



GO

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

**Preparing Your Heart
To Serve Well**

“

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking:
“Who will I send? Who will go for us?”*

I said: “Here I am. Send me.”

— Isaiah 6:8

”

Teammate:

Every year, hundreds of coaches, athletes and volunteers from all around the United States go on short-term international trips with FCA. It is important to prepare yourself before you go, so you can fully experience your outreach. Jesus will touch your heart in a very specific way as you serve Him. There will be promptings by the Holy Spirit to make a change or shift in your heart, your thinking, or in your approach to life. As the Lord speaks to you through His Word, His people and His Spirit, we want to prepare you for a fresh encounter with Him.

We desire for you to be passionate about learning, growing and changing. You must always ask yourself on your trip: “How can I serve?” If you do, God will use you in a great way! The goal of this pre-trip devotional is for you to be fully ready for the work God has handpicked for you. God has already placed your name on a specific work.

To help you prepare, we have written a short series of devotions. Please start these devotions five days before you leave on your trip and complete before you leave.

Our hope is for these devotions to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ, unify you with others on your trip and prepare your heart for a powerful time of spiritual transformation when you go.

Your Teammate in Christ,



Dan Britton
Chief Field Officer

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GO

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Preparing Your Heart To Serve Well

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DAY ONE

Don't Miss It!

“

*Busyness makes us stop caring about
the things we care about.*

— Mark Buchanan

”

DAY ONE

During my morning run, I don't like to stop—for anything. The goal is to stay focused, keep moving and finish strong. Stopping isn't part of the formula. However, one morning I saw a car crawling toward me with the passenger window down. Noticing the elderly man leaning across the passenger seat, he wanted to ask me something. Since my shirt had a big FCA logo on the front that was bearing witness, I felt convicted ... I mean compelled ... to stop and help.

As I approached the window, I saw maps and directions scattered all over the front seat. He had every map known to mankind at his fingertips. His papers were his GPS—old school! He asked, “Can you help me?” Breathing heavily and a little bothered that I had to stop, I said, “Sure.” He asked where the Ritz Charles was located. Stunned, I pointed to a sign 10 feet in front of his car that said “Ritz Charles.” He simply said, “Thanks,” and he traveled two seconds to his destination.

On my run home, I started to think about how crazy it was that the man was right in front of his destination, but he didn't see it. The Lord quickly took my judgmental attitude toward the lost driver and shifted it toward me. We can so easily recognize it in others, but it is hard to see cluelessness in the mirror. The Lord quietly whispered, “You are the directionally challenged driver. You don't get your head up and see where you are going, so you miss the ultimate destination.” I was convicted.

I can get so caught up in all the stuff around me—the unreturned calls, the unopened emails, the uncompleted to-dos—that I don't see the destination. I miss it.

“*The battle is not against sin or difficulties or circumstances, but against being so absorbed in work that we are not ready to face Jesus Christ at every turn.*”

— Oswald Chambers

In life, we have so many responsibilities and commitments that we drift toward complexity and miss our ultimate destinations. We do life, and we feel like we are drowning. There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel, and we can never get it all done.

News flash: You're never going to get it all done! Life is bottomless and relentless. Every day, it will get harder. The ultimate destination is not completing all our tasks. It is not wrapping up life in a nice little package with a ribbon on top. Life is messy. It is hard. We will never control it, and we have to watch out or else it will quickly control us. Don't miss it! In all you do, make sure you never miss what your life is all about.

Always keep your head up, eyes fixed on Jesus. The win is fulfilling the calling God has placed in your lives and being faithful to the missions and tasks He has for you every day.

And in view of this, we always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

— 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Pastor Warren Wiersbe frames these verses into three areas: **Your Worth**, **Your Walk** and **Your Witness**. Because of our future hope in Christ, we must be faithful today as we serve. Keep these three areas in mind as you go on your trip to serve:

1. Your Worth

The Lord has called you to serve Him on your trip, and your worth to God is usually revealed in the trials and tough times. Wiersbe writes, "When our faith is tried, we are revealing our worth." Scripture encourages us in 1 Peter 1:6-9: "You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." God has called you. You have great worth, so serve well as you go.

2. Your Walk

Character must lead to conduct. How we live, act and conduct ourselves is much more important than the impact of your trip. I have seen too many people look great on the outside, but they were rotting on the inside. Oswald Chambers says it well: "Not only must the inner sanctuary be kept right with God, but the outer

courts as well are to be brought into perfect accord with the purity God gives us by His grace.” Walk with Christ-like purpose: a daily, consistent walk that sets you apart. Pay attention to your walk and recognize that your actions and words make the biggest difference. Ephesians 5:15-16 gives us our marching orders: “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” We can walk victoriously because of His power. Plug into His power every single day. Draw near to God. Ask God to strengthen your walk on your trip.

3. Your Witness

As we receive His grace, we reveal His glory. Reflect God’s glory as you minister on your trip. We must always ask ourselves: Is Jesus Christ being glorified in my work? Do people see Christ in me as I serve? Our witness should be contagious.

Don’t miss it. You can easily become consumed with day-to-day activities. It takes discipline to keep your head up and realize you are called because you have great worth; your walk matters more than anything, and your witness needs to glorify Christ.

Take Action:

1. What are possible distractions that may prevent you from seeing the ultimate purpose of this international trip? Write them down.

2. Meditate on 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.
Rewrite these two verses in your own words.

3. Evaluate your worth, your walk and your witness.
Where does the Lord desire change?

4. How will you maintain a servant’s heart on your trip?



DAY TWO

The 4 O's

“

*One person with courage
is a majority.*

—Thomas Jefferson

”

DAY TWO

Too many people are not thriving. They are barely surviving and unable to finish the race of faith well. I remember what a professor said during my freshman year in college: “Look to your left and to your right, only one of you will be here in four years.” Thinking it was a “scare” tactic at first, I realized the truth in what he said after my two freshman roommates didn’t make it to the second semester. The same can be said about life: Too many people are not living well and not ending well. Personally, I have seen great, talented Christians crash and burn.

All of us experience four things: **Opportunity, Opposition, Obedience** and **Outcome**. We all have opportunities to serve, minister, share, teach and reach others in our communities and on the mission field. Clearly, we each face opposition that attempts to stop us from finishing well. There is obedience to the calling God puts in our lives and to live worthy of the Gospel. And there will be a clear outcome as we serve faithfully. When we truly understand this concept, we can minister courageously despite the circumstances.

Where do opportunities come from? Have you ever heard the phrase “God is opening a door?” Do all opportunities come from God? It’s hard to believe that even though we have great abilities and gifts, and we have worked hard to get an open door, it is God who orchestrates and provides the opportunities. It is important for us to know that God gives and takes away opportunities. He will use us, but opportunities are God’s part, not ours.

Oftentimes, we hesitate to walk through open doors of opportunity. We wait for confirmation before we make our move. We want to be certain that everything will work out just right. All we have to do is walk through it, right? Whatever is on the other side will work out perfectly. When we know the open door of opportunity is from God, we think nothing will stand in our way.

But what about opposition? Could that be waiting for us as well? Paul seems to see it that way and even expects it.

But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

— 1 Corinthians 16:8-9

Oftentimes, we equate the moving of God with blessings, easy roads and clear sailing. When things don’t go well, we question: Did I make a mistake? Did I hear God correctly? Should I even be on this international trip? But clear sailing is not the kind of open door we often experience, is it? Walking in step with the Holy Spirit is not an opposition-free road. In fact, it’s often just the opposite!

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.

— Acts 20:22

Courage is proven true only when tested. Paul is being led by the Holy Spirit through open doors of tremendous opportunity, yet great opposition awaited him. He faced prison and beatings—two things we are unlikely to encounter. Instead, we have three main competitors. Their names are World, Flesh and Devil. Each one is a formidable opponent and has only one goal: To keep you from crossing the finish line. The World will distract you, causing you to focus on matters and issues that don't really count for eternity. The Flesh will delude you, turning your attention away from serving others and toward taking care of yourself, convincing you there's nothing as important as having your needs met. The Devil seeks to destroy you by finding your weaknesses and exploiting them. And your opposition doesn't care how you go down, just as long as you give up.

Obedience is when courage shows up. Paul still obeyed God's voice and walked through the open door. When the going gets tough, the tough start obeying. Joshua 1:9 says, "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Sometimes we shy away from the open door of opportunity because we can see the opposition. Could God be leading you into an opportunity that requires courage? Or could it be an opportunity that requires obedience that sometimes confounds common sense? That sounds like a God-sized opportunity to me. Instead of leaning away, we need to lean in—that's when obedience kicks in.

“God is not looking for nibblers of the possible, but the grabbers of the impossible.”

— C.T. Studd (Missionary to China and Africa)

The easy opportunity is for passive people—pleasure-seekers, comfort-zoners and buck-passers. The challenging opportunity is for purpose people—mission-finders, boundary-pushers and shot-takers. Purpose people realize God-sized opportunities require God-sized courage that only He can give.

Living courageously is not about personal happiness, comfort or convenience. Courageous living requires obedience to walk with the Spirit through the open doors of opportunity, even in the face of opposition. Obedience must be our response.

The fourth “O” is outcomes, and they are God’s business, not ours. It is the God of the universe who is responsible for how things turn out. When we are obedient, we can rest in His results. There is peace when we know the Lord is taking care of the outcome. Either He is in control of the results or we are. We must always remind ourselves that the outcome is God’s department.

“The source of our courage is more important than our ability to muster up self-confidence,” said Thomas Jefferson. He almost got it right. As believers we know “nothing is impossible with God.” Are we expecting God to open doors of opportunities? Let’s not shrink back when the opposition comes. Let’s be courageous and walk in courageous obedience, step for step with the Spirit. Then we can trust the Lord for the outcomes.

Take Action:

1. How can you remind yourself that all opportunities come from God and not your hard work?

2. What type of opposition have you encountered while preparing for this trip?

3. How has courage played into your obedience?

4. Write down three outcomes you want to see happen on your trip. Why would it be easy to explain why you made it happen? Write down why God will do it, not you.



The background of the slide features a light beige map of Asia, with the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and East Asia visible. A faint compass rose is positioned in the lower-left corner, with its lines extending across the map. The text is overlaid on this background.

DAY THREE

The Larry Principle

“

*Life's most urgent and persistent question is:
'What are you doing for others?'*

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

”

Larry, at only 13 years old, impacted my life.

At the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, we have a tradition that has occurred at every camp since 1956. On the last night, we have an open mic session when athletes come forward and share how camp impacted their lives. It is always the highlight of the entire week.

I will never forget an FCA Leadership Camp I was directing several years ago when Larry got up to share at open mic night. After a terrific week of training middle school and high school students on how to impact their campuses for Christ, it was time to hear how God had worked in their hearts regarding leadership. Service projects, leadership workshops, hands-on training, inspiring speakers and powerful worship had marked the week.

Larry was a 5-foot tall 7th grader from inner-city Kansas City, and he was a hit with the campers. He was funny, loveable, charming and outspoken. His contagious laugh and raspy voice made Larry stand out from the others, and he became the camp favorite.

The open mic session had already gone 30 minutes too long, but Larry stood up to be the last in line to share. Larry was never short of words, but when he leaned into the microphone with his raspy voice, he shared a single transformational leadership statement. This one sentence hit me between the eyes!

Larry said, ***“If you ain’t serving, you ain’t leading!”***

He turned around, walked off the stage and sat down. Larry, the great theologian, had spoken. I was in awe. I have read hundreds of leadership books and articles, listened to tons of leadership talks and podcasts, written devotions about leadership, and I had just heard the ultimate leadership challenge from a 7th grader! It has since become my personal definition of leadership.

Larry’s words still ring in my ears. It was a watershed moment for me. Larry had just communicated in seven words one of the most profound things I had ever heard on leadership. Larry’s insight has changed the way I lead and serve. God used Larry in my life.

It’s all about serving, not leading.

We need to be reminded constantly that we are here on Earth to serve well. There will be lots of opportunities on your trip to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Serve first and God will show up.

It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.

— Matthew 20:26-28

Why are Jesus' words hard to live by? What gets in the way of serving?

Everybody wants to be a leader, but not a servant. As a result, whenever I have the blessing to speak at one of FCA's Leadership Camps, I usually say to the young leaders at the beginning of camp, "Welcome to Servant Camp!" We don't call camps that, because no one would show up. But, imagine if in a few days you introduced yourself like this: "Hi, I am here to serve, because we are on a serving trip." That would change things.

When Billy Graham's late wife Ruth stated to the president of Wheaton College that the university trained leaders, he replied, "No, not leaders, but servants." We need to go into training to become servants, not leaders. Our devotion and desire should consume us to serve with everything we have.

Is there a fire burning within you to serve? How can you make an impact on your trip by serving?

Too often we get caught in the "leadership trap," which moves us from a serving mindset to a leadership mindset. We think that in order to be successful, we need to be a strong, upfront leader who is controlling every aspect. Instead, we need to be positioned to serve the people God brings our way.

If we serve first, God will pour out His blessing. If we lead first, serving gets pushed to the side. The leadership trap is when we lead first instead of serving first. Serve first and serve well.

Don't be fooled: You may think you are leading, but if you're not serving, you are not really leading. Let the Larry Principle burn in your heart: "If you ain't serving, you ain't leading!"

Take Action:

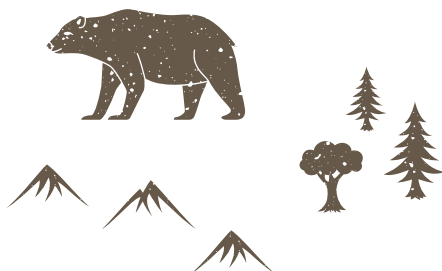
1. How would you describe your leadership style? Why? What would others say? Be bold enough to ask a couple of friends what they think.

2. How does the Larry Principle impact you?

3. Write down three ways you can be a servant on your trip.

4. How did Jesus serve? Read John 13:1-15. How can you serve in that way?

5. Spend some time reading and meditating on these verses: Mark 10:45; Luke 17:10; Galatians 5:13. How do these verses challenge you to be a servant on your trip?





DAY FOUR

Rubber Band Faith

“

*I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone
in Israel with such great faith.*

— Jesus

”

Faith is like a rubber band!

I have always loved rubber bands. They're one of the greatest inventions ever. They're simple, practical and useful. There are many names for this wonderful invention—binder, elastic band, lackey band, and my favorite: Gumband. Everybody knows what a rubber band is, it's a short length of rubber and latex formed in the shape of a loop. Uses of a rubber band are many, but bottom line, rubber bands simply hold multiple objects together.

An interesting effect of rubber bands is that stretching one produces heat. Try pressing it against your lips while stretching it, you will feel it get hot. Once you release it, it will get cooler.

Back in 1845, Stephen Perry from England patented the rubber band. It is hard to imagine life without it.

I always keep a rubber band around my wrist. But my habit took on new meaning this past year when I noticed a friend of mine also wore one. When I asked him why he wore his rubber band, he said it was a constant reminder that God wanted to stretch him daily. Rubber bands are pretty useless unless they are stretched. When they are extended beyond their standard form, they can hold things together and accomplish their purpose. After hearing my friend's reasoning, my rubber band took on a whole new meaning.

Faith, like a rubber band, is useless unless it's stretched.

Now the solo rubber band on my wrist is a constant reminder to have rubber band faith. Faith is not really faith unless it is stretched. It needs to be tested. Our faith needs to be heated up, because when we step out of our comfort zones and count on God showing up, we grow and expand our faith. Jesus was astonished only twice in Scripture: once for great faith in Matthew 8:5-10 (rubber band faith) and once for lack of faith in Mark 6:4-6 (weak faith).

Then Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.'

—Matthew 8:10

In Matthew 8:10, the Roman commander had so much faith in Jesus, he asked Jesus not to come to heal his servant, but to just speak the words and his servant would be healed. Jesus' response was, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

Is your faith getting stronger as the years go by? Is it growing or declining? When you are willing to step out and stretch yourself, God shows up and does what you can't do. That is rubber band faith!

True faith begins at the edge of our comfort zone.

When we are willing to go to the edge and be stretched, God does what we can't do. We need to engage in situations where we whisper, *"God, if You don't show up, I am bound to fail. I can't do this in my own strength."*

It's hard to have rubber band faith, because we often rely too much on our own abilities. We focus on our strengths instead of His power and presence. When we have rubber band faith, we have an opportunity to see God do the supernatural—things we can't explain! And we'll immediately respond, "Only God could do this!" instead of, "I did it!"

We are made to be stretched.

Ask the Lord for rubber band faith—the kind that requires a moving of God's Spirit. Be bold and courageous. Step out. Let God stretch your faith so He can accomplish His purposes through you.

It's time to be stretched, because you will be stretched on your trip. You will be forced out of your comfort zone as you experience a new culture, new foods, new customs—new everything! International trips are the ultimate rubber band faith adventure. You will learn so much about your faith and yourself.

I still remember vividly the conversation I had with an FCA leader after a trip to Korea in 2007. As we were walking back to pack up after a great week of sports camps, he leaned over and said, "I realized something this week; I am not the leader I thought I was."

He was reflecting on how he was taken out of his comfort zone, and he was stretched all week long. It was amazing to see him return to America and become a servant-leader. He later said to me, "I guess the Lord had to take me to Korea and stretch me so I could be the leader He wanted me to be!"

You will be stretched. Let God stretch you. Let others stretch you. He is not done with you. Maybe God needs to take you to a different country to develop full faith. Super faith. Big faith. Powerful faith. Rubber band faith.

Take Action:

1. When has your faith been stretched the most?
How did God show up?
2. What areas do you believe God will stretch you on your trip? How can you increase your faith in these areas?
3. How would your life change if you lived with rubber band faith?
4. Ask the Lord to prepare your heart for the trip. Ask Him to teach you how to have rubber band faith. Ask Him to give you extra grace and mercy as He stretches you.





DAY FIVE

Triple Threat

“

Live our lives in such a way that when our feet hit the floor in the morning, Satan shudders and says, “Oh no...they’re awake!”

— Is there a reference???

”

DAY FIVE

I still remember being a 12-year-old aspiring basketball player and hearing NBA Hall of Famer Adrian Dantley teach about basketball's "triple threat." I learned that when you first receive the ball, you are in a great position with three potential options: dribble, shoot or pass. I wouldn't soon forget the power of the triple threat. It changed the way I played basketball, and it even helped me beat my older brother in one-on-one a few times.

As followers of Christ, we also have a "triple threat." Our opponent, Satan, wants to defeat us and take us out. He doesn't want us to win and he works overtime to make sure you and I are discouraged and overwhelmed. He wants us to believe the goal in life is to just survive—get through one more day. But it doesn't have to be this way. We need to be a spiritual threat.

When I coach, I always tell players they need to be a threat. If you get the ball and the defender knows you aren't going to do anything with the ball, the defender will smother you. But if the other players know you are a threat, they will be on their heels when you have the ball. It changes everything! In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul gives us a great spiritual triple threat. It is simply this: BE, PRAY, GIVE. This kind of triple threat will surely put Satan on his heels!

***Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Threat #1: Be Joyful

Paul says to be joyful always, not sometimes. It would be easier to live this out if he would have left out the word "always." Always seems impossible; sometimes is more realistic. This is a command that instructs us to be full of joy all the time. It is like saying, "You WILL do life with joy in your heart – all the time. You got it?" How many times throughout the day am I not joyful? I do not have enough fingers to count! Many times when we are competing, joy depends on how we are playing or how our team is doing. Joy has a way of leaking because of worry, anxiety and fear.

Joy is more than happiness. It is at the core of our soul. Joy is internal and happiness is external. Happiness can come and go, but joy is here to stay. God gives joy to us, and happiness is given to us by the circumstances around us. In John 15:11, Jesus said, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

Are you feeling complete because of the joy Jesus has deposited in your heart? His joy should fill up our hearts so the outside stuff does not impact us. Are you so full of joy that the world has no room?

A good friend once challenged me with this thought (he knew I was influenced too much by the outside stuff): “Do not let anyone or anything rob you of the joy God has placed in you.” We should experience joy whether we win or lose. Joy is off-limits. Do you have joy in your life? Do others see it? You need to have joy overflowing, pouring or even gushing out of your life. Are you a threat to Satan because joy is pouring out of your heart, and it is affecting others for Christ?

Threat #2: Pray Continually

Once again, Paul makes an extreme command. If instructing us to pray was not hard enough, he had to tack on that extreme word “continually.” You might be saying to yourself, “I pray, just not all the time.” Paul is saying that we should always be connected to our Maker, always having access to the throne of glory. There should always be a prayer in our hearts and on our lips.

Many times we pray when we need something like a big win before a game. A couple of prayer principles have radically changed my life. One of them is that prayer is not telling God what He already knows, but God revealing to us what we do not know. Our goal is not to give God a report through our prayer. Trust me: God does not need updated. What He wants is for us to dig deep and find out what is below the surface. Prayer should be a discovery time, not a reporting time. Praying should be a workout.

The other principle is prayer changes me the most. This impacts the way I pray, because I no longer pray seeking God’s hand of blessing, but instead I’m seeking God’s face! I ask for God to reveal Himself to me, not to do something for me. Prayer takes effort and time. Intentional prayer is hard! Like David wrote in Psalms, we need to pursue God in our prayers. Prayer is a way of following hard after God (Psalm 63:8). Prayer should change the way we live. E.M. Bounds said, “Get people to pray, and they will stop sinning, because prayer creates a distaste for sinning.” Are your prayers shaking the gates of hell? When you pray is Satan on his heels?



Threat #3: Give Thanks

In all three threats, Paul uses extreme commands. First, it was “always,” then “continually,” and, finally, it is “all.” Just like in Ephesians 4:29, we need to use our words to build up others, bringing praise. When we speak, we either speak life or death. Giving thanks means speaking life in every situation: on an international trip, in the locker room, classroom, home, on the phone and even in text messaging. Proverbs 12:18 says reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. When you speak, do you bring healing? Is Satan threatened by the way you talk? Does he fear every time you open your mouth because he knows you are speaking blessing and thanksgiving?

The triple threat is simple – BE, PRAY, GIVE. What are you waiting for? There are people you will meet who are depending on you being joyful, praying continually and giving thanks. Put Satan on his heels today. Our opponent will do everything to prevent you from being a triple threat! Let’s do a jab step together. Ready. Set. Go!

Take Action:

1. Are you a threat to Satan?
Why or why not?
2. Out of the three threats, which one are you doing best?
Which one needs work?
3. How can you be a triple threat on your trip?
4. How can the triple threat change your life? How can it change others as you become a triple threat?

NOTES





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