

The purpose of this guide is to help you continue your worship throughout the week – slowly and carefully looking back on Sunday’s service and considering what was read, sung, prayed and preached more deeply – with an eye towards devotion and application.

Call to Worship - From Psalm 84 - How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord! Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We recently moved and it was hard for me to move on from all the goodness I remembered in our old house. We spend our lives aching to be truly “home” - and this Psalm reminds us that God has indeed prepared a home - a good home - for us.

Song: Victory in the Lamb

The strong ones and the weak are the same under His blood
For empty handed all must come to receive His endless love

Won't be surprised if a square dance breaks out to this song. But even if it doesn't, consider how good it is that all of us are the same under the blood of Jesus. Are you strong in the eyes of the world? Let this truth humble you. Are you weak in the eyes of the world? Let this truth lift you up.

Song: Give to Our God Immortal Praise

Isaac Watts wrote this song with eight stanzas - all of which mention the incredible mercy of God. The fact that we get to come to church and sing this song with our church family is just one more example of this mercy.

Song: All Creatures of Our God and King

Thou burning sun with golden beam / Thou silver moon with softer gleam
Thou rushing wind that art so strong / Ye clouds that sail in Heaven along
Thou rising moon in praise rejoice / Ye lights of evening find a voice

God gives us “special revelation” - the Bible - but He also gives us “general revelation” - the rest of His creation. And there is much we can learn about God and praise Him for as we see His creation. What have you noticed today about God's creation? What does it teach you about God?

Confession of Sin - Holy Father, we confess that we have not lived as you have taught us. We have put our longing for money, success, or happiness above our desire for you and your kingdom. We worry about what others will think of us, what we will wear, how our reputation can be polished. We make idols out of sports teams, out of our next promotion at work, out of having the perfect family and the perfect home. We make idols out of having the latest technology or the highest GPA. We make an idol out of finding the perfect spouse and we are angry with you when you don't provide one. We are careless with our words, saying things before we think, hurting those around us whom we are called to love. We are so busy with our lives that we forget that our every breath depends on you. We harbor hateful thoughts against those we feel have offended us, and we are indifferent toward the suffering of those around us and in the world. We take advantage of weakness and we are passive in the face of injustice. For personal gain and reputation, we blatantly lie, or lie by omission. We long for what is not ours and begrudge the blessings of others. Forgive us for thinking of ourselves before others and before you. Free us from unreasonable expectations of ourselves and others. Help us to glorify you in all we think, say, and do. For the sake, and by the grace of your Son we pray all these things. Amen.

Is there one of the idols listed here that has been forcing its way into your view lately? Name it specifically and bring it to Jesus.

Assurance of God's Forgiveness – Ephesians 2:8-10 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Think about how shaky our forgiveness would be if it was based on our own doing. Know that your covenant God is committed to you. He will be our God, and we will be His people.

Song: Lord I Need You

Lord, I need You, oh, I need You / Every hour I need You
My one defense, my righteousness / Oh God, how I need You

I love how this song reminds us that we need God every. single. hour. It is so easy to breeze through a day or a week without thinking much about Him. What rhythms can you consider in your life that would help you to acknowledge Him in all your ways? But know this - even when we are not aware that we need Him - He knows that we need Him, and He does not forsake us.

Sermon Passage: Acts 17:16-34

- If Paul came to America, what kinds of things do you think would lead him to say “I see that in every way you are very religious?” What about if he walked in your home or looked on your internet search history?
- Paul gives a great model of cultural engagement here. He uses the texts of those he is talking with to give a point of connection, but then also a point of disconnect. Think of a TV show/movie you have watched recently. How can you see a point of connection to Christianity, and then a point of disconnect?
- Consider reading [Why Christian Movies are So Terrible](#) by Jared Wilson and think about how the church sometimes missing the mark in engaging culture.
- How would you characterize Paul’s evangelism in this passage? How is it different from other places?
- According to verse 31, the resurrection is proof of (among other things) God’s commitment to justice. Have you considered this connection before? If not, how does it expand your understanding of the resurrection?

Song: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Let that goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it - prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it - seal it for Thy courts above

It's good to close remembering God's goodness - and how that goodness is so comprehensive that it in fact binds and keeps us and is bringing us home. His grace is stronger than our (strong) propensity to wander.

Closing Prayer: Consider closing your time by praying this prayer (adapted from Scotty Smith) about our idolatry.

Dear heavenly Father, these Scriptures about idolatry cause me pause and drive me to the resources of the gospel today. Idolatry is everywhere because there’s no such thing as a non-worshiper.

Yet for me to obey the commands to “keep myself from idols” and to “flee idolatry”, requires much more than simply staying away from ancient sites, pagan temples, and man-made idols. Father, I’ve never been more aware of the invisible pantheon clamoring for my heart’s worship and trust. How I wish that as soon as you placed me in Christ my struggle with idolatry would have ceased. That’s simply not the case, or these Scriptures would be entirely irrelevant.

Sometimes the praise, or disdain, of people has more sway over my heart than what you think about me. Sometimes my need to be right is more compelling to me than being righteous in Christ. Sometimes my desire to be in control of people and circumstances claims more of my time and energy than seeking your face, savoring your grace, and serving your Son—the true King. These are just a few of the things bearing the marks of idolatry in my heart.

Have mercy on me, Father, and free my foolish heart from giving anything or anyone the attention, allegiance, affection, and adoration you alone deserve. Make Jesus so beautiful and the love of Christ so compelling to me that my struggle with idolatry will diminish in intensity.

The fact that I’m one of your “dear children”—forgiven, secure, righteous, and beloved in Christ—should be all the motivation I need to keep myself from any form of idolatry. May the gospel of your grace relentlessly expose and dethrone all “empty nothings” from my heart. So very Amen I pray, in Jesus’ most worthy and loving name.