

Immerse

BETTER TOGETHER

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.

“Better Together”

Initial Thought: I have heard it said a thousand times, “there is strength in numbers.” I have almost always believed this to be true. That is, until I realized that the only way numbers produced strength was through unity. Without unification, the masses are like a million specks of sand as opposed to a single boulder.

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

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

A single strand can be broken easily. With more effort and strength, a two-fold strand can be broken as well. A three-fold cord, on the other hand, is not easily broken.

Read: Ephesians 4:2-6

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

Paul’s letter here to the Ephesians calls for the church, the community of people in Ephesus, to be one body, just as God is one. They were not to split off and separate into this and that, but through unity with the Holy Spirit, they were to work to become one.

Reflection: As husband and wife come together as one with God, each independent strand works to intertwine with one another, creating a bond of support and strength. The husband is still the husband, the wife is still the wife, and God is still God, yet together, each is made stronger by being connected to the other. Other places we might see this relationship dynamic working out are:

Mother, Father, and Children
Management, Coach, and Players
Coach, Players, and Parents
Administration, Teachers, and Students/Families
God, Pastor, and Congregation

Unity vs. Uniformity

There is a major difference between unity and uniformity. To be unified as ONE does not require all parts to be uniform, but it does require all parts to have a willingness to come together despite differences. A mosaic is one beautiful piece of art made of many different pieces coming together as ONE. To be uniform, on the other hand, is to have the same beliefs or mirror the same movements. Uniformity does not allow room for diversity. When we think about it, uniforms are great for teams to all look alike and instill a sense of unity, but the team would not function successfully if all of its members all did the same thing; unless of course it is synchronized swimming.

What Now? The church is created to be ONE body with many parts (see the next devotion). Does that mean the church is created to be unified or uniform? Does a particular church like First Presbyterian have to be made up of people who all believe the same things, or is there room for variance in God’s church?

“Better Together”

Initial Thought: No one is created with the ability to do everything. There are lots of people who can do several things well, and there are some people who don't seem to do anything well. We are all created to do something. We are created to play a part. We are better together.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-16

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

This passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians includes one of the most well-known and powerful images in scripture. It defines the Church as a body with Christ as the head of the body. The Church, made up of all of us as God's children, make up the various parts of the body. Paul's challenge to his audience, and our challenge even today, is that we are to do our job as a part of the body!!! We can't all be hands and we can't all be toes. Some of us need to be the skin and some of us need to be the nose. Perhaps the most important lesson from Paul is that we are all needed. As the body, it is detrimental to suggest that someone is not needed for something. It would be like saying we don't need our hand or our leg or our heart.

Reflection: Have you ever tried to play in a game with one less person than the other team? There is a clear void when someone is missing; not just physically, but emotionally as well. Think of being on a basketball team with only 4 players, trying to compete against another team with 5 players. On defense, how is it that 4 players will equally guard 5? On offense, who will be the one to take on 2 players while the others face 1? The odds are not good for the depleted team. Can it happen for 4 players to play against 5? Sure. But it is not ideal, and it is certainly not a sustainable game plan.

To have all the right people in all the right places doing all the right things, helps the mechanism work the way it is intended. It prevents one person from having to over extend themselves to cover for someone else. It gives honor and purpose and call to each person, with no one able to say to another they are not important. To say this acknowledges that there is more to this than just presence. Not only do we have to be present, we must also be willing to own our place and part and perform it well. It is then, and only then, that the body can function effectively.

Do you part!!! Do you know your role on your team? Do you know how you fit into the master plan and how you best contribute? If so, then do your part. If not, now is good time to figure it out. Everyone member of the team is important. Not everyone can be the point guard or shooting guard and certainly not everyone can be the center. Someone needs to be the player off the bench that gets a big rebound and someone needs to be the go-to defender or scorer.

What Now? Being present at church whenever it is convenient, or we feel like it, isn't enough. We all have a role to play. When we aren't present, and better yet, when we aren't fulfilling our role, we are forcing someone else to over extend and cover for us. The church is better with you present and engaged. The church functions at a higher level with you present and doing your part. The church is better when we are all working together toward the same mission and goal.

Active Listening Exercise:
Download and Listen to: “We are the Body” by Casting Crowns

Consider This:

It is likely that we have all heard “No man/woman left behind.” Every member of the team looks after one another and every member is looked after. Every member is given a role and a mission only succeeds if everyone does their part.

“Surf passage,” where small teams of SEAL candidates paddle inflatable boats through waves crashing into San Diego's Silver Strand, has become one of the Navy's most iconic training tools. The goal is for a team of 6-7 seals in full uniform to carry a raft into waist deep water, board the boat together, and then paddle through 3-5 foot crashing waves past the surf.

A business manager from Colorado made a comment in response to a recent article reporting on “surf passage.” He said, “What applies to all of us (in & out of uniform) is the fact that successful teams achieve great things when they all clearly understand the plan and all paddle in the same direction. Does your Team know the plan and are they all paddling in the same direction?”

Notes: