



REDEEMER
CHURCH

Sabbatical Devotion Guide

Resting in the Renewing Power of God

Let us therefore strive
to enter that rest ...
Hebrews 4:11

About This Guide...

One of my hopes for Redeemer during this eight-week sabbatical is that we, collectively, come to know, in greater ways, how great and glorious and good and gracious God is and how he shows us this again and again through his Word, by his Spirit, in his people. While we seek rest and renewal, my hope is the same for our church family: a resting in the renewing power of God at work within us.

To aid in this, I wanted to put together a guide that is more than just a list of ways you can pray for us, though that would be appreciated! Rather, my hope is that this guide will encourage your hearts and spur on your actions to intentional care for one another .

Here are three “three’s” to know about this guide.

First...there are three resources you may want to have:

Colossians

The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ by Ray Ortlund

Dangerous Calling by Paul Tripp

Second...each week will have three components:

Read:You will be encouraged to read Colossians this summer; as well as The Gospel by Ray Ortlund. Those sections will be indicated each week. You can also read through Dangerous Calling but I will provide a key thought in the guide that will be enough to use for reflection and prayer.

Reflect: During the week, reflect on what you read, what it means, how it impacts you, our church. There will be a few questions to help with reflection.

Pray: From the reading and reflection will come a guide for praying. Of course, you can pray for more than what is listed! The prayer guide will be for you, personally, for our church, corporately, and for your pastor, specifically, while on sabbatical.

Third...there three ways this guide can be useful:

Personal Devotions: you can incorporate this into your personal devotions...even if you don't meet up with anyone to discuss and pray together, just knowing others are reading and thinking on the same things will be encouraging and unifying.

Discipleship Groups: this will be a great resource to use with a summer Discipleship Group! 2-3 men or 2-3 women gathering together weekly to read, reflect and pray together is something we want/need more of and this could be the catalyst for you to make that happen.

Larger Groups: this would also be adaptable to a bigger group, like your RLG or a men's or women's group. Food, fellowship and time of mutual encouragement as you share your reflections and hopes for Redeemer.

I hope and pray that this guide is useful to you and to our church. There won't be room to write notes or thoughts, so you may want to grab a moleskin or a Field Notes or some other (lesser) journal.

To the glory of God and the good of his people.

Pastor Shawn

My hope is
that this
guide will
encourage
your hearts
and spur on
your actions

READ

Colossians 1:1-14

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (1:11-12)

The Gospel: The Gospel For You

“Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace. When the doctrine is clear and the culture is beautiful, that church will be powerful. But there are no shortcuts to getting there. Without the doctrine, the culture will be weak. Without the culture, the doctrine will seem pointless.” (page 21)

“Human beings are always assigning to themselves some kind of identity. There are only two places to look. Either you will be getting your identity vertically, from who you are in Christ, or you will be shopping for it horizontally in the situations, experiences, and relationships of your daily life.”

Dangerous Calling, page 22

REFLECT

In what ways, over the last year, have you seen the gospel “bear fruit” and “increase” (Col 1:6) in your life; in Redeemer? How does what Paul pray for in Col 1:11-12 connect to the gospel “bearing fruit” and “increasing” in the church? Why is it important to see Paul plead for more even as there is evidence of bearing and increasing?

Why is gospel doctrine and culture inseparably linked? What is implied about the way gospel doctrine and culture take shape in a church by the following statement: “there are no shortcuts to getting there”?

What happens when you fail to find your identity vertically by settling for horizontal options? How does this skew your view of the role of the local church in your life?

PRAY

Pray that Redeemer Church would be strengthened with gospel power, marked with fruit, growth, endurance, joy and thankfulness. Pray specifically for your leadership to also be strengthened with gospel power.

Pray for a strong gospel culture, sourced from a strengthened belief in gospel doctrine that then permeates in the life of the church.

Pray that we would better grasp our identity in Christ and how it informs the way we live out our daily lives. Pray this truth for Pastor Shawn as he begins his sabbatical this week.

READ

Colossians 1:15-29

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (1:28-29)

The Gospel: The Gospel For The Church

“...a church’s gospel culture is marked by a beautiful holiness. It remains imperfect in this life, but it’s visible and lovely. Our Lord says to us, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (1 Peter 1:16). A new culture of holiness to the Lord flows from deep within—from hearts that are refreshed in the love of Christ and given over to him alone.” (page 48)

“There simply is no set of exegetical, homiletical, or leadership skills that can compensate for the absence of this [his devotional life] in the life of a pastor. It is my worship that enables me to lead others to worship. It is my sense of need that leads me to tenderly pastor those in need of grace. It is my joy in my identity in Christ that leads me to want to help others live in the middle of what it means to be ‘in Christ.’ In fact, one of the things that makes a sermon compelling is that the preacher is worshipping his way through his own sermon.” *Dangerous Calling*, page 35

REFLECT

What stands out to you about the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ (1:15-20)? If there is nothing lacking or insufficient in Christ, what does it say about the daily relevance of the gospel to our lives and our ministry together? What is the aim our ministry together (1:28-29)? How is that taking shape in you; in our church?

Why is it necessary for a church’s culture, while imperfect, to be marked with visible and lovely holiness? How do we know if a church’s culture is actually marked by a beautiful holiness? What’s at stake if it’s not?

How would you know if your pastor (or other leaders, or each other) has lost his way in ministry? How can you encourage and build up your pastor so that he and his family experience gospel culture too?

PRAY

Pray that Redeemer Church would cling to and reflect the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ in what we believe and how we live that out together. Pray for unity in Christ, in our worship, community and mission.

Pray for a growing Christ-likeness in our lives and culture; that a growing, imperfect holiness in our culture would be encouraging to each other and attractive to those who do not know Christ.

Pray that Pastor Shawn will have a ministry fueled by a personal devotion that has its roots deep in a love for and worship of Jesus and in humble, heart-deep confession.

READ

Colossians 2:1 - 15

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (2:6-7)

The Gospel: The Gospel For Everything

“How does this gospel doctrine lead to a gospel culture? It creates churches of bright, resilient, rugged hope. It creates churches that face life as it is and are not defeated. There is nothing petty and small about a church when it believes this massive and noble gospel. And there is nothing this world can dish out to our churches that our Savior won’t bend upward and use to lift us closer to our eternal home.” (page 62)

“The pastor must be enthralled by, in awe of—can I say it: in love with—his Redeemer so that everything he thinks, desires, chooses, decides, says, and does is propelled by love for Christ and the security of rest in the love of Christ. He must be regularly exposed, humbled, assured, and given rest by the grace of his Redeemer. His heart needs to be tenderized day after day by his communion with Christ so that he becomes a tender, loving, patient, forgiving, encouraging, and giving servant leader. His meditation of Christ—his presence, his promises, and his provisions—must not be overwhelmed by his meditation on to make his ministry work.” *Dangerous Calling*, page 65

REFLECT

Colossians 2 deals with external pressures and false teaching that was impacting the church. Given that context, how does biblical clarity on the person and work of Christ (a) guard the church, (b) encourage the church and (c) equip the church for worship and witness? What do the verbs “rooted,” “built up,” and “established” imply to our call to “walk” (2:6-7)?

Why is it important to know that a church seeking gospel doctrine and gospel culture will find all sorts of oppositions and obstacles in the way? How can we overcome obstacles and endure opposition?

How does the quote from *Dangerous Calling* change the way you look at those in ministry? What sort of tension do you think exists between meditation on Christ and meditation on making ministry work?

PRAY

Pray that we would be rooted, built up and established in the faith, full of thanksgiving, so that we would walk in Christ...clinging to him and making much of him to others. Pray for a love and zeal for gospel truth to grip our hearts and transform our lives, our commitment and our perspective on life and mission.

Pray that we would be bold in both belief that the gospel is the power of God for salvation of sinners and the practice of making much of the gospel to others in need of salvation.

Pray that tender, loving, patient, encouraging and serving characteristics become more and more evident in the leadership of our church.

READ

Colossians 2:16 - 3:4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (3:1-4)

The Gospel: Something New

“Your church is called to be a pillar lifting high the truth of the gospel. The one truth that will outlast the universe, the one truth that can help sinners and sufferers right now, deserves to be put on clear display. We must not allow anything in our churches to compete with the high visibility of the gospel.”
(page 75)

“The spiritual danger here is that when awe of God is absent, it is quickly replaced by awe of ourselves. If you are not living for God, the only alternative is to live for yourself. So a central ministry of the church must be to do anything it can to be used of God to turn people back to the one thing for which they were created: to live in a sturdy, joyful, faithful awe of God.”

Dangerous Calling, page 118

REFLECT

The end of Colossians 2 shows the folly of adding anything to Jesus. The beginning of Colossians 3 holds up the centrality of Jesus for life. One is a warning to not embrace other things as if they are equal to Christ, and the other shows how Christ is ultimate for all of life. How do you go about encouraging this in others?

Is there anything in the culture of Redeemer Church that competes with the high visibility of the gospel? What might it look like for our church, in our city, to live out the belief that the gospel is the one truth that helps sinners and sufferers?

What are the effects of no longer living and/or ministering in awe of God? What might a lack of awe of God do to the culture of a church? What about its witness to the surrounding community?

PRAY

Pray that we will be increasingly intentional to help each other embrace the centrality of Christ for all of life, as well as, identify, let go of, and turn away from the folly of adding anything to Jesus,

Pray for a growing desire and commitment to gatherings for corporate worship, to service of the variety of needs on Sunday mornings, to the weekly care of RLGs and DGs, and to pursuing others in gospel conversations.

Pray that we would live in a sturdy, joyful, faithful awe of God, recognizing God's awesomeness and our need to live in awe of him.

READ

Colossians 3:5-17

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (3:15-16)

The Gospel: It Isn't Easy, But It Is Possible

“The primary barrier to displaying the beauty of Jesus in our churches comes from the way we re-insert ourselves into that sacred center that belongs to him alone. That is why cultivating a gospel culture requires a profound, moment-by-moment “unselfing” by every one of us. It is personally costly, even painful. What I am proposing throughout this book is not glib or shallow. So much is set against us, within and without. But the triumph of the gospel in our churches is still possible, as we look to Christ alone. He will help us.” (page 83)

“We should care about, pray for, and do all we can to work toward the constant, progressive spiritual growth of our pastors. We should not assume that it is taking place, we should want them in a thoroughly gospelized community that takes this seriously and invites them into loving, honest relationships where this kind of growth thrives.”

Dangerous Calling, page 95

REFLECT

The first three paragraphs of Colossians 3 give us an incredible roadmap for sanctification: Christ is Your Life (3:1-4); Put Off Old (3:5-11); Put On New (3:12-17). Why is the first paragraph (3:1-4) necessary for the putting off and putting on of the Christian life? Why are putting off and putting on necessary accompaniments to life in Christ? Why will this fail if attempted alone, in isolation?

How do you go about “re-inserting” yourself into the sacred center that belongs to Christ? How does your re-inserting disrupt the gospel culture of the church? How can gospel culture help us with “unselfing”?

Pastors (and their families) and leaders in the church are often among the most neglected people **to receive** the intentional care of the church. How might we combat this at Redeemer?

PRAY

Pray for a gracious awareness of how sanctification works out in your life and in the context of the church; and pray for a Christ-centered and Christ-dependent putting off old and putting on new to take more profound shape in your life, in our leaders, in our church.

Pray for a gracious awareness of your own selfishness and for the grace-filled forgiving of one-another in the culture of our church.

Pray for a gracious awareness of the ways you can intentionally pursue and invite your leaders into a gospelized community.

READ

Colossians 3:18 - 4:5

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (3:18-21)

The Gospel: What We Can Expect

“The ministry of the gospel in our churches involves more than doctrinal argumentation. The work of the gospel is subtle, like the work of a fragrance. It is not just brute facts landing hard on someone’s mind, but an aroma wafting into a heart.” (page 99)

We must be committed to do anything we can to be that generation that commends God’s works, his glory, to the next generation so that they may be rescued and motivated by a glory bigger than the typical catalog of glories they would choose for themselves.

Dangerous Calling, page 119

REFLECT

The conclusion of Colossians 3 works out how the gospel informs your roles and relationships and the beginning of Colossians 4 works out how the gospel informs your engagement with the world around you. Whether households (3:18-4:1) or outsiders (4:2-6), the gospel shapes how you engage both. How has the gospel shaped your home life? How has the gospel shaped your life in the broader culture?

Evaluate how you live at home and how you live in front of others. Is the aroma of your life the gospel or the foul stench of selfishness? Are there discrepancies between how you are in private and in public?

How are we doing in pouring into the generations younger than our own (this applies differently to each of us!)? How can you serve Redeemer’s younger generations so that they see a glory bigger than themselves?

PRAY

Pray that you and our church will have a love for and commitment to serve our families (parents, youth, children) so as to help, encourage, equip them to live for the Lord and make much of him together. Seek the Lord for the joyful desire to serve willingly in practical, tangible ways at Redeemer

Pray for the aroma of the gospel to do its subtle work in both private and public spheres of our lives and pray that there would be integrity and consistency between what is in private and what is in public.

Pray for our families; for parents to be gracious, kind, long-suffering and Christ-honoring; and for youth and children to be drawn to the aroma of the gospel.

READ

Colossians 4:6-18

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. (4:12-13)

The Gospel: Our Path Forward

“The primary barrier to the ministry of the gospel through your church is not out in the world; the primary barrier is within your church itself. Every church, to some extent, clogs and hinders the gospel, even as we intend to advance the gospel. So each one of our churches should examine itself. Then we should make every adjustment, however painful, however embarrassing, however controversial, out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. He will honor our courage, because it springs from faith.” (page 109)

“It is very tempting for the pastor to load the welfare of the church on his shoulders, and when he does, he ends up being burdened and motivated by an endless and ever-changing catalog of ‘what ifs.’ This never leads to a restful and joyful life of ministry but rather to a ministry debilitated by unrealistic and unmet goals, a personal sense of failure, and the dread that results.”

Dangerous Calling, page 126

REFLECT

The conclusion of Colossians deals with personal matters of greetings and details, yet displays a decided affirmation of fellow laborers. Paul held in high estimation the laboring for the gospel by fellow servants. Ministry is hard and those who serve in a variety of ways, week-in and week-out, would be blessed with some affirmation. Take some time to think of those who serve regularly, joyfully and earnestly and thank God for them and think of some way you can show your appreciation to them.

As seen throughout The Gospel by Ray Ortlund, so much of the disruption of the gospel culture comes from within the culture. Why is a healthy gospel culture pivotal to a healthy gospel mission?

Do you see church as a performance to view or a ministry in which to participate? How is this evident?

PRAY

Pray that our church will be blessed to give and receive affirmation and appreciation for intentional, ordinary, weekly, gospel ministry; pray for the humility to celebrate God’s grace at work through others; pray for the humility to receive appreciation for laboring on behalf of others; pray for the humility to encourage each others hearts along the way

Pray for the courage to make every adjustment, sacrifice, change needed as we follow Jesus.

Pray that your pastor won’t be debilitated with unrealistic goals or a personal sense of failure but rather renewed to fulfill the ministry the Lord has given.

READ

2 Corinthians 4

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart...But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us... So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (4:1, 7, 16)

The Gospel: Introduction

“The purpose of this book, then, is simple. I want to show how Christ puts his beauty into our churches by his gospel. That explains the title of this book: *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*. Beauty is powerful. Our churches long for it. You and I long for it. And we can help our churches see it. We possess, in the gospel alone, God’s wonder-working resources for the display of Christ among us. As you read, I hope you find yourself thrilled with the beauty of Christ.” (page 19)

“If you are not committed to loving gospel community, you will minister out of frustration and discouragement, displaying God’s glory in an abstract form but not in its living, life-changing vitality. And if you are not committed to the discipline of preparation, you will offer sloppy leadership to poorly sighted people that will become more of a distraction from, rather than an enhancement of, their ability to see God for who he is and place their hope in him.”
Dangerous Calling, page 144

REFLECT

In 2 Corinthians 3-5, the apostle Paul repeats, in some form or another, the call to not lose heart. What is implied about the dynamic of ministry in the statement “we do not lose heart”? In the US, the average a pastor stays at a church is between 3 and 4 years. I know a handful of guys who I went through seminary with who are no longer in ministry. Why do you suppose ministry takes such a toll? How can we go about not losing heart?

Did Ray Ortlund hit his intended mark of helping you be thrilled with the beauty of Christ and how it is portrayed in the church? In what ways were you encouraged in this?

What hopes do you have for Redeemer Church after this sabbatical...for you personally, for our church?

PRAY

Pray that our church rests in the renewing power of God so as to not lose heart for the ministry of the gospel.

Pray for the beauty of Christ to be portrayed with wonder and power in the life of Redeemer Church

Pray that your pastor will be renewed with a gospel-fueled vision for ministry in Redeemer and with a joyful, ordinary, realistic-but-faith-filled anticipation for the next season of ministry at Redeemer.

Pray that God would be delighted to use our church to bring the saving, life-changing gospel to others.