

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Great and glorious Lord, Creator of all and Master of the Universe, help each of us who honour You as Lord and God turn to You each day to forgive our sins. We are people who are committed, and yet know that our nature is sinful, and we want to be rid of this sin and serve You as people who are forgiven and free. Draw us daily to Your saving, healing and redeeming grace, we pray. AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: CHRISTMAS

**1. For yourself**

*Make time to pray for yourself and for your own needs. Remember that God loves you personally and His desire is to see you content and happy in your life; He truly wants what is best for us*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Pray and ask the Lord to be close to those you love, in whatever way is right for each individual. Everyone is different and has different needs, so pray for each according to who they are*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Pray for the people who are at the centre of the life of the church, as you perceive it. Pray that they will have the courage to do new things for God, as He leads.*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Pray against the evils in the world that make people corrupt and dangerous. Pray against evil dictators and regimes that kill people systematically. Pray that God's voice will be heard that injustice is not right.*

### Meditation

We use cameras to take pictures or clips,  
We do it whenever we can;  
We may have hundreds of photographs  
Stored on film or computer.

Each moment is captured for posterity,  
Reminding us of something;  
A beautiful scene, a special family event,  
A flower, a precious moment.

Lord, forgive us if our faith is just memories  
Gathered from long ago;  
A collection of religious memorabilia;  
A sermon, your healing, a baptism;

Change us, Lord, from being just gatherers  
To loves of your graciousness;  
Those who need no reminding of Your presence,  
For You are with us, all the time.

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## Bible Study

**Bible passage – John 1:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* <sup>2</sup> *He was with God in the beginning.* <sup>3</sup> *Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made. What was made* <sup>4</sup> *in Him was life, and that life was the light of all people.* <sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.*

## Review

The beginning of John's Gospel is a profoundly moving commentary on Jesus' coming into the world. These verses contain some of the most famous verses of the New Testament and are intensely studied by scholars. They are also loved and read by countless millions at Christmas time, as they seek to think deeply about the meaning of Christ's coming into the world at Christmas time. Our passage today speaks eloquently about Jesus' role in God's great master plan for the world; He is the 'Word', the mysterious combination of God's spoken word and deed by which the world was made and by which 'light' shines into darkness. The 'Word' is Jesus; God made flesh as a real person, the 'incarnation' of our divine Creator come to be with us for our salvation and redemption.

These words have a majesty about them which is hard to define, for the words are both simple and yet deeply thought provoking; both plain and highly complex. Jesus' birth is not announced in John's Gospel as in the other Gospels, but it does talk of his coming in verses 10 and 11, and we must give ourselves time to allow these majestic words to speak to us with the same awesome power with which they have spoken to generations.

The opening verses of the Gospel take us back to the very beginning of the Bible, to where Genesis starts with the words 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1). John copies this opening but adds that Jesus, the divine 'Word', was there in the beginning. Later on in his Gospel John explains clearly that the Word is Jesus, but he assumes his readers will make this connection immediately, so we will do this too. Anyone who has read the first chapter of Genesis will recall that God 'spoke' each day into existence and his words were the power by which His unique creative work was done. John began his Gospel by saying that Jesus was deeply involved with this work as the 'Word', and he did so to make a point. Some of his readers believed that Jesus was just the 'human bit' of God, or some other appearance of God in human form which was not the same as God himself, as some believe this even today. John disagreed most strongly, and wanted to make it clear that Jesus was not simply the Word 'of' God, but 'the Word who was God'. His message is that Jesus was God.

Towards the end of verse 3, John begins a sentence that straddles to verses, and it is sometimes translated unhelpfully so that the sense of it is obscured. What John says here is important, however, and we need to know exactly what John is trying to say, so I quote them now without the verse numbers '*What was made in Him was life, and that life was the light of all people*' (1:3,4). Here then, with powerful clarity, John explains that although God made all things including the mortal life of men and women (Gen 1:26ff), in Jesus the Word, God gives people a different quality of life, something he calls 'light'. This fulfils the promise of God found throughout the Old Testament (Gen 12:2,3; Isaiah 49:6 etc.), which says that God will bring 'light' into His world, as a metaphor for salvation and the gift of everlasting life.

By saying this, John offers us a powerful explanation of why Jesus has come into the world. He has come to bring us God's salvation, something we cannot achieve for ourselves, and something that can only come through Him. Moreover, the very last verse of this passage tells us that Jesus the 'light' has victory over all 'darkness', '*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it*' (1:5). This is a major theme of John's Gospel, which describes how Jesus successfully overcame darkness and death in this world, and through His death, has won a complete victory over all evil. The joy of Christmas Day is this; Jesus the Saviour has come, and God's great plan of Salvation has begun!

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. Read this passage a few times and in your group, describe to each other the different things that come into your minds. What does this reveal to you about God?
2. What is your own picture of how 'Jesus' and 'God' are related? Is it possible to gain a simple definition of this relationship?
3. What does light mean in this passage? Is it possible to explain this without using the word 'salvation'?

## Discipleship challenges

- *The Christmas season is not one in which it is easy to remember to do anything other than 'go with the flow' of what you usually do at Christmas time. Nevertheless, try to stop and give some space to yourself in which you read the first chapter of John and let it help you think about Jesus.*
  - *Pray for those whose understanding of the Gospel has become distorted by the world, and they have lost sight of its power to change lives. Pray for those who need to know the 'light of Christ'.*
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## Final Prayer

We thank You, Jesus, for coming to this world as a child and bringing us God's good gift of the Gospel. As we party and celebrate your coming with joy, may we remain sensitive to why You have come, and welcome You as the One who transforms lives for the better, and brings us close to God.

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