

MONTH
OF PRAYER

DAILY
FOCUS

– WEEK ONE –

GRACE
CHURCH
NOTTINGHAM

DAY 1

SUNDAY 3RD JANUARY

Topic: Our expectations for 2021

Written by: Chris Barton

Our first daily focus for this Month of Prayer is by Chris Barton. Chris is on our staff team at Grace Church and leads our Worship.

Expectation for 2021: Breakthroughs, provision & Kingdom perspective

Let's be honest, no one expected the last 12 months to play out the way they did. And frankly, after the year we've just had, you'd be forgiven for not giving a second thought to what your expectations are for 2021. And yet, here we are, on day one, supposedly praying into our expectations for the year. Why? Because God can do far more than we can ask of Him. And even if He doesn't do exactly what we *expect*, we know that He *always* works for our good in the long run.

So, as weird as it sounds, I don't want us to expect much of the year ahead, of the events it will contain or even what you'll do with it. In fact, I think it'd be wildly inappropriate to suggest that this year is going to be the answer to all of last year's problems. Instead, let's direct our expectations towards God.

Last year most of my prayers ended up something like this: "God, you're all I've got. In faith, I say that I believe in you, that I trust you!". And I actually think that's a very healthy place to be, so let's start there.

I urge you to dig deep into God today and anchor all of your expectations in Him. Believe for breakthrough because He is able. Expect that He will provide because He's kind. And here, at the outset of 2021, let's leave our wildest expectations at His feet and simply say "I trust you."

DAY 2

MONDAY 4TH JANUARY

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Topic: Building a Thriving Community

Written by: Tim Bunker

Tim Bunker has been a part of Grace Church for the past seven years and leads one of our Home Groups. His focus for today is on the first part of our church vision.

Vision Part 1: Building a Thriving Community

In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul envisions the close of his ministry and looks to the future of the thriving communities he has established, those churches across Greece and Turkey he cares for. Paul longs for them to grow and multiply healthily. With this in mind, he writes to Timothy 'the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.' Paul knows that the gospel, the power of God, is central to a thriving community. He instructs Timothy to feed the church the gospel, that it would go deep into individuals' hearts and result in healthy growth and fruit. As we, Grace Church, know the power of the gospel to save and mature us, as we stay rooted to its truth, we will surely see communities characterised by the life and love of God.

Pray that we as a church will continually go deeper in the truth of the gospel.

Pray that the gospel will be entrusted to others, both those able to teach others as communities multiply, and those who currently don't know Jesus.

Pray that our communities will be filled with his Spirit and marked by a centrifugal, outward, love.

Paul continues in verse 3, 'Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.' Decisive for our health and development as a thriving community will be our ability to suffer well. Pray that we will know His grace in our weakness and suffering.

DAY 3

TUESDAY 5TH JANUARY

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Topic: the year ahead

Written by: Ben Topliss

Today's daily focus is by Ben Topliss. Ben leads Grace Church, along with his wife Emily.

The Year Ahead: Jesus to build his church wider & deeper

2020 has demonstrated that the systems and structures that society are built on are not as secure as had been assumed. The year highlighted how fragile we are and how much society needs Jesus and his church because he is the only firm foundation and our eternal hope.

As we follow Jesus and push into all he has for us in 2021, my prayer is that we as a church go deeper and wider:

Deeper - Knowing Jesus better

It is said that you become like the company you keep. This is often stated in a negative sense, but the positive is also true because as we spend more time with Jesus, we become more like him. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says: "I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how wide and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love" (3 v17-18). Love is the natural outcome of a living faith and is the fruit of spending time with Jesus. We grow in love for Christ and the church as we spend time with him because he first loved us and he is love.

Wider - The whole of Nottingham needs to hear the good news

The church started with people telling those around them that Jesus had risen from the dead and knowing him changes everything. Motivated by our love for him, let us be bold and courageous by telling our friends about what Jesus has done in our lives and inviting them to experience our thriving Christ-centred community.

Prayer Points

1. Pray that every person at Grace Church knows Jesus better because they have spent more time in his presence.
2. Pray that much of our growth in 2021 at Grace Church is through people coming to faith, demonstrated by the number of baptisms we see both on a Sunday and at the 12 O'Clock Service.

DAY 4

WEDNESDAY 6TH JANUARY

Topic: Education Sector

Written by: Loyin Umoren

Today's daily focus is by Loyin Umoren, who has been a part of Grace Church for a couple of years. Loyin works as the Head of Operations at the School of Business at Trent University.

Education Sector: schools, college, universities & all who attend/work for them

Education empowers learners to live a more fulfilling life and to the highest potential in life. It is a strong driver of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, and habits.

Today as we pray for the Education sector, think about all **settings** - daycares, schools, colleges and universities, **educators** and all types of **learners** – kids, young people and adults.

You can use the following to reflect and focus your prayer on a variety of needs:

1. Pray for teachers everywhere to be men and women of integrity. They have enormous influence over those they teach, pray for inspiration to be good role models, speaking the truth in love to those in their care.
2. Pray for those who experience stresses in their daily work and those who feel inadequate and overwhelmed by their workload. Ask for strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.
3. Pray for protection against any harm – physical harm, abduction, abuse, addiction and untimely death of students. Pray against bullying, which is particularly rampant in schools.
4. Pray for children's influences, friendships and social skills. Pray that God's truth becomes a driving force in the school setting.
5. Pray that institutions fulfil their purpose – to give children an education. Pray against distractions that make it hard for students to focus and teachers to teach.
6. Pray for the Government leading education. Pray for a vision to use education to break barriers, to create a system that works, which doesn't send young people into poverty before they have started their lives as working adults.
7. Pray that a right to education is recognised worldwide – especially in developing countries where millions of children are not enrolled in schools. Pray for an end to the generational cycle of illiteracy and poverty.

DAY 5

THURSDAY 7TH JANUARY

Topic: Media & the arts

Written by: Sarah Jordan

*Today's daily focus is by Sarah Jordan who leads the Grace Church Nottingham
Created to Move dance group.*

Media & the Arts: godliness, righteousness & creativity to showcase God's splendour

We have missed them, the arts I mean, not just our relatives and friends! What is it about the arts that we miss? What is it about visible and audible art that encourages us, uplifts us and make us feel good inside? Is it watching someone excel, at the top of their game, being perfect at acting or painting or dancing?

I would say instead that it is watching someone trying to express on the outside what is happening on the inside.

A painter may want to show the beauty around them or the emotions inside them, which they need to express openly. An actor may want to give life and limb to a set of words in poetry or a staged play.

Sometimes watching their work lets us feel their emotions and perhaps find a kindred spirit and an outlet for our own emotions.

So too it is with dance or expressive movement. Again we watch an outward expression of inner emotion and in watching we may find a mirror of ourselves and a release of those emotions.

For me as a Christian, I feel the desire to express my love for God with movement and I hope that those who see me move, will see the work of God in me, as He leads me, changes me, loves me.

Dance is the visible expression of the splendour of God.

In your prayers today I ask you to pray for the strange ones who are not content to simply speak or sing but believe God loves to receive our worship in a fulsome way, using our hearts, our souls and our bodies.

Blessings for the coming year to all who read this.

DAY 6

FRIDAY 8TH JANUARY

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Topic: Grace Connection churches

Written by: Claire Stubberfield

Today's daily focus is by Claire Stubberfield who works as the Grace Connection Administrator.

Grace Connection Churches: for wellbeing & gospel growth in Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle & Malawi.

Grace Connection was founded after a move of the Holy Spirit where God spoke to us and called us to be a church like the one you read about in the book of Acts. Specifically, the diverse and evangelistic church in Antioch (*Acts 11-13*), a church marked by the grace of God, sending people on God's mission. We believe that God has called us to be a family of churches that makes disciples, raises up leaders and sends people to preach the gospel.

We are a growing family of churches and we currently have churches based in major cities in the UK and in Malawi, Africa. In 2020 the pandemic brought unique challenges for the UK Church but it also gave opportunities to outwork church in new ways, and arguably make church more accessible than ever. With each of the UK churches in different stages of growth and establishment, and each in cities with varying restrictions this has looked unique for each church. Nevertheless, the vision of each church is the same as ever, to build a gospel preaching community and to support and disciple its flock.

Please pray for all of these churches in this challenging time.

DAY 7

SATURDAY 9TH JANUARY

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Rest

Take time today to enjoy Jesus, family, friends and the things that refresh you.