

## The Importance of Support

**Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well. (1 Samuel 18:5)**

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 18:1–5

**Song:** “Count Your Blessings”

Built in 2022 at a cost of 3.8 billion dollars, the Padma River Bridge boasts the deepest structural piles in the world, with a depth of nearly 400 feet below the surface. Spanning the winding serpentine river in Bangladesh, the majority of the bridge's structure is hidden beneath the water. The bridge holds a number of current world records, including using the largest crane in the world to lay the spans and using concrete and steel together for the first time.

In today's passage, David finds a true friend in Saul's son Jonathan. Jonathan makes a covenant with David born from brotherly love and affection, a sign of loyalty and commitment. With the support of such a friend in the background, David finds great success in the eyes of King Saul and the troops and officers as well.

Much like the Padma River Bridge, many people who experience great success (like David) have a strong support system of friends and family, unseen and behind the scenes. Having other people who believe in you can be a source of great encouragement and strength to help you step into the calling God has placed on your heart.

**Father,** please bring encouragers into my life to help and support me as I seek to serve and honor You. May I offer the same to others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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## 18 Inches

**This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.**  
(1 John 4:13–14)

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:7–16

**Song:** “In Christ Alone”

The vast majority of Americans know who the president is at any given time. Many can tell you his home state, his age, and important policies of his administration. But how many could tell you what he eats for breakfast or his favorite sports team? In short, most Americans know things about the president, but only a handful of people actually know him personally. There is a difference between knowing *about* someone and truly knowing someone.

Many people also know who Jesus Christ is, when He lived, what He taught, how He died, and what the church teaches and believes about Him. However these are all things someone can know about Jesus without actually knowing Him—that is, being in a personal relationship with Him. John teaches that the presence of the Holy Spirit and a heart surrendered to Christ as Savior are proof of this personal relationship.

Simply knowing about Jesus is not enough. The next step is to trust Christ in our hearts and invite Him to be the Lord and leader of our lives. The distance between our heads and our hearts is a mere 18 inches, but these few inches are enough to affect our destiny for eternity.

**Father**, thank You for saving me and calling me into a personal relationship with You. Help me to grow to know You more deeply each day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## A Vision of Christ

**This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.** (1 John 4:17)

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:17–21

**Song:** “Take My Life and Let It Be”

The *Mona Lisa* is a world-famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci that hangs in the Louvre in Paris, France. The real-life person who posed for this painting is an Italian noblewoman named Lisa Gherardini from Florence, Italy. Painted in 1503, people have been fascinated by her coy smile for the past 600 years. While we know that the woman pictured in the painting is a real person, it is only a momentary representation of who she really was.

In a similar way, Christ-followers today are the “Mona Lisa” for Jesus. When He ascended into heaven, Christ left His followers here on earth to reflect His grace, mercy, and love to the world. When a Christian purposes to live a life that honors God and glorifies His name, the result can be that this Christian is a portrait of Christ for all to see.

When others encounter us, we may be the only representation of Jesus a person ever sees. Can they see God living in us and God’s love flowing through us? What kind of impression do we leave on the lives of those we encounter each day? May we be a vision of Christ for the world!

**Father**, let my life be a living testimony of Your love and grace for everyone to see. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Everyone Is Welcome!

**The Sovereign LORD declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”** (Isaiah 56:8)

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56:3–8

**Song:** “Bringing in the Sheaves”

The Augusta National Golf Club is most well-known for hosting the prestigious PGA tournament known as The Masters every April since 1934. This golf club, located in Augusta, Georgia, is also well-known for its exclusivity. Augusta did not allow its first African American member until 1990 and continued to ban women until 2012. Yearly membership fees run in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per person. It’s definitely not for everyone!

Isaiah addresses a superiority complex in the hearts of many ancient Israelites. These Israelites believed that as Jews, the chosen people of God, they were in an exclusive club, a club where they were able to enjoy the blessings of God while the rest of the world could only watch. Through Isaiah, God teaches the Israelites that not only will He pursue His wayward children, but He will also extend His mercy and grace to all of the peoples of the world.

Today, the vast majority of people come to Christ because of others God has chosen to gather to Himself. We can be thankful to God that He chose to include us in His family by His grace and love. With grateful hearts, we can extend the invitation to those outside Christ today in the same way He extends it to us.

**Father**, thank You for inviting me into Your love and including me in Your family. Help me extend that same love to others today. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Team Chemistry

**How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!** (Psalm 133:1)

**Scripture:** Psalm 133–134

**Song:** “Make Us One”

Successful coaches will tell you that it takes more than talent to have a winning season or to win a championship. Great teams are often beaten by teams with less talent but more of what coaches call “team chemistry.” Team chemistry is an undeniable unity and togetherness that a team can experience when every player buys into the idea of “we” instead of “me.”

A similar thing can happen in the local church. When members and attenders are brought together by a common faith in Christ and the common goal of honoring Him, churches can experience a powerful unity that blesses its people and helps the church grow. The psalmist had clearly experienced this himself and provides the beautiful imagery of oil running down the high priest's beard and robe.

As we consider how this applies to our personal lives, we see the importance of our role in ensuring unity in our churches and places of worship. How many churches simply don't have an impact on the community because divisiveness and selfishness take away from the focus of the church? The psalmist leaves us with a promise of blessing if we are committed to preserving and protecting unity in the church.

**Father,** lead me today to value the unity of my local church and to do all I can to protect this unity so my church and community can experience blessings from You! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Representing the Team

**So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** (Galatians 3:26–27)

**Scripture:** Galatians 3:25–29

**Song:** “The Family of God”

In sports, one of the most recognizable aspects of the game is the different uniforms worn by each team, regardless of the specific sport being played. Whether high school, college, or professional, teams are known by their uniforms. For the players, one of the most exciting days of the season is when the uniforms are given out and numbers are assigned. Fans of the team purchase the jerseys of their favorite players so they can be identified with the team as well.

Paul teaches that when a person trusts Christ as Savior, that person becomes part of God’s family through the common faith in Christ. Because the life of every person in God’s family is marked with sin, God clothes His children with the sinless perfection of Christ. In some ways, the righteousness of Christ can be viewed as the “uniform” that identifies a person as part of God’s family.

When we claim Christ and proclaim our faith to others, our brokenness and mistakes are covered by the blood of Christ, and we are clothed in His righteousness—free from guilt and sin. His righteousness becomes our “uniform” and identifies us with God’s family. It is this “uniform” that gives us the opportunity to represent Christ to the world around us.

**Father**, thank You for saving me and bringing me into Your family. Help me to represent Your name well each day. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## The Power of Rethinking

**The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” (Acts 10:15)**

**Scripture:** Acts 10:19–15, 30–35

**Song:** “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

In the fifth century BC, it was generally agreed by philosophers and scientists alike that the earth was flat and that if a boat sailed to the end of the earth, it would fall off the edge. However, in the third century BC, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC), based on observations of a lunar eclipse, boldly postulated that the earth was a sphere rather than a flat disc, a fact that has since been proven in many ways.

Peter had been raised to follow the strict dietary restrictions of the Jewish law. He had never in his life intentionally eaten anything that was forbidden. Then in a vision, Peter is shown a sheet with all kinds of different animals (many forbidden to eat), and God tells him that he is now allowed to eat whatever he wants. Peter’s cry of “Surely not, Lord!” can be heard and felt throughout the centuries.

Though 2,000 years have passed, the church today faces many different challenges to change with the culture without compromising the message of the gospel. Even a few decades ago, people were very resistant to the idea of guitars and drums in church, using the arts in worship, or even letting the pastor wear jeans. What are we willing to rethink so that the gospel of Christ reaches more and more people?

**Father**, help me to be willing to change when You say it is time. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.