

Slowing

A 4-Week Devotional for Students
Adapted for the 2020 COVID-19 Shut-Down

INTRODUCTION

We are in a very unique time in the history of our world. Very few times in history has the entire world been so impacted by one event that everyone's lives were changed by it. We are currently in one of those moments together. Many of you have had to cease much of the activity that defines your life right now. This can be difficult. It can definitely cause sadness, frustration, bitterness, and even anger.

This devotional was created to help you during this time when situations outside of your control have caused you to slow down your life. Middle school and high school can be a busy time. You have school, after-school activities—like sports, drama, or other groups you're a part of—friendships, family, homework, and so many other things that keep you busy throughout your week.

In the Bible, there are many instances where Jesus showed us what it's like to slow down and hear from God. Jesus was able to do life while also having healthy relationships with those around Him and with God. He always took the time to show love to others, even when He was busy doing other things or on His way to do something.

The purpose of this devotional is to help you intentionally create space in your life to slow down and hear from God. Maybe it's been a long time since you've heard from Him—or maybe you've never heard from Him. No matter who you are, God has something in store for you, and it will be greater than anything you could ever imagine. If we open our eyes, we will see that God can use this, yes, the Coronavirus to draw people to himself

Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast—you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.

– Eddie Cantor

WEEK ONE

Each week, you'll find an experiential activity that will help you with slowing down your life and finding purpose in those moments. That means you'll need to do something, physically, to slow down your life during the day—not just read about it.

You will be asked to do the same thing *three times* throughout your week, for the entire day, and then reflect after each time you do it. These activities are going to get you outside of your comfort zone, but they're totally worth it!

EXPERIENCE ONE

This week, you are going to be asked to do the following:

Walk slowly everywhere you go. Don't take shortcuts on household chores and activities (i.e. if you can cook something instead of microwave... cook it) Do everything... including the prep... intentionally slow.

When you're walking from your room, around the house, outside, or wherever. Walk slower than you normally do. Not just barely but intentionally walking slow. No running down the steps or to the front door. No This will require you to leave earlier than usual so that you're not late! Instead of cooking your hot pocket in the microwave for 3 minutes, cook it in the oven for 28 minutes.

You will do this for an entire day, three days throughout the week. Each day you do this, you'll use one of the following devotional pages to reflect on what you did during your day.

REMINDER: Week One of the devotional should take you the entire week (choose three days to do it). Do not move onto Week Two until next week.

WEEK ONE #1

READ

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30, NIV)

PRAY

Spend a few minutes praying that God would give you the strength to slow down your life. He desires to walk with you in your life—you just need to slow down.

REFLECT

1. This was your first day slowing your life down. How did it feel? Was it awkward? Fun? Write a few words that describe how it made you feel.

2. When you were walking slowly, what did you notice other family or friends... if you saw them... doing?

3. Did you have to plan more time to get things done, or did slowing down not affect your daily life?

WEEK ONE #2

READ

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7, NIV)

PRAY

Spend a few minutes praying to God about things that make you anxious.

REFLECT

1. Has anyone noticed you walking or doing things slowly and asked you what you were doing? What did they say?

2. What is one thing you noticed that you didn't before by taking your time when walking, preparing, or just living more slowly?

3. Has slowing down (from the devotion or the mandatory home time) messed with your daily schedule? How so?

WEEK ONE #3

READ

*So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
(Isaiah 41:10, NIV)

PRAY

At this point, slowing down your life might be getting easier—or maybe it's becoming more difficult. Continue to pray that you will not give up.

REFLECT

1. This is the last time you will have been intentionally slow this week. What was the biggest takeaway you had from doing this?
2. Would you want to try to do this again? Why or why not?
3. What was the most difficult part of slowing down this week?
4. What has been the most difficult part of slowing down as a result of the Coronavirus?

Most days it feels as if the world is whirling around me and I am standing still. In slow motion, I watch the colors blur; people and faces all become a massive wash. – Sarah Kay

WEEK TWO

Congratulations! You made it through one week of slowing your life down. Give yourself a high five if you made it all the way through the first week! If you didn't finish, pick up where you left off, or start over this week! Keep it going!

Reminder, you will be asked to do the same thing *three times* throughout the week.

EXPERIENCE TWO

This week, you're going to be asked to do the following:

Sit silently for 30 minutes.

Here are the rules for doing this: you can't have any electronics during this time, you must be alone, and you can't watch T.V. or any other media. The only thing you can have is a Bible. Let family know what you are doing so you won't be disturbed. Plug all devices up far from you so any notifications won't distract you

Find a quiet place—your bedroom, outside, or wherever you can be quiet and sit silently—but no sleeping! The 30 minutes are 30 continuous minutes. Don't try for 10 minutes here or there. 30 minutes in a row of silence (no music... silence)

You'll do this three times this week for 30 minutes. Each day you do this, you'll use one of the following devotional pages to reflect on what you did during your day. If you can't get through 30 minutes, try again next time.

REMINDER: Week Two of the devotional should take you the entire week (choose three days to do it). Do not move onto Week Three until next week.

WEEK TWO #1 – Find your place and experience 30m of silence

READ

*My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.*

(Psalm 73:26, NIV)

PRAY

Pray that during your silent time this week, God would speak to you and that His plans for you would become clearer. Especially for you to find purpose during this “down” time away from school. *He still has plans for your right now*

REFLECT

1. How did it go the first time? Did you finish all 30 minutes? How far did you get?
2. Why do you think it's so hard to sit silently for even just 30 minutes?
3. What did you start thinking about once you started your silent time?

WEEK TWO #2 - Find your place and experience 30m of silence

READ

*Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*
(Psalm 62:1–2, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for your friends, your family, the church, and believers all around the world, that they would find rest in God. Pray for our leaders, our medical professionals, and those making decisions during this crisis

REFLECT

1. How did it go the second time? Better or worse than the first time?

2. Did you feel yourself wanting to go do something else once you started sitting silently?

3. What did you notice while you were silent that you might have missed otherwise?

WEEK TWO #3

READ

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. (Psalm 37:7, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for more opportunities in your life where you can be silent and still. This might not seem like something we would want so maybe the prayer begins by asking for God to create a desire within you to be quiet and alone with Him.

REFLECT

1. Was this time easier than the first two? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. What do you think it says about us when we cannot easily sit still, even for 30 minutes?

3. What did God teach you during this time?

No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone. As long as our expectation is from other things, nothing but disappointment awaits us. – Hannah Whitall Smith

WEEK THREE

Woohoo! You made it through another week. You are a LEGEND for doing that!

This week is going to be another challenge. Are you ready?

Reminder: You'll be asked to do the same thing *three times* throughout the week for an entire day, and then reflect each time you do it.

EXPERIENCE THREE

This week, you're going to be asked to do the following:

Eat slower and put your fork/spoon down between bites.

Whenever you're eating, eat slower than you normally do. Take time in between bites of food to converse with friends or family. Put your fork or spoon down after every bite and focus on others around you. It might sound silly, but you'll notice more than you think.

Note: If you're eating those hot pockets from week 1 or chowing down on a pizza... put the food down between each bite. You know the spirit of this activity... spend time between each bite, don't just stuff your face and run. Lead in conversation. Ask questions you have on your heart. Share about the first two weeks of this study. Whatever...

You'll do this three times throughout your week for an entire day. Each day you do this, use one of the following devotional pages to reflect on what you did during your day.

REMINDER: Week Three of the devotional should take you the entire week (choose three days to do it). Do not move onto Week Four until next week.

WEEK THREE #1

READ

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
(Colossians 3:12, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for God to give you opportunities to interact with others around you while you eat. Maybe it's someone you normally don't talk to, or a good friend or family member.

REFLECT

1. Write down a few words that describe how you felt while eating slower. Were you annoyed, like you just wanted to eat your food?
2. Did it feel weird to put your spoon or fork down each time you took a bite of food? Why or why not?
3. Did you end up having more conversations with people while you ate than you normally do? What happened?

WEEK THREE #2

READ

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.
(John 15:13, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for the people you normally eat with. Maybe it's your family, friends, or other students at school. Pick one group and pray for them today.

REFLECT

1. What did you notice that you might normally miss while eating slower?

2. What have you noticed about your eating habits while eating slower?
Are you a fast eater? Slow? Don't talk? Write what you've noticed.

3. Do you normally talk while you eat, or not talk at all? Mix of both?

WEEK THREE #3

READ

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for those around the world who have limited access to food and are hungry. Pray for those who are hungry in your community, as well.

REFLECT

1. Was this experience good? Bad? Fun? Write a few words to describe it.

2. Would you ever want to do this again? Why or why not?

3. In your opinion, what does this say about our culture in the United States and our eating habits?

*God cannot give us a
happiness and peace
apart from Himself,
because it is not there. There is no such thing.
– C.S. Lewis*

WEEK FOUR

This is the last week of this devotional! If you've made it this far and have done every week, well done! You will not be disappointed that you've taken some time to slow your life down.

Remember: you will be asked to do the same thing *three times* throughout the week for the entire day and reflect each time you do it.

EXPERIENCE FOUR

This week, you are going to be asked to do the following:

Read and memorize James 3:13–18.

Putting God's Word into your memory will serve a great purpose both now and later in your life. Also, taking time to intentionally memorize God's Word gives you a chance to slow down and seek Him.

Read the verses each day you do this, and memorize them by writing them on a notecard and quizzing yourself.

You will do this three times throughout the week for the entire day. Each day you do this, you will use one of the following devotional pages to reflect on what you did during your day.

REMINDER: Week Four of the devotional should take you the entire week (choose three days to do it). Do not finish the devotional until the week is over!

WEEK FOUR #1

READ

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17, NIV)

PRAY

Pray for God to move His Word into your life. Pray that it would move into every area.

REFLECT

1. Have you memorized Scripture before? How did it go?

2. Why do you think it is important to memorize God's Word?

3. Has God's Word been useful at times in your life before? What happened?

WEEK FOUR #2

READ

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105, NIV)

PRAY

Pray that God's Word would guide you in your life and that it would give you clear direction for what God desires for you to do.

REFLECT

1. What is your favorite Bible verse?

2. Have you ever been talking with a friend or someone who was upset, and a Bible verse came to mind to encourage them? What was it?

3. Do you believe God's word has power? Why or why not?

WEEK FOUR #3

READ

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1, NIV)

PRAY

Pray that God's Word would reach every person across the world.

REFLECT

1. Was the experience good? Bad? Fun? Write a few words to describe it.

2. Would you ever want to do this again? Why or why not?

3. If it was hard for you to memorize Scripture, why do you think it was hard? If not, why do others find it hard?

FINAL WORD

Just because you completed this devotional doesn't mean slowing down your life will always be easy. As a student, you will need to continue to figure out what it looks like for you to slow your life down each and every day.

Our culture is not built to be slow. We live in a fast-paced world, where slow is bad and fast is what's expected. The COVID-19 crisis has placed everyone in a position where slow is not a choice... it is a reality. Many of us were too busy to begin with. We try and squeeze too many things into an incredibly limited amount of time. We begin leaving out the things that are most important. In no way did God allow this crisis simply for the purpose of slowing down some students in North Carolina. However, Scripture tells us to make the most of the opportunities we are given. Hopefully, this study has helped you hear from God during this time.

It's been said that people can walk about 3 miles per hour. If God were to walk and do life at the same pace, how should we respond?

Can you imagine doing everything, going everywhere, and walking everywhere at 3 miles per hour? It would take you much longer to get anything done. But what might you see? Who might you meet? What might God use you for?

God speaks to those who listen. He moves in the lives of those who are willing to be used by Him, no matter what it takes.

Continue to find ways to slow your life down. You won't regret it!