

Immerse

TIMEOUT

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.

“Timeout”

Initial Thought: We all need a break. We all need to rest and take the time to take deep breaths. We all need to stop, have a snack, and if we are lucky, take a nap.

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-8

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

We all need to rest.

Reflection:

- A. There is a reason every sport has an off season. The time away from the intensity of being in season allows us to step back and gain new perspective, work on things to become better, and allow our bodies to recuperate. An example is Winter. The season of winter is dormant for a reason. It is dormant in order to give creation a rest. Even trees shed their leaves and let the weight go. Winter is a season of rest and hibernation.
- B. Our muscles need time to recuperate and develop. When we are working out and training, the physical process of tearing our muscles by lifting and pushing new limits, must be accompanied by rest in order to allow those muscles to grow back stronger.
- C. *Selah* is a musical rest. In scripture it appears in the psalms to signify a break. Most of the psalms have become hymns and the notation of *selah* after a phrase marks a clear break in thought and rhythm. In music, rests are vital. They are strategically placed in a way to allow the energy and breath needed to carry on. No one could sing an entire song the right way with the right passion and tone, with only one breath.
- D. Coaches who know how to use timeouts correctly in games give their teams an advantage over the course of a game. If a coach or player misuses their timeouts, they could find themselves forcing matters without the appropriate attention or personnel to run the right play. A coach who can rest players at the right times, allows for the right players to be in the game at the right times. There have been very few players throughout the history of sports, if any, who have ever been able to play every down, every minute, or every inning.

What Now? “Sabbathly” means to do something in the manner of Sabbath. Keeping the sabbath is hard, so we might need to act our way into it. Sabbathly can happen any time and not just on the Sabbath. Considering the chaos of the world, the mindset we have while doing our work matters; feeling the warm water on our hands as we do the dishes or driving the speed limit rather than breaking land speed records from point a to point b. Even though work is pulling at us, we can work at focusing our attention elsewhere.

Six days shall you be a workaholic; on the seventh day, shall you join the serene company of human beings.

Six days shall you take orders from your boss; on the seventh day, shall you be master/mistress of your own life.

Six days shall you toil in the market; on the seventh day, shall you detach from money matters.

Six days shall you create, drive, create, invent, push; on the seventh day, shall you reflect.

Six days shall you be the perfect success; on the seventh day, shall you remember that not everything is in your power.

Six days shall you be a miserable failure; on the seventh day, shall you be on top of the world.

Six days shall you enjoy the blessings of work; on the seventh day, shall you understand being is as important as doing.

-Blu Greenberg

“Timeout”

Initial Thought: Unfortunately, we often work ourselves into rhythms that don't stop, psychologically convincing ourselves we can't afford any time for a break. Knowing when to stop and take a break is extremely important. As a matter of fact, taking timeouts are absolutely essential.

Read: Genesis 1-2 and Exodus 1

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

God made the universe and everything in it and then rested for a time: “On the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation (Gen. 2:2-3).”

The text from Exodus reminds us of the time when God's people were slaves in Egypt, captive to Pharaoh. God's people were forced to work every day of the week with no freedom and no relief. At that time, God's people lived every day with the constant lashing of expectations. They needed to do more, produce more, and build more. This reality is not the end of the story. God delivered the people out of slavery. God led the people to a safe passage of freedom and shortly thereafter, presented them with the Ten Commandments. No longer were the people slaves to Pharaoh. Now, they were to follow God's ways.

Reflection: “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20)” is often known as the cute commandment. In our fast-pace-try-to-do-it-all-world, keeping the sabbath is easy to dismiss. It is a nice idea, a lofty, pleasant-sounding but unattainable goal. Sabbath feels like one of those cultural trappings from the Bible that doesn't apply any more, like polygamy or washing a guest's feet when they enter a house. But why? Doesn't a day each week without work sound heavenly; a day to unplug, unwind, laugh, play, and love? On one day, we wouldn't have to multitask, plan, or shop. We wouldn't have to map out the optimal way to get everything on our to do lists complete. Instead, we can stop and rest. For one day a week, we can take a day of rest to help put the rest of the week in better perspective.

To stop and rest is the literal meaning of Sabbath, or the Hebrew word “shabbat.” In order to uphold the original law of keeping the sabbath, one could not take on any weight or burden. No cooking, no carrying a mat, no washing clothes, no physical work at all. Taking time to stop and rest for one day each week provides intentionality to our lives in connection with God. Keeping the sabbath puts the focus on God and God's gracious invitation to rest from our work. The sabbath was a day reserved solely for the worship of God.

What Now? God rested and so should we!! It has been said that our checkbooks are spiritual documents. How we budget and spend our money demonstrates what we believe and hold dear. Do we give a portion away? Do we spend it on trendy clothes and trinkets? Our money reveals who we are and what we believe about the world and about God. Our calendars are spiritual documents in a similar way. To a certain degree, to-do lists and Google calendars are statements of faith. What does your calendar say about your faith? Are you busy with good and important things but have no time to stop and enjoy God's creation? Do you believe in your own self-importance? Do you believe in your need to keep up appearances of having it all together? Do you believe you are in control of your own life?
(from *Sabbath in the Suburbs*)

Consider This:

Knowing When to Quit by David McGlynn (June 2, 2017) Credit given to Giselle Potter

My son, Galen, had been shooting hoops since he was 4, barely big enough to hold the ball. Now 11, he was 5-foot-6, a head taller than his mom, and light and agile on his feet. He could sink a basket from anywhere on the driveway, including a shot that passed between the branches of the maple tree on its way to the net. Basketball, I'd long believed, was his destiny.

Galen was a standout his first season at the YMCA, when he was 8. The next year we signed up for the club team, which turned our six-week rec league season into six months of intense tournament play. When it became clear that every kid on his team had been a YMCA standout (or had bypassed the Y league altogether), I arranged for him to take private lessons with the captain of the basketball team at the college where I teach.

He played in a 3-on-3 league over the summer and, at the conclusion of the club season the following spring, he began playing with an Amateur Athletic Union team, a national youth sports organization that, in addition to increasing the level of competition also expanded our travel radius to a tristate region. Three weekends a month, from October to July, we crisscrossed the Upper Midwest traveling to tournaments. All the parents complained about the endless driving, the lost weekends, the hours spent in the bleachers, yet all agreed the sacrifices were worth it. They were the cost of success.

I was no stranger to the world of hyper-intense sports. I'd grown up swimming and had spent my share of weekends camped out in stifling, chlorinated natatoriums. I was good enough to swim, on scholarship, at a large Division I university where I routinely lost to swimmers who'd go on to win Olympic medals. Twenty years later, I still swam every morning and I still believed in the power of sports — to focus both body and mind, release stress-busting endorphins, forge lifelong friendships. Even the defeats were useful. Anyone who's ever loved a sport has learned the hard way that sometimes life isn't fair.

But while I (most of the time) looked forward to swimming practices and meets, the chance to test my mettle against my peers, basketball tournaments made Galen nothing but miserable. He'd punish himself for days over missed shots and flubbed passes, even if his team prevailed in the end. Whenever a shot went in, he looked more relieved than happy, grateful not to have screwed up again. During the lulls between games, he sat by himself, brooding into his iPad. He didn't want to talk to anyone, not even me.

For a while I thought I was the problem. I was failing my son by not loving his sport enough for the both of us — until the Saturday I took a seat on the bleachers beside another dad. He told me his older kids had also played competitive basketball; he'd been coming to tournaments for 15 years and figured he had at least a decade more to go. When I asked if his oldest daughter still played, he laughed and said, "By the end of high school she was so burned out she never wanted to see a basketball again. She won't even watch it on TV with her brothers."

"Was it worth it?" I asked.

"Builds character," he said, half-grinning. I could tell he didn't believe it, not all the way. I'd begun to wonder whether it was even true. Did youth sports *really* impart discipline and determination in ways that other activities — like learning Greek, say, or taking long hikes in the backcountry, or painting a fence — could not? How often does a childhood sacrificed on the altar of sports really confer advantages in adult life?

“Did she have fun at least?” I asked the dad.

“Some of the time,” he said. “But it wasn’t really about fun.”

To me, it should be, and John Engh, executive director of the National Alliance for Youth Sports, agreed. “Kids need diversity both socially and athletically,” he said in an email. “When their main outlet for both becomes the same activity, then a bad (or even a mediocre) experience can leave them disliking not only their sport but also physical activity of any kind.”

Driving home from Galen’s final tournament, after nearly a year of constant practices and games, I made a radical proposal. “Maybe it’s time to quit,” I said. “Basketball isn’t making you happy.”

“If I quit basketball, what sport do I play?” Galen asked.

“How about NO sport,” I said. “At least not for a while. You can play basketball with friends all you want, but you don’t have to play on a team. We can spend our weekends camping and backpacking, skiing in the winter. You know, things we actually enjoy.”

He hesitated. “Every kid at my school plays something.”

If he didn’t have a sport, he continued, “I’ll be a nobody.”

“I’m only trying to consider how our light is spent,” I told Galen.

He looked at me. “What’s that mean? Is that poetry?”

“It’s John Milton,” I said. I’d taught a few of his sonnets the previous spring. “It’s about accepting who we are.”

Galen rolled his eyes. “I just want to go home.”

Over the weeks and months that followed, the idea grew on Galen. Freed from practice, he took to riding his bike and skateboard for hours, turning into the driveway as the last of the dusk light drained from the sky, his cheeks ruddy and his shoulders relaxed. He spent far more time outside without basketball weighing on his mind and schedule. He didn’t become a nobody or stop being an athlete.

Instead, both his definition of sports and his circle of friendships expanded. In the fall, he signed up for a kayaking class and went out for the junior high cross-country team, a far more reasonable eight-week season. When the snow fell, he joined a skiing club. Each new activity introduced him to new friends, and in some cases gave him a chance to hang out with his old basketball teammates without the pressure to win a game. This summer he’s heading to the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota for a weeklong canoeing trip.

Now that the weather’s warm, Galen’s back to shooting hoops in the driveway. More than once, I’ve looked out the kitchen window and spotted him dribbling the ball between his legs while talking trash to an imaginary adversary. He fakes right, spins to the left, stops on a dime, swishes a jumper from behind the garbage cans. When he exultantly raises his arms above his head, full of joy and confidence, I know the decision to quit was the right one. A slam dunk.