

August 31/September 1, 2024

"Unity"

Pastor John Dickson



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

### 2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

**September:** Read Ezekiel to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## Day 1 Ezekiel 34:23-24 | Jesus in Ezekiel

**"I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken."** Ezekiel 34:23-24

*This year, we look for Jesus in the Old Testament to see how God's plan always included Jesus saving us from our sins. We introduce a new book on the first Monday of every month. This month, we will read from Ezekiel and see how this book points to Jesus coming to shepherd his people and ultimately reign as the eternal Prince of Peace.*

Ezekiel is often called the prophet of divine glory. He ministers during the Babylonian exile, when God's people were displaced and greatly distressed. Through vivid visions and powerful metaphors, Ezekiel conveys messages of both judgment and hope. He reminds the exiles of God's sovereignty and holiness, calls them to repentance and offers promises of future restoration. Throughout the book, there are glimpses of Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

We see a picture of Jesus in Ezekiel's vision of the divine shepherd who will rescue and care for his scattered flock ([Ezekiel 34:11-16](#)). Jesus declares himself the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep ([John 10:11,14](#)). Ezekiel also prophesies a future king from David's line who will be a shepherd to God's people ([Ezekiel 34:23-24](#)). Jesus, as the Son of David, fulfills this role perfectly. The prophet's vision of life-giving water flowing from the temple ([Ezekiel 47:1-12](#)) foreshadows Jesus's promise of living water that gives eternal life ([John 7:38](#)). God's promise of a new heart and spirit ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#)) points to the new covenant that Jesus establishes, where the Holy Spirit dwells within believers, enabling them to follow God's ways.

**TODAY:** As you read Ezekiel this month, ask God to reveal prophecies that point to Jesus. Thank God for Jesus, our Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to give us new hearts and the living water of eternal life.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 1-2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the vision of God's glory. Consider how this foreshadows Jesus as the full revelation of God's glory ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

## Day 2 Philippians 2:1-2 | Trinity

**"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion..."** Philippians 2:1

Paul encourages the Philippian Christian community in unity and love. He uses the Trinity to illustrate this idea. He instructs them to find unity in Christ, comfort in the Father's love and fellowship in the Spirit. The Trinity exists in perfect unity, love and tenderness. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, each with a specific role. But the three are united as one God. Paul encourages the Philippians that God intends the same

kind of unity for them. He desires that they are both diverse and unified, marked by love for one another and unity.

The Trinity can be a mind-warping concept to understand. Christians have wrestled with the truth that God is three-in-one for centuries. We will never fully understand the Trinity here on earth. But we can see what God intends for us in our relationships in light of the Trinity. Before creation, God already existed within a united, tender and loving community. God created us to share the love found within the trinitarian relationship. He desires the same unity with us. He also longs to see us live in perfect unity with one another. God calls us to deeper relationships that seek loving unity above all.

**TODAY:** Spend a moment thanking God for his perfect love, modeled for us by the Trinity. Then join the Ada Bible Worship Team as they sing "[Same God](#)." Reflect on the lyrics about God's love and faithfulness throughout time and history.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 3-4](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to Ezekiel's call as a watchman. Reflect on how Jesus is the ultimate watchman who came to warn and save.

## Day 3 Acts 16:12-33 | Community

**"He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."** Acts 16:30-31

During his time in Philippi, Paul encounters a diversity of believers. A wealthy businesswoman opens her heart to the message of Jesus ([Acts 16:14](#)). A slave possessed by an evil spirit declares Paul and Silas "servants of the Most High God ([Acts 16:17](#))." Moved by Paul's faithfulness and compassion, a Roman jailer believes in Jesus and asks Paul to baptize him ([Acts 16:33](#)). Ten years later, Paul writes a letter to the believers in Philippi. He encourages them to be a unified community, like-minded and one in Spirit ([Philippians 2:2](#)). Paul knows both their diversity and unity strengthen their Christian witness.

We tend to put Christians in a box. Sometimes, how we understand faith affects who we see as worthy of the gospel. But the community of Christ reflects the beauty and diversity of God's creation. Things like political affiliation and socio-economic status are not barriers to the gospel. God calls us to live in unity rather than despise one another for our differences. We are called to have both conviction and compassion. When we live as a unified, Christian community, Christ's love spreads like wildfire to those around us.

**TODAY:** God calls us to be people of both compassion and conviction. Take a moment to journal about which one you lean toward and why. Then pray: "God, I confess that I have been too focused on \_\_\_\_\_ when trying to reach others. I ask that your Spirit would lead me to be a person who is both compassionate and full of conviction. Amen."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 5-6](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Look for God's judgments against idolatry. Consider how Jesus calls us to worship God alone.

## Day 4 Philippians 2:3-11 | Humility

**"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."** Philippians 2:3-4

Paul's call for humility was completely subversive to the culture of the early Christians. In first-century Rome, humility was not considered a virtue. A Roman citizen would never show humility toward a person of equal or lesser social standing. A ruler or divine being would never show humility toward anyone. Yet, that is what Jesus

did: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing" ([Philippians 2:6-7](#)). Jesus did not promote himself, though his divinity gave him reason to. Instead, he lived and died in service to others. Paul urges the early Christians to do the same. They are to set personal interests aside and value others above themselves.

Our society rewards self-promotion and selfish ambitions. Yet humility involves being active in service and passive in self-promotion. To live like Jesus is to reject self-centeredness and embrace service toward others. Service toward others grows humility. Humility affects all areas of life, including politics. Humility reframes politics as an opportunity to serve others. It promotes unity by listening to differing viewpoints and understanding them. When we vote and interact with others, we should do so in humility, putting the interests of others above our own.

**TODAY:** Serving others is a great way to grow in humility and live like Jesus. We are all created, called and gifted to serve. Find your place to serve by visiting [adabible.org/serving](http://adabible.org/serving). We would love to help you find ways to serve the church and our community.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 7-8](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the descriptions of God's coming judgment. Consider how Jesus speaks of final judgment but offers salvation ([John 5:24-27](#)).

## Day 5 John 17:20-23 | Politics and Unity

**"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 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 17:22-23

Jesus's prayer for unity for all believers resonates today. Unity illuminates the Church as a beacon of light for a broken world. Pastor Aaron Buer prayed five things over Ada Bible Church. 1) That no matter who we vote for we will feel welcome at Ada Bible. 2) That we will view politics through the lens of Jesus and not the other way around. 3) That we will become curious about why our fellow Jesus followers hold political views different from our own. 4) That we will invite God to challenge us through this series. 5) That Jesus will bond us together as a church during this political season.

We will likely experience conflict in our relationships and nation this season. Throughout this series, we learned that Jesus calls us to live differently. He is to be King over every area of our lives, including politics. How we relate to each other and our unity as believers has eternal consequences for the gospel. We are called to live with both conviction and compassion as citizens of God's kingdom. We are called to be humble servants in a world that promotes self-centeredness. We can rely on the Holy Spirit during this political season. He will guide us in love and compassion toward others in ways that reflect his kingdom and reveals what Jesus is like.

**TODAY:** Find all the sermons in this series [HERE](#). If you missed one, watch it now. Or re-watch one for continued growth. Then, continue to pray Pastor Aaron Buer's five hopes for yourself and Ada Bible Church during this election season.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 9](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Observe the marking of the righteous for preservation. Consider how, through Jesus, we are marked by the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 1:13](#)).