

Immerse

YES, AND

On the Go Devotional Guide

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Fundamental Notes:

Purpose: Explore, discover. Grow. The purpose of this devotional is to provide another way for us to engage God and God's Word, reassuring us that God is with us wherever we are, no matter what we might be doing. This devotional is not a substitute for church. This devotional is not meant to replace the focus or importance of being in community with others in our faith exploration, discovery, and growth.

Goal: The last time I checked, none of us have all the answers. The goal of this devotional is to wrestle with God's word and open the door (window) for God to speak to us. When we wrestle, we provide a platform of opportunity to be shaped and formed (like a potter at the wheel) to God's intended purpose. Asking questions on our own, rather than simply take another person's word for it, helps us develop our independent character and grow stronger in self.

Structure: At the front end of this devotional guide are things meant to center your focus. You may read them one at a time and one each day, or you can dive in head first and double team them. The one activity I would like to encourage everyone to take time on, is "Yes And." This activity gets at the core of validating the importance of all we learn through our faith and involvement in church and all we learn by participating in extracurricular activities.

One a Day. Two a Days. Two sides of the coin: As you reach the core lessons, you will find that they are labeled as A and B. Sometimes, there is even a "Consider This" addendum. There are many consistent themes throughout scripture and as we might already know, there are often two sides to consider within each theme. The layout of this devotional is meant to give the flexibility to explore the devotions one each day, if you are away for a weekend, or if you have a group gathered, you are welcome to take each topic in its entirety. The "Consider This" addendum provides further thought to consider and dig deeper. In essence, the hope is for you to use how it works best for you.

Initial Thought: This thought comes at the beginning of each devotional as insight to what and where the devotional topic might be leading. This thought is meant to give you a taste of what is to come and make you hungry to dig deeper.

What Now? This thought comes at the close of each devotional as an ending challenge or question. What we explore and discover through the devotions should not end with the turning of each page. Our growth through this journey will be dependent on our ability to listen and learn and leverage our knowledge throughout our lives. This thought will work to help us build a bridge back to the church or worship community that grounds us. It will remind us of how we can stay connected when we are away, and if the opportunity presents itself, challenge us to come back and share our experiences and discoveries with others. We are all called to be the light and a candle is only as good as the light it shares.

Consider This: This section is for digging deeper. None of these devotions cover everything there is to know about the topic. This section provides additional scripture references, reflections, or stories to consider.

Practice: The scripture readings for each devotional are cited, but you are strongly encouraged to open the good book, open an app, look in the top drawer of the hotel dresser, or pack a bible-to-go.

A note from the author...

As a former athlete seeking to play at a very high level, with all the expectations of coaches, scouts, parents, teammates, and even those I didn't know; a parent of three children who love to get out and go and do; a pastor of a very active, mobile, and passionate congregation; and a convicted believer of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; I get that the balance between our call to church/ faith and extracurricular activities (all the other things we get involved in) is tense. If you don't think it is, either you balance life beautifully and are doing all the right things, or you aren't paying close enough attention to one or the other.

Throughout the course of the last 17 years, since my deep encounter with God and baseball through Athletes in Action the summer of 2001, when I had the privilege of playing in the M.I.N.K. Collegiate Wood Bat League out of Kansas City, Missouri, I have become increasingly aware of the compartmentalization that exists in having God in a box on one side and my other activities in a separate box on the other. I don't think it was intentional. As a matter of fact, I am almost certain it was just the natural flow of things around me. I participated in church and my faith was strong, but I wasn't cognizant of my faith playing a part in the other things I was doing. I had a time for this and a time for that, but they didn't mix. They were like oil and water.

My experiences that summer, of having God be the foundation and gift giver of all the other things I was doing, enriched my life and my experiences far beyond anything I could imagine. I loved baseball and on top of that I had become a good ballplayer, but with God, my experiences on the field, in practice, with my teammates, and even in wins and losses, became so much better. What I was pleased to discover was that I didn't need to stop what I was doing to recognize and worship God. God was already involved. I just needed to open my eyes to see and my heart to feel just how present God was. God was with me on the field as much as God was at church on Sunday mornings. It was up to me to grow in my awareness and understanding.

Since that summer, I have juggled transitions from being a potential top draft pick, getting hurt during a career year, bouncing back, graduating college, being given another shot in trying out for the big leagues, falling in love with coaching, falling in love with the church, walking away from playing the game, being called to seminary (school for pastors), asking all the "why" questions, graduating from seminary, being called to serve the church, meeting my wife, adopting our first child and having two more in as many years, going back to school for more brain busting, buying a home and moving a couple times. In the midst of it all, the one thing I have come to learn, not only for myself, but for many of the students and families I have worked with, is that the tension between our desire to be involved with the church/ faith and the demands of our extracurricular activities is all too real. The trend today leans toward our time being spent with extracurricular activities far more than with church/ faith. As a result, our extracurricular activities have more influence over us, simply because of the time we spend, than church/ faith. This might be the way it is, but that doesn't mean it is the way it has to be. This "reality" does not have to define us. We have a choice. Better yet, we have an opportunity to bring it all together.

The foundation of this devotional is built on two very key theological beliefs: 1. God created and made all things, and then, God looked at creation and pronounced it "Good." This means, everything that is good, is rooted in God. 2. God is everywhere (omnipresent). This means that there is no place we can go that God isn't already there. So, no matter what we are doing, where we are doing it, who we are doing it with, or when we are doing it, God is a key part. What this also can mean is that there are no timeouts with God. God doesn't take timeouts from us and we can't take timeouts from God. This is not meant to be a burden, it is meant to be a blessing, and something to be celebrated throughout our lives, in all we say and do.

THE SNEEZE

They walked in tandem, each of the ninety-two students filing into the already crowded auditorium. With their rich maroon gowns flowing and the traditional caps, they looked almost as grown up as they felt. Dads swallowed hard behind broad smiles, and Moms freely brushed away tears

This class would NOT pray during the commencements, not by choice, but because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it. The principal and several students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance, and no one asked for blessings on the graduates or their families. The speeches were nice, but they were routine until the final speech received a standing ovation.

A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone. He stood still and silent for just a moment, and then, it happened.

All 92 students, every single one of them, suddenly SNEEZED !!!!

The student on stage simply looked at the audience and said, 'GOD BLESS YOU' And he walked off the stage.

The audience exploded into applause. This graduating class had found a unique way to invoke God's blessing on their future with or without the court's approval.

This is a true story; it happened at the University of Maryland.

Consider This:

No matter how hard the world may try to keep God out of things, it is impossible. How? Because God is already there and there is nothing anyone can do about that. Our role is to help illumine the presence of God and allow the power of the Spirit to fill us and use us, giving us the courage, strength, and hope to be the Salt of the earth and Light of the world (Matthew 5: 13-16).

What Now? Yes, And Theology is a powerful way to dig deeper into how we can better understand God's role in all aspects of life. Please look at the following page and work through the worksheet provided.

Yes, And...

Contrary to what several “church folks” believe, I don’t think our many extra-curricular activities (i.e. soccer, dance, family time at the lake, etc.) on Sundays are the “devil”. Actually, I think the activities we choose to participate in are vital to our growth and understanding of who God has made us to be. These activities can teach us many of the same characteristics being in church can. With this being said, I don’t believe our activities are ever an acceptable excuse to not be engaged in the church. If our goal is to be the best version of ourselves, then we not only need to sharpen our athletic abilities, fine tune our agility and balance, and relax with quality family time, we need to be active participants in the church (aka: the body of Christ) worshipping joyfully, growing spiritually, living faithfully, and serving others boldly.

To get started, I would like to ask you to brainstorm a list of characteristics, qualities, beliefs, values, etc. you learn, develop, and obtain from each of the two columns below. (I.E. Teamwork, loyalty, unity, support, accountability, trust)

Extra-Curricular Activities

Sports, School, Clubs, Camps, Hobbies, Family Time

Church- Faith- God

Worship, Youth Group, Conferences, Spiritual Growth Classes, Bible Studies

The goal of this exercise is to validate the value and worth of both extra-curricular activities we participate in and our faith. The reason there is a dotted line in the middle of the two columns is to show that there are similarities of what we can be learning and growing from throughout our life. The Church is a great place to learn and grow and develop as a person. Some would say it is the safest and best place to learn how to be the best person you can possibly be. I will echo that is it certainly a great community intended to strengthen each individual a part of it. I think that is God’s true intention for the church. However, I will say that I don’t think the Church is the only place we can learn value and important lessons. The church is not the only positive influence we have in our lives. The point is, God is working in and through all aspects of our life. The Holy Spirit is not bound to the walls of a church building but is actively at work in and through us in all we do. God is with us at Church for sure, God calls us there. God is also with us at home, school, on the field, court, in the studio, at the park, or anywhere. All throughout this devotional, an intentional “Yes, And” theology will be used to enhance the importance of not only the importance of our faith, but also God’s activity through everything we do.