



---

# 40

# DAYS OF PRAYER

---

[occ-strafford.org.uk/prayer](http://occ-strafford.org.uk/prayer)

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION             | 3  |
| HOW WILL IT WORK         | 4  |
| PRAYING FOR MY FRIENDS   | 6  |
| DAYS 1-4 - FATHER        | 7  |
| Prayer focus: FAMILY     |    |
| DAYS 5-10 - PRIORITIES   | 12 |
| Prayer focus: BUSINESS   |    |
| DAYS 11-16 - COMPASSION  | 19 |
| Prayer focus: GOVERNMENT |    |
| DAYS 17-22 - FAITH       | 26 |
| Prayer Focus: MEDIA      |    |
| DAYS 23-28 - RESTORING   | 33 |
| Prayer Focus: EDUCATION  |    |
| DAYS 29-34 - GRACE       | 40 |
| Prayer Focus: HEALTH     |    |
| DAYS 35-40 -PURPOSES     | 47 |
| Prayer Focus: CHURCH     |    |
| YOUR NOTES               | 54 |
| SUSTAINING THE HABIT     | 58 |

# INTRODUCTION

## 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

I am so excited by the 40 day journey we have ahead of us; 40 days of prayer, corporately, individually, as families, as friends.

*"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions,  
with all kinds of prayers and  
requests"*

EPHESIANS 6:18

Prayer is vital - I believe that every miracle starts with prayer, the hinge point of breakthrough is found in the bended knee of prayer, and so as a church I am calling us all to prioritise this next season of 40 days to:

PRAY MORE:

Pray a bit longer than usual. Rather than just praying for your own needs, pray for the needs of the church, the area, the nations.

PRAY WITH OTHERS:

We are gathering as a church to pray. This means we will have times where we physically come together, there are also times when we can all be praying at the same time of day. Commit to praying with your others.

SEEK HIS PRESENCE:

Start your prayer time by making a conscious effort to come into

God's presence. Open your heart to allow him to speak to you. In Rev 3:20 Jesus knocks at the door asking to come in. You can be creative - Offer Him prayers of worship for who he is and thanks for what he has done. Intersperse your conversation with him with prayers of adoration and gratitude, use prayers from Scripture. You could even sing!

LISTEN:

Remember that conversations are two way! Whilst you pray and fast God may well challenge your own life. By spending more time than usual, you are giving the Holy Spirit a wonderful opportunity to show where you need to change or perhaps to inspire or empower you for some ministry.

KEEP GOING:

Keep on praying even when you don't see immediate answers. Praying for something once does not necessarily mean that this issue is dealt with! God may give you a determination to pray about something in particular. If so, you should keep on until you see the answer come.

# HOW IT WILL WORK:

## WEEKLY:

Each week will consist of a PRAYER THEME and a PRAYER FOCUS. This will allow everyone in the church to gather in prayer whether we are able to come together or not. These themes and focus are not meant to be restrictive but are a starting point. Some days you may have more time and can allow your prayers to move beyond this guide.

## DAILY:

Each day we will have an opportunity to also pray for 3 not yet Christian friends we have. 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us that God does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. We will be praying for 3 friends to come to faith in Jesus and that we will have opportunities to invite them to various events in 2018.

Each day we will also gather around the theme of revival. But what is revival? Revival extends and enlarges God's work. It's like a new wave rolling forward, breaking and reaching more ground. It is an activity of the Holy Spirit deepening people's commitment and bringing an awareness of eternity. Christ's message is heard and believed. Historically it has affected large numbers of people and transformed communities. People have described it as 'communities saturated with the presence of God.'

Each day you will have an opportunity to pray for a BIG ISSUE that you are facing based around the theme and focus of the week.

## TRY FASTING:

Fasting is a demonstration to God that you mean what you pray. It is an outward expression of the commitment that lies behind the prayer. It has been practised by the Christian church throughout its history. It was also an important part of the prayer life of many Biblical characters. People fasted: to be in God's presence ready to hear him (Acts 13:2); to seek God's special help or blessing (2 Chronicles 20:1-4, Ezra 8:21-23); to express repentance (Nehemiah 9:1-2); to petition God to fulfil his word (Daniel 9:1-3). Fasting means to voluntarily deprive yourself of something for a time in

order to give yourself more fully to prayer. Usually it means to fast from food, but it is possible to fast from many other comforts or activities: TV, Internet, computer, alcohol, magazines, sweets, or anything that regularly takes up time which can be made available for God instead.

Before fasting check: No one is putting pressure on you to do so. Your fasting must stem from your personal choice and be based on your own convictions. You should not fast to impress others (Matt. 6:18) and you should not do it to punish yourself for a sinful life. Christ took care of that at the cross!

You should not fast: if by doing so, there is a risk of placing yours and/or other people's lives. If you receive professional advice that fasting will harm you or others, you should not fast. It is recommended that the elderly and children who are still growing physically should not fast. If in any doubt, consult your doctor.

If you are not used to fasting, it is recommended that you start with a short fast (1-3 days). This will familiarise you with what it feels like to fast, and with how your body reacts to being without food. If you don't experience any difficulties with this, then you can gradually increase the length of your fast until you become confident at fasting for one week, two weeks or longer. An alternative to fasting for long blocks of time is to fast for one day or more each week.

**Church, imagine what could happen if as a church we were praying every day, asking God for his will to be done. Imagine whole communities becoming saturated with the presence of God and seeking to live, love and look like Jesus every day.**

**Imagine people becoming interested in the message of Christ and widespread social change as people live in hope instead of despair. Imagine discovering God to be near; answers to prayer, miracles becoming common place and church becoming truly glorious.**

If you sense God speaking during these 40 days, or you have testimony of what God is doing please contact John via phone at 07840043030 or email at [john@occ-stratford.org.uk](mailto:john@occ-stratford.org.uk).

# PRAYING FOR MY FRIENDS

During these 40 Days we are all going to be praying for people to become Christians. When someone comes to Christ usually someone has been praying for them.

Choose three 'friends'. These should be people you know who do not know the Lord, or who are not walking with him at present. They could be members of your family, neighbours, colleagues, friends or contacts.

Commit to pray for these three friends everyday and when you gather with others pray for their three friends as well as yours.

1.

2.

3.

- I Pray for each person specifically. Pray for their personal needs. Try to look at life from their standpoint. What are the worries and joys, pressures and decisions, dreams and fears that they face? Pray for those things.
- Pray about their spiritual life. What are the things that keep them from God? Pray that God would soften their hearts and bring them to faith in Christ.
- Pray that the Lord would give you opportunities to share something of His love with them.
- Believe that these three people will change during the 40 days of prayer.

# DAYS 1-4

PRAYER THEME: FATHER

PRAYER FOCUS: FAMILY

## MY BIG ISSUE

There may be one thing that you want God to do during these 40 Days, what is it? What situation, person or trial is there in which you want to ask God to intervene?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

Your BIG ISSUE may change over the 40 days as God moves. Whether it remains or changes, write down what God is doing in you each week.

# DAY 1 - PROTECTING

**Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

Matthew 7:9-11

We have a Father in heaven, as the Lord's prayer says. He longs for us to experience confidence, love and power in our relationship with him as we work our way through this life.

In the Old Testament God reveals how he feels about people. In Jeremiah, for example, he speaks to the Jews who were 'idoling' around. He says how gladly he would treat them as sons and give them a desirable land. He says "I thought you would call me 'father' and not turn away from following me." In the New Testament Jesus speaks of our Father in heaven observing, rewarding, caring and loving. Here we have 40 days to get to know God better. 'Father' is waiting, watching, listening, longing for you.

## PRAYER FOCUS - FAMILIES

The family as a basic unit of God-ordained stability is in disarray in UK society.

Let's pray this week for families to be strengthened.

## PRAYER POINTS

Thank God that he is a loving, living and caring father to you.

Many people do not have a good experience of their fathers and are suffering from the effects. Pray for someone you know (yourself?), who needs to be freed from the effects of bad fathering. Pray that they (you) will be able to forgive and discover freedom from the bondage they live with.

Pray for the many fathers, especially young ones, who do not have a good role model of fatherhood and yet are now fathers themselves, that they will do good to their children.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

# DAY 2 - RETURNING

**This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."**

Jeremiah 6:16

Come near to God and he will come near to you (James 4:8). There's movement here! As Christians we can think that if we have placed our faith in Jesus then we are home and dry in relation to God. All sorted. We have all we need in Christ. We are forgiven. We are going to heaven and in fact are already experiencing eternal life now. All this is true. It's as true as my relationship with our earthly father: You will always be his child; he will always be your father.

However if God says we should come near then it implies we have moved away! At the very least there is an invitation to come closer. Distance can come in our relation with God, just as there can be distance with friends or family. A coldness can come, an awkwardness in his presence or when we pray we're not really on speaking terms. Lack of communication allows 'ice' to form. There can be specific issues of offence, failure or disappointment that cause distance and need to be cleared. In fact even standing still brings distance from God. Our 'walk' with God is always a journey towards God.

In the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) God is portrayed as a father waiting for his son to return. No failure or sin is too great. His love compels him to watch for his son's return and to give him a lavish welcome. It is the same with us. So we are invited to make a move, to return. Drawing close to God is what we do as Christians.

## PRAYER POINTS

Pray for a greater intimacy with God.

Pray for those who need to return to God – the 'prodigals' in your family or the family of a friend. Pray that they will long for what they have lost and begin their 'return.'

Pray for a greater understanding of what God is like among people in your church so that there will be many who return to the full experience of him in their lives. Pray for a greater depth to the life of the church.

## PRAYER FOCUS - FAMILIES

People living together without being married is common. Adultery destroys many relationships. Married couples often experience separation and divorce. There are many second families and single parent families. Children as well as parents are often hurting and confused.

Pray for love to prevail in your own family and those known to you.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival



## DAY 3 - ADOPTING

**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

1 John 3:1

God has children – those who receive (or believe in) his Son Jesus (John 1:12). Think about this for a minute: when we become Christians we are adopted into God's family. We take on the family characteristics and have its privileges:

We have a new family – a good one (John 8:35, Hebrews 2:11)

We have a new Father – the best there could be (Matthew 7:11)

We have a new status – children of royalty (1 Peter 2:9, 10)

We have a new access – we receive the mercy and help he gives (Hebrews 4:16)

So how do we feel about ourselves today? Low self esteem? Feeling we don't really count? Not worth being taken seriously? Perhaps instead we should remember we are children of God: having the most amazing Father caring for us. He is ensuring that we will become like him; sharing in the family characteristics of love, holiness, power and kindness. We matter to God. We are His children.

### PRAYER POINTS

Take some time to consider what it means for you to be a child of God. Thank God for what is true of you as a Christian. Put away everything that undermines your confidence in your relationship with your heavenly Father.

Pray for those in your church who are 'at the edge'; not quite sure that they are yet children of God (yourself?) Pray that they will have an experience of the 'Spirit of sonship' when God's Spirit tells them they are God's children (Romans 8:15,16).

### PRAYER FOCUS - FAMILIES

Single parents do a fantastic job in trying to bring up their children and need our prayers. Nevertheless many children from families where there has only been one parent end up in crime. (70% of criminals in the UK come from single parent families.)

Pray for a single parent known to you that God will help them in their demanding task.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

## DAY 4 - KNOWING

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.**

Ephesians 1:17-20

In the 1992 Olympics Derek Redmond was tipped for a medal in the 400m. Immediately after the start of the race he experienced a ham-string injury. In that moment all the years of preparation and training came to an end. But he was determined to finish the course and began to hobble along in immense pain.

It was at this point that a figure pushed through the crowd onto the track. It was his father. He had realised that Derek was going to finish the race. So he put his arms round Derek and the two of them hobbled along together with Derek burying his head on his father's shoulder.

Derek says of his father: 'I'm very, very close to my father. He has a massive influence on my life. He was never my coach but he came to every race. He was everything else. My motivator, my hero, my pal, my bodyguard, my physio and my masseur some days. You name it, he was it.'

Jesus knew his Father in heaven. He said some striking things about that relationship, but most astonishing is that he invited us to join in the relationship they had together. In a single phrase Jesus says something that turns most religion on its head: 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent' (John 17:3).

Being a Christian is not a matter of being religious but having a relationship. We can know God, not just things about him, because he is our Father.

### PRAYER FOCUS - FAMILIES

Families should be a place of knowing you are loved.

Pray for families that are struggling to love one another today.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for yourself to know God better. Pray some of the things stated in Ephesians 1:17. As one commentator says: 'that your "preschool" experience of God will develop into maturity'.

Pray for a young person you know that they would know their father's love. When children know they are loved by their father they are far less prone to search for intimacy in wrong relationships.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

# DAYS 5 - 10

PRAYER THEME: PRIORITIES

PRAYER FOCUS: BUSINESS



MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 4 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY 5 - SEEKING

**"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."**

Matthew 13:44

Imagine finding a treasure chest overflowing with gold coins and precious gems. From now on you can buy whatever your heart desires, go to anywhere in the world, first class, and lavish wonderful gifts on all your friends. Fantastic! This is how Jesus describes the kingdom of God: a treasure in a field or a pearl of great price. Nothing is ever the same once we have found this treasure.

The man in Jesus' parable was lucky. He almost stumbled upon the treasure. He knew he had found something more valuable than everything he owned, so he was willing to sell everything to gain this treasure. It was not a financial risk, it was astute.

Why do we seek God? Why do we spend time like this? Why are we willing to pray or to fast? Is it because we think it is just something we should do, a worthwhile process to fine tune our spiritual lives? If so then we have missed the point.

When Jesus speaks about prayer he talks about persistence in asking, knocking and seeking (Luke 11:9-13). That is because there is something to be given, a door to be

opened and something to be received. It's not just a process, it achieves something – treasure!

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for people in your church or friendship group to experience a breakthrough in their relationship with Christ, finding a deeper appreciation of God in prayer or some greater experience of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Pray this for yourself too!

Check your value system! Jesus said, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart will be' (Matthew 6:21) Where is your heart? Worldly goods will never satisfy and they all need to be placed after the pursuit of God.

Pray for your church that the immense value of the kingdom of God will be seen in the services this Sunday. Pray that people will be drawn to make astute life choices to pursue Christ.

The best thing that we can ever achieve in life is to know God. He is the greatest treasure this life has to offer. He is worth seeking.

### PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Businesses are the wealth creators and employers in our society.

Pray for honesty and creativity for businesses. Pray that people will find new areas in which to trade and new resources for their business.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

## DAY 6 - CLEANSING

**Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.**

Psalms 24:3-4

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

Are there things we do which stop God listening to us? Yes! In the Psalms it says "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." (Psalm 66:18). Our sin stops God from answering. So if we want God to hear and answer we must pray with a clean heart.

Perhaps we need to have a 'clean-out'. Imagine the dirt-busting, clutter-removing team from the BBC visiting a house today? What do they do? They ruthlessly remove unnecessary junk. They organise the muddle and disorder and apply lashings of all kinds of cleaning materials to purge all the dirt and grime. Within hours they can transform a dirty hovel into an attractive, spacious and desirable dwelling.

Now we might not have 'hovel-like' proportions of spiritual grime in our lives, but as God is holy, so should we be. How do we get rid of the dust and dirt in our lives? We need to confess where we went wrong – attitudes and actions. How does this work?

God has provided a way of being clean. It is through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We become clean on the inside not by promising to be good, trying harder or praying more, but by faith in Christ's death for us. To get a clean heart we need to confess our sins. Confession to God is simply naming our faults, our sins, holding back nothing. What will God do when we do this? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

This is how we can be sure that God will listen to our prayer: confess our sin. When we do this, all God's mighty power is accessible in bringing about the answers we ask of him.

### PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Pray for our society that the emptiness of materialism will be exposed rather than exalted in the media this week.

### PRAYER POINTS

Ask God if anything is spoiling your relationship with him. If so, confess it to him.

Having confessed, thank God for his forgiveness. Christ carried those sins on the cross and God now has no condemnation for you because you are in Christ (Romans 8:1).

Revivals of the past have always included conviction of sin. Pray for God's Spirit to bring a wave of conviction so that people know they have to get right with God.

## DAY 7 - WORSHIPPING

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God— this is your spiritual act of worship.**

Romans 12:1

What am I going to get out of it? What's in it for me? How often we find ourselves subconsciously asking these questions about activities and situations we get involved in! We all have different ways in which we express our worship, but however we do it we face the same challenge. Too often we are the centre of our attention. But worship is not about us, it's about bringing something of ourselves to God. Our greatest calling in life is to worship our loving creator.

In a conversation recorded in John 4:23,24. Jesus says that God is looking for true worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. Anna worshipped with devotion 'serving night and day' in the temple with 'fasting and prayers' (Luke 2:37); David danced exuberantly 'with all his might' (2 Samuel 6:14); Mary demonstrated extravagant worship as she anointed Jesus with oil (John 12:3).

Worship isn't just about what we do in church – it is an attitude of serving God at all times and in all we do. In Mark 12:30 we are called to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

This is radical! It means everything surrendered to him. The apostle Paul picks this up in Romans 12:1 "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him". We are to worship him through our lives: our relationships, attitudes and words and actions. Nothing we do should be devoid of worship.

Worship pleases God and allows us to come close to him. The irony is that as we worship without regard for ourselves, we do get something out of it: intimacy with the living God.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Pray that our love affair with money, excess and indulgence will end.

### PRAYER POINTS

Still yourself: spend time bringing to God your day, your worries, your concerns. Now spend time worshipping God for who he is: our awesome creator, our Holy Lord, our heavenly father whose love endures forever!

Pray that in your day's activities and your relationships you would become less and less concerned with yourself and more and more concerned with what God wants you to be.



## DAY 8 - EMPOWERING

**He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

Acts 1:7-8

The New Testament shows Christianity to be an engaging, transforming experience of God's presence and power through the Holy Spirit. It speaks about Jesus the Son of God teaching, doing miracles, healing the sick and raising the dead; about a conflict between spiritual forces of good and evil and about the Holy Spirit equipping us to reach the ends of the earth with an amazing message.

So who is the Holy Spirit? He is the person and the power behind the message of Jesus. As the third person of the Godhead, he comes to make God real to us convicting us of sin, glorifying Jesus, and empowering us to live as we should. He enables us to be witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit empowered those first disciples to extend the work of Jesus. In Luke 9:1 and Luke 10: 1 Jesus sent the disciples off on a couple of mission trips to do what he had been doing himself: preaching and healing. It turned out to be something they were hugely excited about when they returned. But then after Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to dwell among them they really got going in carrying his life-changing message wherever they went. Jesus had trained them over three years but now through the presence of the indwelling Spirit they continued his work.

The challenge for us today is to make Christ known to those around us. We participate in this by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is as present today as he was in the first century. We can trust him to give us the words to say and even for signs and wonders to accompany what we do in his name.

### PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Pray especially for God's provision for those who are unemployed.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for more of the Holy Spirit's power for yourself and others in your church in ministry and mission, holiness and service.

Pray that the church will properly engage in the task of making the good news of Jesus known. Pray for church leadership to prioritise this, people who will do it and response to the message.

Spend a little longer today praying for your three friends. Ask God for opportunities to show and tell of the love of Jesus.

## DAY 9 - UNITING

**Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope.**

Ephesians 4:3-6

Sadly news got around in first century Corinth that some people thought their particular group in the church was more important than others. The purity of the church was being invaded by human nature. So in 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul gets really steamed up, saying in effect: "I appeal to you by the authority of Jesus Christ stop arguing!" He appeals for harmony and an end to silly cliques in the church – or between churches. What would Jesus say if he heard of Christians taking pot-shots at each other like this? What would he say to people refusing to talk to others – or even crossing the road to prevent a conversation? This is sin!

Jesus prayed for his followers to be one, just as he and the Father are one. And that is the most wonderful example of unity. He prays to the Father in John 17:22: "I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one" and again in verse 24: "I want them to be with me, where I am, so that they may see my glory, the glory you gave me."

Jesus says that Christian unity will make a definite impact on the world. Just as Jesus revealed an unseen God to the world, so the Church can reveal the unseen Father and his love. The unity Jesus prayed for is not organisationally produced, nor is it historically invisible. It is something God produces – full of grace and truth. The world needs to see our unity.

### PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Pray for harmony in industrial relations and the prospering of businesses under the hand of God. This is a good time for the nation to learn that man does not live on bread alone.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for divisions and cliques in and between churches to be removed and for grace and truth to be expressed.

Pray about any initiative you can take to be in harmony with those you know. Pray over the Week of Christian Unity in January.

Pray that the watching world will have its visible demonstration of God's love shown through, and in, the churches here. Pray that many will see this and believe.

# DAY 10 - ENLISTING

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

1 Peter 2:9-12

It would have been a momentous day. The elderly king David had made great plans for the future and he had enlisted his son to complete them. The plan was to build a temple fit for God. David's leadership of the nation was being passed to Solomon. So on this special day, when the baton was being handed on, David said to Solomon, "The Lord has chosen you ... Be strong and do the work." 1 Chronicles 28:9,10.

How did Solomon feel? Did he feel kingly? Did he feel up to the task? We do not know. But he was the anointed child of the king and so he took his place.

On another occasion an elderly leader was writing to those who had become Christians. He wanted them to discover their true identity and fulfil their calling. Peter writes to say they are special, chosen by God in order to fulfil a great plan of telling the night and day difference that God makes (1 Peter 2:9-12.) This was written about us and for us, too.

Do we feel special, chosen by God? Would we rather take a back seat? The truth is, if we have received Christ, we too are children of the king. We also can take our place and live out what we are as Christians.

- Pray for your 'big issue'
- Pray for your 'three friends'
- Pray for a new wave of revival

## PRAYER FOCUS - BUSINESS

Pray for those known to you who have responsibility in business that they will discover the favour of God as they act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. Pray especially for God's provision for those who are unemployed.

## PRAYER POINTS

Let's aggressively pray out of our lives the self doubt and false humility that keeps us from taking our place in God's plan. Pray that you will know more fully the reality of who you are in Christ.

Pray for your church and the whole Church that a new confidence will arise and that we will together take our place in declaring God's praise to the world.

Pray for yourself to have an opportunity to share your faith this week.

# DAYS 11-16

PRAYER THEME: COMPASSION

PRAYER FOCUS: GOVERNMENT

## MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 6 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 11 - LIVING IN NEED

**"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."** Luke 4:18-19

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

God's heart is for the distressed and downtrodden. Jesus as the son of God reveals this. In his manifesto in Luke 4:18-19 and in the Beatitudes Matthew 5:3-12 we see his intention to bring good news to the poor, gladness to those who sorrow and hope for those with a bitter past.

Everybody needs God. We need him for our next breath, our next heartbeat, our next thought. We need him to meet us in our other needs as well: food, health, friendship, safety, homes. So many people are without these. We also need acceptance, significance a sense of worth. Many limp through life struggling with feelings of failure, rejection and worthlessness. What can we do in the face of so much need?

Jesus encourages us to 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things - the daily needs of life - will be added to you'. (Matthew 6:33.) Sometimes our needs are based on a wrong value system. Jesus turns upside down the value of the world which says 'having is blessed'. He says there are rewards for those who have not and those who are meek, show mercy and are peace-makers.

Sometimes people's needs just need to be met. The church continues to be in the forefront of meeting the needs of the poor, the desolate and the sick. It continues Christ's ministry of compassion.

We have many needs, the fulfilment of which occupies much of our time and energy. God is the giver of all good things and wisdom encourages us to seek God as first priority as the one who provides for us.

### PRAYER FOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Listen to the news this week and pray that those who are involved in government trying to handle situations would be given God's wisdom.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray about your own attitude to wealth – if you have it or if you don't! Confess any absorbing of the world's value system.

Trust God with your own finances. Perhaps you need to pray for money, a job, better management of your money. Trust God because he knows your needs before you ask.

Is there a gift you should make? Pray about your giving to those in need as well as spreading God's Good News in the world.

Pray for those caught in the trap of debt.

## DAY 12 - POVERTY

**"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table... "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment ... he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me ... "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things...he is comforted here and you are in agony."**

Luke 16:19-25

There is enormous wealth in the hands of some. Wealth is not wrong; it is a gift from God. But to be wealthy without generosity is abhorrent to God. The rich man did just this in Luke 16 and he got his 'reward.' When we are rich we can alleviate need by giving out of our wealth. There is often a need for justice. We should be aware of trade issues that keep the poor, poor and the rich, rich. There are injustices to fight.

God hears the cry of the poor and will not forsake them (Is 41:17). When we are poor we can be encouraged knowing that God sees our situation and cares. There is no shame in being poor. Jesus lived dependent on others' generosity (Lk 8:3).

Let's check our attitude. There is a 'poverty spirit'. Do we have the attitude that second best, second hand and second rate is what we are worth? If so, we have not understood how much God values us. This poverty of spirit inhibits us from achieving our full potential. Perhaps we should realise we are children of the king.

And finally, in Revelation 3:14-22 Jesus describes a church that has lost it. They have absorbed the value system of the world and have become lukewarm. They think they are rich and don't need a thing. But Jesus says to them, "You do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." He counsels them to repent, to hear him knocking at the door, receive him and eat with him. Spiritual poverty needs addressing.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYERFOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Pray for those in local and national government. Most people enter public life with a desire to serve and often at great cost.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray that in your day's activities and how you can reach out to those living in financial, relational, spiritual poverty today.

Praise God for the various ministries that are helping the poor. Pray for Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and they provide a vital service to people in this country. Pray also for Elim Missions, helping the least and the lost around the world.



## DAY 13 - LOSS

**Mary came to where Jesus was waiting and fell at his feet, saying, "Master, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put him?" "Master, come and see," they said. Now Jesus wept. The Jews said, "Look how deeply he loved him."**

John 11: 32 – 36

To lose something very dear to us causes great pain. We may lose jobs, health, relationships, hopes, dreams and loved ones. In John 11 Jesus receives news from two friends of the imminent death of their brother and his friend Lazarus. Despite the emergency, Jesus waits for two days before travelling to visit his dying friend and by the time he arrives Lazarus is long dead. It was hard for his sisters, Mary and Martha, not to ask Jesus why he had not come sooner. The same reproach often rises from our hearts – why Lord? ...If only it could have been different.

Our losses may not always be met with the same miracle as experienced by Lazarus (see John 11:43-44), but we can always take two truths from this as we pray in the face of loss. First: there is a time for mourning our losses and hurts; Jesus mourns with us during those times. The pain and imperfection of this world hurts and angers him too. Second: ultimately we do not lose. Jesus promises us that even though we may lose our life, we will live – now and in eternity.

Just as we hurt so our cities are hurting places. We can pray that God will be close to us and those around us as we mourn our loss. Jesus' heart was for those who suffered physically, mentally and emotionally. He demonstrated love and care and healed those who came to him. We too can ask for love and care. And we can ask, right now, in the face of hopeless loss, for his resurrection hope and power.

### PRAYERFOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Ask God that the decisions made in the corridors of power this week would have positive effect in the life of community and nation.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Thank God for blessings in our lives and for strength to cope with loss.

Ask God to show you someone who is suffering and needs your prayers today. Consider praying for this person on a longer term basis.

Pray for the disabled, ill and bereaved: for comfort, healing and that Jesus would touch their lives – perhaps through a Christian neighbour or friend.

Ask God to encourage those who care for others in our communities.

## DAY 14 - PRESSURE

**So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

John 8:36

Stress is good for you, without it we wouldn't get anything done. But too much pressure in our lives can paralyse us. Much of the pressure we experience is self-inflicted, a result of the choices we make. Our desires to impress, to succeed, to be the first and best underlie lifestyle preferences. But the Beatitudes indicate a blessedness that God gives those who opt for a meek or humble lifestyle. He values truth over status and purity over power. Choosing to put others first, ourselves last and freeing ourselves from the world's expectations is an antidote for much of the intense pressure we endure.

Nevertheless, some people experience more than pressure. They are oppressed. This is obvious where there is violence, human trafficking or racism. But there is a less obvious oppression. Illness, depression or life's circumstances can restrict and constrict our lives. The wrong choices that people make, leading to alcohol or drug addiction, are particularly damaging. Sin in its various forms robs people of their freedom.

Jesus stated that he came to 'proclaim freedom for the prisoners and release for the oppressed' (Luke 4:18-19). He demonstrated this by forgiving sins, healing sicknesses and driving out demons. He taught that sin leads to slavery. Jesus also taught that truth will set people free. 'If the Son sets you free then you will be free indeed' (John 8:36). Through faith in Christ salvation, freedom and healing are possible. He calls us to continue his ministry to people today.

### PRAYERFOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Pray for Nadhim Zahawi MP and Stratford's local councillors, that in the midst of increasing pressure their desire to serve would remain uppermost and that their work would benefit those they represent.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Are there aspects of your life in which you would say you are oppressed? If necessary, ask forgiveness for any wrong choices made. Ask for the Son to set you free. In prayer receive the freedom that Christ wants you to have.

Are you making the right choices in life? Pray for right thinking and the breaking of any strongholds in your mind that hold you captive (2 Corinthians 10:4,5).

Pray for those you know who are prisoners to some form of oppression – in mind, body or spirit – that they too will be set free. Include any you know who have an addiction to alcohol or drugs.

## DAY 15 - CONFLICT

**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

Ephesians 4:29-32

Family harmony provides a sense of belonging and security unlike many other relationships. When conflict arises it threatens that security. Family breakdown is the root of so many of society's problems. Words and actions cause lasting damage and the anguish of broken relationships often results in violence. The next generation carries the scars and may continue the same process with their partners. There are not only strained relationships between couples but in all aspects of life. Relationships between colleagues, communities and nations are in tension.

The Bible is clear about how to maintain healthy relationships and restore broken ones. We need to cultivate an attitude of acceptance and service choosing to let love and forgiveness govern our relationships. It is not easy, but we should get rid of negative emotions and attitudes. Paul says to get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger and he encourages us to watch what we say, speaking only what is helpful for building people up.

The Bible emphasises the amazing mercy of God. Restoration is possible as we discover that God is a God of fresh starts. We discover our own identity, secure in Christ. Knowing who we are – sons and daughters of the King of Kings – is the best foundation on which to build a good relationship with a partner or parent, friend or colleague. We can demonstrate Christ-like attitudes: co-operation instead of competition, affirmation instead of criticism, and love instead of hate (Ephesians 4:20-32).

### PRAYER FOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Pray for wisdom to be given, petty power-broking to be absent and integrity maintained.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for a situation of conflict that you know about – or even are involved in – that God will turn it around. Pray that grace and truth will replace accusation, fear and defensiveness.

Pray that people will recognise how important it is to protect and promote the institution of lifelong, faithful, loving marriage.

Pray for two or three married couples you know that their relationships would be strengthened and enriched.

Pray for the homeless who are often the victims of family breakdown.

## DAY 16 - ALONE

**Practise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.**

Romans 12:13-16

'The most daring thing young people can do is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.' Kurt Vonnegut. A third of the population lives alone. The importance of family and community has declined. Fewer activities revolve around local communities – and if there is a community focal point it is more likely to be a pub than the local church, which was a hub for former generations. People leave home to study or work and find themselves alone – leaving parents alone. Many struggle to find a longed-for life partner. And at the other end of life, an aching void opens when a partner dies.

There is an opportunity for the church. Jesus said, "Do to others what you would have them do for you." If you were alone, what would you like someone to do for you? Invite you round for a meal? Coffee? Out for a drink? It's all about taking the initiative. We can make it a priority to include and befriend the lonely and the single by creating inclusive communities. 'God sets the lonely in families.' (Psalm 68:5,6) If our father in heaven extends his love to those who are single, widowed and vulnerable, then we can be his hands and feet by taking action.

This also extends to those we might be tempted to shun as different. We all tend to gravitate towards those who are like us. Yet whole people-groups can find themselves rejected or even targets of abuse. God says to treat foreigners as we would treat fellow countrymen, to love them as we love ourselves. (Leviticus 19:33-34) Perhaps the challenge is to demonstrate God's love even to those who have made wrong choices?

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - GOVERNMENT

Pray also our nations leadership to strengthen justice, freedom and the spiritual life of the nation.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for your immediate neighbours and think if there is some things you can do for them.

Pray that our churches will become places where good relationships are formed. Pray for those who are single (perhaps that's you!) that special friendships will be formed.

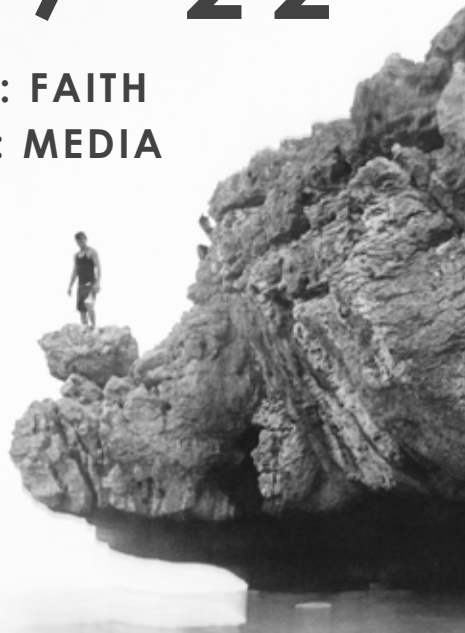
Pray for the protection and wellbeing of asylum seekers. Pray that churches will reach out with practical help but also that many come to a real faith in Christ.

Pray for the gay community and other minority groups – that they will know Christ's love.



# DAYS 17-22

PRAYER THEME: FAITH  
PRAYER FOCUS: MEDIA



MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 8 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY 17 - HAVING

He [Jesus] replied, 'Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. Matthew 17:20

Do we have faith? Jesus encouraged people's faith. Again and again he said to people that their faith had healed them. He was always looking for that kernel of faith that he could work with and was disappointed when it was not present.

But finding faith is not a process of 'hyping' yourself to believe something that you know to be unlikely. Faith has content. It is faith in something, in someone. And that is what Jesus encouraged people to do – to put their faith in him.

Faith is what is needed for us to see answers to prayer. But this frequently sends us off into a spiral of self analysis: have I got faith? Have I got enough faith? How can I get more? However the most important issue is not how much faith we have, but in whom is it placed?

Our faith must be in God as revealed in Jesus. When we understand what God is like: his nature, his person, his compassion, his word, his love, his eternal, all-encompassing, sovereign power, then we realise we can trust him. A tiny amount of faith – even as small as a mustard seed – when it is in Jesus is sufficient to move mountains.

This week as we pray let's take a long look at Jesus and put our trust in him for the things we ask.

### PRAYER POINTS

Ask that God's Spirit, the spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13) fill your mind.

Confess and repent about the mountain of unbelief that pervades our land. Confess your own proneness to scepticism. Have we seen things through eyes of unbelief? Ask for the ability to distinguish between faith and gullibility.

Pray about these same things in relation to your church. Pray for the ministry of the church to stimulate faith in a God who can do anything, rather than faith in a God who doesn't do much more

### PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

The values and behaviour of the nation are reflected and fashioned by the media. Over the coming days let's pray for those involved in the media, including the arts and entertainment, who are key shapers of our society.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

## DAY 18 - ASKING

**A blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."**

**He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.**

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

Luke 18:35-43

'Simply put, God favours those who ask.' Bruce Wilkinson

Some people are reluctant to ask God for things. However Jesus said, 'You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.' (John 14:14.) There are some things that God will do if we ask that he will not do if we do not ask him.

The blind man in Luke 18:35-43 asked. He was tenacious and single-minded. When Jesus quietened the crowd and asked him what he wanted, the reply was stunningly simple: 'Lord I want to see.' In that one statement lay a life time of dashed hopes and cruel disappointments; of rejection and grinding poverty. We are not told how this man knew about Jesus. The crowd referred to Jesus as 'Jesus of Nazareth', but the blind man called him 'Son of David'. He was recognising Jesus as the Messiah. Though blind, he was seeing something. He was single-minded in his request and believed that Jesus was able to do it. He asked - Jesus gave - God was glorified.

In the letter of James a little phrase echoes the same theme: 'You do not have because you do not ask God' (James 4:2.)

We are encouraged to ask God for things. Perhaps we need to overcome our reluctance because, as clear as day, this is a principle in scripture.

### PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

Pray for programme directors, news editors, scriptwriters, DJs, and policy makers who shape the content and tone of what we hear, see and read each day.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray that you – and others in your group or church – will see in Jesus what the blind man saw, that God has power to transform life.

If Jesus asked you, "What do you want me to do for you?" What would you say? Try telling him now.

Like the blind man, pray with boldness for things that will make life different for you. Check your motives (James 4:3) and pray with faith and single-mindedness.

## DAY 19 - ACTING

**What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.**

James 2:14-17

'I will show you my faith by what I do.' James had become frustrated with what was going on in some churches. So in radical mood he wrote these words (James 2:18). He was correcting attitudes that said that we don't need to do anything if we are Christians; we don't need to help those in need; we don't need to change our behaviour.

His point was that genuine faith is demonstrated in actions: godly living, care for the poor and consistent behaviour. So for us if we have faith in God then it will determine how we act.

There is another dimension to this. In the Gospels people were told that their faith had healed them. They came to Jesus in various ways but left having had their needs met.

Jesus commended them for their faith. How was their faith demonstrated? They showed it by disturbing the peace (Luke 18:35-43), breaking into a house (Luke 5:17-26), nagging (Luke 18:1-8), giving a smart answer (Mark 7:24-30), and grabbing clothes (Mark 5:25-34)! In each case a person had a powerful encounter with Jesus because their faith was demonstrated in their actions. Faith does not lead to passivity. It leads to action.

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Heb 11:1) So we need to demonstrate it. There are actions to take consistent with our convictions. There is behaviour to exhibit that shows the reality of our faith in Christ. The absence of action shows we may not have faith. So let us have faith and act.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

Pray for the editor of a programme you watch or a newspaper you read.

### PRAYER POINTS

Think about what you can do today that shows you believe what you are praying for, are convinced of ... what you hope for but do not yet see?

Pray for a person you know who has been 'turned off' by the inconsistencies of Christians' actions or behaviour.

Pray for your church to be a place where faith is real: demonstrated by obedience and love in action.

Pray for God to do miracles.

## DAY 20 - TESTING

**You may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

1 Peter 1:6-7

Abraham is called the “father of faith” for good reason. Called by God to leave his homeland and his family, in effect everything from which he derived his identity and security, Abraham agreed to travel to a land he knew nothing about. It was a hard test, one that his father, Terah, had failed, preferring to stop in Haran, but Abraham took up the call and moved out.

Once in the land God promised him a son, but as the years went by Sarah's barrenness almost consumed hope. However, God kept his word and in time she gave birth to Isaac. The son of promise had arrived. But what of God's next command “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering.” What was Abraham to do with that? But early the next day Abraham is ready to obey..... He had learnt to trust God.

Testing strengthens our faith, “the testing of your faith develops perseverance...so that you may be mature and complete.” It can hit us in many personal ways such as sudden illness, financial difficulties, childlessness, bereavement, broken relationships or the seeming silence of God in times of desperate prayer. The testings seem to defy God's love and faithfulness, yet we are called to believe the truth in the face of adverse circumstances.

Hold on! For God is faithful and “blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

### PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

Pray for Christians who are involved in the media.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for anyone you know who is going through a hard time.  
Pray that their faith will not fail.

Pray for any young people who are causing anxiety to their parents: “Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children” (Lamentations 2:19).

Pray for the parents, too.

## DAY 21 - SEEING

**So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

2 Corinthians 4:18

Joseph's boy or the Son of God; deceiver or truth itself; a bloody corpse on a cross or the Son of God coming into his Kingdom; blasphemer or King of the Jews? It's the same man through different eyes.

'Blind Pharisees!' said Jesus to those who looked at him but didn't 'see' him. Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, was blinded before he truly 'saw' who Jesus was. In his letter to the Ephesians he prays 'that the eyes of your heart may be opened' to bring understanding, for it is not with our natural eyes that we see Jesus or his Kingdom, but with our spiritual eyes.

These are the eyes of faith, the eyes that see what is unseen. When we see with faith, that unseen world becomes more real than the physical world we live in. However, the hard realities of life can crowd out faith bringing in doubt, despair and unbelief if we are not careful.

'Only believe!' says Jesus. Trust what the eyes of faith show you. What do you see with the eyes of the heart? Jesus called himself 'the truth' and another word for truth is 'reality'. Our unseen Lord is more real than any situation here on earth. Be encouraged today to believe again.

Perhaps you have given up on a promise from God or felt that the struggle of faith was too much for you? Then look up, use the eyes of faith to see Jesus, and believe again. Don't be robbed by the enemy of your soul who wants you to believe that the problem is too big – that Jesus offers only a vain hope.

Fix your eyes on him and faith will rise again.

### PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

Pray that God would raise up Christians to work in the media.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray that the eyes of our hearts will be enlightened so that we can know the hope to which God has called us.

Let's pray that, like Paul, we can say that though we are outwardly wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Pray for those in the last days of their lives, that they will come to 'see' Jesus, even if they have rejected him until now, there is still time.

DAY 22 - RECEIVING

**You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing - if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Consider Abraham: He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**

Galatians 3:1-6

Imagine someone at a cash machine putting in their card then, instead of keying in details, getting down on their knees and pleading with the machine to give them money.

Now when it comes to making our requests to God we often miss the point: we will receive what we ask for by faith. God has promised to give us what we need. So we can trust him to fulfil his promise. We can therefore approach God with confidence not diffidence (Hebrews 4:16).

The Galatian Christians got this idea right at first. However they slipped back into human effort and missed faith. Paul says, 'After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ... Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?'

God gives promises. He may test us, and in so doing cause us to grow. We may have to wait, and in so doing learn patience. But there comes a time of fulfilment, when what has been promised is given, what has been longed for is received and what has been hoped for is accomplished. It is simple. We receive what we ask for because of faith, not human effort.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

PRAYER FOCUS - MEDIA

Pray that what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy will feature (Phil 4:8,9).

PRAYER POINTS

Check that you have not slipped into thinking that your prayers are going to be answered by human effort. Ask God to realign your praying into faith. Of the things you have been praying about what do you have faith in that God will do?

What do you need: filling with the Holy Spirit, a closer walk with God, patience, etc? Ask and receive.

Pray for your church that it will be one of faith rather than human effort.

DAYS 23 - 28

PRAYER THEME: RESTORING  
PRAYER FOCUS: EDUCATION

MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 6 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## DAY 23 - CONFIDENCE

**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**

Philippians 4:13

It is distressing how events rob us of our confidence: a harsh word of discouragement; a complaint from a team member; a father who never encouraged; a mother who controls.

Little wonder that so many of us struggle to have any confidence to do anything worthwhile. As life takes its toll, we become dispirited. Eventually we become so lacking in confidence that we don't need the discouragement of others to stop us from acting, we do it to ourselves. We believe we are useless.

But this is a lie. God gives encouragement (Romans 15:5). He says 'Arise and shine for your light has come' (Isaiah 60:1). He brings those who receive Christ into his family as his children (John 1:12) and he banishes the darkness of despair and discouragement with the light of his presence. We are made in his image and according to his purpose. So there are good grounds for being confident.

Paul encourages Timothy to overcome his natural reticence when he said that God has not given a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self discipline. He encourages him to fan into flames the gift that God has given him (2 Timothy 1:6,7). Timothy was being encouraged to believe that God had given him something other than his natural timidity. We also have the same spirit of power, love and self discipline which we received when we received Christ into our lives.

Have you lost confidence? Has life eroded your assurance? If so, let's address the root causes and apply the solution: a fresh realisation that you are a child of a God who is 100% committed to you, giving you power, love and self discipline.

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

What happens in a child's early years has a huge effect on their life. Pray for Nursery, primary, junior, secondary schools and further education as they invest in the lives of the future adults in this country.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

For yourself: to believe the truth that you are a child of God and have the light of life.

Ask for wisdom to address things that have eroded your confidence.

Pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to fan into flame the gift God has given you so you can walk confidently in a spirit of power, love and self-discipline.

Pray for another person and for your church collectively in the same manner.

## DAY 24 - OPPOSITION

**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

Ephesians 6:12

We pray 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...' but often we experience conflict. Christians have found conflict in places that they considered to be the most secure: at church, home, even family or friendships... places they believed to be outside the battle-zone. Not so!

It is in the unseen world where our real enemy lies. Though defeated at the cross, Satan still prowls around accusing, deceiving and leading the world astray. He will try to damage wherever he can, so we need to be alert. James 4:7 doesn't say, 'Ignore the devil and he will flee from you', but 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you'.

Joshua, when facing an impregnable city, used the strategy God gave him and became a history-maker at Jericho. David stood against an enormous giant with a simple sling and confidence in God. Daniel would not compromise his faith and paid for it by spending a night with the lions. He showed us that God can shut both the mouths of lions and the mouths of those who falsely accuse.

But perhaps the greatest arena of spiritual warfare occurs in our heads: the space between our ears! In 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 Paul talks about strongholds. A stronghold is an 'attitude or mindset, impregnated with despair that accepts as unchangeable anything that is contrary to the will of God.' Such strongholds are situated in our reasoning, our knowledge and our thoughts. With God there is no difference between an impregnable city and a wounded mind. That is why Paul encourages us to, 'Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.' Perhaps here, if nowhere else, we should pray, 'Deliver us from evil.'

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

So pray for those children and young people known to you who are involved in school or further education today.

### PRAYER POINTS

Ask God whether you have unwittingly been a tool in the hands of the enemy: by accusing falsely, by spreading gossip, by bringing damage to others' lives. Confess this and, if need be, go and make peace.

Break a stronghold in your mind! Bring a despairing mind set to God who transforms and brings hope!

Resist the devil in regard to areas of your life or your church that have been in conflict. Take your stand against him clothed with the armour of God.

Pray about an issue in our nation where Satan has been seeking to gain a foothold by stealing, killing and destroying (John 10:10).



## DAY 25 - PREJUDICE

**You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection... I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.**

Acts 10:28-35

What is our reaction when we think about people who are charismatic, reformed, evangelical, catholic, immigrant, foreign? The disciples had spent three years with Jesus watching as he ate with tax collectors, befriended prostitutes and became a friend of sinners, but still they carried their culturally elitist. Cornelius, a gentile, was the last person on earth to whom Peter would take the gospel. It took an angelic visitation, a heavenly vision and supernatural guidance to convince Peter he should preach to Cornelius' household. We too easily put up barriers. Different cultural preferences become a wall that separates us. We think 'they' have got it wrong and we have to be careful about associating with 'them'.

We put people in boxes marked 'very spiritual', 'spiritually unbalanced', 'doctrinally suspect', or 'needs prayer'! We would do well to listen to what God told Peter in that vision which led him to Cornelius, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean' (Acts 10:15, Acts 11:9).

Jesus loved and associated with those who belonged to spiritual institutions he knew to be flawed – remember Nicodemus (John 3) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). And do you think the church of today would have shown such acceptance to the woman caught in adultery? To Jesus, she was a child of God, an individual, though sinful, to whom he could reach out. 'Let him who is without sin throw the first stone' (John 8:7).

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

Pray for teachers known to you and those who advise and effect policy in education.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Confess any cultural prejudices that you might have: to immigrants, the rich, the poor, the unemployed, different races. Pray for Christ-likeness.

Confess any spiritual prejudices you have towards other churches or denominations. Pray that you will grow to see them as God sees them.

Pray that God would help people in your church to be less critical of others, but instead 'quick to listen and slow to speak'.

We need maturity in knowing how to handle doctrinal differences. Pray for a greater understanding of God's truth in his word.

## DAY 26 - REFLECTION

**Whenever anyone turns to the Lord the veil is taken away... and we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

Since the Fall, mankind has made countless of erroneous attempts to know God. We have worshipped everything from the sun, moon and stars to rocks, snakes, owls, bulls, lizards, celebrities, grotesque carved images and lumps of wood.

However, when God wanted to reveal himself, he sent Jesus, the exact representation of his being. Jesus wasn't just pretty close to what God is like, or the best available thing, he was and IS God. Everything God is, Christ is. Christ was God's ambassador, coming into the world to reconcile people to God. Now that same ministry of reconciliation has been given to us, and just as Jesus reflected God, so we are to reflect Christ and be his representatives on earth. What ME? HOW?

How did Moses radiate God's glory? He spent time in God's presence, so much so that his face shone. When we gaze on Christ with unveiled faces we reflect Jesus back into the world.

The dark, lifeless moon has no light of its own, but reflects the powerful light of the sun. Yet that comparison falls short, for we are actually being changed into the likeness of Christ. The moon will never become a ball of fire, but we will become just like him.

He calls us brothers and sisters. Spend time with God as Moses did, speaking to him face to face as you speak with a friend. Then when you go out into the world hold your head up believing that you do indeed reflect the glory of Christ on your face, and in your transformed character.

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

Pray for those who make funding decisions and employment decisions for educational establishments.

Pray for your 'big issue'

Pray for your 'three friends'

Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Spend time with God today: as a servant with his master, as a child with its father as a wife with her husband. Be still in his presence.

Pray for your church this Sunday for many in the congregation to know the presence of God in a new way.

Pray that as individuals and as churches we would reflect the true nature of Christ to the world. Pray for Stratford's Street Pastors.

## DAY 27 - INITIATIVE

**The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.' 'Ah, Sovereign Lord,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,'**

Jeremiah 1:4-8

The greatest mistake we can make in life is to be continually fearing we will make one. Many of us want to step forward and serve God. But perhaps we have tried things in the past which didn't work out. We then don't want to make ourselves vulnerable. There are real challenges in making ourselves available to God: dealing with fears and facing up to responsibilities. However the great gain is that we get close to God himself and live a life of enterprise and purpose.

The Bible is packed full of ordinary people who took simple steps of obedience to God. Jeremiah responded to God's call by saying that he didn't have what was needed. Nevertheless God encouraged him and Jeremiah made his life available to God. His faith and courage had the edge over his doubt and fear. To recover our initiative we need to look honestly at our doubts and fears and ask God to strengthen our faith and courage. If we take one step, we may find that other steps come more easily.

Faith can be nurtured and cultivated. Sydney Smith, an old saint, wrote: 'A great deal of talent is lost to the world for want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves obscure men whose timidity prevented them from making a first effort.' When we recover our availability and initiative we share in the excitement of being part of a movement spanning culture, history and continents. We will have the fulfilment of getting to the end of our life having done what we were put here to do.

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

Pray that the years that children are in education prove to be positive learning and life experiences.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for faith and courage today to take the initiative in: a conversation, a project, a deed of kindness, praying for someone, sharing your faith.

Pray that those within the church who disguise unbelief as 'caution' would be helped to trust God and that wisdom would lead to godly activities.

Pray that the church would become characterised by faith-filled adventures that glorify God.

## DAY 28 - TRANSFORMATION

**And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.**

1 Corinthians 15:49

In fairy tales, a frog becomes a prince, a puppet becomes a real boy, and a scullery maid becomes a princess. But in the real world God is working towards a whole new creation. And when God restores he does not come with his mending kit to stick the old, broken self back together again. He comes with his creative transforming power to make us altogether new.

We are new creatures: the old has gone and the new has come. God is not just restoring us to what we should have been if we had lived a good life from the day of our birth. He is making us like Jesus. But when we look in the mirror the old familiar face stares back at us. When we stumble into sin we are acutely aware that the old has not yet gone. At this time we have the deposit of the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of what is to come. A deposit is given when the purchase is fully decided, but it speaks of a day of completion still to come. The apostle John says NOW we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. There is a NOW and a THEN.

Paul talks of the whole of creation groaning, (Romans 8:22) as we do, longing for the liberation from the old into the new. Today we catch glimpses of love, joy, peace and kindness; we taste the powers of the age to come, but that perception can be quickly snatched away by life's uncertainties. However a day will come when God will restore it all, when the Kingdom will come in all its fullness and everything that causes sin, pain and heartache will be gone, forever.

### PRAYER FOCUS - EDUCATION

Pray that corrosive influences at work in our society would be halted and that many children and young adults will come to faith and be part of a new generation of God's people.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Take time today to rejoice in what God has done for us. Our future is more amazing than we could ever ask or imagine. Thank God for this.

Pray for those who are suffering: physically or emotionally.

Pray for those who are being persecuted. Pray that God will give strong glimpses of heaven and the new order of things.

Pray for those who are facing death that they will do so without fear, joyfully anticipating their own resurrection. Pray for those who have lost heart, that God would restore hope.

# DAYS 29 - 34

PRAYER THEME: GRACE

PRAYER FOCUS: HEALTH



MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 6 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DAY 29 - LOVE

**We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**  
1 John 4:19-21

Have you ever tried standing on your head or doing a handstand? It's not easy being upside down. It's unnatural. Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to its end came to embody and inaugurate the 'upside down kingdom of grace'. Yet when we look more closely, Jesus was really turning things the right way up. He demonstrated the right way to live. His teaching challenged accepted practice: bless those who persecute you; better to give than receive; love your enemies. His practice overturned social norms: friend of outcasts, prostitutes and Samaritans. The spiritual and social consequences were revolutionary.

Jesus was energised by one thing – God's unrestricted love for the world. Every person on the face of the earth is loved and valued by God regardless of culture, creed or colour. That is what is so amazing about God's grace; it is a love beyond reason: it is a love that positively seeks out the best for others regardless of emotion, feeling or inclination.

This love can be realised not just in relationships with individuals. It can also be practised in our approach to groups whose behaviour and attitudes may seem strange to us. In our increasingly polarised world Christians are called to resist the acceptance of false stereotypes. Muslim does not equal terrorist, refugee does not equal troublemaker and asylum seeker does not equal sponger.

The Lord's call on us is to a life of unconditional love for others.  
Are we up for it?

### PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

The National Health Service is said to be the world's third largest employer after the Chinese Army and Indian Railways. In the UK many people are not well – 1000s and 1000s of them. Let's pray about that!

Pray for someone you know who is not well. Pray for their healing. Pray for good medical attention.

### PRAYER POINTS

Have you experienced God's love in your life? Thank him for his love for you.

Ask God for courage to demonstrate his way of doing life and loving people, even if it is against accepted norms.

Ask God for love to be ever increasing with our church.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

## DAY 30 - GIFT

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

Matthew 6: 33-34

'Thank you for your generosity and support. I've been constantly amazed at God's provision and people's generosity whilst living here. At home I never really had to trust God for providing my financial needs. Yet out here I've constantly had to rely on him. It's amazing how God has blessed and provided for me. There's a sense that everything belongs to him. Thank you again for your generosity.'

This was the email of a 25-year-old lady who has been working as a volunteer physiotherapist with Africa Inland Mission in Uganda since July 2005.

A.I.M. provides excellent support to its field workers but each has to be responsible for raising the finance they need. For so many missionaries around the world who have to raise their own personal support this can be daunting. But she never doubted that, if God wanted her there, he would provide. And he has. She is doing what she had set her heart on doing for years. She is making a real difference to people in the hospital and surrounding villages. The maths doesn't really add up. With only a small allowance she has enough and to spare.

Jesus encourages us not to worry about our provision. God knows we need food and clothes and will readily provide them. He generously gives us what we need, especially when we put him first. If God provides for flowers in the field and birds in the air will he not also provide for us?

### PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

Pray for someone you know who is not well. Pray for their healing. Pray for good medical attention.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Give thanks for God's provision for your needs.

Do you have a need at the moment for finances? Pray about it and trust God. Do you need to give a gift to others? Do it cheerfully.

Pray for a missionary you know and those behind the scenes who enable the work. Visit [www.elimmissions.co.uk](http://www.elimmissions.co.uk)

Pray for Stratford and the various community projects you know of.

## DAY 31 - SACRIFICE

**Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'**

Matthew 16:24

On July 31st 1941 in Auschwitz, the infamous German concentration camp, sirens announced the escape of a prisoner. It was the rule that if one escaped ten were killed in reprisal.

The commandant and his Gestapo assistant walked up and down the lines of assembled prisoners and picked out Francis Gajowniczek as one of the ten. As he was picked he cried out, 'My poor wife and children.' Hearing these words, Father Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward saying, 'I am a Catholic priest, I want to die for that man, he has a wife and children... I have no one.' His offer was accepted and with nine others he was thrown in an underground concrete bunker and left to starve to death. After two weeks they took out Father Kolbe, still alive with three others, and killed them.

It is easy to undervalue the meaning of sacrifice. Giving up chocolate for Lent is a popular choice as we remember the Lord's own fast at this time of the year. We can easily be misled into thinking that such a sacrifice gets us 'off the hook'. Once our pledge is fulfilled can we binge for another year?

What about those things that really matter to us? Attitudes and agendas, personal goals and deep felt desires; these are the drives that propel us – and also the things that we must sometimes sacrifice. What has God asked us to do that we haven't done yet?

When we are willing to sacrifice anything for the gospel and give up everything that comes between us and God, we will know what sacrifice is.

### PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

Pray for the doctors, nurses and technicians who are working to help them. So many working long hours for the good of others.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for a renewal in your personal value system. Ask God what is important to him and make these matters your focus.

Pray for a new understanding of what the sacrifice Jesus made means for you.

Pray for those all over the world who are sacrificing themselves for the gospel:  
– the persecuted church  
– those who are paying a great price for their faith.

Pray for those facing difficult decisions – who are making a choice that may cost them dearly. Pray for grace and peace for them at this time.



## DAY 32 - VALUE

**Whether you are Jew or Greek, slave or free, a man or a woman you are all one and equal in Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:28

A capable man is dogged every day by the feeling he is inadequate. An attractive woman is paralysed by her father's words to her as a child that she was unattractive. A young man was told he could never match family expectations and has to 'prove' them wrong.

Perhaps similar stories could be told about you: about how your life has been affected and you now don't value yourself. Is it possible for Christians to live with confused identities and low self esteem? Yes. Sadly hurts from our past are allowed to define both the present and the future. To compensate we often consider others superior, envy what they achieve and deprecate our own gifts and abilities. Alternatively, we criticise others to bring them to our level. Sometimes we live our lives through family, work or church.

How should we view ourselves? Perhaps we need to be honest with God and ask him to help us see ourselves as he sees us. His beloved child. Once we see that our lives are intended by God and he has a purpose for us, we can begin to fulfil our role in life.

The apostle Paul knew he wasn't perfect, but he told the Philippians (3:12) 'I press on.' Let us do the same.

### PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

Pray for the NHS, that this enormous provider of care would function in the best way possible.

### PRAYER POINTS

Thank the Lord that he has made you to be special and loved. Confess any inadequate or superior view you may have of yourself and calling.

Pray for a friend whom you know suffers with low esteem and ask God to change that mindset.

Ask the Lord to help you remove prejudice and criticism against others and to value them in line with Scripture.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

## DAY 33 - FORGIVENESS

**This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**

Matthew 6:9-15

Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer to his followers as a pattern for all our praying. Afterwards, he commented on just one part of it: he was concerned to stress the vital importance of forgiving. We must forgive the people who have hurt us if we want to receive forgiveness from God. It isn't that we have to earn God's forgiveness, but forgiving is like breathing. We can't breathe in unless we breathe out as well. In the same way, we can't expect forgiveness from God unless we are giving forgiveness to others.

Simon Peter once came to Jesus with a question: 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me?' The rabbi may have said three times. When Peter suggested seven times he thought he was being generous, but Jesus didn't agree. If we're counting, we're not really forgiving them at all.

Jesus replied to his question with a parable about an ungrateful servant (Matthew 18:23-35). His story shows that if we choose to hold onto our bitterness against someone, it is as though we keep that person locked behind bars; but the consequence is that we become the prisoner.

Forgiving is rarely easy. If someone has damaged us we can't simply brush our hurt under the carpet. Sometimes we will have to persist in prayer, and maybe even ask someone to pray with us before we find freedom. But there is only one thing harder than forgiving, and that's not forgiving.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

Pray for success in combating MRSA and other antibiotic persistent infections. Pray also for prevention of disease and reduction of addictions.

### PRAYER POINTS

Thank God for his free gift of forgiveness through Christ's death on the cross.

Is there someone you need to forgive? Ask God to help you release them. Be willing to persist with this prayer, if necessary. Is there a practical step you could take to restore your relationship?

Pray the Lord's Prayer (Above). Pray it slowly, pausing after each line to allow time for reflection.

Pray for families under pressure. Pray for anyone you know whose marriage is in danger of breaking up because of unresolved hurt or conflict.



DAY 34 - HOPE

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

At a funeral service a signer was present to help some deaf people understand. As the meeting went on the speaker was frequently using the word 'hope'. The sign was crossed fingers. However the speaker began to talk about Christian hope – the certainty of life beyond the grave. And as he did so a different sign was being introduced: hands clasped together in rock-like certainty.

In the New Testament the word for hope means something that is in the future which is certain. It is not, as in normal English usage, something that might happen if we are fortunate. The rock-like certainty of the New Testament use of the word is what the signer was communicating at the service.

Peter, who saw the death and resurrection of Jesus, writes with certainty about our hope. 'Praise' is his word, because we have been born again into a living hope. Unlike virtually everything in this life, what we have been given in Christ is something that can never perish, spoil or fade. Our hope is guaranteed on the basis of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

God is a God of hope. So it is possible to 'overflow with hope' says Paul in Romans 15. He gives hope. Christians need not wallow in gloom or despair. The power of the Holy Spirit within us is what enables us to exhibit hope. Death is the most despairing of life's events. Yet even here, or especially here, it is possible to have hope for the future. Christians are people who have a certain and a living hope. That's the difference.

PRAYER FOCUS - HEALTH

Pray for someone you know who is struggling with their health that they would choose a healthy lifestyle.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

PRAYER POINTS

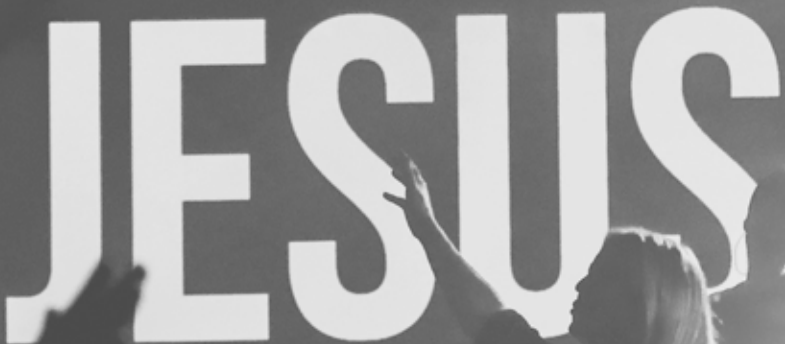
Pray for yourself that you will become more of a person of hope. Ask God to show you areas of your life that hinder this: attitudes, the way you speak, the way you think etc.

Pray for your church that its whole ethos will exhibit the hope of the gospel.

Countless people are facing illness, financial pressure, breakdown in relationships, suffering from depression, etc. Pray that they will find hope. If you know of anyone in particular, ask God what you can do to help.

DAYS 35 - 40

PRAYER THEME: PURPOSES  
PRAYER FOCUS: CHURCH



MY BIG ISSUE

How are you getting on with your big issue? How has God been working in you over the past 6 days?

Write it here > \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## DAY 35 - LIBERATING

**Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**

2 Corinthians 3:17

When Ann Robinson was interviewed on Parkinson she said: 'Every day my mother used to tell me, 'You can do whatever you want in the world!'' How liberating. Few people grow up with such encouragement. Many grow up with the opposite.

It seems that Jesus Christ had the same liberating and affirming attitude towards his followers. 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19). 'You can ask me for anything and I will do it' (Matthew 18:19). 'If you have faith even as a mustard seed you can say to this mountain be moved' (Matthew 17:20).

But they often had little faith, didn't understand about his death and resurrection, or the point of his mission. Nevertheless his choice of them was not mistaken. When the Spirit came, they became the leaders of a world-changing movement.

Likewise Jesus has hand-picked you to be his follower: 'You did not choose me, but I choose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last' (John 15:16). There are no limits, no boundaries, to the provision and purposes of God. Perhaps you are unusually gifted to pray for things to change. Maybe you are to be in a team which does exploits for the kingdom of God. Perhaps you can demonstrate the love of God in practical and extravagant ways. Your potential is immense.

What possibilities are there for your church? With a liberating 'can do' mentality the potential for ventures of faith lies open. Risks can be taken, opportunities grasped and great projects begun. The Holy Spirit of God in fashioning our hearts and our congregations is a liberating, city-transforming and world changing power.

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Praise God for His church. The church is the greatest provider of social care in the UK. It is the greatest provider of youth services. It is the organism that has within its core value the message that brings hope to a decaying world. It carries a potent message of love that transforms life and society.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for a view of yourself that is based on God's affirmation rather than life's undermining.

Pray for a 'can do' spirit to pervade church life: its services, connect groups, leadership and business meetings.

Pray for people to discover and exercise their ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for people and churches to bear fruit that will remain.

## DAY 36 - DARING

**While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume?'**

Mark 14:3-4

Mary of Bethany had it in mind to make an extravagant display of devotion. What she planned was out of the ordinary. It was shocking. She would pour expensive perfume worth the equivalent of thousands of pounds on Jesus' head! Would her nerves hold?

She loved Jesus and wanted him to know it, it was that simple. She poured the perfume on Jesus' head. Those present were outraged and harshly criticised her for this extravagance. But Jesus shielded her from it by saying, 'She has done a beautiful thing to me.'

The words 'Why this waste?' have, through the centuries, deflected good people from serving Jesus. People say it's a waste of time, money, education, even a waste of a life. But Jesus strengthens those who dare to stand out.

On a hot day in Athens a small Jew stood out in front of an audience of great thinkers. He had been brought to a respected and influential council where philosophies were debated – the Areopagus. Paul had a message and now a rare platform to speak. Would his nerves get the better of him?

Paul stood. He said that the God who created all there is cannot be shrunk to look like something we have made. He referred to their man-made religion as ignorance. He said that God gave us life on earth so that people should seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him. Paul's punch-line was the resurrection; it didn't go down well with his hearers. But he did communicate the message and a few believed. (Acts 17:16-34) Whether acts of devotion or sharing our story, Christ is there. Dare to be different.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Pray for Oasis Christian Centre that we will be more of what God wants us to be this year.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray about your own devotion to Christ. He does not necessarily want you to break social norms, but is your commitment to him such that you would dare to do anything? Tell Jesus how much he means to you.

Pray for the worship life of your church that there will be 'beautiful things for Jesus'.

Pray for the progress of the gospel in your area. Are people hearing about Christ? What can you or your church do?

## DAY 37 - CO-OPERATING

**Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**

Romans 12:4

There was once a man who had seven sons. The first was strong as an ox; the second was fast and could outrun all the others; the third was quiet, preferring to read and study; the fourth was skilled with his hands; the fifth was easy-going; the sixth was tender-hearted and compassionate; and the seventh son loved to sing, but he was crippled in one leg.

The father loved each one, admiring their strengths and abilities. Together they would make a strong community. Soon, as is the case in parables, the time came for him to go on a long journey. He told his sons to work together: the strength of one helping the weakness of the other.

However, on his return, he found that each son had simply drawn close to others like himself. The strong son lived in a well-fortified town with others who were strong. The swift son had formed a hunting group. The third son had found others of an academic bent and was spending his time debating and learning. And so it went on. The father was concerned how his seventh son had survived because his brothers had left him. However the seventh son knew he was weak, but also knew he could sing. He sought out others and together they built a loving community where the strength of one helped the weakness of another. The only way to join was an admission of need and a willingness to help.

The truth this story illustrates is that across congregations and churches it is co-operation, not perfection that achieves the effective functioning of the body.

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Pray for the leadership of Oasis Christian Centre to hear from God and gently enable everyone to grow in love and good works.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

What is one of your strengths? Thank God for it and pray that you will have opportunities to use it to serve others.

What is one of your weaknesses? Trust God with this and look for ways that will enable others to serve.

Pray for meaningful cooperation within our church and likewise between churches in Stratford. Unity across the body of Christ is something which enables nonbelievers to see the truth that Jesus came from God. (John 17:21) Pray that this will happen.

## DAY 38 - INVITING

**'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'What you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 'Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.'**

Luke 14:21-23

Some people just love to share what they have and eagerly invite people to join in. The picture Jesus gave about a great banquet needing guests to come and fill the places is a good illustration for us. (Luke 14:15-24) The banquet is the feast in heaven. Unfortunately, in the story, many people seem to have far too many excuses about coming. Business projects get in the way ('I've just bought a field'). Checking out new purchases is another ('I've just bought five yoke of oxen'). Or relationships got in the way. ('I've just got married') Whatever the excuses – in the terms of the story – more people needed to be invited.

What kind of people do the inviting? Perhaps people like Andrew. Andrew was one of the first disciples to meet Jesus. Immediately after meeting Jesus he found his brother Peter and told him 'We have found the Messiah.' And he brought him to Jesus (John 1:41,42). It was such a natural thing to do. He already knew Peter. He was probably going to see him anyway. All he did was say, 'Guess who I met today?' and the consequences of that conversation were far reaching. Peter became a follower of Jesus, led over 3000 people to Christ in one meeting and became a great leader in the early church. It began with Andrew's invitation.

Andrew had a flare for introducing people to Jesus. On another occasion he introduced some Greek people to Jesus (John 12:20-22). Who knows what the consequences of that introduction were.

Inviting: perhaps we can become better at it!

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Pray that the priorities and values of Oasis and the church as a whole would more fully reflect those in the New Testament.

### PRAYER POINTS

Pray for a (re-)discovery of the goodness of the gospel of Jesus. Pray this for yourself. Confess if you have begun to see the gospel as neither 'news' nor particularly 'good'.

Pray for enthusiastic 'invitation carriers' in your church. Pray for opportunities for yourself and others to share God's good news verbally and practically.

Spend some time praying for opportunities to invite your 'three friends' to some of the various social events or services at church. Easter will be a great opportunity to invite friends that you have been praying for.

## DAY 39 - PERSUADING

**He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.**

Acts 18:26-28

There are many people who would become Christians if someone would give them a reason. People need evidence. They need information – not religious jargon – about how our lives have actually changed. And they need reasons to believe: evidence, facts. It takes more than these things alone for someone to become a Christian, but they are the foundation for a real faith. First century Christians could give the names of people who had seen Jesus alive implying that those who were sceptical could check out the facts for themselves (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

They also had people who could communicate the truth persuasively – people like Apollos and Paul. Apollos was a gift to the church. He had a brain and he was willing to use it. To begin with he didn't have the full message about Jesus. Fortunately Priscilla and Aquila realised and took him aside to 'explain the way of God more adequately' (!) Once he had got the full message, he was away. He was gifted in public debate and was able to handle all the awkward questions. Paul also was one accustomed to giving reasons for his faith. In Ephesus he went to the synagogue for three months and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. When he was thrown out he went to a lecture hall and spent the next two years ensuring that everyone in the city and its region heard about Jesus. And they did! (Acts 19:8-12) Irrefutable facts, persuasive people, the power of the Spirit; all these ensure that everyone has a decent chance to hear about Jesus.

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Pray for everyone at church and the churches in Stratford to experience a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, bringing unusual growth in love for both God and people and bringing many to faith in Jesus.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER POINTS

Thank God that our faith is based on solid evidence: that Jesus actually rose from the dead and that the historicity of the New Testament is unquestionable.

Pray that you will be prepared to give the reason for the hope within you (1 Peter 3:15).

Pray that God will raise up 'quiet persuaders' (like Priscilla and Aquila) and 'public debaters' (like Apollos and Paul).

Pray for evidence to be given to your three friends.

## DAY 40 - ARRIVING

**But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

Hebrews 12:22-24

We have arrived. The journey has ended. Has your big issue been resolved, changed, or improved? Have you had opportunity to talk with your three friends about your faith? Are there signs of revival? Have you discovered more of God?

No doubt it is a mixture of encouragements and perhaps some disappointments. But you have made it to the end. Arriving at the end of a journey is sometimes a relief. But most of all it is an accomplishment. You have made it!

One day there will be the completion of a greater journey. When we reach the end of this life we will arrive and come 'home' like there has never been a home-coming before. Family, friends, freedom from pain, beauty, light, music, the consummation of all the hopes this world has had ... and glory. 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Corinthians 2:9).

There we will meet someone who we have not seen in this life, but in whom we have believed. When we arrive we will see Jesus Christ as he is. He is preparing a place for us. If we have tasted beauty in this life, it's because it is a reflection – a pale one – of the beauty of the next. If we have known love in this life, then it's an echo of the pure love of heaven. If we have known joy in this life, then it's a picture of the abundant joy of the family of God in eternity. At this point we can barely imagine it, but the day will come and we will experience the real thing.

And it will have been worth every step of the journey.

Pray for your 'big issue'  
Pray for your 'three friends'  
Pray for a new wave of revival

### PRAYER FOCUS - CHURCH

Pray for our church as we conclude these 40 days - that this will not be a finishing point in prayer but the start of a life and culture transforming habit.

### PRAYER POINTS

Thank God for the things accomplished during these 40 days. Some issues may still not be answered, but you can thank God for that he has heard your prayer. You may want to decide how you will continue from here.

Thank God for the door of heaven opened for us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

WELL DONE FOR COMPLETING THIS 40 DAYS IN PRAYER - we encourage you to continue with this amazing habit you have formed in prayer. Read p58-59 for some hints on how to continue in prayer.

# YOUR NOTES:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



[illegible]

# SUSTAINING THE HABIT:

## CONTINUE:

Having spent the last 40 days praying everyday you have formed a habit and we encourage you not to see day 40 as the conclusion of this journey but the start.

You may have been setting a specific time aside each day to pray, continue to do that. Keep that time and that space and time sacred.

Prayer flows out of a life connected to God so if you are struggling with what to pray now this guide has concluded, then ask God to show you. Prayer is an opportunity to receive from our Heavenly Father all that He desires to give.

## TOOLS:

Prayer should not become a sideline habit for Christians, it should also not become a ritual that we perform - prayer is about persistence and passionate dependence on God.

So as well as a set time for prayer it is a great practice to weave prayer into the moments of your day.

**PRAYER WALKING:** There are many biblical postures for prayer: stand, kneel, look up, head bowed, etc. This does mean that no one posture is necessary. Walking is a great way to pray - walk to church or work when you might usually drive. Take these moments to focus on prayer

**KEEP A PRAYER JOURNAL:** Journaling can give your prayer life a boost. You could write prayers in a physical journal or keep a prayer journal in the Notes app on your phone. Include the date, write down brief prayers or notes for prayer, and keep a list of needs and requests. The greatest benefit of a journal is how it helps us remember what we've prayed in the past and how God has answered.

**PRAYER LIST:** Keeping a list is a great way to stay on track with prayer but don't forget, prayer is a relationship. We do not approach those we love with a list of requests - we talk, we listen, we laugh, we cry - this is prayer. If you find your mind wandering during prayer then this helpful acronym (ACTS) might help you come back to a focus:

**ADORATION** – "Praise be to God!" Psalms 68:35

Tell God how much you appreciate Him. Express your love for Him. Praise His power and majesty. This is a great way to begin your prayer time. Use creation, and praise God for the beauty around you. You'll should never run out of praise.

**CONFESSION** – "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." -1 John 1:9

Tell Him where you have fallen short. Be specific. I thank Him for the forgiveness I have in Christ, and ask for help and strength to turn away from future temptations.

**THANKSGIVING** – Always "glorify him with thanksgiving" -Psalms 69:30

You have plenty of reasons to be thankful. Thank God for His love, His faithfulness, His patience and a million other things. Express gratitude for what He's doing in your life. Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for you. Thank the Holy Spirit for indwelling you, and never leaving. Thank Him for being your conscience, your counsellor and that "still small voice."

**SUPPLICATION** – "Make your requests known to God." -Philippians 4:6

Tell God what you want, no matter how small it seems to you. Do you really think any of your requests are big too God the Creator? You should have lots of intercessory prayer here.

HINT: weave these prayers into your day - E.G. You could confess whilst in the shower - as the water washes you clean take that moment to confess how you have fallen short (see CONFESSION). As you step out of the shower ask God for His strength as you seek to repent, turn in the other direction.

Find ways that you can pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) by turning the moments in your day into opportunities for prayer.

## BOOKS:

There are some great books on prayer - some can be borrowed from the OCC library. Here are some Pastor John recommends: Prayer by Timothy Keller, Prayer by Richard Foster, Too Busy Not To Pray by Bill Hybels, Prayer by Philip Yancy and The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson, God on Mute, Red Moon Rising & Dirty Glory all by Pete Greig.



## #40DaysOfPrayer

Lord we ask that you would act not according to the poverty of what we are, or believe, but according to the greatness of who you are and what you can do.

**[WWW.OCC-STRATFORD.ORG.UK](http://WWW.OCC-STRATFORD.ORG.UK)**

Guide content adapted from Catching The Wave 40 Day Prayer Guide.  
All images used with permission unsplash.com