



Guided

STUDENT DEVOTIONAL

Assemblies of God Youth Ministries

Introduction by Austin Westlake

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Gospel Publishing House

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INTRODUCTION

Just as the sun was beginning to rise over East Africa, our team loaded into Land Cruisers and headed out for the day. Within minutes, Mount Kilimanjaro became visible in the morning light, creating one of the most beautiful backdrops that any of us had ever seen. We spent the next few hours tracking African animals across the plains of Amboseli National Park; we even got to see a pride of lions share a wildebeest for breakfast—it was unreal!

After a few hours of navigating through the park, we ended up on a lookout cliff where we enjoyed a hot picnic breakfast, steaming coffee, and a stunning view. With Kilimanjaro towering in the distance and some hippos in the water below, we kept turning to our friend, Jonathan Kangethe, and saying, “This is amazing, Jonathan! Thank you for bringing us here.” As we looked out over the picturesque savanna, we were so full of gratitude because we knew that we would not have gotten there unless we had been guided there. We recognized that we needed a guide!

Would it have been possible for our team to rent Land Cruisers, pack a bunch of food, and drive into Amboseli on our own? Maybe. However, without a guide, we would not have gone where we needed to go or seen the things that we had gone there to see. At one point, Jonathan even had to jump out and change a flat tire on our vehicle as a lioness stared him down from about fifty yards away. So, I will go ahead and say it again. We needed a guide—and so do you!

YOU NEED A GUIDE

I understand that you probably aren’t heading out on an East African game drive today. But you are on a journey—it’s the journey of life.

And, regardless of how your journey looks in this season, you aren't supposed to wander through it. You are supposed to be guided through it. Here's the bottom line: You were never meant to live an unguided life.

If we look at the creation story in the Book of Genesis, it becomes clear that humanity needed a guide, and that God was the Guide we needed. In fact, one of the first things that we see God do in the creation story is give guidance to Adam and Eve. And one of the first things that we see Adam and Eve do is receive guidance from God.

The truth is that humankind was never meant to be guided by the culture we live in or the creation around us. Instead, we were meant to be guided by the Creator himself. However, if you are familiar with the rest of the Genesis account, you are aware that Adam and Eve had some serious problems living a life guided by God.

In Genesis 2, we read that there was one tree in the entire Garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve weren't allowed to eat; it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Sadly, we learn that both Adam and Eve decided to ignore the guidance of the Lord and eat the forbidden fruit. This moment in the Bible is known as the fall of man, and it brought immediate separation between humanity and God.

Despite Adam and Eve's decision to ignore the guidance of the Lord and eat the forbidden fruit, it is important to understand that humanity's fall wasn't an unguided moment. It was actually a misguided moment. There was another character in the story—his name is Satan. And, when Satan approached Eve in the Garden, he began to question God's Word, tell lies, and ultimately, guide Eve away from what she and Adam knew to be right. Even in their moment of sin, Adam and Eve were still being guided. They just chose to follow the wrong voice and were misguided as a result.

So, what is my point? My point is that humanity was created with a need to be guided. But when we aren't guided by our Creator, we will be misguided by the culture around us. Living a misguided life can lead

us to places that we never intended to be in and do things that we never intended to do. That is why it is extremely important to choose the right guide for your life.

YOU HAVE A SUPERPOWER

Did you know that you have a superpower? You do, whether you realize it or not. I'm not talking about the ability to fly, make yourself invisible, or eat multiple footlong hot dogs in one sitting. (I did that at a Kansas City Royals baseball game once. My wife wasn't impressed, and she claims that it isn't an actual superpower.)

You have a superpower. It is the power to make choices, or the power of decision. Although some have the freedom to make more decisions than others, humans were created with the cognitive ability to make choices. The most important of all the choices that we will make is choosing who we will follow—choosing our guide.

Several years ago, my family was on vacation in New York City. One morning, we headed out for a day of shopping, good coffee, great pizza, and sightseeing. As we set out for the day, we decided that my brother George was going to take the lead on navigating our way through the city. Rather than taking the most direct route to some of the places that we wanted to go, we took the scenic route through Central Park. It was a lot of fun, until it wasn't. We ended up getting lost multiple times and logged several miles of walking before ever visiting the sites that we had planned to see that day. By the time we got to a few of our must-see spots and shops, we were already tired from the summer heat and crowded crosswalks. We knew where we wanted to go and what we wanted to do that day, but we didn't get to do it all because we chose the wrong guide (sorry Geo). As it turned out, I wasn't a great guide either. When I tried to navigate the subway system to Times Square, I accidentally led us to the Brooklyn Bridge. The moral is that choosing the wrong guide will get you lost!

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Let me ask you this question: Who, or what, is guiding your life on a daily basis? Whether you realize it or not, every decision you make is being guided by someone or something. And it's really important to identify who your guide is. Because ultimately, your guide will determine where you go and what you do.

So, I'll ask again. This time, spend a few moments taking an honest evaluation of your life and habits. Who, or what, is guiding your life on a daily basis? Are you being guided by cultural norms such as social media, the pursuit of influence, the trap of comparison, or anxiousness? Or are you being guided by God's Word, the pursuit of faithfulness, and the peace that comes from the Holy Spirit? Who, or what, is guiding your life?

As you answer this question, my hope is that you will start to evaluate your journey and recognize that you were never meant to be guided by culture, but instead, by your Creator. You were meant to live a life led by God through the daily guidance of His Holy Spirit. My prayer is that you wouldn't stop at simply recognizing the truth, but that you would pursue the truth. My prayer is that you would do the things necessary to live a God-guided life.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

To live a life guided by God, you will have to seek Him and hear His voice. You will have to build daily habits such as spending time in prayer, reading the Bible, and journaling. You will have to be more intentional with your schedule. You might have to (this one can be scary) wake up a few minutes early each day to create more time with God. And, if you are serious about living a God-guided life, you may even have to cut back on some things that have been harming your purpose such as social media, materialism, and unhealthy relationships.

Will it be a challenge? Absolutely. But I promise you, the results will be worth it. When you live a life guided by God, you will start to grow in

your faith, develop wisdom, and experience the peace of the Holy Spirit. You will start to see situations with clarity rather than confusion. And ultimately, you will start to make decisions with eternity in mind. A God-guided life changes everything. So, don't wait until tomorrow or next week to start seeking God. Make the decision today that you are going to allow the Holy Spirit to lead your life. Choose to live a life guided by God.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Living a God-guided life means that you aren't the leader of your life—Jesus is. And according to Jesus, it is His Holy Spirit who comes alongside us, guides us into all truth, teaches us all things, and gives us peace. For some, the idea of being led by the Holy Spirit can get confusing because, as I'm sure you've noticed, the Holy Spirit is invisible. So, how do you know if you are actually following Jesus? How do you know if you are allowing God, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, to guide your life?

In the Assemblies of God, we believe that there are seven dimensions of living that will become evident when someone is following Jesus and listening to the guidance of His Holy Spirit. We call these the Seven Dimensions of a Spirit-Filled Disciple, and they are as follows:

1. Bible: Knowing, loving, and being able to apply God's Word
2. Holy Spirit: Living a Spirit-empowered life through the baptism in the Holy Spirit
3. Mission: Being on a mission with God, sharing Christ with others, and discipling others
4. Prayer: Enjoy listening to and speaking with God regularly
5. Worship: Delighting in God and offering all of one's life as worship
6. Service: Living a humble life of service to God and others
7. Generosity: Responding to the Holy Spirit's leading in giving and stewardship

These Seven Dimensions of a Spirit-Filled Disciple aren't just items on a checklist. They are the marks of someone who walks with Jesus. As you

journey through the *Guided Student Devotional*, you will notice that these Seven Dimensions serve as the framework for your daily devotions and will help you to identify growth opportunities in your life.

WHERE SHOULD I START?

Deciding where to start depends on where you want to finish. When our Speed the Light missions team was navigating the rural landscapes of Kenya to visit our ministry sites, our guide, Jonathan, knew where he wanted to finish out that specific leg of the trip—Amboseli National Park on the border of Kenya and Tanzania. Knowing where we wanted to close out that portion of the trip determined the route that we would take from the hills of Narok to our camp at Amboseli. We needed a general idea of where we wanted to end before we could start. The same is true with living a God-guided life. Knowing that you want to live guided by the Holy Spirit will require that you start in the right place. That place is the Bible.

Over the next sixty-three days, my friends and I want to help you develop a devotion habit that will change your life. It's the habit of spending time with God and reading His word every single day. My prayer is that, through this devotional, you would not only build healthy disciplines, but that you would also hear the voice of the Lord and allow Him to be the primary influence on your life. My prayer is that this devotional would help you live life guided by God.



Austin Westlake
Director of Student Discipleship
and Resource Development

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Having a strong devotional habit is life-changing because getting into the Word of God is one of the best ways to draw near to Him. But, there will be times when staying committed to the process will be challenging. Here are some tips that can help you stay locked-in to your devotional journey so that you can continue to grow in your walk with Jesus.

- 1. Understand what the Bible is.** If you are going to prioritize the Bible, I think it is really important that you understand what it is first.
 - The Bible is the perfect and inspired Word of God.
 - The Bible is one big story from start to finish; it's all connected.
 - The Bible is a road map to the life that you were meant to live.
 - The Bible gives us information about the past, instructions for the present, and insight about the future.
- 2. Choose a time and place.** One of the keys to building your devotional habit is choosing a consistent time and place to do your devotions. Even Jesus, the Son of God, would often go to specific places at specific times to spend uninterrupted time with His Father. If Jesus needed a time and place, we need a time and place too.
- 3. Learn how to build a habit.** Growing up, I often heard teachers, coaches, and even dentists say things like, “You have to do this for three weeks solid because a habit takes twenty-one days to build.” As more research has surfaced, we know that twenty-one days is simply not enough time to effectively build a habit. In fact, research now shows that a habit actually takes over sixty days to take root and become automatic in our lives.¹ So, if we can commit to spending time with God for about three months, it becomes much more likely that we will still be spending time with Him six months or six years from now.

4. **Write down what God speaks.** Every day, we are bombarded with a lot of information. Whether the content is coming from social media, school, conversations, or podcasts, we are absorbing so much information that it can be really difficult to remember any of it. So, you should write down what you notice God saying in His Word. If you are going to take the time to read God's Word, you should do the work to retain God's Word. Write things down! We have even given you space to do that in this book.

5. **Set boundaries.** I have heard it said that we are living in the most distracted culture in history. I think that statement can be true, but only if we allow it to be. Distractions don't have to control our level of discipline. Most distractions can be avoided if we have proper boundaries in our life. To stay focused, identify what distracts you, and put some boundaries in place to protect your devotional time each day. Here are some ideas of helpful boundaries that may help you.
 - Don't check social media or respond to texts while doing your devotions.
 - Don't eat snacks while doing your devotions.
 - Don't watch TV while doing your devotions.
 - Only listen to worship music during your devotions.
 - Don't do your devotions in the same place you sleep each night.

6. **Set up accountability.** The journey of faith was never meant to be walked alone. If you read the Bible, what you will quickly realize is that faith is best lived out within community. If you are going to establish healthy devotional habits, you need to have someone in your life who will hold you accountable and help you stick to the commitment that you have made. Before you start this devotional journey, you should talk to a youth leader, parent, or godly friend and establish a time each week when you will give that person an update on how your devotional journey is progressing. Everyone needs someone to walk with. Don't try to do this devotional alone; get some accountability.

As you start this journey, just know that each contributor to this book is praying for you and cheering you on. We believe God will reveal himself in a new way as you spend time in His Word and allow Him to guide your life!

¹ To read the full article about forming new habits, visit <https://jamesclear.com/new-habit>

A Firm Foundation
*Edgar Alfaro***ENGAGE: MATTHEW 7:24-27**

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

CONSIDER

I remember as a young boy when my family built the home where I spent my adolescent years. While we lived in a mobile home, our house was being built right behind us. The workers had just finished preparing everything for the foundation to be poured. I remember standing next to my nonbelieving father as he said, “The foundation needs to be strong because that’ll prevent our house from collapsing during hurricanes or strong winds.” For some reason, my father’s words stuck with me. That might be because I’ve always been a person who likes safety and protection.

When I met Jesus, I realized that those words my father spoke were not just his words. They were a biblical truth. To survive the storms of life and attacks of the enemy, it is important for Christians to build a good foundation to stand on. The Bible is the best foundation we can use to build our life on. When we read the Bible and obey its words, we will be people who build a house on a rock. That’s a good foundation. I encourage you to read your Bible and apply the words you read to your life. If you do this, your foundation will be firm.

REFLECT

No matter how beautiful a building looks above the ground, it is the foundation underneath that keeps it standing. The same is true for our life. We should be more concerned about what is underneath the surface, than what is above the surface (our social media aesthetic, the clothes we wear, or our talents).

ACTIVATE

On a scale of 1–10 (10 being the strongest) how would you rate the strength of your foundation in God’s Word? _____

On a scale of 1–10 (10 being the highest) how strong would you like your foundation to be sixty-three days from now? _____

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you build your foundation on His Word by helping you develop the fruit of the Spirit. These are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The Indwelling
*Austin Westlake***ENGAGE: JOHN 20:19, 21-22**

That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. . . . Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

CONSIDER

In the 1970s, aerospace engineer Frank Rudy patented something that would change the athletic shoe forever. Frank is famous for developing a cushioning system that functioned like a miniature air bag. This technology would eventually be picked up by Nike and placed within the sole of their athletic shoes. This little pocket of air would eventually be called Nike Air. The athletic shoe market would be forever changed because of what was in the sole of the shoes.

Jesus wasn’t concerned with shoes during His time on earth. He *was* interested in changing the lives of people forever by sending His Holy Spirit. In John 20:22, that is exactly what Jesus did. On the day that Jesus rose from the grave, He gave His Holy Spirit to the disciples.

But it’s important to understand that Jesus was not *baptizing* them in His Holy Spirit as they would receive later in Acts 2. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead would now live within them.¹ This was the moment when we first see the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. What these disciples experienced would change their lives forever.

¹ Life Publishers, “The Spiritual Rebirth of the Disciples,” *Fire Bible Student Edition*, 1,490.

REFLECT

Throughout Scripture, we see the Holy Spirit come upon various people. When this happened, they were given guidance and abilities that they normally wouldn't have. But following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit wasn't just available some of the time, but at all times through His indwelling of believers. This happens anytime a person invites Jesus to live in their heart and experiences spiritual rebirth. Isn't it encouraging that God's Holy Spirit literally lives inside Christ's followers and guides them?

ACTIVATE

How do you think the indwelling of the Holy Spirit should help us in our daily life? What are some areas of your life that the Holy Spirit has been helping you in?

PRAY

Today, thank God that His presence within us isn't available only occasionally, but continually through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

Talking about Jesus Blesses Others
Lee Rogers

ENGAGE: GENESIS 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

CONSIDER

God called Abram to go on a great journey—a journey of faith. He didn’t know exactly what the journey held for him and his family, or even what the destination would be. But, he did know a few things that God had promised him.

God would show Abram where to go, Abram would be a blessing to others, and all the families on earth would be blessed through him. The promise that everyone would be blessed came true through Jesus, who was a descendant of Abram. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, all people on earth are blessed with God’s forgiveness for sin. All they need to do is put their faith in God.

You are also on a great faith journey. Like Abram, you may not know what the journey holds for you, but you can be a blessing to others, and that blessing can come through Jesus Christ. You can bless others by telling them who God is, what He has done in your life, and what He can do in their lives. Today, ask God to give you an opportunity to be a blessing to others by talking about Him.

REFLECT

In this passage, God told Abram to step out in faith and leave the place where he was most comfortable. Are there any areas of comfort in your life that God may be calling you to step away from in faith?

ACTIVATE

List two examples in your life where your personal comfort may be getting in the way of your calling to reach people for Jesus.

- 1.
- 2.

PRAY

Pray that the Lord would provide you with the opportunities, and the faith, to step out of your comfort zone and tell others about Jesus.

Who is guiding your life?

You were never meant to be guided by the culture you live in or the creation around you. Instead, you were meant to be guided by God, the Creator himself.

**When you are guided by our Creator,
you won't be misguided by culture.**

The Guided Student Devotional will help you develop a devotional habit of spending time with God and reading His Word every day. Each devotion will focus on one of these seven dimensions of a Spirit-filled disciple:

Bible • Holy Spirit • Mission • Prayer
Worship • Service • Generosity

Each day is formatted to help you intentionally apply God's Word to your life in these five steps:

ENGAGE with the Word of God
CONSIDER a specific thought about the Scripture
REFLECT on what it means in your context
ACTIVATE what you've learned
PRAY for God to help you apply the thought

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Thirty-four youth ministry leaders contributed to the *Guided Student Devotional*, under the direction of the Assemblies of God Youth Ministries.

The Assemblies of God Youth Ministries exists to equip the Church so that every single student in this generation personally knows Jesus and is well acquainted with all of His works!

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