

BEING ONE IN LOVE

JOHN 17:20–26

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## Being Together

*“Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory.”*

John 17:24a

“To err is human; to forgive, divine.”\* Perhaps “to rejoice is both” would be an appropriate addition. We believe that Jesus is fully human and fully divine, and through this verse, Jesus subtly acknowledges both. People love to celebrate, gathering in joy for births, baptisms, graduations, weddings, holidays, and so on. Food is even used for an excuse to have fun, like on National Ice Cream Day.

Jesus asks that those who believe will be with him to see his glory, his oneness with God. He desires that his followers be with him to witness and celebrate divine goodness and love. How human it is to request to be with whom one loves to celebrate that which is good. How divine it is to ask that the fallible beings who we are be present in the indescribable nature of the Son of God.



*God of glory, remind us to celebrate your goodness with you and one another. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

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\* Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Criticism,” *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69379/an-essay-on-criticism>.

BEING ONE IN LOVE

ACTS 1:1–11

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## Hold, Please!

*While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the Father.*

Acts 1:4

During technical rehearsals for theatrical productions, “Hold, please!” is called out, and the actors freeze in their positions. Adjustments and corrections to costumes, lighting, or set changes can be made before the rehearsal continues. These moments of holding in place are important. Without them, mistakes and difficulties can be overlooked or made worse, and the final production ends up being less than desired.

Jesus tells the disciples to “Hold, please! Stay where you are! Something is going to happen here.” Like us, the disciples probably desired to keep going. Waiting patiently is not a specialty of most people. We want to know what’s next *now*, even when trying to discern God’s call. Yet God’s “Hold, please!” had a purpose then, as it does now.



*God of infinite wisdom and time, help us to breathe and listen when you call to us to hold in place, waiting with hope for the fulfillment of your promises. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2025

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BEING ONE IN LOVE

JOHN 17:20–26

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## Knowing Names

*“I made your name known to them, and I will make it known.”*

John 17:26a

Having people know my name well enough to accurately pronounce it has been a challenge for most of my life. My name is Ginny as in Virginia, not Jenny as in Jennifer; after getting married, I learned to tell people that Shanda rhymes with Honda. Getting the pronunciation right signaled to me a person’s spark of interest and care in knowing me.

Truly knowing another’s name means that that person understands what is behind the name: the character, the qualities, the whole of the person. When Jesus states that he made God’s name known and will continue to do so, that knowing went and goes beyond God’s title or name. Followers knew and will know who God was and is through Jesus, as well as what being in relationship with God meant and means.



*God who knows our names, you became fully human through your Son, our Savior, so that we might know you. May we each day grow to know your name more fully. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

BEING ONE IN LOVE

JOHN 17:20–26

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## Loving Oneness

*“So that the love with which you have loved me  
may be in them and I in them.”*

John 17:26b

In closing his intercessory prayer, Jesus names an intention or purpose for knowing the Father—the same love shared with, in, and through Jesus by God is to be within the believers. This knowing of God is and leads to agape, unconditional love. Praying on behalf of Christ’s followers, Jesus desires a union that is infused with God’s boundless love. This desire for unity with and through Jesus and with one another flows from this love, which has no height, breadth, or depth to it.

Such a gift to us is this loving oneness is! How we embody and live out this loving togetherness reveals to the world in whom we believe and in whose communion we share a part. As followers of Jesus, the ways in which we pray, listen, and live together in relationship reflects our knowing of God’s name.



*Loving God, help us each day to draw close to you  
through your Son, our Savior. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2025

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GOD'S PROVISION FOR DAILY NEEDS

1 KINGS 19:1–4 (5–7), 8–15A

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## Food from an Angel

*Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him,  
“Get up and eat.”*

1 Kings 19:5b

Elijah is afraid for his life because he has played a role in the death of evil Queen Jezebel's favorite prophets. He flees into the wilderness and asks God to take his life. Elijah is exhausted and depressed after the tumultuous events, so he lies down under a tree and falls asleep. When he wakes, an angel offers him food.

The contrast between the high drama Elijah has experienced and the simple offer of food illustrates God's provision in daily life. Even when we experience a day of overwhelming challenges, perhaps even trauma, God cares about us and meets our basic needs. Sometimes we are so absorbed in facing the pressing demands that we can't see God's provision. When we pay attention, we will notice people and circumstances that show God's care for us.



*Provider God, help us to notice the ways you meet our practical, everyday needs even when the events of our lives seem overwhelming, traumatic, or frightening.  
Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington

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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM  
ACTS 2:1–4

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## Language Connects

*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

Acts 2:4

Language is a pathway that leads toward connection and a sense of belonging. A child's first words strengthen the bonds of their relationships with those who nurture and love them. Being among people who speak unfamiliar languages can be disorienting and isolating. However, discovering another who understands the same language or dialect can bring relief and forge bonds.

To suddenly speak new languages must have caused momentary bewilderment among those filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet the warmth of the tongues of fire could have also brought reassurance, possibility, and purpose as these Spirit-filled gifts emerged. The followers did not scatter. The Spirit resting on and filling them inspired them to speak and bear witness to God's deeds of power in languages that allowed others to receive the Spirit's message.



*Holy Spirit, open us and cultivate in us a readiness to receive and welcome the gifts that you bestow on us.  
Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM  
ACTS 2:5–13

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## Language Matters

*Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.*

Acts 2:5–6

“They’re speaking my language” infers that another person holds similar perspectives or attitudes as the listener. Usually, the hearer positively receives the statement, but sometimes the initial reaction is one of bewilderment. Maybe the listener perceives the speaker to have a different background from their own. So how could the two possibly think similarly?

The crowd’s reaction was not surprising. It must have been a shock for them to hear their native languages being spoken by people who previously spoke only a single language. Today, it is not uncommon to meet people from different walks of life who are multilingual, even as the quick learning of second and third languages can be challenging. Like the Holy Spirit’s dramatic arrival, the Spirit’s imparting of gifts can astound both hearers and witnesses toward God’s end.



*Holy bearer of gifts, give us patience when you pour out your gifts with generosity. Amen.*

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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM

ACTS 2:5–13

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## Responding to the Unexpected

*All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”*

Acts 2:12–13

People are gloriously diverse in language, culture, physicality, attitudes, and beliefs, including the ways in which we experience and process ordinary and extraordinary events. How do we respond to someone taking a few new steps, whether a toddler, youth, rehab patient, older person, or ourselves? Do we rejoice, analyze, or take no notice? When witnessing something that is without obvious explanation, do we seek to understand, sit in awe, or dismiss it? Are our perspectives like the amazed and perplexed in Acts who sought meaning in the unexpected, or are they more like those who sneered at the events as distastefully mundane? How do we respond to experiencing “God’s deeds of power” (v. 11)? Where is the Holy Spirit today igniting sparks of transformational connection among us and those around us? What will be our reply?



*Holy Spirit, enlighten us so that we may see and embrace the wondrous works of God each day.  
Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky



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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM  
ACTS 2:14–21

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## For All

*“In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.*

Acts 2:17

The prophet Joel’s pronouncement that the Spirit shall be poured out “upon *all* flesh” was socially upending in his time and remained as such when Peter proclaimed it to his listeners. The spiritual gifts to be given to this community of believers would not be set aside for a select few but would be given to all, no matter their station in life. Gifts of discernment, forthtelling, and visioning will be spread throughout the followers, reaffirming the Holy Spirit’s gift of many languages among the disciples. Diversity of language and people, which scattered humanity at the Tower of Babel, now builds inclusion and connection through the movement of the Spirit.



*Spirit of God, inspire us to celebrate and nurture the  
variety of gifts that you give us to connect with you  
and all your children. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM  
ROMANS 8:14–17

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## We Are Family!

*When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs.*

Romans 8:15b–17a

Growing up in the middle of a multifamily farm gave me a distinct meaning of family. Having extended family nearby taught me about the joys and challenges of being with people who were very similar and yet very different from me. Family gatherings brought fun and laughter. However, loss of livestock or crops created financial worries. Amid these concerns, a reassurance was also present. We had each other to lean on.

What joy and comfort must have been felt by Paul’s listeners, who were not people of means, to hear of this promise of family and inheritance. Their cries of pain and for help would be opportunities for the Spirit to remind them that they were children of God. Their fears of insecurity and bondage were eased. The Spirit-led followers would inherit God’s abundance.



*Abba, Father, through your Spirit may we remember that we are yours. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2025

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THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM

JOHN 14:15–17

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## The Gift of Presence

*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.”*

John 14:16

During times of great emotion, having another person present can help us to acknowledge the significance of the moment and the importance of those who are living in that moment. Having someone by one's side during a crisis sparks a hope that getting through the difficulty is possible. When we are without the needed energy to speak for ourselves, hearing a friend speak up in our stead can provide us with a moment to breathe. Knowing that someone stands with you can kindle your courage to take on a right but unpopular action.

Jesus reassures the disciples, as he does us, that his transition from this physical world to the heavenly realm does not mean that he is abandoning them. Jesus will request of God the Father to send another who will speak and act on their and our behalf for all time. The Comforter will be forever abiding with those who know Jesus.



*Holy Advocate and Comforter, thank you for your presence, which guides and sustains us. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

THE SPIRIT AMONG THEM  
ACTS 2:1–4

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## What an Entrance!

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.*

Acts 2:1–2

Often when we are waiting for something to occur or for someone to arrive, we prefer not to be alone, especially during times of uncertainty. The disciples were together because Jesus instructed them to gather, and probably because gathering helped them with the anxiety that accompanies waiting. Picturing this scene, one sees them quietly huddled, pacing, or fidgeting as they wait. Then the Holy Spirit, about whom they were told, makes a grand entrance, rushing in like a violent wind!

We, too, wait for the Spirit's guidance and inspiration, but we frequently find ourselves as startled as we imagine the disciples were. The Holy Spirit moves and engages according to God's plan; we wait and listen.



*Holy Spirit, give us attentive patience as we wait for your spirit to blow through us, moving us to faithful action. Amen.*

Ginny Shanda, Lexington, Kentucky

THE JOY OF THE TRINITY  
PROVERBS 8:1–4, 22–31

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## Delight in Creation

*“I was beside him, like a master worker,  
and I was daily his delight.”*

Proverbs 8:30

Wisdom was with God at creation, and God delights in wisdom. In response, wisdom delights in God’s creative and beautiful handiwork, the creation. Proverbs 8 expresses joy at the abundance of creation and vividly describes God’s actions. Springs abound with water. God made “the first bits of soil” (v. 26) and “assigned to the sea its limit” (v. 29).

Amid the challenges in our lives, we can join wisdom in taking delight in creation. A newly bloomed flower, a fluffy cloud floating in the bright blue sky, or an affectionate dog or cat can lift our spirits to the One who created such beauty. Wisdom describes herself as playing in God’s inhabited world; we can join in. Wisdom also takes delight in the human race; we can thank God for every instance of human kindness, brilliance, and artistry.



*Creator God, we rejoice in the beauty of creation. Stir  
us to play in your world and delight in all that you  
have made. Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington

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THE JOY OF THE TRINITY  
PSALM 8

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## God's Delight in Humans

*What are humans that you are mindful of them?*

Psalm 8:4a

God's name is majestic in all the earth. God's glory shines through the beauty of the heavens. The whole creation, through its complexity and wonder, speaks about this God. We are finite and broken. How can this majestic God care about us?

The whole Bible provides God's answer to that question. Through the story of Israel, the music of the Psalms, the voices of the prophets, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we hear repeatedly that God loves us and delights in us. How amazing! God has crowned us with glory and honor. God invites us to join in the work of the triune God by exercising dominion over the created world. When we wisely and tenderly care for sheep, oxen, beasts, birds, and fish, we show the kind of dominion God desires and models.



*God of glory and majesty, we are awed that you have crowned us with glory and honor. Give us wisdom to live into our calling to tend your creation. Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington

THE JOY OF THE TRINITY  
ROMANS 5:1–5

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## The Person of Jesus Christ

*We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 5:1

The three persons of the Trinity are one in purpose and goal, yet each person of the Trinity has a different role in achieving those goals. The triune God desires reconciliation with humans, which Jesus made possible through his life, death, and resurrection. Through him, we have peace with God and access to grace.

Peace can be defined as the absence of war. Peace is also the presence of tranquility and well-being. Peace with God, made possible by the grace we receive through Jesus, illuminates our lives and enables us to navigate pain and suffering. All barriers between us and God have been removed. We can experience God's presence as we move through challenges, trusting in God's goodness and relying on the endurance supplied to us by the Holy Spirit. We are not alone in hard times.



*Gracious and grace-filled Jesus, thank you for reconciling us to God. Help us grow into delight. We long to appreciate your generous gifts of peace and grace. Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington

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THE JOY OF THE TRINITY  
ROMANS 5:1–5

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## God's Love Poured Out

*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 5:5

Water is a powerful metaphor for God's presence and love throughout the Bible, and water is evoked here with the word *poured*. Water flows. Water fills low places. Water quenches thirst and enables plants and animals to thrive. God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit enables us to live satisfying and fruitful lives.

God's grace and peace come to us through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Then, the Spirit pours the reality of God's love into our lives. Here, we see the triune God working toward one goal: the reconciliation of humans to God and each other. We also see the roles of the specific persons of the Trinity. We rejoice that the three are one.



*Holy Spirit, we rely on you to pour God's love into our hearts. Be like fresh water. Fill our low places and flow into every hidden, painful, and shameful corner of our lives. Bring Jesus' peace and grace to us at every moment of every day. Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington



FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 2025

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THE JOY OF THE TRINITY  
JOHN 16:12–15

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## Delight in Truth

*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*

John 16:13a

“The sum of your word is truth,” writes the psalmist about God (Ps. 119:160). Jesus is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The Holy Spirit guides us into the truth that comes from God and that is made visible in Jesus. The Spirit guides our thoughts when we read the Bible, listen to a sermon, or participate in Bible study.

Without God’s Spirit, words that communicate God’s truth would be dry and lifeless. We would be buffeted by diverse opinions and voices from books, podcasts, websites, and blogs. We need discernment to sort through all the voices we hear. We also need wise mentors and friends to help us ponder what the Spirit is saying. With practice, we learn to hear the Spirit’s voice and gain wisdom and perception.



*Holy Spirit, help us feel your nudges and hear your voice in our hearts and through trusted mentors and friends. Give us the light of your truth. Amen.*

Lynne M. Baab, Seattle, Washington

