

Prayers

To God

You, Lord God, created darkness and light. We do not understand the darkness and we love Your light, so why did You create both? Did you allow evil to enter this world to tempt us and take us off the pathway of life You intended? Far be it from us to question Your wisdom, Lord God, but help us to trust You enough to discern the difference between darkness and light. May we live according to the lightness of Your love and compassion, and turn away from the dark evils of this world which afflict us from time to time. We bless You Lord God: AMEN

For myself

Weekly theme: Discipline

Pray for the courage to organise your life in a manner that will give glory to God. Pray with fervour and do not give up.

For others

Pray for the people in Oklahoma and the central regions of the USA who have surrender and are suffering the effects of one of the worst tornado seasons ever. Pray for families who have lost loved ones and for people who have lost everything.

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 Passage

Genesis 1:3-5

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

Review

This is the record of day one of Creation, in which 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 imaginable. Time and light were created in a moment, outside of our experience and understanding, and this is how God set in place the laws of physics, chemistry and biology that have defined our Universe ever since. This is the immense mystery of the beginning of the world as we know it, an event of supremely awesome glory because it was the unique work of God; but it was merely the beginning of His work! Our passage today tells us that God immediately separated light from darkness, naming them 'day' and 'night', and demonstrating to all future generations His power and authority. He has made these fundamentals of the world in which we live and they are in His control. He can therefore do whatever He wants with them.

It is too easy to become over-familiar with these words, for if we read them without engaging with them, we can lose the genuinely awesome nature of what they say. Almost every word of our passage is more powerful than we can imagine, and says more than we can ever fully know about God's creative acts. If we are to grasp the essential truths that lies behind this passage however, we must start with its basic definition of a 'day', which is that a day is a progression of light out of darkness and then light back to darkness again.

We take all this for granted, of course, but we can only observe the world from where we are. Today, we tend to think of a day as defined by the relative movements of the earth and the sun. People of ages past who did not have science as we know it saw the day as the fundamental unit of existence, and thus it was natural that they perceived it as the first thing God made in all creation. For all of us, the day remains fundamental to our basic human experience; for all people who live on earth, day and night govern how we experience our world. The message of God's Word here is that He has made it this way.

As we look at this passage closely, and observe how God reacts to what He has done, one thing is immediately obvious. God had emotions and discernment. He called light 'good', but gave no such affirmation to darkness (1:3). After the description of chaos and darkness in the first two verses of the Bible (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), and it flooded the world with energy and potential. Even the world of science and physics agrees that 'light', which is another word for 'energy', together with the related properties of 'time' and 'matter' (mass) constitute the very basis of the Universe as we experience it (for those who understand this, it is encapsulated in Einstein's famous law $E=MC^2$). The subtle literary nuances of the Bible however provides a level of understanding that science cannot provide; for in declaring the light 'good', God has overcome the fearsome chaos of darkness, which existed before creation. After the dramatic announcement of light, we can never go back.

Now we must explore one more fascinating aspect of this passage. 'Day' and 'night' are named (1:5), but as we all know from experience, night, as we experience it, is never complete darkness. The emphasis of this passage is on the light, named by God as 'day', so whenever we read about a 'day' in the story of Creation, this means the light of God that holds Creation together. In addition, light also holds darkness at bay, and we never hear of night or darkness again throughout the story of Creation. Over the years we have been so fixed on the idea of a 'day' as 24 hours worth of abstract time (consisting of seconds, minutes, hours etc), we miss the spiritually important idea of a 'day', which is a complete unit of God's creative work.

This definition of a 'day', which holds everything together in a consistent and functioning manner under God 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. Creation reflects the very nature of the God who made it, otherwise the whole idea is rather non-sensical. God has made the world for a purpose and to extend His own 'image', in ways we will find out about later!

Discipleship

Application

The spiritual significance of things.

Some feel that only certain people have the gifts to perceive spiritual things, and others just do not naturally see what is of God in any situation or 'thing'. I disagree. I believe that we can all learn to spot God's hand in things. Here, all that is required is the ability to strip away the science from our idea about what a 'day' means. When we have done this we are left with what it means to God! This text then helps us perceive that God has ordered life on earth for a reason, and that for Him, the unit of the 'day' is the unit of work done. This, of course, is the fundamental understanding that lies behind all Genesis 1, and it adds nothing to our understanding of God's creative power and achievement to think of it in terms of a scientific idea of time.

Looking after what God has created

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 what to do

- *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?*

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?

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