October 31/November 01, 2026
"Follow Jesus"
Pastor Aaron Buer

Beyond the Weekend

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY, + ACT.

2026 Focus: 12 Months of Prayer | **November**: Thanksgiving

Each month, journey through a different biblical model of prayer.

Day 1 Matthew 4:18–22 | The Call to Discipleship

"Come, follow me," Jesus said. Matthew 4:19a

Jesus returns to Galilee to begin his ministry after being baptized and tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He first calls people to repent because "the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 4:17). Then he begins inviting ordinary, often unlikely people to become his disciples. Jesus, the perfect rabbi, calls them on a journey not simply to learn his teachings but to become like him. A disciple, or apprentice learner, spends each day with his teacher, walking, eating, listening, and learning. Disciples walk so closely behind their rabbi that the dust from his feet covers them!

The same invitation to discipleship extends to us today. Following Jesus begins when we put our trust in him, but it doesn't stop there. It means more than learning facts about him. It means walking closely with him every day, learning his ways, and allowing him to shape who we become. It's a lifelong journey of obeying his Word and becoming more like him. As we begin this three-week sermon series, we'll explore what it means to follow Jesus, grow together, and pursue God's mission. These aren't just ideas to understand; they're ways of life to put into practice as we walk closely with Jesus.

TODAY: Commit to attending church for all three weeks of this series. Mark the dates on your calendar and make being there a priority. Each week, ask God to deepen your love for Jesus, show you where you need to grow, and help you put what you learn into practice.

Day 2 John 15:1–16 | The Why of Discipleship

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." John 15:16a

Jesus kneels to wash his disciples' feet, while sharing the Passover meal with them. He then sends Judas, his betrayer, into the night. With his arrest and crucifixion hours away, Jesus knows his disciples are troubled. He comforts them and prepares them for life when he will no longer be physically with them. Describing himself as the "true vine," Jesus urges them to remain in him to grow and bear fruit. Then he reminds them how their journey began. Jesus made the first move, inviting them into a relationship with him. That same night, these disciples fall asleep when he asks them to pray and run away when soldiers arrest him. Peter even denies knowing him. Yet Jesus's love for them is not based on their performance. Their relationship with him begins with his grace.

Our journey as disciples begins with his grace, too. Grace is God's undeserved favor—a gift we could never earn. It's easy to get this backward and think we must do enough, know enough, or be good enough to earn

God's love. But discipleship is not a requirement for receiving grace; it's our response to the grace we've already received. Jesus invites us to follow him, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who he is and what he has done for us on the cross.

TODAY: Thank God for his grace using this prayer: "Lord, thank you that I don't have to earn your love. I'm grateful for the gift of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross. Thank you for showing me grace even when I fall short, especially when _____. Help me follow you today."

Day 3 Matthew 4:18–19 | The Power of Discipleship

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." Matthew 4:19

Jesus stands on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and invites two brothers, Peter and Andrew, to follow him. He describes the change he will bring about in their lives. They have been fishing for fish, but Jesus will teach them to fish for people by inviting others to follow him. Jesus meets them where they are and calls them into a greater purpose in God's kingdom. He doesn't erase their past; he transforms their lives and gives them new meaning and motivation as they follow him.

Following Jesus changes us, too. Discipleship isn't something we simply add to our already busy lives. When we continually follow Jesus, he begins to reshape our desires, attitudes, thoughts, habits, and priorities to become more like his. This transformation doesn't happen through our own strength or willpower. Jesus is the one who transforms us as we surrender our lives to him. We may want to control our plans, relationships, finances, or future. We may hold tightly to habits and attitudes we know we need to change. But when we trust Jesus enough to release these to him, he works in us and through us. He can use our gifts, talents, and experiences for his kingdom and his glory rather than our own. This is the powerful journey of discipleship: surrendering to Jesus daily and allowing him to shape us for his purposes.

TODAY: Take a few minutes to ask yourself, "What part of my life am I still trying to control instead of surrendering to Jesus?" Write down one specific area. Confess your struggle to him in prayer, open your hands as a physical act of surrender, and ask him to transform your heart.

For more encouragement, listen to the *Beyond the Weekend Podcast* as the team discusses what it means to follow Jesus—find it wherever you listen to podcasts or on YouTube HERE.

Day 4 Matthew 4:20–22 | The Cost of Discipleship

At once they left their nets and followed him. Matthew 4:20

Jesus steps into the busy heart of a major fishing town and calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him. These men run family businesses with boats, nets, and hired workers. Following Jesus means leaving behind their work, financial security, and familiar way of life. In a culture that highly values honoring parents and carrying on the family trade, their response is striking. Their decision isn't based on knowing every detail of what lies ahead. Still, they respond swiftly because of the authority of the one calling them (John 1:35–42). They know the cost of following Jesus.

There is a cost for us to follow Jesus today, too. He calls us to put him first, even when it means leaving something behind. Perhaps a hobby or activity has taken priority over time with him. Maybe jealousy, unforgiveness, unmet expectations, or a secret sin is keeping us from fully surrendering to him. Following Jesus may challenge our comfort, plans, or desire to control. But whatever we give up cannot compare to the richness of knowing and following him. Surrender isn't about losing what matters most; it's about trusting

Jesus with every part of our lives. When we put him first, he reshapes our priorities for our good and his glory. As we follow Jesus together, we grow together.

TODAY: Listen to the Ada Bible Worship Team sing "Cornerstone," which ends with lines from the hymn "I Surrender All." As you listen, reflect on the cost of following Jesus and what it means to build your life on him. Pray, "Jesus, my hope is built on nothing less. I wholly trust in you."



Day 5 Colossians 4:2 | Gratitude in Prayer

This year in Beyond the Weekend, journey through different biblical models of prayer—one each month. November's focus is Thanksgiving: expressing gratitude to God.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2

Paul writes this letter from a prison cell. He has never met the believers in Colossae, but he's heard false teachers are trying to pull them away from the gospel by saying Jesus is not enough. They push strict rules, special days, and human ideas (Colossians 2:8, 16). Paul answers with the truth. Jesus is over all things. In him, the church has everything it needs (Colossians 1:15–20; 2:9–10). Again and again, Paul calls them to be thankful (Colossians 2:7; 3:15–17), to remember what they already have in Christ. As Paul finishes his letter, he once more points them to pray and to give thanks.

This month, we focus on prayers of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is expressing gratitude to God for his goodness and all he has done for us. Just as the Colossians were tempted to look for something more than Jesus, we can be, too. We chase the next thing and forget what we already have in Jesus. We must devote ourselves to prayer, meaning we keep at it, even when it's hard. We can be watchful and thankful for what God is doing. Gratitude turns our eyes from what we lack to what God has given. Paul was in chains, yet he still gave thanks (Colossians 1:3). We too can thank God in every season. Because of Jesus, we have forgiveness, new life, and a place in God's family. That is always a reason to give thanks.

TODAY: Write down three things God has done for you or given you this week. Then thank him for each one by name. Add to your list all month long.