

UNIFIED unified

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A 21 DAY

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PRAYER

prayer

INITIATIVE

"I do not ask for these only, but
also for those who believe in me
through their word, that they
may all be one, just as you,
Father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe
that you have sent me."

JOHN 17:20–21

JESUS DESIRES FOR US TO LIVE OUT HIS PRAYER.

The prayer of Jesus was a simple prayer for oneness. He prayed that all his followers – no matter their race, age, or even voting preferences – would be unified. Above all else, he prayed that there would be this cross-based, blood-bought, grace-purchased oneness that would be so powerful, enduring, and counter-cultural that onlookers would believe in him. Essentially, Jesus staked his reputation and his fame on our unity and oneness.

In the last 2000 years, it seems like every church, in every country and every generation, has struggled in some way with this prayer. Including our present generation, our country follows a long history and pattern of division, prejudice, racism, and disunity. We see this between ages. We see this between races. We see this between political parties. We see it here, there, and everywhere.

For 2019, our hope as a church is to help answer his prayer beginning with Northeast Ohio. Our hope is that as a people we would move from separation to oneness, move from disunity to unity, and move from being divided to being unified. Not for our own sake, but his. Not for our name, but his. Not for our fame, but for his.

We believe this sort of unity and oneness doesn't start with a class, a program, or an event. It doesn't begin with a movie, a book, or a podcast. It starts with prayer.

Starting Monday, February 4, we are inviting the whole church into a 21-day prayer initiative called Unified. This prayer initiative will culminate in a Just Worship Night on Sunday, February 24. On each of these 21 days, there will be passages of Scripture to read and different prayers to follow. And who knows, instead of making Jesus wait on his prayer to be answered, we might just start making Jesus famous.

We will divide the 21 days into three weeks.

Week 1: Divided and Apart

Week 2: Jesus and the Gospel

Week 3: Unified and Together

Week 1: Feb. 4–10

Divided + Apart

What do you think makes us so divided? Why do we all struggle to get along? There are many reasons, and this first week will be introspective as we reflect on some of the causes for the division and the lack of unity we experience with each other.

Monday

We separate // Galatians 2:12–14

Peter, a Jew, separated himself from a group of people, the Gentiles. Like Peter, there are certain types of people, even Christians, who we tend to separate ourselves from. Take time to think on the ways you separate yourself from some kinds of Christians, whether by race, political party, age, or any number of other situations, then confess how that separation is not in step with the gospel.

Tuesday

We devalue // John 1:45–46

We all tend to devalue some people like Nathanael did with people from Nazareth. We can think higher of ourselves and less of others on account of where they're from or how they look. Reflect and confess your devaluing of certain types of people, and over-valuing of yourself.

Wednesday

We ignore // Luke 10:29–32

The priest saw the hurting, broken man and rather than helping him, he ignored him and passed on to the other side. He saw the issue. He could've helped but for whatever reason he decided not to help. What are the problems we see, we could've helped, but that we decided not to after all was said and done? Take time to review moments where you have crossed the street and ignored the issues of other Christians.

Thursday

We fight // James 4:1–2

I want what I want, when I want it. That's an aggressive way of putting it, but no less accurate. We are people inwardly curved in on ourselves, people who are just selfish. Also, if we don't get what we want, then we throw a fit. We fight and quarrel with each other. Much of our division is rooted merely in our unmet selfish desires. Think about whom you've argued or disagreed with in the past, and then confess your role and part in it.

Friday

We favor // Acts 6:1

One of the first problems in the early church was racial. One group (the Hebrews) favored caring for their widows over widows from another group (the Hellenists). They cared more for people that looked like them and shared their ethnicity. Shared faith in Jesus wasn't even enough to care about someone who was different. Reflect and confess how you favor one group of people over another.

Saturday

We fear // Acts 9:26

Rightly or wrongly, the early disciples were terrified of Paul when he first became a Christian. They feared him and didn't trust what God had done in his life. Often, we can wrongly be afraid of other believers, for many reasons. We let their past impact how we treat them in the present. Confess your fear and ask God to remove it and replace it with a deeper trust in our God.

Sunday

Let's lament // Psalm 6:3

The Psalmist was grieving, mourning, and lamenting on account of the pain that he was enduring. The question he asks merely is, how long? How much longer God? May we grieve, mourn, and lament our current situation and our present pain that flows from our division. How much longer, Lord, until we act unified?

Week 2: Feb. 11–17

Jesus + Gospel

The division between people doesn't compare to the division between God and us. Ever since the Garden of Eden, every human being has had a broken relationship with God. We wanted nothing to do with him, and we had no chance at reconciling with him unless he would make it happen himself. The good news is he did. This week we will explore how God reconciled us to him through Jesus, and what that means for our reconciliation with others.

Monday

God loved // Romans 5:6–8

When we wanted nothing to do with God, God gave everything for us. When we were anti-God, God was pro-us. When we were against him, and there was a division between us, he was for us and he loved us by sending his Son. Thank God for how he treated you, loved you, and pursued you. Ask him to help you love others as he loves you and others.

Tuesday

God pursued // John 1:14

When a relationship needs mending, someone needs to take the initiative in making the first move. One thing that is clear: God pursued us, and we didn't pursue him. It wasn't a short and straightforward pursuit, but instead it involved Jesus leaving heaven, coming to earth, and becoming human – all in the name of reconciliation. Take this very moment to thank God for his jealous pursuit of you.

Wednesday

God humbled // Philippians 2:8

Jesus humbled himself for you. The God who was, who is, and who is to come, humbled himself. He wasn't all about himself, his ego, his reputation, or ministry, but instead, he counted us more significant than himself. Thank God for his humility that took him to the cross. Confess the pride that is keeping you far from God and away from others. Lay yourself down.

Thursday

God suffered // 1 Peter 2:21–24

There is a cost to unity. There is a price to pay for a relationship to be healed and restored. Jesus suffered and paid the price for us. A relationship with you mattered enough to Jesus that he would suffer for you. And not just any kind of suffering but the kind that took his life in the most publicly humiliating ways possible – death on a cross. Thank God that you mattered that much to him. Perhaps the unity he is calling to you will also include humiliation on your part as well. Pray for wisdom.

Friday

God forgave // Psalm 103:8–12

God didn't have to treat us the way he did. Our sins, all of our iniquities, they deserved punishment and death. However, he didn't treat us as we deserve. Jesus took our treatment for us. Jesus underwent an undeserved death so that we could have an undeserved life. Now, our sins are forgiven, our sins are far from us. Receive his forgiveness today. Pray for the grace to extend it to someone else.

Saturday

God reconciled // 2 Corinthians 5:18–19

Through faith in Jesus, we are reconciled to God. There isn't hostility. There isn't division. There is oneness, unity, and peace. That's the gospel. Thank God for Jesus and our reconciliation and ask him to give you a heart like his. Ask him specifically who it is that you need to be reconciled with.

Sunday

God welcomed // Galatians 4:4–6

This passage gives us another picture of reconciliation that is more in-depth. This one is that of adoption. We have peace with God, but it's more than that. We are reconciled to God, but it's more than that. God welcomes us, embraces us, and adopts us as his children. Whatever we used to call him, he now invites us to call him Father. From being his enemies to being his children. All because of Jesus. Thank God that he is your Father and pray for the ability to see and treat your brothers and sisters as just that.

Monday

We reconcile // Philippians 4:2

We don't know what the conflict was or wasn't. We don't know whose fault it was or wasn't. Paul isn't concerned with those things. His concern is unity. His heart is for reconciliation in the Church. Hear this today, God is pleading with you, and he is requesting for you to have that same concern. Pray for an open heart this week, to agree in the Lord with those whom you have disagreements. Pray for unity with that person whom you have disunity. Pray for your enemies to become family.

Tuesday

We forgive // Matthew 18:21–22

There must be a time where we say no more. There must be a time where grace runs out, forgiveness goes dry, and reconciliation isn't an option. The hurt feels like it's too much. The pain is too fresh. The history is too long. How many times Jesus? Seven? We are all like Peter to a degree, but Jesus isn't like us. We're to forgive 77 times. In other words, forgive as much as is needed. Forgive as much as is necessary for unity and oneness. Pray for the willingness to forgive and to be forgiven.

Wednesday

We welcome // Philemon 1:15–16

A relationship of power changes to a relationship of love. A relationship riddled with conflict changes to one a peace. That's the story of Philemon and Onesimus. Onesimus was a hired hand for Philemon who ran away and met Jesus, and now Paul is encouraging Philemon to welcome him back. Sometimes our pursuit of unity requires an outside voice. It doesn't always come naturally. It didn't come easily for Philemon, and it might not for us. Pray to be like Paul and encourage someone you know to be welcomed back. Pray to be like Philemon, and welcome back those who have wronged you.

Thursday

We defer // Philippians 2:3–5

True unity and oneness is marked by a spirit of deferring to one another. Not what I want but what you want. Not my idea but yours. Not what is most important to me but what matters to you. I will defer to you and consider you more significant than me. This frame of mind is a spirit that we have in Jesus. Let's pray to use it today.

Friday

We carry // Galatians 6:2

Let me take that for you. Let me bear that for you. I am here for you, and your problem is now my problem, your struggle is now my struggle, and your burden is now my burden. We all have our issues and problems but rather than dealing with them on our own, we honor Jesus by helping others with their problems and letting others help us with ours. That is what he has done for us. Pray for eyes to see the burdens around you and pray for the humility to accept help from others.

Week 3: Feb. 18–24

Unified + Together

If we can be reconciled to God in Jesus, we can surely be reconciled to each other in Jesus. This week we will explore what it looks like for us to be unified, and take steps to pursue it.

Saturday

We celebrate // 1 Corinthians 12:14–20

Unity does not mean uniformity. We are a part of the same body, and each of us is different. We have different gifts, different skin colors, different ages, and the list goes on. In our oneness, we celebrate and value our differences. God has made us that way, and the Church needs it to be that way. We are better together. Thank God for how he has made you and for how different he made others.

Sunday

We anticipate // Revelation 7:9–10

There is a day coming when the prayer of Jesus will be answered in full. We will be together as one, and we will be unified. People from every nation, every language, and every skin color. Moreover, our bond will be nothing else than our beautiful salvation from God given to us through the sacrifice of Jesus. We must wait in anticipation as we prepare for that day, fighting for oneness this day. Thank God for the hope of the unity that is come and ask for a taste of it here now.

Notes

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



*Join us at the Just Worship Night
on Sunday, Feb. 24, 6–7:30 p.m.*



*750 W Streetsboro Street
Hudson, OH 44236 // 330.650.9533*

f t i @CCChapelHudson