

## Prayer

Lord God Almighty, Your piercing gaze uncovers our souls;  
 Yet we are not always willing to accept Your truth, advice or help.  
 Break down our own resistance to the work of Your Spirit with us,  
 So we may be fed by the sound of Your voice and the truth of Your Word,  
 That we may find so much more beyond the world of 'self' in which we live.  
 Liberate us in Your glory, Lord God Almighty, and lead us on, we pray: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Politicians

*It is a very difficult time for UK politics and there is a lot of anger in the country against politicians. Please pray that God will use this to create better politics at Westminster.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for the key political issues in your country at the moment*
- *Give thanks for the love and care shown to you by other people*
- *Pray for those who spend their lives driving lorries on roads*

## Meditation

Glory! The clouds have lifted and my spirit bursts with joy!  
 Nothing can eradicate the destiny I've been given,  
 And everything that occupies my life for now  
 Prepares me for a glory that is sure, but yet to be revealed!

Praise! My soul would strike every barrier opposing me  
 So worship may consume my soul this day!  
 What can stop the outpouring of the heart's intent;  
 The triumph of salvation may be dead to some but not to me!

Wonder! The precious sounds of those I love grow stronger,  
 And by Your graciousness the past comes clean.  
 Ignite the brightest fires of love inside my heart.  
 So life may take its fullest meaning, now and in eternity.

## Bible Study - Proverbs 4:10-19

<sup>10</sup> Listen, my child, and accept what I say  
 so that you will have many years  
 of life ahead.

<sup>11</sup> I have guided you in the path of wisdom;  
 I have led you on a morally  
 straight path.

<sup>12</sup> As you walk, your steps will not be hindered,  
 and if you run, you will not trip up.

<sup>13</sup> Keep firm hold of discipline,  
 do not loosen your grip;  
 guard her, for she is your life.

<sup>14</sup> Do not begin the path of the wicked,  
 or walk in the way of evil people.

<sup>15</sup> Avoid it, do not go near it,  
 turn from it and pass on your way;

<sup>16</sup> for they cannot sleep unless they  
 have done evil,

*and they are robbed of their rest  
unless they have tripped  
someone up.*

<sup>17</sup> *They eat the bread of wickedness  
and drink the wine of violence.*

<sup>18</sup> *But the path of the righteous  
is like the dawning light,*

*shining ever brighter  
until the full heat of the day.*

<sup>19</sup> *The way of the wicked  
is like the deepest darkness;  
and they do know  
what makes them stumble.*

## Review

Here are words of both encouragement and warning to a young person learning the ways of God. The passage begins with some 'words of wisdom' in the classic style, appealing to the young person to stand by what is godly, and reap the benefits so doing (see 4:10-13). Then, in the general style of wisdom that teaches by way of making comparisons, the next four verses (4:14-17) compare this with the path of wickedness and its temptations that lie on the darker side of human life. The last two verses continue the theme by comparing the way of the righteous and the wicked and describing them as like day and night. In particular, it describes how light increases in brightness to full day, whilst darkness gets darker to the point where people stumble because they cannot see what they are doing (4:18,19)!

Of course, any teacher will naturally believe in the truth of what they say, and describe what they think as enlightenment compared with the ignorant foolishness of what others might think. Such contrasting opinions may be good for teaching of academic subjects such as philosophy, history or some sciences, for example, but we are dealing here with Wisdom, and the absolutes of moral truth within the natural order of the world. Here, in our text, is God's wisdom, which has been passed down through the history of the known world from the ancient Israelites. They distilled this first from God's revelation to them over the centuries, and passed it on through the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the Church; now the Church continues to pass it on through the Bible. It is astonishing to think that this wisdom has influenced thousands of people through the centuries, many of them people who have been responsible for the economic revolutions that have shaped our world; and whether people accept this or not, it still influences the morality of society to this day. Many people, not even Christians, could read this text today and apart from raising an eyebrow at the idea that being good will enable people to live a long life (in verse 10), agree with its sentiments wholeheartedly!

The passage says is that if you have been taught and you maintain a morally wise path, and if you refrain from taking even the first steps towards what is plainly evil and destructive of life, then you will live in the light of the day; whilst others, trapped in evil ways, will walk in the dark. It appears a simple and obvious popular morality. The trouble with this is that too many people today, particularly in the West, think that they can extract wisdom such as this from the Bible and take it away from its context of Godliness. All this comes from the Bible, from the Creator who made it, the Saviour who has demonstrated it, and the many Christian teachers who have taught it down through the years.

There is a history to truth and its revelation and it does not just 'pop up' for each new generation, and this is why the majority of Wisdom literature in the Bible is presented in the form of teaching for the young. In a world in which young people are expected to pick up morality from whoever they meet and wherever they may find it; from T.V., parents, clubs, school, the streets, pubs and general gossip, there is a crying need for God's people to affirm wisdom. Churches have a work to do in the world, and one of these is to pass on to young people the moral truth and wisdom of Christian Faith, and even to people who have not yet accepted Christian faith, much can be found in Proverbs. Frankly, without moral

guidance, many young people will continue to reject what they find in the world instead of learning from it. God has so much to offer young people as they grow through puberty and enter adolescence; but too many in the church have lost the desire to accept the challenge of this call.

I can imagine the discussion at a meeting of Sunday School teachers if someone were to suggest that sections from Proverbs would form good material! I am not sure the suggestion would survive; but it ought to, providing it is handled intelligently and properly, and arranged for the right age groups. The teaching of moral guidance should be a priority today for the witness of the Church.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How did you learn moral guidance for life? Discuss this in your group, and suggest ways for young people to learn morality in the church.
2. In what ways are the paths of right and wrong blurred in today's world?
3. How does 'doing what is right' help us to live a long life? In what ways is this true, and in what ways is this perhaps questionable?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*It is truly hard to address the issue of how we teach morality in the church, and how the witness of the church can be extended, so that society is affected by what is said, taught and done. We live at a time when many people are searching for truth, and I believe that we need to be imaginative in our attempts to present both our faith and the consequences in believing in a God who is fundamentally moral. If we persist in failing to do much more than come together on Sundays, we will not change our localities, our neighbourhoods or the world!*

### Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Read through this Scripture again, and see whether any part of it speaks to you perhaps about some part of your own life that needs change. Let God work in your spirit to help you discern those things you need to hear.*
- *Pray for young people, especially those who have lost their moral compass through no fault of their own, and who find it hard to accept any authority. Pray against Satan's attempts to ruin lives, and pray for young people known to you.*

## Final Prayer

Stay with us, Lord God, through all the dangers and perils of this day. We ask that we might hold on to You by faith and never let You down; and we ask that You hold on to us with all the might of Your love and Your Holy Spirit. So when the day ends, we ask for the gifts of Your rest and Your peace; thank You, Lord God. AMEN