

Day 1

Ephesians 4:11-16 “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

All believers make up the Body of Christ, that is the Church. Jesus is the head, and we are the body. We are all called to work together and build each other up until “we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

A big part of this is praying for the Body (believers all over the world). In 1 Samuel 12:23, Samuel says, “As for me far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” We have a responsibility as believers to pray for one another. This includes not only those close to us, but believers around the world. Specifically, as a local Body of Christ, we should pray for the ministries that we support. Throughout this prayer guide, you will be asked to pray for specific ministries/missionaries that Oakwood supports.

Prayer: Father, thank you for Oakwood. Thank you for a church that is concerned for people in our community and all over the world. I pray that you would encourage the leaders of our church and give them wisdom and discernment in how to best lead your Church. I pray that you would use me to build up your Church. Help us all to be like-minded and work together to build your kingdom.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Dr. Camacho as he leads at Casa Hogar children’s home in Mexico. Pray for all of the children and staff.

Day 2

Read John 17: 20-26

John 17:21 “That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.”

This is a portion of Jesus’ high priestly prayer for His disciples. Jesus knew that God’s plan, purpose and calling for His disciples after His death, burial, and resurrection could be adversely affected if His disciples were not on the same page.

The sign of a healthy local New Testament Church is a spirit of unity, harmony, and commitment to cause and purpose. Unity does not mean unanimity or uniformity. We will not always agree on everything, every time.

We come from different ages and stages of life, different backgrounds and life situations, and different life experiences. But we all have been created by God, saved by His grace, indwelt by His Spirit and called to serve Him according to the talents, abilities, skills, and spiritual gifts He has given us through the local church we have become. Unity moves us forward and keeps us on the same page.

Prayer: Father, as we begin a new year, may we as a church family be one. Keep us in a spirit of unity, harmony, and commitment to cause and purpose as we serve You through serving our community and our world.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our church plants in the San Antonio area.

- Mosaic Church – Pastor Lucas
- New Day 416 – Pastor Dustin
- Family Baptist Church – Pastor Andrew
- Impact Church – Pray as they look for a new pastor

Day 3

Read John 17:20-26

John 17:22-23 “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.”

Once again, this is a portion of the high priestly prayer of Jesus for His disciples before His death, burial, and resurrection.

As we begin a new year in ministry, we cannot help but remember that our nation has been struggling with a spirit of division, rather than a spirit of unity. Our nation has also been struggling with a spirit of confusion as the result of the pandemic. God is not the author of confusion; He is the author of order. He certainly is not the author of division; He is the author of unity.

Therefore, it is good for us to pray for unity and order in our nation. That means praying for those in positions of leadership in our church, our community, our state, and our nation. We need to pray that in the midst of division that we come together, rather than come apart.

Prayer: Father, in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit we come before Your throne of grace and we pray for our leaders. We pray that they will look to You for wisdom and discernment to lead effectively. Most importantly, we pray for Pastor Ray. Give him a clear vision and direction as he leads us in this new year to honor You and minister to others.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Oakwood Kids, Oakwood Student Ministries, and Mark 9. Pray for Pastor Jordan, Pastor Brandon, Pastor Patrick, Pastor Jody, Angela, Amy, Paula, Courtney, Brenda, Matt, and Dalinda as they lead in these ministries. Pray for all of our volunteers who do such a great job.

Day 4

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Are you a disciple? If you come to church and listen to the pastor and your small group leader and never tell others what you learned, the answer is no. You can be a believer, but not a disciple. A disciple is one who learns from another with the plan to teach it to others. For too long we have been sponges of the Word. We take it in and soak it up. But unlike a sponge, we never release all we have soaked up. Teaching others should be something we desire to do as a true disciple. I can hear some of you saying, I cannot do that. You are right, you can't, but the Spirit which you have inside of you can help. Just like the sponge needs someone to squeeze them to get the water out, we need the Holy Spirit to squeeze what we have learned out of us.

One thing I was disciplined in was that each one of us must have a Paul in our life, someone we are learning from in our walk. We also should have a Timothy in our life, someone we are teaching what we have learned. Who is your Paul and who is your Timothy?

In these two verses, the imperative is to make disciples. He tells us how to do it, by teaching them all you have been commanded. You can do this because the Holy Spirit is with you and will be to the end of the age. So, let's go be disciples and disciple makers by His Name, which has all authority in heaven and earth.

Prayer: Lord, help me and Oakwood to be disciples and disciple makers. Let us do this by the power You have given us and let us do it continuously. What a wonderful thing to do together for Your Glory.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Trey and Amelia McCain as they teach and disciple believers in Wales.

Day 5

Read John 13: 4-14

John 13:12-14 “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples as they came together for the Passover meal, their last supper before the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Jesus knew that the success of the ministry to which He had called them centered on placing the needs of others before themselves. Jesus set the example for them by washing their feet.

Washing the feet of others was perhaps the most menial task one could be called upon to do in that culture. It was the demonstration of the servant spirit of the Lord Jesus. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus demonstrated a spirit of understanding rather than a spirit of demanding.

Unity will more likely follow a spirit of understanding rather than a spirit of demanding. When we demand from others, we are more likely to repel others. When we strive to understand others, we are more likely to be drawn to others.

Prayer: Father, please give us hearts that are tender, minds that are alert, attitudes that put others before ourselves. Empower us through the Holy Spirit to be understanding, rather than demanding. Draw us together through a spirit of humility, rather than a spirit of pride.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the community ministry events that we will do this year (Heart of Hope, Fall Festival, etc.). Pray for those who attend to see the love we have for them and that it will transform lives.

Day 6

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-25

1 Corinthians 12:25 “So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.”

The context of this passage and this verse of Scripture is the subject of spiritual gifts. The apostle Paul told the Christians at the church in Corinth that the primary witness of the gospel is the Holy Spirit who draws all men and women to Christ. He told them that there are different spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Spirit distributes them.

Each manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good, to glorify God and edify the church. Paul stated that there is only one Body of Christ, but many parts to that Body. God determines the gift or gifts that each believer and follower of Christ will receive.

Each gift is important to the overall function of the Body of Christ. We ought to desire the gift or gifts that God grants us and not covet the gift or gifts He grants others in the Body. There should be no division over spiritual gifts in the church.

Prayer: Father God, in this new year, identify anew and afresh the spiritual gifts You have given us, and in a spirit of unity and harmony, empower us to invest them in the body of Christ that there be no division in the Body.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Compassion International as they minister to children and families all over the world. Pray for our partnerships with Compassion in Peru.

Day 7

1 Peter 4:10 “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

Within the context of this verse, Peter is writing of the final days. He is encouraging us to use what we have been given to minister to our fellow believers. We should not be focusing on benefit for ourselves, but for the uplifting of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. God has shown us unbelievable grace in saving us and equipping us for serving.

Each of you indicates who. Every Christian has been given at least one spiritual gift. Many people I speak to say they do not know what their gift is. Live your life among other believers and it will be evident what it is because others will see it in you and speak it to you. It may not be something you see in yourself. As an introvert, I never imagined being up in front of people teaching. That is the gift God has given me and it is so much fun to watch Him provide all I need in order to do what He has called me to do.

If you struggle with what your gift is, ask others. When you are using your gift, you will be equipping the other saints to carry out what He has called them to do. When you are faithful with your gift, this pleases the Lord and one day you will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Prayer: Lord, help us all to use our spiritual gift so that we will help other believers to use their gift. Thank You for the gift You have given me. May Your name be glorified!

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Chris and Eileen Carr, who have been given the gift of leadership, as they lead others to reach immigrant groups in Toronto. Pray for them as they lead teams from Oakwood to help carry out God’s plan among the Sikhs of Pakistan in Toronto.

Day 8

Galatians 6:2 “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

We all have burdens and there are many types of burdens. Our burdens can be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. While we all have burdens, we are often unaware of other people’s burdens. Some people are good at hiding their burdens and some are eager to tell everyone their burdens. Also, we are often too prideful to let anyone else know that we have burdens. Regardless, Paul urges Christians to carry each other’s burdens.

For us to carry another’s burden, we must first become aware of their burden. We must get to know them and what is going on in their life. Next, we need to take action. This often involves anticipating their needs. I experienced a great example of this a few years ago. I was struggling with an illness and was unable to do much. Someone asked me when they could come over and mow my grass. They didn’t just ask if there was anything they could do. They were very specific in offering to help in a way they knew they could help me carry my burden.

Prayer: Father, open my eyes to the burdens of others. Make me aware of ways that I can help them carry their burden and give me the willingness to follow through. Help me to not be so prideful that I do not allow others to help me carry my burdens.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for those who serve through the Oakwood Counseling Center and how they bear other’s burdens. Pray for Eva Lott as she leads this ministry.

Day 9

Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Just preceding this verse, the apostles were all in agreement on a question. Is this the time that Jesus would restore the kingdom of Israel? As so many times in our own lives, we think we know where God is leading, but His plans are bigger than ours. Whereas the apostles were looking for earthly power, God had heavenly power He wanted them to have. He desires that for all His children. We must let go of our plans and let Him show us the bigger picture. God’s plan from day one, and even before, was for His Name to be known everywhere throughout the world. He gave this plan again to the apostles. He told them they would be, not might be, His witnesses in Jerusalem (New Braunfels and Comal and Guadalupe counties), Judea and Samaria (the rest of Texas and North America) and the remotest part of the earth (everywhere there are not many Christians and even places His Name is not known). That is His plan for you. He wants us to be involved in some way in all of these, whether by praying, providing or participating in those areas. Seek Him today to find what He desires for you to do in His Plan.

Prayer: Lord, help me be involved in reaching the lost all over the world. Maybe by volunteering at Kids Club or by praying for Oakwood’s church plants around North America or going on a short-term trip or going as a full-time missionary to these places that have never heard the name of Jesus. Let us as a church do all these so Your name can spread everywhere, for Your Glory.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the missionaries that we support who we cannot name that serve in countries that are antagonistic to the gospel.

Day 10

Philippians 2:1-2 “Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

Paul urges unity among the church in Philippi so that they can endure their suffering caused by those outside the church and to heal divisions caused by those inside the church. He tells them it is Christ that unites them and that He is bigger than all of the things that oppose them or divide them.

It always warms my heart to see how people come together when disaster strikes. People put aside their differences and unite to overcome whatever it may be. However, it is unfortunate that it often takes a disaster for people to look past their differences and unite under a common goal.

As Christians we need to understand that we are surrounded by disaster. There are people all around us that do not know Jesus. They live every day without His peace and without His love. They will spend eternity separated from Him. We must wake up to this truth. We must come together with the love of God, put aside our differences, and work together to reach a lost and dying community and world.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for saving me. Thank you for calling me to be a part of building your kingdom. I pray that you would fill me with your tenderness and compassion for the people around me. Help Oakwood to be one in spirit and of one mind in intentionally engaging our community and the world around us with the love of Christ.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Kids Club. Pray for all the employees and volunteers that serve there. Pray for Jamie Ezell as she leads at Kids Club. Pray for the kids who attend and their families.

Day 11

Read Phil. 2:3-10

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

There are many things in the bible that are contrary to modern world views. This is one of the most conflicting. The world teaches self-promotion. In the world, you hear things like, “You need to climb the ladder of success. If you don’t look out for yourself, no one else will.”

This is not how Jesus lived and it is not how we are called to live. We are called to humble ourselves and think of the interests of others. Living in humility requires immense trust in God. Jesus trusted his Father so much that he went to the cross because he was thinking of us more than he was thinking of himself. Because of this, Scripture tells us that “God exalted him to the highest place.” For us to live with humility, we must trust that He is going to take care of us. We must trust that glorifying Him produces better results than glorifying ourselves. This requires a great paradigm shift in our thinking. Our minds should be on the advancement of the gospel, not on the advancement of our own personal agendas. As John said in John 3:30, “He must become greater, I must become less.”

Do you trust God enough to live a life of serving others? Do you trust God to meet your needs so you can look to the needs of the community and the world around you?

Prayer: Father, I am amazed when I consider the humility of Jesus. I am amazed that He endured such pain, heartbreak, and humility for me. Help me to trust you as He did. Help me to trust you to take care of me so that I can be free to care for those around me.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our church plants in Oregon. Pray that they will trust in the Lord to meet their needs as they look to serve those who need Jesus. Pray that God would encourage them.

- Remedy City Church – Pastor Josh
- Garden Church – Pastor Aaron
- Trinity Church – Pastor Raju
- Word of Life Church – Pastor Adrian
- New Creation Fellowship – Pastor Tom

Day 12

James 5:9 “Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door.”

God throughout Scripture reminds us to not grumble against each other. In this verse, He was reminding believers how others will recognize when they were not waiting patiently on the Lord. How many times in our own lives do we become impatient on the promises of God and others receive the brunt of our impatience? God wants us to be an example to those around us of what patience looks like. When the world sees us complaining against our fellow believers, they question our faith and the validity of Christianity.

God also reminds us through James that we will be judged for this grumbling. He is waiting at the door, which references His return is near. I remember when I was growing up, I had a Sunday School teacher who would say, “When you are thinking about doing something wrong, ask yourself if you want to be doing that if God returned at that moment.” Of course, none of us would want to be caught in sin when the Lord returns. This should help us not to complain about a fellow believer or about anything else. To keep our minds on good things and speak highly of others.

This is a reminder to us of the old saying, if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all. God desires us to speak encouraging words about others in our lives. When we complain or gossip about others it creates a lack of unity among us. When we speak of good things about others it keeps us close and makes it possible for good things to happen through us.

Prayer: Lord, help us to speak well of others and not to make it our habit to grumble against them. Keep us unified so that You can do powerful and amazing things through us. May our words glorify You.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our Volunteers in Medicine clinic. Pray for Ashley Woodward as she leads as well as the staff and volunteers.

Day 13

Hebrews 10:24 "...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..."

When you read the verses preceding and right after it, it encourages us to hold strong to our hope in Him who is faithful and to not forsake assembling together. It is because of our hope in Jesus that we do good deeds. He is the One who is able to compel us to show His Love for others. But we are not to do this on our own. As the body of Christ, we are to work together to accomplish His good works.

The greatest basketball player to ever play, Michael Jordan, was wonderful at making his surrounding players better. He coached and motivated others to do what they should to enable them to reach their goal of winning NBA championships. His tactics are not the best for us to copy. Yet, the idea of having goals to reach and working together to get there are admirable goals.

Oakwood, or the Church as a whole, should desire to love and do good works. Jesus set an example for all of us to follow. He did things in front of the disciples so they could learn how to do them. When they failed, He was there to help them. He then sent them out to do the work on their own and celebrated in their successes. This should be a goal at Oakwood, to work together to see His works done and celebrate what He does in those works. To encourage everyone to love and do good works.

Prayer: Lord, help us to encourage each other in doing good works in our community. Let us be unified in showing love to our community. Lord, let us follow the example of Christ. Thank you for what You will do through us.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Fellowship Oshawa (one of our church plants) in Ontario, Canada. Pray for Pastor Mike as he leads the church.

Day 14

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8

1 Timothy 2:8 “Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.”

This passage of Scripture is a reminder that God is deeply concerned about every area and aspect of life. He is deeply concerned about every person, and every person’s life situation. Because everyone is struggling with something in life, everyone needs prayer, whether they realize it or not. What a privilege to pray for them!

Our community, our nation, and our world have been tragically impacted by the COVID-19 virus that has taken the lives of hundreds of thousands. It is vitally important that people in positions of leadership are lifted up in prayer before God’s throne of grace.

In formulating a plan to bring the virus under control, medical professionals need wisdom and discernment. They need training, equipment, the support of the government and the prayers of believers and followers of Christ around the world. We need to come together in a spirit of unity and harmony and pray for the end of this pandemic.

Prayer: Father God, in and of ourselves we are powerless against this virus. But You are powerful against it. We lift up our medical professionals and our governmental leaders. Please give them wisdom and discernment to know how best to respond to the pandemic. Please bring about a cure for the pandemic and an end to the pandemic, for your honor and glory!

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the front-line workers who worship at Oakwood and around Comal County. Pray that God would encourage them and give them wisdom and discernment.

Day 15

1 Peter 3:8 “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.”

Stronger together. We have all heard this and believe it to be true. We must be together to be stronger. Here in 1 Peter, we are given instruction on how to be together. First, we are told to be like-minded. Our harmonious thoughts have nothing to do with anything other than on the way of Jesus. We may never agree on peripheral issues, but we must strive toward thinking alike about the work of Jesus.

Second, we should be sympathetic toward each other. Our hearts should be moved toward the hurts and problems of others. We may not understand what they are going through, but we can care.

Third, love one another. Jesus said this would be how others knew we believed in Him, by loving one another. This is the cornerstone to all the others. It all starts with love.

Fourth, be compassionate. React to what happens with compassion. Love and sympathy combined show others how much we care for them.

Finally, be humble. We must not put our wants and desires above those of others. We must not think more of ourselves than who we are.

When we put these all together, think of the closeness and unity that would be formed. When we are striving to be more like Jesus, we make ourselves stronger for the work He has planned for us. Think of the difference it would make in your family, street, neighborhood, city, state, nation and the world. We can be the agents of change, and it starts with love.

Prayer: Lord, help us love others and allow You to change our hearts toward these attributes in 1 Peter. We want to be a force for You and we desire to do it together.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Pastor Mathias as he ministers in Uganda. Pray for Tubwoomwe Orphanage in Uganda.

Day 16

Ephesians 4:1-6 “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. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 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.”

We are called to live as Jesus lived. That is a high calling! Living this way means that we are to be humble, gentle, patient, and bear with one another in love. Paul begins with humility because we cannot live this way unless we put aside our own interests and desires. It is far too easy for us to get caught up in the busyness of our lives and not be able to see outside of our own little bubble. This often leads us to be impatient and critical of others.

It is not possible to live this way on our own. It is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. All believers have the same Spirit and are part of the same Body of Christ. We are all called to the same hope, the same faith, and to the same God. This “call” is to be a unifying call among all believers. We are all in the same struggle together and must bear with one another in humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live a life worthy of your calling. Help me to live a life of humility that is gentle and patient with people. Help me to love people the way you love them and to support them with that love.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Aaron and Tiffany Zavala, of Equip Worship, as they lead to train worship leaders of church plants in the Pacific Northwest.

Day 17

Habakkuk 2:14 “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Here in Habakkuk is a wonderful promise. Surrounding this one verse is God’s pronouncement of judgment and destruction on individuals and groups because of their sin and disobedience. But we see even in the midst of all this, we are promised that the knowledge of Him will cover all the earth.

In today’s times, we are surrounded by chaos and unsettling events. Still, God wants us to remember that this is not how it will always be. This is the message that all believers need to come together and share. We have a God who is faithful to carry out His Promises. Think of the times He has fulfilled a promise on an individual level to you. The joy that it brought you. Within you, you have a message of joy and hope for the world. Start by telling it to your family and friends who do not have this promise in their life. Let’s share that knowledge with others so that His Glory will cover the whole world.

Prayer: Lord, help me and Oakwood to share this promise with those around us. Allow us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to turn other’s eyes and hearts to this hope which is in us.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Josh and Jessica Kidwell as they share with people in Japan and help the knowledge of Him to spread.

Day 18

Read Galatians 5:22-26

Gal. 5:24 “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

The dictionary defines conceit as “an excessively favorable opinion of one’s own ability, importance, wit, etc.” Conceit can lead to all kinds of conflict in the church and it can ruin our testimony to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If we think we are better than someone else, it often provokes them to anger. If we think we are important or deserving of something we do not have, it creates envy in us. These are all signs of living in the flesh. Paul says that we have crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires.

We must be diligent in our daily routines to spend time with the Lord and in His Word so that we can “keep in step with the Spirit.” If we fail to do this, the flesh will begin to take over and we will find ourselves doing more harm than good when it comes to the health of the church.

Prayer: Father, please show me the areas in my life that I struggle with conceit. Am I easily provoked or because of my conceit, do I provoke others? Do I envy others (their talents, abilities, possessions, etc.)? Do I get upset when I don’t get my way? Do I think that I am always right or that my ideas are always best? Please forgive me of my conceit. Help me to live in step with your Spirit.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Mission New Braunfels and the projects they will complete this year. Pray for Pastor Will and the volunteers. Pray for the people that we do work for, that they will experience God’s love and that they will be open to the gospel.

Day 19

Read John 13: 27-35

John 13:34 “A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

These words of Jesus came toward the conclusion of the Passover meal, His last supper with His disciples. Jesus’ disciples were not “perfect” people. They struggled with a desire to be first, or to be the greatest, or to be in certain positions of notoriety when Jesus came into His kingdom. Jesus did not want them to compete with one another, He wanted them to love one another.

In Oscar Thompson’s book, Concentric Circles of Concern, he writes, “Love makes the world go round, but relationships are the track on which love travels most effectively.” Jesus knew that the success of the ministry of the disciples hinged on their love for one another. If their ministry was to be effective, they had to put each other before themselves.

Most of us are more likely to live in a spirit of unity toward each other if we demonstrate a spirit of Christlike love for each other. Jesus wants us to serve with an “others first” mentality.

Prayer: Father God, based upon how You love us, give us the desire of our hearts to love one another and minister in a spirit of unity.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for New Hope School in India.

Day 20

Acts 2:46-47 “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Luke gives us an excellent view of what the early church looked like. All through chapter 2, you can read of the beginnings of the church from the Day of Pentecost. It gives us an excellent overview of the first outdoor revival and the gathering of the first church and how they interacted with each other.

One of the words used really jumps out, the word together. That was a characteristic of them. They were together in their worship, in breaking bread and having meals. They did it with gladness and sincerity of heart. They genuinely liked being together. Because of this they were able to have favor with all the people and the Lord added to their number daily. God has blessed us at Oakwood because we look forward to times we can worship together and serve others together. The Lord gives us a good name in the community, and He does add to our numbers. We should strive to keep this a part of who Oakwood is. Let’s seek unity among our ourselves and let that surround our love and worship of God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for our closeness at Oakwood. Help us to keep our eyes focused on You in all we do. Let us glorify Your Name together as we love You and those around us with the love of Christ.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our support group ministries.

- Divorce Care
- Family Grace
- Grief Share
- Cancer Warriors
- Celebrate Recovery
- Celebration Place

Day 21

1 Thessalonians 5:15 “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.”

We all have been wronged in our lives. Someone has told a lie about us, a spouse has cheated on us, someone close to us stole from us. Whatever the wrong or wrongs that have been done to you, what was your reaction? Did you seek revenge, or did you seek to forgive? How many times have you heard someone say, “I could never forgive someone for that!”? It is our culture and our natural reaction.

Fortunately, we do not have a Savior that acts the way we do when we are wronged. Our Lord was beaten, whipped, verbally abused, and abandoned by those close to Him. Yet, He showed the greatest act of forgiveness in history. As He hung on the cross, all of my sins and all of your sins were laid upon Him. The thing is, our sins had not even been committed yet. He knew exactly what we would do to sin against Him, but He was still willing to go to the cross to die for these sins.

Jesus told his disciples to forgive those who wronged them however many times they did it. Have you forgiven all those who sinned against you? Give them the forgiveness they do not deserve, but that our Lord demands of us. This does not only include believers, but all people. Go seek that which is good for one another and for all people and love your enemies as Christ Jesus has instructed us.

Prayer: Lord, when I am wronged, show me how not to seek revenge, but look for ways to do good to those people. May Your love for me compel me to love others in a way that glorifies You.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Kyle and Christina Kroeger as they lead Taproot Church in San Antonio and reach college students at UTSA.

Day 22

Ephesians 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Jesus’ life was characterized by submission. He lived a life of full submission to his Heavenly Father and he even submitted to human authorities. He put aside his status, position, and rights, and became a servant. God calls us to submit to each other.

As parents, we expect our children to submit to our authority. One way that we know our children are honoring God is that they willingly submit to our leadership. One way that we know that God is working in us is when we willingly submit our will and preferences to seek out what is best for others. This means that we are not to assert our own desires, but we should humbly take on the form of a servant and look to the needs of others. Paul points out that we are to live this way out of reverence for Christ. Whether or not other people “deserve” it is not part of the equation.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put aside my selfish desires and make me aware of ways that I can submit to those around me. Help me to see their needs and fill me with your love and compassion that I may serve them as Jesus served those around Him. Help me to bring you glory in my relationships.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our government leaders (local, state, and national). Pray that they submit themselves before God.

Day 23

Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity!”

In these days of political turmoil, the pandemic, racial disunity and all that brings us anxiety and discord, God desires us to be in unity with one another. “How good and pleasant it is,” is what this verse says. It indicates that it is good, which is pleasing to Him. It is also pleasant, which is good for us and those around us. Are you dwelling in unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ or are you in a place of unease with them? He wants unity, but it is up to you and me to make it happen.

Take the next few days and if you find that you are not dwelling in peace, find ways to make that happen. Whether it is going to that person and seeking forgiveness or letting them know how you have felt wronged. Maybe it is turning off your social media accounts or turning off the TV. We have to make the effort to have peace in our lives, which is good for us and our relationships with others and with God. Let’s find unity. It starts with us.

Lord, help me find unity with those around me. Allow me to experience the peace that comes from unity with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Let all believers experience this so we can model to the world what true unity looks like.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our marriage ministries (Re-engage and Merge). Pray for the leaders and pray for those that will go through them this year. Pray that God will strengthen marriages and families.

Day 24

Ephesians 4:29, 31-32 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

It is difficult in this day and age to not get caught up in all of the “bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” It is all over social media, the TV, and almost everywhere you look. If we are not intentional in limiting our exposure to such things and maximizing our exposure to God’s Word and His truths, we will find ourselves jumping right in all of the unwholesome talk. We must take steps to “get rid” of all of the negative thinking that we are exposed to and “put on” the things that are of God.

Years ago, I listened to talk radio whenever I would drive in my car. I found that, over time, I had become much more cynical and negative about everything. I was quick to argue and quick to be offended. I realized that it was because I was constantly being bombarded with negativity. Once I changed what I was listening to, my thinking began to change. If we are going to build each other up and be kind and compassionate, we must immerse ourselves in things that will encourage such behavior.

Do you find yourself angry, cynical, and easy to be offended? Do you find it easier to jump on social media and tear others down instead of building them up?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be quick to forgive and encourage people. Reveal to me areas where I am negative and participate in unwholesome talk. Open my eyes to the areas that I need to get rid of and give me the strength to do so. Help me to benefit those that listen to me.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for all of the small group leaders at Oakwood and Pastor Dale, as he leads this ministry.

Day 25

Revelation 7:9 “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...”

What a beautiful vision God revealed to John. As he was isolated, being banished to the island of Patmos, God reminds him that one day he will be surrounded by others in worshipping the Lamb. In John’s mind, he probably was very limited in his thinking of all the different types of people this was referencing. Imagine right now all the different ethnicities or languages you have been exposed to in your life. That is miniscule to the vision that God has for this.

Today, we have often have an us versus them mentality, but that is not what God has planned. We will be surrounded by people who will look like us, people who do not look like us, and people groups we have never seen here on earth. Also, think of a people you may not feel comfortable around or possibly do not like, they will have people there. In God’s perfect vision, He does not see race, gender, language or even party affiliation as qualifiers for those written in the Book of Life. He sees our hearts and whether we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. May we begin to have those kinds of eyes. The kind that sees people as believers or those who need to hear. May we love those around us here on earth because there will be people from every group we can think of, and many more, who will be in that multitude too great to count, worshipping the Lamb.

Prayer: Lord, help us love all people here on earth, even those we do not agree with, because they could be standing right next to me in Heaven. May I follow the teachings to love my enemies. You created us all, so as Your creation, I should love them.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the Yemeni Arabs who have a very small number of believers. Pray that God will send people to share with them and that one day we will have many surrounding us in heaven.

Day 26

Colossians 4:2-3 “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned.”

As Paul wrote this letter to the Colossian church, he knew that the church had become vulnerable to false teachings. He wrote from prison to try to help them stay strong in their faith. He reminds them to devote themselves to prayer. He wanted them to be seeking the Lord continuously and that their prayers should not be one-time events. He wanted their prayers to be focused and to be full of thanksgiving. He also desired for them to pray for Paul and those with him so that they could share the gospel with those around them in prison.

Paul had been imprisoned because of his faith and sharing that faith with others. There are many people who are in prison for the same thing today. These are heroes of the faith that we should remember daily. I had the opportunity to meet and work with a man who had been put in prison for telling others about Jesus. Those who were able to go and pick him up when he was released from prison heard him proclaim, “I am like Paul.” He was diligent to share with the other prisoners and the guards and had led some to Christ. Let us have that kind of faith. It starts with prayer. That same man stayed in my apartment at times as he traveled and I heard him each morning he was there at 4AM praying for the fellow believers and for those he would encounter throughout the day who did not believe to have soft hearts for the gospel. Let us devote ourselves to these kinds of prayers.

Prayer: Lord, help us to pray with focus for those around us. Also, help those who are in prison because of their faith. Give them strength and boldness to share Your Truths with those around them.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the persecuted Church today. Pray that they will be lights in the darkness that surrounds them.

Day 27

Read Romans 12:3-10

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

The apostle Paul wrote his theological treatise of the gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That treatise is given to us in chapters one through eleven in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome. It is a masterful work!

In chapters twelve through sixteen, Paul “turns the corner” if you will, and begins to state the practicality of that theology.

As believers and followers of Jesus, we must assume personal responsibility for living the gospel in our relationships with one another. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better. It demands personal involvement. Others must come before self.

A spirit of unity and harmony is the oil that greases the hinges of our personal relationships with one another and allows them to turn effectively toward one another.

Prayer: Father God, empower us through the presence of your Holy Spirit to love one another and honor one another in a spirit of unity for your glory and their honor.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Robert and Sidney Ewing as they lead churches to learn how to love those who have moved to the United States and share the truth of the gospel with them.

Day 28

James 4:11 “Brothers and sisters, do not criticize one another.”

I love to watch sports. I enjoy the competition. Still, I do not like to hear the announcers because they are critical of players, play calling, and sometimes, the referees. Their criticism takes away from my enjoyment of the game.

We often are like those announcers as we sit with others and criticize other believers. We find fault with what they wear or with how they were not involved in something. The range of topics is far reaching. Also, like those announcers, we don't have all the information. We don't know everything that person is going through and why they may have had to make the decision you have chosen to criticize. Our criticism then influences others and then unity among the believers is broken.

Right before this verse, Paul had written about humility. This should be a reminder that we all should walk humbly before God and see each other as His creations. Many times, when we make disparaging remarks about people, we are actually criticizing God for how He made them. Paul tells us to let no unwholesome talk come from our mouths. Let us go and encourage and build up our fellow believers.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the log in my own eye before I allow myself to say something about anyone else. Let me follow the Bible as my guide and not our culture of tearing others down. Lord, help us to maintain unity by speaking of only the good we see in others and to keep our judgmental words from leaving our mouths.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our Colorado church plants.

- Living Rock Church, Timnath – Pastor Kelly
- Living Rock Church, Severance – Pastor Josh
- Keystone Church, Loveland – Pastor AJ

Day 29

Read Matthew 18:15-20

Matthew 18:19-20 “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

“Christ is pictured in the Revelation as being in the midst of His churches. This passage of Scripture records His promise to be in the midst of even the smallest congregation, even just two or three, if they are agreeing in prayer together. These words are more than a promise; they are a statement of fact. Since Jesus is there, the prayer will be answered, although the answer will be as God sees best and not always as the petitioner requests” (Dr. Roland Q. Leavell).

Christ is present with those who are diligently concerned with understanding His mind and His will. Christ is present with those who are diligently demonstrating a spirit of unity and harmony according to the will of God for the purposes of God among the people of God.

Prayer: Father God, grant us a spirit of unity and harmony in our church family and may this spirit lead us to prayer for Your will, according to Your purpose, among Your people, for Your glory in this new year!

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our associations and conventions as they assist churches in reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

- Bluebonnet Baptist Association
- San Antonio Baptist Association
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Southern Baptist Convention

Day 30

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1 Corinthians 11:33 “So then, my brothers and sisters; when you come together to eat, make everyone equally welcome.”

The context of this passage of Scripture is the celebration of communion or “The Lord’s Supper.” Apparently, there were divisions in the Church in Corinth and those divisions surfaced during the preparation and celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

“The worldly, carnal church at Corinth had turned the observance of those sacred meals into gluttonous, drunken revelries. Beyond that, wealthy believers brought ample food and drink for themselves but refused to share, letting their poorer brethren go away hungry” (Dr. John McArthur).

The local New Testament Church must be a gathering of people who demonstrate kindness and generosity and deep-abiding love for one another. There is no room for “preferred customers” or “inferior sub-cultures” in the Body of Christ.

Through a spirit of unity and harmony, the local church is one of the few institutions in which people of all backgrounds gather to worship the one true living God. All are equal. All are welcome.

Prayer: Father God, we pray that in this new year, You will bring people from all different backgrounds into the body of Christ called Oakwood Church. We pray that you will give the desire of our hearts to love them, serve them, minister to them, pray for them, and come alongside them in their times of struggle.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Canvas Church of Oak Bay, British Columbia. Pray for Pastor Mike as he leads the new church.

Day 31

Read Romans 15: 1-7

Romans 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Believers and followers of Jesus must be kind and considerate. We must not live in such a way as to please ourselves only. We must be careful not to disregard the feelings of others. Our Christian convictions must not be a disguise for ill treatment of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are more likely to build up one another when a spirit of unity and harmony exist in our relationships. As we grow in faith and come to know Jesus better, we will become more capable of maintaining the spirit of unity throughout each day.

We love the blessing of being included and appreciated. We hate the pain of rejection and being treated like we do not even exist. Because we all know the experience of rejection to some degree, we must include others when given the opportunity.

Prayer: Father God, please give us a spirit of unity and harmony so that no one in our sphere of influence ever feels rejected or disregarded.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Rebecca Epley as she helps others understand the different people groups that live in our area, state, and nation. That none of these groups will be disregarded and that they will all have the opportunity to hear of Jesus and His wonderful love for them.

Day 32

Read Romans 14: 1-20

Romans 14:13 “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”

“Both strong and weak Christians can cause their brothers and sisters to stumble. The strong but insensitive Christian may flaunt his or her freedom and intentionally offend others’ consciences. The scrupulous but weak Christian may try to fence others in with petty rules and regulations, thus causing dissension. Paul wants his readers to be both strong in the faith and sensitive to the needs of others” (The Application Study Bible).

God gave us His Son, His Holy Spirit, and His Word as a guide to faithfulness, obedience, and others-centered love. It may very well be that the greatest deterrent to the forward movement of the gospel is a judgmental, hyper-critical, hypocritical spirit toward others. A spirit of unity and harmony allows for encouraging one another rather than finding fault with one another.

Prayer: Father God, we pray for a spirit of unity and harmony among us to help us be complementary rather than critical, genuine and sincere rather than hypocritical, understanding rather than condemning.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the ministry in Tocoa, Honduras. Pray for the school, the church, and the teams that go to work with them from Oakwood.

Day 33

Read Romans 12: 12-21

Romans 12:16 “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not think you are superior.”

One of the reasons it is good for us to pray each day that God will fill us anew and afresh with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) is because of what we are called upon to do in Romans 12:12-21. It is a tall order! We will not do it in the power of the flesh, but only in the power of the Spirit!

A lot of what we see played out in our current culture challenges what Romans 12:16 admonishes us to do. Our culture is aggressive, competitive, opinionated, self-centered, and preoccupied. This verse of Scripture calls upon us to be humble, not boastful!

The Christian life is to be lived in the context of community. There are no “Second Stringers” or “B-teamers” in the Kingdom of God. There are no “All-Stars” or “Super-Stars.” We are all saved by the same grace, through the same faith, given us by the One true living God based on the same perfect sacrifice of the same Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord! Humility must rise to the surface in our lives if we are to live in unity and harmony.

Prayer: Father God, we beg and plead with you to unify us through your Holy Spirit that we might live in harmony with one another and not think more of ourselves than we should.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Pastor Jared and Pillar Church of Washington DC.

Day 34

James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

Throughout Christian history, the tie between confession, prayer and revival is well-documented. Great revivals have begun with a great time of repentance and confession. Our prayers are stronger and more intimate when we have confessed to our Father.

Intimacy and unity go hand in hand. When we share our deepest, darkest sins with someone else, there is a closeness developed. In our society, most people try on social media to put their best foot forward. We think if people know what we really are like, they will not like us or respect us.

Now think about how God reacts to our sins. Yes, they grieve Him, but He awaits our prayers of forgiveness and when we do, He quickly forgives. He knows every sin we have ever committed and will ever commit in the future. Yet, He still loves us and loves us so much He sent Jesus to cleanse us of all our sins. Now think of the sequence there. We sin, we drop our façade and admit it to God, and we are forgiven. Now, think of that same course of events with a believing friend. It should be the same reaction as Jesus has toward us. These types of friends become our greatest prayer warriors. I think of my closest friends and they are the people who pray for me the most and I pray for them. And when we pray together for each other, our prayers are even stronger and more effective.

Prayer: Lord, help us to confess our sins to You and to each other so our unity can become stronger. Help us be quick to confess so we do not allow our sins to fester and weaken our effectiveness for Your Kingdom.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for the Prayer Ministry here at Oakwood. Pray for Mary Ford and Gloria Ford as they lead this ministry. May we be a praying church.

Day 35

Galatians 5:13 “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

Paul communicates to the Galatians that living in freedom means living a life of love that manifests itself in serving others. We, as believers, are free from the bondage of sin and should live in freedom from self-interest and promotion. Our freedom is not a license to live however we want. It is a freedom that allows us to be guided by the Holy Spirit to love and serve people. We are no longer slaves to selfishness, fear, jealousy, pride, etc. These are things that come from the “flesh.”

As Christians, we are free to become what God created us to be, his ambassadors to the world. We are free to love others instead of judging others. We are free to serve others instead of envying others or being critical of them. We are free to think of others instead of thinking of ourselves. We no longer are to serve our own desires, but to be God’s humble servants and expressions of His love.

Prayer: Lord, help me to realize that you have set me free from selfishness, fear, jealousy, and pride. Help me to look to the needs of others instead of my own. Open my eyes to see the people around me as you see them and fill me with your love and compassion so that I may faithfully serve them as your Ambassador.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our church plants in El Paso.

- Mesa Place Church – Pastor Christian
- Sun City Church – Pastor Brant

Day 36

Hebrews 3:13 “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

Life can be rough. People can be mean, rude, and critical. People are quick to turn on you. Life’s circumstances can leave us beat up and discouraged. It is no wonder that so many people are hurting and depressed!!

We all need encouragement. God is a God of encouragement. He is a God of Hope. He is a God that is slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness. He knows that we need this. As His ambassadors, we are called to be one of His channels of encouragement to those around us. The writer of Hebrews says that we are to encourage each other daily. I don’t know about you, but I struggle to think of encouraging others daily. I may think about it every once in a while, but not daily. Can you imagine a world where you are encouraged daily by people? How different would your life be? How different can you make someone else’s life today by encouraging them? Write someone a note of encouragement today. Encourage someone in your family and someone at your work today.

Prayer: Father, thank you for being a God that encourages me. Thank you for your Word that gives me hope. Help me to see opportunities to encourage people. Help me become a person that is known for encouraging others.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for ministries at Texas State University in San Marcos.

- Baptist Student Ministry – led by Wayne Dillen
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes – led by Pat Ford

Day 37

Acts 4:32 “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”

There were around 5,000 believers in the early church at this time. They all had the commonality of their faith which made them a tight knit group. They had begun to have some persecution, which made this bond even tighter. It says they were of one heart and soul. The heart referenced the intellectual bond, while the soul indicated their emotional oneness.

They were also generous to one another. While they recognized individual possessions, they also were following the teachings of Christ to be good stewards with what He had blessed them. This is a magnificent portrait of unity in the church.

Jesus has taught us to always think of others before ourselves. This goes against what our culture teaches us, that we need to make sure we are good first. As believers, our desire should be to see the happiness and peace of others as our main goal. When we are pouring ourselves out for each other, we find the peace that He has for us. Let us be known as generous individuals as well as a generous church so He may receive all the glory.

Prayer: Lord, give us opportunities to be generous to our fellow believers as well to those in the community. Let us love each other as the early church loved. Let us keep our eyes focused on You and You will direct us to others to show Your Love.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Church 21 in Magog, Quebec and Pastor Tim.

Day 38

1 Thessalonians 3:12 “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.”

Our love for people (those near to us and those all over the world) should be increasing day by day. This will not happen by accident nor can it happen through our own determination and willpower. Notice that Paul wrote, “May the Lord make your love increase...” It is only possible through a growing relationship with the Lord and by being “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:2). It is God that makes it happen. It is God that changes our hearts and minds and transforms us. We must seek Him with all our heart, and He will be faithful to make our love increase.

In John 13:35, Jesus said that the world will know we are his disciples if we love one another. Are Christians today known for their love? Are you known for your love? Are you known for your love by those who disagree with your opinions and views? Are you known for your love when the waiter or waitress gets your order wrong or the service is slow? Are you a more loving person today than you were a year ago? Ten years ago?

Prayer: Lord, I pray that I will grow in my love of people. Fill me with your love. Help me to see people through your eyes not through my eyes. Help me to see them as your beloved creation and children that you love and care about. Transform me by the renewing of my mind.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for our church plants in the state of Washington.

- Epic Life in Seattle – Pastor Keith also Alyssa Morales who grew up at Oakwood and is on staff with the church
- Tabernaculo Familia de Dios – Pastor Erik
- Ivan Montenegro – Ivan is planting churches and training pastors.

Day 39

Colossians 3:12-14 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

There is no doubt that at some point in your life you have been hurt by someone else or that you will be hurt by someone in the future. We live in a fallen world and it is inevitable. As Pastor Ray often says, “hurt people, hurt people.” And we are all hurt.

The question is not whether you will be wronged, the question is, how will you respond when you are wronged. As Christians, we are to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. We have all sinned and been forgiven of much. The Lord’s forgiveness came at great cost, the life of his Son. It is not easy to forgive others when we have been wronged, but it is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit and when we consider how much we have been forgiven. We need to be eager to forgive instead of eager to resent.

Prayer: Lord, help me to clothe myself with your compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Help me to forgive those who sin against me. Remind me of how much you have forgiven me. Instill in me a heart of overwhelming gratitude for your forgiveness that leads me to be eager to forgive others.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for churches in New Braunfels and all over the world. Lift up the Body of Christ.

Day 40

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.”

It is important that we acknowledge and encourage those that lead us in our faith (pastors, ministry leaders, small group leaders). The work can be disheartening, and it is never finished. The Bible tells us that we are to hold them in the “highest regard” and to acknowledge them.

This is important for our local church leaders, but it is also important for the leaders of churches and ministries all around the world that Oakwood supports. Over the last 40 days, you have been praying for many different ministries/missionaries that we support. I encourage you to continue praying for them.

Prayer: God, thank you for those who guide me spiritually. Thank you for those all over the world that are leading your Church. Help me to think of ways that I can bless and encourage them. Help me to always hold them in the highest regard because of their work for you.

Ministry Prayer: Pray for Pastor Ray and the leadership of Oakwood.