

# Building the Church Through Prayer

Ephesians 1:15-19 | October 3, 2025

Pastor Douglas Humphrey | Bridge Fellowship Church

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Welcome to Bridge Fellowship Church. I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My name is Douglas Humphrey, and I serve as your Lead Pastor.

Welcome back to our sermon series "Building the Church," where we're learning how to expand BFC—making room for more souls to be discipled and to have greater impact in our immediate community.

Two weeks ago, I told you that before we can talk about how to expand the church, we must make sure we're all on the same page about what the church is. From Ephesians 1:1-14 we concluded: **The church is comprised of those who are predestined by God, redeemed through Jesus Christ, and sealed with God the Holy Spirit.** In short, the church is a compilation of true believers resolved to serve God all their days. That's what the church is. That's who we are as a local church.

Now we come to the actual work of the church. And it may surprise you, but the first thing the church should be about is **praying—specifically praying for the congregants.**

Not making new disciples.

Not social justice issues.

Not being Christian influencers.

Not fighting to remain relevant.

Not even defending your faith.

But praying for one another.

So what exactly should we be praying for? Thankfully, Paul tells us. From this text we have four areas where prayer is consistently needed.

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## 1. Pray for Hunger to Know God More (v. 17)

Earlier in verse 9, Paul told the Ephesian Christians that upon being redeemed, God poured wisdom and understanding into them. Now in verse 17, Paul prays that God "would give them the Spirit"—the desire to walk in God's wisdom and to know Him more.

But why is this even important? If they're already saved and they've already been given wisdom, why do they need to desire it more?

### We Think We're Further Along Spiritually Than We Really Are

I remember counseling a couple who told me they wanted to go deeper in God's Word. They said, "Pastor, we want the heavy stuff. Academic level teaching. We're ready for more."

So I asked them, "When's the last time you actually obeyed something God showed you in Scripture?"

Silence.

Then I asked the wife, "When's the last time you built up your husband instead of ridiculing him?"—as she was known to do.

Silence.

I asked the husband, "When's the last time you led your family spiritually instead of letting your wife carry the full spiritual burden?"

The room got real quiet.

Here's what I realized: **They had confused head knowledge with spiritual maturity.** She could quote scripture but couldn't control her tongue. He could debate doctrine but didn't lead his home. They wanted graduate-level Bible studies, but they weren't doing what James 1 already told them: "Be hearers and doers of God's Word."

We think we need more information, but what we really need is submission and application.

## **We Become Bored with God When We're Not Intentionally Focused on Him**

That's why Paul prays for them to hunger after the Lord.

**Hunger looks like curiosity.** You read something about God in Scripture and instead of checking the box, you think, "I want to understand that more."

**Hunger looks like pursuit.** You don't just wait for Sunday to encounter God. You're seeking Him throughout the week—in your car, in your home, on your lunch break.

**Hunger looks like dissatisfaction.** Not with God—but with where you are spiritually. You're not content staying at the same level.

**Hunger looks like adjustment.** When God shows you something, you actually change your behavior.

And here's the thing about hunger: **It can only be satisfied by eating.** You can't hunger for God and refuse to open the Word. You can't say you want more of Him and never show up at the dinner table.

So the question is: Are you hungry? Or are you just snacking on spiritual morsels that never satisfy?

## **What Happens When You Stop Pursuing God**

You plateau and drift backwards. Your faith becomes routine. Your prayers become repetitive. Your Bible reading becomes a checkbox. And you wonder why God feels distant.

Here's what I know: **It takes a humble, transparent, surrendered disciple to see where they truly are spiritually and actually agree—"Yeah God, I thought I was here, but really I'm much lower."**

If you're serious about leveling up spiritually, then ask the Lord to do a full body scan of your mind, soul, and body. Ask Him to make known to you any trouble spots. And once He does, surrender them to God and submit to His growth plan.

Unfortunately, some will pray for growth, submit to Christ's scan, but when the results come back, they'll keep doing what they've been doing. Why? Because they're either not ready for change or they're too proud to agree with what God has shown them.

## When Change Will Occur

Here's a truth worth its weight in gold: **When a person is truly sick and tired of being sick and tired, that's when change will occur—when they're fed up with what they see in the mirror.**

So here's my question: Are you fed up with what you see in the mirror to the point of doing something about it? Or are you just bothered?

Christ's church is comprised of saints who pray for one another to walk in wisdom and to pursue knowing God more. Ask the Lord to make you hunger after Him, and as He does, respond in kind. Don't ignore the hunger pains you asked for.

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## 2. Pray to Understand the Hope of God's Calling (v. 18a)

Paul prays that the Ephesians would have the eyes of their hearts enlightened so they could see the hope of God's calling. Which is:

- The confident expectation that God chose you for a reason.
- That your life has divine purpose.
- That He's not done with you yet.
- That every day matters because God is working through you.

That's why Paul prays—"God, open the eyes of their heart." Not physical eyes. But their heart eyes, the core of who they are.

**Hope is more than just a good feeling. Hope is the blessed assurance that life is worth living and that you can make it.**

### A World Starving for Hope

Here's the reality: We live in a city, a nation, a world starving for hope. And the reason is simple. Jesus, who is the only source of hope, is absent from most people's lives.

I did some research on true Protestant Christian believers. Using strict criteria, roughly 1–2% of Americans are Christians. Let that sink in. Out of 330 million people in this country, only 6 to 7 million are genuine followers of Christ.

That means if you're sitting in a room with 100 people, 98 of them are living without hope.

Which helps to explain: The chaos. The hate. The violence. Corporate and political corruption. The divorce rate. The drug epidemics. The depression and suicide rates. The exacting murder rate.

We're the wealthiest, most powerful, and the freest nation in the world. And yet we lack hope. We lack the very thing we need.

### Hope Is Like Air

Hope to humanity is what air is to the human body. Try holding your breath right now. Go ahead. Take a deep breath. How long can you last? 30 seconds? A minute? Before your body starts screaming for oxygen. Your chest burns. Vision blurs. You'll do anything to breathe again.

**That's what living without hope feels like. It feels like desperation.**

Some of you are suffocating. You've been holding your breath spiritually for months. Maybe years. You get up. Go to work. Come home. Rinse, wash, and repeat. And you keep asking yourself, "Is this it? Is this all there is?"

You're gasping for purpose, but you've forgotten God already gave you one.

That's why Paul prays—"God, open their eyes! Show them the hope! Let them breathe again!"

## **When You Know God's Calling on Your Life**

You don't live chasing the weekend.

You don't hang your worth on a paycheck or a promotion.

You don't need to outshine somebody else to feel seen.

You don't need a romantic relationship to feel valued.

Because the God of the universe already stamped your value when He saved you. Already secured your identity. Already handed you your mission. Already secured your soul for eternity.

If that's not enough to fill your heart with hope, then nothing will.

It's time to stop living like non-believers—those who don't have hope. Put your full confidence in Christ and walk in His authority. Your life is worth living because God is in you. All you have to do is open your eyes to it and say yes, Lord, to His will and His way.

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## **3. Pray to Know the Wealth of Your God-Given Inheritance (v. 18b)**

Paul prays for something most Christians have no idea they possess. He's praying that they would know—not just believe, not just hope for someday—but actually know the wealth of God's glorious inheritance.

He's praying that we would know what we inherit from God.

The word "in" in verse 18b means "among." The fellowship of Christians is the sphere where this inheritance is found. In other words, **you can't fully grasp the riches of what God has given you until you're walking in community with other believers.** Until you do life as a member of a local church.

That's why some of you feel spiritually broke even though you have access to everything God owns. You're isolated. You're disconnected from the body.

### **You're Like a Trust Fund Kid**

Let me put it this way: You're like a trust fund kid who doesn't know the account exists. Your Father owns everything. He's put your name on the account. You have full access. But you're living like you're spiritually broke because nobody told you what's actually yours.

Paul is praying that you would know the riches of your inheritance NOW.

### **Your Inheritance Breaks Down Into Four Categories**

### **IDENTITY - Who you are.**

You're adopted. Chosen. A citizen of heaven. You're not trying to earn a spot at the table—you're already seated with Christ.

### **POWER - What you can do.**

You have the Holy Spirit. The same power that raised Jesus. That's literal divine energy living in you.

### **ACCESS - What you can reach.**

You have direct access to the Father. No middleman. No waiting room. No Pastor or Priest needed. You can talk to the Creator of the universe whenever you call on Him. There's no voicemail, busy tones, or AI-Chat.

### **SECURITY - What's guaranteed.**

You're sealed. Redeemed. Forgiven. Eternally His. Your salvation isn't on probation. Your eternity isn't in question.

That's what you've inherited. It's time for you to start walking in it.

## **Which Area Do You Struggle With Most?**

Submit it to the Lord and start walking in victory. Enlist a trusted brother or sister in Christ to help guide you and encourage you. Which is one of the key benefits of belonging to a Discipleship group here at BFC—it comes with baked-in love, encouragement, and accountability.

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## **4. Pray to Experience God's Immeasurable Power (v. 19)**

Paul prays that we would know—not just acknowledge, not just theoretically understand—but experientially KNOW the immeasurable greatness of God's power.

And Paul can't find strong enough words to describe it. So he uses every word for power the Greek language has:

- **Power (dynamis)** - where we get "dynamite"
- **Working (energeia)** - where we get "energy"
- **Strength (kratos)** - divine might
- **Might (ischys)** - available force

Paul isn't stacking words because one isn't enough, but to illustrate the fact that **we tend to only tap into a limited amount of God's power.**

### **Most Christians Live Like They're Running on AA Batteries**

Here's the problem: Most Christians live like they're running on AA batteries when they have access to nuclear power.

I watched a man fight the same sin for years. White-knuckling it. Trying harder. Failing again and again. One day he finally said, "God, I can't do this. But You can." And for the first time in years, he experienced breakthrough. Not because he tried harder—but because he finally accessed the power that was always available. All he had to do was surrender to it.

Notice Paul doesn't pray that you would know God HAS power. You already know that. He prays that you would know God's power experientially. Power that's working. Power that's active. Power that's being released in us who believe.

## **Why Some Christians Don't Experience God's Power**

**We don't believe we have access to it.** We think God's power is for super-saints, for pastors, missionaries, for people more spiritual than us.

**We're trying to live the Christian life in our own strength.** Like the man I told you about, we're white-knuckling it through life. "If I just hold on until glory...then I'll be good." Exhausting ourselves. And the whole time God is saying, "Stop it. Let go and let me...Abide in me."

**We've settled for spiritual mediocrity.** We've accepted defeat as normal. Stress as just a way of life. And we've convinced ourselves that struggling is what faithfulness looks like.

I'm sorry—that's a lie. **Struggling without accessing God's power is what unbelief looks like.**

## **The Condition Is Believing**

Paul says this power operates in us who believe. The condition is believing. That's it.

Believing looks like this: It's saying, "God, I can't overcome this temptation, but Your power can—and I'm trusting You." That's believing. That's accessing the power.

This power that all Christians possess is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The same power that seated Him at God's right hand. That same power was made available to you when God sealed you with His Spirit. That's who's working in you. Or should I say—that's who wants to work through you more and more.

## **Jesus Said His Yoke Is Easy**

Some of you are spiritually exhausted. Like you've been running a marathon. And you've been telling yourself, "This is just what the Christian life is. It's supposed to be hard. The harder it is, the stronger I become."

Well, that's not exactly right. Your life in Christ is supposed to be empowered. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

If you're exhausted, if you're defeated, if you're barely hanging on—you're not accessing the power that's available to you. No wonder you're near burnout.

## **The Guy with the Jackhammer**

Here's what confuses me: We have Christians running on fumes trying to serve God when He's offering them a never-ending power source.

I saw a video of a guy trying to remove tile from his floor. He had an electric jackhammer to remove tile—the perfect tool for the job. But instead of plugging it in and pulling the trigger, he's holding it with both hands, working it back and forth like a chisel, chipping away one tiny piece at a time. Sweating. Straining. Exhausted. Getting nowhere fast.

The comment section was going crazy:

"Bro, plug it in!"

"Just pull the trigger!"

"Hello...It's a power tool, McFly!"

He had the right tool. But no clue how to use it. Had he just plugged in and pulled the trigger, he could've done in five minutes what was taking him hours.

**That's how some of us are with God's power.** You've got the Holy Spirit—the perfect tool for breaking through sin, fear, anxiety, defeat, getting guidance. But you're trying to do it manually. Working it back and forth in your own strength. Grinding. Straining. Barely making progress.

And the whole time, God's saying, "Just plug into me and pull the trigger. Trust in me!"

The power is there. You just haven't pulled the trigger.

## **You Can't Build a Church the Hard Way**

And here's the reality: **You can't build a church when everyone's doing it the hard way.** And we can't expand and grow BFC when we're all exhausted from trying to do God's work without God's power. You can't make disciples when you're barely surviving yourself.

That's why we pray for each other to know His power—because a church that doesn't know how to access what God's already given them will burn out before they build anything.

But when we learn to plug in and pull the trigger—releasing ourselves to God—everything changes.

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## **Closing: A Call to Pray for One Another**

BFC, we need to be praying these things for one another:

- Pray for hunger to know God more.
- Pray for hope in your calling.
- Pray to grasp your inheritance.
- Pray to experience God's power.

## **Here's What I Want You to Do**

### **Step 1: Ask God for a name.**

Someone in THIS church. Not your spouse. Not your kids. Someone in this congregation. Pray and ask: "God, who in BFC do You want me to pray for this week?" Write the name down.

### **Step 2: Tell them you're praying for them.**

Don't just pray in secret. Catch them after service. Send them a text. Call them. Say this: "God put you on my heart this week. I'm going to pray for you—specifically the four things Pastor preached from Ephesians 1:15-19 today."

### **Step 3: Pray these four things by name on their behalf every day:**

- For hunger to know God more.
- For hope in their calling.
- To grasp (understand and walk in) their inheritance.
- For them to experience God's power.

**Step 4: Report back next Sunday.**

And watch what God does when His church stops just gathering and starts building each other up through prayer.

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**Let's pray.**

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*Pastor Douglas Humphrey serves as Lead Pastor of Bridge Fellowship Church. This message is part of the "Building the Church" sermon series.*