

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Great and Mighty God, thank You for blessing me with Your presence, and giving me so much. Help me, I pray, whether I feel 'up' or 'down' and in whatever my circumstances I find myself, to live as one of your servants, at peace with other people and also with You. I ask this through Jesus Christ my Saviour, whose Holy Spirit has come upon me. Alleluia!

### Prayer Suggestions

**Prayer ideas** *(Alternatives that can broaden the experience of prayer)*

*What does it mean to be at peace with God? Are you at peace with God? Set aside a few moments of the day to reflect on these questions, and see what the Holy Spirit will do to bless you this very day.*

#### **On-going prayers**

- **Pray for Christian youth camps.** *Pray for those whose responsibility it is to look after the spiritual welfare of the children on these camps. Pray that they will indeed be spiritual people who are willing to be guided by the Spirit of God.*
- *Pray for the country of Syria, which continues to experience turmoil as many people are killed. Pray that the violence will come to an end soon, and that the rights of ordinary people will be respected.*
- *Give thanks to God for your food and drink, and say a special prayer of grace today at the meal table, giving considered thanks to God for His provision, and also calling for God's blessing on the food.*

### Meditation

Be careful, fellow believers ...

With the best of intentions, we lose our way  
For the world is full of sin and temptation.

Be wise, fellow believers ...

There is always more to learn about faith  
So allow God's Spirit to teach you all wisdom.

Be diligent, fellow believers ...

Do not be casual in reading God's Word  
For Satan delights in ignorance of the truth.

Be positive, fellow believers ...

Our God has a plan for the world's salvation,  
And He will achieve it against all the odds!

Be content, fellow believers ...

For everything is possible through Christ our Saviour,  
Our victory has been won, and our future secured!

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – Psalm 19:1-6

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens publish the glory of God;  
the Universe exposes the work of his hands.
- <sup>2</sup> From day to day they pour out information;

- and from night to night they reveal knowledge.
- <sup>3</sup> Nothing is spoken,  
there are no words,  
and no voice is heard,
- <sup>4</sup> Yet their communication reaches all the earth,  
their message to the ends of the world.
- He has pitched in the heavens a tent for the sun,
- <sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom leaving the wedding-suite,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
- <sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and goes around to the other;  
nothing escapes its heat.

## Review

Psalm 19 divides into two halves; verse 1-6 and 7-14. The first half is about God's creative power and the second is about His Law, but as a whole, the Psalm is about the glory of God's creative Word, and it is indeed a truly remarkable piece of literature. In contrast to previous psalms which focussed on God's help for the troubled believer (see psalms 3-7,10,13,17, for example), this psalm takes the reader on a journey of discovery as we read about God as Creator, and it offers praise to Him as the One who has both made all things and revealed Himself through His Creation.

Psalm 19 begins with the heavens praising the 'glory of God' (19:1). 'Glory' is a fascinating word. In an earthly sense, it means 'the evidence of something awesome'. Today, we might use the word 'glorious' to describe some great event or sporting feat, but this pales into insignificance against the glory of the God who made the world and everything in it. Creation is itself the evidence of the God who has made it, as Psalm 19 announces, right from its beginning (19:1,2).

These opening verses describe a pouring forth of evidence (19:2), as God makes available to humanity a vast amount of information about Himself, all of which awaits discovery. Now the ancients thought of the world as like a plate, with a dome over it to make the heavens; their understanding of creation was limited, but their understanding of God's revelation through it was not. Today, we possess much more information about the world in which we live, so how much more should we, together with the Psalmist, celebrate all we can know about God from the wonders of His creation? Of course, we find salvation in Jesus Christ, not in Creation, but God still has much to tell us about Himself within His world, and if we follow His revelation we will invariably be led to Christ.

God's glory is described in Psalm 19 as something like speech continually flowing out from the heavens (19:1,2), but this is not language as we understand it. The glory of God is not available to us in mere words, it is like silent communication, reaching out to us (19:4). But what does this mean? In truth, most communication is indeed non-verbal; gestures and expressions are all readily understood as part of language today, and all of us 'read' the expression on people's faces, it is a part of life. In the same way, the life God has given us tells us something about God himself, for He is indeed a 'living' God, and we believe this not because God says so in so many words, but because he has given us the gift of life. This is a form of silent communication, and it is very real!

Halfway through verse four, the Psalm gives us an illustration of how God communicates to us through his Creation, but it is not easy to understand. It paints a picture of the sun rising on one side of the heavens and going round to the other (19:6); now this is straightforward, but the three lines before this are not. Here, the sun is described as something like a medieval bridegroom after a marriage ceremony, parading himself like an athlete (19:4,5)! These verses hide something rather important. In ancient times, most ancient people believed that the sun was a god, or to use the imagery of our text, that the bridegroom was a god!

The writer of psalm 19, however, has turned everything on its head, and the sun is no god, it is merely a constituent part of the created order. The sun illustrates God; it is a life-giving, energising, awe-inspiring part of the Universe without which we would not exist, but it is no god, and the talk of a bridegroom running out of a wedding suite is mere poetic license. It is hard for us to grasp the significance of this for the people who first heard this psalm. Instead of being puzzled these verses, we should rather read them as a powerful revelation of God. He is greater than all things and beyond every 'why' we can ask; He alone is responsible for every part of the Universe.

We tend look at things in our own way today, but it is surely not possible to lose sight of the awesomeness of God as Creator? He is there in the intricate and magnificent colour schemes of nature, in the complex life-

cycles of butterflies, in the amazing heat of the sun and so much more. Surely, we cannot be content merely to accept Creation exists and do experiments with it for our own advancement? How hard and blindfolded we must be if we cannot see the hand of the Creator even in the midst of the sin, decay and mortality all around us.

There is much we can learn from this psalm. It stands as a testimony to the powerful words and deeds of the One who made all things and holds them even now in existence. We owe Him all things.

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. Which verse of this psalm catches your attention with the most powerful description of God's creative power?
2. Try to think of examples (other than given above) of where and when we 'hear' without speech or other form of language. What can we learn from this about listening to God?
3. Many ancients believed that the sun was a god. That sounds strange to us today - but what similar strange beliefs do people have today?

### Discipleship challenges

- *As you go about your daily routine, have a look around you, and written down some of the interesting things you see. Ask yourself what God might be saying to you through these things.*
  - *If possible, discuss Psalm 19 with someone who is studying sciences, perhaps someone at school or university. Find out what they have to say about what they read hear in Psalm 19*
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## Final Prayer

Heavenly Father, I praise you for the world all around me, for the life that you have given me, for the family you have placed me in, for the work you have given me, for the country in which I was born and for so many things that have become a part of my life. I thank you for all things because you are the God of all creation. Lift up my life as an offering of praise to your holy Name; AMEN

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