

# SUMMER DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION GUIDE

## SCRIPTURE: TOOLS

How often have you been reading a passage of Scripture and come upon a word or phrase that you either didn't fully understand or wished you had more context for? Because the Bible is made up of several types of literature (narrative, letter, poetry, prophecy, etc.), written over hundreds of years by multiple authors, and to a different culture than our own, questions about issues of context, word usage, and meaning are normal and expected. Thankfully, there are tools that can help! Below are a few of these tools. Many times just a little clarity can bring a lot of understanding. Remember, the goal is to understand God's Word that we might believe and be transformed by God's Word!

### **Study Bible**

One of the most helpful tools for engaging with Scripture is a Study Bible, which contains explanatory notes printed alongside the Biblical text. Study Bibles are helpful because they contain versions of several tools within them. The ESV Study Bible and NIV Life Application Study Bible are good options.

### **Concordance**

Another helpful tool is a concordance, which shows you all the places a given word is used in Scripture. Using the context of other verses that address the same topic can help you more easily understand the meaning of the verse in question. A good online concordance can be found at [biblia.com](http://biblia.com). Simply type the word or phrase into the search bar, select a Bible (like ESV, NASB, or NIV), and hit Go. You'll see all the places a word or phrase is used in the Bible. *Strong's Concordance* is a good physical option.

### **Bible Dictionary**

Bible dictionaries are helpful because they can give you a definition and broader context of a word or concept you don't understand. You can use a free online Bible dictionary at [biblia.com](http://biblia.com) by typing a word into the search bar and selecting *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. For physical Bible dictionaries, check out *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* or the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.

### **Journal**

A great tool to enhance our engagement with Scripture is journaling. This could look like writing down thoughts, questions, or the things that stand out to you as you read. Or maybe you want to write out prayers to God in response to what you read. This can be especially useful while hearing God's Word preached on Sundays, which will help you come back to what you've heard for a reminder, further study, or to share with your Redemption Group. Reading the Word, hearing the Word, journaling about the Word, and challenging and encouraging one another with the Word is a powerful combination!

## **PRACTICE**

Spend personal time with God praying and engaging with Scripture. While reading Scripture, use one of the tools above to deepen your understanding. Maybe start with journaling or try the concordance at [biblia.com](http://biblia.com). If you don't own a Study Bible, consider ordering one as you go deeper in God's Word.

For previous week's guides, go to [redemptionokc.com/summerdevotions](http://redemptionokc.com/summerdevotions).



## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **PSALM 133 | THE LORD OUR CONNECTOR**

#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Each week this summer, our Reflection Guide will include a spiritual practice for you to engage in your personal devotional time. Begin this week by reading page one of the reflection guide. Have you ever used any of these tools while engaging with Scripture? Are there any you'd like to try this week?
2. Read Psalm 133 aloud. What is the overall tone of the psalm? How does the tone contribute to the meaning?
3. What is the connection (if any) between the first sentence (verse 1) and the last sentence of the psalm (verse 3b)?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

4. We are all on a spiritual journey with ups and downs along the way, but our hope is that we will be growing more like Christ, and toward deep life in Christ, over time. How would you describe your spiritual journey recently (e.g. growing steadily, stagnant, big leaps, regressing, etc.)?
5. How have you seen church community play a role in your spiritual growth along the way?
6. In his book *When the Church Was a Family*, Joseph Hellerman gives four principles to sum up the biblical concept of church as a family: 1. We share our stuff with one another. 2. We share our hearts with one another. 3. We stay, embrace the pain, and grow up with one another. 4. Family is about more than me, my spouse, and the kids.

Which of these principles is easiest for you to live out? What are some ways you are doing so?

Which of these principles is hardest for you to live out? What are some ways you might be able to begin doing so with the Spirit's help?

7. The gospel not only reconciles us to God, it also reconciles us to one another—imperfectly now but perfectly when Jesus renews all things. How does this community aspect of the gospel give you hope in a world full of disunity and relational brokenness?

Practice this week: During your personal, undistracted time with the Lord this week, spend some time praying and engaging with Scripture. While reading Scripture, try out one of the tools on the front side of this sheet to help you more deeply understand God's Word in order to more fully apply it to your life.