



# FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

STUDENT DEVOTIONS

**WRITTEN BY: KAYLA JEFFERS**



## Time is Precious

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*15 Pay careful attention, then, to how you live—not as unwise people but as wise— 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil.*

Ephesians 5:15-16 (CSB)

### REFLECT

Many of us, along with the rest of the world, have found ourselves with an over abundance of time on our hands. Theme parks are closing, events are being canceled, stores are reducing their hours...what are we supposed to do for fun? There's only so much we can do in our homes before we run out of snacks, become frustrated with our family members, or absolutely bored out of our minds. Instead of binge-watching TV shows and Instagram stories, let's look at this gift of time in another way.

There are 86,400 seconds in everyday. They can never be paused, re-started, or saved for later. Time is a precious resource that is continuously passing by. Paul tells us in Ephesians to live wisely and make the best use of the time we are given. If we view time as a prized possession, it changes the way we use it. He also mentions that the days are evil. Can we all agree that the world around us is full of hurt, fear and darkness? Instead of being frustrated with all of this extra time, why don't we use it to honor God and encourage others? Maybe God is granting you an opportunity to grow closer to Him...will you take it or squander it?

### RESPOND

1. Have you been frustrated or delighted with this abundance of time? How can you change your attitude to glorify God and be a light to others?
2. In what ways do you use time unwisely? What is one distraction you can give up?
3. What if you double or triple the amount of time you spend with Jesus on a daily basis? Try it and write down how the Lord speaks to you and transforms your heart.

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## Traditions Shattered

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### READ

*The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. 2 They observed that some of his disciples were eating bread with unclean—that is, unwashed—hands. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, keeping the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they have washed. And there are many other customs they have received and keep, like the washing of cups, pitchers, kettles, and dining couches.) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ceremonially unclean hands?” 6 He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands. 8 Abandoning the command of God, you hold on to human tradition.”*

Mark 7:1-8 (CSB)

### REFLECT

Funny that we are reading a passage that talks about hand washing, eh? I know it seems like Jesus is advocating for the disciples not to wash their hands, but there is a much bigger point here. Please know that Jesus is concerned about hygiene and wants you to love your neighbor by not spreading germs. What He is addressing here is an issue of valuing human traditions over true connection with God. The Pharisees (religious leaders) had gotten so caught up in the rules and regulations of what worshipping God was supposed to look like that they forgot about the posture of their hearts. When their natural rhythms of worship were thrown off, they were offended, agitated, and unable to get over the idea that their traditions were hindering their connection with God.

Fast forward to our culture today, where our current circumstances are preventing the church from gathering in the traditional way. For years, we have been able to meet together in worship services, but now our natural flows of corporate worship are thrown off. How do we stay connected? How do we worship God, if we can’t gather together? This is an opportunity to remember that our traditions and methods are meaningless unless they point us to our Savior. When all is stripped away, God always remains, ready and waiting for you to spend time with Him. Choose to fully embrace this new and different season with the Lord.

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## RESPOND

1. When was a time you felt like you were just going through the motions?
2. What are some new rhythms and traditions you can start to help you grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus?
3. What is God teaching you through this change of pace, schedule, and normalcy?

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## New Rhythms

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*18 "Do not remember the past events, pay no attention to things of old. 19 Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.*

Isaiah 43:18-19 (CSB)

### REFLECT

Struggling to settle into this odd, new schedule (or maybe a lack thereof)? Missing the days when we barely had time to eat, sleep or think? Whether we like it or not, life as we know it is abruptly changing. For some, it's coming to a screeching halt; for others, it's spiraling out of control. The one thing we know is this is new territory and we are all navigating these uncharted waters together.

In these verses from Isaiah, the Lord is telling His people that He is doing something new. He is reassuring them that He will make a way through the difficult times. In the same way, the Lord is doing something new in the life of the present-day church and in each person's heart. This 'new thing' is not to punish us or harm us, but to draw us to Him. It would be easy for us to become frustrated, confused, discouraged and hopeless, but what if all of this is happening in order to shift our focus? What if this sudden onset of uncertainty is an opportunity for us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith? We can no longer cling to our busy schedules and normal rhythms of life. Instead, the Lord is calling us to create new rhythms that have Jesus at the center of everything. We have an opportunity to reset and rearrange much of our daily routine. Let's choose to make quality time with Jesus our top priority. If we draw close to Him, then He will draw near to us and transform us from the inside out. Embrace what the Lord is doing and imagine the impact that could have on the world.

### RESPOND

1. What do you miss about your busy schedule or daily routine? Why do you find comfort in schedules and routine?
2. Why is it difficult to maintain time with Jesus as your top priority?
3. What is one new way you could draw near to Jesus during this season of uncertainty?



## Faithful Through All Generations

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.*

Psalm 100:5 (CSB)

### REFLECT

Faithful to all generations? In a time like this, do we really believe the Lord is good and His love endures forever? Or are these just words on a page with no power or meaning? How can we agree with this verse in the midst of so much uncertainty?

When it seems like God is silent and we're unable to see how He is working behind the scenes, we must choose to dwell on the ways He has been faithful in the past - to us, our family and friends, and all the heroes of the Bible. We have to remember His character and cling to the fact that He sent Jesus, His only Son, to die for our sins and give us eternal life. That alone is more than enough reason to believe that He is good and His steadfast love endures forever.

When woeful questions fill our minds, tempting us to doubt the presence and providence of God, we must claim the promises found in Psalm 100:5 to overcome our doubts.

What if I have to repeat the same grade next school year?

"The Lord is good..."

What if my parents lose their jobs?

"...His steadfast love endures forever..."

What if the world is never the same after this pandemic?

"...and His faithfulness to all generations..."

We may not know how He will demonstrate His faithfulness during our trials, but we can hold onto the promise that His love will always be there to carry us. Take a look at Joseph for example; so many years of his life were full of suffering and uncertainty. But look at how he responded in Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God

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meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

Even though we have no idea what the future holds, may we adopt a perspective like Joseph and look for the good that the Lord will produce during this season.

#### RESPOND

1. What is causing you to doubt the goodness of God?
2. What do you know about Joseph’s life? How can he be an encouragement to you? (Read Genesis 37-50 to learn more.)
3. How has God been faithful to you in the past? How does that help you in the midst of uncertainty?

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## Sense of Longing

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world. 9 God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son—that I constantly mention you, 10 always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 11 For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, 12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

Romans 1:8-12 (CSB)

### REFLECT

Paul (author of Romans) was an incredible hero of the faith. He recognized the hopeless, evil man he once was (a persecutor of Christians) and how Jesus had redeemed him to spread the gospel to the nations. He understood that Jesus was his only source of life, and he wanted everyone he encountered to experience the hope and love of Christ.

Here, we see him writing a letter to the church in Rome. While he had never met the Romans before writing this letter to them, he was expressing a longing to visit them. He says that he wants to strengthen them, but he also knows how encouraging it is to gather with all of the members of the body of Christ. While Paul was traveling, or worse, in prison, he always longed to be with other believers. Why?

Think about the season in which we find ourselves. Large gatherings of any kind are highly discouraged (banned in many areas) and leaving our homes for anything other than groceries and doctor visits is considered a threat to our health. Connecting with friends and family can only be done over the phone or through a screen. Our definition of community has drastically changed with the onset of the nationwide quarantine. We haven't seen our church friends face to face or gathered physically for a worship service in weeks. We can understand Paul's sense of longing better than ever before. We now know what it feels like to crave connection with other believers.

May we never take for granted the privilege of meeting together as the body of Christ ever again. Let's remember our brothers and sisters of the persecuted church who are rarely

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able to gather together. Allow this sense of longing to stir us to pray for one another and encourage each other however we can.

## RESPOND

1. How can you relate to Paul's longing for connection with other believers? Why do we need community?
2. How can you encourage other believers during this time? Pick a creative way each day to connect with others.
3. What do you miss most about church gatherings? Reach out to someone on your church staff to let them know how much you appreciate all they are doing to help you and your family stay connected.

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## Carry Me Through

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*18 If I say, "My foot is slipping," your faithful love will support me, Lord. 19 When I am filled with cares, your comfort brings me joy. Psalm 94:18-19 (CSB)*

### REFLECT

It's safe to say that many of us can relate to the phrase, "When I am filled with cares..." We are all being affected by this pandemic in a variety of ways. Maybe a loved one contracted the virus, a family member lost a job, a long-awaited event was cancelled, or a birthday celebration was far from perfect; no matter the specific situation in which we find ourselves, we can all agree that our hearts are dealing with a lot right now. But, these verses remind us that the only thing that will carry us through this season is the steadfast love of the Lord.

The Lord desires to walk with us through difficult times. He understands our sadness, our disappointments, and our fears. He's ready and waiting to comfort us, or console us, as verse 19 reminds us. But, in order to be consoled, we must first acknowledge our need to be comforted. Maybe we've been doing everything we can to stay busy and fill all of the extra time, while completely ignoring the misery in our souls. Or, maybe we are doing the opposite and milking our sorrows and frustrations for all they are worth.

Either way, we are not allowing the Lord to console us. We are not acknowledging His presence in the midst of our pain. How can we expect to be comforted if we aren't willing to stop, admit our struggles, and let Him draw near to our hearts? Connecting with the Lord requires us to be still and quiet, and that's really hard sometimes.

1 Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all of our anxiety on the Lord because He cares for us. The Lord desires to be there for us and wants us to turn to Him during difficult times like these. His love will not let us slip and His comfort will bring joy to our souls. Instead of trying to mend our souls on our own, why don't we run to our Heavenly Father who is more than capable of bringing healing and restoration.

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## RESPOND

1. In what area(s) of your life do you need God's comfort and healing? How have you been trying to fix it on your own?
2. Why is it so difficult to be still and listen to God?
3. How have you seen God restore joy to others? How does that encourage you to turn to Him in the midst of your struggles?



## Above All Else

These devotionals are designed for students to read on their own, journal their responses, and discuss with a small group of family and friends.

### READ

*12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. 14 Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* Colossians 3:12-16 (CSB)

### REFLECT

We are all stuck at home, surrounded by the same people, looking out the same windows, desperate for interaction beyond our homes and backyards. When we read this passage from Colossians, we might be tempted to think about the ways we have failed in the last few weeks. We might not have been as kind, loving, or forgiving to our families because we are in such close proximity.

But, what if we take this moment right now to change our perspective? What if we take a step back, say a prayer, and ask Jesus to help us be filled with love, compassion, kindness, humility and patience? How would the atmosphere in our homes change? When we are tempted to snap at our little brother or sister, or complain to our parents about how bored we are for the 100th time, let's think of all the things for which we are thankful. Allow an attitude of gratitude to outshine the frustration in our minds and hearts.

Think about Jesus. How would He respond to this difficult season? Verse 15 reads, "let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts," which tells us that Jesus would bring unity and harmony into our homes. Verse 16 says to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," which means in order to represent Christ in our homes, we have to know His word and let it transform us from the inside out. When we sense the slightest bit of hostility welling up inside, may we take that opportunity to turn to Jesus, through prayer and Scripture, to remind us to be thankful and put on love. Day by day, moment by moment, He will shape us into His likeness.

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## RESPOND

1. Are you being a vessel of peace in your home? If not, how can you change your attitude?
2. For what are you thankful? How can that change the way you view and respond to this season?
3. How is Jesus shaping you and transforming your heart during this time?



## About the Author



Kayla Jeffers is currently the PE teacher at International Community School and also works part time as the Student Director at Grace Church of Oviedo, FL. She was called to ministry while she was in college at The University of Central Florida and that has taken on many forms in her life and career. She has worked in the public school system, churches, and also summer camps. Much of her experience was developed while working with FUGE Camps, a summer ministry under the umbrella of LifeWay Christian Resources.

She has served on a FUGE Camp team for the last eight summers, two of which were spent as the director of the team. Through this experience, she was able to develop her leadership and communication skills, but ultimately realizing her passion for discipling and equipping the next generation. She enjoys using her talents to develop content and create environments where students can grow closer to Jesus and realize how much He loves them. She strives to take advantage of every teachable moment and help students apply Biblical truth to their daily lives.

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