

Rhythms of Renewal: **GOSPEL**

A Four-Week Guide
Winter, 2024



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WELCOME

Dear Renewal Church,

Welcome to the Gospel Rhythm. We are so glad you are joining us on this 4-week journey.

You may have heard by now that Renewal Church exists to make disciples for the glory of God and the good of the neighborhood, and our desire is to experience a multiethnic reproducing movement of God in our lifetimes. One of the main ways we grow in our mission and vision is through what we call *The Rhythms of Renewal*.

The *Rhythms of Renewal* are simple and straightforward—four times a year, we have an all-church emphasis on one of the 4G's (the four values) of Renewal Church: Gospel, Growth, Good Neighboring, and Generosity.

This guide will help us, together as a church family, explore our current rhythm *Gospel*. At Renewal, the gospel is fundamental to everything we do. It's the reason we pursue growth, good neighboring, and generosity. And the justice proclaimed in the gospel matches with the justice we wish to see in our communities; there is no disconnect between the two.

As we walk together through this Gospel Rhythm over the next four weeks, we encourage you to say yes to a life that participates in the biblical drama of mission. Pay attention to the opportunities God puts in your way to proclaim the good news, and even if it feels difficult at times, trust the Spirit of Jesus to transform you along the way. We're praying for you and cheering you on!

For the Glory of God and the good of the neighborhood,
The Renewal Church Team

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guidebook is your invitation into a sweeping drama: the great story of salvation, and the Great Commission, otherwise known as the gospel. We believe God's Spirit will use this guidebook as a catalyst for you. Dive into what you can and have fun! We encourage you to use this guide in your Renewal Community or another group, and as part of your personal time with Jesus.

For each of the four weeks, we have included:

- Scripture readings from various passages across the Old and New Testaments
- Reflection and consideration questions
- Journaling space

Our hope is that you'll go slowly, absorbing the scripture reading, internalizing the spiritual practices, and paying attention to how God is transforming you over these four weeks.

The content for this guide is taken largely from a wonderful new book authored by Christopher J.H. Wright and published by Baker Academic: *The Great Story and the Great Commission: Participating in the Biblical Drama of Mission*. In addition, passages from various Bible translations (including The Message and the First Nations Version) are used.

We chose to focus on Wright's work because of its sound hermeneutics. The story of God's relationship with his people is woven through each story and book in the Bible, and all of it is useful for teaching and preaching the gospel.

Tips:

1. Choose a Bible translation you enjoy and can read easily. We often use the NIV, the NLT, the Message, or the First Nations Version at Renewal Church.
2. We invite you to read the provided Bible passages using a method known as *Lectio Divina* or Slow Reading:
 - Place yourself in a quiet environment, if possible.
 - Inhale and exhale slowly, getting present with God.
 - Acknowledge God's loving presence with you.
 - Invite the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire you as you read God's word. You might pray something like, "Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to receive your Word."
 - Read the Bible passages several times, slowly and aloud if possible.
 - Pay attention to and note anything that stands out, any questions you have, anything that "strikes you." Assume *that* is God's Spirit speaking to you, showing you something. Underline or circle what stands out, or write about it in the journal space we've provided.
3. Spend the week meditating on the insights and journaling through the questions. Go slow and be patient with yourself, and be honest when you meet to discuss them with your Renewal Community.
4. Join with us in praying over these four weeks, that God will grow our entire church in understanding, passion and commitment for the Great Commission.

WEEK ONE

Christ

Jesus' time on earth—from conception to ascension—is the heartbeat of the whole biblical drama.

Think of the parallels:

In the Old Testament, God traveled with his people in the form of a tabernacle.

In the New Testament, God travels with his people in the form of Jesus.

In the Old Testament, God 'comes down' to his people at Mount Sinai.

In the New Testament, God 'comes down' to his people in Bethlehem.

"The astonishing significance of this is that in this great story of Scripture, God is no longer an observer but a participant—no longer just the Director of the drama but also a visible player on the stage," says Christopher Wright.

It's difficult to overstate the passion with which the Jewish people waited for Jesus. For hundreds of years, they longed for and expected a military leader who would conquer and drive out the Romans. (The most ardent of these were called zealots, and several of them showed up among Jesus' disciples.) It was utterly shocking to church leaders when a carpenter from Galilee showed up and started claiming to be the Son of God.

Think back to the first time you heard the name of Jesus. Under what circumstances were you presented with the gospel? Did it seem like good news at the time?

Read the following passages using the slow reading method (*from the How To Use This Guide page*).

- Luke 1:26-38
- John 1:29-34
- John 7:40-53

Spend the week meditating on the verses, and noticing how each person in the gospel reacts to the news of Jesus. In stillness, reflect on what Jesus meant to them and to you.

Reflections and Considerations

1. Name other parallels between God's relationship with his people in the Old Testament and Jesus' arrival in the New Testament.
2. Name contrasts between God's relationship with his people in the Old Testament and Jesus' arrival/conduct in the New Testament.
3. Think about an example of how shifting from observer to participant can change a situation.
4. Under what circumstances did you first hear the name of Jesus? How was his character presented to you, and what was your reaction at the time?

5. How do you feel about the person of Jesus now? If you were a character in the gospels who interacted with him, which one would you be, and why?
6. In his book “Giving Jesus Away,” author John Hopper names three main barriers to Jesus: the emotional barrier (past experience or lack of trust), the intellectual barrier (having questions that no one has answered to your satisfaction), and the spiritual barrier (admitting that we need a Savior).
- Do you identify with any of these categories?
 - Do you have friends or family members who have emotional, intellectual or spiritual barriers that keep them from turning to Christ?

Spiritual Exercise

Read this passage from the Nicene Creed, which is often repeated in churches around the world.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

Do you have any trouble believing or affirming any portion of this creed? Journal about it here, and discuss it with your Renewal Community.

Journal

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WEEK TWO

Mission

Read this climax of Matthew's account—"The Great Commission"—from *The Message* (Matthew 28:16-20):

"Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally. "Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave this charge: 'God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.'"

Then, read this take from Christopher Wright ("The Great Story and the Great Commission"):

"There is only one way forward. The world must know this great truth and the good news it brings. The nations must be discipled, baptized into relationship with the living God, and taught the obedience of faith, as Paul called it, echoing Abraham."

And finally, read these comments from John Hopper ("Giving Jesus Away"):

"As Jesus so powerfully taught, there is an urgency to the gospel. No one is guaranteed tomorrow, and if a person does not turn to Christ in faith, they will be separated from all the goodness of God for eternity. This urgency, however, can cause us to pressure people to give a positive response to the gospel before they know all the fact or before they understand [it]... pressuring a 'decision' before a person has sufficient understanding can be counterproductive... remember, evangelism is a process, and the results are up to God."

When we have been transformed by the gospel, as the old hymn goes, we "cannot keep from singing." Listen to this hymn at the following YouTube link while you answer the following questions.

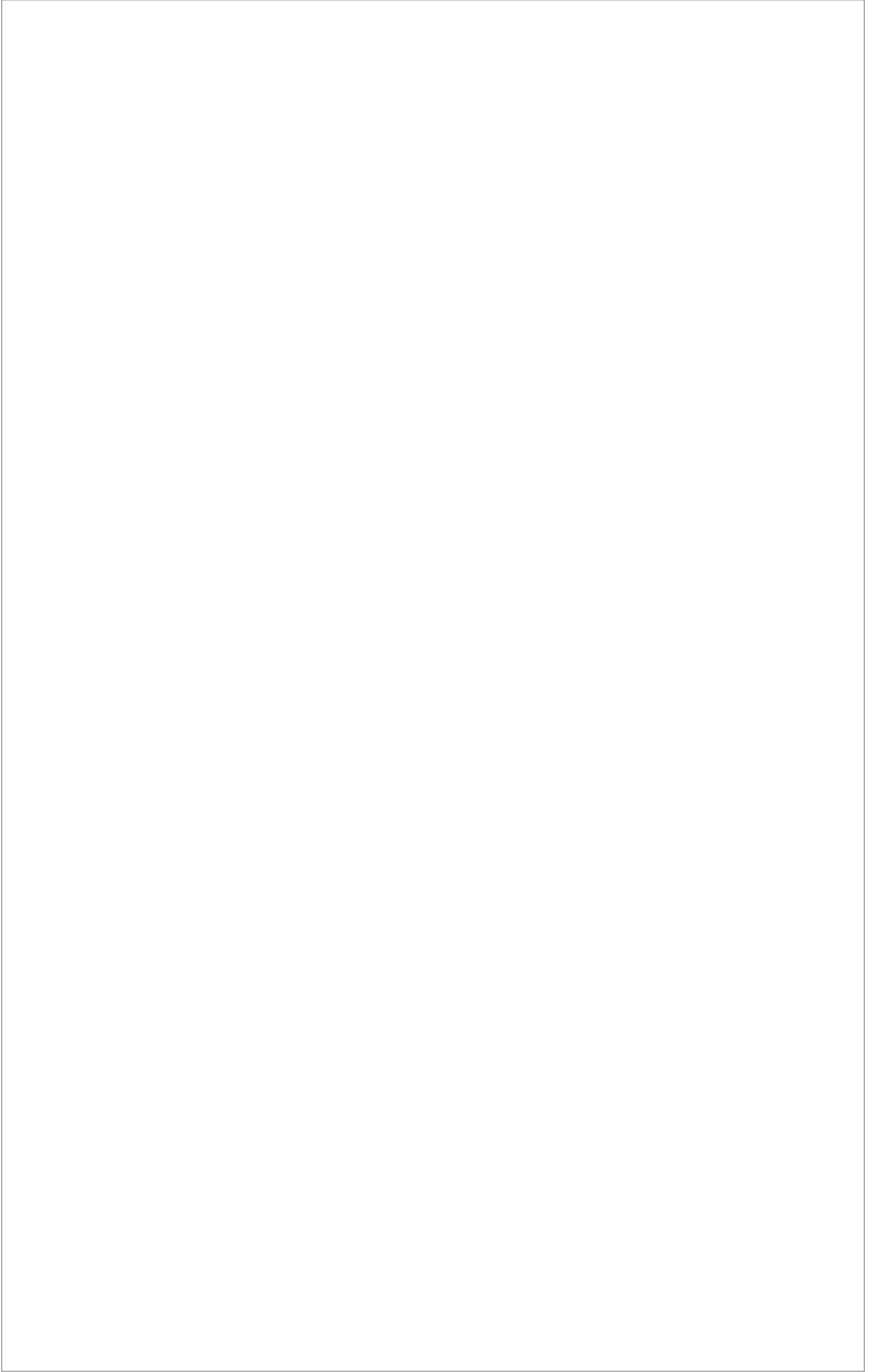


Reflections and Considerations

1. What has been your experience sharing the gospel with others?
2. If evangelism is a process and the results are up to God, how does this impact the manner in which we share the gospel with others?
3. List three people whom you are in relationship with that you would love to see come to faith.
 - a. Where are you in the process of evangelism with these three?
 - b. How can your Renewal Community assist you in praying for/ speaking with these individuals?
 - c. Do you need a push to take the next step of conversation? Are you able to trust that the results are up to God?
4. React to this statement: "Mission is not a specialist activity for a few professionals."

Journal

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WEEK THREE

Final Judgment

Read Psalm 96:10-13 using the slow reading method.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 using the slow reading method. It is also provided below in the First Nations Version.

In flaming fire he will punish the ones who refuse to see who Creator truly is, and those who do not respect and follow the good story of our Honored Chief Creator Sets Free (Jesus). They will come to a bad end and to a punishment that will last beyond the end of all days. They will be removed far away from the beauty and power that shines from the face of our Honored Chief. This will happen on the day he comes to be honored by all his holy people and to be looked on in amazement by all who have trusted in him. This includes you, because you trusted the truth we told you.

The final judgment is not actually the end of our great drama, because the final ending will be God's new creation. But, according to Christopher Wright, "It is the necessary prelude to that great restoration. God must put all things right before he makes all things new."

In the Old Testament, judges were supposed to take a more active role in restitution. Wright says: "they got involved in sorting out broken relationships, arranging appropriate compensation or penalties, hearing the cases and complaints of one party against another, vindicating the innocent or wrongly accused, making sure those who exploited or oppressed others were restrained and punished if necessary. Putting things right." (They often failed.)

Human justice is flawed, partial, and provisional. God's justice is perfect, indisputable and irreversible. He will ultimately deal with all wrongs and put all things right.


Reflections and Considerations

1. What are your preconceptions about the final judgment?

2. Does it surprise you that the biblical writers rejoiced in the idea of God's judgment?

3. Has it ever occurred to you to look forward to God's judgment with joy or excitement?

Journal

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WEEK FOUR

New Creation

There's a Christian trope that Christopher Wright says is incorrect: the idea that we will 'go up' to heaven after the final judgment.

But that's not what the Bible predicts. It predicts that heaven and earth will become one—a new creation, where God will dwell in the midst of his redeemed people from all nations.

Read Revelation 21 using the slow reading method, and allow yourself time to bask in the glory of what John describes.

Then consider this: although in chronological “earth time” (so to speak) we are still on Mission (see week 2), the Bible teaches that spiritually and theologically we inhabit the New Creation already. This is a tension that we have lived in ever since the New Testament itself, or to be more precise, ever since the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We live, therefore, in this great ‘overlap’ within the Bible’s narrative, an overlap that creates the familiar “already but not yet” of the Christian life.

Reflections and Considerations

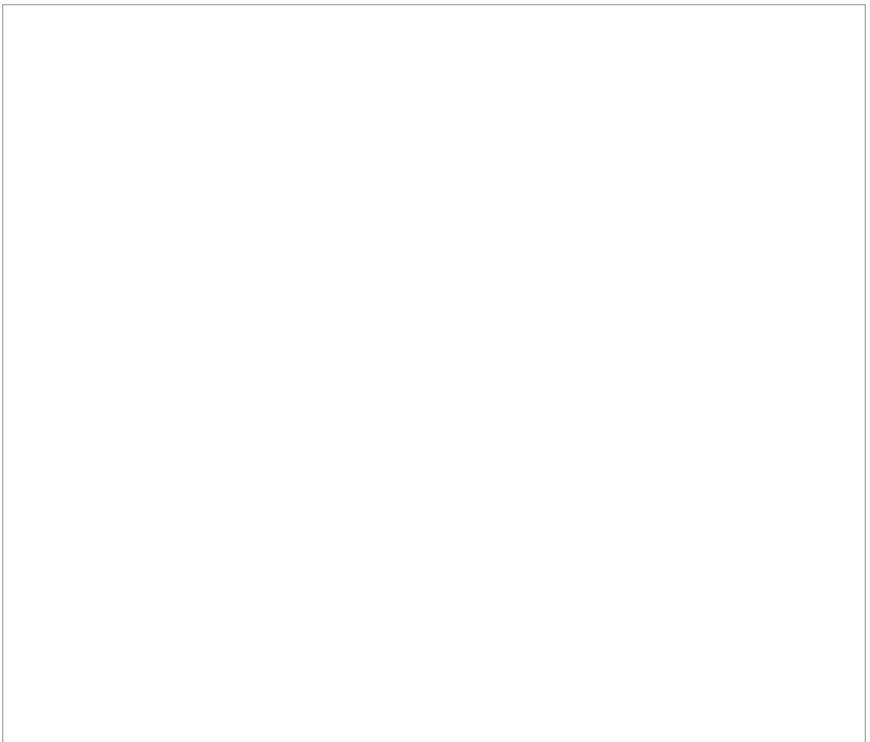
1. Talk to God, who is outside of time, about what it's like living in the “already but not yet”.

2. How might you regularly schedule efforts to reach out to others with the message of the gospel?

3. Have you ever thought of sharing Christ as a lifelong pursuit? Who are some key people you want to share Christ with before you take your dying breath?

4. In what ways do you feel inadequate for evangelism? How might the adequacy of God help you to overcome your sense of inadequacy?

Journal

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for journaling or writing responses to the questions above.

Final Thoughts

Thank you for walking with us through the Gospel Rhythm. Be sure to join us for our next Rhythm, Good Neighboring.

As we engage together in our mission of making disciples for the glory of God and the good of the neighborhood, and as we pursue our vision of experiencing a multiethnic reproducing movement of God, we invite you to take your next step of growth at Renewal church. *What is your next step?*

Get Baptized at Renewal. If you haven't taken this meaningful step of faith in your walk with Jesus, we invite you to get baptized during our next upcoming baptism service. Reach out to Kevin@bringrenewal.com for more information.

Join Renewal through Church Partnership. This is your invitation to attend and invite others to church, serve on a team, and give toward the mission of Renewal. Connect with Rachel@bringrenewal.com about church partnership.

Give to Renewal through an end-of-the-year tax-deductible donation by texting any amount to 84321 or by going to bringrenewal.com/give. Our mission is to be a church for the neighborhood, and your gifts of radical generosity, as an act of worship, go toward that end.

Experience Renewal through the Rhythms. Engage in the rhythms of Renewal four times a year, when we take a church-wide deep dive into one of the 4G's of Renewal Church: gospel, growth, good neighboring, and generosity. Reach out to Aubrey@bringrenewal.com with any questions.

Bring Renewal through Renewal Communities. Join or launch a Renewal Community, our small group gatherings of folks living on mission together, growing in Christ together, and building genuine relationships with one another. Reach out to Jake@bringrenewal.com to get connected to a community today.

God is inviting us all into greater intimacy with Jesus and deeper engagement with the church. We want to invite you to take your next step of radical generosity by joining, bringing, and experiencing Renewal. *What's your next step?*

Lastly, we'd love your feedback on this rhythm. What was helpful for your growth, and what would you like to see more of?

Let us know by emailing Aubrey Sampson, our teaching pastor
Aubrey@bringrenewal.com.

For the glory of God and the good of the neighborhood.
Renewal Church Staff Team

Resources

Hopper, John. Giving Jesus Away: *Finding Joy in Sharing the Gospel*.

(Search Ministries, 2023)

Wildman, Terry M. 2021. *First Nations Version*. InterVarsity Press.

Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Great Story and the Great Commission*.

(Baker Academic, 2023)

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