

# UBUNTU

A photograph of three women walking away from the camera on a dusty path. They are carrying large pots or bowls balanced on their heads. The woman on the left is wearing a dark t-shirt and a patterned skirt. The woman in the middle is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and a dark skirt. The woman on the right is wearing an orange tank top and a colorful patterned skirt. The background shows a dry, hilly landscape under a blue sky with some clouds.

I am because we are

My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound  
up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life.

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

## WEEK 1 | February 19 | AFRICA

### Ubuntu: I Am Because We Are

*"My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.  
We belong in a bundle of life." — Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

#### TO BEGIN

**Video** (from a secular perspective on "Ubuntu"): Specifically 0:39 – 4:29

<https://youtu.be/7UojwMiRpNM?si=tOtHkIs-5jQJDCdd>

#### OPENING PRAYER

God of all peoples, you have made us one human family,  
yet we have built walls where you intended bridges.  
You created us for connection,  
yet we have chosen isolation over solidarity.  
Open our eyes to see where we continue to reinforce those walls in ourselves.  
Softener our hearts and give us eyes to see all humans as part of us – that we too  
have a responsibility toward. That we too are called to Love as you love.  
Bind us together in the bundle of life, for we are because they are.  
Amen.

**Song 1 – Ubuntu – One Big Voice Studio Choir:**

<https://youtu.be/42DRscY4iHc?si=oZpSNNyUANliYMsX>

#### A MEDITATION ON UBUNTU

**To go deeper:** See the attached handout "Understanding Africa's Diversity" for information about Africa's 54 countries, 2,000+ languages, and 3,000+ ethnic groups.

Africa is a continent of 54 nations, over 3,000 ethnic groups, and more than 2,000 languages. From the Sahara to the Cape, from the Congo Basin to the Horn, Africa holds within it extraordinary diversity: the Hausa and Yoruba, the Oromo and Somali, the Zulu and Akan. Ancient kingdoms and modern nations. Desert and rainforest. Muslims, Christians, and indigenous faiths living side by side.

From the breathtaking landscapes of Victoria Falls to Mount Kilimanjaro, the vibrant rhythms of Afrobeat and gospel choirs, the wisdom of oral traditions passed down through generations, the innovation of mobile banking revolutionizing economies, the art and literature that moves the world, and from the heart of Africa, this Ubuntu philosophy that teaches us what it means to be human.



Yet it is also a continent that has borne, and continues to bear, immense suffering: wars in Sudan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo displacing millions; drought and famine threatening the Horn of Africa; the ongoing violence and political instability that forces families to flee their homes; the AIDS epidemic that has claimed countless lives; the exploitation of resources while communities remain in poverty.

And we who gather from the West must name an uncomfortable truth: much of this suffering has roots in our own history. The transatlantic slave trade that stole millions of lives. The colonialism that carved up the continent with arbitrary borders, extracting wealth while imposing foreign rule. The neo-colonial economic systems that continue to benefit us while impoverishing others. The apathy and amnesia that allow us to forget that these are human beings - made in the image of God – are our brothers and sisters.

We have stood by. We have looked away. We have benefited from systems of injustice while remaining silent.

We belong to the same bundle of life. *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu* - a person is a person through other people. Our humanity rises and falls together.

**Worship Song:** <https://youtu.be/YYZ1mFdSm-M?si=JtkYsCMvOijrgkNH>

## SOME CURRENT HEADLINES

*(See attached handout)*

## LAMENT & INTERCESSION

**God of beauty and creativity,** we praise you for the incredible richness and diversity and joy that flows from the continent of Africa!

**We pray now for these 54 nations,** over 3,000 ethnic groups, and more than 2,000 language groups. We can't possibly capture all of their beauty now, but we specifically name the places we have ties, connections, or a heart for tonight.

***(Name the countries or people you know or have connection to in Africa)***

God of justice and mercy, we come before you with heavy hearts and bowed heads.

**We confess:** we have been complicit in systems that dehumanize and exploit.

**We confess:** we have turned away when it was convenient, forgotten when it was comfortable.

**We confess:** we have consumed the resources of Africa while ignoring the suffering of its people.

**We confess:** our ancestors' sins of slavery and colonialism, and our own sins of apathy and indifference.

**Forgive us, Lord.** Break our hearts for what breaks yours.

**We lament** the wars that ravage Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and countless other places where violence steals peace and destroys families.

**We lament** the droughts and famines in Ethiopia, Kenya, and the Horn of Africa, where children go to bed hungry and mothers watch their babies waste away.

**We lament** the political corruption and instability that robs people of safety, opportunity, and hope.

**We lament** the diseases -malaria, AIDS, tuberculosis - that claim lives that could be saved.

**We lament** the displacement of millions who have been forced to flee their homes, becoming refugees in their own land or strangers in foreign countries.

**We lament** that the richness of Africa - its wisdom, its beauty, its contributions to the world—is so often ignored or diminished.

***[Space for specific prayer points based on the week's news]***

***Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu — God, may we live this truth: A person is a person through other people.***

## CLOSING FROM GROUP LEADER

Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord with this blessing:

May you see the face of Christ in every face;

May you know that when one suffers, we all suffer;

May the Spirit bind us together across oceans -

**For we are because they are.**

***Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu.***



# BREATH PRAYERS

As you move through your week, Set aside 5-10 minutes each day and use these breath prayers as a reminder of Ubuntu. Let the rhythm quiet your mind and carry your intercession. Pray while commuting, while preparing meals, before sleep. Let this prayer become the heartbeat of your week.:

*Inhale:* God, break our hearts

*Exhale:* for what breaks yours.

*Inhale:* Creator God, give us eyes to see

*Exhale:* the beauty in each other.

*Inhale:* Help me see You.

*Exhale:* in every face I meet.

*Inhale:* Open my heart.

*Exhale:* to honor the holy in others.

*Inhale:* Break down the walls

*Exhale:* that divide what You've made one.

*Inhale:* Teach me to love

*Exhale:* as widely as You create.

