

August 17/18, 2024
"Why Unity Matters"
Pastor Aaron Buer



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

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

August: Read Jeremiah to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 [John 17:20-23](#) | Why Unity Matters

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:20-21

Jesus and his disciples begin their ministry in a highly-charged political atmosphere. The Romans occupy Israel. In response, Jews are scattered across the political spectrum. Some make money as tax collectors for the Romans. Others would love to see a violent overthrow of the regime. These opposing views are found not just in the country as a whole but also in the small group of Jesus's disciples.

Political differences also exist at Ada Bible Church. In our current series, "Politics and Unity," Pastor Aaron Buer has five hopes. 1) That no matter who we vote for, we feel welcome at Ada. 2) That we see politics through the lens of Jesus and not the other way around. 3) That we become genuinely curious about why a fellow Christian holds different political beliefs. 4) That we invite God to challenge us and change our politics. 5) That the words of Jesus bind us together as a church during this political season. These goals are important because Jesus stakes his reputation on the church and how we get along with each other.

TODAY: Slowly read Pastor Aaron's five goals again. Then, pray these five goals for yourself and the church.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Jeremiah 26-27](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

Day 2 [John 17:20-21](#) | The "What" of Church Unity

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." John 17:20-21a

Shortly before his arrest and trial, Jesus is praying for his followers. Of all the things for which he could pray, he prays for their unity. He knows he selected a diverse group of men. Among the disciples are those who want to separate from society, others who collaborate with the hated Romans, and still others who want to violently overthrow their occupiers. There must have been interesting discussions around the campfire each night! But Jesus prays for unity. He doesn't want them to be the same, but he wants them to be unified in diversity as they work toward the same goal, to "make disciples of all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)).

It's the same for us as we work toward that same goal 2,000 years later. In our diversity, Jesus wants us to show unity as well. We don't all need to be the same as we make disciples. Our diversity *helps* make disciples of "all nations." Jesus calls people from every background and situation to follow him. In our differences, we should always work toward unity in obedience to Jesus.

TODAY: Pray a prayer of gratitude that we don't all have to be the same. Thank Jesus for including you and those who think differently than you in the church.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Jeremiah 28-29](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider how through Jesus, God hears our prayers and brings us back to himself.

Day 3 [John 17:23](#) | The "Why" of Church Unity

"I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23

Jesus says something astounding in his prayer: the unity of the church shows the world that God the Father sent Jesus. Jesus's message is about reconciliation. It is first about restoring a right relationship between people and God. Sin separates us from God, and we need someone to serve as our reconciler. In his death, Jesus paid the penalty for sin that we cannot pay and restored us to God. The gospel is a bridge, restoring people's relationship with God.

But that's not all he did. Jesus also makes a way for us to live in restoration with each other and experience unity. The gospel doesn't just reconcile us and God. It reconciles us to others. The Gospel acts as a sledgehammer breaking down dividing walls between believers ([Ephesians 2:14](#)). Men and women. Black and white. Rich and poor. Liberal and conservative (and third parties). Because of what Jesus did, we can live in restored relationships even with those with whom we disagree.

TODAY: In your journal, reflect on how you represent Jesus and the Gospel. Think about your actions around politics. Consider how you talk about others who disagree with you, what you post on social media and what you say about other Christians. Confess anything God reveals. Ask God to help you reflect him well to the world around you.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Jeremiah 30-32](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider how, through the Holy Spirit, God has now written his word on our hearts.

Day 4 [1 Corinthians 1:10-12](#) | Family

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. 1 Corinthians 1:10

It doesn't take long for divisions to develop in the early church. Words fly. Tempers flare. In Corinth, Christians divide over who they follow. Some boast about following Paul, others Apollos or Peter. Though it is not political, division is tearing them apart. So, Paul writes to them about the importance of unity. He reminds them that they are, in the most significant way, brothers and sisters united in Jesus. Their loyalty to each other is more important than their favorite teacher.

We are to live in unity with each other in the same way. First and foremost, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have all been adopted into God's family through Jesus. We are united by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our loyalty to each other must override our political loyalties. We may strongly disagree and vote differently, but we choose to treat others well. We choose, through God's power, to be loyal to each other, no matter our differences.

TODAY: Ask God to bring someone to mind that you need to treat as a brother or sister in Christ. Pray that God will help you see them as a dearly loved family member who needs your love and understanding.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Jeremiah 33-34](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider how Jesus is from the line of David, who only does what is just and right.

Day 5 [John 17:22-23](#) | The “How” of Church Unity

“I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:23

Jesus stakes his reputation on the church’s unity. The world will know the Father’s love through Jesus by how the church relates to each other. The Apostle Paul later says believers are to be “perfectly united” ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)), which means “to mend.” Jesus knows relationships will need “mending” after disagreements. His followers will need to work through division and create unity. Believers do this through God’s power and by choosing to make unity a priority.

Pastor Aaron Buer gave us four phrases for moving toward reconciliation with each other. First: “How did I come across?” This is good to ask when we become animated or enthusiastic. Second: “I’m sorry.” Be willing to say, “I shouldn’t have said that. I was wrong.” Third: “I forgive you.” This means the apology is accepted, and you won’t hold it against them. Finally: “Help me understand.” Desiring more information is a great way to avoid missing important perspectives and continue the conversation. It isn’t about changing your position (although it might). It’s about loving your brother or sister in Christ.

TODAY: Which of your conversations needs one of these phrases? Pray for the strength and courage to continue conversations in a way that moves toward unity.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Jeremiah 35-37](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.