



# The 4th Focus

## “These Lazy Days”

As is the case with my sermons, this article involves a personal summer season struggle that may resonate with you as well. Michigan summers are long-anticipated and can be as refreshing as a cool lake plunge on a sweltering day. I revel in the sun, green grass and woods while zigzagging around various golf courses. We all find ways to refreshingly step outside of the normal work or office grind and SLOOOOWWWW DOOOOWWN and then perhaps settle into some lazy days. Personally, I struggle with cutting back on the throttle and especially hitting the brakes to a screeching halt. I think my struggle is partially related to workaholic pangs of guilt about any kind of slowdown and enjoyment. But, I am “working” at it and making some progress.

Now, for all of us, there is a deadly danger in these lazy days of summer. While we take some breaks from small groups, worship participation, perhaps even personal study and prayer, our culture’s influences, our sinful nature and Satan never take a break. You might even say that our temptations (scantily-clad women, one more cold beer, bratwurst, potato salad) and potential for spiritual regression increase. When do our activities and passions like golf or food cross the line into obsession and idolatry? Or when does the slowdown cross the line into the sloth and laziness?

On Sunday, July 11, with a focus on Romans 13:11-14, we will consider various biblical strategies for dealing with some of these dangers but in this article I want to focus on a couple of vital strategies for the summer. In this text, Paul warns against falling asleep at the wheel of your Christian journey and exhorts us to actively fight against sin and spiritual regression. Earlier in this same letter, Paul wrote, “*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord*” (12:11). John Owen wrote, “*Be killing sin or it will be killing you.*” And so it is vital for us to be alert and actively engaged toward spiritual progress.

Our spiritual progress will always be tied to the way we treasure, value and love Jesus. In Romans 13:14, Paul explains that one essential for turning away from our sinful desires is to “*clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Jesus has to become sweeter and more precious than all the other desires that lead us into sin, obsession, and idolatry. Psalm 90:14: “*Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*”

So, our delight in the beauty and love of Jesus is vital for an active fight against sin and spiritual straying. And how do we nurture this delight in Jesus and stay alert at the wheel of our faith journey? How can we be remarkably different from the world and beautiful for our family, friends and neighbors who are closely watching us? Augustine tells the story of his conversion in his *Confessions*. When he was deeply moved by a desire to break away from his old way of living and as he sat weeping in the garden of a friend in Milan, he suddenly heard a child singing *Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege!* (“Take up and read! Take up and read!”). He picked up a scroll lying there, and his eyes fell on Rom 13:13–14, “Not in orgies and drunkenness ...” Immediately his heart was flooded with a clear light, and the darkness of doubt vanished. No other theologian has made a greater contribution to the theology of the Western world.

In a similar way, there is no daily life transformation unless we “take up and read” daily and plug into the power of God’s Word. Yesterday, a good friend who has recently struggled intensely to battle sin in his life was excitedly sharing the way various Bible texts (that he was memorizing) were pointing and revealing the wonder of Jesus. There is life in God’s Word. What part does God’s Word have in your life—especially during these lazy days of summer? Who or what is the greatest passion and pleasure of your heart and life?

- Pastor Tim

# Check out These Books!

# Birthdays

## YOUTH

### **The Door Within** by Wayne Batson

Three ancient scrolls beckon Aidan Thomas to enter another world: a realm of knights, warriors, kings, unusual creatures, and mysterious glimpses who can travel between worlds. Soon Aidan is training to become the twelfth knight of an elite unit who will join Alleble in its long fight against the evil paragory. With the fate of two worlds hanging in the balance, will Aidan be willing to risk everything and trust the one true King?

### **The Rise of the Wyrn Lord** by Wayne Batson

The Door Within Trilogy continues.....

### **Dragonspell** by Donita K. Paul

“Donita Paul has created an amazing world of fantasy adventure. From riding on dragons to jumping off cliffs to moving mountains, this story is sure to spark a reader’s imagination - young and old. And with a message of identity transformed from slavery to servanthood, it’s a book families will love reading and discussing together.”

### **DragonQuest** by Donita K. Paul

“A rich tapestry of creatures, characters, and adventure. A whimsical allegory, casting bright light on ultimate truth.”

### **Chosen and Infidel** by Ted Dekker

The first two books of The Lost Books series!

### **House of Dark Shadows** by Robert Liparulo

“This book is the key to a very special house. Its rooms open into adventures and wonders, dangers and intrigue. At first, they seem to lead only into history’s most volatile and fascinating events, but the King family, who move into the house, come to realize that the rooms also expose their hearts; their fear and courage, the things they believe and hold dear. Mom and Dad, Xander, David, and Toria discover that God has a very specific purpose for them in the dreamhouse.....”

### **Watcher in the Woods** by Robert Liparulo

Book 2 of the Dreamhouse Kings Series!

## July

- 1 - Kari Bierens
- 2 - Jerry Wierenga
- 8 - Connie Larson
- 11 - Anne Nordyke
- 13 - Teresa DeBoer
- 14 - Ed Reitsma
- 22 - Jonathan Brinks
- 23 - Avery Gleason
- 23 - Kate Schalk
- 24 - Wendy Wetzel
- 26 - Erica Fles
- 28 - Jonathan O’Brock
- 28 - Branson Parler

## Aug

- 2 - Charlton Meyer
- 2 - Tom Adams
- 3 - Tim Meendering
- 5 - Connie Scherpenisse
- 8 - Joyce Van Neuren
- 12 - Rick Berthiaume
- 12 - Alexis Springfield
- 14 - Steve Springfield
- 14 - Jake Kooyer
- 15 - Betty Webster
- 17 - Darold Parks
- 20 - Ke Rossiter
- 21 - Amy Adams
- 22 - Jacob Tubergen
- 23 - Bertha VanderVelde
- 24 - Lynn Simone
- 25 - Amber Studebaker
- 26 - Joel Adams
- 31 - Jeff Springfield



**“Many things about tomorrow,  
I don’t seem to understand,  
But I know who holds tomorrow,  
And I know who holds my hand.”**



## Kids Hope USA Current Job Openings

**Mentors** needed for one hour a week, and to attend 5 – 6 parties throughout the school year! Qualifications: Regular attendee of 4<sup>th</sup> Reformed Church, at least 16 years old, has time during the school day for mentoring, loves and wants to make a difference in the life of a child!

**Events Coordinator** to serve on the Leadership Team. Requirements: Works well with others, loves working with children. Job Description: Attendance at Leadership Team meetings, assisting with planning the program/activity part of our events. This person would join Sue Hawkins, Amy Coeling and Lisa Fles who are currently serving on the events committee.

**Prayer Coordinator** to serve on the Leadership Team. Requirements: Loves God and sees the importance of communion with God through prayer! Job Description: Attendance at Leadership Team meetings, overseeing and communicating with Prayer Partners.

**Communications Coordinator** to serve on the Leadership Team. Requirements: Currently a Kids Hope USA Mentor, Substitute or Prayer Partner. Job Description: Attendance at Leadership Team meetings, assisting with bi-monthly newsletter to our Kids Hope USA families and other communication tools as needed.

Applicants or those interested in more information:  
Contact Mary Kay Townley  
by phone at 454-1561  
or email: [kidshopeusa@fourthchurch.com](mailto:kidshopeusa@fourthchurch.com)

We've all enjoyed getting to know the Parlers, whether it was in a small group, a social event or hearing Branson preach for us.

Sarah grew up in Whitehall and Branson in Waterloo, IA and it was at Cornerstone University where God orchestrated their first meeting. While in college Sarah and Branson participated in several short term mission trips to Guatemala and the Philippines. After continuing to date a couple years after they graduated, it was in 2003 when they exchanged their vows.

In August of 2003 they moved to Toronto where Branson studied at the Institute for Christian Studies. Sarah was busy working as an administrative assistant at a dental office while Branson was busy in the classroom.

Grand Rapids became home again in 2005 as Branson enrolled in the Ph.D. program at Calvin Seminary. Sarah enjoyed working at Grand Rapids Ophthalmology until Eliana was born in 2008.

Branson found himself doing adjunct teaching in Cornerstone, Calvin and Kuyper and in the fall of 2008 was hired on staff at Kuyper College where he is now teaching *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, *Introduction to Philosophy* and *Practices of Reformed Worldview*. Branson put on his robe and officially become Dr. Parler this spring as he finished his dissertation entitled *Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder's Trinitarian Theology of Culture*.

The Parlers found 4th to be very welcoming when they came to visit and appreciated the focus on discipleship internally but also the ways we were ministering to the community. They felt it was a great place to be taught and grow in their spiritual life—making it a good launching pad to make a difference in the community. Living on Country Club Drive nearby makes 4th a neighborhood church and this was important for them as well.

Branson and Sarah enjoy reading, spending time with family and friends, and “garage sale-ing”! They have made many adjustments in their life together—relocation, education, employment, parenting—and soon they will experience life with two children, as Eliana will learn what it's like to have a younger sister the beginning of September.

If you haven't already, take time to meet the Parlers!



### JULY

- 11 - Communion
- 12 - Just For Moms
- 15 - Ball Game 7:20
- 17 - Garden Party
- 18 - Mission Offering

- 19 - Men's Study
- 21 - Kids Hope Summer Party
- 22 - Ball Game 6:30
- 24 - Dumpster Day
- 25 - Aaron Wetzel Preaching
- 27 - Women's Dinner Out



**A PUBLICATION OF  
FOURTH  
REFORMED CHURCH**



1226 Union Ave. N.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Pastor Tim Meendering  
Phone: 454-1561  
www.fourthchurch.com

**Sunday Service**  
9:30 AM

**Family Fellowship  
Lifeline Groups**  
5:00 PM

**Christian Education**  
11:15 AM

**Our Vision**

Seeking to be a joyful,  
welcoming  
community that is  
transformed by the gospel  
and nurtured in God's  
Word, and led by His  
Spirit - to redeem the  
city and beyond."

**A COMMUNITY REDEEMED TO  
REDEEM OUR COMMUNITY**

## Breaktime

Laura and Amy are busy upstairs having a good time with the 2nd - 5th graders this summer during Breaktime. When the kids were asked what they have enjoyed most so far there were a variety of answers: trip to the beach, air zoo, making friendship bracelets, studying about July 4, football, playing in the basement, reading the Bible and soccer.

The trip to the library to see the "animal show" resulted in a lot of excitement and many of them wrote about it:

- My favorite part of the animal show was the sloth that took the peanut out of his mouth. It was cide of skare. It was cool! I loved it!
- My favorite part of the show was the gator. It was small but dangerous. And it was hissingsssss. And it almost bit him.
- My favorite animal from the show was the sloth. Because it had 4 teeth. And it was disgusting when he grabed the peanut out of its mouth. And he said it was the biggest and the dangerous animal.
- I also liked when he showed us how big the turtle and tortise and a snapping turtle were. The scariest animal was the iguana.



The kitchen is always a buzz of activity, stirring up delicious treats to sell a few hours later. **Isaac** enjoys working with his friends. He especially likes baking peanut butter bars, cinnamon rolls and even likes to wash dishes!! (The dishwasher is pretty cool.) **Cameron** has been here since the beginning. Much better than watching TV all day!! **Christian** is happy for something to do and likes hanging with his buddies. **Ashley** likes to think about the big trip at the end so she likes to see all the money coming in. **Arionna** has enjoyed doing something new and not staying in the house all the time. She appreciates learning how to make different things and according to her, which we aren't sure if we believe, you don't get yelled at when things don't turn out!! Not getting bored at home is important to **Sheylin** during the summer and **Slater** enjoys meeting new friends and baking stuff he has never baked before and **Brandy** loves the various trips.

They appreciate the people who make a point in coming down frequently and support their efforts. Selling a lot of goodies makes for a really nice way to end their day! Spread the word - Breaktime Bakery is the place to be this summer!!

(Look for the great article about the bakery in the *West Michigan Christian News* - July edition.)