

Pursuing Unity

David C. McCasland



*Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all. **Colossians 3:11***

Read: Colossians 3:9–17

Bible in a Year: Genesis 36–38; Matthew 10:21–42

Growing up during the 1950s, I never questioned racism and the segregation practices that permeated daily life in the city where we lived. In schools, restaurants, public transportation, and neighborhoods, people with different shades of skin color were separated.

My attitude changed in 1968 when I entered US Army Basic Training. Our company included young men from many different cultural groups. We soon learned that we needed to understand and accept each other, work together, and accomplish our mission.

When Paul wrote to the first-century church at Colossae, he was well aware of the diversity of its members. He reminded them, “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11). In a group where surface as well as deeper differences could easily divide people, Paul urged them to “clothe [themselves] with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (v. 12). And over all these virtues, he told them to put on love “which binds them all together in perfect unity” (v. 14).

Putting these principles into practice may often be a work in progress, but that is what Jesus calls us to. What we as believers hold in common is our love for Him. On that basis, we pursue understanding, peace, and unity as members of the body of Christ.

Amid all our wonderful diversity, we pursue an even greater unity in Christ.

Christ’s love creates unity in the midst of diversity.



The Power of Prayer



Amy Boucher Pye

Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us. 1 Samuel 7:8

Read: 1 Samuel 7:7–14

Bible in a Year: Genesis 39–40; Matthew 11

One day, when I was deeply concerned about the welfare of one close to me, I found encouragement in part of the Old Testament story of Samuel, a wise leader of the Israelites. As I read how Samuel interceded for God's people as they faced trouble, I strengthened my resolve to pray for the one I loved.

The Israelites faced the threat of the Philistines, who had previously defeated them when God's people didn't trust in Him (see 1 Samuel 4). After repenting of their sins, they heard that the Philistines were about to attack. This time, however, they asked Samuel to continue praying for them (7:8), and the Lord answered clearly by throwing their enemy into confusion (v. 10). Though the Philistines may have been mightier than the Israelites, the Lord was the strongest of them all.

When we ache over the challenges facing those we love, and fear the situation won't change, we may be tempted to believe that the Lord will not act. But we should never underestimate the power of prayer, for our loving God hears our pleas. We don't know how He will move in response to our petitions, but we know that as our Father He longs for us to embrace His love and to trust in His faithfulness.

Do you have someone you can pray for today?

Father God, the way You hear and answer my prayers amazes me. Strengthen my faith, that I will always believe in Your goodness and love.

Share your prayer request or pray for others at YourDailyBread.org/prayer.

God hears us when we pray.

Growing Gratitude

Lisa Samra



*For from him and through him and for him are all things. **Romans 11:36***

Read: Romans 11:33–36

Bible in a Year: Genesis 41–42; Matthew 12:1–23

Would you like to cultivate a greater sense of gratitude? George Herbert, a seventeenth-century British poet, encourages readers toward that goal in his poem “Gratefulness”: “Thou that hast given so much to me, give one thing more: a grateful heart.”

Herbert recognized the only thing he needed in order to be thankful was simply an awareness of the blessings God had already given him.

The Bible declares Christ Jesus as the source of all blessing in Romans 11:36, “For from him and through him and for him are all things.” “All things” encompasses both the extravagant and the mundane, everyday gifts in our lives. Everything we receive in life comes directly from our heavenly Father (James 1:17), and He willingly gives us those gifts out of His love for us.

To expand my awareness of God’s blessings in my life, I am learning to cultivate a heart that acknowledges the source of all the joys I experience each day, but especially the ones I often take for granted. Today those included a crisp morning to run, the anticipation of an evening with friends, a stocked pantry so I could make French toast with my daughters, the beauty of the world outside my window, and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee.

What is the “so much” that God has already given to you? Opening our eyes to those blessings will help us to develop grateful hearts.

Take a few minutes to thank God for what comes to your mind right now. Try to do that throughout the day as well.

When you think of all that’s good, thank God.

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Dealing with Delay

David C. McCasland



So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. [Genesis 45:8](#)

Read: [Genesis 45:1–8](#)

Bible in a Year: [Genesis 43–45](#); [Matthew 12:24–50](#)

A global computer system outage causes widespread flight cancellations, stranding hundreds of thousands of passengers at airports. During a winter storm, multiple auto accidents close major highways. The person who promised to send a reply “right away” has failed to do so. Delays can often produce anger and frustration, but as followers of Jesus, we have the privilege of looking to Him for help.

One of the Bible’s great examples of patience is Joseph, who was sold to slave traders by his jealous brothers, falsely accused by his employer’s wife, and imprisoned in Egypt. “But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him” (Genesis 39:20–21). Years later, when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, he was made second in command in Egypt (ch. 41).

The most remarkable fruit of his patience occurred when his brothers came to buy grain during a famine. “I am your brother Joseph,” he told them, “the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. . . . So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God” (45:4–5, 8).

In all our delays, brief or long, may we, like Joseph, gain patience, perspective, and peace as we trust in the Lord.

Father in heaven, in all of our delays may we trust Your faithful hand of guidance and experience Your presence with us in every situation.

Confidence in God enables us to live out our faith patiently.



By the Spirit's Power

Marvin Williams



What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. [Zechariah 4:7](#)

Read: [Zechariah 4:1–7](#)

Bible in a Year: [Genesis 46–48](#); [Matthew 13:1–30](#)

What do you do when there is a mountain in your way? The story of Dashrath Manjhi can inspire us. When his wife died because he was unable to get her to the hospital to receive urgent medical care, Manjhi did what seemed impossible. He spent twenty-two years chiseling a massive gap in a mountain so other villagers could get to the local hospital to receive the medical care they needed. Before he died, the government of India celebrated him for his achievement.

Rebuilding the temple must have looked impossible to Zerubbabel, one of the leaders of Israel who returned from exile. The people were discouraged, faced opposition from their enemies, and lacked resources or a big army. But God sent Zechariah to remind Zerubbabel that the task would take something more powerful than military strength, individual power, or man-made resources. It would take the Spirit's power (Zechariah 4:6). With the assurance of divine aid, Zerubbabel trusted that God would level any mountain of difficulty that stood in the way of rebuilding the temple and restoring the community (v. 7).

What do we do when there is a “mountain” before us? We have two options: rely on our own strength or trust the Spirit's power. When we trust His power, He will either level the mountain or give us the strength and endurance to climb over it.

What challenges stand in your way? How will you trust the power of God's Spirit in your life? Share it on [Facebook.com/ourdailybread](https://www.facebook.com/ourdailybread).

Human power is inadequate to accomplish God's purposes.
