

## Prayer

This is a truly wonderful day, Lord Jesus Christ; for on this day I set myself aside to love and worship You; to honour and praise You! Whatever people may think of me, it can be no worse than the crowd who bayed for Your blood and shouted 'crucify!' But through Your death and resurrection I am liberated! By Your ascension and eternal reign I receive my commission to do Your will! So as I touch eternal things on this most glorious day, inspire me to live for You, forever! ALLELUIA!

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Politicians

*You may read this anywhere in the world, but in England, politicians are currently getting into a mess concerning the expenses they claim. Pray for integrity amongst politicians!*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for those who plan big events important to your country*
- *Give thanks to God for His mercies whilst travelling*
- *Pray for people who are in despair or suicidal*

## Meditation

What is worship?

Is it that which lifts the soul to heaven above?

Maybe, but only if

the hand of God has done the lifting, nothing else.

What is faith?

Is it having faith in God and living by the Bible?

Maybe, but only if

the Lord has changed the heart within to make it so.

What is prayer?

Is it praise and thanksgiving, confession and request?

Maybe, but only if

The encounter is a conversation in which truth is spoken.

What is the Gospel?

Is it the truth of Christ's salvation, spoken out forever?

Maybe, but only if

The message we proclaim is changing us, right now.

## Bible Study - Proverbs 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup> Listen, children, to a father's moral discipline,  
and listen carefully so you may obtain insight;

<sup>2</sup> for I have given you good teaching:  
do not forget my rules of life.

<sup>3</sup> I, too, was a son with my father,

youthful, and my mother's delight,  
<sup>4</sup> this is what he taught me and said to me,

'Let your heart take firm hold of my words;

keep my commandments, and you will live.

<sup>5</sup> *Get Wisdom; get insight:  
do not forget my words, or turn  
from them.*

<sup>6</sup> *Do not abandon her, and she will  
keep you;  
love her, and she will watch out for  
you.*

<sup>7</sup> *The most important thing is Wisdom;  
get this and whatever else you  
find, get insight.*

<sup>8</sup> *Value her highly, and she will raise  
you high;*

*and when you hold her closely,  
she will give you honour.*

<sup>9</sup> *She will place on your head a  
graceful wreath;*

*she will confer on you a crown of  
glory!*

## Review

Here is teaching within the Proverbs at its broadest. These verses highlight the teaching about life that takes place in the home, and it mentions especially the teaching passed on from father to son, but involves the mother as well (4:3). This activity is an essential feature of stable community life. The teaching is general, but centred around what is positive, not the oppressive demands of a series of 'do's and 'don'ts' which can give the impression of restriction and restraint; the technique and the subject matter advertise the merits of freedom instead of unnecessary restraint. Wisdom is identified as lying the heart of what is good and life-giving in the community, and the 'honour' and 'glory' are essential to its success. The words 'honour' and 'glory' are often used in the Old Testament to refer to wealth, frequently measured in livestock and household size, and these indicate general success in life (as in the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – see Gen. 31:1, 34:29, for example).

The education suggested by this passage of Scripture is easily forgotten today in the programmed and socially controlled education provided to children by most countries, which is designed to meet social and economic targets. Much of what is done in our education systems is intended to produce the engineers, professionals and workers who service the economies upon which wealth as we understand today it is based. The picture presented by our passage today is very different from this, and it is one that relates more to what could happen in the home, or perhaps in the church, where moral standards are learned and taught. It begins with something far simpler than national statistics for jobs required, and pictures a father addressing a child and reminiscing about when he had been in the same position himself, seated at the feet of his own father, the child's grandfather, in order to have the traditions of life, faith and moral teaching passed on to him. The picture is a little formal to us today, but something like this happens today whether we like it or not, and the more we work with it consciously, the better. Such traditions are the stuff of real life; and although Wisdom seems a very difficult thing to tie down, it is really the sum of what is passed down through the generations in a society. Within the church, it is a distillation of the knowledge of God, morality and practical life-skills.

Christian churches and fellowships today could learn much from Proverbs and from Wisdom. I do not believe the way forward for God's people is to seek 'new ways to be church' for the next generation by relying on young minds to think up new things to do and to be in our emerging cultures. The heart of our heritage lies unlocked in the experience and wisdom of the people of faith already around us; people of this generation who have never been empowered to believe that they hold within their faith the precious wisdom that is the essential key to the faith for the next, and those who come after them. The Old Testament speaks about Wisdom as a duty placed upon people to do two things. Firstly, there is a duty placed on parents to pass on their faith and experience of life to those who are younger, and secondly, on the children and young people to receive this Wisdom and desire it (4:4f.), for they will become the vehicles of this wisdom for the future.

The reason why Wisdom is so important is because it teaches us about how our belief in God is connected to the many different facets of life we encounter, even in the 'new' world of today. It has long been observed that Christians appear to survive by 'practicing' their faith on Sunday's and various occasions in the life of the church, but by drawing a demarcation line between this and what they do for a living for the rest of their time. It is very hard to find ways of making positive connections between the church and the world of work. Now, if you read through the Book of Proverbs, you will find that most of it is about the differences between godly actions and ungodly actions in everyday and working life situations. It deals with honesty, integrity, knowing when to speak and when to hold back, and a thousand other life skills which are all more obviously applicable to everyday life than what someone does at church on Sunday. You may not hear Proverbs spoken about much in the life of church on Sundays, but this is because it is a 'Monday to Friday' book!

This passage talks about the great benefits of Wisdom received through the family tradition of either the personal family or the family of the church. When the cry goes up in your fellowship, 'we need more teaching!', then do bear 'Wisdom' in mind. Wisdom is both something to be taught, but also the 'glue' which holds together what needs to be taught about God and His world.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How much do you recall being taught about God, the Faith, and the Church, from within your family?
2. How much do you recall being taught about God, the Faith, and the Church, from going to Church, or from 'Sunday School'?
3. To what extent do you see Christ within this passage of Scripture?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*Each of us has obligations to receive and to pass on our faith, and our duty as disciples is to make sure that we fulfil each role appropriately. What happens in the home is one thing, and what happens in the church is another. Personally, I never thought that I was the right kind of person to teach the young about faith, and yet the Lord has asked me to do this all the way through my experience as a Christian minister! In addition, I have found that I need to learn things constantly from those who have a greater grasp of the truth than I, and I would not be able to write without receiving advice from people and from books. Passing on the Wisdom of our Faith is an important matter.*

### Further ideas to think about, and for prayer

- *How can you play your part in passing on 'Wisdom' within your own family, perhaps your wider family. Sometimes, the impact of a grandparent can be greater than we fully understand, particularly in matters of wisdom. However, we all need to be proactive in passing on Wisdom if we hope for the best outcomes.*
- *Pray for young people growing up in a confusing world that offers them so much but gives so little real guidance. Pray that the church will be a positive helper and guide to young people today.*

## Final Prayer

You, Lord Jesus, have done for me what is impossible for my mind to grasp, my heart to comprehend or my feelings to appreciate; and somewhere within my spirit lies the