars do you see?
What kind of work do beggars do? Just begging?
Cleaning shoes ...?
How do locals deal with them?
How much do locals usually give to beggars?

READ

Ex 24:10-15

THINK

Poor people also have small possessions. What do they own in Exodus 24, and what possessions do you notice yourself?
What is the basic theme in dealing with poverty in Exodus 24?
How is the dignity of the poor upheld?
Why is there this reference to the LORD at the end of v. 15?
How do I want to deal with street beggars?

PRAY

Prayer: "Thank you, Father, for all those things you have given me, ensuring that I am well provided for.... for the education I have received ...for the good experiences I have had ...for the opportunities I have been givenfor ... for ... for ..."

Prayer: "Please God show me what I can learn from the poor."

A M E N

DISCUSS

When you see all those poor people around you, how do you view your own relative wealth and that of the people you mostly deal with?

GO DEEPER

Link to resources:

www.chalmers.org/resources/books/when-helping-hurts/



REGULAR BEGGARS



OBSERVE

Who is considered a beggar? What types of beggars do you encounter?
 How do local people deal with them?
 Are there differences in how Christians deal with them compared to others?
 Are those beggars seen as 'professional beggars', or as a 'nuisance', or perhaps as ...?
 Which beggars are more successful than others?
 Do you know the names of beggars?

READ

Lk 16:19-21

There was once a rich man who wore expensive fashion clothes and lived luxuriously every day. At the door of his house lay a poor man named Lazarus whose body was full of ulcers. Lazarus would have liked to satisfy his hunger with the scraps from the rich man's kitchen but only dogs would come by and lick his ulcers....

THINK

What is shown by the fact that the rich man has no name while the poor has a name?

How do you experience the contrast between rich and poor in your host country?

How might this story speak to the poor in your country, as it does to the rich?

PRAY

Prayer: "O GOD! I will not be able to help most of the poor. But one or two I may be able to give some support to. Please show me how to help them, and how to do it creatively and in the best possible way."

Prayer: "Father in heaven, you know the poor by name; the rich who do not know you are without name (Lk 16:19-31). Please bring a poor person to my attention whom I may ask for his or her name and honour that person."

DISCUSS

How does the local church in your host country deal with poverty?

What do you notice about non-Christians in their dealings with the poor? Who should learn from whom? In what way?

OBSERVE

- When someone is sick, do they try to play it down or do they make it evident?
- How do people in your host culture behave towards the sick or disabled?
- Is a mental or spiritual cause suspected behind sickness or disability?
- Apart from taking medicine, what do the locals do to get better?

READ

Mk 5:21-43

The healing of the woman with a flow of blood and the resurrection of Jāirus' daughter:

Jesus.ch: Twelve Bible verses about dealing with sickness on jesus.ch

www.jesus.ch/neuigkeiten/gesundheits-und-umwelt/366340-zwoelf-bibelverse_ueber_den_umgang_mit_krankheit.html

THINK

- Compare those two miracles of healing that Jesus performed. In what way are they similar, how do they differ?
- What role does faith play in both stories? How does Jesus behave towards the two 'sick' people? How do people react to those healings?

PRAY

- Pray for a person you know to be sick. You can do this on your own, in a group or with the sick person.
- Prayer (according to the sick person): "O Jesus, raise up ... in his / her sickness. Comfort him/her and be close to them. Give him/her what he/she needs and raise him/her up again! And show me how to help him/her."

A M E N

DISCUSS

- Why does God sometimes heal and why does He often not heal?
- Why are we sick? Consider how our perceptions of the cause of a sickness also affect our dealing with it!

GO DEEPER

Film tip (Amazon Prime)

JONI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twAqbJsWYVM>



Film tip (Amazon Prime)

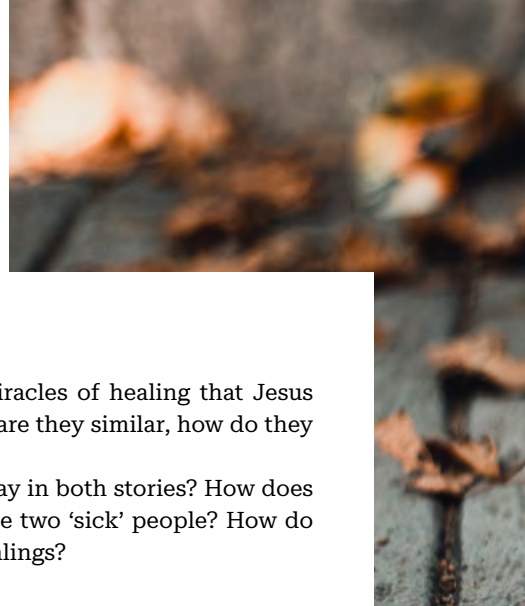
HEAVEN IS FOR REAL

https://www.amazon.de/gp/video/detail/B00WH5ES40/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r



WHY DOES GOOD ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN? - JESUS.DE

<https://www.jesus.de/was-wenn-gott-gar-nicht-gut-ist/>



SICKNESS

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? - ERF.DE

[www.erf.de/glaubens-faq/
warum-laesst-gott-leid-
zu/33618-5](http://www.erf.de/glaubens-faq/warum-laesst-gott-leid-zu/33618-5)



SICKNESS AND HEALING IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE - BIBELBUND.DE

[www.bibelbund.de/
2015/03/krankheit-und-
heilung-im-licht-der-
bibel/](http://www.bibelbund.de/2015/03/krankheit-und-heilung-im-licht-der-bibel/)



GOD WANTS TO HEAL, NOT PUNISH - ERF.DE

[www.erf.de/themen/glau-
be/gott-will-heilen-nicht-
strafen/2803-542-4905](http://www.erf.de/themen/glaube/gott-will-heilen-nicht-strafen/2803-542-4905)



CHRISTIANS AND DISEASES - BIBELSTUDIUM.DE

[www.bibelstudium.de/
articles/2103/christen-
und-krankheiten.html](http://www.bibelstudium.de/articles/2103/christen-und-krankheiten.html)



SICKNESS AND HEALTH IN THE BIBLE - BIBELBUND.DE

[www.bibelbund.de/
2015/03/krankheit-und-
gesundheit-in-der-bibel/](http://www.bibelbund.de/2015/03/krankheit-und-gesundheit-in-der-bibel/)



FATE IS A RACKET - CHRISTINA RAMMLER

[www.scm-shop.de/
das-schicksal-ist-ein-
schlaeger.html](http://www.scm-shop.de/das-schicksal-ist-ein-schlaeger.html)



DEATH
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DEATH

OBSERVE

- Go to a cemetery.
- How can you recognise a grave? Are there stone markings, name plaques, inscriptions, etc.?
- Look closely at those graves: How are they cared for?
- Are there any differences between graves?
- Are there any people in the cemetery? What do they do?

READ

Mt 23:27–29

DISCUSS

Share what roles graves or the dead play in the everyday life of the living.

THINK

- What does that say about the care for graves in Jesus' time?
- Is it possible to defile yourself at a grave?
- Do graves indicate the status of the buried?

PRAY

Prayer: Pray with Psalm 90:12 "Lord, teach us to be mindful that one day we all must die, so that we may become wise in our lives."

A M E N

GO DEEPER

**BESTATTUNGSKULTUR-
PLANET-WISSEN.DE
[BURIAL CULTURE]**

https://www.planet-wissen.de/gesellschaft/tod_und_trauer/bestattungskultur/index.html

**TOD - BESONDERS TEILE 6–11
WIKIPEDIA.ORG
[DEATH – SEE PARTS 6 TO 11,
WIKIPEDIA.ORG]**

de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tod



OBSERVE

Try to join a local funeral procession and burial.

Who is walking in what position of the procession? How is the dead body transported?

Are there speeches or prayers offered up?

Are there any persons appointed for official prayers, any wailers, singers...?

Is there a gathering of the bereaved (funeral feast)?

Ask someone at the funeral what kind of prayers are said.

Find out who is told first about a person's death and by whom.

READ

Psalm 90:1-12

A Psalm worth learning in your own language, but also in the language of your host culture.

THINK

Find pairs of opposites in the psalm. What reasons does it give for impermanence?

How can the knowledge of our mortality be comforting?

Pray with Psalm 39 (VOLX Bible translation)

WATCH OUT WHAT YOU SAY

»By David, for DJ Jedutun and the choir.
I said: I want to be careful not to torment God with my babbling. And I want to watch who is with me when I say anything. So I was quiet, I didn't say another word. But inside I was plagued with pain. Then I said: God, show me how long I have to live, and my life time is like nothing before you. My days are but a breath. People wander about like shadows; what they do and make has no value. Is it the same with me? No, for I believe in you, my Lord. Save me from my own evil, do not make a fool of me. I'll let you do it, and I'll be quiet, and I'll stay here. Please don't make me suffer, turn everything for the best. For you can swat a man like a gnat for his guilt. Hear my cry and please help me, see my tears. Turn a blind eye and give me the life I long for.«

PRAY

Prayer: "What then shall we hope for, Lord Jesus? I place my hope in you! You were dead and have come back to life. You have conquered death. Therefore, my soul will be still only with you, Lord. My hope comes from you alone. You are a living God. Give this living hope in you, Lord, also to those who meet you in me."

DISCUSS

How do perceptions of the 'hereafter' affect a funeral?

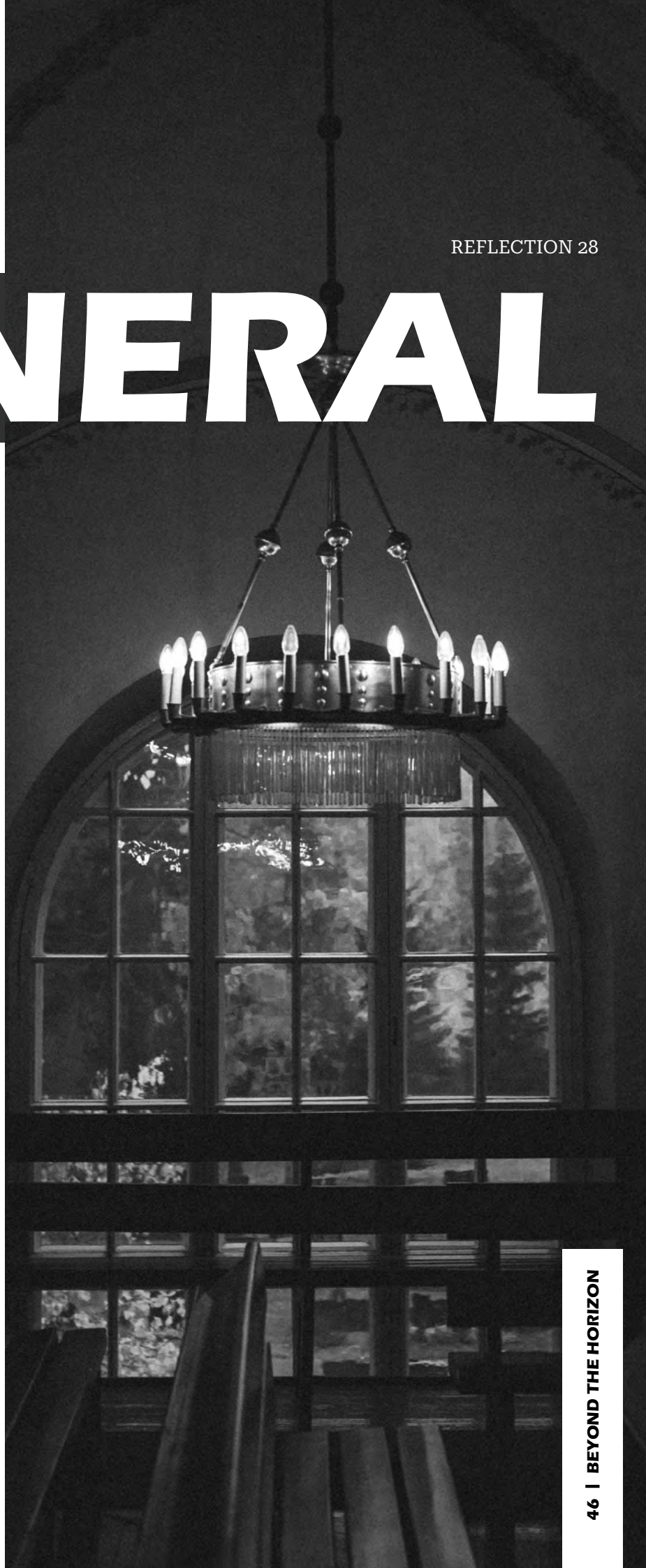
What are the dominant feelings at a funeral? Fear, sadness, shame, joy?

FUNERAL

GO DEEPER

DEALING WITH GRIEF

www.erf.de/themen/glaube/umgang-mit-trauer/2803-542-2324



OBSERVE

- When does the family of the deceased receive visits? What do you bring along, how long do you stay, what do you do during your visit?
- Are there any repeated visits after a few days, weeks, months?
- What do you say when you hear about a death to express your feelings of regret? How are your condolences replied to? What do the words used in both instances mean literally?
- How does grief show itself externally? In women? In men?
- How long are the outward signs of mourning worn?
- What do people in your host culture do during periods of mourning, what do they not do? Are there any taboos in the time of mourning?

READ

Jn 11:1-45

The raising of Lazarus.

Mt 11:17

“We have played you weddings songs on the flute, but you did not dance; we sang songs of mourning to you, but you did not weep...”

THINK

- How does Jesus deal with the death of his friend? How did His disciples handle it? In the Judaism at the time, what was customary in times of mourning?
- What forms does mourning take in your home country? And in your family? What does mourning look like in your host culture?

PRAY

Pray for people you know are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Prayer: “Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for loving every person. Thank you that you came into this world

and lived yourself through times of need and of grief, and even your own death. Thank you for being able to comfort and support every human being. And that is why I ask you now for ... who has just experienced so much suffering and is grieving. Please be especially close to him/her and let him/her feel your love. Grant him/her your comfort both from eternity and with a view to eternity. For whosoever believes in you, Lord Jesus, shall live, even though he or she dies; and whosoever lives in you and believes in you will not die in all eternity.”

A M E N

DISCUSS

What do you think about keeping lament and grief as private as possible? Or should feelings be put ‘on display’?

What could be of help to the mourner? How does mourning affect the environment? Why is mourning tainted with shame in some western countries?

Read on Edition F:

We don't deal with death, and then grief attacks us like a wild animal.

www.editionf.com/Vergiss-mein-nie-Trauerarbeit-Tod-Er-innerungen/

LETTING GO OF LOVED ONES - ERF.DE

www.erf.de/themen/glaube/loslassen-von-menschen-orten-zeiten-traeumen/2803-542-2681

HOW TO PROCESS GRIEF AND LOSS

www.herder.de/leben/lebensberatung-und-psychologie/trauer-verarbeiten/



GRIEF

A person is shown in profile, facing left, with their hand covering their face in a gesture of grief. The image is heavily stylized with a teal/cyan color palette. The person's face and hand are in deep shadow, while the background is a lighter, hazy teal. The word "GRIEF" is superimposed in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the upper part of the image.

OBSERVE

- Observe how people in your host culture communicate through gestures, facial expressions, proximity vs. distance, etc. What differences do you see compared to your own culture? What differences do you see from your culture at home?
- Ask someone from your own culture about possible experiences they may have had with indirect communication.
- How is rejection expressed in your host culture? How is a negative reply expressed?
- Is there a difference in communication between men/women and in direct/indirect communication?
- Are there certain topics that are addressed directly or indirectly? What would that sound like?

READ

Jn 1:1–14; Gen 1

Nathan confronts David by way of a story:

2 Sam 12:1–14 (~25)

Jesus speaks through parables, like the one of the vinedresser:

Mt 21:23–46

THINK

- God revealed Himself as the Word, and Genesis 1 describes in dramatic words how powerful this Word is: God spoke and the world began to exist. We often underestimate the importance of communication. It is not only a matter of what we say with words but also how we say it and what we do not put into words. Through our words and gestures, we too have the opportunity to build a person's world.
- Why do both Nathan and Jesus choose this indirect form of com-

munication?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct and indirect communication?

PRAY

Prayer: "Lord, grant me the patience needed to deal well with difference. Allow me to learn this lesson. And please equip me with your wisdom in knowing how to suitably address things. Help me to be silent when silence is called for, and to speak up when necessary."

A M E N

DISCUSS/GO DEEPER

Consider if you might notice a connection between indirect communication and shame cultures and direct communication and guilt-oriented cultures.

HOW TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS

www.vhs-ehrenamtsportal.de/wissen/integration/interkulturelle-kommunikation/interkulturelle-kommunikation



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION – YOUR COUNTRY AND OTHER COUNTRIES

www.youtube.com/@annalas-sonczyk2387/videos



DIRECT AND INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

https://youtu.be/RaH_97wxIGg



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BY O. LASSONCZYK

www.intercultural-success.de/category/podcast/



DIRECT / INDIRECT / COMMUN ICATION



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE LIED TO AND DECEIVED

REFLECTION 31

Not everyone you meet in your host country will have good intentions for you. You are also going to meet those that take advantage of you, telling you heart-wrenching stories to ensure you support them financially. Once a young man came by and, with tears in his eyes, told me his mother had just died and that he now needed urgent financial help to cover those high funeral costs. Trusting him I gave him the money. Months later, God designed things in such a way that the allegedly dead mother came to my front door, thanking me for my quick resolve at the time. Be aware that, in your host country, truth may be considered and dealt with differently compared to your home country. So, what should be done?

OBSERVE

- How did you feel back home when you discovered that your friend's statements had not always been entirely true?
- What feelings did such experiences arouse in you (frustration, sadness, disappointment, ...)?
- What did such experiences do to your relationship (conflict, withdrawal...)?
- Were you able to confront the person concerned with the truth?
- How did you do that?
- Do you notice in your host country that people do not tell the truth or seem to lie to you?
- Try to find out if locals view the respective matter also as a case of fraud.
- How is dishonesty rated in your host culture? Is it seen as sinful or as a clever or polite form of communication?

READ

You are not alone in the experience of being lied to! Even kings have been caught in lies to hide their own sin.

Psalm 15:1-2

Whoever wants to approach God must be true in his heart.

Jn 14:6

Jesus is the truth, He is reality.

Ex 20:16

You must not give false witness against your neighbour.

1 Kings 11-12

King David turned into an adulterer and murderer.

Deut 32:35

Vengeance is my business, says GOD

Ex 1:19

Embellished truth that pleased God (!)

Gen 39-40

The lie of Potifar's wife and Josef's dealing with it. Great harm is brought about through lies: Jacob's life (Gen 25-49), the denial of the resurrection (Mt 28:12-15). Better to die than to lie: Jesus (Jn 18:8), Daniel and his friends (Dan 1-5). Blessing of truth: Paul and his companions (2 Cor 6:8), our own lives (Mt 6:21).

PRAY

Prayer: "Lord, I forgive ... his/her guilt. For you have also forgiven me so much and I, too, have done so much wrong. So I ask that you do him/her good in spite of everything. For you, Jesus, have also prayed for those who have done you wrong."

A M E N

SHAME AND GUILT CULTURES & DEALING WITH TRUTH, LIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

REFLECTION 32

In the Western world with its guilt culture, truth is even more important than relationships. Reporters and leak-disclosers who bring truth to light are celebrated, especially in the big public. However, the closer we get to relationships at a lower level, the more shame-oriented we are in the West, too: How do I like your gift – truthfully? And your new hairstyle? Where do I refrain from sharing my thoughts so as to not strain but build a relationship? Are some relationships simply more important to me than the naked cold truth, and is that good?

In a non-Western culture of shame, there are often much higher values in place than truth e.g. personal honour and that of the family. Important and worthy of love and honour is what the surrounding community thinks of a person, not what reality is about. It would be considered lacking in love to tell a person the unvarnished truth. It is much more honourable to tell the truth either indirectly or through an intermediary. When Jesus met with the woman at the well, He first opened up a relationship of acceptance and trust with her. He gives her hope and creates in her a thirst for true life. It is not before a sustainable basis of communication has been established that Jesus confronts her with her way of life,

and even then He does so indirectly, politely and without reproach. As a result, the Samaritan woman can accept Jesus' revelations about her; so much so that, in the end, she shares the news with others. Jesus does the same with Peter: He restores Peter's lost honour after his denial of the Lord. First there is an invitation to dinner, the deepest form of fellowship, without any word of reproach. And then, apart from the other disciples, Jesus gives Peter the chance to confess to him and to his love for Jesus three times. Jesus takes people's shame into account and yet, adapted to the culture, He addresses the problems and does not sweep anything below the carpet.



THINK

- How do people in your home country and culture react to lies?
- What does this reaction look like in your new environment?
- What do people do in a shame-based culture so the person you are dealing with does not lose face?
- People in cultures of shame are more likely to avoid you than to constructively solve the issue.
- As in the case of King David, is there a third person who might help you solve a conflict and restore the relationship at hand?

- Can God Himself help you to solve the problem of lying?

- Do you need to confront everyone with their faulty behaviour? Can you, may you, should you simply leave one matter or the other in God's hands?

PRAY

- You may complain to God about your frustration when you have been lied to or deceived.
- Pray for wisdom to confront the other person with the problem in a culturally and truthfully appropriate way.

- Pray for a willingness to forgive because God also forgives our transgressions every day.

- Pray for wisdom to know whether it is you who should confront the other person, or forgive.

- Pray for healing of relationships that are burdened by negative experiences.

- Thank God every day for forgiving us all of our sin and guilt so that we may become merciful.

OBSERVE

- How do people around you deal with those who are different from you (e.g. foreigners, disabled people...)?
- When in the past did you feel misunderstood? How did that make you feel?
- What did you do to make yourself understood?
- How do you deal with it when someone feels misunderstood?
- How do you feel about not being able to express yourself in the language you are learning?

READ

Psalm 139

THINK

There are times in life when we wonder if anyone cares about our personal existence. Who actually takes note of me? How is it possible that I find myself in the middle of a group of people and feel like no one sees me? Does anyone care about me?

Have you ever felt like this? Have you ever wondered if someone would really love you if they really knew what was going on inside you?

God knows what people are like. He knows that at times we feel that way. He is aware of our habits and quirks. We don't need to pretend to be perfect because God knows our true selves. He loves us with a perfect love including all those less than perfect things in our lives.

No need for us to explain anything to Him, either. He just knows. After all, Jesus too was often misunderstood and disappointed by His

closest friends (His disciples). God knows exactly the pain of being misunderstood, and He invites you to come to Him with all of that pain.

PRAY

Prayer: "Lord, please grant me a joyful and sustained motivation in learning this language. Give me people I can talk to and practise the language with. Please help me to make progress because with better language skills I can be close to the people around me."

Prayer: "Lord, please help me to establish good relationships around here."

DISCUSS / GO DEEPER

Excellent English language resources for coworkers in intercultural settings may be found here:

Lifelong Learning Send U
**SEND U
WIKI**

www.senduwiki.org



**REFLECTIONS AND
RESOURCES FOR LI-
FELONG LEARNING
FOR MISSIONARIES**

www.sendublog.com



a cross-cultural conversation
**A LIFE
OVERSEAS**

www.alifeoverseas.com



Youtube Podcast
**GLOBAL MISSION
PODCAST**

www.youtube.com/@globalmissionspodcast7493



BEING MISUNDER STOOD



TEAM COMMUNICATION

REFLECTION 34

OBSERVE

- When you think about your team, in what way do you complement each other?

- Think of three team building activities you would like to do with your team.

- What personalities (DISG test/Big Five/Type test/ etc.) do you have in your team and how do you deal with the differences?

- How can you contribute toward a good communication in your team?

- How is your prayer life in the team? Can you share your faith with each other?

- What would help you to accept constructive criticism?

READ

1 Cor 12:17–31

Ecc1 4:9–12

THINK

God has deliberately chosen us to have diversity in His church. Jesus' team was also characterised by its diversity (Mark 3:13–18; Luke 6:12–16). One of His followers was a tax collector, some were fishermen, one was politically active and known as "the Zealot". However, the person who united them all was Jesus. The Ten Commandments (Ex 20: 1–17) as we know

them contain some of the best advice for teamwork ever written. They might read something like this:

- God comes first. He leads, we listen and obey.

- Nothing should stand in the way of our devotion to Him.

- We can't use God and His name as an excuse, a threat or a swearword.

- We take one day per week off to rest and recover.

- We respect our parents (or team leaders) and give them the right to speak into our lives. We honour them.





- We should not engage in slander (or any other kind of character assassination).
- We should not commit spiritual, emotional or physical adultery. We set healthy boundaries for our working relationships and team members.
- We should not steal from each other, neither ideas, nor recognition or personal items.
- We should not tell lies about each other nor use subtle negative remarks designed to rob others of their status or influence.
- We should not covet a team member's life, wife, husband, position or personal property.

PRAY

O God I pray ...

... that we will be open to each other in our team, ... that we will be

sincere and honest with each other.

... that our differences will complement rather than rub against each other ... that we may grow together as a team

... that we as the entire team will achieve great things and celebrate successes together.

Prayer: "Lord help us to accept each other in the team as we are. For you have also accepted us wholeheartedly with all our weaknesses, strengths and peculiarities - and that is ever so cool!"

A M E N

GO DEEPER

- Recommended reading: Lianne Roembke – Multicultural Teams, Risks and Chances

- To think further: Schulz von Thun, Kommunikationsmodell

- Wikipedia: Vier-Seiten-Model
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vier-Seiten-Modell>

- Alternatively: Das Kommunikationsquadrat, Schulz von Thun Institut
www.schulz-von-thun.de/die-modelle/das-kommunikations-quadrat

- Recommended reading: Friedemann Schulz von Thun: Miteinander Reden, vol. (also vols. 2-4)

- Friedemann Schulz von Thun: Kommunikation Bücher

- Recommended reading: Michael Noss, Teamarbeit, effektiv und gerne zusammenarbeiten



CONFLICTS IN THE TEAM

OBSERVE

- How do you communicate in your team? How well does that work?
- What issues do you often disagree on? How does that present itself?
- As and when a conflict comes up, how do you deal with it?
- How does the communication in your family differ from that in your team?
- How does your culture deal with conflicts? Do you notice any differences in this regard in your team or compared to your host culture?

READ

Mt 18:15–35

Eph 4:26

THINK

There are few guarantees in the world, but one is that someone will do something that needs our forgiveness. After all, we are imperfect people who sometimes are egoistic and unloving. We all desperately need forgiveness, from God and from each other. The only alternative to forgiveness is not to forgive. Forgiveness leads to healing and life. Failing to forgive inflicts pain and death on all involved. Accepting the invitation to forgive means accepting the invitation to life, love and grace. Rage and anger bring me into contact with my va-

lues, showing me what truly matters to me. Those values, however, become sinful when I act out in anger and rage, using these emotions in a destructive way. Anything of importance to me, I should address in a respectful manner. Also, I must always check my personal values against God's values. Anger is not always a sin and not all anger is wrong, and there are indeed times when Christians should express their sincere anger in a way that honours the Lord. If, however, any kind of anger is not addressed biblically, the enemy can turn righteous anger into sin and escalate it into a greater offence. That is why the Bible reminds us to deal with conflicts at an early stage and to forgive others. We forgive others because we ourselves have been forgiven.

TIP

Ensure situations are clarified before your voluntary service is over as otherwise you may be sure the matter will catch up on you when back in your home country. Forgiveness? Yes! Also, try first to listen to the other person with their different opinion, make an effort to understand their perspective and find out about their true wants and needs. Strive to reach a consensus.

PRAY

Prayer: "Father in heaven, all of us need forgiveness and grace. May you forgive us and have mercy on us. Please forgive me, too, and be merciful to me. Father, forgi-

ve [...] and be [...] merciful to him/her. Just as you forgive us through Jesus, help us to also forgive each other. And that I may forgive in the same way because that is where healing and freedom begins... and a new beginning. And that is good."

A M E N

Prayer: "Jesus, you specialise in good relationships. Please help me to work through these conflicts with ... Thank you, Lord, for being there, showing me exactly how I can go about this matter. I trust that you can bring about a positive development. Please do so. Please help. Please be merciful."

A M E N

GO DEEPER

For further thought:

- Kommunikationsmodell, Schulz von Thun
www.schulz-von-thun.de/die-modelle/das-kommunikationsquadrat

Recommended reading:

Multicultural Teams: Risks and Opportunities by Lianne Roembke,

The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures by Erin Meyer

Biblical Multicultural Teams by Sheryl Takagi Silzer



LINKS

BECOMING A HEALTHY MULTI- CULTURAL TEAM SCOTT MOREAU

[www.lausanne.org/content/
lga/2019-03/becoming-a-healthy-multi-cultural-team](http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-03/becoming-a-healthy-multi-cultural-team)



THIS MAKES INTERCULTURAL TEAMS SUCCESS- FUL

[www.hrtoday.ch/de/article/
interkulturelle-teams-erfolgreich-checkliste](http://www.hrtoday.ch/de/article/interkulturelle-teams-erfolgreich-checkliste)



PAGE ABOUT TEAM WORK: TEAM MANAGE- MENT SKILLS

[www.mindtools.com/pages/
main/newMN_TMM.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TMM.htm)



IGM INSTITUT INTERCULTURAL ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

www.institut-igm.de/ikorga





REFLECTION 36

INJ UST ICE

On the topic of justice northwest European countries like Germany, for example, rank high with a strong justice index.¹ Germans are used to a fair legal system, equal opportunities, basic freedoms, social and economic justice etc. Often such advantages may easily be taken for granted. In many countries you will encounter injustice and the discrimination of groups of people in one way or another.

OBSERVE

- Where and in what forms do you notice injustice in your host country?
- How do locals deal with injustice? What are your thoughts on the subject?
- Are these issues addressed in local churches or in your church community back home?

¹ Equity index or justice index: an international ranking is established on the basis of certain equity criteria. See ["FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND READING"](#) of the same Reflection.

READ

Our God loves justice and hates injustice:

Isa 61:8–9

Ps 33:5

Ps 89:15

Prov 6:16–19

Our mandate:

Lev 19:15; Deut 16:20

Prov 14:31; Prov 29:7

Zec 7:9

Mic 6:8

Mt 25:42–43

Jas 1:27

Isa 1:17

“Learn to do good things! Ensure that justice is upheld! Help the oppressed! Speak up for orphans and stand by them, be advocates for widows!”

THINK

- Why is justice a fundamental issue for Christians?
- What is the Christian perspective on justice?
- Do your work and life contribute to making the world a more just place?

PRAY

Prayer: “Lord, I pray for the disadvantaged people around me. Please help ... with ... And please help ... with ... Look at their suffering and misery. Please grant them opportunities, and provide them with justice. Shower your goodness onto them! Thank you that you are on their side.”

“Lord Jesus, show me where in my host country I may play a role for greater justice. Please open my eyes for the needs and opportunities in my immediate environment. Also, please show me what I may contribute toward justice while I am in my host country, and what I may do for people here when I am back in my own country! I ask you, Lord, to give me a little kick to ensure that I will not only take the initiative with regard to justice but also show perseverance.”

Prayer: “Lord, I pray for the government of my host country: May people of responsibility stand up for justice there.”

A M E N

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT AND READING

- World Justice Project

www.worldjusticeproject.org

- Justice Index: Social Justice in the EU and OECD: Index Report 2019

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/social-justice-in-the-eu-and-oecd/

Bertelsmann Stiftung (Hg.). Thorsten Hellmann, Pia Schmidt, Sascha Matthias Heller 2019

- NIV God's Justice Bible: God's justice – his plan for 'setting things right' is a foundational principle of the bible. Understand God's perspective on the injustices of our day.

www.lifebible.com/bible



CORRUPTION

REFLECTION 37



EXPERIENCES OF AN ASIAN NEW YORK TIMES REPORTER:

“My decade over here (in Asia) has been a time of intense ambivalence. I was enchanted by the warmth, friendliness and courtesy of the people. When I interviewed demonstrators on hot summer days, they often fanned my face as I spoke. I learned from my Thai friends how to laugh away life’s disappointments and annoyances. I enjoyed the food and marvelled at the hospitality. However, I also despaired at the venality of the elite and the corruption that devoured the people I interviewed. I came to know South East Asia as a region of great people and bad governments, also of people with remarkable kindness but a frightening degree of impunity.”

Thomas Fuller (Feb. 21, 2016). “Reporting on Life, Death and Corruption in Southeast Asia.”
www.nytimes.com/2016/02/22/world/asia/reporting-on-life-death-and-corruption-in-southeast-asia.html

WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

Corruption is the abuse of state or personal power for one’s own or one’s group’s benefit.

Bribery: The most frequent form of corruption is bribery i.e. giving or accepting money, a gift or other benefit as an inducement to do something that is dishonest or illegal. The World Bank estimates a flow of around 1 billion US\$ a year worldwide. Some countries use special terms for this: In the Middle East it is called ‘baksheesh’, in Latin America it is ‘mondida’, in Italy ‘speed money’, in West Africa ‘dash’ and in Russia ‘blat’.



OBSERVE

- Where do you experience corruption in your host country?
- Carefully ask people in your immediate environment, those with whom you share a basis of trust, about this topic. What do they experience? How do they feel about it? What structural problems are conducive to corruption?
- How do other non-local coworkers deal with it? Is there a general rule or policy in place?
- How does the local church community deal with corruption, and the locals in general?

READ

- God's children in the face of corruption:

Daniel 1

1 Tim 3:1–7

Hebr 13:5–6

“Let your lives be free from greed;

be content with the possessions you own, for God has promised: I will neither let you fall nor abandon you. That is why we may confidently say, The Lord is helping me, I will not be afraid.”

Psalm 25:21

“Sincerity and uprightness shall be my protection because my hope is only in you.”

Prov 10:9

“Those who walk their way uprightly walk safely; he who walks crooked ways is seen through.”

If you want to read more on the subject: What does the Bible say about corruption and bribery?

Gen 6:8; Deut 16:19; 2 Chron 19:7; 1 Sam 2:12–17; Prov 17:23; Am 5:11–15

THINK

- Stand firm in the face of corruption: What do we learn from Daniel? What drives him? How does he communicate his steadfastness?

- What basic attitudes of a Christian help us to be strong against corruption?

- How do you decide on this issue: How do you want to deal with it? What principles guide you?

PRAY

Lord, I pray ...

... for profound changes in this country: for honesty, truthfulness, steadfastness, integrity

... for steadfastness among the people not to accept corruption as ‘normal’, no matter how widespread it is

... for Christian leaders in local churches and international organizations. May they be good role models. Grant them clear values based on your Word. Provide them with the right and seasoned word at the right time. Keep them from enriching themselves unlawfully, ...

A M E N

GO DEEPER

- Bribery and Corruption: Biblical Reflections and Case Studies from the Marketplace in Asia, Hwa Yung (2018)

www.amazon.de/Bribery-Corruption-Biblical-Reflections-Marketplace/dp/9811166722

- 6 basic principles to avoid falling into corruptions traps: Business as Mission. ‘Corruption Introduction’.

www.businessasmission.com/toolkits/corruption-toolkit/



OBSERVE

- Is your place of outreach a country from which a) people flee or emigrate or b) a country offering refuge?
- What are the causes of flight and migration? Find out about reasons.
- What hardships do refugees experience?
- Have you heard about refugee experiences yourself? How did those stories affect you?
- Country of refuge: How do locals react to refugees? Do they welcome them or are they rather dismissive? What fears and anxieties do they have?

READ

Deut 28:65–67

Gen 16:13

Ru 1:1–5

THINK

- Where in the Bible are refugees mentioned?
- What does it mean to be a refugee?
- How do Hagar and others experience God on their flight?
- How does the Bible deal with the refugee issue? What is the task and responsibility of Christians and church communities?

PRAY

LORD Jesus, I am praying for ...

... open hearts among refugees for them to experience you, Lord Jesus, as their helper in a time of crisis.

... hospitality and charity in the countries the refugees are fleeing to.

... the refugee camps in my country and around the world. Have mercy on the people there and grant them your help.

... local aid organisations. Help them to help with love, discernment, wisdom and patience. Please provide them with the necessary means to enable them to help.

... the countries currently most affected by hunger or wars.

GO DEEPER

Inform yourself about the global situation, for example by way of a UN refugee report update.



[www.unhcr.org/
dach/de/services/
statistiken](http://www.unhcr.org/dach/de/services/statistiken)



[www.uno-flu-
echtlingshilfe.de/
informieren/flu-
echtlingzahlen](http://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/informieren/fluechtlingszahlen)



REFLECTION 38

ESCAPE & MIGRA TION

A full-page background image showing a person from behind, standing on a dark shore and looking out at a body of water under a sunset sky. The person is silhouetted against the bright, colorful horizon. The sky transitions from purple at the top to orange and pink near the water. The water reflects the colors of the sky.

BETWEEN ITCHY FEET & HOME SICK NESS

REFLECTION 39



OBSERVE

How might I regain a small part of what I am missing, perhaps in a slightly different form? What do I let go of?

What do you appreciate most about your new place, your current home? What is it that makes you feel at home there?

Where between your two worlds are you living right now? How does that feel?

When thinking of your return to your home country, how do you feel?

READ

Gen 12:1

Ps 32:7; 2

2 Cor 5:1–8

Hebr 13:14

THINK

What made Abraham leave his homeland and how did he feel about it?

When the Bible says that our home is in heaven, how can that give you comfort and support?

Can you wholeheartedly sing along with Chris Tomlin's 'I will follow'?

If so, what gives you the confidence to follow God everywhere?

If not, what is holding you back?

PRAY

Prayer: "Lord, I pray for my family and church at home. Bless and keep them! I also pray for my new family and friends here. Thank you, Father in heaven, that I have a permanent home with you! (Psalm 23:6). I pray, Lord, please help me prepare to say 'good bye' and to return to my country."

A M E N

LISTEN

Listen to **I will Follow** by Chris Tomlin:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=g02mOpdNDtY



DMG INTERPERSONAL E.V.

Buchenauerhof 2
D-74889 Sinsheim, GERMANY
+49 7265 959-100
Kontakt@DMGint.de

www.DMGint.de

 [@DMGint](https://www.instagram.com/DMGint)

 [@DMGint](https://www.youtube.com/DMGint)

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AUTHORS

Dr. Tabea Binder, Cynthia Beyhl,
Anna Kaufmann, Martin Sachs,
Dr. Verena Schafroth, Martin Seidl-Schulz

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS USED

Direct translation of the German template into English. German Original: Bible verses without reference are translations of the editor's own wording, based on various Bible translations in German language
Where indicated accordingly: VOLX Bible
www.volxbibel.de

English translation by Doris Graf, Graf Training & Translations, www.graf-uebersetzungen.com

POEM

'Spuren hinterlassen' © Christoph Zehendner,
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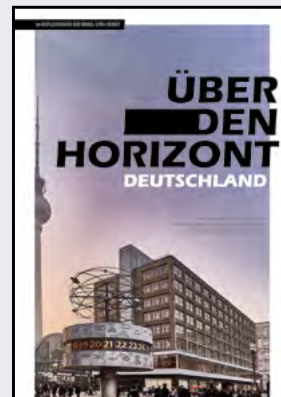
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»Leaving tracks in freshly fallen snow.
Envisioning what I do not yet see.
Thinking out of turn, against my mind.
Steering my steps towards undiscovered land.

Entering new lands, I want to take risks again,
wanting to dare, hope, pray,
and then boldly look forward.

Not sticking to my armchair, setting off cross-country.
Experiencing new things, being open for miracles.
Overcoming boundaries, even against resistance.

Ways into the distance, what shall happen to me?
God at my side, he will go with me.«

Christoph Zehendner

LOOK BEYOND THE HORIZON WITH GOD

Great, you have decided to do voluntary service in another country and in a different culture! The coming months will be full of countless exciting new experiences for you. This magazine is designed to help you delve deeper into your host culture. 39 reflections on real-life topics encourage you to dive into your host culture. Understand the people at your place of work, build bridges, show them appreciation and experience respect yourself because of your genuine interest in the people around you. In the 'Reflections' of this booklet, apt observation questions will sharpen your view of your surroundings. Biblical texts will relate to your own cultural experiences. They are meant to deepen your understanding, helping you to

reflect on your experience from God's perspective. Take time to consider those biblical verses as suggested in different parts of this booklet, discuss them with your mentors and team leaders. And if you like, talk to God about everything, pray! You will find many suggestions and model prayers to help you. We have a God who understands and hears us: Jesus Christ Himself became man and lived as one of us. Knowing this will help you to experience not only the new culture but also God in a new way during your voluntary service. No matter where you go, God is already there, and He works in all cultures. This booklet will take you on a spiritual and intercultural journey of discovery during your voluntary service.

GO FOR IT!