

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*



THEALLIANCE

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OF *prayer*

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## INTRO

Dear Alliance Family,

Welcome to 40 Days of Prayer! This prayer guide features daily devotionals and prayer prompts that are designed to lead you into the presence of God to cry out to Him in prayer and listen for His still, small voice. It's not enough to hear about prayer, read about it, or even just learn about it. During these 40 days at the beginning of 2021, we need to *engage* in prayer—to perhaps do so with a frequency, fervency, and focus that is not normal for us. Lord, teach us to pray!

Look around at all that is happening in our nation and world. 2020 was a year like no other. It's time to pray! Could it be that this 40 Days of Prayer could change us, change our prayer lives, change The Alliance, and even help transform our nation and world? Let's step into this prayer experience with the anticipation that we will encounter the living God. Let's pray with a spirit of expectancy that the Spirit of God will do great things in, among, and through us to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Keep the faith!



Terry D. Smith  
Vice President for Church Ministries



THEALLIANCE

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## WEEK 1

### THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Our focus during this first week is on the Person of God and His attributes. Our Triune God is perfect in holiness and in all of His other attributes. As we see Him for who He is, see Him in the fullness of His glory, may we be drawn to a posture of worship before Him. He is perfectly worthy!

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## THE ETERNALNESS OF GOD

MITCH KIM

The promises of God are guaranteed by His own eternal name. When Moses doubts God's promise to bring Israel out of Egypt, God guarantees His word by saying, "I will be with you" (Exod. 3:12a). He then signs that promissory note with His name, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14). He is an eternal God—not an "I WAS" of the past nor an "I WILL BE" of the future but the great "I AM"—always present in our every area of need. No wonder "I AM" becomes the personal name of God in the Old Testament, the LORD.

Obstacles to God's promises are opportunities to draw on His guarantees and learn new facets of His name. When Israel faced bitter water and cried out to the LORD, He sweetened the water and revealed Himself as ". . . the Lord, who heals you" (Exod. 15:26b). When they are overwhelmed in battle and lifted up in prayer, they overcome and realize, "The LORD is my Banner" (Exod. 17:15). When the Israelites sin with the golden calf and plead for mercy, they are forgiven and discover "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exod. 34:6). Every challenge they faced became a fresh encounter with new facets of the LORD's name.

Therefore, we do not fear our challenges. Instead we cry out to the LORD, the eternal God, who is big enough for our problems. Because God is eternal, the riches of His resources never run dry for our troubles. We do not only look forward to seeing His deliverance but also to learning more fully new facets of His name. What new facets of the LORD's name will He reveal through your challenges today?



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Praise God by speaking His names.
2. Thank God that problems are opportunities to encounter new facets of His presence.
3. Commit your problems to Him today so you may see His deliverance and experience more of His presence.

## THE HOLINESS OF GOD

JESSIE RITCHEY

*Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed (Rev. 15:4).*

While growing up, I was surrounded by adults who often coupled God's holiness with an emphasis on His otherness. Stories relating to His wrath and destruction seemed to further underscore a distance from humanity. In a young child's mind, this boiled down to an oversimplified and inaccurate formula: holy = far off.

Therefore, it was a delight to mature into the understanding that while God's holiness is irrevocably linked to His eternal power and glory, it permeates all He is and does. This is not a characteristic that exists solely to be displayed and admired from a distance. Rather, His holiness is linked and compellingly displayed in a sustained posture of leaning toward His creation in pursuit of relationship with us. He is not a holy God who stands far off but one who:

- Comes down in the cool of the evening to walk in the garden and talk;
- Speaks to Moses from a burning bush and completely redirects his life;
- Leads, accompanies, and protects the Israelites in the form of fire and cloud;
- Sends detailed artistic instructions for the tabernacle and comes to dwell with His people;
- Takes on the limitations of a human body to assure us He is indeed acquainted with our grief;
- Provides His Holy Spirit to lead us into the pursuit of deeper relationship with Him;
- Empowers us to pattern our lives after His holiness; and
- Chooses us as conduits of His holiness as we connect with those around us.

God's holiness can flow through every area of our lives as it motivates, propels, discerns, convicts, reaches, and impacts.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Show me what aspects of my life are far off from Your holiness.
2. How would You have me serve as a conduit of Your holiness and to whom?
3. Remind me of Your holy and faithful posture of leaning toward me.

## THE LOVE OF GOD

THOMAS GEORGE

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 Jn. 4:7–8).*

The word “love” seems so common. People want it, proclaim it easily, and lose it just as quickly. It seems to be everywhere and nowhere, and its definition varies widely. Scripture, however, is very specific in its use of the word. God is particular in using the word “agape” when talking about Himself. Agape is a defining characteristic of God—what He does comes out of who He is.

Below are three characteristics of agape love.

**Agape is unchanging:** It is commitment-based love. God does have feelings for us, but agape love is not based on a feeling. It is much stronger and more robust, a higher order love with no expiration date. He does not get bored or change His mind. He does not fall out of love with His creation or His people.

**Agape is not transactional:** God was not waiting for us to perform to His standards to love us. His love is not based on your earning potential or goodness. God declares you valuable and good.

**Agape is active:** His love is not just talk. He sent His Son to die for us. He is not distant; He is in our messes. He is forming, shaping, rescuing, restoring, growing. He is patient, long suffering, committed, self-sacrificing, and altruistic, even when we are stubborn and resistant. God is creating agape love inside of you for Him and for others.

The “I Am” is Agape.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. How does this kind of love affect my life?
2. How can I love others this way?

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

MATT COHEN

Few topics have produced more theological debate than the doctrine of God's sovereignty. But long before it was a subject of debate, it fueled the fire of worship among Christians. In the original Greek, Ephesians 1:3–14 is a long sentence with one big idea: **Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**

But why? Why should we glorify God with our lips and our lives? Let's look for a moment at all the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has done, by His sovereign grace, for all who are in Christ. God "has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (verse 3b). God "chose us in him before the creation of the world" (verse 4). In love, God "predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (verse 5). Because of the riches of God's grace, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (verse 7). God "made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ . . . to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head" (verses 9–10). God "predestined [us] according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (verse 11). God sealed us with "the promised Holy Spirit . . . guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (verses 13–14). And God did it all to the praise of His glory.

God's sovereignty is the fuel that lights the fire of His people's praises. God has saved us by sovereign grace. Let us praise Him!



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Begin your prayer time by praising God for the spiritual blessings God has lavished upon you in Christ (Ephesians 1:3–14). Consider rewriting this passage as a prayer of adoration and thanksgiving.
2. Confess any ways that you've lived in "functional unbelief" about God's sovereignty and goodness. For example, "Father, I confess I've been giving in to fear because I haven't trusted You to work all things according to the counsel of Your will."
3. Ask the Father to give you strength to comprehend "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Eph. 3:18). Pray this for yourself, your family, church, community, and our world.



## THE OMNISCIENCE/OMNIPOTENCE/OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD CRAIG SMITH

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Ps. 139:23–24).*

Psalm 139 celebrates God's attributes—His *omniscience*, *omnipotence*, and *omnipresence*. Affirming these realities, the psalmist models for us how to pray in alignment with them.

Based on God's omniscience, he opens himself to God's all-knowing scrutiny. Such an intimate review of any of us can reveal deep, hidden secrets that are already fully known to Him. The psalmist subjects himself to such scrutiny with a heartfelt willingness to repent as needed, knowing God's omnipotence makes Him the only One who can fully forgive and deliver us from sin. He is powerful enough not only for our needs but also the needs of all others for whom we pray.

Because God is everywhere, the psalmist can trust Him to lead him in paths that He ordains for him because He is already there. God's omnipresence closes the distance gap between us and those we are interceding for, even if a world apart. Oceans may separate us from our international missionary force or from family living miles away. Regardless, God is right there with us as we pray—and with those we are praying for! This allows for intimate, productive praying that reaps results.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. As we pray, let's begin with full surrender to God's scrutiny of our lives. Opening ourselves up to an all-knowing God does not provide Him with new information! Such transparency welcomes Him to cleanse, fill, and empower us for holy living.
2. God is capable of doing exceedingly above all we can ask or think. Knowing this should embolden us to pray with divinely inspired confidence. Affirming God's omnipotence in prayer moves His hand in the lives of those we intercede for, as much as it does in our own.
3. May God's omnipresence encourage our hearts and move us toward deeper intimacy with Him and those we are interceding for, regardless of distance. His omnipresence will offer those we pray for the strength to endure until the answer comes.

## THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD

JEN ASHBY

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (Js. 1:17).*

At the end of the high ropes course at a camp I was attending, the final task was to leap from a platform about 30' high and grab a swinging trapeze bar with both hands. When I jumped, I made contact with the bar but didn't get a grip. I felt the safety harness jerk and was suddenly upside down, feet in the air, slowly swaying and twisting. To say I was disoriented would be an understatement, and I had no idea how to right myself or this situation. The young camp staffer on the platform called down to me, "Ma'am, put your feet down." I did so and was instantly flipped upright before being lowered to the ground. Soon my feet were on solid ground again.

Change is constantly coming our way. Earlier in this passage, James says that just as the blossom withers, worldly riches fade (verse 11). He mentions the heavenly lights, sun, and moon, whose shadows are constantly shifting (verse 17). Sometimes change, especially if unexpected or unwanted, feels like a jerk on the safety harness, leaving us upside down, feet in the air, and disoriented. This passage is a call to "put your feet down" on the One who does not change. He is the Father, Creator of the heavenly lights, and He does not change. He is immutable. Nothing jerks Him upside down, and when we are, we can "put our feet down" and find ourselves standing on solid ground again. We do this by continually placing our faith in the truth of who God is, confident in His consistent, unchanging character and promises.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Acknowledge to God any ways that change or other circumstances have left you feeling disoriented.
2. Ask God to show you if you've been looking for stability or security in anything other than Him.
3. "Put your feet down" by praising and thanking God for being the solid ground that does not change.

## THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

GARY FRIESEN

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities (Ps. 103:8–10).*

God delights in extending mercy and grace to His deeply loved children.

More than 20 years ago, I received a call from a friend in another state who was a chaplain in a juvenile prison. He was calling about a 22-year-old prisoner who, at the age of 16, had murdered a gang member who had threatened his life. While in prison, he had responded to the gospel and been discipled by my friend. Because the young man was sentenced as a juvenile, the law now required that he be released. Gang members threatened to kill him if he remained in the area. So, my friend called to arrange for the young man to stay with friends near my home.

Several days later I picked him up from the airport and brought him home. Over dinner that night he told the remarkable story of his conversion and shared how God had miraculously arranged for him to take an internship, working with youth at a church in a nearby city. This young man's experience of God's grace was tangible. He knew that he deserved a lifetime in prison, not a new life, a new job, and freedom.

And this is true for each of us. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Like this young man freed from a prison sentence he fully deserved, we all live in the undeserved freedom of God's grace and mercy provided through Christ.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Thank God for specific ways He has extended His grace to you.
2. Ask God to reveal to you where you can share with others the grace God has extended to you.
3. Pray for those close to you who desperately need to daily experience His mercy and grace through our Lord Jesus.

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*

## WEEK 2

### REPENTANCE—TURNING FROM OUR UNHOLINESS

This week, we will allow the spotlight to turn inward. As we pray, we will open our lives to a deep search and cleansing by the Holy Spirit. While repenting of our own sinful attitudes and behaviors, we will also pray prayers of repentance for our nation, which has turned away from God and His truth and has not valued the precious gift of life.

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## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CONVICTION

LANTZIA C. THAO

We live in a sinful world and have fallen short of God's standard. As Christians, this reality affects us as it did the prophet Isaiah when he saw God and exclaimed, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (6:5a). It is the work and conviction of the Holy Spirit that brings us to such a realization. In 1 Thessalonians 1:4–7 Paul shed light on this truth, describing how the gospel first came to the believers "with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction" (5a). Although they were suffering severely, the Holy Spirit helped them to welcome the gospel with joy. As a result, they "became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (7).

As the Body of Christ, we are now in great need of the Holy Spirit's conviction in our lives, our churches, our districts, and the C&MA. He is our helper in convicting our community, our country, and our world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment (see John 16:8). Therefore, let us spend time conversing with God, seeking His direction and conviction of our sins, or unholiness, in the following areas.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Ask God to show you what He wants you to do regarding yourself and your church.
2. Ask Him to show our district superintendents what to do regarding our districts.
3. Ask God to show our C&MA president and his staff what to do regarding our denomination.

## PERSONAL EXAMINATION

JEN SCHEPENS

Personal examination is a powerful tool to see where our lives don't align with God's holiness. It can highlight areas in which we can welcome the Spirit's deep, transforming work. Psalm 139 highlights three truths to deepen our personal examination in prayer.

Read Psalm 139:1–6. *You are known.* No matter where you are in your faith journey, you have a history with God. He has been present in your story. He has searched you and is with you regardless of your circumstances.

Read Psalm 139:7–16. *You are seen.* God's presence brings light, which illuminates what is hidden and reveals truth. When you truly see who God is, you are ready to see the truth of who you are—one He has created and knit together in the womb.

Read Psalm 139:17–24. *Search me.* Now step out in humility and ask for God's scrutiny. He knows you, sees you, and has created you. Ask for His revelation as you personally examine anything preventing you from living out your identity as His creation.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Welcome the Lord into this moment, this place, and acknowledge His presence. Trace your journey to this point and recall how God has been with you. Where have you seen Him before? How has He been present? How has He already worked in you?
2. Welcome the Spirit's illuminating presence to bring light to the dark spaces in your soul. Using verse 14, take a moment to praise and worship your Creator.
3. Pray verses 23 and 24, asking God to reveal any offensive way in you. What came to mind as you prayed those words? Ask God to reveal what is hidden. Pray that the Spirit will show you areas that are not aligned with how God created you.

## UNCONFESSED SIN

KEN BALDES

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).*

I have often thought of unconfessed sin as like stepping on a garden hose that prevents the fast flow of water. How many times have you had to stop what you're doing to remove the kink in the hose so more water could flow freely? Ezekiel provides another vivid picture of unconfessed sin in chapter 36. He contrasts a heart of stone with a heart of flesh. Take some time today to read Ezekiel 36:22–38.

In Psalm 51, David gives us helpful words in verse 2: “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” As we begin 2021, would you prayerfully consider fixing any kinks in your life's hose between your heart and God's heart so the Holy Spirit can flow more fully in your life? A broken and contrite (repentant) heart (see Psalm 51:17) will produce a tender heart toward God and others.

Over time, unconfessed sin results in a calloused heart to the things that matter most to God. As we ponder this sobering reality, here are three questions to ask yourself (and perhaps discuss with your church's leadership).



### PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** What am I indifferent to that needs to be confessed? Have I, perhaps unknowingly, developed a heart of stone toward the unborn who die through abortion; the injustices around me that I remain silent about; or the marginalized people in my community whom I pass or forget about because they live “over there”? January 17 is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and provides an opportunity in a few days to corporately repent for the sin of abortion.
- 2.** What pride in my life or lack of dependence on God do I need to confess?
- 3.** What step of obedience is being thwarted because of unconfessed sin in my life that may result in not clearly hearing the voice of the Lord?

## SECRET SIN/HIDDEN SIN

TED KANG

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9).*

“Faithful” and “just”—isn’t it strange to find these two words in one sentence? I’d much prefer to have God’s faithfulness than justice when it comes to my sins. Divine mercy is a profound mystery. In every confession of our wrongs, a transaction takes place on that old rugged cross—a transaction where God keeps His end of the bargain to be faithful, while our Savior takes the blow of God’s ruthless justice. Confession is the Father’s gracious gift to His children. It is the key that unlocks every shackle of guilt and shame that separates us from God and from one another.

As children, my brother and I would play with an antique Omega watch that belonged to my late grandfather. One day, play turned into fight, destroying this family heirloom. I managed to convince my younger brother that he was responsible for this crime. Then I made him an offer he couldn’t resist. We put what was left of the watch back in the drawer and kept the transgression a secret. For the next several weeks, I turned him into my personal slave. When he refused to serve me, all I had to do was point at my wrist as a reminder of my mercy. This went on for weeks until he got so tired of being held hostage that he decided to come clean. He tearfully confessed to my grandmother that he had broken the watch. I will never forget what I heard that day. With a gentle smile, my grandmother said, “I know. I’ve just been waiting for you to tell me.” One confession set him free.

Our Father calls us to confession, not because He is ignorant of our wrongs, but because our shame and guilt keep us from coming to Him boldly.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Let us each come clean before God today.
2. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will restore the purity of His Church.
3. Let us pray that the Alliance family will be a light in spiritually dark places.



## **STRONGHOLDS THAT NEED TO BE BROKEN** **DAVID AND TY KING**

Strongholds usually begin with nothing more than a glance away from the face of Christ toward something or someone else. Over time this substitute (whether entertainment, relationships, money, approval, addictions, unforgiveness) becomes a controlling influence in our hearts, hindering our pilgrimage with Jesus. It grows like a spiritual cancer, killing the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. It's an idol on steroids, and the issue is always Lordship.

Use the prayer below as you sit in God's presence to evaluate your heart and discern any strongholds. Remember, your Father is waiting with open arms. The ring and the robe are ready. Run home.



### **PRAYER POINTS:**

Lord Jesus, I quiet myself in Your presence and choose to submit to You as my Savior and Lord. I ask that You open the closed-off places in my heart and expose them to the light of the Holy Spirit. Reveal all strongholds and heal me.

- 1.** Where I am blind to my own sin, restore my sight, for only You can bring healing to the hidden places of my heart. (Pause and confess those things that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.)
- 2.** Where I have allowed the enemy to steal Your work in my life, I now take my stand in Jesus' name and authority, taking back the stolen ground. (Continue to pray as led by the Holy Spirit.)
- 3.** I ask, Father, for complete freedom in every area of my life. Fill me afresh with the Holy Spirit so I will be strengthened to stand firm and become more like Jesus. Renew my hunger for Your Word and holiness.
- 4.** I choose now to throw off the sin that has entangled me and once again fix my eyes on Jesus Christ, my only Lord. Amen (see Romans 6:19; Luke 15:11-31; Galatians 5:16; Isaiah 29:13; 1 Peter 2:24-25; Galatians 5:1; James 5:16; Hebrews 12:1-2).

## UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS

KAREN GUSTAFSON

*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification* (Rom. 14:19).

Conflict can exist wherever there are people, and whether we like it or not, we all will face interpersonal tensions. When confronting difficulties in a relationship, as in any threatening situation, our initial reaction is often to fight or flee. Fighting can look like accusing the other person or group, attacking their character or motives while defending our own actions. Fleeing can look like withdrawing from interactions with the person involved or cutting them off emotionally. (Certainly in dangerous situations, safety may require distance.) These options, however, leave conflicts unresolved, relationships harmed or broken, and our own soul agitated or cold.

Jesus took unresolved conflict seriously and taught another way. He told us in Mark 11:25 that when we pray and hold anything against anyone, we need to forgive and also receive forgiveness. In Matthew 5:23–24, Jesus instructed us to seek out reconciliation when we go to worship while knowing someone has something against us. In both passages, Jesus links our prayer and worship with the need to resolve interpersonal conflict. No matter how the conflict started, Jesus wants us to take steps to make peace as far as possible (see Romans 12:18).

Not every relationship problem will end the way we desire, but the steps we take will open the possibility for resolution, bring peace to our souls, and give us joy in fellowship with the Lord. May we make every effort to promote peace in these difficult situations and build each other up.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. What conflict is still unsettled or causes unrest in my soul?
2. Who may be feeling that I have offended them (whether justified or not)?
3. What steps is the Lord asking me to take, making every effort to bring peace to these situations?

## GOD'S FAITHFUL FORGIVENESS

JASON KIM

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (Jn. 1:9).*

As believers we experience two kinds of repentance: one that ushers the natural man from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light and one that restores the sin-laden disciple to whiter-than-snow purity.

Many Christians live as though God's forgiving grace applies primarily—if not only—to the “first” repentance—the act of justification at conversion. We offer eternal gratitude for this metamorphic act of salvation while often overlooking our desperate need for His daily mercy and forgiveness as we stumble into sin.

This verse brings two simple truths to light that are essential to our ongoing spiritual growth and renewal: (1) Christians—no matter how devout—continue to sin; and (2) God the Father, because of His boundless love for us, made allowance for our transgressions through His Son's shed blood—the source of a vast flowing fountain of grace that washes away ALL our sins.

So, what should we do when we fall? John admonishes us to confess our sins to Jesus—who promises to forgive and purify. We simply need to trust in His faithfulness and take His promise at its word.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Using Psalm 139:33-34 as your prayer, ask God to help reveal your current sinful behavior.
2. Acknowledge and confess these sins, asking for Christ's forgiveness.
3. Give thanks for His faithfulness and celebrate the purity He restores through His shed blood.

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*

## WEEK 3

### SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT/FULLNESS

Having now turned from things that were grieving and quenching the Spirit, in this week we prayerfully welcome His fullness and power. May there be a sense of hunger and holy desperation as we pray for a fresh outpouring and infilling of the Holy Spirit on our lives and in our churches. Come, Holy Spirit!

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## THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

KRISY MAXEY

The Holy Spirit is introduced in Genesis 1. Throughout the Old Testament we see the Spirit moving with power among God's people. In the gospels, John the Baptist declared there is One more powerful who will come. "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 1:8).

In John 14–16 Jesus introduced the "Alongsider" (*paraclete* means "called to one's side"), raising high expectations of the One coming after Him. After the Resurrection, Jesus spoke again about this promised gift. ". . . in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4, 5).

But it wasn't until Jesus had been gone for 50 days that the Holy Spirit blew through the small band of followers, baptizing them with miraculous *dunamis* ("power to do"). Acts tells compellingly of a new power for living the gospel—preaching, helping the disadvantaged, worshiping, praying, and healing. And when we meet Paul on his third missionary journey about 20 years later, he's in the city of Ephesus with a group of believers. "Hey guys! Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? No? You haven't even heard of Him? Let me introduce you!" (see Acts 19:1–6). And the Holy Spirit came with power just as Christ promised.

A thrilling expectation accompanies these introductions. The Holy Spirit flames uniquely before us in truth, advocacy, comfort, and power. Come! Meet this Person yourself; Jesus longs to baptize you.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Reflect on how you first met Jesus. Thank the Holy Spirit for the hunger planted in you, and remember key growth points since that time. Then enjoy the memory of your "second baptism." Spend time in gratefulness and joy.
2. If you don't have a clear moment when you were filled by the Spirit, declare your desire to meet Him. Position your body to indicate your openness (open your hands, kneel, etc.).
3. Pray the following: "Come, Holy Spirit, as the transforming Alongsider promised by Jesus. Grow my capacity to receive all I need from You. Transform my comprehension; instruct me in truth; comfort and strengthen me; fill me with an ability to introduce You to others. I want to know You. I desire to be transformed by You. Come!"

## THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER JAMES CHUNG

In Ezekiel 1, the prophet had lost his country, his career as a priest, and his future. The hand of God was upon him in a foreign land. He then saw a heavenly vision of four living creatures—each had the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (see Ezekiel 1:10). The lion is the king of the beasts, the ox the king of livestock, the eagle the king of the sky, and the human the king of all creatures. Later, Ezekiel saw the Lord enthroned in all His glory. He fell on his face.

When the apostle John was imprisoned in Patmos, he too saw four living creatures while in the Spirit: one like a lion, the second like an ox, the third with a face like a man, and the fourth like an eagle, worshipping the one on the throne (see Revelation 4:7). Like Ezekiel, John fell as though dead.

We've also seen God's glory in our journey. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Jesus is the glory of the Father, and the cross was the climax of His glory. We have all seen His glory in the cross. We fell at His feet and wept in the presence of the Spirit.

The apostle Paul said, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Recall a moment you wept in the presence of the Spirit. Ask the Lord to open your heart, then pour out your heart and share with the Lord your feelings.
2. Declare to the Lord the words from your soul to bring Him what He deserves.
3. Express your deep desire and longing to see His glory in the presence of the Spirit.

## OUR BATTLE WITH THE OLD NATURE

PETER BURGO

We've all seen the classic horror scene with the hand reaching from the grave to snag an unsuspecting soul back into the depths. While it's easy to dismiss this macabre imagery as the fabrication of a fright-mongering filmmaker, we can't as easily dismiss the reality that the old man we "put to death" often reaches from the grave to try to drag us back.

Therein lies the trap that leaves us vulnerable and unsuspecting: our mistaken assumption that the old man will rest in his banished torment and cease to be a threat. Scripture offers a threefold warfare plan to help us avoid ambush.

### **Be watchful.** 1 Peter 5:8

Our old, sinful nature—along with the enemy who arouses it—lies in wait for any opportunity to strike. Like a predator seeking its prey, it launches its attacks when we are tired, weak, and vulnerable. Jesus warned His disciples of this in that crucial hour (see Matthew 26:41).

### **Suit up for daily battle.** Ephesians 6:10–18

Although it's true that Jesus conquered sin and death once and for all, He still leads us into daily battle to retain—and sometimes reclaim—the territory He won. The armor He furnished us is to be kept battle ready and donned daily—not left rusting in a closet to be hastily retrieved after the enemy has already stormed the gates.

### **Dwell in protected territory.** Psalm 91

Although our battle-readiness sometimes requires that we advance into enemy territory to reclaim a hill, we must always retreat back to the place of protection and restoration: Our *Refuge. Mighty Fortress. Strong Tower. Hiding Place*. The soul finds its rest—and its righteousness—in the shadow of the Almighty.



## PRAYER POINTS:

1. Read 1 Peter 5:8, asking the Lord to keep you watchful throughout the day.
2. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and put on the full armor piece by piece as you pray.
3. Read Psalm 91, reflecting on how His shadow protects you from the "old nature."

## THE FAILURE OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT

JOHN STUMBO

God has a long history of telling His people He wants them to do and be what He knows they can't do or be. He often places us in positions where we see our need of Him. Why? Because He knows we will experience Him most fully when we realize we need Him most completely.

His call contrasts common human thinking. "Be all you can be. Believe in yourself and unleash your full potential." Such teaching has become so common we may not recognize its error.

The Bible teaches we are at our best not by discovering our human potential but in discovering our human limitation—believing that a divine source is available to us.

From my vantage point, the U.S. evangelical church has a decent understanding of salvation but a poor one of sanctification. Many Christians give their lives to Christ in faith but think they can live their lives for Him by works. We typically believe in sanctification by works. We delight that we are saved by grace but then despair, attempting to achieve sanctification by effort.

My brothers and sisters—be encouraged. The entrance to salvation and the pathway of sanctification are the same: humble dependence upon and faith in the One who saves and sanctifies us.

Yes, we participate. We respond, believe, accept, trust. But we don't control or contrive.

The sanctified life is not passive ("I have no participation), nor is it a life of initiation ("It's up to me to get this right"). It is a life of cooperation: "I yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit in my life."



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Be thankful that God desires to live His life through us by His Spirit (see John 7:37-39).
2. Welcome the Spirit to fill you and grant you everything you need to do what He calls you to do and be who He desires you to be (see 2 Peter 1:3).



## FULLY SURRENDERED

KELVIN WALKER

Galatians 5:25 is a challenging verse: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” It’s challenging because keeping in step with the Spirit requires surrender. No one likes that word. To me, it means giving up control. And I don’t like to be controlled by anyone.

Yet living a Spirit-filled life means daily coming to terms with and willingly surrendering to the Spirit’s control in my life. Here’s the beautiful thing. For every moment that I surrender to the Spirit, He promises a fresh outpouring and filling of Himself. And, as I am filled with the Spirit, He provides the empowerment I need to keep in step with Him.

In recent years, God has been using one question to let me know it’s time for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit: “Do I have your ‘yes’ no matter the outcome?” Each time He asks that question, I know that my “yes” will require surrendering my control to the leading and voice of the Holy Spirit. Yet each time I say yes, I receive a fresh outpouring of the Spirit that empowers me to keep in step with Him and to live my life in Him as He lives His life through me.

That same empowerment is available to you. It begins with a simple phrase of surrender: “Yes, Lord . . . no matter the outcome, I say yes to You.”

Fully surrendered—Lord, I am Thine;  
Fully surrendered, Savior divine!  
Live Thou Thy life in me;  
All fullness dwells in Thee;  
Not I, but Christ in me.  
—From “Fully Surrendered,” by Alfred C. Snead



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Prayerfully consider your current life situation. Do you see areas where you are out-of-step with the Spirit? If so, confess those and surrender them to His control.
2. Welcome in prayer a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your life.
3. Can you truly say that God has your “yes” in everything He’s asking you to do? If not, sincerely give it to Him as you pray through your life this week.

## WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

TERRY SMITH

The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we trust Jesus as Savior. Before this, we had only the sin nature, or the flesh, in us. It is the Spirit who brings to life within us the new nature. However, the flesh is not pulled out by its roots. In this life, both natures will always be in us. The Spirit and the flesh are in conflict, and both want control.

How do we overcome the influence of the flesh? In The Alliance we believe the answer comes in both a decisive and ongoing surrender to the Spirit. In Galatians 5, when Paul calls us to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, he's referring to our ongoing daily experience of welcoming the Spirit's control and experiencing the fullness of His power (see Galatians 5:16, 25).

Paul depicts the Christian life as a step-by-step walk in which we seek the Spirit's strength and direction for our small daily choices and big life-decisions. I walk almost every morning. The path I take and the turns I make control my destination. In the Christian life, allowing the Spirit to direct our steps each day enables us to experience life in such a way that we look more and more like Jesus.

Even if we had a transformative experience with the Spirit in our past, we must ask ourselves if we're living under the Spirit's control right now. If so, we'll find ourselves increasingly overcoming attitudes and behaviors that marked our old way of life—and experiencing the freedom and fullness of new life in Jesus.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Acknowledge your inability to overcome the flesh.
2. Pray daily to surrender your whole life to the fullness and control of the Holy Spirit.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your life that are not Christlike—then ask for His power to change.

## THE SPIRIT'S POWER FOR MINISTRY JONATHAN SCHAEFFER

The Bible is full of amazing promises. Have we considered how many of those are conditional? God forgives us . . . when we confess our sins to Him (see 1 John 1:9). He blesses us . . . when we honor our parents (see Ephesians 6:1–3). God guides us . . . when we acknowledge Him in all our ways (Proverbs 3:5–6). There is something God asks of us.

The same is true if we want to experience daily the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells His followers, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14:23). This is one of the most remarkable promises in the Bible—He actually comes to live in us. What’s the condition for experiencing that most fully? Obedience to Jesus’ teaching. Peter puts it this way: “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32).

The Spirit is a gift from the Father, received by grace. There is a sense in which He has freedom to influence us, empower us, and work in our lives—when we obey Him. We surrender, boldly follow, and relinquish anything that displeases Jesus. We could say it this way: Our level of obedience determines our level of blessability. This kind of obedience isn’t mere religious duty. Jesus says we want to please Him because we love Him.

Do you want Him to work powerfully in you and through you? By His grace and power, commit today to obey Jesus in every area of your life.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Lord, thank You for keeping Your promises to actually take up residence in me.
2. I confess anything that threatens my relationship with You. Cleanse me so You are completely at home in my life.
3. Empower me to walk in obedience to You so I can be fully “blessable” and serve as Your instrument wherever and however You want to use me today.

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*

## WEEK 4

### EVANGELISM (LOCAL AND REGIONAL)

All around us in this nation and right where each of us lives, there are people who need Jesus. They need the peace and hope that Jesus alone can bring. During our prayer times this week, let's allow the Spirit to bring people to our minds who need Jesus and need us to share His love and gospel with them. Jesus, bring new courage and fresh power upon us to fulfill Your mission.

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## NEEDS IN YOUR CITY/COMMUNITY

JIM RUDD

Many factors determine whether a city struggles or thrives—housing and job markets, the climate, the school system, and population trends, to name a few. Some might seem too overwhelming for us to make a difference with our prayers.

King Solomon observed, “Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed” (Prov. 11:11). The wisest man in the Old Testament, a respected global leader, said that cities rise and fall based on how people talk about them.

How do you talk about your city? Would you characterize the way you speak about your city or region as blessing or cursing?

Cursing our cities sounds like: “Things will never get better” or “Our best days are behind us” or “This God-forsaken place.”

Blessing our cities sounds like: “God is working here!” or “Our city has a rich heritage of church unity” or “Anything is possible with God!”

Blessing our cities does not call for blind, unrealistic optimism. Blessing our cities is a matter of discovering the character and nature of God at work in the world around us.

It’s important that our prayers for our cities and regions don’t turn into a list of complaints about the quality of life. If Jesus has made us righteous, we have a responsibility to bless our cities. We should be quick to identify where God is active in our cities and always bless what He is doing.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Do you need to repent of cursing your city?
2. Where is God active in your city? Can you bless His work?
3. What are some areas of real need in your city or region that you could commit to pray blessing over this week?

## CHURCHES TO BE RENEWED IN THEIR EVANGELISTIC PASSION ROSILIO ROMAN

When the Jews began persecuting the Jerusalem believers, many left the city, seeking refuge in Judea and Samaria (see Acts 8:3). As they scattered throughout the region, the believers shared the gospel with people everywhere. They became passionate about evangelism, and God affirmed their efforts with miraculous signs and wonders. Revival broke out throughout Samaria—the same region Jesus and His apostles had visited during His earthly ministry. God moved so powerfully that the disciples remaining in Jerusalem wound up sending Peter and John to confirm the news of the many conversions, praying for the new Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:14–17).

Pondering on the current state of affairs in the United States, with so much hopelessness from the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing racial tension, I wonder if it will take persecution or great opposition from those hurting masses to scatter and propel us throughout the land to proclaim the gospel to everyone we encounter. Perhaps God may allow a season of persecution and suffering (see Acts 8:1–3) among our churches to have Spirit-filled men and women rise like Philip did in Samaria to spread the good news (see Acts 8:5–8).



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. May every Alliance church gather for a season of prayer, asking God to send a fresh anointing of His Holy Spirit over our entire denomination.
2. May this prayer effort result in a great number of Alliance people sharing their testimonies of God's transforming power with everyone they meet.
3. I wonder if you, the reader, would join me in praying for God to renew our evangelistic passion to reach the lost in our families, communities, and workplaces. Would you pray with me to that end?

## LOST PEOPLE IN MY SPHERE OF LIFE/ EVANGELISTIC COURAGE JEN VOGEL

*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them* (Heb. 7:25).

Through the years, I have prayed fervently with women, interceding and pleading for children and grandchildren who were not walking with Jesus. Primarily through the ministry of Moms in Prayer International™, I have gained both confidence and boldness in my prayers for the lost in our families.

Some women bear the heartache of a family member who was once near to God and is now distant; others plead for children and grandchildren who have not yet responded to the gospel. In both cases, we have claimed the truth found in Scripture to guide our intercession.

We know God does not want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9). The Good Shepherd is willing to leave the ninety-nine to search for the one lost sheep until He finds it (see Luke 15:4). We can join God in this lovingly relentless pursuit. Today, I encourage you to pray these prayers for lost members in your own family. Better yet, connect with a friend and pray them together.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Prayer for mercy. "Father God, you are not willing that \_\_\_\_\_ be separated from you. Instead, you desire reconciliation with him/her. I pray your mercy on \_\_\_\_\_. Rescue \_\_\_\_\_ from the dominion of darkness and bring him/her into the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, whom you love" (2 Pet. 3:9, Col. 1:13).
2. Prayer for myself. "Father God, may your kingdom come and your will be done today, on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus, I do believe you are able to save completely those who come to God through you, including \_\_\_\_\_. Help my unbelief" (Matt. 6:10, Heb. 7:25, Mk. 9:24).
3. Prayer of praise. "Father God, you are rich in mercy. Because of your great love, you made me alive with Christ even when I was dead in transgressions—it is by grace that I have been saved" (Eph. 2:4-5).

## PRODIGALS AND LOST LOVED ONES

RON WALBORN

*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. [26] They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be a blessing (Ps. 37:25–26).*

The Lord gave Psalm 37 to my wife, Wanda, and me early in our ministry. It promises God's faithfulness not only to the righteous but also to their children. Even before we had children, we began to pray God's blessing and favor over them and their future families. As our children grew and entered their teen years, those prayers became much more intense. Following are lessons we learned over the years about praying your children into their Psalm 37 place of blessing.



### PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** Pray out of faith, not fear. Often when our children go through crisis, we shift from a position of faith to fear. We have learned that prayers birthed in fear are weak. But when we keep our eyes on a God who is always faithful, our own faith begins to arise. This frees us from the spirit of fear.
- 2.** As you pray for your children, remember they are writing their own testimony—not yours. We can certainly pray that what the enemy means for evil will be redeemed for God's glory in their lives, but never forget you have to love and pray for them even when the path they choose is not one you would have chosen for them. This frees us—and them—from the unhealthy spirit of control.
- 3.** Finally, pray for yourself—specifically that you will become a place of mercy and grace instead of one of punishment and judgment. Years ago, the Holy Spirit whispered in our ears that prodigals will never return home to a place of judgment but only to one of mercy and grace. Ask God to show you how to win the battle for their hearts and not just their behavior. This frees us from the spirit of religion.



## THE CALL FOR RESILIENT CHILD DISCIPLES LEAH BROACH

*Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isa. 43:19).*

The early portion of Isaiah's prophetic poetry is a reflection on the grim effects of generations disobeying God and caving to wicked cultures. Our present-day circumstances often mimic this decay. It seems no one is listening, and old methods to reach new generations no longer work. But God ultimately used Isaiah's words to bring lasting hope through the promised Redeemer. His message shouts to believers today this fresh call to raise generations that know and love Jesus.

This courageous call to faith must include reaching our children. We are not to get distracted or discouraged by the noise of the pervasive culture. We are responsible for pressing into the lives of children with the good news. Nothing is more transformative to a generation or culture than resilient disciples of Christ. And nothing is more damaging than failing in our responsibility to reach and raise children who know and love God.

Reaching today's children and growing their faith resiliency amid a world screaming ideologies counter to Scripture is no small task. We need fresh perspective from the Creator Himself. We do well to remember that children have the full capacity for transformative faith. This kind of faith starts with us passing on the truths of the whole Bible, living out the gospel in our daily lives, and showing radical love to the world. Doing so ensures we are sending living testimonies to the present and the future of the power of salvation through Christ. When we prioritize reaching the children of our communities, we can expect God to do new and beautiful things now and in the coming generations.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Lord, give me eyes to see all the children in my sphere of influence, and burden my heart for their faith development.
2. Grant me compassion, creativity, and innovation to bring Your truth to a generation that is taught subjective truth.
3. Pour over me Your perspective and excitement for the NEW thing You will do in this generation.

## REACHING AND DISCIPLING TEENS

DAN BOAL

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deut. 6:6–7).*

Have you ever had a conversation that changed the direction of your day, week, month—or life? Like going to the store and trying on new clothes to see what you like, teenagers are constantly trying out new thoughts, activities, behaviors, and philosophies of thinking. These activities are critical to identity formation. As they find concepts and behavior they like, they will eventually adopt them as their own and discard the concepts and actions that don't resonate with the core of who they believe themselves to be. Think back on your own life and identify seasons where you “tried on” different behaviors simply because someone suggested you should. Are you embarrassed, ashamed, and confused? Or grateful, excited, and happy?

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 emphasizes the older generation's powerful responsibility to be the initiators of that one conversation with the next generation that will change their life. It's not a teen's responsibility to ask about Jesus and what it is like to follow Him. It is an adult's responsibility to inform them EVERY MOMENT POSSIBLE how good and wonderful it is to follow after Jesus and invite them to try it for themselves. You just might be the person who has the one conversation that changes their life forever.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Jesus, is there a younger person in my life I can talk with about following You?
2. Jesus, give me the words to say and courage to share the many stories of Your faithfulness in my life in a way that resonates with this young person.
3. Jesus, allow the generation of believers in my church to be found faithful in Your eyes to pass on the faith from one generation to the next.

## CHURCH PLANTS AND AREAS NEAR YOU THAT NEED A NEW CHURCH IVÁN MARTÍ

*He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:2–3).*

Have you ever lost your wallet or your keys? I have. Typically, we begin by searching the kitchen counter, dresser, dining room table, etc. Why do we never check our pockets first?

Sometimes we can miss what is right under our noses. Did you know that more than 40 percent of members at successful church plants were previously unchurched? Every year, about 4,000 churches are planted in the United States, and about 3,700 churches close—leaving a net gain of only about 300 churches per year. Church planting needs to increase by two to three times to address population growth and anticipated closures.

Church plants are needed everywhere in the United States—especially in the Northeast and on the West Coast. Urban centers continue to grow at a staggering rate, but 54 percent of Americans reside in small towns or the rural countryside. Both need churches that thrive in their communities to reach the lost.

We must pray to the Lord of the harvest to send prayerful, Spirit-filled laborers into the fields. In this moment in history, we have a unique opportunity for great Kingdom impact. Will we discern the times in which we live and respond as God would have us? Or will we look elsewhere and ignore what is right in front of us?



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that believers are willing to participate in reaching the lost in their communities.
2. Pray that people will contribute to a church plant, whether financially or by volunteering.
3. Pray that more Alliance churches will hear the call to plant multiplying churches.

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*

## WEEK 5

### MARGINALIZED PEOPLE

The prayer spotlight falls this week on people who are often overlooked or even mistreated. Pray that the Lord will make us His vessels of love, hope, and justice. Pray for those among our Alliance family who do the important work of chaplaincy—bringing the message of Jesus to people in their most challenging times, when they need to hear that message the most and may well be most responsive to it.

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## THOSE IN POVERTY

MIKE SOHM/MCCABE

Human beings are a beautiful blend of body and soul designed to be highly interconnected. Body and soul together make us whole.

When sin entered the world, the whole of who we are came under the curse. In our fallen world we experience brokenness in our relationship with God, ourselves, one another, and creation. Jesus came to free our bodies, our souls, and the entire universe from the Fall's effects. Yet the gospel we often preach is only that Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins so we can spend eternity in heaven.

While that's accurate, Jesus entered this world to do so much more. My friend Kumafi lives in extreme poverty in the African slums. It's not hopeful for her to hear this message: "I'm sorry you and your children are hungry, that you are mistreated, scared, and alone. But it's OK; your sins can be forgiven, and you can go to heaven when you die."

This isn't reaching the hearts of the poor because we are undervaluing the gospel's fullness. Jesus cares for the whole of who He created Kumafi to be; His redemptive work on the cross covers all her emotional pain, every messy relationship, and every difficult day she faces.

Colossians 1:15–23 proclaims a gospel message that is compelling to people in poverty. We see a Savior who reigns and is the sustainer and reconciler of all things! Jesus has all authority and power in heaven and on earth and is reconciling all of creation.

The good news Kumafi needs to hear is that there is hope for this life, not just eternity—that King Jesus reigns right now over the whole of who she is, and through Him there is the promise of fullness of life today.

Now that's good news worth telling!



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that people like Kumafi will understand and experience the fullness of the gospel in their difficult circumstances.
2. Search your heart. Do you provide a simplified and over-spiritualized gospel to those who need to experience its fullness?

## IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

SHELLY CROUCH

Our world is home to 7.8 billion people. Most reside in the land of their birth, but 3.5 percent, or 272 million, are migrants. Some leave their communities by choice; many more are forced to flee their homelands, cultures, and families with little or no say about their future destination. Myriad reasons motivate migrants to relocate, but there is one constant experienced by every immigrant—vulnerability. Vulnerabilities that are relieved only by the compassion and hospitality of the people who do not have to move, whose lives are blessed with stability.

Scripture teaches that God sees those who feel invisible, forgotten, and vulnerable (Gen. 16:13). We are told, “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing” (Deut. 10:18). In Scripture we see God’s plan for those living in the land to receive people who are new: “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:33–34).

God wants us to have compassion on those who are vulnerable, who rely on the kindness of others to endure their struggles. Compassion involves intention and action. Intention is simply opening your heart to others; action is what you do about it. Compassion begins with empathy— seeing the story of another fellow human being from their perspective.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. God, open my eyes to immigrants in my community who need my compassion.
2. Lord, provide wisdom, discernment, and provision to those who work with immigrants.
3. Jesus, reveal your compassion to immigrants through Your people so they will come to know Your unconditional love and saving grace.

## SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

AMY ROEDDING

*Blessed are the merciful...* (Matt. 5:7a).

One topic the Church has struggled to address is single-parent families. A recent *Christianity Today* article notes, “In 2018, there were more than 16 million single parents in the U.S., and nearly half (40%) of births in the U.S. were to unmarried women.” I work with both the women’s and children’s ministries at my church, and I realize I don’t know any single parent families who attend our church. Why? Single parents tend to be in a lower income bracket; so if the church isn’t near where they live or doesn’t provide a way to get to church, they will not attend.

Life of Single Mom Ministries notes that two-thirds of single mothers do not attend church. It’s as if we have an unreached people group within our communities that we, whether intentionally or not, overlook. Dawn VanderWerf, who started Single Parent Missions in 2012 after her husband was incarcerated, writes, “Single moms and fatherless kids are like the ‘widows and orphans’ of this generation.”

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount we are given an image of what believers should look like: merciful, meek, poor in spirit, caring about righteousness and justice, and mourning with those who mourn. In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard notes that preceding the sermon, “Jesus was demonstrating the Gospel of His Kingdom . . . by healing people, and huge crowds were coming. He demonstrates it by acting with God’s rule from the heavens, meeting the desperate needs of the people around him.” Shouldn’t we be acting on this need in our culture and communities?



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Pray that God will forgive us for overlooking these “modern-day widows and orphans.”
2. Ask God to give us a burden for the single-parent families in our communities.
3. Pray that God will enable us to think of creative ways to serve single-parent families in our communities.

## THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

TOM FLANDERS

*... I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 Jn 2:1).*

My wife holds her graduate degree in special education, but it's our experience as parents of children with special needs that has taught us the most about ourselves and God and how to be their advocates. If you are a parent or guardian of someone with special needs, you are familiar with the term "advocate." And you're often reminded that you are your child's BEST advocate.

Initially, I was overwhelmed at the thought of being an advocate for our children, as I was unfamiliar with the laws upon which special needs advocacy is based. In time, I realized these statutes, while needed and helpful, were not the best foundation for my advocacy. The reason my wife and I make the best advocates for our children is that we know them better than anyone else. 1 John illustrates Jesus' advocacy for us in the context of being God's children.

Who better to advocate for you than the One who knows you best? God's intimate and infinite knowledge of you is what allows Him to arrange what's best for your life. We love our children unconditionally, but we will not always be around to advocate and care for them. This thought can be unsettling, because no one loves your children the same way you do. Our comfort is in realizing that God knows, advocates for, and cares for them perfectly every day of their lives. One day, His advocacy will remove all the limitations they experience in this world. Trusting Christ as your advocate means He will do the same for you.



### PRAYER POINTS:

1. Go confidently to the Advocate of heaven, who occupies the throne of grace and dispenses mercy from there. Tell Him your concerns.
2. Ask God to reveal how your church can embrace families and individuals with special needs, a largely unreached segment of society.
3. Prayerfully consider giving some of your time and resources to an individual or family with special needs. It can make a world of difference!



## RACIAL RECONCILIATION

RON MORRISON

God makes it clear in His word that His image bearers' lives matter equally and supremely—and He sent His Son to prove it. There is no hierarchy of importance in human life. Do you believe that statement, or do you assign levels of importance on some over others? What makes one person's life superior and another inferior?

If you don't believe in a hierarchy of importance in human life, then you should have no problem unpacking the statement "All Lives Matter" to assign every people group equal value. Black lives included. While our nation's history is scarred by injustices like slavery, and current events include the all-too-frequent mistreatment of Blacks, Christ followers must lead the way in fully acknowledging the equal dignity and value of Blacks as fellow image bearers.

This is why we need to allow the Bible to inform our worldview to "demolish arguments and . . . take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"—and to think like Him (2 Cor. 10:5). We need to agree with God about ALL image-bearing HUMAN LIFE—born and unborn—being of equal value and equally precious in His sight. This includes all Black life.

Have you allowed God's Word to challenge your assumptions and change your thinking about absolutely everything? If only the Church for which Jesus shed His blood could unify around and embrace the great equalizer, the Cross, we could show this world what a holy nation looks like when God is our King.



### PRAYER POINTS:

- 1.** The Lord has reconciled all believers to Himself and one another by tearing down walls that separated people groups and uniting them in one Body. Let us recognize the unity He has created (see Ephesians 2:14-18).
- 2.** Each of us has been given a ministry of reconciliation to tell others about the God who makes reconciliation possible. Pray that you will fulfill your assignment in word and deed (see 2 Corinthians 5:18).
- 3.** Acceptable worship involves going to our brothers and sisters to attempt to reconcile when we realize they feel something is hindering our fellowship. Pray about who you need to reconcile with (see Matthew 5:23-24).

## **PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY FAMILIES** **CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) KEVIN PIES**

*We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope* (1 Chron. 29:15).

Sojourning is not always fun and certainly not easy. As creatures of habit desiring established continuity, military service members and families lack opportunities to plant roots. An overlooked people group, military families nomadically sojourn by following their soldier, airmen, sailor, or marine to many global installations. Uprooted, they also make sacrifices in supporting those who defend and protect our freedoms.

In the pandemic summer of 2020 alone, more than 30,000 families were reassigned and required to move again. On average, military families will move at least eight times throughout their military service. This brings a disjointedness and the need to make new friends, enroll in new schools, seek spousal employment, and basically start all over again.

Many families are also challenged to find new places of worship. Civilian churches are often unaware of the complex needs that sojourning and serving brings. Therefore, military families do their best to fit in and enjoy a semblance of the next faith community. Throughout this process, many learn to rely on the one constant in their journey—faith in our unchanging God who reminds us that this world is not our ultimate home.



### **PRAYER POINTS:**

- 1.** Pray that while living a life on the go, military families are reminded that only our Lord Jesus is a constant guide.
- 2.** Pray that they will experience continuity in their spiritual formation as they transition to new communities of faith.
- 3.** Pray for the chaplains who come alongside our military families to announce the continuous good news of Jesus and the need to set their minds “on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:2).

## **THE INFIRM, THOSE IN PRISON, AND OUR INSTITUTIONAL CHAPLAINS** PHYLLIS FITZWATER

As each day unfolds, we do not know what challenges we may encounter that only the living God can meet. A hospital chaplain may encounter a patient who is suffering from disease or injury. A police chaplain may speak with a law enforcement officer who doesn't know if he or she will make it home at the end of their shift. A prison chaplain may be called upon to bring "light" into a world of dark depravity.

Psalm 18:6a reads: "In my distress I called to the Lord." The individuals we meet daily are often in deep distress. What hope can we offer them? We have the presence of the Lord—hope for them and for us as well. Psalm 23:4a reads, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow . . . I will fear no evil." No matter what that valley may be—suffering, injury, disease, or incarceration—Christ is the only hope. Psalm 27:1b claims: ". . . of whom [what] shall I be afraid?" What shall we fear when we see no way through our situations? Psalm 46:1 is a verse my mentor lived by, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Scripture reveals that Lazarus's death was to "glorify God." What is God doing in your life that He might be glorified?



### **PRAYER POINTS:**

- 1.** Pray for God's anointing and presence upon our chaplains serving in various fields—including law enforcement, fire departments, jails and prisons, healthcare systems, and hospice.
- 2.** Pray that those whom chaplains serve will be open to God's presence and power.
- 3.** Pray that God will be glorified in all that chaplains do to serve others.