

# Immerse

TO “NOT DO” OR “DO”

**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.

# To “NOT DO” or “DO”

Initial Thought: As I have grown a bit older, learning to think for myself and comprehend situations and information on my own, I have learned that you can know “what to do” in one of two ways: how “not to do” and how “to do”.

## “NOT DO”...

### Read Exodus 20: 1-20

*\*Take notes or underline key words or phrases in your bible as you read\**

*The first five books of the bible are a section known as the Pentateuch or Torah; “Law”. Exodus is the second book of the Torah, following Genesis and preceding Leviticus, and contains the stories of God’s people being delivered out of slavery to the promised land. The stories span a time frame of 40+ years, in which God’s chosen people traveled through the wilderness learning how to depend on God and what it means to gain true life.*

One of the things I have noticed in reviewing the Ten Commandments, is that most of them are structured in the negative. These Ten Commandments are famous for marking a clear line in the sand that you are not to cross: Thou Shalt NOT have other idols; Thou Shalt NOT steal; Thou Shalt NOT lie; Thou Shalt NOT murder; Thou Shalt NOT wish for things your neighbor has and you don’t. “Thou Shalt Not” is meant to scream at us and tell us to stay clear.

*Note: If you think about it, the only law we ever really needed was the first. If we were to faithfully follow the first commandment, the other nine would never come into play. I think God must have known what our tendencies would be, don’t you?*

**Reflection:** Most of us know what this is like. Anytime we have been told “NO” by a parent, coach, or teacher, we have learned that we are “not to do” whatever we were thinking of doing. How does this work for you? Does being told “NO” effectively teach you and instruct you on how to be better?

Some of us respond well to this form of instruction. We do well knowing there are hard lines in the sand we are not to cross, and if we do, there will be consequences for our actions. I think these lines are easier to define in the activities we participate in than in the big decisions of life we are faced with, but the concept is the same.

All of our actions and choices, whether they seem big or small, have consequences. There is a right way and a wrong way. In order to get the results we desire, whether we are learning to play an instrument, balance on the tip of our toes, shoot a jump shot, or be successful in life, it is important for us to learn the right way. In order to do that, sometimes we need to know what the wrong way is.

As Thomas Edison worked to invent the lightbulb, it took him hundreds of tries doing things the wrong way in order to finally discover the right way. Ultimately, what Edison did was work to rule out all the ways “not to do” it, to find the way “to do” it.

**What Now?** Even though we may know what “not to do”, our human tendency and temptation (like Adam and Eve knowing they were not to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil), is to flirt with the edge of what we are “not to do”. To do this is a trap. We might even say to ourselves that rules are meant to be broken. No! The reason we are told “not to do” something is because someone else has figured out that it is not good for us. Living close to the edge, with the temptation of crossing that line, is a dangerous place to be. For some there may be no turning back. Don’t let that be you. Take the “NOT DO” signs seriously and stay clear!!!

Consider this:

Don't Cut Corners... In competition, the temptation to cheat is always there. We try to think of whatever it takes to get the edge over our competitor; to insure a victory rather than defeat. In the heat of the moment, what we often forget, is that by cheating, we are immediately choosing the losing way. Even if cheating warrants an immediate victory, there will always be an Asterix next to our name, even if we are the only one who knows.

I am pretty sure I will always remember running laps in gym class. It was our warm up every day. At the time, it was important for me to be at the front of the line and be first. Our class would take off and begin running. No matter how fast I would run, there was always someone who would try to move to the front. In order to get there though, they were going to have to cut the corner and take me on the inside. Without fail, as soon as that person would try to cut the corner, our gym teacher would yell out to the class "Go back. Don't cut corners. That is cheating. We don't cheat. Go back and do it again. If you cheat in here, you will likely cheat out there, and that is not acceptable." What did I learn? "Don't cut corners. Don't cheat."

**In the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules.**

2 Timothy 2:5

What Paul is teaching his protégé Timothy is much more serious than taking a few steps off a lap in the gym. Paul is speaking about "being crowned" in victory. Salvation, eternal life with God, is the ultimate victory and what Paul is saying is that there are rules to live by in order to "be crowned." Following the life of Christ, and "not" any other way, is the goal, and following the life of Christ has rules. Some of those rules are spelled out clearly by what "not to do" but others, are spelled out clearly by what "to do."

## To “NOT DO” or “DO”

Initial Thought: Not only can we learn from what “not to do” but many of us do better knowing what “to do”. There is still a line in sand, but instead of being a line not to cross, it becomes a goal line we are striving toward. And we not only want to reach that goal line, we want to exceed it.

“DO”...

### Read: Matthew 5: 1-16

*\*Take notes or underline key words or phrases in your bible as you read\**

*The first four books of the New Testament are the Gospels (Good News) and each of them tells of the life of Jesus Christ, God’s only Son. Matthew is first in line, not because it was written first, but because of the historical genealogy of Jesus and the comprehensive birth story of Jesus. Matthew’s narration portrays Jesus as a teacher, focusing on Jesus coming to fulfill the law and prophecies of the Old Testament. Chapters 5- 7 of Matthew are some of Jesus’ most famous teachings and proclamations called “The Sermon on the Mount”.*

The beatitudes are exactly what the word “be-attitude” suggests. They are declarations from Jesus on how we are to act and “be”. The sheer beauty of this list is the promise of blessing accompanying it; BLESSED are the meek; BLESSED are the pure in heart. Not only does this section of Jesus’ teachings include the beatitudes, it concludes with the charge and calling for us to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” For many, the beatitudes are the new Torah (law). In other words, they are the newly rendered ten commandments. Not only do the beatitudes teach us who we are to be, they embody what we are “to do” in order to faithfully be.

**Reflection:** I have grown into someone who really enjoys watching people do things the right way. I love to eat and because I love food so much, I have also grown to love cooking. There is nothing more satisfying for me than to watch a good chef, particularly on Food Network, create their masterpieces. The skill and knowledge they own, and share, sets a great example. All I want to do is be able to learn and follow the right steps in my own kitchen.

**What Now?** A few years ago, at the dawning of fatherhood, I was gifted wall art entitled “The Ten Commandments for Kids.” This wall art now hangs in my office and is a daily reminder to me of the Law of God (Torah). The difference in these Ten Commandments and the original Ten Commandments is that these are structured in the positive. These commandments mark a line in the sand representing a goal to strive toward.

**“Love God more than you love anything else”**  
**“Be thoughtful and kind in what you say and do”**  
**“Share your things cheerfully”**  
**“Love and respect your mom and dad”**  
**“Take care of all living things: people, animals, and plants”**  
**“Be true to what is really important”**  
**“Treat other people’s things as if they were your own”**  
**“Always tell the truth and be honest”**  
**“Be happy for your friends when good things happen to them”**  
**“Show God your love by loving others”**

How can you do your part in being who God has called you to be? What things do you need “to do”?

Consider This:

### **Deuteronomy 6:1-9... “Great Commandment”**

*Now these are the commandments, the regulations, and the case laws that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you to follow in the land you are entering to possess, <sup>2</sup> so that you will fear the Lord your God by keeping all his regulations and his commandments that I am commanding you—both you and your sons and daughters—all the days of your life and so that you will lengthen your life. <sup>3</sup> Listen to them, Israel! Follow them carefully so that things will go well for you and so that you will continue to multiply exactly as the Lord, your ancestors’ God, promised you, in a land full of milk and honey.*

*<sup>4</sup> Israel, listen! Our God is the Lord! Only the Lord!*

*<sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. <sup>7</sup> Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>9</sup> Write them on your house’s doorframes and on your city’s gates.*

### **Matthew 22:36-40... “Great Commandment”**

*<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”*

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and its surrounding text) was, and still is today, the fundamental commission for all Jews. It is the very foundation, the heart and soul, of living a life for God. Jesus, a Jew, would have grown up reciting the Shema and would have bound it to his heart, his hand, his forehead, his mind, and his life. And here, in Matthew’s narrative, Jesus fulfills the commission “To recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house.”

Commandments, whether the Ten Commandments or the Great Commandment, are not simply meant to be talked about though.

## **Meod**

A professor of mine in seminary once shared a story to illustrate the embodiment of this text. So often, we focus on the heart, soul, and mind, with a quick glance over strength. Strength seems rather peril in comparison to the other three. Or does it? The term in Hebrew is “meod,” which actually translates as “ability.” We are to love God with 100% of our heart, our soul, our mind, and our ability.

He shared the story of his son, who, after a long day, wanted to go to bed. On his way, his son fell to his knees in the hallway, exhausted and tired. From his knees, he reached out with one hand after another lunging for the door. It was all he could do to lift his arm again and pick up his knees to follow. His eyes couldn’t stay open and the few feet left to the door seemed like miles. His son was giving everything he could in that moment: all of his strength, all of his ability.

This is what “meod” is. To give it all is to commit every ounce.

**To give it all is to fully immerse: heart. soul. mind. ability.**

**NOTES:**