

Immerse

PERSEVERANCE

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.

“Perseverance”

Initial Thought: Never, ever give up.

Read James 1:2-4

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

When (not if) we face trials in life, James writes, we should consider it pure joy. But why in the world would we ever consider difficulties a cause for joy? Because, continues James, these trials are essential to our development as human beings and people of faith. These trials or tests – part of life for us all - in turn produce perseverance, and this perseverance helps us become mature and complete men and women who do not lack anything.

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Roman church speaks similarly of the relationship between trials, perseverance and our personal and faith development when he writes:

Read Romans 5:1-4

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

Like James, Paul understood that perseverance is closely linked with the formation of one's character and also tied to the one virtue that arguably makes all other virtues even possible: hope. As the saying goes, “When the world says ‘Give up,’ hope says, ‘Try it one more time.’”

Reflection: “Never, ever give up.” Have you ever been tempted to walk away from the challenges before you? In sports? In School? In business? In a relationship? In pursuing your dream? Life for us all is full of bad plays, bad breaks and bad calls. With each difficulty that comes our way, we have a choice to make. We can complain, or we can seek to overcome. Those with a grace-filled character find a way to pick themselves up, brush themselves off and continue on in the game.

One of the greatest examples of never giving up is Cal Ripken Jr., Hall of Fame Shortstop for the Baltimore Orioles and now business owner. It is one thing to play through an entire season without missing a game. Every day we play, we are susceptible to things that could keep us from playing the next day. Cal Ripken Jr. defied all of those odds. After playing 2632 games, more than 16 Major League baseball seasons worth, Cal Ripken Jr. set the Consecutive Games Played Record earning him the nickname “Ironman.”

Perseverance

To persevere is to do something in spite of difficulty.

To persevere is to persist despite great odds. To persevere is to refuse to give up.

What Now? Pray! (*Prayer is simply talking to God. Like you would talk to a friend. Through prayer, God connects us all together in the Spirit.*) Hey God, help me to keep plodding along. Help me to take it one day at a time. Help me to remember, that through it all, I will be stronger and more complete when I get to the other side. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, empower me to persevere and never, ever give up. Amen.

“Perseverance”

Initial Thought: In order for us to enact perseverance, we presume some type of adversity. Whether we are working hard on a project, enduring a long season, or going through necessary growing pains, perseverance can be the key to helping us keep going when all we really want to do is stop and quit. Perseverance is an act of will and not just of skill.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

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

Within

The exact point of contact, physical and psychological, between man and his sport.

That is where the Game is.

In the bleeding, broken hands refusing to let go
because there's still time on the clock, time for one more play.

That is the test.

This measure of commitment and wherewithal of mind and body.

It is not on the scoreboard or in the victory lane.

Those illustrations exist only to make the Game easier to understand from the bleachers,
from living rooms, from the outside looking in.
Only when we get close do we learn where the Game is truly played.

It is this intimacy that takes us past the mano a mano, through the obvious battles with gravity, speed, and the elements, to expose the vulnerabilities alongside the victories. And it is here that we discover one simple truth about competition:

In sport as in life, the real opponent, the only real enemy, is within.

-No Fear: Sport Chronicles

What Now? How does perseverance play out in the Church? How can you dig deeper and find strength within to deepen your faith? In what ways would persevering benefit your participation in the church and with your community of faith?

Just like in our activities, the only real thing holding us back from being more involved, more invested, and more in tune with God, is ourselves. We must persevere, for God's sake and ours.

Consider This:

Carrots, Eggs, and Coffee

A young woman went to her grandmother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her- her husband had cheated on her and she was devastated. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seems as soon as one problem was solved, a new one arose. Her grandmother took her into the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil; without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and place it in a bowl. Turning to her granddaughter, she asked, 'Tell me what you see.' 'Carrots, eggs, and coffee,' she replied.

Her grandmother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. The grandmother then asked the granddaughter to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hardboiled egg. Finally, the grandmother asked the granddaughter to sip the coffee. The granddaughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The granddaughter then asked, 'What does it mean, grandmother?'

Her grandmother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity: boiling water. Each reacted differently. The carrots went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, they softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

"Which are you?" she asked her granddaughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

Which are you? How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, you wilt and become soft and lose strength? Are you an egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did you have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, you became hardened and stiff? Does your shell look the same, but on the inside you are bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and hardened heart? Or are you like the coffee bean, able to influence even the toughest of circumstances pushing against you? When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, do you elevate yourself to another level?

May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human and enough hope to make you happy. The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way. May we all be like the COFFEE.

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