

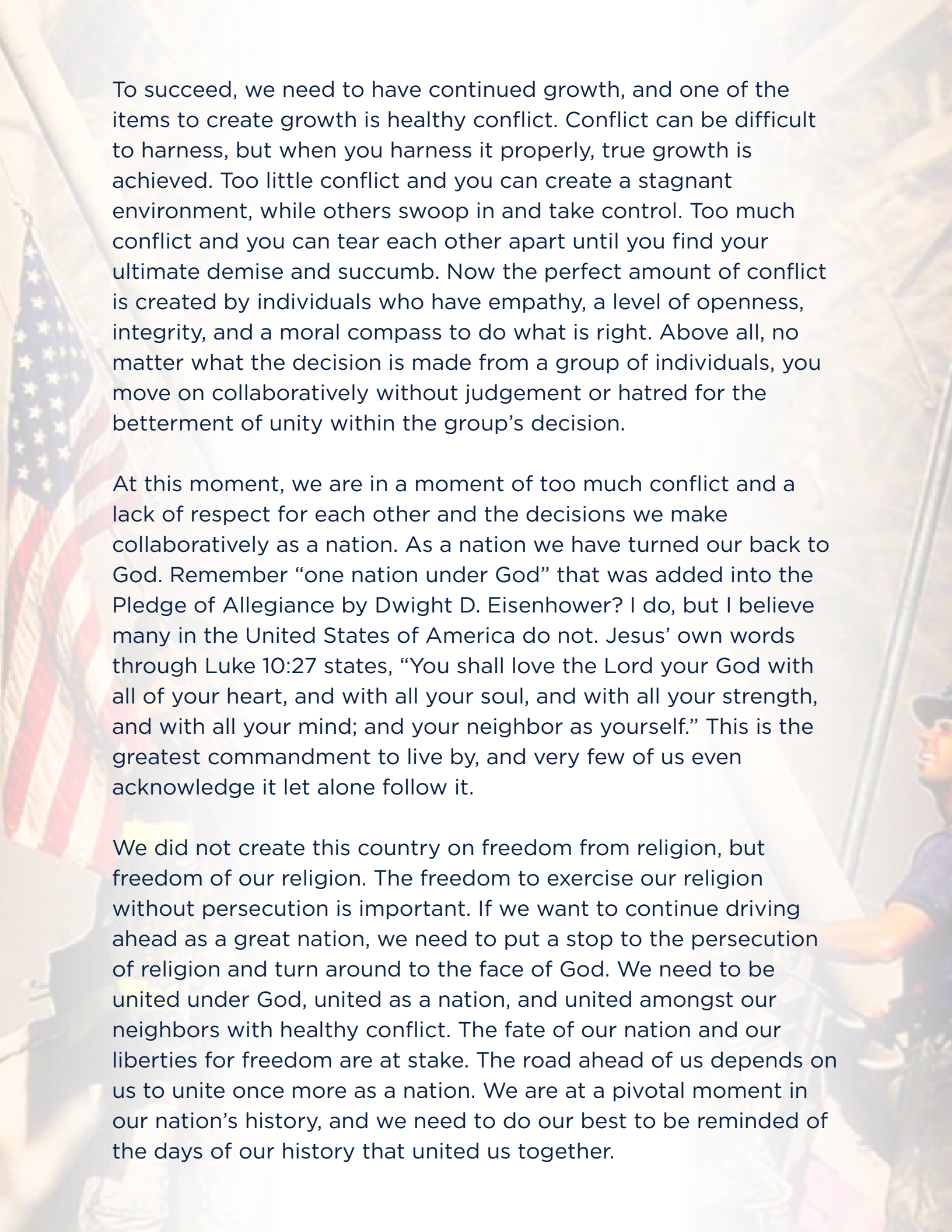
United or Succumb for All

By Kevin Shark

Twenty-five years ago, I sat in my freshman class at Bay City Western High School. Rumors were swirling through the halls with whispers of an attack on New York City and our nation. After an hour or two our administration decided it was time to let us visually see the events unfold on our square television sets. We then witnessed the collapse of the first tower of the World Trade Center. Shock and fear were some of our first emotions, but the most powerful state of being was to come to fruition in the days ahead.

Unity was the most powerful state of being that presented itself in the following days of the 9/11 attack throughout our great nation. It did not matter if you were Republican, Democrat, or Libertarian in that moment; we were all red, white, and blue for a moment in history. When a small group of individuals lose something, a majority of the U.S.A. lacks the empathy to care about the situation. We tend to say, “next” and move on with a bucket of popcorn. When a large enough group loses something; here in the United States of America, we are a force that only God can stop.

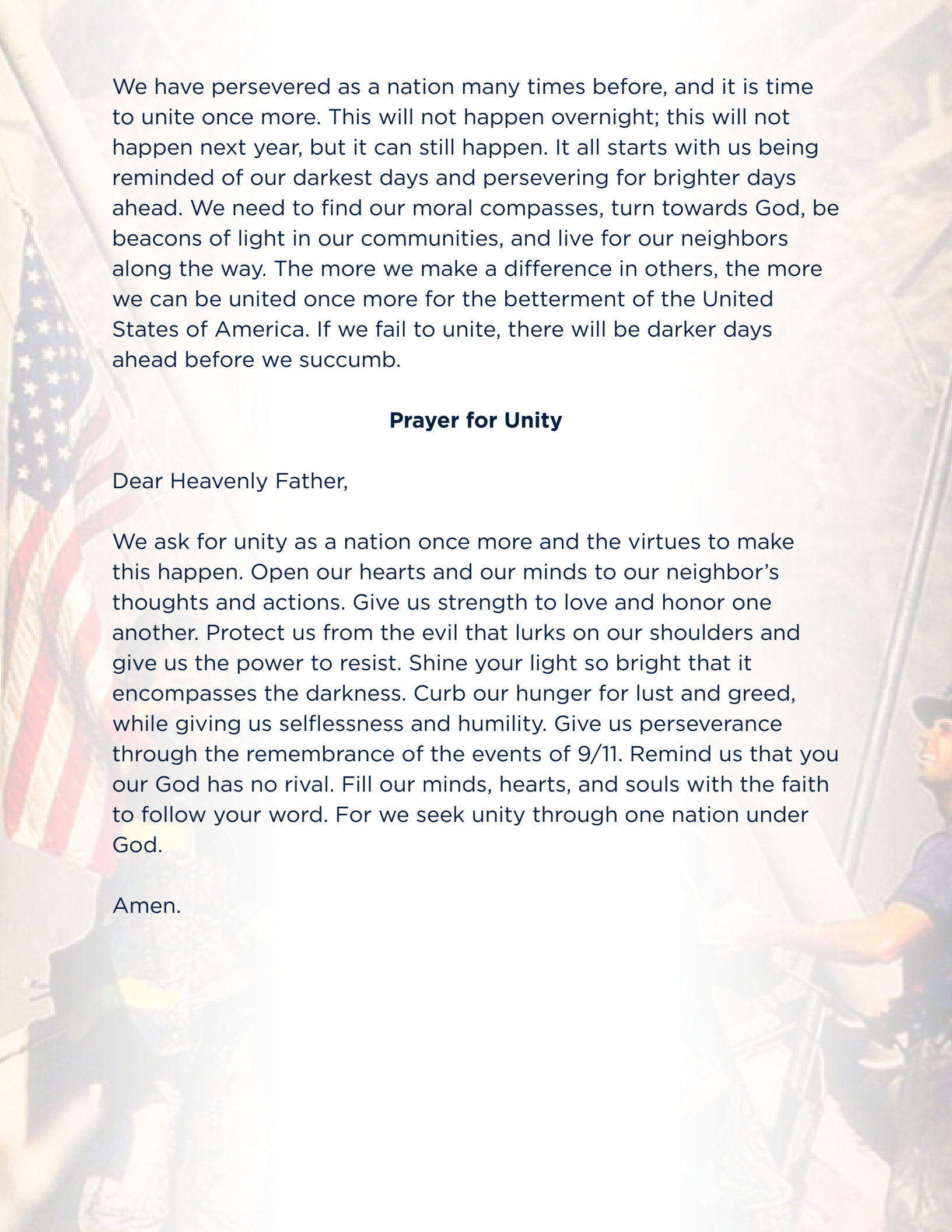
How long did we remain united? It has been 25 years since this attack, and 250 years since we signed our Declaration of Independence. We began united as a nation 250 years ago, we united again 25 years ago, but we do not stand united today. Scripture of Jesus’ own words from Luke 11:17 state, “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house.” This is a warning and a call to heed our actions on division within our great nation. We are at an imperative time in our history, and if we want to succeed as a nation, it is time to unify once more.

The background of the image is a faded, semi-transparent photograph. On the left side, the stars and stripes of the United States flag are visible. On the right side, a person wearing a blue t-shirt and a dark cap is partially visible, looking towards the left. The overall tone is patriotic and somber.

To succeed, we need to have continued growth, and one of the items to create growth is healthy conflict. Conflict can be difficult to harness, but when you harness it properly, true growth is achieved. Too little conflict and you can create a stagnant environment, while others swoop in and take control. Too much conflict and you can tear each other apart until you find your ultimate demise and succumb. Now the perfect amount of conflict is created by individuals who have empathy, a level of openness, integrity, and a moral compass to do what is right. Above all, no matter what the decision is made from a group of individuals, you move on collaboratively without judgement or hatred for the betterment of unity within the group's decision.

At this moment, we are in a moment of too much conflict and a lack of respect for each other and the decisions we make collaboratively as a nation. As a nation we have turned our back to God. Remember "one nation under God" that was added into the Pledge of Allegiance by Dwight D. Eisenhower? I do, but I believe many in the United States of America do not. Jesus' own words through Luke 10:27 states, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." This is the greatest commandment to live by, and very few of us even acknowledge it let alone follow it.

We did not create this country on freedom from religion, but freedom of our religion. The freedom to exercise our religion without persecution is important. If we want to continue driving ahead as a great nation, we need to put a stop to the persecution of religion and turn around to the face of God. We need to be united under God, united as a nation, and united amongst our neighbors with healthy conflict. The fate of our nation and our liberties for freedom are at stake. The road ahead of us depends on us to unite once more as a nation. We are at a pivotal moment in our nation's history, and we need to do our best to be reminded of the days of our history that united us together.

The background of the page features a faded image of an American flag on the left side and a person in a blue shirt on the right side. The text is overlaid on this background.

We have persevered as a nation many times before, and it is time to unite once more. This will not happen overnight; this will not happen next year, but it can still happen. It all starts with us being reminded of our darkest days and persevering for brighter days ahead. We need to find our moral compasses, turn towards God, be beacons of light in our communities, and live for our neighbors along the way. The more we make a difference in others, the more we can be united once more for the betterment of the United States of America. If we fail to unite, there will be darker days ahead before we succumb.

Prayer for Unity

Dear Heavenly Father,

We ask for unity as a nation once more and the virtues to make this happen. Open our hearts and our minds to our neighbor's thoughts and actions. Give us strength to love and honor one another. Protect us from the evil that lurks on our shoulders and give us the power to resist. Shine your light so bright that it encompasses the darkness. Curb our hunger for lust and greed, while giving us selflessness and humility. Give us perseverance through the remembrance of the events of 9/11. Remind us that you our God has no rival. Fill our minds, hearts, and souls with the faith to follow your word. For we seek unity through one nation under God.

Amen.