

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

**2026 Focus: 12 Months of Prayer | January: Prayers of Praise**

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

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## Day 1 [Ephesians 4:1-3](#) | Groundwork

**As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.** Ephesians 4:1

The gospel has spread quickly despite persecution and reached the city of Ephesus. Ephesus is a large, influential port city known for commerce and idol worship, especially devoted to the Greek goddess Artemis. Paul helped establish the church there during an earlier missionary journey. Now, he writes from a prison in Rome. Paul’s purpose is clear: to strengthen and encourage believers. Before telling them how to live in a culture opposed to Jesus, Paul first grounds them in their identity in Christ. The gospel reshapes who they are and how they behave, including how they handle relationships.

This same tension exists for us today. Our sense of self is constantly challenged by the loud messages of our culture. Things like our physical appearance, financial success, marital status, and sexuality seem to be subject to cultural voices and social media approval. These voices compete with what God says is true about us. When we allow culture to define us, our relationship with God and others begins to shift. But when our identity is rooted in Christ, we can experience clarity, humility and unity in how we live and love. Throughout this series, we will return to this truth again and again: belief before behavior. Who we are in Jesus is the groundwork that shapes how we show up in every relationship—at home, in the church and in the world.

**Today:** Set aside twenty minutes to read or listen to the book of Ephesians. Notice who Paul says we are in Christ in [chapters 1-3](#), and how that identity shapes the way we live and treat others in [chapters 4-6](#).

## Day 2 [Ephesians 1:1-5](#) | Adopted

**In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.** Ephesians 1:4-5

In ancient Rome, the practice of *exposure* is common. After a child is born, the baby is presented to the father. If the father accepts the child, he lifts the baby into his arms. If he rejects the child—often due to poverty, disability or even gender—the child is abandoned. Many of these children are left to die or sold into slavery. Some believers in Ephesus likely know this kind of rejection firsthand. Paul reminds the Ephesians that what is most true about them is not their past rejection, but their acceptance in Christ. So, adoption is a powerful theme in Paul’s letter. Through Jesus, God chooses them, welcomes them and adopts them into his family. Their identity is no longer defined by what others did to them, but by what God has done for them.

Many of us carry wounds of rejection—the parent who left, the spouse who walked out, the friends who disappeared. These experiences can shape how we see ourselves. But Paul redirects our focus. Our new identity is found in God’s love and acceptance. We were once dead in our sins, but God has made us alive in

Christ. When we place our faith in Jesus, we are adopted into God's family and called his children. When we know who we are in Christ, it reshapes how we live and how we relate to others.

**TODAY:** Reread [Ephesians 1](#). In your journal, list every word Paul uses to describe who you are in Christ. Or download the "A to Z" list bookmark [HERE](#).

## Day 3 [Ephesians 1:6-7](#) | Redeemed

**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.** Ephesians 1:7

Ephesus serves as a major center of trade in the Roman Empire. It is a hub for the slave trade. Some of the early believers who gather in house churches are slaves—legally considered property, owned by someone else. In this world, to redeem means purchasing someone out of slavery, claiming them as one's own. Paul speaks to both slaves and masters in the Ephesian church and reminds them of a greater truth: regardless of their social status, all believers have been redeemed by Jesus's blood. Christ paid the full price for their sin and released them from slavery to sin. Even if some remain physically enslaved, they are spiritually free.

This same truth applies to us. Apart from Christ, we are enslaved to sin—unable to free ourselves. But Jesus came to redeem us. Fully God and fully man, Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live. He took our place on the cross, died for our sins, and rose again three days later. His blood paid the full price for our redemption. To be redeemed is to be forgiven completely of past, present and future sin. Nothing we have done, nothing that has been done to us, is beyond the reach of his grace.

**TODAY:** Turn to Jesus. Confess your sin and receive his forgiveness and freedom. If you have never trusted Christ, today can be the day you place your faith in him. If you want to learn more about who Jesus is and what it means to follow him, join our four-week "Explore Groups" that begin January 19. Find out more [HERE](#).

## Day 4 [Ephesians 1:8-14](#) | Sealed

**And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.** Ephesians 1:13

Ephesus is a busy port city where seals are commonly used. A seal marks ownership, proves something is authentic and guarantees that what is promised will be delivered. Jars of goods, and sacks of fruit and grain are sealed to show they belong to someone and payment is coming. Paul uses this image to explain what happens when the Ephesians place their trust in Jesus. The moment they believe, God places his seal on them—the Holy Spirit. This seal shows that they belong to God. It guarantees that God will keep his promises. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment or signature on a contract.

We are sealed with the Spirit of God the moment we put our faith in Jesus. Our inheritance is God himself—not just something we receive later—living in us now. The Spirit confirms our faith is real, that we are God's children and that eternal life is secure. The Spirit also works in us today, shaping our character, guiding our choices and teaching us how to love and live well with others. What we experience now is only a preview of the complete restoration God has promised for eternity. Because God sealed us, we can live with confidence, gratitude and peace.

**TODAY:** Take a few minutes today and listen as Ada Bible Worship sings "[So Much](#)." As you listen, thank God for the Holy Spirit's presence in your life and ask him to help you live from a place of security and trust.



## Day 5 [Matthew 11:25-26](#) | Jesus Praises the Father

*This year in Beyond the Weekend, journey through different biblical models of prayer—one each month. January's focus is Prayers of Praise.*

**At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” Matthew 11:25**

Tension leaps off the page as Jesus praises the Father. Jesus has emptied himself by teaching throughout Galilee, yet many still misunderstand his ministry. Even his cousin, John the Baptist, sends others to ask him if he is the Messiah ([Matthew 11:1-6](#)). Jesus points them to Isaiah's words, affirming that his actions are those of the promised one. He denounces the crowd's blindness. Despite their learned wisdom, they cannot see that God-in-flesh stands before them. They only see that Jesus spends time with tax collectors and sinners. Amid their rejection and doubt, Jesus praises God the Father for his **ultimate** plan. Salvation is for all who are humble enough to see their sin and believe in him for forgiveness and restoration.

We may also feel misunderstood and experience the sting of rejection for our faith in Jesus. Prayers of praise and remembering God's ultimate plan of salvation will strengthen us. Jesus taught that his followers would experience intense rejection ([Matthew 5:11](#)). This is the cost of following him in a world that is still broken. As we praise God, we find comfort knowing that he is not surprised by our rejection or pain. We find hope that even death itself is not the end. Jesus has conquered sin and death. Praising God for his mighty work revealed through Jesus strengthens us as we trust that God is with us and in control.

**TODAY:** Praise God for his ultimate plan. “Thank you, Jesus, for revealing to me the truth that I am your child. I praise you for making your plan visible in Jesus, and that it is being accomplished despite my circumstances.”