

A GROWN-UP'S GUIDE

to using *Don't Forget to Flush: A Bathroom Devotional for Kids* by Kevin and Britta Alton



WELCOME TO DON'T FORGET TO FLUSH

This offbeat devotional is geared toward instigating the habit of a devotional routine in kids ages 9 to 12 years old. Written from the perspective of a snarky preteen boy named Eli, this devotional will make kids think, laugh, and connect with God all while sitting on the toilet. *Don't Forget to Flush* contains 99 devotions that connect ordinary bathroom items to faith-filled practices and character building ideas to take beyond the bathroom into everyday life.



WHAT IS A BATHROOM DEVOTIONAL?

A bathroom devotional is exactly what it sounds like—a devotional to read in the bathroom. *Don't Forget to Flush* helps kids connect the regular habits and objects in the bathroom with faith practices. It's amazing how much divine inspiration (and hilarity) can be gleaned from a plunger or bar of soap.

WHY A BATHROOM DEVOTIONAL?

The idea grew out of a conversation with some kids on a youth retreat—where the kids themselves suggested the bathroom as a good place to connect with God. Children (and adults) often struggle to form devotional habits. If you attach something youth pastors and parents would like kids to do with something they already have to do, maybe they'll carry that new habit out of the bathroom into other parts of life.

Kevin and Britta Alton have done their share of hollering, "Don't forget to flush!" to their preteen boys who have exited the bathroom without taking care of this important task. They decided that this was the perfect title for a devotional intent on helping preteens to remember to think about God once in a while too.

HOW CAN I GET MY KID EXCITED ABOUT DEVOTIONS?

At this age, it's probably best to be subtle about it. Preteens and teenagers aren't going to think something is fun or cool just because their parents want them to. *Don't Forget to Flush* pairs faith reflections and Bible verses with funny stories, bathroom trivia, and jokes. If you leave this in the bathroom, chances are your kids will pick it up and read it. When they're finished with this book, they might be ready for something new to read in their bedroom or somewhere else in ordinary life. Before too long, they'll be hooked on connecting with God on a regular basis.

WHAT STANDS OUT MOST ABOUT ELI?

Eli is not your average kid—he thinks about the Bible and how to live out Christian faith on a regular basis. He looks verses up in the Bible and asks his parents tough questions about what he's reading. But he's also really down to earth and funny. He builds towers out of toilet paper rolls, learns how to use a plunger effectively (eventually), and develops systems to stock toilet paper and towels in his family bathrooms. He's serious and silly, and just the kind of kid you'd want your kids to be friends with.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK TO CONNECT WITH YOUR KID

If this book is in your bathroom, chances are you'll read it too. After all, what else are you going to do while you're making an extra-long visit on the john? If you read something that makes you laugh, mention it to your kid later. Or if you read something that makes you think, try bringing that up as well. You could even try recreating some of the zany efforts of the parents in this book to help your kids think about faith—such as leaving Bible verses in their shoes or sticky notes on the bathroom wall. Don't try too hard though—the best way to connect with your kid is to let it happen organically. Follow their cues, be honest with your own joys and struggles in faith, and let faith practices and conversations become a normal part of your family life together.

SHUT THE DOOR

SO THERE I WAS,

full of cheeseburger, sitting on the toilet. The porcelain throne. The john. In my office, so to speak, minding my business. I was trying to avoid my mom's friends from church who had taken over the living room. A full belly provided the excuse for privacy.

I like going to the bathroom. It's like a little vacay from the family unit. I can think in here. I can read, like you're doing now. Sometimes I stay a little longer than I need too just to have some alone time or rock out in the mirror. Sometimes I talk to God. It's a great time to ...

"Oh, I'M SO SORRY! I didn't realize you were in here, sweetie."

Oooooohhh, bummer, I left the door open. Hope my mom's friend wasn't totally traumatized. Quick, look did you shut the door?



The door is important. In a moment of hurried weakness I had failed to engage the primary protective agent of the restroom experience. The imaginary barrier between self and family unfortunately requires shutting an actual, physical door. I'm sorry, me, I have let you down.

Reminds me of a note my mom stuck in my backpack last week. It had Matthew 6:5-15 on it. You can read the whole thing when you get out of here, but this is the part that I just remembered:

"But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matt. 6:6)

Going somewhere to be alone to pray helps me focus better on God. The bathroom is a great place for that. I don't always pray in here, but I should always shut the door. It's rule #1 for #2.

YOUR TURN

- What do you think about prayer?
- What do you pray when you pray alone?
- Where do you pray the most?

Alright, you better get outta here. Ask your parent where they pray and what they like to pray about. And don't forget to flush.

6



IT'S POSSIBLE THAT AS MANY AS 1 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD DO NOT HAVE A BATHROOM DOOR.

7



Q: WHY SHOULD YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER TO FLUSH? A: IT'S YOUR DOODY.