

# Lord, Make Us One

## Prayers Toward Racial Healing



Fires of racial tension have been ignited in our nation. Hurt, fear, anger, suspicion, disappointment, pain, misunderstanding, and judgment surface in our relationships with people of different races. Many people express struggles that have marked their lives for years; others are uncertain of how to respond.

But the common cry within the Church and much of society is for change, healing, and a way forward.

What if the Church committed herself to 31 days of concerted prayer, seeking God to bring healing, restoring—and yes, even revival and spiritual awakening—to our nation? That would be a way forward that brings glory to God and hope to those who are hurting and in despair.

Niko Peele and Jonathan Graf invited prayer leaders from around the country to write prayers for racial healing that are steeped in God's Word. Peele and Graf have edited and compiled the book, titled *Make Us One*, to release this fall.

In this article we feature a sample of prayers that you can begin praying now. As you pray, invite God to do a radical work by using the Church to bring racial reconciliation through the power of Jesus Christ. Pray that God will use a

season of concerted prayer to ignite new fires that consume our nation with love for God and for each other.

## **Forgive Us, Restore Us**

Our loving heavenly Father, we come to You in the most powerful name of Jesus. We worship and praise You with every breath that is within us. We desperately seek You during this chaotic time. Our nation is in a spiritually war-torn state. Please cleanse us, forgive us, revive us, transform us, heal us! We cry out to You to intervene and heal our minds and hearts from any hatred, hurt, pain, confusion, or misunderstandings.

Search the depths of our souls and reveal anything contrary to Your Word that hinders the process of healing needed in our nation. Remove any pride and blind spots that keep us from accepting each other and being united in the body of Christ and our country.

Forgive us for the sin of racism—an age-old strategy and lie of the enemy that makes us feel or think we are better, more important, more valuable, or superior than someone who looks different from ourselves in color, ethnicity, nationality, wealth, or culture.

Forgive America for the part it played in slavery and racism in our country's formation. This issue continues to plague us.

Help us to be patient with one another and to listen and learn from our differences. Help us to show empathy toward others even if we don't understand or agree with their point of view.

Father, restore to us a holy reverence and fear of God and a fresh revelation and understanding of Your Word, which declares we are all created from one blood and are all made in Your image after Your likeness. Penetrate our hearts so deeply with this truth that we can celebrate the truth that we are

all part of the same human race, regardless of our background or the color of our skin. Saturate us with Your love so that we may embrace our calling as reconcilers and healers.

We expect to see a great spiritual awakening because we know Your eyes are on the righteous and Your ears are attentive to our prayers. We realize it is not by our own might nor by our own power, but it is by your Holy Spirit that this battle will be won! You are the Warrior; the Lord is Your name. Thank You for leading us and hearing our prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.

(Genesis 1:26; Acts 17:28; Acts 17:26; 1 Peter 3:12; Zechariah 4:6; Exodus 15:3)

**PAT CHEN** is a board member of the National Day of Prayer and America's National Prayer Committee. She is the president of First Love Ministries International Prayer Ministry, located in the San Francisco Bay area and Washington, D.C.

## **Move Me Closer**

Father, Jesus said that nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. But that would be just the beginning of the birth pains. The subject of race is one of the most discussed topics in our culture today. Racism is one of the most basic and deadly problems in history—and it is increasing in power.

However, we know the Church is called to be different. Father, You call us to “move closer” to You and to one another. This problem of racism only changes if we change—from up close. It's easy to judge what we don't understand, but everything changes when we move closer to one another. We seek Your forgiveness:

- Father, forgive us for thinking that some races are better than others.
- Father, forgive us for thinking there is something

better in us than in others.

- Father, forgive us for showing favoritism when we are all undeserving of Your mercy and grace.
- Father, forgive us for our pride, feeling sufficient in ourselves, believing that we don't need God or anyone else.
- Father, forgive us for judging based on externals.
- Father, forgive us for our insecurity, for being afraid of those who are different and those we can't control.
- Father, forgive us for not being a house of prayer for all nations, for every race.
- Father, forgive us for partnering with Satan, the accuser of the brethren, rather than partnering with Your Son, the Lord Jesus, who lives to intercede for us.
- Father, forgive us for separating ourselves from one another.

Father, help us learn to “listen” to one another. May we “move closer” to You and to one another. In the name of Jesus, amen.

(Matthew 24:7–8; Hebrews 7:25)

DR. JASON HUBBARD is chaplain and associate professor at Arizona Christian University, and a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

## **Jesus, Awaken Me with Light**

Father, Your Word tells us that You are our light and salvation. I, along with my brothers and sisters, acknowledge that, more than ever, we need Your light to shine in the darkness of the culture that threatens to overtake our nation, our churches, our neighborhoods, our homes, and our hearts. You are our only source of redemption and healing.

We proclaim Jesus is the light of the world. Help us to see all people, in all their array of colors and diversity, as manifestations of Your light, for we are all created in Your

image and are sacred in Your sight. Shine Your light in our hearts, dispelling any place of prejudice. With boldness and courage, we ask You to change us any way You want.

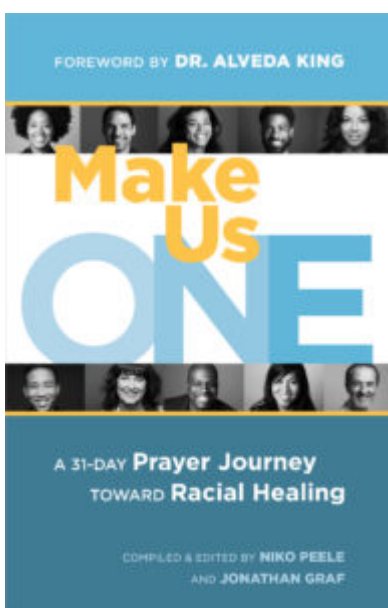
Empower us to love others in the same way You love each of us personally. Awaken our ears to hear the pain and suffering of others. May we also be quick to extend our hands in service, for we love not only with words, but also with action.

We are in awe that You have commissioned us to live as light bearers. As agents of Your light and dispensers of Your love, we speak grace and peace over fractured families, over our national discord, and over racial unrest. May we live collectively as “the city on the hill” that gives light to everyone and brings glory to God.

We ask this in Your name, amen.

(Psalm 27:1; 36:9; Matthew 5:14–16)

REBECCA SHIREY is a speaker and writer who serves alongside her husband Lou (a retired military chaplain) in leading Galatians 6:6 retreats for ministry couples. She is also a member of America’s National Prayer Committee.



—These prayers are excerpted from *Make Us One: A 31-Day Prayer Journey Toward Racial Healing*, compiled and edited by Niko Peele and Jonathan Graf.

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# A Scripture-Based Covid-19 Prayer



This day Lord I choose to abide in Christ, to set my mind on Christ, to realign my thinking and heart on things above where my true citizenship has been firmly established through the finished work of Jesus. Remind me continually Father, that this world is not my true home. Forgive me I pray, for allowing the roots of my living to grow deep in what is not eternal.

- For my satisfaction with earthly pleasures instead of Jesus, forgive me O God.
- For feasting on media of all kinds, but not on Your Word, forgive me O God.
- For giving in to the pull of the world in many ways, while ignoring the promptings of the Holy Spirit, forgive me O God.
- For the disparity between what I say I believe and how I actually live, O God forgive me!

*(Pause and continue to pray as led by the Holy Spirit.)*

During these days of restricted activity, may my heart become quiet enough, still enough, to hear Your voice clearly once again. Strengthen me by the Holy Spirit to resist distractions. Instead, like Mary, may I sit at Your feet choosing what is best. As I wait on You, I ask Father that You give to me the gift of a broken and contrite heart. Show me the ways in which pride has entrenched itself in my actions, reactions and relationships. Destroy it all I pray!

*(Pause and continue to pray as led by the Holy Spirit.)*

Lord God, Your Word admonishes me to not be anxious about anything, but to pray about everything. And so, in submission to Your Word, I bring my requests before You.

- Father, in Jesus' mighty Name I ask that You stop the spread of COVID-19 and bring healing to those who are suffering, and Your Name glorified!
- I lay before You my concerns for the physical well-being of my family, neighbors and friends at this time of sickness. Surround them with Your loving protection. I lift them before You by name . . . *(Pause and pray for your family members by name.)*
- May families grow stronger because of the extra time they have together. Use these days of restricted activity to bring healing to weak or fractured relationships.
- Father I give all of my finances to You, confessing that I am only the steward. Forgive me for the ways that I have been possessive of what is not mine. All that I have belongs to You. Remove all fear from my heart and remind me continually that You Father, will supply all my needs. Present needs, future needs—You are my



provider.

- I ask for those who are without work and ask that You open doors of provision for them (*pray for the wait staff at restaurants you frequent, and other service oriented businesses*).
- I pray for healthcare workers who have too much work, that You strengthen them and sustain them. Keep them from sickness. I especially pray for those working in hospitals and eldercare facilities close to me . . . (*Pause and pray for healthcare workers you know by name.*)
- Give wisdom to our Pastor(s) and leaders (pray for them by name) and grow us as a faith community during this time of separation. May we be increasingly intentional in staying connected and encouraging one another!
- Father give Your wisdom to those who lead our nation and to all public officials. May their hearts turn to You and call on Your Name.

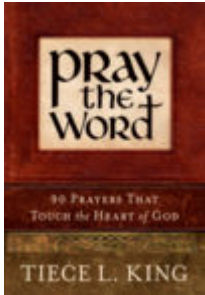
Holy Spirit show me, prompt me, as to how I might participate with Your purposes during this time. Use me as Your mouthpiece to calm fearful hearts and encourage the weary. Use me as Your hands to bless those around me with acts of kindness that Jesus might be seen through me. May Your goodness expressed through me, overcome evil.

I bring these requests before you Father with thanksgiving in my heart, knowing that You are the God who sees and hears and answers. There is nothing that is impossible for You! Therefore, I have hope.

I commit these things to You believing, in Jesus' Name. Amen

Matthew 6:21; Philippians 3:20; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians

5:19; 1 John 2:6; Philippians 4:6; Romans 12:21; Luke 1:37



—By Tiece King, Author of *Pray the Word* and *Pray the Word for Your Church*. These prayers are presented by the Church Prayer Leaders Network and PrayerShop Publishing.

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# Warfare Prayer for Believers

## A Clash of Kingdoms

By Kathy Branzell



Family can evoke strong emotions. I am very protective of my younger brother Keifer. We never fought while growing up. And if anyone messed with him, I was there to protect him in a heartbeat. Even as adults we still have each other's backs.

Most of our families have some disagreements or squabbles among ourselves, but when an outsider comes after one of us,

all the family members take their battle stations, coming to that person's defense. Taking aim at one member of our family is a declaration of *war* on us all!

The apostle Paul reminds us of the nature of war, especially in the spiritual sense, in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5:

Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (nasb).

Who are the people in your family? I pray you see yourself belonging to *God's* family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, a bond even stronger than siblings by blood or marriage.

God's family members pray all types of prayers for each other: protection and provision, direction and desires, jobs and joy, fruitfulness and finances. We even pray over weddings and the weather. We intercede for those who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We pray over our own needs and the needs of others around us.

But as family members in the eternal sense, each of us is also at war with otherworldly spiritual forces, and we need to take our battle stations to fight for each other.

## **Developing a Warfare Mindset**

Do you consider yourself a “go-to-war” type of family member? It's a good question for all of us. When Satan starts pursuing or pressuring our brothers or sisters in Christ, do we rush into God's throne room in fervent prayer on their behalf? In deep suffering and adversity, do we press in and pray

scriptural promises with tears, tenacity, and faith?

When a mother fights for the life of her unborn baby that she is in danger of losing, are we likely to casually lift up a request? Or do we fall before God and plead with Him to glorify Himself in this life and situation?

How do we pray regarding a neighbor's cancer diagnosis? How about that pregnant teen at church whose life is about to change drastically? Can you and I be counted on to do battle in prayer when someone in our small group is "let go" at work? Do we have the courage to prayerfully approach a brother or sister who is being tempted or tormented?

When a fellow believer is wrestling against powers of darkness, God calls us to watch each other's backs. Think about your response when you hear of turmoil and distress. Are your prayers yielded to the Holy Spirit and filled with faith so that they produce divinely powerful responses from the Almighty Hands that formed the universe and keeps it in motion?

John Piper says, "We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war."<sup>1</sup> In every breath, decision, and activity, Satan and his fallen army are fighting to fill their kingdom of eternal torment. After all, misery loves company. They do not care about people; there is no affection in them, no desire to see people fulfilled or happy. Their intent is to tempt, trick, and torture any soul into an eternal separation from God. Their goal is to hurt God by stealing His children away from Him. It is *war*!

## **Fighting the Right Way**

We do not fight this war with gossip or judgment—or by leaving people alone to make their own bad choices. When we fail to press in and persevere in prayer, we're abandoning our posts.

We're surrendering territory and family to the plundering of our enemy.

We must armor up, so to speak, and stand firm on the front lines (Eph. 6:10–17). We fight first on our knees in travailing prayer. We give ourselves to agonizing intercession that expresses our grief and God's sorrow as He sees His child becoming a target of Satan's battleplan to kill, steal, and destroy.

- *Family battlegrounds.* If you are a parent, you may know the pain of one of your children being drawn away from the spiritual and physical safety of your household rules. You've determined family guardrails for protection and success, but your children rebel, thinking you're withholding happiness from them.

Parents, overcome Satan's tricks with truth! Wield the sword of God's Word over them in prayer (Eph. 6:17).

- *Community battlegrounds.* Millions of Christ-followers enter the marketplace every day. They take their places in schools, the military, law enforcement, business, and retail. They assume roles as government officials, judges, first-responders, and teachers. As influencers in our society, these believers may experience some of the most intense warfare.

Become an intercessor for one or more of them.

- *Cultural battlegrounds.* It's easy to complain about the eroding of biblical values in our culture, to post our frustrations on social media, or to rally in protest. Posting and protesting may make us feel better, but do not change things.

Fight in a more effective way. Try pressing in and praying for God's servants to be bold and courageous in making the right decisions and acting in righteousness.

James 5:16 tells us that the fervent prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective. Prayers tear down the devil's defenses and destroy his schemes. When we, as prayer warriors, fall to our knees, anything set up against or above God will tumble. The haughty are silenced in the humble prayers of God's servants. Even children can overcome fear and join in warfare prayer for others when they pray in the strength and authority of Jesus.

## **Finding a Higher Perspective**

Growing up, all I dreamed of doing was joining the Air Force and becoming a SR-71 pilot. Known as a spy plane, the SR-71 was the fastest manned plane used for strategic reconnaissance. I wanted to serve my country, protect it from harm, and defeat its enemies.

I planned and worked for this my whole life. But, because of one eye exam, my dreams came crashing down—or so I thought. I was night blind.

A few years ago I told this story to my small group. A friend who knew me well leaned forward, looked intently at me, and said, "Wow, so God put those desires in your heart. But His plans were to use you in His Kingdom, not a country—to fight every person's enemy, not just America's. God is allowing you to fly above the earth's atmosphere and into the spiritual realm in warring prayers. God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours, but thankfully you have volunteered in the 'Kingdom Air Force.'"

Years of questions and pain faded as I realized God had deployed me to thousands of prayer battles. He gave me incredible squadrons of fellow prayer warriors who had my back, prayed me through, and taught me truths about prayer.

In warfare never fly alone. We all need prayer partners to

defeat a deceiving enemy. Lock your shield with the shields of other warriors who pray with you and for you. Paul reminds us in a passage about spiritual warfare: “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people” (Eph. 6:18).

The war between God’s Kingdom and the kingdom of darkness is raging. Our family (the family of God) is under attack. It’s time to mobilize heaven’s army on our family’s behalf with passionate and persevering prayer.

<sup>1</sup>John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) 65.

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## His Kingdom or My Comfort Praying?



Longtime Presbyterian minister, Dr. Wilbur Chapman (early 1900s) was 26 when called to be pastor of Wanamakers Church in Philadelphia. His first Sunday, an old gentleman came up to him and said, “you’re much too young to be the pastor of such a fine church as this.” Chapman thought the guy was a kook. But the gentleman went on to tell him that he had decided to pray for him, that the Holy Spirit’s power would fall on him each time he stepped into the pulpit. And he had another man who would pray with him.

Chapman report that those two men soon turned into 10, the 20, then 50, and finally more than 200 men who gathered each Sunday morning before services and pray for the Holy Spirit’s enablement. Over the next three years the church saw 1,100 people come into the kingdom—more than 600 of them men.

Somewhere along the line churches have lost sight of what they should be praying for! Today, most churches’ prayers are almost exclusively for needs within the body. Prayers that each person’s life would get back to normal. Seldom are there prayers that cry out for the fullness of Jesus Christ to come upon a body, for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit onto a church, that Joe’s life would glorify God and people would be drawn to Christ as he walks through this difficult time, that our youth would desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit. No, we stay focused on the “little answerables” that have upset our people’s ease in life. No thought is ever given as to “God what do you want to do in this situation in Bill’s life”; no our prayers are always, “Get Bill out of this!”

I’m struck by the prayers of Paul. Even though he had many



people with life and death needs under his care, Paul—at least in the prayers we see in Scriptures—never prayed for a logical answer to a specific need. (His own request that his thorn in the flesh be removed is the closest he comes; but God said, “no,” so he stopped asking.) Instead, Paul focused on spiritual fruit and spiritual growth issues.

For the Roman believers, who were undoubtedly suffering intense persecution, Paul prayed “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). No “Get them out of this!” Paul knew the Holy Spirit would draw people to Christ if they saw believers go through tough times with a sense of hope, joy and peace.

How do you pray when faced with a situation in your life or in the life of another? Do you simply default to “get them out of this” mode? Or do you recognize that God wants to do something in and through this situation in someone’s life. Spiritual growth, maybe. Glory to His Son, maybe. Growing the kingdom, maybe. Maybe we and our churches would see more kingdom growth if we changed the way we prayed.

Jonathan Graf is the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and the publisher of Prayer Connect magazine.

**To read more about praying kingdom prayers, we recommend Jon’s book *Praying Like Paul*.**

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# The Unwanted Gift of

# Unanswered Prayer

By Eleanor Shepherd



As the train sped through the French countryside in early February 2013, I spent my time praying for my son repeatedly. "Lord, You can do anything. Please keep John safe as he travels this weekend."

I felt restless. I even doubted that God was hearing my prayers. But I was compelled to seek Him on behalf of my son.

That Sunday night we were traveling on the high-speed train from Valence, in the south of France, back to our home in Paris.

Although my body was in France, my mind and heart were in North America with our children. John, then studying in Boston, had driven to Montreal that weekend to attend a conference and visit his sister Elizabeth. I was worried because I knew road conditions could be treacherous in winter.

The next morning, during my morning prayer time at home, my heart tightened when the phone rang. Our daughter Elizabeth, calling from Montreal, said that John had been in a car accident. Stunned, I listened to her report. John's vehicle had hit black ice and rolled over. His neck was broken from the impact. John was paralyzed.

My prayers had not been answered.

During the following months, a kaleidoscope of emotions jumbled together with questions. I tried to understand why God did not answer my prayer. What if I had prayed in a different way? What if my prayers had focused on surrendering to His sovereignty more than insistent pleading? Would it have made a difference?

## **Certainty in the Answer**

All of us, at one time or another, have experienced unanswered prayer. We have poured our hearts out to God with a desired outcome, only to find God not answering the way we had hoped. Some of us struggle even now, trying to understand why God has not intervened and responded to a long-standing prayer of our hearts.

What provides a glimmer of hope for me is the way Jesus prayed, as recorded in Hebrews 4:15: “We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

As God, Jesus is sovereign, yet He also knows what it is like to contend with the challenges we face—even unanswered prayers.

I think of Jesus, kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42). I note His transparency. He does not pretend that He easily embraces the suffering that threatens Him. He is honest and says to the Father, “If it is possible, don’t let this happen to me! Father, you can do anything. Don’t make me suffer by having me drink from this cup” (v. 36, CEV).

These words of Jesus take me back to my urgent prayers on that train in France. I had prayed that God would protect John from any harm that might come his way.

But Jesus concluded His prayer in the garden, telling His

Father, "Do what you want, and not what I want." Perhaps Jesus could say that because He had the absolute certainty that what the Father wanted was best for His Son—and for everyone impacted for all eternity.

In fact, after praying in the garden and then facing His accusers, Jesus was certain that the choice of the Father was the right one. When Peter drew a sword to defend His Master, Jesus confidently told Peter to put it away. Jesus confronted Peter with a question that revealed His determination: "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11). He spoke out of His clear-sighted understanding that this is the way it must be.

## **Faith-building in Unanswered Prayers**

What can we learn from Jesus' example about dealing with our "unanswered" prayers? We discover that unanswered prayers build faith.

One day Donna, my friend in another ministry, said to me, "Have you ever noticed that when a person comes to Christ, it seems like their prayers are answered so often, yet as they continue on their faith journey, the answers become less frequent?"

After further discussion, we concluded that this is one way the Lord enables Christians to grow in their faith. If all our prayers were answered without fail in just the way we desire, we would eventually take God for granted and fail to value all He does for us. We would be tempted to treat God like a vending machine, expecting to receive whatever we ask for. The result would be a shallow faith. In fact, we would be placing our faith in the effectiveness of our prayers rather than trusting God for whatever way He might choose to answer.

Understanding that God does not always answer the way we expect Him to, forces us to go deeper. We then must ask

ourselves hard questions: Have we lost our connection with Him? Does He have other plans for us? What is going on?

It forces us to intimately engage with God in even more fervent prayer.

## **Strength in Surrender**

Questions and reflection teach us to trust confidently that God is in control of our lives, even if we do not understand what is happening. He always gives us a choice. We can hold onto our demands, or we can surrender them to Him and allow Him to work out all things for our good. The answers might not immediately bring happiness or satisfaction, but God always acts for our good (Rom. 8:28).

A statement I heard in a sermon once has remained with me: "You never know how much faith you have until it is tested." One way our faith is tested is that God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we believe He should. While it is evident that Jesus fully embraced the Father's will for Him, it wasn't easy. In fact, He struggled so intensely in Gethsemane that, according to Dr. Luke, His "sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). As Jesus took upon Himself all our sins, He knew what was ahead: not only the agony of His torture and crucifixion but the fear of abandonment by His Father. He was saying yes to something beyond anything we can imagine.

Our yes to His will, even when it leads us to suffering, pales in comparison. Yet, like Jesus, we would prefer another option. God may not change the circumstances He permits, but He will not force us to accept that this is part of His will. Our strength is found in our relinquishment.

## **Answers in Time!**

Now, more than 15 years after John's accident, adjustment to

his new life as a quadriplegic has been extremely difficult. Some of my prayers have remained unanswered. Others not. After about eight years, John told me he had finally dealt with his anger over the accident. That was a huge answer to my prayers.

However, throughout his lengthy struggle to find employment, we did not find an answer as quickly. Three years after the accident John went back to school and completed his MBA from Harvard Business School. But a well-educated young man, finding himself seemingly unemployable because of physical limitations, needs huge amounts of courage to keep going each day.

God continues to answer this prayer. John has used his time profitably. He has scoured all the journals and books available about spinal cord injury. At his own expense, he developed an online program to help people with spinal cord injuries. Currently John is working to achieve the academic credentials needed to speak and to teach people with serious long-term diseases some ways they can live and thrive.

## **The Gift in Unanswered Prayer**

Is unanswered prayer really a gift? At first it seemed like an unwanted gift, but after my initial disappointment in my prayers for John, I discovered something even greater. When we surrender our prayers—and the answers—to God, He uses the seemingly unanswered prayers:

- to develop faith
- to test that faith and refine us as our faith holds
- to discover that His strength is ours through our willing relinquishment to His sovereignty
- and to find our joy in His plans and purposes for us in our imperfect situations.

As difficult as it has been to go through this faith test surrounding John's accident, I'm learning that we can

confidently ask God for the desires of our hearts, and we can rest assured that His answer, in His time, is part of His perfect plan for our lives.

**ELEANOR SHEPHERD** served as a Salvation Army officer for 30 years in Canada, Bermuda, and France. She is the author of *More Questions than Answers*, and *Sharing Faith by Listening*, which won The Word Guild Award in the Christian Leadership category.

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