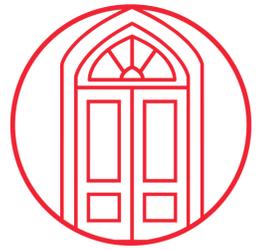


21 DAYS

OF PRAYER & FASTING



WEEK # 3

APPROVAL

BIG IDEA

Letting go of the need for approval and leaning into desperation puts us in a posture of receiving healing (even great miracles).

SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:9-12, Galatians 1:10, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Mark 5:25-34

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you look for approval?
 2. What does it look like to operate out of already knowing you're approved by God? How would your life look different?
 3. What practices help you receive God's love and live from that place instead of striving or trying to earn it?
 4. Where are you desperate for God to move?
 5. Is the approval of man keeping you from the healing you desire?
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PRACTICES

Option 1: Where Does My Approval Come From?

Send everyone [*this chart*](#), either share the link or print it out. You'll want some instrumental music playing in the background.

1. Introduce the chart: This comes from a book “Spiritual Slavery to Spiritual Sonship”, which digs into why we so often don't live as though we're heirs to God's Kingdom. We are plagued by an orphan mentality that can keep us striving and distant from God. As we grow in identity as sons and daughters (co-heirs with Christ), we live as already approved by the Father. The left side behaviors are how we live when trying to earn our approval. The right side indicates how we live from a place of knowing our identity instead of trying to earn it.
 2. Read through the list and prayerfully highlight, underline or circle the behaviors and mindsets that are evident in your life.
 3. Review what you've called out. Which one stands out to you the most?
 4. Take a few minutes and ask God what He wants to say about that behavior or mindset. Give about 5-7 minutes for them to see what God might be saying.
 5. Get in groups of 3 or 4. Share what you picked, and what you think God might be saying about it. What is one way you can live from approval instead of trying to earn it this week?
 6. Once each person shares, one other person in the group prays for them. Keep going until everyone has shared.
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Option 2: Guided meditation/prayer

Read the following guided meditation to your group. Read it slowly, allowing for time to process as you go. Read it ahead of time, so you're familiar with what it says. Turn on some light instrumental music in the background, and dim lighting if you can. This should take about 30 minutes, including the debrief.

Ask everyone to close their eyes and to breathe deeply. Let go of any wandering thoughts.

1. Imagine yourself with God in one of your favorite places. Maybe it's your home, out in nature, your favorite vacation spot. Just sit there with God and notice how you're feeling. Take a few deep breaths, and imagine you're sitting with your best friend.
 2. As you're sitting with God, you start talking about all that he's taken you through in your life. He's had big plans for you well before you were born. Together, you recount the different seasons of your life and how they shaped you. There were those times you felt misunderstood. Times you felt looked over or even hidden for a long season, wondering if there was anything significant about you. *(Give people space to think about what this was for them.)*
 3. There were also times that really scared you – those defining moments where you took a risk that changed the trajectory of your life, or you saw the potential God had known was in you all along. *(Give pause for reflection here.)* There were times when you felt hurt and betrayed by people close to you, feeling more isolated and alone than ever. Or the times when you lost someone or something close to you, and it was hard to see a way out of grief. *(Give a longer pause for reflection here.)*
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4. And, there were the victories. All of the battles you've won, the places where your gifts are magnified and life feels so fulfilling. You have purpose. You are loved. (*Give a longer pause here.*)
 5. As you look back over the years, God shows you how He was with you through it all – every single moment, He never left your side. He saw you when you felt unseen and He was cheering you on in each victory. He's the best dad you could ever ask for. As you look through your life you realize, He's given you everything you've ever needed. Look around now and see the abundance He's lavished you with. He's made you royalty! You have authority and power, and access to anything you need. God is so pleased with you. What emotions start to come up as you recognize this? What is your response to God? What has He revealed about who He's been to you? How has that shifted how you view yourself? Take a moment to soak in all of God's love and provision.
 6. Yet, you get comfortable here, and it seems something is still missing. You look over and see something you desire...a lot. And because you have all of this abundance from God, why shouldn't you have this thing as well? Even if it was never meant to be yours. So, you use your authority and power to just borrow it for a little while, thinking no one will ever know. But while you have it, it breaks. And because this thing you desired was so valuable, if people find out what happened, you're at risk of losing everything. What emotions start coming up now? How might shame, fear and self-preservation determine what you do next?
 7. You devise a cover-up plan, and make sure no one ever finds out what you did. Other people are hurt in the process, but you? Your image is intact. Your status is secure. You did it. No one will ever know.
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8. But then you remember that conversation with God – that He’s always with you and sees it all. And you know what you just did broke His heart. So how do you respond? What does this mean for your relationship with Him? How do you move on from here? (*Give a few minutes for people to talk to God.*) Open your eyes once you’re done playing out the rest of the story.

After a few minutes and everyone’s eyes are opened, read 1 Samuel 11-12 and Psalm 51.

Debrief (in small groups if needed).

1. What thoughts, feelings, or insights came up through that exercise?
2. What did you learn about God’s character?
3. How does your view of approval (whether from God or man) impact how you respond?

OBEDIENCE

What is one way you can let go of seeking approval this week?
