

OASIS COMMUNITY CHURCH

21

**DAYS OF
PRAYER**

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WELCOME TO OUR 21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

Prayer is vital to who we are and what we do, it undergirds everything we do. I believe as we come together, fully submitted to God in prayer, He will display both His person and His power in unprecedented ways. And He will advance the Gospel through us so that more people will meet, know and follow Him.

Over the next three weeks, we are going to go on a journey through the parable of the Prodigal Son. However, there is so much more to this parable than it just being about a son who wandered off. You're going to dig into the character and actions of the Father, gain insights from the family dynamics at work in that household and how parties might well be a great way to connect lost sons and daughters.

This devotional will follow the identity of who we are as Oasis Community Church, Discover, Nurture and Act, it is our DNA, with a week devoted to each aspect of relationship. The devotional thought and questions will be focussed on those themes each week.

So, as we begin this adventure together, let us pray this prayer:
Heavenly Father, thank you that it is your desire to draw us into a deeper intimacy with the Father through Jesus, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. As I undertake this period of prayer and fasting, may my heart be drawn ever closer to yours and my life reflect your transformative work in me. May love for my church family increase, not simply in feeling but in my actions. May my passion for the lost be increased and my expectations for what you will do in and through me be raised. Amen.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'J' or 'K' followed by a flourish.

WEEK 1 - DISCOVER:
Cultivating Adoration For Our Father

Day 1 - Un-Controlling (v12)

Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

The father's un-controlling nature meant that he didn't stipulate how the son used his money. God lets us make decisions even though He knows they are sometimes unwise. He gives us freedom to make mistakes, but in so doing He also gives us freedom to seek Him.

1. How have you perceived Father God? Have you ever thought of him as controlling?
2. Have there been times in the past when God has allowed you to make mistakes? What were the consequences of your unwise choices, and what did you learn?
3. In light of who the Father is, how do we get to live?

Notes

Day 2 - Patient (v20)

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming."

The Father is infinitely patient with his kids. When we wander, He doesn't go anywhere. He is longing for our return. The Father doesn't allow the pain he feels over our rejection of him to make his heart bitter. He is waiting patiently for the return of his children.

1. In what ways has God demonstrated patience with you?
2. Are there times when you have abused God's patience?
3. How might you live in such a way as to honour God's patience with you?

Notes

Day 3 - Compassionate (v20)

"Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."

When did you come home (make the decision to follow Jesus)? If you're a follower of Jesus, you've experienced the compassionate love of the Father. He doesn't hold against you all your past sins, but welcomes you into His embrace.

1. What does the word 'compassion' mean to you? Take a moment to write down some reflections.
2. What would the father's embrace have felt like to the son?
3. The father's compassion was always available, but it was the son's movement towards the father which triggered it. How are you moving towards your Father to receive His compassion?

Notes

Day 4 - Generous (v22)

“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.’”

The father digs out the finest things for his returning son. There is no expense spared in the father's welcome. The son returned expecting to be a slave, but the father welcomed him with an extravagantly generous party. God is unfailingly generous to us.

1. How have you experienced the generosity of God?
Make a list.
2. Are there ways in which you are living in the son's poverty mentality?
3. How do we get to live in light of God's generosity?

Notes

Day 5 - Gracious (v24)

“‘We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”

Grace means getting what we don't deserve. The son had been transient and sinful. The father threw him a massive welcome home party, which he didn't deserve. The father chose ludicrous grace over retribution.

1. What opportunities have you had which you didn't deserve?
2. Are there times when you try and earn the Father's favour?
3. How is God's grace shaping your day-to-day life?

Notes

Day 6 - Invitational (v28)

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him."

The father's invitation extends not only to those who are lost, but also to those who are present but not fully experiencing relationship with him. The elder brother never left, but also never understood his relationship to the father. God's invitation is for all of us to experience fullness of relationship with Him. The elder son's sense of entitlement was a barrier to him receiving this relationship.

1. What are the things which could be barriers for you accepting the Father's invitation to relationship?
2. Are there parts of your inner life where you are like the elder son, missing out on full relationship with the Father?
3. Have you taken up the invitation to experience life in all its fullness?

Notes

Day 7 - Joy-Filled (v32)

"We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!"

The father was so filled with joy at the return of his son, he couldn't contain himself - he had to celebrate! For him, it was like he had literally received his son back from the dead. This is exactly how God views those who come to faith in Jesus. His rejoicing is not based on anything the son has done, but on who he himself is.

1. Do you know that the Father rejoices over you? Take a few moments to dwell on that truth.
2. How does the knowledge that God rejoices over you shape your identity?
3. How are you living in that new identity each day?

Notes

WEEK 2 - NURTURE:

Cultivating Growth In Us And Others

Day 8 - Un-Controlling (v12)

"'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons."

The father doesn't seek to control his son, even though he is making an unwise decision. Sometimes we can clearly see that someone is choosing unwisely, but they are determined to make that choice. We cannot control people, so our responsibility is to love them and release them.

1. Have you faced situations like the father with his son, where you have had to release someone even though their choice was an unwise one? How did you deal with that situation?
2. Have there been people who have released you, and how did you grow through that experience, despite your mistakes?
3. Releasing people isn't always negative. How are you seeking to release people around you so that they can grow?

Notes

Day 9 - Patient (v20)

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming."

The relationship between the father and the son had been broken for a long time. The father was patiently waiting for an opportunity to repair that relationship. In any church family, there will be relational issues from time to time. It is important that we are patient with each other as we seek to repair these relationships.

1. The father doesn't allow the pain of his son's rejection to make his heart bitter. Have you allowed your heart to become bitter towards somebody? Will you take steps today towards resolving that?
2. Have you observed relational issues within the church family which have been repaired well? What can you learn from this?
3. How are you seeking to grow in patience with those around you?

Notes

Day 10 - Compassionate (v20)

"Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."

The father was so eager to repair the relationship with his son that he ran to him and embraced him. The father was even prepared to run - a very undignified action - in order to restore the relationship. Reconciliation can be a difficult process, because it requires us swallow our pride and forgive one another.

1. How have others shown you compassion in the past when you had wronged them?
2. Have you shown compassion in forgiving someone who wronged you? How did you grow through this experience?
3. How are you seeking to relate to others with compassion?

Notes

Day 11 - Generous (v22)

"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.'"

When the son returned he expected anger, but instead he experienced extravagant generosity. The generosity of the father completely eclipsed the son's expectations. What's more, the father gave without any expectation of a return. It can be easy to be generous when it is within our means or when we know we will receive in return. Everything we have is a gift from God which we don't deserve. Understanding this will shape our generosity to others.

1. Have you been the recipient of extravagant generosity? How did it feel?
2. How do you view your possessions, time and talents? Are you willing to give sacrificially to others out of them?
3. What impact would it have on our church family if we were all generous like the father?

Notes

Day 12 - Gracious (v24)

"This son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began."

The father's response to his son returning is to throw a lavish party. By rights he should be furious and should discipline his son, but he chooses to be gracious and celebrate his return. The elder son is upset because his brother doesn't deserve this treatment. Sometimes our desire for justice is greater than our desire for grace. If we understand God's lavish grace towards us in the cross of Jesus, it leads us to be gracious towards those around us.

1. Which character to you most relate to in how you respond to those who have wronged you - the father or the elder son?
2. Can you think of times when you received grace from someone?
3. How are you seeking to be gracious towards those around you?

Notes

Day 13 - Invitational (v28)

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him."

The elder brother is bitter because his father is throwing a party for his sinful brother. Because he refuses to join in, the father goes out to him. It would be easy for the father to just leave his elder son to stew and deal with him later - nobody likes a party pooper - but instead he chooses to directly invite the elder son and make him feel included.

1. How does it make you feel when someone goes out of their way to include you?
2. Have you noticed people in church who seem not to be included? What can you do to rectify this?
3. What can we do collectively to ensure that we are creating an inclusive, invitational environment?

Notes

Day 14 - Joy-Filled (v32)

"We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!"

The son has returned, and the father celebrates. When God has done something amazing in the life of someone in our church family, we ought to celebrate in the same way. The father is unselfish in his expression of joy over the restoration of his son.

1. Are you aware of God's activity in your life? How good are you at sharing that with your church family/ Connect Group? In what ways do we get to celebrate this?
2. When somebody shares a story of God's goodness to them, how quick are you to celebrate with them?
3. How would the culture of our church change if we regularly chose to celebrate the goodness of God in one another's lives?

Notes

WEEK 2 - ACT:
Cultivating Boldness To Reach Out To
Our Networks

Day 15 - Un-Controlling (v12)

"The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons."

The son's decision to take his inheritance early is clearly wrong and hurtful to the father. However, the father does not seek to hold the son to his own moral standard. This can be the way we deal with non-Christians sometimes - we try to hold them to the same moral standards by which we live, even though they haven't made the commitment to Jesus we have.

1. Who are the people in your life who you long to see come to faith in Jesus? Make a list below.
2. Have there been times when you have mistakenly held a non-Christian to your Biblical moral standard?
3. How can you show love to these people even when you don't agree with their lifestyles and choices?

Notes

Day 16 - Patient (v20)

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming."

The father saw his son from a long way off. He had been patiently waiting for his son to return, even though he didn't know if that would ever happen. Many Christians have people whom they are praying for over a long period of time. Consistently praying for people to come to faith takes a great deal of patience and commitment. We don't know if they will come to faith, but it is important not to give up.

1. Are you regularly praying for the people you listed yesterday?
2. Have you seen people come to faith who you have prayed for in the past? Could you share that with your Connect Group to encourage them?
3. What things can you put in place to keep from being discouraged and to help you persevere in prayer?

Notes

Day 17 - Compassionate (v20)

"Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."

The son returns repentant. His appearance would have clearly displayed the consequences of his bad decisions - his last job was feeding muddy pigs. When people come to faith in Jesus, often they don't look or act the part of a church-going Christian. The father runs and embraces his son in spite of his appearance.

1. Is our church welcoming to people who are seeking Jesus but are still displaying the marks of their sinful lives?
2. How can we actively show compassion to our community?
3. How might our city be transformed if we actively lived as compassionate disciples?

Notes

Day 18 - Generous (v22)

"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.'"

In a world that is saturated with self-centredness, the example of the father's generosity towards his wayward son is an important one for us to emulate. The father holds nothing back from his son, generously giving to him despite the great cost to himself. As we seek to disciple our city, generosity towards our communities will be an important part of our lives.

1. In what ways can you show generosity to people in your community, workplace or neighbourhood?
2. How generous are you in giving your time to others?
3. What one thing can you do today to show generosity to somebody who doesn't know Jesus?

Notes

Day 19 - Gracious (v24)

"This son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began."

People in our culture are used to people getting what they deserve. When someone gets a promotion, they are congratulated by their friends because they deserved it. When someone is put in prison, it is because they deserved it. We reward our children because of their good behaviour. The example of the father in his welcome towards the prodigal son is one of undeserved grace. Grace often doesn't make sense to a world which believes in fairness.

1. Where will you spend your time today? Look for opportunities to display unmerited grace to someone who doesn't understand it in that environment today.
2. Reflect upon the grace you have received. How can you allow that to shape your responses to people you're interacting with.
3. How can demonstrating grace enable you to communicate the gospel to someone who doesn't know Jesus?

Notes

Day 20 - Invitational (v28)

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him."

As we discovered on Day 6, the elder brother was not experiencing the fulness of relationship with his father. To rectify this, the father went out of his way to invite the elder brother in. There are some people in our communities who are people of peace and are open to our message. Others are not people of peace, but would still be open to being invited into our lives. It's important to note that our focus isn't on just inviting people to church events, but on inviting them into our own lives.

1. Look back to the list of people you wrote down on Day 15. How are you opening up your life to them?
2. What are the barriers which could stop you from inviting people into your life, and how can you get around them?
3. What one thing can you do to invite someone into your life this week? (For example, invite them into a family meal)

Notes

Day 21 - Joy-Filled (v32)

"We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!"

The father is so excited about his son returning that he throws a party! Jesus tells us elsewhere about the celebrations in heaven when someone comes to faith. The moment someone comes to faith in Jesus, they are set free from the penalty of sin and adopted into the family of Almighty God. There really is no greater miracle than that - it deserves a celebration!

1. Are you still daily living in the reality of your salvation and experiencing the joy of the Father? If no, how can you rediscover that joy?
2. How can you maintain a joyful attitude in your everyday life?
3. How can we continue to be joyful every time someone comes to faith, even if we don't personally know them?

Notes

As we conclude our 21 days of prayer and fasting, it is important to ask, “Now what?” How can you remain committed to seeking Him?

Very simply decide to love God and seek Him. That’s right, decide. Make it a non-negotiable. Look for opportunities to spend time with Him, with others who love Him and with those who need Him.

Daily: Discover God and the passionate love He has for you.

Daily: Nurture others to draw close to Him through how you live.

Daily: Act to see God’s Kingdom extend by loving as He has first loved you.

It will take intention, effort, desire and time, but it will be so worth it as your relationship with Him grows and you fall more in love with Him and those around you.

Hebrews 11:6 says that God will reward those who earnestly seek Him.

Will you continue to earnestly seek after the God of this universe who loves you completely and desires to walk with you daily? The reward will be great because God is great!

One way to do this is to be part of a Connect Group - Groups that meet outside of Sunday Services to Discover Jesus, Nurture each other to live, love and look like Jesus and Act to see the Kingdom of God extended. You were not designed to do this Christian life alone. Being part of a Connect Group will help you go deeper into God and your journey alongside others.

If you would like to be a part of a Connect Group please see John.

RESOURCES:

www.occ-stratford.org.uk/prayer prayers for all different stages of life and times of day, talks, and articles.

www.youversion.com an app filled with reading plans for all circumstances and experiences. Read the Bible in groups or on your own in various Bible translations.

www.elim.org.uk/liftup Elim’s prayer network

Some great books to read that may help you are:

Preyer - Timothy Keller

The Circle Maker - Mark Batterson

Dirty Glory - Pete Greig

Prayer - Richard Foster

Prayer - Philip Yancey

Before Amen - Max Lucado

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