



**DAILY PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONALS**

# INTRODUCTION

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Neighborliness, it's a word that doesn't roll off the tongue. In fact, it can be difficult to say, let alone define. We understand what a neighbor is, and we also know how Jesus in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and in other areas of the Bible, expanded the definition of neighbor to include everyone! We also see in this story how we are not just to accept everyone as our neighbor but to go out of our way to seek their betterment, to repair what has been broken, even if it is at our own expense. We know what a neighborhood is; houses, schools, shops, and churches that are in our surrounding area. God calls on us to seek the betterment of our neighborhoods and communities and the people that are in them (Matthew 7:12, 1 Corinthians 10:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and many more). The love, care, support, and building up is paramount to Jesus' call to love everyone. We are also called to love and seek the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29:7).

But what does Neighborliness mean? Neighborliness is the active part of loving as Jesus does in His call to love our neighbors. It is seeing God's call on our lives to actively go into the world to love our neighbors by lifting them up and by seeking the betterment of our communities. To be the hands and feet of who Jesus is calling us to love, to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is about not just being a "good" neighbor by not doing harm, it also requires seeing value, crossing barriers, and loving like never before. In this last year and a half of lockdowns, political tensions, and racial struggles, we need to better understand and seek the betterment of people who are different than us. To see that everyone is God's child and has a place in His Kingdom. We are called to help lift people up.

As Christ the King is embarking on the greatest outreach in our history through the Act2Thrive initiative, our neighbors will become friends, those struggling will be lifted with a loving heart and a caring hand. Walls that divide us will come tumbling down to expose God's true heavenly agenda for our communities. We want the Holy Spirit to move in us so we can experience how Jesus loves and how our hearts can grow to embody His presence as we reach the communities around us. As we enter this time, we are asking our church and its friends to be in prayer, to seek God's guidance and blessing on this sermon and book series. But, as we seek to be in our community and neighborhoods, we need to lift up all aspects of our church; our community relations directors, youth ministries, children's ministries, worship, adult discipleship, care, outreach, and of course our preaching to be able to seek after Jesus and bring Him to a hurting and broken world. Then, to seek to actively help our neighbors in healing, wellness, and making sure they have a chance to live out the gospel call in their lives.



This prayer guide, written by members of Christ the King, is meant to be used over the six weeks of the sermon series and seven weeks of the book study. You will see that instead of a devotion/prayer a day, they are grouped around two or three days. Take time to pray these prayers as part of your regular prayer time. As you lift up these prayers, please also pray for our groups that are meeting and our sermon series that the Holy Spirit moves in them and that people's lives are changed and called to action.

If you have not been able to make a book study group, please still pray for them and the movement that will take place. You can always pick up a book, *Neighborliness: Finding the Beauty of God Across Dividing Lines* by David Docusen online or we may have a couple of copies at the church. We will have extra small group guides at the church too if you would also like a copy.

Blessings as you embark on this prayer journey. May you too be touched by the Holy Spirit as we seek to better understand His call on our lives.

-Pastor Bill McKinley



A photograph of a red brick building with multiple windows. Some windows have white air conditioning units. A billboard is mounted on the roof, featuring a row of small house icons and the text "NEIGHBORLINESS BECAUSE GOD MADE US ALL". A large red rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the text "DAILY PRAYERS, DEVOTIONALS, AND SCRIPTURE".

# **NEIGHBORLINESS**

**BECAUSE GOD MADE US ALL**

**DAILY PRAYERS,  
DEVOTIONALS,  
AND SCRIPTURE**



# SEPT. 12-13

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## Love of Neighbor

**Mark 12:29-31 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."**

As this verse in Mark states so clearly this is God's GREATEST commandment. We can't call ourselves Christians without loving God and loving people. I think often of how intentional Jesus was to hang out with those people that were NOT like him. He didn't just gravitate to his friend's or his families' homes. I am so guilty of just "hitting the easy button" and hanging out with those that are like me – Christian moms, the same socioeconomic group, and those that basically line up with my belief system. It naturally takes more energy to do what Jesus calls us to do – love others – that means everyone!!!!

For me, the struggle is to be vulnerable with others so that they see that God is the one that I lean on for my identity and guidance. I get those walls up with "it's fine" and find it very hard to open up to others. But I have been so profoundly changed by other people's honesty and struggles and how they have overcome them by leaning on God. So, I try now to very intentionally meet people where they are. I dare say not one of us hasn't been hurt, betrayed, or just struggled with daily life at one time or another. But we tend to hide those struggles and act like we have it all together when I hear God saying, "be honest and more open so others can learn from your struggles."

I strive for the ". . . all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and to turn from the worldliness that trips me up constantly!! Jesus took it ALL for us on the cross, He is enough, and we want to show that to others. Literally being His hands and feet to everyone we meet, co-laboring with Jesus day in and day out.

### **Prayer:**

**Lord, may we all put this command at the forefront of all that we do. May it truly be our motivation throughout our days, to shine Your light into people's lives. Thank you so much for what Jesus did for us on the cross! Show us how to love you and to love people well, in your precious son's name.**

**Amen.**

# SEPT. 14-15

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## Who is My Neighbor

**Luke: 10:29-37** 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. 36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Who is my neighbor? We know the correct answer is everyone! And yes, that is biblically correct but is that practically correct? Can I be a good neighbor to everyone? In some ways yes, by cutting back on pollution, caring for the environment, donating to charities, etc. But what about the people on my street or neighborhood? Do I really care enough for the people I come into contact with daily? Is it easier to send money or clothes off to some faraway place where I don't have to interact with them? God calls us to neighborliness, and for that to be real, we must care for the family across the street, the people who are caught in endless poverty in my city, the struggles of the kids who aren't "mine" in the school system. I must ask God to show me the neighbors with whom I need to be in more intimate contact.

True neighborliness in this passage is just not the stranger, but anyone God places in my path. In this story, even the community leader passed by the injured person. Too often we are also the one passing people by when we could do something. This story also shows that helping others will cost us something. The Samaritan had to spend some of his own money to help and heal his neighbor. What are we willing to give up, what are we willing to spend to help others be healed? We cannot just send money far off, but we need to look closer for the neighbors in our own lives. God has planted us where we are for a reason. As we enter our communities, help us to see those people he has planted in front of us that we normally wouldn't reach out to or might even ignore.

### **Prayer:**

**Lord help me not to step over others but, to see them, to hear them, and get to know them. Too often Lord, we only see those overseas or far off. Help all of us to see the neighbors who need help and support in our own backyards. Help us realize being a good neighbor will cost us something and be willing to serve others.**

**In your Holy Name, Amen.**



# SEPT. 16-18

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## Entertaining Angels

**Hebrews 13:1-2 1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.**

Today's verses give us two very simple and direct commands; continue loving one another as brothers and sisters and show hospitality to strangers. It is a practical reminder to show kindness to people who are far from like us. It is a reminder that we are all obligated to humbly love one another because God first loved us.

It is often so easy for us to get caught up in our very busy lives that we don't take the time to show hospitality to strangers. We feel we can't be bothered. We see it as a distraction to what is important to us. Instead of seeing these times as distractions, we should see them as Jesus saw them in his ministry; as divine opportunities to show the love and care of God. Sometimes God might be interrupting your life for a good reason. Don't miss the chance to focus on the people that God has brought to you for help.

This doesn't mean that you have to give every homeless person you see money or food, but you could give them a word of encouragement. You can show hospitality to the strangers you pass at work or on the street with a simple good morning or God bless you. The point is you may never know the blessing you might be to them. If you miss the opportunity to show those strangers around you hospitality, you might be denying angels and the blessings that God might be sending you through them.

Have I ever talked to an angel without knowing it? What a wonderful question to ponder. I wonder if by showing kindness to a stranger, I could actually have been showing kindness to a messenger of God. I have found that hospitality not only allows me the privilege of blessings others, it is also God's gift of blessing to me.

If the people of the world were to truly apply today's verses in their lives, imagine the change it would make in our culture.

### Prayer:

**Heavenly Father I come to you today with a grateful heart for all the blessings you have bestowed on me this day. Help me to share the generosity and love you have shown to me with all those I meet. Help me to see my neighbors and the strangers I meet with the eyes of Jesus. In Jesus holy and precious name.**

**Amen.**

# SEPT. 19-20

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## Breaking Walls

**Ephesians 2:14-16** **14** For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15** by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16** and in one body to reconcile both to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

We have walls around us in our society, not physical walls so much, as walls that separate us and divide us as people. Walls can be based on ethnic backgrounds, education, economic status, politics, religion, and any other thing people can disagree on. We have let the divisions overwhelm us – breaking down families, friends, and communities. Christ calls us to be in unity of Spirit as Christians. For this to happen, we must break down the walls that divide us. Where can we find common ground and break down walls? In our passage Eph. 2:14, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” It is Jesus that breaks down the walls and barriers.

We can’t do this under our own power – this passage even says “our flesh” can’t break down barriers. It is only Jesus that can break down the barriers. We can try, but we will fail. When we submit our lives to Jesus and seek His way and not ours, walls will fall – we will stop seeing people as “others” and start seeing people as the children of God they were created to be, even if there are disagreements. As we dive deeper into neighborliness, we start seeing people as fellow travelers and less as projects to be fixed. We will see them more as people on a journey, and that we can work together to help raise up all and solve the problems and issues that divide us.

Ultimately in Eph. 2:15, it is through him that one new humanity is created and divisions are erased, thus making peace. God’s peace is not just the absence of conflict, but it is the biblical principle of completeness, of having enough. It is only through the reconciliation power of Jesus that this can happen.

### **Prayer:**

**Lord help me to submit to you daily in prayer, scripture, worship and community. It is only through this submission that my will be broken and I will see others as fellow children. Help me bring Jesus into every conversation, every meeting and every decision I make as I seek to know my neighbor.**

**Amen.**





# SEPT. 21-22

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## Turning the World Upside Down

**Matthew 5:3–12 He said: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

What is the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker? God calls us to more than peacekeeping, which is passive. He calls us to peacemaking, which is active. God does not call us to maintain the status quo, to accept what has always been. God calls us to peacemaking, to the bringing of heaven to earth. In order to make peace, we have to challenge any belief, system, idea, thought or practice that leads to disunity. In order to make peace, we have to do the deep inner work of trusting Christ to lead us into self-reflection, growth, and conversations with others that may be uncomfortable.

In order to make true peace, we have to examine who in our world is marginalized, and we have to elevate their needs in order to create unity and harmony. This type of peacemaking is kingdom work. God ordains this peacemaking, and He tells us that in this work, we are blessed. To paraphrase Maya Angelou's work *Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem*, peace is not just the absence of war but rather a harmony among all spirits. When have you felt true harmony in a place? Imagine if the Church was full of harmonious spirits, committed to deeply understanding one another and advocating for one another!

In endeavoring to make peace and create harmony, we will face challenges both within ourselves and among others. Peacemaking turns what the world values upside down. In peacemaking, we challenge old patterns of behavior and thinking, and we challenge ideas and systems that give some people more power and more value than other people. In the same passage that God calls us to peacemaking, He also tells us that we are blessed when we mourn, blessed when we are meek, blessed when we are merciful, blessed when we are pure-hearted, and blessed when we have broken spirits.



# SEPT. 21-22 CONT.

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In the same way that peacemaking turns the world upside down, so does God's teaching that we are blessed when we embody these postures. God knows we will experience many difficulties in peacemaking and harmony creation, but He promises to be with us in creating this shalom.

**Prayer:**

**Lord, Prince of Peace, please guide me in the way of peacemaking, not peacekeeping. Give me clarity and help me discern in what areas of life I am just accepting the status quo. Reveal to me opportunities for deeper learning and engagement with people who are different from me. Break my heart for what breaks yours. Help me to make peace daily, even when it's uncomfortable and even when my spirit is broken. Teach our church body how to make true peace in our community of Southwest Charlotte and beyond. Guide our church body into true reconciliation and true harmony. Thank you for your goodness and mercy, every day of our lives.**

**Amen.**



# SEPT. 23-25

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## From Every Nation

**Acts 2: 5-12** 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

"What does this mean?" That is the real question as we look at this passage and what God's desire is for us. In this passage, all these different nations, languages, and people are mentioned. Some of them are natural enemies, different colors of skin, different beliefs about God, and certainly different cultural traditions, but they have one thing in common. They are hearing the word of God preached to them in their language. They are hearing about who Jesus is because of the power of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean that everyone can know Jesus and have a relationship with Him? It means that we are all one in Christ, that a relationship with Him is open to everyone.

"What does this mean?" It means that as we seek to be better neighbors and to seek out healing and relationships, all are welcome at the table. As we look at this list, we see the world is gathered, waiting to hear and be lifted. The same Jesus comes to each person and nation in His way. In vs. 11 we hear the writer say they were declaring the wonders of God in each group's language. That is how we seek to be – helping each group hear the word of God and how wonderful it is, how it will transform their lives, their communities, and the way they see each other. As we work through this time to build neighborliness, let's work to reach out to those who speak different languages, who have different customs or cultural contexts, calling on the Holy Spirit to give us the power to cross those often difficult lines in the name of Jesus.

### Prayer:

**Holy Spirit Come! Come and break down the barriers of culture and language. Answer for us "What does this mean?" Help us to hear your call to be the first that brings in, not just different languages and cultures, but people who are different from us. Thank you, Lord, for being one, but coming to every tribe, tongue, and nation.**

**Amen.**

# SEPT. 26-27

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## Doing for Him

**Matthew 25:37-40 (NLT)** 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Several years ago, I read "The Nine Arts of Spiritual Conversations." One concept that keeps coming up in my life is the art of "noticing." Years ago, a friend lovingly confronted me for ignoring her as we passed each other in the school hallway. "Karen, you walked right by me, and didn't even notice me." There was hurt in her voice in being overlooked, even by someone walking by her in the hallway.

Each day, we "walk" by people. Whether it is someone pushing another grocery cart, or waiting in line, or even passing by in the hallway, we encounter people with real needs. In our neighborhoods, we walk by homes with people who may not have slept last night due to a crying baby, or a couple that is not speaking to each other, or a teen who has been isolated by his or her peers.

But what about the one who is dressed differently in your workplace? The one who may wear the same clothes day after day? The one who moved in down the street and no one has greeted yet? How about the woman who sits alone at the coffee shop?

If we "notice" those around us, we may see differences. And if we look beyond the differences, we may see; their needs, their emotional hurt and pain, the economic challenges, the accent from another country, or the wondering where the next rent or mortgage payment is going to come from.

Jesus was telling the disciples that when we do "one of these things" to someone, to the "least of these", we do it to Him! They sound relatively simple: feeding, giving drink, hospitality to a stranger, clothing, visiting the sick or imprisoned. Physical needs. Noticing. Responding.

Where do we start? Right where we are, in our neighborhoods, in our workplace, in our school, in our church, with those around us. The ones we notice if we look beyond ourselves. Who are the "least of these" in your life?

### Prayer:

**Loving Father, open my eyes. Let me see the needs of those around me. May I look beyond our differences, and see, really see, their needs. Help me to respond in love, as the Holy Spirit prompts me. May I be a noticer in my community, and then a first responder.**

**Amen.**





# SEPT. 28-29

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## Love in Deed and Truth

**1 John 3:16-18** **16** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

When the disciple John wrote his pastoral letters to several congregations, he was encouraging the church and followers of Christ to grow in love for all people. Even in the 1st century, there were divisions and walls that separated people based on ethnicity, culture, economics, and sex. In this passage, John defines what love is when he says, 'By this we know love'. The this he speaks of is then defined as 'that He (Christ) laid down His life for us'. Jesus didn't just talk the talk; He took action by walking the walk! His message of love was clearly defined when Jesus willingly hung on the cross as a sacrifice for each of us.

The passage continues by saying we should do the same thing, 'lay down our lives for the brothers (others)'. John isn't suggesting we hang on that cross, but that we do sacrifice for others who are in need, keeping our hearts tender to those needs, regardless of how the individuals might be different from us. Can we look at others through the eyes of Christ, blind to the differences between us, seeing only our commonalities as children of the Father? This is how we show love and justice in a broken world.

John ends by calling us all, 'Little children'. As children, we learned a phrase that speaks simply and clearly to the heart of this passage, Actions speak louder than words! It is through our actions, not our words, that we live out Your sacrifice, showing God's love living in us. It is through our actions that we live out the belief that we are all brothers and sisters, children of God, all part of one family!

### Prayer:

**Lord, thank You for the sacrifice You made for us all. Help us to understand how to live out Your sacrifice in this broken, challenging world so that we are an example of You and Your love. Guard our hearts, our words, our actions.**

**Amen.**

# SEPT. 30-OCT. 2

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## Who is Invited?

**Matthew 22:8-10** 8 Then he said to his servants, "The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find." 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

The wedding feast was one of the most important festivities of the time. It makes perfect sense Jesus would use the celebration in a parable. To have such an important event rejected so harshly by those invited, would have surely disappointed and even enraged the king. The people hearing this story were able to understand the significance that after this rejection, the king was opening the wedding to anyone that would come.

So, imagine this: You are hanging out with friends or family, nothing much exciting is going on. You might be shopping for food or clothes, killing time in the town square, or you might be wondering where your next meal will come from. You might even be about to commit a crime. Then one of the king's servants comes up to you and all the other people on the streets and says, "you are all invited to the wedding celebration for the king's son!" Can you imagine how that would make you feel? The king invited YOU. Not only you, but all around you. The rich, the poor, the beggar, and the thief. No matter where you came from, what your background was or what you looked like, EVERYONE was invited. I imagine this would have been the perfect vision of what God, our King, wants Heaven to look like. I imagine this is what He wants our churches and our communities to be like today.

### Prayer:

**Father, thank you for loving us, for who we are, who you have created us to be. Thank you for opening the feast to all of us, so we can all have a seat at your table. Help us to continually seek to reach others to bring into your kingdom, to celebrate in the beauty of your salvation.**

**Amen.**



# OCT. 3-4

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## Restoring Our Community

**Isaiah 58:12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.**

Over the last year and a half, we have seen the cracks and brokenness of our society more than we have in a long time. God calls us to take action during the struggles that our cities and communities have had in this time. It is easy to sit on the sidelines and either ignore the struggles, to point fingers at others, to be angry, or to just run away. But God has called Christians to not only be a light on a hill that can't be hidden, but to actually "repair the breach." In our scripture, God is calling us as His people to participate in his kingdom-building process. We can't ignore the plight of the downtrodden or the people who are different from us, but to rebuild the "ruins", to look for the needs of our communities, families, and churches.

God's call has always been active and not passive. Some people only hear the passive part, and they forget to take Jesus out in the world with them as they serve and lead others. Some Christians only preach salvation and forget that it is hard to hear the message of hope when your belly is empty and you don't see hope in your life. It is passages like this and others in our prayer guide that point to our having to bring both the gospel of hope and outreach to help serve and uplift people. Our passage from Isaiah calls us to raise up the "foundations of many generations." Jesus himself is our foundation. When we call on the Holy Spirit to help us with restoration, it will be successful because we will be focused on Jesus and not ourselves or our desires. It is through Him alone that true rebuilding will happen, and we will be partaking in a glorious Kingdom-building movement.

### **Prayer:**

**Lord God, help us to rely on you to rebuild our communities. After such a year as we have had, help us to seek to ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance in how we rebuild and who we seek to serve. Help us to focus first on you as the source of all restoration, both for our souls and for those around us. Gracious Spirit, move in your church to mobilize it in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

# OCT. 5-6

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## Jesus Restores

**Luke 4:17-20** **17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor . . . ."**

Imagine being a first-century Jew in the town of Nazareth under Roman rule. Your Jewish tradition has taught you that the Messiah will come and restore your people to a position of power and wealth. You expect the Messiah to be a warrior, someone who will come to save the Jewish people by a violent display of the Lord's displeasure with the oppression of His chosen people. As was customary, you spend the Sabbath at the synagogue. You notice that an unfamiliar man is in the synagogue today, you vaguely recognize him and, perhaps, he is the eldest son of Joseph, a local carpenter. He stands up to read and is given the scroll of Isaiah. You know much of this sacred text which talks of the Lord's justice and His redemptive plan for His people. As this man concludes his reading, he claims that the prophecy is fulfilled claiming to be the Messiah and in your utter confusion you witness the crowd at the synagogue become enraged and run the man out of town.

This man looks nothing like the Messiah you have been taught to expect. He did not choose to read the prophecies about regaining cities and land, about the Lord's vengeance and wrath, about the rightful place of the Jewish people. Instead, he has declared that he will preach to the poor, release the captives, and set the oppressed free. You leave the synagogue that day wondering who that man was and if he is the Messiah sent to fulfill the prophecies handed down by your ancestors.

When we put ourselves in the shoes of someone who encountered Jesus that day in the synagogue, we see just how radically different Jesus was from the messianic expectation. He was not a warrior, He was not proclaiming the greatness of the Hebrew people and insisting on their return to power. He was a carpenter's son who chose to highlight a passage from Isaiah focused on the Lord's care for those at the margins of society. A passage that speaks to freedom from oppression rather than amassing worldly power. These were Jesus's first recorded words read from scripture within the walls of a synagogue. As we stop and reflect on what Jesus believed was the most important as he proclaimed Himself the Messiah, we will see that He first highlights restoration for those at the margins and He positions Himself as the Messiah who, through His redemptive power on the cross, can bring freedom amid this broken world.

# OCT. 5-6 CONT.

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## Prayer:

Dear God – As I read Your word, I try to find You in every passage. I ponder how the passage reveals more of Your heart to mine. Sometimes I see you in the defiant actions of women like Shiphra and Puah. Sometimes I see you in the quiet whisper in the wind. As we learn to better love and care for our neighbor, I pray that our heart is guided by Yours. You care so much for the marginalized, for the underprivileged, the minoritized, and the incarcerated that You proclaimed their worth and freedom in your first ever recorded sermon. I pray that my heart reflects Your heart and that I care for not only the spiritual, but earthly, freedom of all my neighbors and, especially, for those neighbors who are cast aside for I know that when I care for them, I am caring for You. Sometimes this care will come in bold, defiant actions, and sometimes it will come in whispered prayers in the night. Please let all of those be within Your will and reveal Your heart.

Amen.



# OCT. 7-9

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## Restoration is What God Commands

**Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love  
kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

Throughout history, humans have asked God, "What do you want of me?" Too often we don't want to hear what he says, or we think his words are confusing. But the prophet Micah records exactly what God says he wants from us. He states it clearly. He starts by asking what does the LORD requires of you. The speaker is acknowledging that it always starts with God, an acknowledgment that he is ultimately in control, that he is not a far-off God, but LORD of our lives. He then says to "do justice." The phrase here is a call to do an action. It is not enough to think about justice or to wish for it, but to go out seeking to bring justice about. Justice in the Bible is a word that has a deeper meaning than how we view it today. It has to do with providing for people's well-being, restoring what was taken, reconciliation, providing enough for people. God is commanding us to do these things in our daily lives and for the daily lives of people around us.

The second command is to love kindness. This phrase is an intimate act of how we are supposed to react to family. We are called to love and do kindness to the stranger, just as we would to our own family. We should welcome people in and treat them just as we would for our closest relatives.

Finally, God says walk humbly with Him. This is the deep abiding relationship between us and God's deeds. We are called to realize He is God, and we are not. Walking humbly with God is related to the first two in that when we walk humbly with God, we can love with kindness and do justice. This shows our humility and love for God and our neighbor.

God requires of us what he has done for us – saved us, redeemed us, brought justice to us, etc. God's call is for us to do the same for those around us.

### **Prayer:**

**Lord God, move in us to not just sit on the side lines, but to get up and take action. When we know you and have you in our lives, we then have to do something with our lives. Help us to seek out where we can bring justice and raise people up. Help us to love everyone as family and seek their betterment. As we seek to move in the world, help us to have humble hearts and attitudes to seek your will and not our own.**

**Amen.**





# OCT. 10-11

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## He Will Heal

**Revelation 21:4-6** **4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”**

Everyday news agencies remind us that the world is broken. Stories of violence, deceit, greed, and destruction seem to be mankind's narrative. Nature too seems afflicted with suffering, with drought, disease, and death. I think back to the Genesis account of creation when God rested on the seventh day and declared that it was good, and I find myself yearning for something better – freedom from not only the world's disfunction but also my own brokenness. God knew that His creation masterpiece would become tainted with sin and death. He knew we could not save ourselves, so He provided a way out. He provided salvation. He built a pathway to redemption and healing that leads us first to Christ's cross and then forward in a walk of faith in His grace and power. Becoming spiritually alive in Christ is indeed life-changing. However, it also brings an even deeper longing for what God originally designed. Now that we have spiritual eyes, it is now impossible to ignore the suffering that exists in our families, our friends, our neighborhoods, and our communities. Many hide pain and regret behind polite smiles and friendly waves. Others wear their feelings more openly displaying frustration and anger to those around them.

The journey we began at the cross now leads us through fields of opportunity as ambassadors of God's grace. The forgiveness and hope we enjoy is a gift we can extend to others in a troubled world. We are part of God's plan to provide healing and hope to a broken world, even to those who may seem hostile. Revelation 21:4-6 speaks of a glorious finish line when God brings his redemption plan full circle back to beauty, healing, and wholeness. Indeed, what was broken will be made new. May God's hope inspire us each day as we journey together!

### **Prayer:**

**Lord, thank you for providing me a pathway to healing and personal redemption through Christ's death on my behalf. Thank you for your promise of eternity in your presence without tears, pain, or suffering. Help me to see everyone around me as you see them – your valuable creation made in your image and needing your grace. Lead me to those who need help and encouragement. Help me to be your hands and feet for those in need today.**

**Amen.**

# OCT. 12-13

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## All One in Christ

**Galatians 3: 26 – 29** 26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons and daughters of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

In the Old Testament, there was a distinction between men and women, a feeling that women were less than men since they weren't circumcised. Women were often looked down upon as not part of, or fully part of, the covenant. Anyone who was not a Jew was a "Greek", a non-Jew, and was to be kept separate, not allowed table fellowship with Jews. If you were a slave, (about 25% of the population at the time) you weren't considered a good Jew. You were property to be bought and sold at your master's convenience. There was a separation among the people. Paul in Galatians does something amazing! He brings God's word to us to say stop! Everyone is my child. Because you have put on Christ, you are all equal. It doesn't matter what gender you are, whether free or slave, what color, ethnic background – you are all the same.

Wow! We are also called sons and daughters – we are part of God's family and have inherited from him the ability to be part of his family. No other faith calls their people sons and daughters. This is an intimate relationship and if we are all sons and daughters, then we are all equal before God, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is powerful. This is all done because we have put on Christ. This is such an amazing phrase – we change our clothes, and we are called to "wear" Christ. To put him on means to take on the person of Jesus. He becomes part of us, and we are walking in him. When we seek to know Christ more through worship, prayer, service, study, and reading, we then can become more like him and once we do that, we become his children through faith and baptism – the engrafting in the family of God. This is open to everyone and we are thus equal and all children of the King. This is great news – everyone is called and equal at the table.

### Prayer:

**Lord God, help us to see each other as one. We too often look at appearances, skin color, clothes, tattoos, piercings, whatever is different from us and just see the outside. Holy Spirit, convict us of these judgements as I put on Jesus and grow deeper in faith and love. Help me reach out to all my brothers and sisters to welcome them and to love them as fellow members of the body.**

**Amen.**





# OCT. 14-16

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## Breaking Down Barriers

**Ephesians 2:13-14** **13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.**

Human beings need boundaries. We need physical boundaries, we need personal boundaries, we need emotional boundaries, we need family boundaries, we need boundaries between work and rest, and we need all sorts of other boundaries too. We need boundaries to survive and we need them to thrive. In fact, we need boundaries for our very sense of self; our boundaries enable us to define who we are and who we are not. When we have good boundaries in place, we are generally stronger and more resilient. That equips us to love and help others from a position of strength.

But in this sinful and broken world, boundaries often become hostile walls. Walls are a way of keeping other people out: physically, personally, emotionally, and in various other ways. Putting up a wall might mean shutting down, refusing to listen, moving away, or turning off. But it is not just in our personal relationships that we put up walls; there are also walls between groups, communities, and even nations. Sometimes there are literal, physical walls which act as symbols and expressions of the relational walls. Walls remind us that there is something very wrong in our world and in our relationships.

The walls come when we forget the gospel of Jesus Christ. They come when we forget that we, like others, are sinners in need of salvation. They come when we forget that those who believe in Jesus Christ are reconciled together to God, and that God loves us and forgives us and makes us secure and holy, together, by the cross of Christ. That's who we really are. As soon as we forget who we really are, we define ourselves in some other way. So, we need to keep coming back to the cross of Christ. Because it's in his death that the walls are broken down.

What walls might you have put up against others? Are all of these walls really just healthy boundaries, or do you have some hostile and illegitimate walls? How does the death of Jesus help to break down any illegitimate walls you may have?

### Prayer:

**Thank you for sending Jesus to break down the dividing wall of hostility. Thank you for the peace and reconciliation that we have in you. In the name of Jesus, our Peace.**

**Amen.**

# OCT. 17-18

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## The Power of the Spirit

**Acts 2:1-4** 1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

How have you experienced the Holy Spirit of God in your life? If you are uncertain, you might ask yourself why. You may come before God in prayer and ask Him, "I want to receive your Spirit. Show me, God, how to prepare myself for this amazing outpouring from you." In this passage, we get some hints as to how. In other passages of Scripture, we get some hints as to why and what for.

First, let us look at how. Jesus had commanded His followers to gather together because He wanted to give them a gift. They were obedient to His command and so gathered and worshipped God. As they were doing this, God fulfilled His promise and poured out on them, like rain, the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit gave them special abilities to speak and share the love of Jesus with cultures all over the world. We do not just receive the Holy Spirit in the gathered community of worship, although powerful there, we position ourselves to receive God's Spirit whenever we are obedient to what God asks us to do. Jesus instructs us in the Bible numerous commands like loving neighbor, caring for the poor and broken, making disciples, worshipping God, etc. The Holy Spirit of God will come upon us and fill and equip us when we are carrying out these instructions from Jesus.

Second, let us look at why. In passages like John 14:26, Jesus wants to give us the Holy Spirit so that we might have the mind of God, so that we might remember God's promises and be empowered to do what Jesus instructs us to do as His followers. How important that is in this world. The world can be so confusing. Who should we follow? What is right and what is wrong? What is truth and what is not? We do not have to worry about any of that when the Holy Spirit of God is upon us. The Holy Spirit instructs us in all truth and shows us what is right or wrong and teaches us how to love our neighbor, break down divisions, elevate the value of all God's people. It is impossible to walk in truth and to love and care in these ways without the Holy Spirit. When our hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit, the outflow of our love and selflessness looks different from the world. That difference is evidence that we are covered in the Spirit of God, standing in His presence, obedient to His commands, faithful to His calling and equipped for His service.

### Prayer:

**Gracious God, thank you for giving us the gift of your Spirit. Draw us to yourself that we may receive a fresh anointing of your Spirit each day. Through your Spirit, align our wills to yours. Open our hearts to greater love. Purify our thoughts and actions. Help us serve the world in your name.**

**Amen!**

# OCT. 19-20

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## Perfect Love

**1 John 4:18-21** 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother and sister.

John is pretty straightforward in his teaching... "You hate your neighbor down the street? But go to church on Sunday mornings? And you profess to believe in God and love him? You're a liar!"

He says it pretty point-blank. What a clear reminder to us today.

In Genesis 1:27, it states that we were all made in the image of God. We're all brothers and sisters in him. If we do not love our brothers and sisters, who are created in Christ's likeness, how are we to love God himself, who we don't even see?

How often does Satan convince you to live in fear? Maybe it's because something is out of our comfort zone, or we lack confidence. Fear can't be our binding factor, as it says in verse 18. We tend to fear because we forget that God made us in His perfect love. God's great love can cast away all of our fearful thoughts.

We must not fear new relationships or avoid loving someone because we have nothing in common with them. God calls us to love ALL, because love first comes from him. It can be hard to connect with someone that looks different than us, speaks different than us, lives a lifestyle different than us, but God calls us to love anyway.

When we love God, when we fully embrace the fact that He's adopted us as His own, we must take the bold step out of our comfort zone and into a relationship with our other brothers and sisters in Christ. As we're adopted into the family of Christ, we aren't all going to look the same, act the same, or think the same, but we're family. We're each His children and we are called to love one another because He first displayed this great love.

How do these verses hit home for you? Have you lived in hate toward a brother or sister, a neighbor, a co-worker, an employer, a person you saw walking down the street? How can you redirect your heart and mind toward a relationship of love for that individual?

### Prayer:

**God, thank you for loving us, despite our unworthiness. Lord, help us to love like you love, because love first comes from you. Help us to identify the relationships in our lives that have been a barrier to living fully in relationship with you. Help us to love deeply, love without limits, and love like you love.**

**Amen.**



# OCT. 21-23

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## Building up Devon Ragoonath

**1 Corinthians 10:23-24 23 "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.**

Did you know that when you receive Jesus as your Savior, your life changes? When we surrender our lives to Jesus, we receive forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus fulfilled all of God's demands and made a way for us to be in relationship with Him. However, our freedoms in Christ come with responsibility. Jesus, while He has given us freedom, has also called us to a mission. We are His representatives here on earth and that changes the way we live. Paul tells us to consider whether our lawful actions are beneficial and constructive to help others. Though it may be legal or possible to perform a certain act, the circumstances surrounding it may make it a sin. Even if not a sin, we still must consider whether we are promoting the welfare of our neighbors before we act. We've been given the privilege and responsibilities of representing Jesus through the way we live and we must honor God in everything we do. We must always ask ourselves, is what I have on display right now going to lead people to Jesus or is it going to turn them away? Our love for Jesus means we must love like Jesus, always putting others first and our neighbors before ourselves.

### **Prayer:**

**Father, thank You for the liberty and freedoms we have in You. Help us to live a life that is worthy of You. Help us to be helpful and to always put our brothers and sisters in Christ, before us. God, in all that we say and do may we be increasingly conformed to the likeness of Jesus.**

**In Your name we pray, Amen.**



# OCT. 24-25

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## My Commandment

**John 15: 12-17 12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another."**

This passage is such a powerful reminder of God's intention for our relationship with Him. It magnifies the depth, purity, and alignment of that relationship. How would you measure your friendship with Jesus? Jesus is saying to you and me that the ultimate in relational depth is the willingness to lay down one's life for another. The value and worth of that person is lifted up on the podium of true love. To top it off, you and I are on that podium with Jesus. This is exactly what He has done for us through His death on the cross. But there is one thing in being willing to die for someone and another to be willing to be their friend. Jesus addresses both of those in this passage. Friendship for Jesus means alignment. It is not only being willing to die for someone but being of the same mind as someone. To be of the same mind means that you value and treasure the same character, purpose and design. The relationship Jesus has with the disciples has now moved from simply following and doing what Jesus says to full alignment of friendship. They are no longer just servants of Jesus. They are friends of Jesus. WOW! Where would you say you are? What this means then is that their alignment – obedience, values, character, purpose, love – is demonstration of the fruit of their friendship. They no longer need to be told what to do as servants. They know what to do. It is in their hearts. To love as Jesus loves is in their DNA. This depth of relationship brings a remarkable surprise in Jesus' words. "Whatever you ask in my name, He may give it to you." This is not a risky statement from Jesus. It also isn't a "free for all" for us. This is Jesus acknowledging the empowerment of alignment. Jesus is saying, I will equip you with everything you need as you live, act and serve others as I would. Jesus chose us to do this in a world that is broken and divided. Jesus saved us, redeemed us, forgave us, empowered us, loved us – to do this in a world that is broken and divided. Will you cross dividing lines and show this kind of love? Will you embody the friendship of Jesus and lay down your life so others may simply live and be loved? To be on mission with Jesus is not easy, but His promise to give us whatever we need as we do it is true.

### Prayer:

**Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us even to giving your life. Thank you for opening the door of friendship to us and giving us your Holy Spirit to teach and align our hearts to yours. Help us to love as you love. Help us to see the needs of others, meet them where they are and raise them up on the podium as ones you love as your image bearers. Amen!**



# OCT. 26-27

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## Worthwhile Debt

**Romans 13:8-10** **8** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Is Paul making the argument that we should never be in debt? Actually not! Paul's encouragement here is that we have more important things to do than to acquire so much stuff that we become in debt. Paul took the second coming of Jesus seriously, as well as the priority of loving one another over the focus on acquisition and debt. The Bible does teach us not to get involved in frivolous debt that we cannot repay, or that feeds our selfish, indulgent desires. We might classify this as consumer debt or addictive spending debt. With this debt, we do not have the discipline to save before purchasing, and therefore no capacity to be generous to the things of God because we have been selfish to our own desires.

The debt that should never be paid in full is the continued debt to love one another. This is the new commandment that Jesus gave for us to love one another "just as" He loved us. His love for us was a sacrificial. It was a love that cost. It was not easy, routine, or unnoticeable. It was a love that was not about His own comfort, but rather the eternal comfort for us. It was a love that put His life on the line for the sake of our lives. It was a love that paid a debt – the debt of sin – versus wanting a debt repaid. This kind of love was visibly evident and therefore revealed the heart of God.

The expectation God has of those who follow Jesus is not to repay the sacrificial cost of the cross, but to live for others in the same way, from a genuine heart of gratitude that comes from receiving heaven, forgiveness, and eternity.

Jesus said: "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42).

God wants us to be generous because that is who God is. Our generosity of love toward others and love for God is visible through giving and helping those less advantaged. This is the point Paul wants to make with Jesus' followers. Focus and make yourself available for what is MOST important – loving and making a difference in the lives of our neighbors. That is the true mark of a Christian.

### Prayer:

**Lord Jesus teach us your way. Grow our hearts to love as you love. Open our eyes to see the needs of our neighbors. Remove our self-focused values and increase our desire to sacrifice as you did so others may truly live.**

**Amen!**





# OCT. 28-30

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## Above All Put On Love

**Colossians 3:14-17** 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Put on love...as you read these verses in Colossians, do you get the image of putting on clothes? I do. It stirs in my mind the act of putting on my shirt, pants, shoes, jewelry - everything I put on every single day. In today's world, there is a lot of chaos, uneasiness, and lack of peace. People are different in many ways, from the color of their skin, their upbringing, their financial situation - you name it, people are different. And, unfortunately, in many cases, this means people are treated differently, treated less than, and worse, treated with hate.

So, how do we, as Jesus loving Christians, act differently? How do we begin to make a change in our world so that racial, ethnic, and economic justice can begin to take place?

Isn't it funny how God answers our question with three very simple words...  
**PUT ON LOVE.**

If we start each day "putting on love", we start a movement of perfect harmony. We start a movement of peace. We start a movement to becoming ONE body. If we let the words of Christ live out loud in our hearts and in our lives, we can begin to make a real difference in this world. One person can make a difference by putting on love, but if we as the family of Christ started each and every day by putting on love, we can make a real impact in our world!

I believe we all want to bring about unity with ALL of our brothers and sisters in Christ. So, when you get up each day, remember as you are getting dressed, to put on love. Wear it proudly in the world. Show everyone you meet Who you represent. And remember, to do everything you do in the name of Jesus and change will begin.

### Prayer:

**Gracious heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the amazing gift of Love. You sent us the perfect example to follow. Today, and every day, I pray that we each put on your love as comfortably as we put on our shirt. As we face each day, I pray we wear that love proudly and loudly for you. I pray that as we come into contact with all the people that you've placed in our path, that we show your love, your compassion, your peace to them so that we can become a culture of unity. We pray for all those who are mistreated for any reason, and especially those mistreated due to their skin color, financial situation or ethnic background. I pray you go before us, beside us, and behind us in this journey to ONE. It's in the most holy name of your Son Jesus we pray.**

**Amen!**

# Prayer Journal and Note Taking

# Prayer Journal and Note Taking





# **NEIGHBORLINESS**

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