

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR SENIORS

SENIOR

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

LARS ROOD



simply for students



YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER

Senior

Preparing for the Future

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TO SOREN:

The year you are a senior is going to be a tough one for me. I love watching you grow and make decisions, and I'll be honest and say that when you leave to a new thing, it'll be really hard. But I'm already so proud of you and know that God is growing you and will use you for great things.

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INTRODUCTION

The senior year can feel a little bit bizarre. I see it broken up into three distinct parts. At the beginning of the year, you are excited to finally be a senior and have all the privileges and prestige of being the oldest kids on campus. But at the same time, you are scrambling to figure out where you'll apply to college and getting those crazy applications and essays completed. Or maybe you're thinking about a different path: the military, or a job, or vocational training, or a family business. Whatever your plans for life after high school, this can be a pretty stressful season of life.

But then things slow down considerably. You've reached the middle of the year, and there isn't as much to do. If you're going to college, you might be waiting for envelopes in the mail that will reveal your options for next year, but in general this period of time is a little more relaxing. Then near the end of your senior year, it ramps up again as you get ready to graduate and prepare to pursue your future plans—while also saying goodbye to so much of your past.

In all of this, your faith journey can get off track or take a little bit of a beating if you don't stay focused on the things that are most important. It's easy to get distracted and to feel like your faith doesn't matter as much anymore because you are getting ready to leave so much of your life behind. During this time, though, it is particularly important to lean into your youth group, church, Christian friends, leaders, family members, and your Bible because even if you've built a firm foundation, you need to keep building on it before you enter a world where everything is different.



How this book works:

This devotional includes 30 short things for you to think about. For each reading you'll find some sort of story and some follow-up questions to consider. You can do these by yourself, but you also can benefit from discussing them with a small group of people. This book might become 30 weeks of curriculum or simply provide 30 days of focus before the school year starts.

Each devotion includes a section called "The World Thinks." Most often these are comments that I have heard from non-Christians about these particular topics or issues. I don't hold back, so they may come across as a little negative. That's OK. You'll hear negative things all the time about your faith. The point is to encourage you to think through what people say and work out how you might respond to the thoughts and reactions people have about your faith in Christ.

You'll also find an action step for each devotion that is exactly what it sounds like: an opportunity to actually do something to discover and apply key truths. Often these are things that take some effort to accomplish and can help you grow. I want to encourage you to really put effort into doing them. Finally, I've included some Bible passages for you to look up—often several, but sometimes just one or two. I want you to go deeper and explore other places in the Bible with more thoughts, stories, truths, and ideas that will help you.

It's my hope and prayer that these devotions will challenge you, encourage you, and put you in places where you will have the opportunity to prepare for the future.

SECTION 1

THE BUSY SEASON



Hooray, you're a senior—now figure out what to do with the rest of your life! Fill out all these applications and essays, and get it done as soon as possible so you can register early and get everything figured out quickly! At the same time, get ready for your "last" everything in high school and be excited that your future life is coming so quickly!

The beginning of your senior year can be really fun and really stressful at the same time. You may need to make one last push to get your grades up to get into that school you want, or you might be padding your resume with a few more volunteer opportunities so you can look well rounded. Or maybe you're not even sure you want to go to college and you're struggling to find people to talk with who won't push you to go that way simply because it's "normal."

Emotions and stress run high during this part of the year, and you need to focus on your faith and on today's realities, and allow the future to come slowly without trying to make it happen sooner than it needs to. God has an awesome plan for you, but a lot of other people also want to offer input and suggestions—and you are finally at a place where you are going to be making choices, which can be incredible and scary.

NO. 1 WILL THIS YEAR BE GREAT?

Your senior year should be great. And it likely will be. You're at the top of the school and are finally a big man (or woman) on campus—for nine months, at least. And then it's over. But while it lasts, it will be amazing.

I remember the first month of my senior year—everything changed. The cliques that had been around for years seemed to disappear in my senior class. All of a sudden, everyone was much more open and accepting of each other. Honestly, it was a little bit weird, but it got me thinking that this was what the next phase of life would be like! I remember thinking that in college there wouldn't be all the weirdness and insular groups of people—and that if anything felt weird like that, I'd just walk away and find new people to hang out with.

There is so much to look forward to this senior year, so enjoy every bit of it. Keep a journal. Take lots of photos. Do whatever it takes to remember all these incredible moments.

THINK ABOUT:

1. What are you most looking forward to your senior year? Why?
2. Is there anything you are particularly nervous or worried about? If so, why?

3. How do you think your relationship with God needs to grow or change this year?

THE WORLD THINKS:

You are finally at the top. Take every opportunity to remind everyone younger than you how important you are. After all, that's what the seniors did to you, right?

ACT:

As you think about this school year, consider some specific things that you might want to accomplish. Get a piece of paper and write down several of those things and share them with two friends. See what they're looking forward to accomplishing, too.

READ:

Ezekiel 38:23, Luke 9:43, and Philippians 3:8

NO. 2 WHO ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?

Like a lot of people, I wasn't fully prepared for my senior year. I'd become comfortable not being in charge and having people to look up to at school. For me it was a little different, too, because my older sister was just one grade ahead of me and I was close to many of her friends. So when they all left, I faced a void that I wasn't really ready for. Deciding how to fill that void and figuring out who I was supposed to be—it all was a little bit tricky.

I had a distinct place at school, though, because I was in band and was actually pretty good at my instrument. So my senior year that was my go-to place for feeling comfortable and having a lot of encouragement and praise come my way. I was pretty sure that I would be doing something with music in college, too, so it didn't feel like I was going to lose that part of my identity. I can imagine, though, that if you are an athlete who isn't planning on playing any sports at the college level, your senior year might be tougher as you realize you are going to be leaving that behind. Trying to figure out who you are supposed to be your senior year isn't always tough for everyone, but it does have pieces that can be difficult to walk through.

What about your identity? Has it been defined by a sport, an extracurricular activity, or a group of friends? Remember that who you are is so much deeper than what you do. Your value and purpose surpass any activity, club, social group, or job—not just now, but for the rest of your life!



THINK ABOUT:

1. What are some of the roles you think or know you will have as a senior?

2. How can you figure out who you are supposed to be this year?

3. What role do you think your faith can play as you figure out your identity as a senior and how to handle the changes at the end of the year?

THE WORLD THINKS:

Your options are limited once you graduate from high school. Everyone has something that they are specifically suited for, and you have to figure that out. Trying to be something different or unique or innovative will just cause you to fail.

ACT:

Think about one thing you wish you had done in high school that you've never tried—a sport, a leadership role, an extracurricular activity, or maybe some kind of community involvement. Is now the right time to see if that is something you could do? Ask some people you trust to help push you to try something new.

READ:

Joshua 1:9, Psalm 13:5-6, and Proverbs 3:5-6

NO. 3 WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

I recently told a friend that years ago I really wanted to be either a tow truck driver or a taxi cab driver. I had a lot of gifts that would have made me good at either of those careers. I memorize streets well, like working hard, can talk to people I don't know, and enjoy working alone and being my own boss. Sometimes I wish I hadn't walked away from those jobs because every now and then they sound more inviting than what I'm doing. But I know that neither of those jobs was what God had called me to do.

In college I started out studying computer science, then politics, then English, and finally became a teacher. God made it pretty clear to me through a series of people and opportunities that he had designed me to work with students.

You may not have a clue what you want to do with your life right now—and that's OK. If I had locked myself into a career path too early, I would have missed out on a life of ministry. But it's OK to have some dreams and ideas; just hold them loosely because God may totally change your plans. He did with mine.

THINK ABOUT:

1. If you had to choose right now, what career path would you follow? Why?

2. What are some things you really like but don't feel you could do as a career?
3. What gifts and talents do you think God has given you that maybe you haven't fully figured out how to implement yet?

THE WORLD THINKS:

Whatever you do make sure it pays and pays well. You'll have bills to pay, a home to maintain, and a family to support. Who cares if you don't really enjoy your job or find it fulfilling? Get your head out of the clouds and face reality.

ACT:

Because you will probably have some free space and not be too busy this year, see if you can find some people in careers that you might want to pursue and ask if you can shadow them for a few hours at work. Ask lots of questions: how they prepared for the career, what they enjoy most (and least), how they make a difference through their job, and what other advice they might offer.

READ:

Psalm 20:4, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 16:9, and Ephesians 1:11

NO. 4 WHO CAN YOU TURN TO?

I didn't really have a very good support system of people I could turn to my senior year. My parents were always there and loved and cared for me, and they were certainly a big part of my decision-making process. But I never really shared my heart and my hopes with them. My youth group had fallen apart just before my senior year when my youth pastor and his wife separated and the church didn't hire anyone to replace him. My friends were in a similar place as me—trying to figure out a lot on their own.

My older sister was a big help for me as I tried to navigate my senior year and decide what I wanted to do after graduation. Because she graduated just a year before me, I saw a lot of her journey. She ended up going to college only about an hour away, so I went and visited her often because I liked her—and because I needed help with my math homework.

It's important to have people around you who will support you, encourage you, help you process your questions, listen to your dreams, and pray for God's direction and strength in your life. Maybe your parents or siblings can fill that role. Maybe your friends or classmates or people at church can. Seek out these kinds of people in your life—and if you can't easily find them, pray that God will lead you to them!

THINK ABOUT:

1. Who are some people you believe you can turn to for help, wisdom, or insight?

THIS IS IT! You've reached the pinnacle of the high school food chain! You've finally become a senior!

Now what?

Here's the crazy thing about your senior year: It often starts with a sprint as you finish applications, make big decisions, and prepare for life after high school. But then you wait. And then senioritis usually kicks in.

Lars Rood remembers what his senior year was like, and as a pastor and a former teacher, he's talked with countless students about how this one year is both an end and a beginning. *What legacy have you left? How do you deal with disappointments and regrets? What does it mean to truly let God lead you? Why is saying goodbye so difficult?*

As you read each entry in this devotional, you'll discover wisdom and truth to guide you in the final months of your high school career, along with solid suggestions on living out what you believe. This isn't just a book you read—it's a book that leads to action.



LARS ROOD has been involved in youth ministry for 20+ years, and it has been an amazing ride. A featured writer/speaker, he loves to be with students and families, as well as teach youth workers and seminary students. Lars and his family live in Washington state, where he is an associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Bellevue. You can follow his life at larsrood.com, twitter.com/larsrood, facebook.com/larsrood.



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helping youth workers with what matters most

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