

# 40 DAYS OF *prayer*



THEALLIANCE

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## 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.