

A Prayer for Community

Join us in this prayer throughout our series:

Almighty God, you have created all people and all of creation. We give you thanks that we are invited to engage with hope, joy and love as your disciples. Open our hearts and eyes to see our communities as you would have us see them. Help us to find courage to sit and hear others when we so often want to be heard first. Help us to become known and create spaces for others to be known. You are good and gracious, O God. Let us see all people as your children. We pray all these things in your name.

Amen.

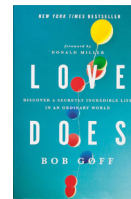
A Spiritual Discipline to Try

Spiritual disciplines refer to regular practices that help us become more rooted in God. Much like the daily discipline of exercising or reading produces benefits in our lives, spiritual disciplines provide holistic benefits or fruit for our lives. Scripture reading, prayer, giving thanks, giving financially, worship, and serving are all examples of spiritual disciplines. During this series, you might consider trying a style of discernment as a spiritual discipline.

One practice of discernment is engaging with your community and relationships with fresh eyes (God's eyes). We ask for God's discernment or eyes to help us see people who are not being seen – perhaps who are incognito. Consider taking a walk around your neighborhood or office and during your walk, ask God to show you new people and to notice new things. Perhaps you have driven by someone or something many times before – maybe even years – and prior to that moment, that thing or person was unknown to you; incognito. When we take the time to slow down and notice, God can give us the eyes to see people we have lived with or been near for years and then, perhaps, God will open our hearts to get to know them and see them as God sees them. People are eternal, God's beloved.

Resources

Check out the following books in our Resource Center located outside of the Worship Center.



Love Does
Bob Goff



Good and Beautiful Community
James Bryan Smith



Life Together in Christ
Ruth Haley Barton



Uninvited
Lysa TerKeurst



Love Does For Kids
Bob Goff & Lindsey Goff Vidulich

Check out the following resources on RightNow Media: Don't have an account yet? Head to jacobsowellchurch.church/rightnow-media/ to get a free account through Jacob's Well!



Community
Andy Stanley



Love Like That
Les Parrott



Living Life Together
Shauna Niequist



Not Alone
Jennie Allen



How We Reflect the Trinity in Biblical Community
Trevor Joy

Next Steps

Join a Group: Groups for 2020 will be open for sign up starting on January 18 & 19, 2020. You can browse and sign up for any of our groups online at jacobsowellchurch.church/groups

Check Out JW Grow: A place where we can take steps in community to become more like Jesus. Here's a few of the classes coming up:

Jan 14: Stress & Anxiety

Jan 21: Healthy Living

Jan 28: Essentials of Dating & Engagement

Feb 4: Parents Navigating Middle School & High School



Fill Out a Connection Card: Sometimes our first step to becoming known is to say "I'm here!" Grab a connection card in the seat back and fill it out – whether to update your address, request prayer for something, or to get connected. And if you're new here, make sure to stop by the New Here Room so we can meet you!

in·cog·ni·to

adjective; adverb;
(of a person)
having one's true
identity concealed.

As the people of God, we believe we been created for community and are being redeemed through community. And yet, we spend much of our lives **incognito**; unknown, anonymous and concealed. The reality is one of the most precious things that has been entrusted to us in this life is our time and relationships.

Stewarding our time and relationships means we cannot remain **incognito**, and we must live into what we have been created for.



NEXT STEPS & DEVOTIONAL

Jan 4/5 – Jan 25/26, 2020

Diving Deeper: Scripture Study

Much of the Bible talks about God's work through communities of people. From the beginning of time, He created people to do life with one another. He established a community of people to live out His plans. And He revealed Himself to communities of people to carry out His mission to the ends of the earth. We are no different! The following passages of Scripture shed light on what it means to live as part of God's community. If you aren't familiar with studying the Bible or need some reminders on good practices, here are a few tips:

1

Find a quiet place to study the Word. Resist the need to rush – there's plenty of that in the rest of the world! Set aside time and find a space where you are comfortable to meet with God. Open and close with prayer, and ask God to reveal Himself to you. He will meet you there.

2

Consider keeping a journal to keep track of your thoughts and record your prayers. It's amazing how, when we look back on what we have written, we can see clearly how God has been moving in our lives.

3

If something seems hard to understand, come back to some basic questions: What do you notice? What surprises or intrigues you about the text? Where do you see God in the text? What is the story or narrative being told? Focus on spending time with God in His Word and resist the urge to "have it all figured out".

Read Genesis 1:1-2:25

Genesis was written at a time when many other creation accounts already existed. Genesis was, in part, written to contrast other pagan creation narratives. In other narratives, the world was portrayed as being created by gods who were selfish and out for their own pleasure. In contrast, in Genesis we read about our God who is orderly and good, designing a beautiful world for humans with great worth. As you read, pay attention to how God gives great care and attention to creation and know He gives that same care and attention to you.

- What do you notice about these creation accounts? What is emphasized?
- How is the earth (land, water, sky, animals) spoken about? How are people spoken about? Why do you think distinctions are made?
- What do we learn about man and woman and their creation? What do we learn about relationships and our design as humans?

Read Genesis 3:1-24

The book of Genesis quickly turns a beautiful world full of good things and very good people into something that is dark and damaged by evil. Pay attention to how Genesis 3 contrasts with Genesis 1 & 2. Which world do you find yourself living in? How has "the fall" and the reality of Genesis 3 messed with God's good intentions for your life?

- What do you think God intended to protect Adam and Eve from? Why do you think they chose what was against God's intentions?
- Why do you think the man and woman's response was to hide from God? How have they become incognito and unknown?
- What have their actions cost?

Read Revelation 7:9-17

Revelation was a letter written to seven churches to warn them about their particular actions and consequences. It's a great example of how the Bible is written for us but not to us. We do know that Revelation was given to us for the building up of one another. It gives a grand picture of what the people of God are created for and will be one day. Through fear, trembling, hope and grandeur, pay attention to what Revelation reveals about God's plans for people.

- Spend some time imagining what this passage is describing. What would it look like to see such a sea of people? What would it feel like to be in the presence of so much worship?
- What role do people play in this vision of the new earth? How does this passage heal what you read in Genesis 3?
- What role do community and relationships play in this passage? How do people spend their time? What hope do you receive?
- Do you think these people are incognito? Why would God choose to redeem and make new relationships and community? What does that say about His intentions and priorities?

Read John 14:15-31

The gospel of John was written with deep care to display the great love of Christ. Authored by the apostle John, who we know as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," it is easy to see his desire for others to know such a love. He writes so that all would know God and believe in Him.

- Pay attention to the Trinity as you read this passage – note where God the Son (Jesus), God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit are referenced.

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- Why do you think the author spends time explaining how connected God is as Trinity? Why might it matter that we understand God, Himself, as community?
- What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in this passage? Why does it matter that God promised to send Himself to be in constant relationship with us?
- How does our relationship with the Holy Spirit influence our relationships with other people?

Read Acts 2:42-47

The book of Acts comes after the four gospels as an in-depth look at what the first church looked like. Acts 2, specifically, can be thought of as the birth of the church – it's this moment where God's people have come together to fulfill His purposes in the world. Pay attention to what community looks like here and how it is similar and different to the way you have encountered the church and community.

- What do the people of the early church do? What do they witness?
- What about this community of people could be transferred to our current communities? What seems impossible or far-fetched? Why does it seem that way?
- How was God revealed to others through their community and relationships?
- Do you think God could be revealed to others through your relationships? Why or why not? What might you need to continue, change or stop in order to make a similar impact? How would you need to steward your time and relationships?

FOR A DIGITAL VERSION OF THIS DEVOTIONAL, GO TO:
WWW.JACOBSWELLCHURCH.CHURCH/MESSAGES

