

21 Days of prayer

To Know Jesus and make Him Known Everywhere

Day 1: Making Jesus known in my own heart.

"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter." Matthew 7:21

There are eighteen inches between our head and our hearts, but that's a long way. We can know about Jesus in our head but not really know Him in our heart. We can know facts about Him, but not really know and have a relationship with Him. As we start these 21 days of prayer, let's begin at the core of who we are and who Jesus is. So on Day One, begin by simply asking God to help us know Him and show us how we can grow our ability to know Him more.

Day 2: Faith superfood...God's Word.

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." Romans 10:17

Years ago, my grandmother grew some of the most beautiful tomatoes you had ever seen. She grew them in pots, not in the ground, and when asked how she accomplished growing such great tomatoes she would simply reply, "That's my secret." And would smile and go on about her business. Later after I had helped her move pots and pull weeds she let me in on her secret ... Her secret was Miracle Grow. A green powder added to water that she poured on the plants. It's true that green liquid turned out some of the biggest, reddest, most beautiful tomatoes you have ever seen. Did you know God has given us the secret growth ingredient to our faith? Well, it's not really a secret at all it is His Word. Maybe we are producing less spiritually in our lives than what we would like. What is the answer, God's Miracle Grow.

On Day Two, pray for a desire to read God's word, delight in His word and understand His word through the working of the Holy Spirit. Include what you have recently read in the Bible in your prayer."

Day 3: Careful what you care about.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:10

We live in a world filled with so many cares and concerns but what is really worth caring about? We can care about the beauty of our yard, we can care about who wins the Super Bowl, we can care about the PH level of our water but what is really worth caring about? Honestly, it is simple. We should care about what God cares about. If we are going to invest our lives in it, make a fuss about it, commit our time to it we better make sure God had directed us to invest, fuss, and commit to it. In Luke 19:10, above all else, we see that God cares about people who are lost, people who do not have a relationship with Him. Today, let's pray that we care about the same things God cares about. Let's pray to surrender the things we are passionate about that deserve no passion and commit to being passionate about the things that matter to God.

Day 4: Spiritual Search Engine

"As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God." Psalms 42:1b

A few years ago America Online released the search history of thousands of users in an effort to show how important their service was. They were careful to hide the user names but replacing them with a simple arbitrary number. What they didn't realize was that by simply following a few searches the person's identity could be figured out. What America Online learned was that our identity is found in what we are searching for. What are you looking for? Today, we have the opportunity to cultivate a heart that looks for and longs after God. Let's pray that God will help us search for Him and thus change who we are.

Day 5: God's great desire

"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

2 Peter 3:9

What does God want more than anything else? He wants to be known for who He is and to be in a relationship with everyone. God has leveraged every resource in Heaven to make a relationship possible with Him. He even sent His own Son. That says a lot about what God wants. Today let's pray that we realize how important a relationship with God is to God. Let's pray that God will help us to share His great desire for all to come to know Him.

Day 6: Consumer or Contributor

When it comes to living out our God-given purpose we tend to get confused and begin to believe that we are more of a fan than a participant. If we are not careful, we can reduce our position to cheering and clapping from the stands rather than wearing the grass stained uniform of the player. God has called all of us to more than watching - He has called us to be a part of the greatest rescue effort in human history. You are a member of God's team and you are in the game! So today let's pray about how God can use us to reach others, and to bring glory to His name. This is a courageous prayer! It is also the gateway to the life you have dreamed about.

Day 7: Put God first

"A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy." Leviticus 27:30

The word "tithe" is a real churchy word that means "one tenth" or, more specifically, it means "the first tenth." The tithe is returned to the local church that you attend. God requires us to bring the tithe because it documents our understanding that all we have has come from God. It accomplishes two purposes: it is a reminder that God comes first in everything including our finances and that we should trust God, not our money or anything else. The reason God requires us to return the tithe *first* is because that one act requires faith. If we give to God *after* we have paid for our bills and spent our money the way we think best, then that requires no faith. Before anything else gets paid, if we return to God His tithe, then that will show we believe God will take care of us. Today, let's pray that we have the faith to put God first in our finances by returning the tithe to Him. For those who are returning the tithe, praise God for his provision and faithful care for your life, including your finances."

Day 8: One another

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." John 13:34

I have read there are 59 "one another" verses in the Bible. These verses paint a very beautiful picture of how we are supposed to treat each other. But I believe that John 13:34 gives the clearest and most comprehensive picture of what it looks like to truly live in a community of believers who are committed to Jesus. Jesus gave this teaching to His disciple. I imagine He paused to let them get out their notebooks just before He rolled out the most challenging and rewarding standard of their relationship with each other. I am guessing He may have cleared His throat and then marched into a verse that would seem shallow at first glance, but deeper than the ocean in practice. Loving each other was nothing new, and I would envision that some of the disciples would have felt underwhelmed at this "new commandment" until Jesus added the next sentence that would completely reset the relationship standard for believers. "Just as I have loved you," Jesus had loved the disciples in spite of their shortcomings, failures, pettiness, and He would love them through the sacrifice of His own life and suffering. Jesus made it clear, this is the standard we are to live up to and live out. Love one another as Jesus has loved us. Today let's pray and practice a deeper love for others in our families and in our church. Ask God to help you to love with this kind of depth and passion.

Day 9: Make hay while the sun is shining

"So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do." Ephesians 5:15-17

The truth is we have but one life to live. We have one shot at this thing and we don't get a do over. God's forgiveness clears the penalty of missed opportunities, but it doesn't give the opportunities back to us. Time is relentless. Once you have spent all of it, it is spent. So let me ask you one simple question: What are you spending your life on? What are you investing the most valuable commodity you possess - time - on? One last question: Is it worth it? It better be because you don't get your time back. Pray today that you will live with wisdom, making the most of the time God has given you.

Day 10: Go ahead, you can fail.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

It was the very end of a close basketball game and every player was on edge on both sides of the ball. As the last seconds ticked away, the opposing team took a shot and missed, the erratic ball bounced off the backboard and into the hands of the youngest player on our team. You could tell by the surprised look on his face he hadn't had that ball in his hands much. The pressure of the moment caused him to do the first thing that came to his mind - he shot the basketball! But he shot it at the wrong goal. Fortunately, the ball didn't go in. Our team held out to win and nothing was lost, but after the game, listening to the young man relive that moment was priceless. "What were you thinking?" the coach asked him, which he replied, "I just wanted to help my team win." Everyone laughed. The young man might have lacked the full understanding of the game of basketball in that moment, but he didn't lack a desire or action to do something. What if in the church we made our desire to do something bigger than our fears of failing? How different would the church be if that was the case! What if we were willing to shoot at the wrong goal? I am convinced we would be better off doing something even if it is a little off than doing nothing. Today, let's pray that God would help us be willing to fail if need be in order to accomplish His goal (see what I did there?).

Day 11; Cheap service

"But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it, for I will not present burnt offerings to the LORD my God that have cost me nothing." So David paid him fifty pieces of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen." 2 Samuel 24:24

I love a bargain. I will search high and low to get a deal. Recently, I bought a new tree stand for half the list price. I love when a deal comes together. When it comes to shopping maybe that is a good perspective, but what about when it comes to serving God? Are you looking for a way to give the least? To be committed the least? To sacrifice the least? In this story in 2nd Samuel, King David helps us understand that some things are worth paying full price. One of those things are our sacrifices, offerings, and service to God. We short change ourselves when we try and serve God on the bargain. Give God all you have, after all, He more than returns what we invest in Him. Let's pray today that we will have joy in our hearts as we serve and give to God all that we have.

Day 12: Drunk and Filled

"Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit," Ephesians 5:18

The Bible is filled with comparisons and contrasts to help us understand more about God and the life He has designed us to live. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul compares our being filled with the Holy Spirit with being drunk. He didn't do this to relate the two experiences but to help us better understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit. When a person is drunk, they are controlled or under the influence of the alcohol. A person cannot operate a motor vehicle while drunk because they are controlled by the alcohol and cannot be trusted to do the right things while driving. The offence itself, a DUI, points to the alcohol's control, DUI means Driving Under the Influence. Paul could have used any sin but the sin of drunkenness best portrays what it is like to be filled by the Spirit in this way. When we are drunk, we are controlled by the alcohol and when we are filled with the Spirit we are controlled by God's Holy Spirit. So does being "filled" mean when we are saved we don't get all of the Holy Spirit? Not at all. When we are saved we get all of God's Spirit, but that doesn't mean He gets all of us. Being filled is when we empty ourselves out and let God have complete control of our lives. At that point we are LUI- Living Under the Influence of the Holy Spirit. Pray today that God will help you empty out yourself and give Him full control over your life.

Day 13: Change the world

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

When we look at the world's problems we are all intimidated. Even more than that, we feel powerless to do anything to help. But God has given us what we need to make a difference. What is that you ask? Our Church. Acts 1:8 is a verse that speaks directly to the church and for the past two thousand or so years the church has been moving, going, preaching, and reaching. The church is in communist China, Russia, the hill country of the Philippines, and even in South Arkansas. The Church is God's vehicle to preach the Gospel all over the world. And guess what? You are a part of the Church. So how can you participate? You can do lots of things! Start with prayer, but also participate by joining a ministry and giving. Your tithe and your offerings make things happen that are far from you. Let's pray today about how we can help our church reach our world with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Day 14: Turn the Light On

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:16

With a somewhat angry face she blurted out, "I get why I need to confess my sins to God, but I have no idea why I should air my dirty laundry to someone else." After her outburst, she looked down and wouldn't make eye contact.

I simply asked, "So how long have you had this struggle."

"For years," She replied.

"And you've never shared it with anyone?"

"I sure haven't, no one wants to hear about my mess," She returned.

"If you want to experience freedom from this, you have to share it with someone you can trust. Sin grows in the dark. To win over it we have to turn the light on."

She later joined a group and found a person she could confide in and shared "her mess". Today she is free, no longer living with a sin as her dictator.

We confess our sins to God for forgiveness and we confess our sins to each other for healing and freedom. The longer you keep it a secret the longer it will keep you a prisoner. Today, let's pray that God helps us find a group, a person, a counselor in our church where we can turn a light on in the darkest parts of our life and experience the freedom that comes from sharing.

That.Church offers free confidential counseling by trained pastoral staff, if you need it. Simply go to That.Church, click on Contact Us and the link to Lay Counseling will be on that page for you to schedule an appointment.

Day 15: Don't let it hold you back

"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

What is holding you back? What are the excuses you have for not going all in on God's mission. Maybe you feel inadequate. Maybe you have a past. Maybe you are busy. Maybe you are scared. Maybe you have no time. Maybe you don't know how. Whatever it is, are you going to put God on hold because you believe that your obstacle is bigger than His opportunity? God lets you know nothing can stop what He desires to do in you if you will let Him. Allow this to sink in, you cannot fail in the strength Christ has given you. That means God has given you the ability in Christ to get up, get out, get over and get on with the life He has designed you by simply being willing to walk in His strength. So how about today you get to stepping? Let's pray today that we take God at His word and chase hard after His purpose for our lives.

Day 16: We can't stay here

"And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." Exodus 14:15

Timing is everything. There is a time to pray, a time to wait, and there is a time to go. In the story of Moses, in Exodus 14, this is a time to go and make something happen. I love how God asks Moses "Why do you cry to me?" In other words why are you still asking for something I have already given you, go take it! I wonder how many of us are waiting on something that is already ours. Something that God has already given. Faith has been defined as belief in action and for many of us maybe we need to put our belief in action or conviction in motion. What is it that you have been putting off and hiding behind prayer when you know God has called you to act? What do you need to stop talking to God about and start doing something about? Today, let's pray that we are bold enough to get off our blessed assurances and get on with God's plan and purpose.

Day 17: The rewards of remaining

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42

We live in a day where we love to change, we love to move, we love variety and we hate commitment. We have been programmed to believe that long term commitment is a prison, a ball and a chain. This sad trend has made our churches some of the most fickle, fairytale chasing, inconsistent organizations on planet earth. We change churches and commitments like we change socks. We want the benefits of a calling without the commitment that comes along with it. The early church in Acts 2 lets us know that its effectiveness was connected to its commitment. The word "devoted" in verse 42 means to make the highest priority, to be willing to protect it, to be willing to suffer for it. Today all it takes is one uncomfortable situation and suddenly we are going to the next flavor of church. But what if we are short circuiting the opportunities of church when we don't stay put, when we don't learn to work through things, when we choose to hop rather than hang. A seed will never see its true potential unless it remains in the ground where it was planted. Let's pray today that God will help us have the fortitude to stick, the willingness to stay, and the foresight to remain committed in our church so that we can see the long term benefits of remaining.

Day 18: The Give Boomerang

"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full--pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." Luke 6:38

I love how simply put Luke's Gospel presents the reality of the give boomerang. Give and you will receive. This one sentence leaves no room for interpretation. You give and you get, simple as that. Luke takes us even deeper into this crazy promise in the very next sentence. Not only will you get back, but you will get so much more. What bank can promise that? What vacation experience can guarantee that? What restaurant can assure that? None. Only God can guarantee you will never out give Him. So why are we so selfish with God? Maybe it's because we are out of practice. Today let's pray about what we could give to God. What we could contribute to His Church, His work, His purpose as a sacrifice. Today, let's believe God's word when it assures us that we cannot out give God.

Day 19: Roots and fruit

"Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you." Matthew 6:4
What is below the surface is more important than what is above. This is especially true when it comes to fruit trees. I once had a gardener tell me that: "If you want great fruit you have to have great roots." What he was saying is that what happens out of sight is more important than what happens in sight. This is true for fruit trees as it is for Christians. Jesus tells us that when we give we need to do it in secret (out of sight). Why? Because when we give in secret we know we are giving it with the right heart, a heart that desires to please God, not out of a heart to get recognition from people. A pure heart when we give is important because if we aren't careful we might find ourselves giving for the purpose of people not praise. Today let's pray that what we do in secret (for God only) helps us keep the right perspective in public.

Day 20: Use your words wisely

"The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences."
Proverbs 18:21

Tearing someone down with our words isn't hard. Bringing a cutting criticism isn't a talent. Destroying a person's reputation with gossip isn't a skill. Truth is, hurting others with our words comes easy. We don't have to practice it or even work at it. We are hardwired to be selfishly mean with our comments and commentary. What is hard is to lift others up. It is incredibly more difficult to practice encouragement than discouragement. Our natural tendency is to pick out what is wrong. We naturally bend to the negative. But what if we chose a better way? What if we chose to lift up rather than tear down? What if we used the power of our tongue to encourage, strength, and build? According to Proverbs 18, we have the power of death and life in our tongue. The words we use can kill something or heal something. God has given us such great power, let's fill our mouth with words that encourage, that love, that heal. Today let's pray that God makes us aware of the words we use, the conversations we participate in, the posts we share. Let's pray that God will help us be a person of life not a harbinger of death.

Day 21: I can't go and stay.

As a kid I always wanted to jump off the high dive, but honestly I was too afraid. On more than one summer day, I would climb the steel and concrete steps to the high platform only to hug the hand rail as I climbed back down. My brother had no problem jumping off the top. He would leap off the top like it was nothing. He would do jack knives, followed by cannon balls, and Attention Getters, a trick we made up because he would pretend to stumble and fall off the edge. The crowd of dive watchers loved it. All day long, he would jump, splash, run back to the top only to do it all over again. I could only watch - fear held me.

Until one day, I climbed to the top and was about to take the walk of shame back down when my brother offered to jump with me. I sheepishly agreed.

He took my hand and with great enthusiasm he said; "Come on, it's great!" I shuffled to the edge like a 90 year old geriatric patient only to be met with panic when I got to the edge looking over the water. My brother immediately jumped off and I immediately realized he still held my hand. The momentum of his weight and his grip snatched me off the cliff and had me tumbling toward the blue water. I landed awkward and ugly, but I made it. After the burning from the chlorinated water in my nose stopped I realized I was alive! That was fun! I jumped out of the water and together we jumped again. Later my brother told me it was time for me to jump on my own, I didn't need him anymore. And I jumped! A few weeks later my cousin who wet the bed and was afraid of everything, came to the pool. I invited him to the top so he could also have the opportunity to be a high dive hero. He tried to turn me down, but I just held tight to his hand and jumped - just like what my brother did to me. He screamed all the way to the water. It was awesome. After he came to the surface, I realized that there were milk duds in the water all around. It didn't seem strange to me at the time until I realized they weren't milk duds. We single handedly cleared out the entire pool as the cleanup crew picked up the poop. He did eventually jump again but with less candy.

High dive jumping and following Jesus are really similar. We need someone to do it with. That someone is known as the Church. It is there we take each other's hands and we leap into God's purpose and plan. Sometimes we scream all the way to the water. Sometimes we may poop in the pool, but always we have someone with us. This week let's pray to either take someone's hand and jump into our purpose or let's take someone's hand and help them jump in. If milk duds show up, don't worry about it, God has the cleanup crew.