

Formation Daily Devotional 2020

At Christ Covenant Church we desire to see [first part of Our Vision] *a movement of the gospel that brings about personal conversion and renewal*. We want to encourage you to participate in God's means of grace in 2020 so that, God by his grace, can bring about in our lives personal renewal. Therefore, we are providing our church family with the Daily Formation Devotional.

We believe habits shape our loves over time. Therefore, we want to encourage you in the daily habit of prayer and use of God's Scriptures. When we trust in God through prayer and his word he uses the truths of the gospel to renew our lives. We are providing the CCC family with a Daily Formation Devotional to be used for God's purposes in your life. This devotional is designed to be used in the morning and evening. You will be encouraged to use it in whole or in part. We suggest you begin using it by spending 15 minutes each morning and evening, and that you build on this over time.

It is a combination of prayers and Bible readings for morning and evening. It is ordered in some ways like the liturgy or order of service we use in our Sunday worship. The prayers will help form your praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession. The Bible reading will allow you to read through the Old Testament once in three years, the New Testament once in a year, and the Psalms three times in a year. Each of the elements in the devotional is designed for you to experience an extended conversation with God. God is continually inviting us into his presence through faith in Jesus Christ, to quietly enjoy his presence, listen to him through his word, and to respond to him from our context in life, and be sent out from him with his blessing. Each morning and evening you will find:

Call to Prayer - you will begin with an invitation to God's presence through a reminder of who God is in his perfections.

Opening Prayer - you will be lead through a prayer from the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). These prayers have been used by the church for centuries and they draw us into worship as a corporate body of Christ.

Prayer of Confession - you will continue in God's presence with honest reflections on how we fall short of God's calling in our life to love him and others. They are expressions of our need for God's grace and forgiveness, and will assure us of that. We will use the Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon from our Sunday worship to guide us through the week.

Praying the Psalms - you will experience daily God's prayer book as the prayer book of God's people. The psalms teach us to respond to God with a full range of thought and emotion. Sometimes the psalms do not connect with our immediate experience, but it may be connecting with someone's experience in your church, family, or work, or at another time in your life. You will learn to read through the psalms prayerfully.

Reading from the Old and New Testament - you will read each morning a passage from the New Testament, and each evening a reading from the Old Testament. This is a time to listen to God speak to you from his word as he addresses your life.

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving - you will continue in prayer through faith in Jesus as you pray for others. In the morning you will be guided to pray for the needs and concerns of your life, your family, your work, and your church. In the evening you will be giving thanks for what God is doing in each of these areas of your life.

Collect - you will conclude your intercession in the morning and thanksgivings in the evening with a collect. A "Collect" (kol-ect) is a set prayer that "collects" the community together in prayer. The collects will take our individual, personal prayer and make it communal as we know others in the church are praying it, too. In the morning you will end with the Lord's Prayer - Jesus' kingdom prayers. In the evening you will end with a selection from the Common Book of Prayer.

Benediction - you will end with a blessing that reminds us of God's intentions for our lives, sending us out knowing we live in the full assurance of God's love.

[This is adapted from Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible through the Year, Written and compiled by Philip F. Reinders Faith Alive Christian Resources 2013]

The devotional will be available through the church website. You will be able to "subscribe" to it so that it will come to your email inbox on a daily basis, and It will also be available for you to print. We hope you will take advantage of using the Daily Formation Devotional as a church family. God has given us the privilege of coming into his presence daily through his Word and prayer. We believe God can use this daily devotional to bring about personal renewal through a movement of the gospel shaping our loves as the re-created image bearers of God. Be looking for the first month of the Daily Formation Devotional on our church website www.ccotc.org.

Orthodoxy - Idolatry

New City Catechism Q.17: What is idolatry?

Answer: Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. . . . They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. . . . - Romans 1:21, 25

We reject, ignore, dishonor, and rebel against God by the sin of idolatry. Idolatry is the expression of our love for anything more than God. John Calvin said, "Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols." Our hearts are love factories seeking to be satisfied, and what we set our hearts on in love are our "gods". Martin Luther defined idolatry in this way, "What is it to have a god? Or, what is one's god? Answer: To whatever we look for any good thing and for refuge in every need, that is what is meant by "god." . . . Many a person imagines that he has God and everything he needs, provided he has money and property. . . . The evidence for this appears when people are arrogant, secure, and proud because of such possessions, but desperate when they lack them or lose them. I repeat, to have a god means to have something on which one's heart depends entirely." What we depend on from the heart, the whole of our beings entirely this is our god, our idol. Our souls searching for idols to satisfy us are never at a place of resting, until they find their rest in the true God through faith in Jesus alone.

We spend our lives searching for meaning, significance, security, hope, and happiness. We look for it in ourselves and the things we attach ourselves to in this created world. This reality grows deep in our hearts, even when we don't find in ourselves any guilt for disrespecting our parents or other authority figures, for stealing something that belongs to someone else, for the taking of someone's life by hatred or murder, or for having an adulterous affair. We may think we're "sinless" as regards God's moral law, but when our hearts are measured by having other gods, we find ourselves guilty of idolatry. And the warehouse is not large enough to house our idols, and the worship of these idols will lead to gross sin.

When our family is too important we try to control our children. When our career is too important we overwork. When a relationship is too important we're devastated when it's lost. These over desires or loves impair our hearts from love to the true God, the development of his fruit in our lives, and will lead us into gross sin. Sin is not just doing bad things. Sin is turning good things into ultimate things that rot our souls, dishonor the true God, and distort and disintegrate life. Flee from idolatry to the true and living God through faith in Jesus. He is true meaning, significance, security, hope, and joy.