

January 17/18, 2025

“Unity”

Pastor Aaron Buer



Beyond the  
Weekend

**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 [John 17:20-23](#) | Christ's Reputation

**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 invests himself in a group of followers over three years of public ministry. These men witness Jesus teach, heal and even raise people from the dead. As Jesus nears his trial and crucifixion, he gathers his disciples together for prayer and some parting words. Jesus tells them of the single greatest factor that will lead to his reputation being honored among the nations: the unity of his followers. How his disciples treat one another and get along will make a profound impact on how Jesus is perceived around the world.

Part of Jesus's prayer in the upper room was for “those who will believe” ([John 17:20](#)), which includes Christians living today. Jesus's prayer and focus—even as he neared his death on the cross—was that we as the church would be unified in love and service to one another. Our love for one another is to reflect the extravagant love that the Father, Son and Spirit share among themselves. As God is one, so we are to be one. It is such unity that will shine a bright light on the beauty of Christ in a dark and needy world.

**Today:** Pray the prayer that Jesus prayed: that we as the church would be one as God is one. Pray that the Bible would be a witness to the world of love and unity in Jesus. For a helpful guide on what to pray, read John 17:20-23.

## Day 2 [Ephesians 4:1-2](#) | Under Construction

**As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.** Ephesians 4:1-2

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus begins with an extended introduction that outlines and unpacks a believer's true identity. Those in Christ are no longer defined by their sin and shame but by the work of Christ and what he secured on their behalf. Believers have been adopted, redeemed and sealed by the Spirit. It is these truths that are to shape and form how believers live today. Followers of Jesus are to allow their gospel-shaped identity to fuel gospel-shaped living.

As the church in Ephesus was “under construction,” so are we. We all have much room for growth and maturing. Just as the work of Christ empowered the transformation of the church in Ephesus, so it will empower transformation in us. Within the church, we are all on a continuum of spiritual growth and maturity. So, rather than get overly upset when a fellow believer disappoints or lets us down, we can extend grace and remember that we are all works in progress. As Paul commanded the believers in Ephesus, we can be people who are humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love.

**TODAY:** Identify one area of your life where you need to grow. Consider the commands in [Ephesians 4:2](#) to be humble, gentle and patient. Ask God for grace and help to grow in the area you identified. As you pray, commit to a new habit or pattern that exemplifies humility, gentleness or patience.

## Day 3 [Ephesians 4:3-6](#) | Dividing Walls

**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.** Ephesians 4:4-6

Paul begins his letter to the church in Ephesus by reinforcing gospel truths about what Jesus has done and who believers are because of Jesus's finished work. Even more, Paul establishes that this same work of Christ is to be the driving force behind believers living in unity with one another—even Jew and Gentile believers. What matters most about them is not their differences in skin color, race, family background, gender or financial status. What matters most is the blood of Jesus that unites them together as one people.

The gospel is to inform and influence all our relationships, especially within the church. Though many aspects of life make us different and distinct from one another, it is the gospel that makes us one in Christ. Through the cross, God has broken down barriers or walls of hostility ([Ephesians 2:14](#)). He has made diverse people and groups one in Christ. Through the work of Christ, we are forgiven of our sins, granted new identities, grafted into the forever family of God and given a new mission in this world. In this way, we are to be cross-shaped people.

**TODAY:** Have you received Jesus's work on the cross? If not, today could be the day! Ask God to forgive you of your sins because of Jesus's work through his death and resurrection. If you have received Christ, give God the praise and ask for his help in applying gospel truths to your daily relationships.

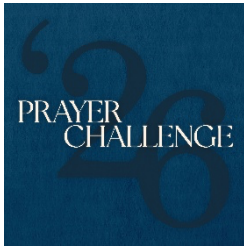
## Day 4 [Ephesians 4:2-3](#) | Guard Unity

**Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** Ephesians 4:2-3

Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, establishing that they are already one in Christ. They have one Father, one Lord, and have been made into one people in Christ. Because of this unity, these believers can live at peace with one another. Paul makes clear, however, that living in unity with other believers takes work and intentional effort—it does not happen by accident. Unity requires growing into the sort of people who are humble, gentle and bear with one another in love.

The same is true for us today. If we are to live at peace with other believers, then we must cultivate, guard and protect these relationships. Much like how cars need ongoing maintenance, our relationships need to be regularly maintained if they are to remain vibrant and healthy. Such efforts at guarding may require that we confess wrongdoing and forgive those who hurt us. Efforts to maintain unity may also involve engaging in difficult conversations or even listening to someone who holds a different perspective than we do. In short, keeping the unity of the Spirit means valuing relationships in the church and making an intentional effort to move toward fellow believers.

**TODAY:** What is a practical step you can take toward guarding unity in the church? It could be asking questions to get more information, apologizing, forgiving or getting to know someone new. Identify one step you could take, and then ask God for the grace and help to take it.



## Day 5 [Acts 16:22-26](#) | Praise in Pain

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

**About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:25**

Paul and Silas sit locked in a Philippian jail cell. The cool touch of the prison wall does little to ease the pain of bruises marbled black and blue. However, singing God's praises works wonders. Earlier, Paul cast a demon out of a fortune-telling slave girl. Her slaveowners preyed on her suffering by trafficking her for profit. Enraged by their loss, the men accused Paul and Silas of stirring up trouble. City rulers have Paul and Silas stripped, beaten and jailed. In their pain, Paul and Silas sing praises to God. Around them, other prisoners listen with curiosity, jubilant noise in a place of despair. These shackled men still act free. It doesn't make sense. Without warning, a violent earthquake shakes them from their bewilderment. Prison doors open, chains fall and they witness the power of God.

Praising God despite painful circumstances is a profound act of courageous faith. Through praise, God empowers us to see past our pain and glimpse his power. Through our praise, the Holy Spirit cultivates hope and strength in God's love. This love and hope amid pain are a witness to those around us. When we praise God, the transforming hope of the gospel appears in unexpected places—local coffee shops, hospital rooms, even prison cells. Praise brings light to what is shrouded in darkness and despair.

**TODAY:** A great way to praise God in painful or unexpected circumstances is by singing in worship. Join Ada Bible Worship as they sing "[The Joy](#)." Let the lyrics be your prayer: "You are faithful to Your promise. You are strong when I am weak."