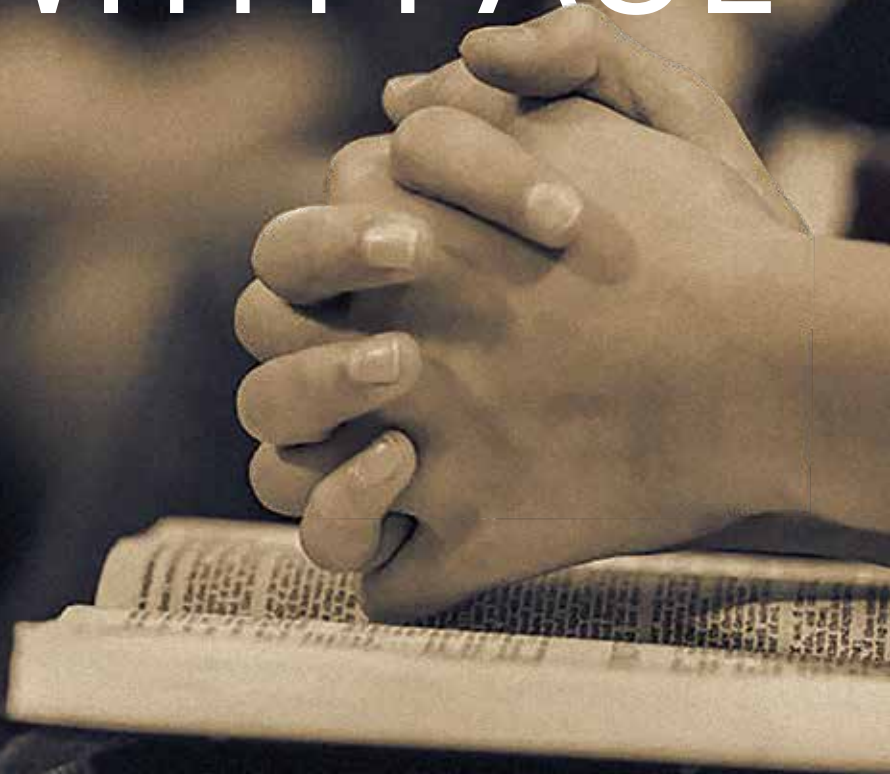


CORNERSTONE

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

PRAYING WITH PAUL



A PRAYER GUIDE BASED ON THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul is arguably the most influential missionary, theologian, and pastor in Christian history. He spread the message of Jesus throughout the ancient Roman Empire, and was a central figure in the Christian church's growth from a Jewish sect to a worldwide movement. The letters Paul wrote to various churches and individuals comprise about half of the New Testament.

This apostle's remarkable career was permeated by prayer. Paul was a man of prayer. Again and again in his New Testament letters, he describes what he prays, and how he prays. His prayers profoundly reflect God's heart and priorities.

What if we allowed Paul's prayers to shape the way we pray?

In his book on prayer, Pastor Tim Keller suggests that:

We only know who we are praying to if we first learn it in the Bible. And we know how we should be praying only by getting our prayer vocabulary from the Bible... Without immersion in God's words... we may not be responding to the real God but to what we wish God and life to be like.¹

This prayer guide is designed to anchor our praying in the Bible (and in Paul's prayers in particular) so that our prayers might better reflect God's heart and priorities.

How might God change the way you relate to him, and your priorities in prayer and in life, as you use this guide to study and apply Paul's prayers?

¹ Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, p. 54–55

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide offers a 7-day cycle of reflections and prayer points based on a selection of Paul's prayers as recorded in the New Testament.

It is recommend that you repeat the 7-day prayer cycle for one month or more. This will allow Paul's prayer priorities to "sink in" for you, and become more a part of your ongoing prayer life.

Each day, simply:

1. **Read the passage (or passages) and the reflection for the day.**
2. **Pray through one or more of the prayer items.** Use these as launching points to pray for yourself, others, and the church as the Holy Spirit leads you.

There are also **Family Prayer Activities** designed for use by parents or guardians with younger children. These are found on pages 18–20. If applicable, feel free to use these activities as often as works for your family.

“Praying with Paul” in this way might feel a bit different at first, but that’s okay. Remember, these are the key themes the New Testament teaches us to pray about—the priorities that are closest to God’s heart.

DAY 1

PRIORITIES IN PRAYER

READ

Colossians 1:9–14

REFLECT

Verse 9 begins with the words, “For this reason...” In the preceding verses, we find Paul thanking God for the Colossian Christians who are growing in faith, hope, and love.² It is for *this* reason that Paul has **not stopped praying** for them.

The reason Paul doesn’t stop praying for the Colossians is because *they’ve been doing so well in their walk with God*. This is unexpected, because we tend to be more inclined to persist in prayer during times of crisis.

And we must certainly pray in times of crisis. But we learn from Paul that when we hear good news of answered prayer about God’s blessing and work in people’s lives, we shouldn’t stop praying for them, or move on to pray for other, more pressing, concerns. Instead we should thank God for the blessings, and then *continue to pray fervently for more of the same*.

The heart of Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is that they would be *filled with the knowledge of God’s will*.

When we hear the phrase “God’s will”, many of us tend to think about the decisions we face in life: where to attend university, the search for the right mate, which church to attend, whether or not to take a job, and so on. We certainly need God’s guidance and direction in such decisions.

But when Paul prays for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, he has something much bigger and broader and deeper in mind. His prayer is that the Colossians would understand *what matters most to God*.

What are *God's priorities* for us as his people?

Drawing our prayer vocabulary from scripture helps us to align our prayers with God's will.

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. How have you recently seen God at work in your life, the lives of others, or the life of the church? In the spirit of Paul's example, don't stop praying. Instead, thank God for the blessings, and pray fervently for more of the same. Take some time to apply this principle during your time of prayer today.
2. Try praying the passage itself, making Paul's prayer your own by slightly paraphrasing it to insert either your name, the names of others, or the name of your church. Pray through the full prayer several times, covering various persons and groups, adjusting the pronouns as needed. For example:

Father, I will not stop praying for Cornerstone. I continually ask you to fill this church family with the knowledge of your will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that together we may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way...

Father, I will not stop praying for John. I continually ask you to fill him with the knowledge of your will...

3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 18)

2 See Colossians 1:3–8

DAY 2

PRAYING TO KNOW GOD BETTER

READ

Ephesians 1:15–21

REFLECT

Did you notice that in this prayer, Paul doesn't say a single thing about the circumstances the Ephesians were going through? This seems odd, because the Ephesian Christians were experiencing significant adversity, including being persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

This is true of most of Paul's other New Testament prayers as well. As Tim Keller notes:

It is remarkable that in all of his writings, Paul's prayers for his friends contained no appeals for changes in their circumstances.³

Does this mean we should never pray for our circumstances? Of course not! Jesus himself invites us to pray for our daily needs, and in other places Paul also instructs us to pray for various needs as well.⁴

Still, in his recorded prayers for his friends, Paul bypasses the circumstantial needs you and I would be most inclined to pray for. Instead, he zooms in on what matters most— *to know God better* (see verse 17). This is the very heart of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.

When Paul speaks of knowing God better, he's referring to the *relational* knowledge of God. He's not asking that the Ephesians would know more *about* God (although that matters too). He's praying that through God's indwelling Spirit, they would *know God* better—personally, experientially, intimately.

As far as Paul is concerned, you're better off having bad circumstances and a close relationship with God than the other way around. We don't go seeking out bad circumstances, but when they come, having a close relationship with God will help you to depend on him more and more, and you will experience that his grace is sufficient for you.⁵

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. Throughout the day, pray the following breath prayer over and over: *God, help me to know you better.* Pray the same breath prayer for others in your life too. Pray it for Cornerstone.
2. Try praying today's passage, making Paul's prayer your own by slightly paraphrasing it to insert either your name, the names of others, or the name of your church. Pray through the prayer several times, covering various persons and groups, adjusting the pronouns as needed.
3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 18)

3 Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, p. 20

4 See Matthew 6:11 – *Give us today our daily bread.* See also 1 Timothy 2:1–2; Ephesians 6:18

5 See 2 Corinthians 12:9

DAY 3

PRAYING TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF CHRIST

READ

Ephesians 3:14–21

REFLECT

Prayer is an invitation into God's love.

In 1 John, the Bible says that *God is love*, and that *we love because God first loved us*.⁶ This is essentially what prayer is all about. When we speak to the Father in prayer, it is first and foremost our grateful response to God's love for us in Christ. It is an intimate conversation between our loving heavenly Father and his child.

When we have such conversations often enough, our communion with God—*who himself is love*—will increasingly transform us into people who love God in return, and reflect his love to others.⁷

Indeed, “love” is the thematic centre of today's prayer from Paul. His priority in prayer for the Ephesians is that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to *experience*—personally and intimately—the full dimensions of Christ's love.

Paul prays this so that the Ephesian Christians *will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God* (see verse 19, NLT). The idea of being “made complete” has to do with spiritual maturity. To mature as a Christian is to grow in Christ-like love. For a Christian, love is the whole ball game.⁸

As author David Benner writes:

The point of God's love is to remake us in his image of love... He wants us to be like him, characterized by love... Love is the acid-test of Christian spirituality. If Christian conversion is authentic, we are in the process of becoming more loving. If we are not becoming more loving, something is seriously wrong.⁹

Paul's prayer shows that it is the *personal experience* of Christ's intimate love for you that enables you to become a person who loves God and others more. When you know Christ's intimate love for you in your personal experience, you come to realize that *it is the truest thing about you*. Everything else in life may change, but nothing can ever separate you from the love of God in Christ.¹⁰ Knowing this will free you from fear and also from the vain search for love in false sources. It will liberate you to become spiritually mature, living a life of Christ-like love.

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. Try praying today's passage itself, making Paul's prayer your own by slightly paraphrasing it to insert your name and the names of others. Pray through the prayer several times, covering various persons and groups, adjusting the pronouns as needed.

Make sure to also pray for your *whole church family* to experience and grow in God's love, because Paul's prayer is for "all God's people" together (see verse 18).

2. Soak in God's love during your prayer time today using this [playlist](#) (you will need a free Spotify account). Or, choose other favourite worship songs that speak of God's love for you in Jesus.
3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 19)

6 See 1 John 4:8, 19

7 Jesus says that the greatest commandments are to love God with all you are and to love others as yourself. See Matthew 22:36–40

8 See Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, 16:14; Galatians 5:14; Ephesians 5:1–2; 1 Peter 4:8

9 David Benner, *Surrender to Love*, p. 85

10 See Romans 8:38–39

DAY 4

WARFARE PRAYER

READ

Ephesians 6:10–18

REFLECT

God’s story — and by extension, yours and mine—has a villain. Those of us who follow Jesus are at war against the devil and the fallen angels that do his bidding.

The ultimate outcome of this war is certain because of what Jesus accomplished through his cross and resurrection.¹¹ One day, when he comes again to rule the earth, Jesus will vanquish the enemy once and for all.¹² And yet, Paul pulls no punches about the fact that until that day, we’ve got a serious fight on our hands. For time-being, spiritual warfare remains an unfortunate reality of our day-to-day lives as followers of Jesus.

But God is good! He provides us with effective spiritual armour and weaponry (verses 13–17), so we can stand firm against the enemy’s schemes and attacks. Paul urges us again and again to make full use of this armour. Put it on! Take it up! Stand firm in it!

But how? How do we actually “put on” this metaphorical armour?

Paul tells us in verse 18, which is the point in the passage when he stops speaking metaphorically, and urges us to *pray, pray, pray*.

Prayer, therefore, isn’t just one item among others in Paul’s list of our spiritual armour and weaponry. Prayer is *the very means* of putting on the full armour of God. As James tells us, we resist the devil by drawing near to God.¹³ How to we draw near to God? *Through prayer*.

¹¹ See Colossians 2:15

¹² See Revelation 20:10

¹³ See James 4:7–8a

¹⁴ It’s recommended that you pray the prayer aloud, if possible. An audio version is also available.

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. Grab your phone, tablet, or computer and Google *Daily Prayer Extended Version*. This will take you to a powerful prayer from Christian author John Eldredge. It's fairly lengthy— you'll need a good 10–15 minutes to pray through it.¹⁴ But it's wonderfully comprehensive, deeply biblical, and oh so powerful. The prayer provides warfare prayer language that will help you to assert the authority that you have in Christ against the devil's schemes and attacks.
2. The following prayer offers specific prayer language that you can use to “put on” each piece of the armour of God. The prayer helps you understand the meaning of each piece as well.

Lord, I put on the belt of truth. I take my stand on the sheer truth of the gospel. Expose any lies that I'm believing, and set me free by your truth this day.

And yes, Lord, I wear your breastplate of righteousness today as a shield against all condemnation and corruption. May I walk in your ways today and always. Fit me with your holiness and purity, and defend me from all enemy assaults against my heart.

I put on the shoes of peace. I pray that you will tear down the walls that divide people, uniting them in Christ. Empower me by your Spirit to be a peacemaker in this world.

And I take up the shield of faith, Lord Jesus. I lift it up against every enemy lie and assault designed to erode my confidence that you are good, and that you have good in store for me. Nothing today is coming that can overcome me, because I belong to you, and you are with me, always. I put my trust in you. Help me to be loyal to you in all things.

I put on the helmet of salvation. Thank you, Lord, for my salvation. I receive it in a new and fresh way from you this day, and as I take every thought captive and make it obedient to you (2 Corinthians 10:5), I declare that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38–39) and the place I have in your kingdom forever.

And I take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, the good news of Christ. Holy Spirit, show me specifically the truths of God's Word that I will need to counter the assaults and snares of the enemy. Bring them to mind throughout this day. I remember that when Jesus faced the devil's temptations in the wilderness, he always countered the enemy's lies with your Word (Matthew 4:1–11).

3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 19)

DAY 5

THANKFUL PRAYER FOR GOD'S WORK IN OTHERS

READ

1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

2 Thessalonians 1:3

1 Corinthians 1:4

Ephesians 1:15–16

Philippians 1:3–5

Colossians 1:3–6a

Philemon 1:4–5

REFLECT

This sampling of several verses in Paul's New Testament letters shows us that Paul's prayers were filled with thanksgiving to God for the spiritual growth and ministry impact that could be seen in and through the lives of the believers he associated with. (We've already seen one example of this in the Colossians passage from Day 1).

Today, as we let the prominence of this kind of thankful praying in Paul's letters wash over us, it begs a question. How often do we thank God for the work he's doing in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ? Is it even on our radar to do so?

If not, why not? Maybe we just haven't thought about prayer in this way before. Maybe we haven't been paying attention to God's work in the lives of others. Maybe our faith is too private. Maybe we're not part of a circle of believers that share their lives and support each other in their spiritual journeys enough. Maybe you need to join a small group or ministry team where that can happen. Maybe the group that you're in needs to go further in terms of really opening your lives to each other. Then you'll be in a position to be aware of and thank God for what he's doing in the lives of other followers of Jesus.

The point is, Paul habitually shares his life with other Christians, prays for their growth in Christlikeness, and thanks God for their growth when he learns of it. Will this scriptural priority mark our life as a church? Will it mark your own prayer life?

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. Think about how God has been working in and through the lives of other Christians you know. It could be members of your family, Christian friends, people in your small group, or those you serve with at church or elsewhere. Wherever you see evidence of God's work in and through others, take time to specifically thank God for it, and for them. You may also want to write one or more of these people a note of encouragement to let them know that you thanked God for them in prayer today.
2. Spend some time in prayer asking God about your involvement in Christian community. Do you do life and ministry with other followers of Jesus enough to be aware of how God is working in and through them? Ask God if there any steps he would have you take in this regard, like joining a small group, serving in the church, or going deeper in your relationships with Christian friends. Take action as the Holy Spirit leads you.
3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 19)

DAY 6

UNITY-BUILDING PRAYER

READ

Romans 15:5–7

REFLECT

The unity of the church is a major theme throughout Paul’s writings and prayers.¹⁵ Jesus himself prayed earnestly for the unity of his church, making it clear that unity is mission-critical.¹⁶ It needs to be a top priority in our prayers as well.

Unity is not the same thing as uniformity. Unity isn’t about dotting all of our theological “i’s” and crossing all of our doctrinal “t’s” in the exact same way. It’s not about everyone sharing the same views on every issue, or having identical preferences. As Christians, we come from a rich diversity of races, cultures, generations, traditions, and backgrounds, and we all have unique personalities.

Paul explains in verse 5 of today’s passage that true unity comes from *having the same mind and attitude toward each other that Christ Jesus had*. He repeats the same thing in Philippians 2:5:

*In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*

What was Jesus’ mindset? Paul goes on to explain that Jesus’ attitude was one of humility and self-sacrificial service for the sake of others— even to the point of death on a cross.¹⁷ If we have the mindset that Jesus did, says Paul, then our diversity will enhance our unity, making it all the more beautiful and attractive.

Unity-in-diversity is a prerequisite for the success of the church’s mission.¹⁸ It’s like a gospel magnet. When a congregation composed of people from different races, cultures, generations, social statuses, backgrounds and personalities accepts each other as Christ accepts them (see Romans 15:7), sharing life together in loving unity, the world gets drawn to Jesus.

Now it’s time to go to prayer, and ask God for the unity-building mindset of Jesus.

PRAY

(Choose one or more options below)

1. Offer prayers of thanksgiving for Cornerstone's long history of unity. Then, pray that God will continue to safeguard our unity in Christ. You may want to borrow the words of Paul's prayer in Romans 15:5–7, applying it to Cornerstone, perhaps repeating it several times. Pray too that we may "experience such perfect unity that the world will know" that God has sent Jesus.¹⁵
2. Spend some time in prayer asking God what he would have you do to contribute to the unity of the body of Christ:
 - Are there divisive patterns of thought or speech God is calling you to surrender?
 - Are there any words or actions of loving acceptance or inclusion he would have you express toward others?
 - Is there anyone in particular that God is calling you to pray for or forgive?
3. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 20)

¹⁵ For example, see Ephesians 4:1–6, 11–16; Philippians 2:1–5

¹⁶ See John 17:20–23; cf. Mark 3:24–25

¹⁷ See Philippians 2:6–11

¹⁸ **Unity-in-Diversity** is one of Cornerstone's Core Values: *We celebrate each person's uniqueness, while eagerly pursuing loving, harmonious relationships with each other.*

¹⁹ See John 17:23b, NLT

DAY 7

TAG-TEAM PRAYER

READ

Ephesians 6:18–20

REFLECT

Today's passage is a continuation of Paul's teaching on prayer as it relates to spiritual warfare (see Day 4). He boldly asks for the prayer support of the Ephesian Christians.

In another New Testament passage about spiritual warfare, the devil is likened to a lion on the prowl.²⁰ What's the hunting strategy of lions? They lie in wait, looking for the straggler, the lone creature that has wandered off from the herd. Isolation is the prey's weakness, and the lion's opportunity.

The same can be said of Christians. We need each other. Together, we will stand strong against the enemy as we multiply our prayer support for one another.

This is exactly what Paul has in mind at the end of his teaching on spiritual warfare in Ephesians: *Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*²¹

Spiritual battles are inevitable as we do kingdom ministry, which is why we desperately need each other's prayers. The great apostle himself urged other believers to pray for him, as we see in verses 19–20 of today's passage, and in many other passages as well.²²

If Paul needed the prayers of others, how much more do we need each other's prayers? Who do you pray for? Who prays for you?

PRAY

1. Ask God to bring to mind a few people that he wants you to pray for, and then spend some time praying for each of them.
2. Borrow words from Paul in today's passage to pray for the pastors who preach. Pray too for other believers you know, that they may share their faith in Jesus boldly. Pray the same thing for yourself.
3. Ask for prayer. Email a personal prayer request to your small group, or to any believer you know and trust. You can also send a prayer request to our prayer team at <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/prayer>.
4. **Family Prayer Activity** (see page 20)

20 See 1 Peter 5:8

21 See Ephesians 6:18

22 See 2 Corinthians 1:8–11; Romans 15:30; Philipians 1:19; Colossians 4:2–4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2

FAMILY PRAYER ACTIVITIES

If you have younger children, feel free to do any or all of the following family prayer activities.

DAY 1: PRIORITIES IN PRAYER

Make or buy playdough or clay. While you are playing talk about how playdough is soft and can be made into whatever the creator wants to make. When we ask God for help in making a decision, we want to know his will. That's a good thing! But when we pray for knowledge or understanding it allows God to make our heart look like his heart. We want our hearts to be changed and molded by God.

Make a heart with your playdough. Take a moment to ask God to be the maker and molder of your heart, showing you how he wants your real heart to be. Take out your playdough each week and choose someone to pray for, asking God to continue to mold and shape their heart so that it looks more like his.

DAY 2: PRAYING TO KNOW GOD BETTER

If you have the game *Guess Who*, play it! Or describe someone from your family and see if the kids can guess who you are talking about (has glasses, no hair on the top of their head). Now describe someone's character and see if they can guess (likes to make people laugh, is always generous, lets people go in front of them at Tim Horton's). We can know a lot about someone from the outside of them, but we don't really know them until we know the INSIDE of them.

When we pray, we are talking to God; having a conversation. Prayer helps us know God in a family way instead of in a guess-who-trivia way. Ask God to show you something about him. Write down things you might know about God on one side of a paper. As you continue this guide each week, write down things you've found out on the other side.

DAY 3: PRAYING TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Make tacos or bacon or curry or something “smelly” for dinner. Talk about how it fills up the house! Even when you leave and go somewhere in the car your clothes might still smell like bacon or tacos! Does Mommy or Daddy smell more like it than you do? Why? If we want to really KNOW Jesus’ love for us, if we want it to stick to us, if we want it to rub off on us, we need to be NEAR JESUS. Prayer is the way we get to be near Jesus.

The smell doesn’t last forever does it? Tomorrow you won’t smell like bacon. That’s why we need to be praying every day. Regularly visiting Jesus so his love will keep rubbing off on us. The more we pray the more we fill up with his love so that we can take it with us into the world, to school to sports and tutoring or piano lessons! May we STINK like Jesus’ love everywhere we go!

DAY 4: WARFARE PRAYER

Use getting ready for school or sport as a conversation starter. We need different things for different activities! We need to get ready for the thing we’re about to do! Paul gave us a really great example of how to get our hearts and minds ready to go out into the world! Praying helps get our hearts ready just like putting snow pants on gets us ready to go play in the snow.

Find examples of armour online (search armour of God free printable) or draw or make them with cardboard or tin foil. As you pray the warfare prayer as a family, use your props to remind you. Each week, challenge each other to remember the prayer using the props, without peeking!

DAY 5: THANKFUL FOR GOD’S WORK IN OTHERS

Make a list of everyone you know at church or small group. Cut the list into strips. Use the strips to make a prayer chain. Take time to pray through the chain, thanking God for the work he is doing in each life.

For older kids, have them write a prayer to a believing friend, leader or teacher, they can use these verses as a “code” for the person receiving the note to look up and find out.

Think of one thing that God has done in your family lately! Make a commitment as a family to share with at least 3 people this week! When we pray for each other and encourage one another we build community.

DAY 6: UNITY BUILDING PRAYER

Find some blocks (lego, plastic, wooden etc). Have each family member build anything they want. Enjoy the differences! Now everyone work on a tower together! Is it bigger? Stronger? When we take our differences (yours was taller, yours was colour-coded, yours had a strong base) and use them for one purpose we can do BIG THINGS!

Ask Jesus to show you what makes you unique. Ask him to use your uniqueness to help you build God's Kingdom with others! Think about your child's Sunday School class. Is there someone they could be kinder to? Is there someone that is confusing to them? How can we love each other the way Jesus loves us? Kids are really great at seeing differences, but they are also experts at finding common ground. Help them to always look for ways to be on the same team as their peers. Pray for and over your child and their classes.

DAY 7: TAG-TEAM PRAYER

Gather toothpicks, spaghetti or straws. Break or bend one. Easy right? Try two or three or 15 together. It gets harder the more you try to bend at once. When we come together as Christians, we find strength in community. It's easy to get discouraged when we're on our own but when we know that other people are with us, we can face our challenges. Talk about a time when you felt alone. Would you have felt the same way if 5 of your friends were standing beside you?

Go through your prayer chain again (day 5) and pray for strength and encouragement for the people in your chain. Feel free to add links as you think of others. Think about adding church leaders or staff into your prayer chain.

Notes



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