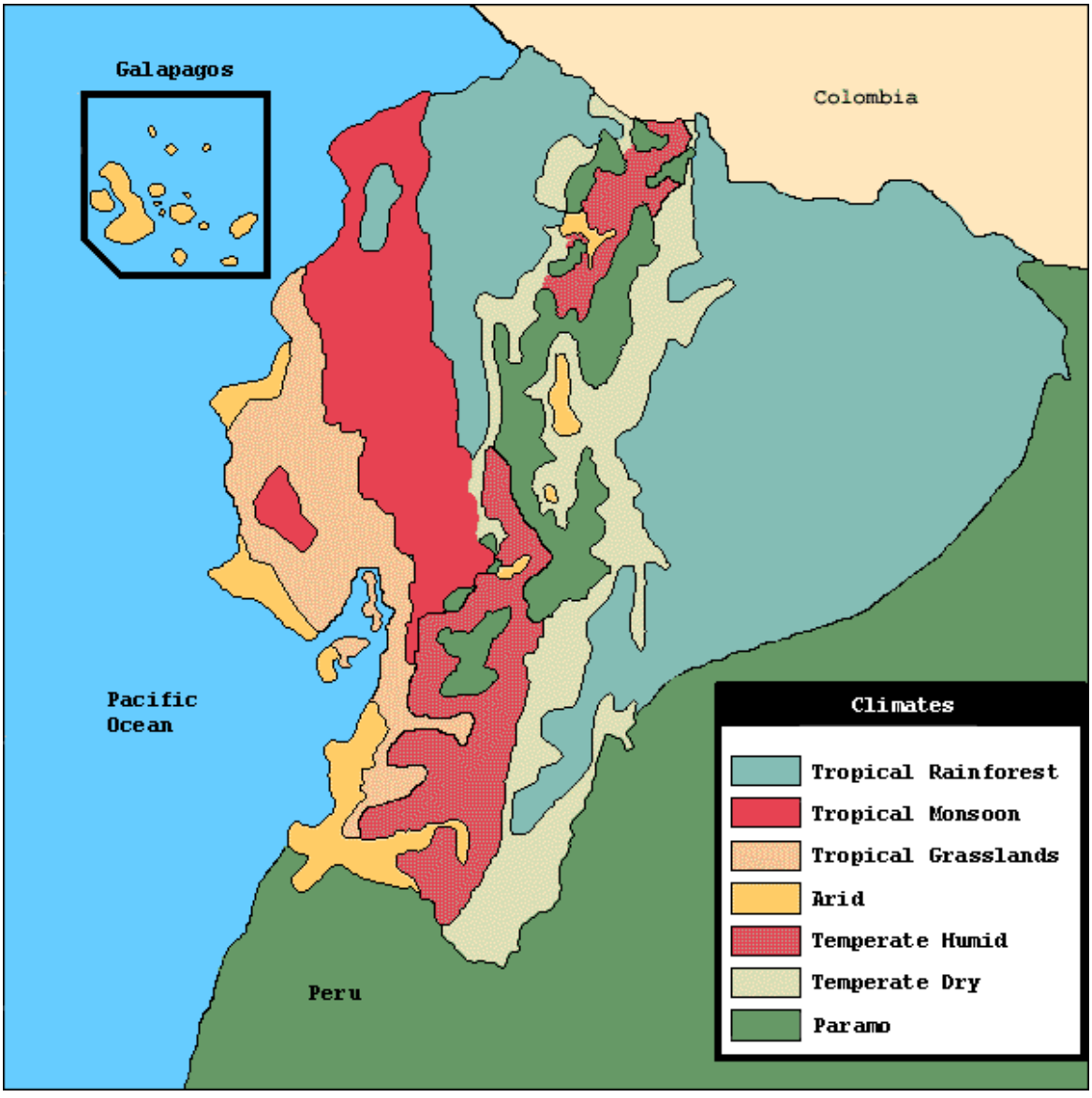
Amazon Rainforest
Galapagos Island



IDIS W45

Interim 2015

Itinerary

Jan 7	Wed	09:00am	Class (Science Building 110)
Jan 8	Thurs	09:00am	Class (Science Building 110)
Jan 9	Fri	05:00am	Bus leave Spoelhof Center flagpole
		07:00am	Arrive at ORD
		10:15am	Depart from ORD on Delta 2183 to ATL
		01:14pm	Arrive in ATL
		05:30pm	Depart from ATL on Delta 673
		10:54pm	Arrive in Quito, Ecuador
Jan 10	Sat	07:00am	All-day tour of Quito/Equator museum
Jan 11	Sun	05:00am	Leave Quito
		11:30am	Arrive in Banos

Jan 12-16 Amazon Rainforest

Jan 16	Fri	05:00am	Leave Kapawi Lodge
		05:30pm	Arrive in Quito
Jan 17	Sat	07:00am	All-day shopping trip
Jan 18	Sun	05:00am	Leave Quito
		11:30am	Arrive in Galapagos (Yachts: Eden, Aida Maria)

Jan 18-25 Galápagos Islands

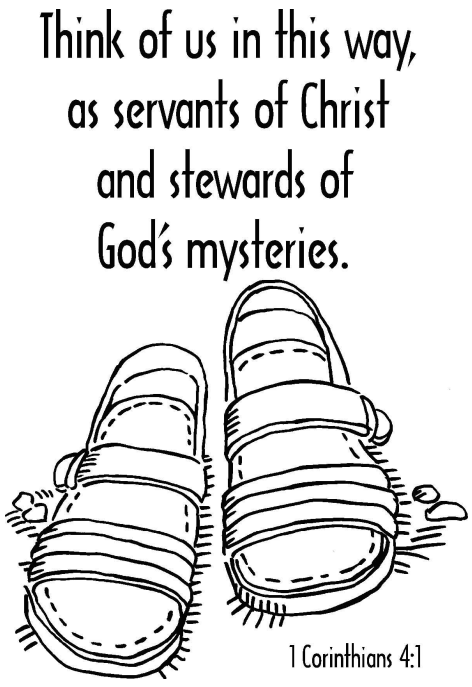
Jan 25	Sun	11:00am	Depart from Galapagos
		03:30pm	Arrive in Quito
Jan 26	Mon	12:29am	Depart from Quito on Delta 680 to ATL
		05:45am	Arrive in ATL
		09:10am	Depart from ATL on Delta 748 to DTW
		11:10pm	Arrive in DTW
		02:30pm	Bus arrive at Spoelhof Center flagpole

Foreward

This booklet is for those who want to spend some quiet time each day reflecting, reading the Bible, praying, and glorifying God. It is intended for those of you traveling to Ecuador, and for those of you going with us in spirit. It is my hope that it helps deepen your personal relationship with our Creator and Lord.

Special thanks go to my father—Harvey Blankespoor and my aunt—Wendy Blankespoor who did all the hard work of writing most of the devotionals. I had the easy job—all I had to do was some minor tweaking and editing—Ecuador/Amazon/Galapagos style!

Curt Blankespoor



Wednesday, January 7: A New Year, A New Resolution

Read: I Samuel 15:22

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed us better than the fat of rams."

Reflect: Spiritual quotas

Having devotions, praying, and reading the Bible are things we all aspire to do on a regular basis. But these activities should be done for the right reasons. If your motivation to read the Bible is because that is what is expected from "good" Christians, or you find yourself praying to fulfill some spiritual quota for the week, then you should re-examine your reasons for having devotions. Like other devotionals, the major purpose of the quiet time mediations in this booklet is for you to more clearly hear God's voice, reflect on what He is saying to you, and apply it in your everyday life. And God always takes great delight when His children pray.

It is my hope that you finding meaning in the devotions in this booklet. May you feel God's grace and power in the coming weeks, and may these experiences further mold you into world-changers.

Apply

- What excites me the most about 2015?
- How can I better prepare myself to be world-changer?

Pray

- That the events 2015 will have a profound impact on my spiritual journey.
- That I will clearly hear God's voice amidst all the chaos around us.
- That our experiences in Ecuador encourage all of us to use our talents for God's service.

Thursday, January 8: Packing Day

Read: Psalm 133

1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!
2 It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.
3 It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.
4 For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Reflect: Community

Webster defines community as a "unified body of individuals; people of common interests, joint participation, likeness; or fellowship."

Tomorrow we leave the United States and fly together to Ecuador on a wonderful three-week adventure. We will share many experiences together—hiking, learning, canoeing, laughing, eating, snorkeling, conversing, worshipping, etc. For the next 18 days we will be in community with one another, support and love each other, and hopefully grow closer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God desires that unity, that togetherness. It is like the oil that was poured on the head of Aaron, which ran down his beard, and even over the edges of his robe. It is a picture of celebration and happiness. We, too, can find joy when we experience unity and togetherness in the family of God, and when we feel the support of a community of loved ones who are praying with us and for us—all of us constitute a community who seeks to honor our God.

Apply

- What excites me the most about the course/trip?
- What can I bring as an individual to this community of believers?
- How can I prepare myself to be an ambassador of God?

Pray

- Give thanks for this unique community
- Give thanks for this opportunity of adventure

Friday, January 9: Travel Day To Ecuador

Read: Joshua 1:9

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Read: Matthew 28:20b

20 …And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Reflect: Apprehensions

The waiting is finally over! For months most of us have been looking forward with great anticipation to this particular day. Today we embark on what most likely will be an experience of a lifetime. We are headed to South America—to immerse ourselves into a culture to which we are not accustomed and into parts of God's Creation that are seemingly indescribable. We are extremely excited, and at the same time a bit anxious, as to what we will see and experience the next twenty days. It's only normal to have a few apprehensions about the trip: How will I handle leaving the security and conveniences of home? Will I get along with everyone on the trip? Will I stay healthy? Will it be a problem that I don't know how to speak Spanish?

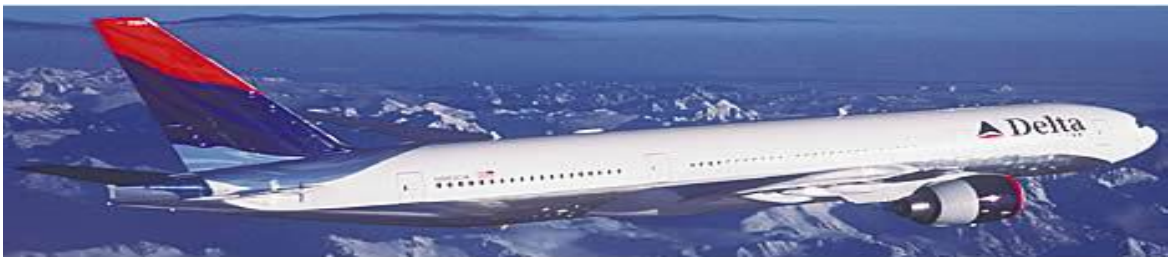
Now matter how traveled we are, all of us have some concerns and apprehensions.

Apply

- What am I most apprehensive about regarding the trip?
- How can turn my concerns and apprehensions into opportunities to deepen my relationship with God?

Pray

- For safe travel
- That we (and all our baggage) make all our connecting flights
- That customs in Quito goes smoothly
- That our bus will be waiting for us at the Quito airport



Saturday, January 10: Quito, Ecuador

Read: Revelations 7:9-10

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Reflect: Culture Shock

Our first full day in Ecuador—YES! Finally! We have left the comforts and familiarities of home and now find ourselves in unfamiliar surroundings. Embrace the differences that you see. Look for the beauty in a different way of doing things. Celebrate the diversity of unfamiliar traditions and cultures. Remember that we are guests in this country for the next two weeks. So we need to remind ourselves daily that we are ambassadors of our Heavenly Father. It is very possible that the person sitting next to you in the internet café, or the Ecuadorian waiter that serves you lunch, has never before interacted with a Christian. Will that make a difference in what you say or how you act?

Apply

- What impressions do Ecuadorians have of me?
- Can people clearly see that I am a faithful ambassador of Christ?
- How can I be a more effective witness for Christ?

Pray

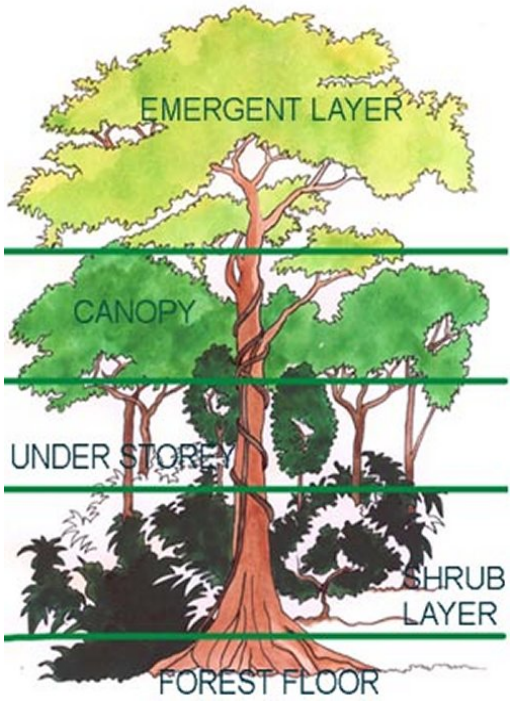
- That we reflect God's love and grace to the people of Ecuador
- That we are respectful and sensitive to Ecuadorians and their culture
- That we are protected on the streets and roads
- That we have a good day of adjustment and rest

Sunday, January 11: Travel to Banos

Read: Job 37:22

22 Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty.

Reflect: The Rainforest God



Tomorrow we will trek through one of the world's most complex ecosystems, the Amazon rainforest. Often called the "lungs of the Earth," this ecosystem provides over 20% of our planet's oxygen. The rainforest is divided into four different parts—the forest floor, the understory layer, the canopy layer, and the emergent layer. Each layer has its unique combination of plants and animals. Many scientists estimate that the Amazon canopy itself contains half of the world's species of living creatures.

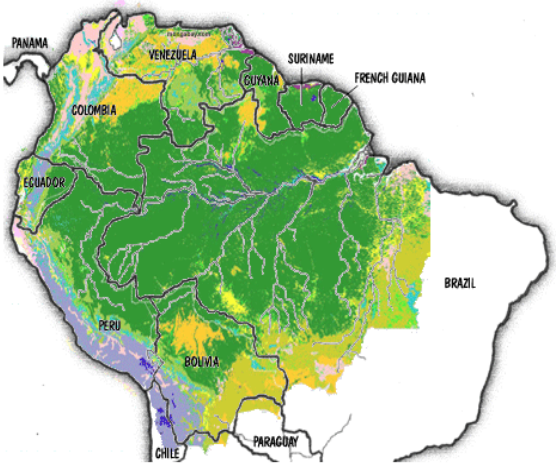
The rainforest is a great metaphor for God. It is complex, consistent, and beautiful. It is also "ginormous", mysterious and teaming with life. The rainforest is a place of unique splendor. Despite our best efforts to learn as much as we can about its character and functioning, we end up with more questions than answers. We cannot help but stand in awe and ponder the majesty and magnificence of it all.

We often want to place God in a tidy little box. We have our ideas on who God really is and what He can really do. But God is much more complex than we can hope or imagine. In fact, God can even handle all our questions and doubts.

The Amazon reminds me of God…infinitely mysterious, unfathomably intricate, and unbelievably beautiful.

Apply

- How am I "boxing in" God?
- Have I ever been frustrated with God when some of my questions about Him go unanswered?



Pray

- For the rainforest
- For the people who make the rainforest their home
- That we become better caretakers of the Creation
- That today, being Sunday, may be a day set apart

Monday, January 12: Amazonia Here We Come!

Read: Isaiah 66:12

12 For this is what the Lord says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arms and dandled on her knees.

Read: Revelations 22:1

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb…

Reflect: Rivers of Life

An early wakeup call, a 15-minute bus ride, a 20-minute airplane ride, and finally, a 2-hour motorized dugout canoe ride down the Pastaza River….all of this to get to our home for the next 5 days—Kapawi Lodge. The closest road is a ten-day walk! Once at the lodge, we will find ourselves living close to one of the major tributaries of the Amazon River and surrounded by the beauty of the Amazon rainforest. The Amazon, with more than 1200 tributaries is the largest river in the world, carrying 20% of the world's freshwater.

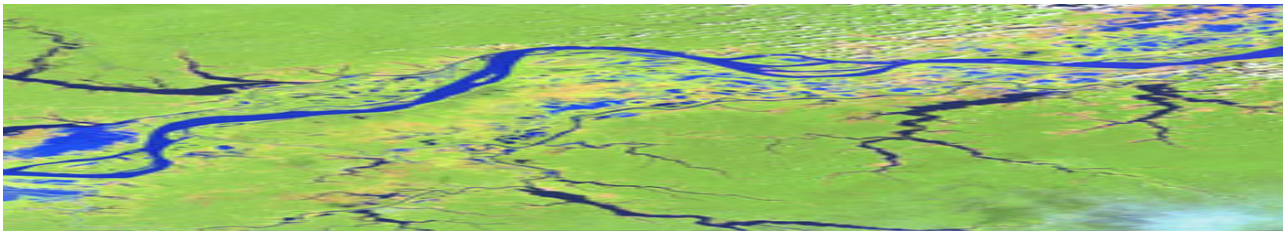
Rivers are the source of life. The Amazon Rainforest has sprung into life as a result of the wealth of water that flows through it. God is our source of life. When we allow God to flow through us, we will be able to best experience the life God intends for us.

Apply

- What important roles/analogies did rivers afford during Biblical times?
- How can I keep God as the source my life?
- In what specific areas of my life do I need to allow God to flow through me?

Pray

- That we arrive safely at Kapawi Lodge
- That we appreciate the beauty and diversity of God and His Creation
- That we enjoy uniqueness of the Amazon watershed



Tuesday, January 13: Kapawi Lodge

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.
29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Reflect: Raining Hoatzins

Not only does it have a strange name, but it also has an odd appearance. The hoatzin, a plant-eating bird, which lives along slow moving rivers or backwaters, is an unforgettable species. These birds are like chickens, dressed up for Halloween. Their bright red eyes are surrounded by featherless blue skin and their head is topped with a wild shock of untamed feathers. The hoatzin young live in loosely constructed stick-nests, usually located above water. When a predator approaches a nest, the young birds drop into the water to escape the danger. Even as a chick, they are very adept in the water, diving and swimming with relative ease. When the danger passes, the young birds use claws on their wings to climb back up to their nests.

Just like the juvenile hoatzins, we need to drop into the Lord's care whenever we are faced with troubles. If God cares so much to know the number of feathers sticking out of a hoatzin's head, then he must really care for us whom He made in his likeness.

Apply

- Is my relationship to God one that allows me to seek Him in times of need?
- Which is scarier for you—jumping out of your nest or hitting the water?

Pray

- That our rain forest experience is more about the forest and less about the rain
- That we have the discipline to hike quietly
- That we have continued good health
- That our families and loved ones are well back home

Wednesday, January 14: Kapawi Lodge

Read: Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Reflect: The Upside-down Life of Sloths

Silent, motionless, and camouflaged—sloths hang upside-down to avoid detection by their two main predators: the jaguar and the harpy eagle. Their slow and steady lifestyle has helped the sloth survive in the hostile environment of the rainforest.

In many ways being a Christian means that we must live an upside-down lifestyle, just like a sloth. By being silent, we are better able to listen to God's will for our life. When we "hang upside-down" we act differently from the way the world acts. We can no longer conform to the patterns and behaviors of this world.

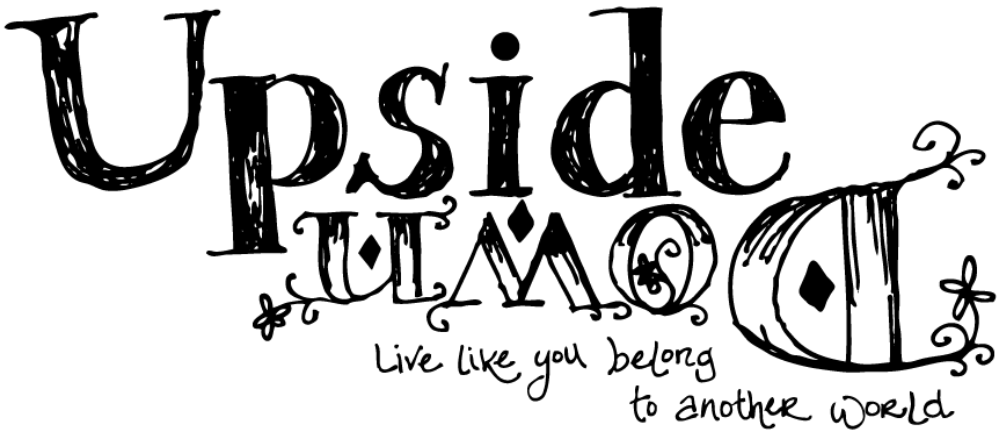
Do not be afraid to be seen and treated as an "upside-down" individual.

Apply

- How can I "hang upside-down" compared with the rest of the world?
- Am I living a "camouflaged" life? Is that necessarily a good thing?

Pray

- For good weather for hiking and canoeing
- For tolerance of unfamiliar food and juices
- For opportunities to see rich biodiversity



Thursday, January 15: Kapawi Lodge

Read: Ephesians 5:1-2

1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children
2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Reflect: Tarantulas and Misconceptions

Tarantulas are often associated with the Amazon, and rightfully so! They are quite common (hopefully by now we have seen at least one!), and contrary to their Hollywood reputation, they really aren't very interested in attacking people. Instead, they live in holes from which they emerge at night to hunt for food. When disturbed, tarantulas generally retreat rapidly into their burrows. Tarantulas carry with them the burden of a negative and erroneous stereotype.

Christianity carries with it such a burden. Throughout the history of the church, the story of Christ has too often been buried under the rubble of misconceptions. Instead of feeling love and forgiveness, some non-believers see only legalism and religiosity. Instead of being surrounded with mercy and grace, some feel judged and abandoned. Sometimes it's just a case of a simple misunderstanding, while other times this results when Christians leave the wrong impressions.

Apply

- How do my actions bury the message of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection?
- How can I better the image non-believers have of Christianity and Christians?

Pray

- That we are salt and light in this world
- That we are a source of hope in and for this world
- That our actions will leave a positive impression on others

AMAZON WATCH

Friday, January 16: We'll miss you Amazonia!

Read: Matthew 14:24-33

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side,
while he dismissed the crowd.
23 After he had dismissed them, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he
was there alone,
24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind
was against it.
25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.
26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and
cried out in fear.
27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."
28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."
29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus.
30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"
31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you
doubt?"
32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.
33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Reflect: Going Against the Current

By now we are heading back upstream the Pastaza and towards modern civilization. From experience, you know that traveling against the current or into the wind is harder than floating downstream or downwind. No doubt the disciples, especially those who were fishermen by trade, knew this as well. Yet Peter trusted Jesus enough to venture over the side of the boat and onto the waves. Just a short time later he took his eyes off the Lord, gazed at the frightening seas and began to sink.

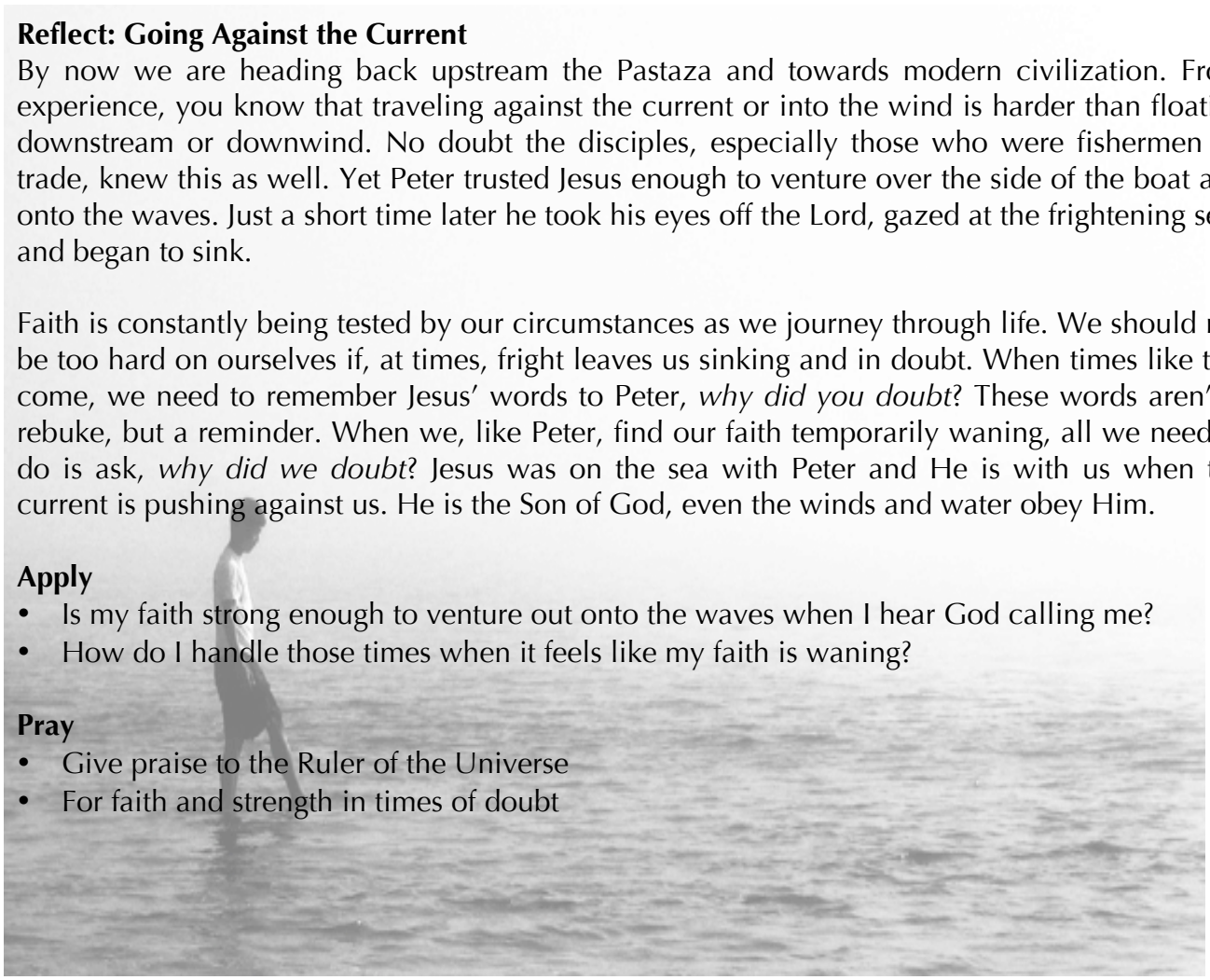
Faith is constantly being tested by our circumstances as we journey through life. We should not be too hard on ourselves if, at times, fright leaves us sinking and in doubt. When times like this come, we need to remember Jesus' words to Peter, *why did you doubt*? These words aren't a rebuke, but a reminder. When we, like Peter, find our faith temporarily waning, all we need to do is ask, *why did we doubt*? Jesus was on the sea with Peter and He is with us when the current is pushing against us. He is the Son of God, even the winds and water obey Him.

Apply

- Is my faith strong enough to venture out onto the waves when I hear God calling me?
- How do I handle those times when it feels like my faith is waning?

Pray

- Give praise to the Ruler of the Universe
- For faith and strength in times of doubt



Saturday, January 17: Otavalo and the Quichua Market

Read: Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
3 He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Reflect: Sheep in the care of the Shepherd

Alpacas are the Ecuadorian equivalent of the sheep of Biblical times. We will be visiting the Quichuan markets of Otavalo and we will see that even today wool is an important export of Ecuador.

The lot in the life of any particular alpaca or sheep depends on the owner or caretaker, the shepherd. Sheep require endless attention and meticulous care. Sheep (and alpacas) need to be sheared periodically. In Scripture, wool is depicted as the old self-life; the clinging accumulation of things and worldly ideas that keeps us down. We also need help to get up and to rid ourselves of worldly concerns. Sheep are notorious creatures of habit—they follow the same trails until they become ruts; graze the same hills until they turn to desert wastes; pollute their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites. Good shepherds keep sheep on the move on a pre-determined plan of rotation from one grazing ground to another. We also want to go our own way, but God leads us to new experiences for growth and health.

The shepherd was a familiar figure in Israel, and his love for his sheep was legendary. Day and night the shepherd watched over the sheep, he knew each one, by name. The image of God as the Good Shepherd, ever present with His people, remains Scripture's most comforting picture of the believer's relationship with his God.

Apply

- How can I get up and more effectively rid myself of worldly concerns?
- How can I follow Jesus more closely?

Pray

- Praise and thanks for the Good Shepherd's care
- That we cast away old sinful habits, concerns, worries and trust God
- For seminaries worldwide—training future shepherds to care for the flock.

Sunday, January 18: Galapagos Islands Here We Come!

Read: I Corinthians 12:4-6, 12, 27

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.
6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.
27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Reflect: Different gifts; different responsibilities

One of the first animals that we will see on the Galapagos is the blue-footed booby. Its close relatives include the Nazca booby and the red-footed booby. A spectacular sight is to see the boobies dive for fish at high speeds. When one of the birds in a squadron spots a school of fish near the water surface, the entire group seems to stop simultaneously in flight. Each bird tucks its wings, points its beak downward, and then dives headfirst into the water. As it rises out of the water, the booby scoops up a fish and then swallows it.

Both incubation and rearing are shared jobs by the male and female. Labor is divided according to the special characteristics and abilities of each parent. When the chicks are young and require smaller amounts of food but more frequent feedings, the smaller male has more flexibility in shallow water and does more of the fishing. When the chicks get older and require more food and can wait longer between feedings, the stronger and larger female parent takes over feeding duties. Each parent has their unique duties and responsibilities, based on the way God made them. We, too, need to look at what gifts and talents God has given us and to use those to glorify Him.

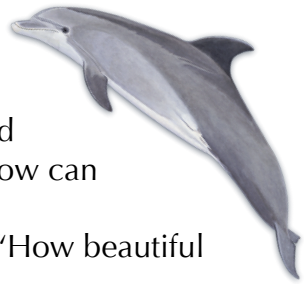
Apply

- What gifts has God given to you?
- How can you use those gifts to glorify God?

Pray

- That we all stay healthy
- Give praise to an Eternal God who, like a parent, meets all of our everyday needs
- That we have a safe trip to the islands

Monday, January 19: Genovesa



Read: Romans 10:14,15

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And
how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can
they hear without someone preaching to them?
15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful
are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Read: Matthew 28:18-20

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

Reflect:

Hopefully, we will see at least 1 pod of bottle-nosed dolphins. The trip to and from Genovesa is a long one, involving the passage over some deep ocean trenches. This is the most likely area to see these aquatic mammals. Dolphins are remarkably smart animals. One of their most interesting traits is their ability to communicate with each other, sometimes from miles away. That is one reason why we possibly can see so many coming toward our boat from a long distance. Dolphins are usually found in groups of two or more.

We can learn a lot from dolphins in our walk with God. God calls us to go out into the world and spread his "good news". Whether we are in Michigan or in Ecuador, we need to be sending messages to people telling them about Christ. God also sent his disciples out in groups of two, never alone. You need to remember that your job is to plant seeds and leave it up to God to let those seeds grow. You do not need to know all the answers in order to share Christ with others. It is important to tell them what Christ has done for you and how he has changed your life. Then trust that God will use your words to help others believe in Him, too. Even more important, is that you radiate God's love through your actions.

Apply

- When's the last time you heard God's voice calling you?
- Who are you going to share the good news of Christ with today?

Pray

- That we avoid motion sickness
- That there is harmony on each boat

Tuesday, January 20: Bartolome/Sullivan Bay

Read: Psalm 118:24-29

24 This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
25 O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success.
26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.
27 The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.
28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.
29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Reflect: Crossing the Equator

Crossing the Equator and living in a different hemisphere probably isn't all that disconcerting. We've actually done it five times already this trip. But imagine if we were flying East-West instead of North-South. Then we would have crossed the International Date Line and lost an entire day! Now that would be quite disconcerting. As human beings we are very time conscious. We all have calendars, real or virtual, that help us organize our time. As twenty-first century westerners we schedule our lives by days, hours, and even minutes.

Psalm 118 teaches us that God's love endures forever. What is our response to this limitless and timeless love? God's eternal reign encompasses each day. *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it*. Throughout this day, this hour, this minute, we continually give God thanks, exalting Him for He is our God and because He is good. Indeed, His love endures forever.

Apply

- Am I too much a slave to time and deadlines?
- Do I thank God for every single day He's given me?

Pray

- That we have good weather for the week
- That we thank God for His forever-enduring love
- That we rejoice and be glad in every day God gives us

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Wednesday, January 21: Black Turtle Cove/Dragon Hill

Read: I Peter 3:15-16

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,
16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Reflect: Adapting to your Environment

Many Galapagos animals have very bright coloration, especially during their mating season. Such coloration is usually very species specific, meaning that individuals only respond to others that possess the unique body colors and patterns their particular species. This help assures that marine iguanas mate with only other marine iguanas and not with closely related land iguanas.

If we are to be effective witness for Christ, we must be aware of the different colors in our environment. People will listen and respond when you speak and act in languages that make sense to them. But as we adapt to the changing environments around us, one thing must remain constant—the central message of the gospel is God's grace and love. Be relevant. Carry the timeless message of Christ into the language of the changing times in which we live.

Apply

- How can I share the love and grace of Christ in ways that are relevant to others?
- What timeless messages am I sending with my words and actions?

Pray

- That we may radiate the love of Christ
- That we may see the rainbow of colors in Creation and at the same time be color-blind to the various skin tones of others

Thursday, January 22: Santa Cruz—Pt. Ayora/Highlands

Read: Psalm 24:1

1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it

Read: Genesis 1:28

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Reflect: The last of his kind

Spanish sailors who discovered the archipelago in 1535 actually named it after the abundant tortoises; the Spanish word for tortoise is *galápago*. These giant tortoises, which can weigh up to 600 pounds and live up to 150 years, are found only in the Galapagos Islands and a few other places (e.g., certain islands in the Indian Ocean). Interestingly, they lose their wrinkles as they age. The tortoises are well adapted to living on the Galapagos because they can survive for up to one year without food and water because they can recover metabolic water from their fat. For centuries, the tortoises were captured and kept alive on ships, where they were a constant source of fresh meat. Early colonists killed them for food and then simply moved to another island whenever they exhausted the tortoise population where they were living.

In 1917, Lonesome George was found on the island of Pinta. In 2012 he died and *Geochelone elephantopus abingdoni* was added to the long list of plants and animals that have perished because of human influence. When George was discovered, 65 years had passed since the last recorded sighting of any tortoises on Pinta. Although the feral goats were eradicated by 1990, it was too late for the tortoises. Lonesome George should be a reminder to us all that the fate of all living things on the earth rests in our human hands.

Apply

- What is our responsibility to preserve life on our planet?
- Does God expect us to be good stewards of his creation or may we exploit it as we see fit?

Pray

- That we all feel a part of the group
- That we continue to be healthy
- That we establish a good rapport with our crew

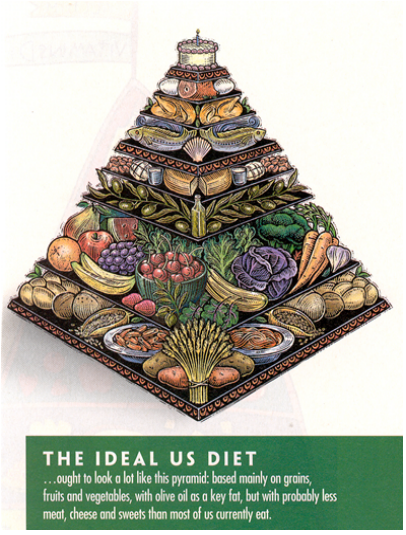
Friday, January 23: Floreana

Read: Romans 12:9-16

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.
10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.
11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.
12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Reflect: Basic Nutrition

By now we have probably eaten some new and different foods. Despite the unfamiliarity of some of the new things that we are eating, they are no doubt very nutritious. A healthy body depends on the basic building blocks of good nutrition: carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and water. The basis for our journey with God is love—we care called to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. Love is sincere, practical, patient, kind, sharing and humble. It is the basic nutrition of the Christian life.



What is nutritious love? It is the dish we are to serve up daily, and live on within the Christian community—the nutrition of God's Word. Just like we check our nutritional habits, we can measure how we are doing as Christ's disciple by His Word.

Apply

- Do I show real love to others?
- Do I honor others, and am eager for their advancement?
- Do I share with others when they are in need?
- Do I welcome others into my home, and into my life?
- Do I rejoice with those who rejoice?
- Do I mourn with those who mourn?
- Do I live in harmony with others?

Pray

- Give praise to a loving God
- That we show His love to others
- That we accept others in our group

Saturday, January 24: Espanola

Read: James 1: 2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.
4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Reflect: Soaring to the heavens

Today we will visit one of the oldest islands in the Galapagos—Espanola. It's practically the only location in the world where the waved albatross breeds. These large birds, which pair bond for life, do not build nests or even have a nesting site. Instead, both parents move their one egg from place to place, sometimes more than 100 yards from where it was laid. This movement seems to increase the egg's hatching rate. When parents temporarily leave their chick to find food, young birds group together into nurseries until each chick returns to its parents in response to their unique call.

The long, slender wings of the waved albatross are ideal for gliding. By choosing a high altitude (and hence wind speed), their eight-foot wingspan allows them to soar for hours. Because they have a difficult time becoming airborne, their nests are near cliffs so that they can jump off the edge to gain flight. Without wind to slow them down, they frequently have crash landings on the rocks.

Apply

- What characteristics or behaviors do you see in the waved albatross that gives us examples of the ways God wants us to live?

Pray

- That we don't get too much sun exposure
- That we have courage to share our faith with our crew members

Sunday, January 25: Back in Quito

Read: I Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises to him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

(The Message)

But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

Reflect: Peculiar People

Officially there are nine different indigenous peoples and cultures located within the Oriente (Amazonian jungle) region of Ecuador—Quichua, Shuar, Achuar, Huaorani, Siona, Shiwiar, Zaparo, and Cofan. Most living in this region drink chicha, maintain manioc (yucca) gardens, hunt monkeys with blowguns, and believe in the power of shamans.

We may think they are an unusual people, but this is not what the Bible means by peculiar. The word peculiar is translated *a people for God's own possession*, (New American Standard), *God's own purchased, special people* (The Amplified) and *peculiar* (King James). Back in King James' day it didn't mean strange or unusual. The English word 'peculiar' came from the Latin word 'peculium' which meant 'one's own private property.' The Old French word 'peculier' spoke of something that was exclusively one's own.

We are a peculiar people—we belong to God, we are owned by Him, we are greatly prized, and a people of His possession. Remember you are Christ's special person, saved to show forth His praise, His gracious dealings, and His glorious attributes.

Apply

- How do I celebrate the fact that I have been chosen by God?
- How am I trying to add members to God's holy nation?

Pray

- Give praise to our Creator—God of all people, every race, every language
- Give praise for the cross-cultural engagement that we are experiencing
- For a Sunday blessing for God's church worldwide

Monday, January 26: Homeward Bound

Read: Exodus 40:34-38

34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.
35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.
36 In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out:
37 But if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted.
38 So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.

Reflect: Traveling again!

At this point, I hope that you can say that you still like to travel because not everybody does. Packing, staying in unfamiliar places, coping with unplanned problems on roads, rivers, boats, and in airports can be worrisome and frustrating.

God's people are always traveling. They left Egypt, with its predictable slavery. Later, they left Sinai to travel through dry and dusty places. But they were there before and they knew that God would provide for them—water, food, and protection from disease and enemies. With God in their midst, not even the unpredictable is worrisome.

Traveling with God makes it impossible to put down roots. God's people learned that being Jewish was not everything, that the tabernacle and the temple were not God's permanent dwellings, and that the Promised Land was not the end of the journey. Traveling with God makes everything else secondary.

The closest Christians come to putting down roots, to having a place, is to be where God dwells. And today God dwells among the people he loves for Jesus' sake, the body of Christ, the church.

Apply

- Do I spend too much time worrying about the unpredictable?
- Have I "put down my roots" in a place where God dwells?
- Am I following the lead of the Eternal King?

Pray

- That we still have a positive feeling about traveling
- That we trust that God is with us as we travel
- That our flights are on schedule
- That we have safety on the planes and in the airports
- That we are thankful for all that we have experienced on this trip

Tuesday, January 27: Re-Entry Shock

Read: Psalm 77:11-14

11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.
13 Your ways O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?
14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Reflect: Zikkarons

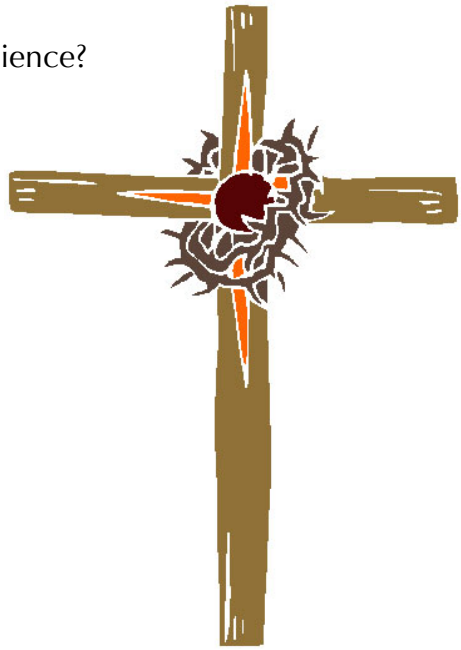
Memories, we have so many from this wonderful country of Ecuador. We have many tangible items to help us remember this time—photographs, souvenirs (French word for "to remember"), hopefully some tan lines, unique stories and experiences, new friends, etc.

The Hebrew word "zikkaron" means memorial. The Bible uses tangible items to remember God's faithful presence. Passover was a memorial feast to God's mercy in Egypt. As the Israelites ate the Passover meal, each family relived the experience of its ancestors. The pillar of stones marked Israel's passage through the Jordan River. The heap of rough stones were seen and touched to remind the Israelites that God was there when He parted the waters. Zikkarons are so important that Jesus instituted the communion service. Through bread and wine we experience the power of the body and blood of Jesus.

It is good for us to remember. To reminisce is to be reminded that God has never failed us. And when we visit with a new IDIS W45 friend, hear birdcalls, see our photographs, smell roses, or touch a zikkaron; it will be a reminder of God's faithfulness and goodness. When we remember all that God has done, it is not hard to trust Him for the future.

Apply

- What zikkarons do I carry with me of this three-week experience?
- What zikkarons have I left for the people of Ecuador?



Pray

- Give praise to God—the Resurrection, the Life
- Give praise to God—for His presence in our lives
- Give thanks for memories
- That God will bless our life's journeys

Participants

Ellie Benzel
Amber Bingle
Kaitlin Brace
Ben Brower
Andrew DeMann
Nathan DeVries
Cory Doot
Nicholas Haveman
Jenny Holsem
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Maggie Kamp
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Dylan Lambert
Alaina Mahn
Donna Pilarski
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Mia Rienstra
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Courtney Selvius
Claire Spoelhof
Lauren Strohbehn
Ariana Strydhorst
Elliott Tauscheck
Kristen Van De Riet
David Van Drunen
Dylan VanderBaan
Jamie Visser
Michael Wierenga
Amy Zinn
Curtis Blankespoor
Darren Proppe

Emergency contacts

Jan 9-10	Bird Garden Guest House	593-2-250-4713
	www.birdgardenguesthouse.com	Fax 593-2-222-6340
	Emergency: See Travel Agent contact information below	
Jan 11-14	Kapawi Lodge	593-2-600-9333
	www.kapawi.com	Fax 593-2-600-9334
	It is very difficult to contact us during our rainforest excursion	
Jan 15-17	Bird Garden Guest House	593-2-250-4713
	www.birdgardenguesthouse.com	Fax 593-2-222-6340
	Emergency: See Travel Agent contact information below	
Jan 18-25	Eden/Aida Maria yachts	593-2-254-6028
	www.aidamariatravel.com	Fax 593-2-254-8329
	It is very difficult to contact us during our Galapagos excursion	
Jan 26	Delta Airlines	
Travel Agent	Roberto Cedeno	593-9-854-9664
	Emergency only	
U.S. Embassy	U.S. Embassy	593-2-398-5000
	ecuador.usembassy.gov	Fax 593-2-398-5268