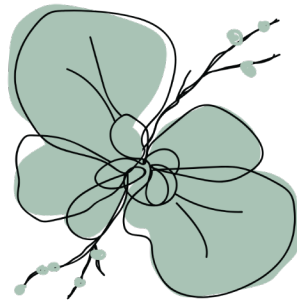




ADOPTION DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM



TOGETHER AS ONE

A 4-week Plan For Families Interested in Adoption

WWW.TOGETHERAS1.ORG

ADOPTION DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

INTRO

The Adoption Discipleship Program (ADP) is designed to be a four-week training guide which aims to help you discover whether or not adoption is the right choice for you and your family. In this program, we will discuss topics such as:

- Prayer
- Fasting
- Scripture
- Community

As you walk through this program, think about the kind of parent you want to be. In what ways can you foster an environment of love and support while also remembering your responsibility to parenthood through boundaries and discipline. What does it mean to be a Godly father? A Godly mother? Through this program, we want to equip you with tools that you can use before, during, and after your adoption process that can serve as a foundation for your family as you build it together. We encourage you to walk through this program together while leaning on one another and the Lord to guide your decision into adoption.

ADOPTION DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

PRAYER



Intro:

As Christians, we believe that prayer is one of the core elements of our faith. Prayer is what allows us to talk to God, to wrestle with God, to plead with and inquire of God. When walking with Christ it is important to encounter the Lord in our own secret place. Prayer is often understood as something we do in church or with groups of people at meals. What we often forget is that prayer is also personal, and your personal prayer should reflect a time of solitude with God. What is your secret place? What does that look like for you?

What does the Bible say about prayer?

Prayer is Biblical! Shocker, I know, but we often forget what the Bible has to say about it. Biblically we are shown not only how to pray, but that there are blessings associated with prayer, and we want to be recipients of those blessings.

1 John 5:14-15

“And this is the confidence that we have towards Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if we know that He hears us, in whatever we ask, we know that we have a request that we have asked of Him.”

- Praying out loud is awkward and can seem almost silly at times, however, we see here that when God hears us, we are to be given what we ask of so long as it aligns with His will. It is easy to get caught up in what we selfishly want, but it is equally important to go to God with an intent to commune with God, to build a relationship with Him. God is not our personal vending machine.

○ **Heart Check:** Are your desires focused on what you want from God?

Matthew 6:6

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

- Matthew explicitly talks about a “secret place” and the reward attached to prayer in that place. El Roi is the Hebrew for “the God who sees.” When we feel alone and forgotten, it is comforting to know that we have the authority to pray to a God who sees us.

Romans 12:12

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

- Prayer is not only reserved for times of abundance and times of extreme need. We must remember that our prayer should be constant. Try and read this verse backward and write down what you think it means. For me, I read this to say that when our prayer is constant, it trains us to be able to be patient during tribulation to come which in turn, allows us to rejoice in the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

Prayer and Adoption:

When you pray, ask the Lord to search your heart and see if there is any grievous way in you (Psalm 139:23-24). Ask the Lord for guidance in your decision to adopt. When we do this, we can help to discern whether the decision to adopt is the will of God rather than your own personal desire. Adoption is a huge and rewarding decision to make, however, we want to make sure that in our decision process, we consult the Lord for His blessing in it as well.

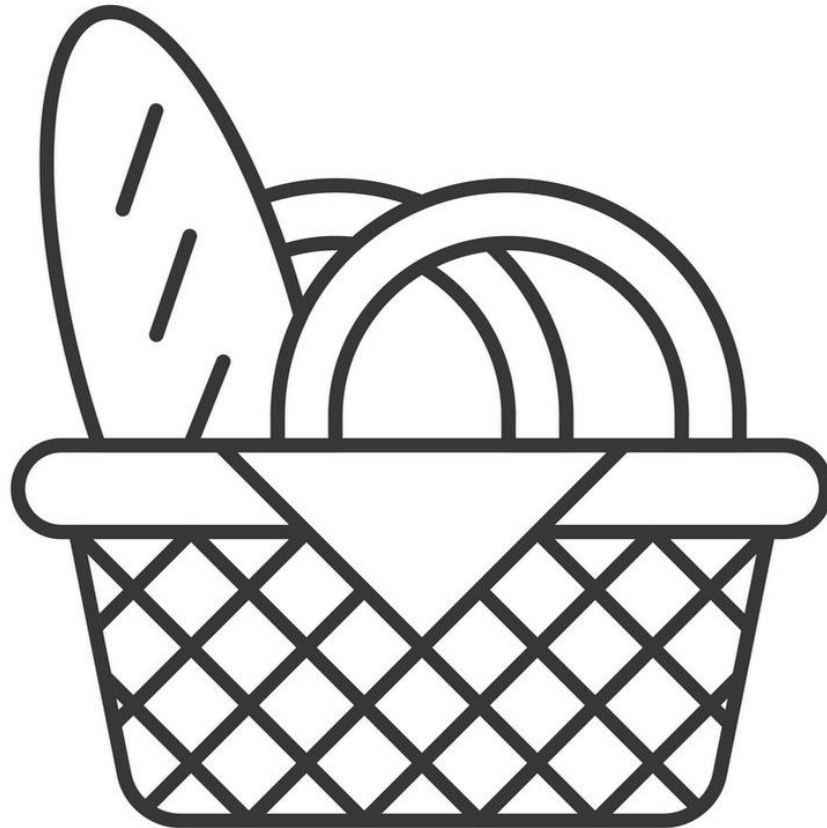
Application:

Three times this week, try to set aside 10-15 minutes to be alone with God. This time with God should be just that...time with God. Limit distractions as much as possible by leaving your phone in another room. This can also extend to other things too such as pets or family members – if you know it will distract you, try to minimize your interaction with it during this time.

*Note: Bring a journal with you during your prayer time and write down your prayers, this journal will serve as an Ebenezer Stone to look back on and see all that the Lord has done.

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FASTING



Intro:

Fasting is another part of Christianity that is essential to a healthy relationship with God. Fasting, like prayer, though, is often misinterpreted and, therefore, not engaged with as a regular part of life as it should be. When you think of fasting, what do you think of? Is it food? Social Media? Sweets? In all honesty, fasting could be any of these things, though traditionally, fasting was meant to be a break from foods. Because of this, most people look at fasting as an intimidating task because let's be real, everyone enjoys food and feeling nourished and fulfilled. When we fast, we give up our physical need for nourishment and fulfillment which is to be replaced with a spiritual nourishment and fulfillment.

So, how do we fast? Surprisingly enough, yes, there is a right and wrong way to fast, and no, it's not as intimidating or difficult as you're probably imagining. Let's use fasting meals as an example to show the difference between what fasting is versus what it isn't.

What fasting IS:

- Taking time that we normally use to eat (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner) and spending that time with God.
- Sitting alone with God
 - When we find time to be alone with God, it is like charging batteries. You can never be fully restored if you do not take time to charge or plug in yourself spiritually.

What fasting is NOT:

- Taking time that we normally use to eat (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner) and simply not eating.
- Asking God for something that you want.
 - See, the point of fasting is to strip yourself of everything and to encounter a holy God that deserves our full attention. It is very easy to ask God for things when we make it about ourselves, but the decision to adopt isn't just affecting you and your spouse but another human's life, too.

Do you see the difference? The goal of fasting is to draw us nearer to God. If we “fast” food (for example) and forget to replace that mealtime with God, we are not effectively fasting! When we fast, it is important to tie in what we talked about in the “prayer” section. When fasting and spending time with God, we can use that time to engage in prayer in our secret place. Taking time to spend one-on-one with God is a great way to spend your time in your fast. Remember, when we fast, it is important to remember that this time is meant to be spent with God, drawing nearer to Him.

- Asking God for something that you want. See, the point of fasting is to strip yourself of everything and to encounter a holy God that deserves our full attention. It is very easy to ask God for things when we make it about ourselves, but the decision to adopt isn't just affecting you and your spouse but another human's life, too.

What does the Bible say about fasting?

Acts 14:23

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

- Throughout the Bible, fasting has been practiced before, during, and after big decisions. As we see here, fasting was practiced when committing elders to churches. In your deci-

sion to adopt, have you gone before the Lord in prayer and fasting to decide if this is the Lord's will for you and your family?

Matthew 6:16-18

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

- Fasting, as a practice should be done reverently and privately. Jesus tells us here that when we fast, we should not make it a public announcement or act in a way that boasts our fasting; rather, we should present ourselves as though we are going about our day regularly to avoid attention. Again, as we talked about with prayer, there is a reward to our fasting.

Nehemiah 1:4-6a, 9

“As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for four days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of Heaven. And I said, ‘O Lord God of Heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep his commandments... but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them though your outcasts are in the outermost parts of Heaven from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.’”

- In our fasting we need to show our adoration to the Lord, who allows us to meet Him in our secret place. As stated previously there are rewards for our obedience to the Lord. Keeping God's commandments is the first part of obedience, but the second part is allowing Christ to dwell in your quiet place.

Fasting and Adoption:

When choosing to adopt, fasting is a major step in making the right decision for you and your spouse. A lot of people are not wise in making good decisions because of their lack of clarity. The bible talks about “body, mind and spirit” (1 Thes. 5:23) and how important it is to exercise all three aspects of these well in your life.

Application:

As stated in this section, it is extremely important to remember that when fasting, the goal is to spend time with the Lord. If we use fasting as an excuse to replace the fasted activity with a new activity, we are cheating both ourselves and God. This week, challenge yourself to fast from something that would normally take a lot of your attention and spend that time with the Lord. This could be social media, electronics as a whole, or something as simple as reading a book or listening to music. In addition to this, try to find one day this week to fast from food. If

this is your first time fasting food, start by only fasting one meal that day. If you have fasted before, try and fast the whole day.

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SCRIPTURE



Intro:

Throughout time and history, people have recorded and retold their stories both orally and through writing. Sacred stories and texts became a central part of life and community together as a people. The Bible, as we know it, is the holder of the history of our faith as we know it. Who are Christians without first the Jewish people? And who is the person of Christ and the idea of a messiah without Jewish prophets who foretold His coming? Even now, what is the church without

the person of Christ and His Holy Spirit? Scripture is such a vital part of our faith, yet most of us have not taken time to read all of it! Reading Scripture not only allows us to learn the history of our faith, but it also serves as a conduit to a better relationship with God. Our Bibles reveal to us the character of God; how can we claim a relationship with a person we do not know? “The importance of the Bible is that it gives us the opportunity to see and know God. The Scriptures reveal His character and nature, His sovereignty and power, and His reason for creating us, the universe, and everything in it. We read about God’s dealings with humankind, His goodness and grace, His light and love, His holiness and justice, and His mercy and compassion.” (gotquestions.org) This week let’s make a pledge to start reading our Bibles daily, even if this is only for five minutes.

Heart check: We dedicate time to the things that are important to us. How much importance do we place on reading God’s word daily?

What does the Bible say about Scripture:

Deuteronomy 4:4-9

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

- This scripture here is known among the Jewish community as the Shema. This passage is more than a bunch of verses, but a prayer said by the Jewish as a reminder that *hearing* the Word and *doing* the Word are one in the same (as also seen in James 1:19-25). This prayer is often said multiple times daily. When we understand the importance of reading the Word, knowing the Word, and acting upon the Word, we can better our relationship with God.
 - As you go through the adoption process, take time to sit with one another in your homes and read scripture together. Get your children involved in this practice, too, so that they develop reading scripture as a healthy habit. Anoint your household and pray God’s word over your family and your home.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- Our original purpose is to share the great commission which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ with all of mankind. In this verse, we see how the Bible is an

instruction manual for us to train in how to share the story of Jesus. The Bible is not just a set of rules for us to follow in a means to restrict us; it gives us freedom in the life that we can live because of the work that Jesus did on the cross. The image that we ought to reflect to the world is one that represents the image of Christ. Our diligence to reading scripture helps to bring us one step closer to this goal.

Hebrews 4:12a

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”

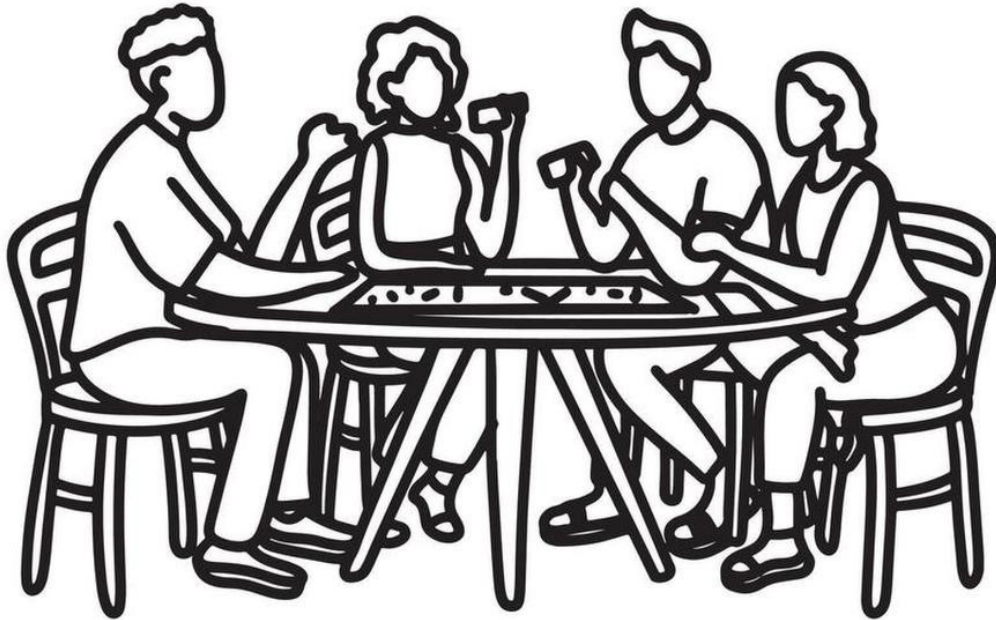
- As stated in this verse, the Word of God is able to cut deep, dividing flesh from bone and soul and spirit. It is a spyglass into our hearts and minds helping to divide what is right from wrong. What are our innermost desires? As asked above, is reading the Bible as important to us as we say it is? Do we prioritize it as much as we should? The Word of God is a powerful instrument which can be helpful to us when we are obedient to God, but it can be equally as detrimental to us if we choose to stray away from His will.

Application:

When we read our Bibles, we connect with God and learn more about Him and His character. This week, take initiative and try to read your Bible every day. If you already read your Bible daily, challenge yourselves by extending the amount that you're reading. Maybe read for 10 minutes a day instead of 5. The idea here is that we want to make a habit of making our Bible reading important to us. The better we get at building habits like this, the more equipped we can be to tackle difficult situations with a Biblical approach rather than with what our fleshly intuition would lead us to.

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COMMUNITY



Intro:

We are firm believers that no one should go through the adoption process alone. What is the church without its community, the people who make up the body? Without people, the church cannot exist. With this, a community of people who do life together – both in celebration

and suffering – makes for a healthy congregation. It is important that we surround ourselves with like-minded, Godly people who will encourage us in hardship and humble us in our pride. Friends who will pray both with and for you are some of the best people to have in your corner when considering adoption. The Bible talks about adoption so much, but we must consider how we walk through the adoption process with our friends, family, and community. This process is not meant for you and your spouse to walk alone, which is why the idea of community is so valuable and important.

What can community look like for me and my spouse as we walk through the adoption journey together?

- Gathering for a prayer night
- Finding others walking through this process currently
 - Or others who have already adopted
- Getting involved with your small group at church and learning to share in your victories and defeats
- Inviting your friends and family to encourage you in your fundraising initiatives
 - At Together As One, we encourage families to fundraise, alongside funds provided by Together As One, to help reduce the financial burden on your family.

What does the Bible say about Community?

Matthew 18:20

“Where two or more are gathered, there He is also.”

- This verse is often used in referring to prayer; however, we can also see the importance of consulting with God – and one another – when we bring to Him our desires.

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.” (CSB)

- Ask yourself, “What has community looked like for me?” Jesus’s work wasn’t done alone; He had a community of people walking alongside Him, encouraging Him in His ministry. Is your community gathering, provoking you towards love and good works, and encouraging you, in your pursuit of adoption?

1 Corinthians 1:10

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

- As we consider the community we gather around us, we must be vigilant in pursuing a community that is one with you in mind and thought as you pursue your adoption. Not only can we unite together in building a family through adoption, we can also be sure of uniting together as a community of believers. Having people around you that support you and agree with you in your calling is essential.

Application

This week, try and find your community whether it be friends or family and gather with them one or two times to talk about adoption, pray together, and possibly find time to be in worship with one another. The goal in this exercise is to invite God into your community to empower you through this process. Finding a family who has already adopted may be very helpful as well. Consider inviting them to dinner this week!