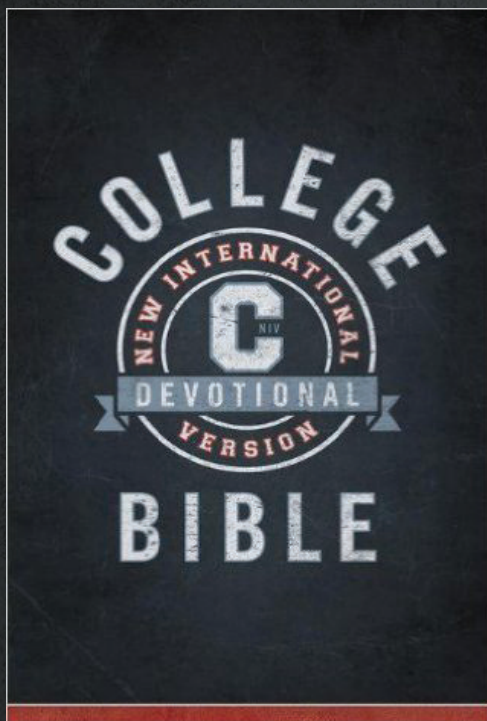


# COLLEGE DEVOTIONAL

## 6-DAY PLAN



# COLLEGE DEVOTIONAL

Your college years are different from any other time in your life. This special time is also an opportunity to deepen your relationship with Jesus! Each day's reading in this 7-day devotional presents a story that helps illustrate eternal truths found in God's Word and connects Scripture with the struggles, questions, and decisions common to all college students.

**DAY 1: FORGING A NEW PATH**

**DAY 2: FINDING HOME**

**DAY 3: WITH HIS POWER**

**DAY 4: I DARE YOU**

**DAY 5: SHAKEN**

**DAY 6: THE POWER OF A SMALL RUDDER**

# DAY 1 **VERSE**

*Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him, he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites.*

**JUDGES 10:6-8**

# DAY 1 DEVOTION

## FORGING A NEW PATH

During the tumultuous times of the judges, the people of Israel continually worship false gods. Their selfish way of living causes God to become very angry, so he delivers them into the hands of their enemies. Instead of remembering their covenant with the one true God, the Israelites go down their own path and lose their way.

The ability to make decisions and choose our own fate is a gift from God. But along with those decisions comes the reality that, like the Israelites, we often turn our backs on what we know to be true—sometimes even worshiping unworthy objects or following false gods. These choices can affect our lives in profound ways—even define our futures.

When Craig left the comforts of his close-knit Christian family for college at age 18, it was the first time in his life he was truly free to make his own decisions. No one told him to make his bed. No one waited up for him at night. No one told him when and where he could and couldn't go. Finally, he had no one to answer to—at least that's what he thought.

His desire to live for the moment and do whatever felt good caused him to end up a much different person from the one he had set out to become. As Craig was growing up, God had been his life's main focus, but at school he became obsessed with the dangerous temptations the world has to offer—drinking, money and power, to name a few. Pretty soon, God was lost in the memories of his past.

But the fast life eventually came to a crashing halt on a night that began like any other for Craig but ended in a hospital emergency room, with a drunk-driving charge, a revoked license and hundreds of dollars in fines.

Sure, Craig was now an adult. He finally got to choose for himself the road he wanted to travel. He also got to find out the hard way what it was like to be out on his own without the protection he had taken for granted his whole life.

- What was God's purpose in how he dealt with the Israelites?
- Is it possible to live life in the "real world" without being overtaken by its temptations?

# DAY 2 VERSE

*How can we sing the songs of the LORD  
while in a foreign land?*

**PSALM 137:4**

# DAY 2 DEVOTION

## FINDING HOME

Miles from home. And “home” doesn’t even exist anymore. The people of Israel have watched their temple burn to the ground as Babylonian invaders carried them away to what is now the country of Iraq. There they sit on the banks of rivers, staring toward Israel and longing for the day they can return home. Their captors make fun of them, taunting them to sing songs of their lost temple.

The Israelites felt lost, abandoned and not very hopeful as they experienced exile in a foreign land. Today, another group of God’s people fights those same feelings as they are exiled—except these people are exiled in their own country.

The news rarely, if ever, mentions their plight. Christians in America are largely unaware that they even exist. World leaders overlook them almost entirely. Who are they? Christian Palestinians.

In 1948, when the country of Israel was formed, there were more than 400,000 Palestinian people who claimed to follow Jesus. Today, less than 60,000 remain in their homeland.

For hundreds of years, these Christian families resided

peacefully alongside their Jewish neighbors. Many of them used to live in and around Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. But today, pressure from some Muslims and Jews has driven them away from their homes and into remote areas or other countries that they consider safer for their families.

Christian Palestinians feel exiled—by Israel for forcing them out of their homes, by Muslims who persecute them for abandoning the “proper” faith of the Palestinian people and by Christians in the West who are essentially unaware that they exist.

Professor Abe Ata, a ninth-generation Christian Palestinian, sums up the desires of his people. “What we seek is support: material, moral, political and spiritual. As Palestinians, we grieve for what we have lost, and few people have lost more than us. But grief can be assuaged by the fellowship of friends.”

- What emotions do you think the exiled people of Israel felt in Psalm 137?
- What relieves you when you feel alone and exiled from friends, family, church or God?

# DAY 3

## VERSE

*Unless the Lord builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.*

*Unless the Lord watches over the city,  
the guards stand watch in vain.*

*In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—  
for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

**PSALM 127:1-2**

# DAY 3 DEVOTION

## WITH HIS POWER

The best-constructed house will crumble without God. The most heavily guarded city will fall to its enemies if God isn't invited inside. And a career defined by going in early and staying out late will not succeed if God is not at its center.

No one is smart enough, beautiful enough or wealthy enough to successfully navigate life without God's help. In fact, an abundance of worldly resources may infuse us with too great a confidence in our own abilities and make us vulnerable to errors in judgment.

During the freshman orientation for the College of Engineering, David began to suspect that university classes were going to be much more demanding than those in high school. His first few weeks confirmed this assumption, and he soon concluded that if he wanted straight As, he was going to have to study—a lot.

At first, David studied seven days a week. But before long he became so fatigued that he was struggling to earn even Bs. At that point he prayed to God for help. God made an unexpected answer clear to David: Don't study so hard. Get your sleep. And spend 24 hours per week without studying whatsoever.

David struggled with God's message. How could he attain good grades without those 24 hours of studying? Surely his GPA would plummet. In the end, though, David decided that God was probably a bit wiser than he was. So he gave it a try.

David stopped studying from Saturday at 6:00 p.m. through Sunday at 6:00 p.m. During that period, he devoted himself to attending a worship service, reading Scripture, praying, sleeping, spending time with friends and relaxing. After those weekly breaks, David found that his Sunday night study session was more productive than any other time of the week.

By the time the semester ended, David had reached his goal—a straight 4.0. And he credits that success to obeying God's call to let him be both his Lord and the center of his desire.

- Why do you think the writer of Psalm 127 has such confidence that God outranks hard work and expensive resources?
- Do you think you can enjoy a successful career without working abnormally long hours? Why or why not?

# DAY 4 VERSE

*“I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty.*

*“But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’*

*“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.*

*“But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’*

*“In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

**MALACHI 3:6-10**

# DAY 4 DEVOTION

## I DARE YOU

“I dare you.” That’s essentially what God says in Malachi 3. He challenges the Israelites to give away their money and possessions. If they do so, he will provide them with more blessings than they will know what to do with. God dictates that we are to give back to him a portion of all his blessings to us. Keep it, and you rob God. Give it away, and you get it back.

It’s one thing to claim to believe in doing it but quite another to actually follow through—to give away a portion of the money you have, the money you need. Brad Schumacher found himself challenged to act on his belief—but it wasn’t easy.

It was Brad’s junior year at Texas A&M University. As part of the city’s Big Brother program, Brad met once a week with 16-year-old Steve, who had no father at home and had been in and out of juvenile detention. Steve and his mom lived in government housing and struggled to make ends meet.

One week while Steve and Brad were having dinner together, Steve explained that the electric company was threatening

to shut off the electricity in their apartment because his mom couldn’t pay the bill. Brad asked, “How much do you need to pay it?” Steve’s answer: thirty dollars.

Brad swallowed hard. He had exactly thirty dollars in his wallet, but it was all he had to live on for a week. Then he thought of Steve’s family and handed over the money.

The next day Brad’s friend asked him to repair her father’s computer. Brad did so gladly, and it only took him a few minutes. But his friend’s father considered the work highly valuable and insisted on paying Brad for it. The amount? Thirty dollars.

Brad smiled. He knew this was no coincidence. It was God keeping his promise.

- Brad was already giving his time to help Steve. Why do you think God would also ask him to give up his money?
- In what ways has God given you the opportunity to take him up on his challenge? How well have you come through?

# DAY 5 **VERSE**

*“Listen to this, Job;  
stop and consider God’s wonders.  
Do you know how God controls the clouds  
and makes his lightning flash?  
Do you know how the clouds hang poised,  
those wonders of him who has perfect knowledge?  
You who swelter in your clothes  
when the land lies hushed under the south wind,  
can you join him in spreading out the skies,  
hard as a mirror of cast bronze?”*

**JOB 37:14-18**

# DAY 5 DEVOTION

## SHAKEN

Job's friends pepper their misleading message with kernels of truth. Here Elihu reminds Job that God works in mysterious ways by pointing out the inscrutability of nature.

In a situation beyond our control, sometimes we can do nothing but throw up our hands. Imagine the emotions that overwhelmed the people of San Francisco in the wake of the 1906 earthquake.

When would they listen? Dennis Sullivan had 320 horses to pull the trucks and dozens of dogs to sound the alarm, but as San Francisco's fire chief, he felt the critical need for a saltwater supplement to the city's limited freshwater supply. Sullivan couldn't forget the previous six times the city had burned, and he knew that just seven years earlier, his men had been unable to stop a raging fire in a local hotel. In 1905, the National Board of Fire Underwriters' Committee declared the city to have a perfectly acceptable level of preparedness. The one man who felt strongly otherwise was about to realize his worst fears: the largest earthquake the city had ever experienced.

On April 18, Sullivan and his wife slept at the firehouse. Later that morning he was scheduled to testify before the mayor

in federal court concerning his warnings about the city's low level of preparedness. But that chance never came. At 5:12 a.m., a 7.9-magnitude earthquake rocked the town awake, sending thousands instantly to their deaths as buildings ripped in half and bridges collapsed. Thousands more died in the fires that swept across the city for the next four days. The dome of the California Hotel crashed through the fire station, and Sullivan fell three stories into the chasm that opened up beneath him. He died four days later, within the burning city he had staunchly fought to protect.

The earthquake shook a 375,000-square-mile area, knocking down millions of trees and any buildings close to the fault line. The quake not only left San Francisco without its fire chief but also destroyed two of the water mains connecting the fire water supply to the city. Ultimately, the quake cast the city's inadequacies back on itself with unimaginable force.

- What comfort do we have in the midst of incomprehensible events?
- What have you been putting off that you want to do before it is too late?

# DAY 6

## VERSE

*Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?*

**JAMES 3:5-6; 9-11**

# DAY 6 DEVOTION

## THE POWER OF A SMALL RUDDER

In this chapter, James addresses one of the most challenging aspects of being Christlike: controlling what we say.

As James declares, the tongue is one of the most powerful parts of the body, able to accomplish both great good and tremendous evil. Our ability to tame it can reflect our commitment to live honestly—or, as Maria found out, not to do so.

Maria knew that lying was wrong, but there were circumstances in her life that her parents simply wouldn't understand. She had dropped all of her classes the previous semester because a close friend had been suicidal and needed her help. Now, at the end of another semester, she hadn't turned in the necessary work, and her "incompletes" would soon show up as failing grades on her transcript.

Perhaps worst of all, her parents didn't know about any of it.

So what did Maria do? She intercepted the transcript from the school and lied about her grades to her parents. After all, she assured herself, her professors had said they would still allow her to complete the courses. Everything would work out for the best in the long run. Her parents didn't need to

know, and she would protect her friend's secret. Even God would understand that this was a situation in which the truth absolutely needed to be bent.

Maria thought she was in the clear until a couple of months later when she received an anxious phone call from her mom. The college had sent her parents a copy of the transcript.

Maria felt deeply ashamed of her deception; she could hardly face her mom and dad the next time she saw them. She wondered how she could have done such a thing. Yet, strangely enough, deep inside she was actually relieved that her secret had finally been exposed. Living a lie had been difficult. From now on, she promised herself—and God—every word that comes out of my mouth will be an honest one!

- Describe a situation in which something you said got you into trouble. How—and when—did you realize that your words had crossed the line?
- Are there times when not saying something can bring about regrettable consequences? Give an example from your own life.