

## Prayer

Gracious Father, the mysteries of the Universe lie within You, and time itself lies spread before You like a map. Thank You for creating each of us within our mothers' wombs, and for placing us within Your beautiful world. Through our salvation, may we all come to know our place within Your strategy for the destiny of the world; and may we honour what You have done in each of us, to Your praise and glory. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Secularism

*Pray for the newspapers and media who influence the lives of many people whilst trying to report impartial truth. Pray that those with influence do not ignore Godliness and truth.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray that Christians will hear the prophecies being given about our world today*
- *Give thanks for the blessing of life that God has given you*
- *Pray for the leaders of your country*

## Meditation

Sometimes, life can become too much.  
Unhappiness becomes a wall, un-scalable,  
Impossible to climb; depressing.

The illusion of gloom suggests no world beyond,  
To be seen or heard or sensed in any way;  
For who can hope for that which lies beyond experience?  
Who anticipates that what is now can ever truly change?

Stand forever hopeless,  
Or let God's Spirit take you to your knees

Give up mortal limitations to His greater power  
Yield all self-obsession to His boundless kindness  
Do what never happens naturally; let go of self.

Give permission to the One who loves you  
Let Him break the boundaries, the walls, the chains,  
And let His glory penetrate impossible extremes  
To let you touch the hope of better things, because they're real.

## Bible Study - Proverbs 8:22-26

<sup>22</sup> *The LORD fashioned me at the beginning of His work,  
the first of everything He made, long ago.*

<sup>23</sup> *I came into being from of old, from the beginning,  
before the earth existed.*

<sup>24</sup> *I was born when there were no ocean depths,  
when there were no springs with running water.*

<sup>25</sup> *Before the mountains set in place,  
before the hills; I came to birth*

<sup>26</sup> *before He had made earth and countryside,  
or the world's first dust and elements.*

## Review

This is an exceptional poem in which wisdom speaks to us about her origins. It is beautiful Hebrew poetry, and it is also highly significant for our understanding of God as Creator. This is because wisdom speaks powerfully about what God did in His work of creation, partly echoing the picture we know well from Genesis 1, but adding to this by telling us throughout this passage that she was there. Her knowledge of what happened is proof of her own origins in God the Father; 'I came into being from of old, from the beginning, before the earth existed.' (8:23). After a few moments reflection, we quickly realise that what is said in this text raises huge questions about the nature of Wisdom, because John uses similar words to this with which to describe Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel; 'He was in the beginning with God, all things came into being through Him ...' (John 1:2,3). We therefore ask whether wisdom is related in some way to Jesus!

There is no doubt that this passage of Scripture has caused great misunderstanding within the church. On the one hand, some have said that Wisdom, like Jesus, is part of the 'Godhead', because of the close relationship between God and Wisdom in this text, and its parallel in John. They therefore conclude that because wisdom is female (see Proverbs 3:13-18), God is therefore female! Some have said similar things about Jesus, based upon the literary connections between this passage and John 1. On the other hand, from the earliest days of the church, there have been those who believe that Wisdom and Jesus are identical, and because God 'gives birth' to Wisdom (8:23,24), Jesus / Wisdom is not God and have a separate identity from God. Jesus / Wisdom was created, and therefore not divine! It pains me to write all this, but I ask you to understand that sincere people have believed this, and some branches of the Christian church have fostered these beliefs. Even more dangerously, despite good scholarship that dismisses such ideas, some still do. It is therefore essential for us to bring some sanity into our discussion of this text, so that Satan can no longer use human limitations and misinterpretations in order to draw God's people away from truth.

Unless we are to throw away everything else that the Bible says about God, about His nature, His creation, and about Jesus His son, then our interpretation of this passage must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. Wisdom is indeed an expression of the nature and character of God, and to say that it was made 'long ago' (8:21) means just this. There is no reason for anyone to say that God and Wisdom are the same, and Wisdom does not define God or His creation! Secondly, when John used similar words to describe Jesus as the 'Word' (in John 1), he understood what he was doing by using these powerful words. He used the poetic force of these great Old Testament words to help us appreciate that Jesus is integral with God at the beginning of all things. However, whilst Wisdom is one of God's characteristics, Jesus is Himself the very 'light' and 'life' of God (John 1:4,5). As John clearly says, Jesus is the 'Son of God' (John 20:31), and He is divine. This is the foremost theme of John's entire Gospel.

Now, if we look at Genesis 1, we discover that on the first day of creation, God separate light from darkness and began the process of creating order out of chaos (Gen 1:2-5), and it is on the second day that He began to make 'things', such as the earth (Gen 1:6-8). It would therefore be presumptive to suggest any more than that Wisdom was made at some point before 'earth existed' and things were made on day 2 of Creation. Poetically, this magnificent verse goes on to picture Wisdom permeating every aspect of God's creation (8:24-26), and this is enough. Proverbs claims no more than that Wisdom is an inescapable part of God's creation.

We can therefore glory in the knowledge that Wisdom, characterised as a woman here in Proverbs for the purpose of teaching, and the essence of moral judgement and righteousness, is deeply rooted both in the character of God and in His created order. Reason, goodness, love, truth, salvation and all the great things we read about in the Bible are not fiction or some kind of 'religion' or set of beliefs, they are all set deeply within the fabric of our world and universe. Everything we know about through the Bible and through our historic faith; God, Jesus, wisdom, and the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, are the truths of life and existence by which we live and die. Praise God that through our salvation, which is itself the product of all these things working 'together for good' as God intends, we know that we have an eternal future with God who, through Wisdom, has made the world and the earth on which we live, and also heaven, our eternal destiny!

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Read Genesis 1:1-8 and then read today's passage again. Check out what this study says with your own understanding of the essential text.
2. What do you think it means for the text to say that wisdom was made as 'the first of everything' (8:22)
3. Have you come across people who believe that Jesus was not divine because God made Him? Why do people believe this?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*When we read passages of Scripture like this which have caused great controversy in the history of the church, it is very easy to become gripped by the arguments that have raged about this or that word, or what this or that phrase means. It is important to address these issues for the sake of truth, but it is also important to stand back, and allow the Scripture passage to speak afresh to us, and see it in the new light God can use to bless us.*

### Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Read through this passage several times, and let God bless you through it. Imagine God's pleasure at creating what is good, right, true, and beautiful for the benefit of all. Let Him bless you through reflecting on wisdom.*
- *Pray for the church of God, that it may be united around the truth of Scripture, and not divided by evil or the distortions of truth.*

## Final Prayer

Almighty and ever living God; You made the world in love, and it must break Your heart to see the mess we have made of what You have made for our benefit, our enjoyment and our blessing. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we can connect with the blessings You have for us in all life, especially in Scriptures, and within our prayers. AMEN