

## Prayer

Be especially present today, Lord God, with all those who face this day and see little but darkness. You created the world good yet sin has made its light into darkness, and many find that their lives are dominated by evils outside of their control. Use Your people to shine the light of Your Kingdom into such darkness, and disperse it by the power of Your Holy Spirit, we pray. In the name of Jesus, AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Wildlife

*Pray for the efforts made today to understand how our world and all its creatures are inter-dependent upon each other. Pray that God's people will be good stewards of Creation.*

### On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the grace of God working in your life today!
- Pray against illegal arms traders and those who sponsor them
- Pray for those on trial at the Hague for crimes against humanity

## Meditation

When life seems hard and you struggle to find hope,  
Look to the rock which is Jesus, and lean on Him.

When trouble is defeated and you begin to see the light,  
Look to the truth which is Jesus, and receive Him.

When all is at peace and you are satisfied and content,  
Look to the light which is Jesus, and believe Him.

When life's challenges await, and you need strength,  
Look to the Spirit which is Jesus, and accept Him.

When victory over the enemy lies within your grasp,  
Look to the hope which is Jesus, and trust Him.

## Bible Study - Genesis 1:3-5

<sup>3</sup> Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light 'day', He called the darkness 'night'. Evening came and morning came; day one.

## Review

On day one of Creation, the Universe bursts into life with the dramatic creation of light by the Word of God (1:3)! This is the foundation of all that follows, and Genesis gives an extraordinarily concise description of the most powerful event ever. Time and light were created in a moment outside our experience and understanding, and God spoke with supreme authority to set in place the laws of physics, chemistry and biology that have defined what has happened in the Universe ever since. This is the immense mystery of the beginning of things as we know them, and it was an event of supremely awesome glory, because it was the work of God. But this was merely the beginning of the Creator's work!

He immediately separated light from darkness, and gave them the names 'day' and 'night'; by naming things in this way, God demonstrated to all future generations His power and authority over them all; He has made them, so He can do whatever He wants with them.

It is too easy to become over-familiar with these words, for if we read them without really thinking, their genuinely awesome quality can be lost. Almost every word of our passage is more powerful than we can imagine, and it says more than we can ever fully know about God's creative acts. The most important thing to remember is that the creative work of God on that first day defines what a 'day' is; it is a progression of light and darkness. We take all this for granted, of course, but whether you think of this as a description of how we experience the relative movements of the earth and the sun (according to astronomy) or as representing God's initial creation of structure within the Universe, each of us can only observe the world from where we are. We speak about the Universe, but we are all people live on earth, and day and night govern how we experience our world. The message of God's Word here in the Bible is that He has made it this way.

If we look at this passage closely, and how God reacts to what He has done, one thing is immediately obvious to us. God called light 'good' (1:3), but not darkness. After the description of chaos and darkness in the first two verses of the Bible (see 1:1,2), darkness is already tainted with being something other than God's great and good creation. The powerful Word of God which said 'Let there be light' was indeed good (1:3); it flooded the world with an energy and potential. Even the world of science and physics agrees that energy and light (together with the related property of time and substance we call 'matter') constitutes the basis of the Universe as we experience it. The subtle nuances of the Bible however provides a level of understanding that science can never do, for in declaring the light 'good', God overcame the fearsome nature of the total chaos of darkness before creation. After the dramatic announcement of light, we can never go back; 'Day' and 'night' are named (1:5), but as we all know from experience, night is never complete darkness.

God called the light called 'day', so whenever we read about a 'day' in the story of Creation, this means the light of God that holds Creation together. Light also holds darkness at bay and we never hear of night or darkness again in the rest of the story of Creation. Over the years we have been so fixed on the idea of a 'day' as 24 hours worth of our abstract and scientific idea of time (consisting of seconds, minutes, hours etc), we miss this spiritually important point about Creation.

In Genesis, each 'day' represents a complete set of work by God, His 'light' which holds everything living together is a consistent and functioning unity. This powerful understanding of what God did when creating a 'day' is crucial for the rest of the story of Creation, and it takes us far away from the distracting arguments Christians have about whether the world was created in seven periods of time we call 24 hours. It is we who have defined the day God made as 24 hours, but the spiritual importance of what God did by separating light from darkness is another thing altogether. We should always be looking for the spiritual layers of truth within God's Word, and here, a 'day' represents the light of God which shines on all His Creation, and it is good, as God is good.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What does 'light' mean to you? How would you describe light and its effect on you?
2. Are you concerned about what the study says about 'days', and do you prefer to think of them as periods of time rather than 'building blocks' of Creation? Why?
3. Is darkness a useful way of describing anything other than colour or hue? Is it helpful or not to associate it with evil in this text?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*It is hard to look out on the world as we know it and reflect upon its glorious creation, perhaps because of what we now know about the way people have polluted our planet almost to death. It is still possible to look at Creation (we cannot do it without light!) and be inspired by the amazing nature and variety of things God has created. Today we bear a heavy responsibility of stewardship to look after this planet because of the failings of both past and present generations, but observing the greatness of the created order can still inspire people to do what is right for the world. We do not know how long the Lord has it in His mind to sustain the world, but this does not change our basic responsibilities.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *One morning, take the opportunity to watch the sunrise, and as you do so, think about God's power in creating light not just at the beginning of time, but all the time. What does the Spirit tell you as you watch the sunrise?*
- *One evening, take the opportunity to watch the sun go down, and you do so, think about God's power over darkness, and the amazing phrase from John's Gospel; 'and the darkness has never put it out'. What does the Spirit tell you as you watch the sunset?*

## Final Prayer

Jesus, You were there at the birth of the world. You were there when light was created and were part of that great experience. Bring light into our world, we pray, and recreate our lives according to Your purpose. We submit ourselves to Your authority and to Your care. AMEN