

## Prayers

### To God

*Pray with a sense of God's awesome presence, and set yourself before your Lord and God in humble submission. What must you submit to God for this to be real?*

### For myself

Weekly theme: Discipline

**I thank You, Lord Jesus, for You have shown me how to follow You. You led Your disciples through all manner of experiences and guided them eventually to doing for themselves everything you had done. I know that it is my duty to do the same and to accept the disciplines of being a disciple. Help me with this, Lord God, especially when I find it hard to grasp. Then, as I do all I can to follow Your words and Your instructions, bless me with Your presence that I may know Your blessing in all I do. AMEN**

### For others

*Pray today for the poor of your country who do not have the benefits you enjoy. Pray for those who work hard to try and feed the poor and for those who seek to alleviate their poverty using political means. Few world leaders are interested in poverty, unfortunately, even if the poor have the answers to many political problems. Pray that some will see sense and use the potential of the poor to help their countries and the poor themselves.*

## Meditation

See the marks of faith in the lives of others;  
The saints of God who live by the Spirit.

A smile on the face of one who suffers  
For their God sustains them, despite all trials.

A truthful word spoken with honesty and wisdom  
Going straight to the heart and moving the spirit.

A life lived in tune with God and with others;  
The faithful heart of a man or woman of God.

An offer of help, by one who cares to notice,

Serving wherever possible, at whatever the cost.

See the marks of faith in the lives of others;  
Join the saints of God who live by the Spirit.

## Bible Passage

### **Genesis 1:6-13**

<sup>6</sup> And God said, 'Let there be a dome set up between the waters, to make a space between the two waters.' <sup>7</sup> So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from those that were above the dome. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the dome Sky. Evening came and morning came; day two.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together to one place, and let dry land appear.' And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land 'Earth', and He called the gathered waters 'Seas'. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, 'Let the earth produce vegetation: seed bearing plants and every kind of fruit tree on earth that has fruit with the seed within it.' And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth produced vegetation: seed bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind having fruit with the seed within it. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> Evening came and morning came: day three.

## Review

The story of Creation continues in Genesis 1 with the description of God's work on days two and three. After God spoke light into being and named it 'day' (1:5) on the first 'day', we must think of all the following days as an expression of God's creative light, and each day, like the light, is a powerful force for good and a reminder that God is good. However, from now on, things become a little more complicated!

In today's reading we begin to see two different 'structures' undergirding the whole story, and although most of us are familiar with one, we are not often told about the other. The first 'structure' is that of the days of creation, as we began to understand yesterday. The second structure is that of the famous phrase '*and God said ...*'. Now on the first day, God spoke (1:3) and this was one day's work (1:5). Now in today's passage, we read about the work of God on two days, days 2 and 3, however, these two days contain three direct commands of God, found in verses 6,9 and 11. So, the number of 'days' does not tally with the number of times we read '*and God said ...*'. As we read through Genesis 1 we will eventually discover there is some significance in this, but for the moment, it is enough that we spot the difference between these two classic 'markers' for God's work.

**Day two (second command)** The two days in our reading describe the creation of the earth and the heavens, and also the vegetation which is in the earth. All this is further 'structure' for the make up of the world that will eventually be filled with people. On day two, this takes practical form as the 'waters' are separated to make a void in which the earth exists with the sky above, forming a vast 'dome' over the earth. Without a scientific understanding of the world, and starting from watery chaos (see 1:2), this is the logical next step.

**Day three (third command)** Then, on day three, God gives two further commands. Command three separates out the land and the sea (1:6-10). Now the ancients thought that

everything was created out of 'waters', so the earth under their feet and the sky above them appeared to be like a dome or cavern filled with air, and this kept the waters 'above' separate from the waters 'below'. They also thought that water permeated up from 'below' to make the seas and rivers they knew about. They also believed that rain was water breaking through the dome in the sky! It does not take much imagination to see how and why people thought like this. They wrote as they did because this was the logic of what they saw, and they saw God's hand in everything around them.

**Day three (fourth command)** The fourth command of God on day three was for the creation of plants and trees (1:11-13). We find it hard to imagine today, but ancient people thought of vegetation as like a 'structural' part of the earth, rather than 'life'. They did not think of it as a form of life as we define it today, largely because although they knew perfectly well that vegetation grew, it did not appear to them to breathe, and they believed everything living 'breathed' (e.g. see Psalm 150:6). Looking closely at these verses, two different types of vegetation are described; firstly, seed bearing plants and secondly fruit bearing trees whose seeds were contained within fruit. The differences are easy for us to understand; the first type of plant was itself food that could be eaten and the seeds collected for further growth, the second classification was for plants not edible themselves, but bearing fruit, capable of being picked and eaten.

**The perspective of Creation in the Bible** It may seem rather simple to describe Creation in such terms, but this is not merely 'simple'. From the beginning of Genesis 1, the narrative gradually focuses in from the initial view of the whole universe down to the earth. It then looks at what is on the earth before turning finally to people, made in the image of God (1:27,28). This is an incredibly powerful beginning to the Bible, because the great book of Genesis gradually brings the perspective of Creation down to a personal, human level. There is a genuine dysfunction in our world today, because science insists that people are not the 'centre of the universe', and it has used its objective methodology to achieve much good and considerable progress. However, each of us can only live and experience things from our own perspective, and science itself must eventually serve the society in which it exists. The Bible however places humanity at the heart of God's creative purposes, whatever we may think of our size or our place on earth; its insistence still stands as a challenge to science and the ultimate alienation from society and individual people required by its objectivism.

## Discipleship

### ***Application***

#### ***Is there an impasse between science and the Bible?***

For this and many other reasons, it would be so wrong for us to ditch what the Bible says about creation, just because it does not tally with what science says. The Bible and science have totally different perspectives, and each will teach us different things. We will not find out about God by studying what science says about the creation of the world today; we will however find out about Him by studying Genesis. We will find out some truths about how the world was made in the book of Genesis, but it will not tally with modern science because it was written by ancient people with a different perception of the world. So is there an impasse? Is the Bible technically wrong? Does this great work reveal anything about the 'truth' of creation?

***A possible answer to anguished disputes, but only a hint, as yet!***

There are many questions here, and Christians have become divided by disputes about 'Creationism' and the commonest scientific name associated with the origins of humanity, 'evolution'. I will say openly that the dispute troubles me, because the devil uses it to make the Gospel message difficult for some to receive, and I regret this. Personally, I prefer to hold back from being content with the theories of evolution, which are only one part of science's approach to the origins of the world and the universe; the fields of geology, astronomy and mathematics all play their part, at least. I have also found an explanation of the origins of people on earth that I believe are helpful. They make sense of the whole Bible story and are acceptable both to the view that the Bible is the Word of God, and also to the evidence of scientific and archaeological study. I will talk some more about this as we progress further in our study!

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- Google the internet and look up the debate between creationism and evolutionism. Look carefully at the arguments presented, but beware of those that do not accept the grounds upon which the other works. Let God help you make up your mind about any issues that may arise for you, and they may not be what everyone else is interested in!
- Pray for God's people today to hold on to the value of Genesis 1 and what it says about the world and about God.

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. Which part of days two and three do you find most difficult to understand, and why?
2. If ancient people described the world as they did simply from their personal experience, why do people not think of it in the same way now?
3. Why are vegetables important for creation, and why does God give them an important place on day three?

## **Final Prayer**

Jesus Christ, we build our hopes on You. Save us from the sands of doubt and liberate us from the quicksands of despair. Lead us through life on the solid rocks and the stones of faith left for us to walk on by saints who have gone before. Thank You Lord. AMEN