

## Prayer

We adore You, Heavenly Father, and we praise You. You are the God who speaks to us through each sound we hear and touches us with every experience of the day. Please accept the offer of our heartfelt love and appreciation. We cannot thank You enough for the amazing grace of Jesus. Thank You, heavenly Father, AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Wildlife

*Pray for those who involve themselves in caring for wildlife and the environment, as a duty of care. Pray that all people might realise that they have a duty of care for wildlife.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray against illegal arms traders and those who sponsor them*
- *Pray for those on trial at the Hague for crimes against humanity*
- *Give thanks to God for the joy of travelling and visiting friends*

## Meditation

Show us something of Yourself, Lord.

Show us Creation in all its splendour;

Show us Salvation in all its graciousness;

Show us Redemption in all its completeness;

Show us Holiness in all its magnificence;

Show us Faith in all its fruitfulness;

Show us Hope in all its fulfilment;

Show us Love in all its contentment;

Show us Jesus, for He is all these things, for us.

## Bible Study - Genesis 1:1,2(b)

<sup>1</sup> *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,*

<sup>2</sup> *the earth was meaningless and empty, and darkness covered the surface of the abyss, while the spirit of God swept over the waters.*

### Review

These first two verses in the Bible are incredibly powerful, because they describe God's creative activity with great beauty and authority. More than this, they announce an abiding truth about the whole world, which is that everything we experience is the product of God's work and design. Before time existed, before history and science, before the elements of the universe were structured, and before all the senses were perceivable, God began His creative activity. It would be foolish of us to say that we can ever fathom the full depth of these words, because they mean so much. However, the wonder of scripture is that in these incredibly powerful verses, God has given us a feel for the truth that lies behind the Universe, telling us that everything we know and experience comes from Him. If we are willing to accept this as the truth, we have a starting place to explore the nature of our existence and our relationship with God. In addition, God has given us unprecedented

access to His world and opened the door to His extraordinary craftsmanship of which we are a part. We see the Creator in His creation, and He invites us to explore it.

Verse 1 states the truth that underpins existence; God made everything. The verse is like a summary of the whole of Genesis 1:1 - 2:3, and perhaps even the whole of Genesis itself. However, it is linked grammatically to the second verse which gives a dramatic picture of 'before' creation; the formlessness and emptiness before matter and time as we know existed, and before God 'spoke' Creation into being (see 'God said "let there be light"' – Gen 1:3). The whole of creation as described in the famous 'six days' of Genesis 1 happens against the backdrop of this desert-like emptiness and chaos, devoid of meaning.

The Bible describes God as constantly active, making things, doing things, and giving structure to things that have no form or shape without Him. For example, the New Testament describes God as 'building up' His church (Ephesians 4:11ff etc.); so once God began to create things he has never stopped! God is mentioned over four thousand times in the Bible, and in nearly every instance He is doing something. His work is often physical, such as leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, but it is also spiritual. Psalm 139, for example, uses the same word for 'create' found in Genesis 1:1 in this famous passage: 'for it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.' This is one of the most memorable descriptions of the creation of people ever written.

Whatever else we may say about the nature of creation, and the coming studies of Genesis 1 will uncover some intriguing revelations about both God and His creation, the creative power of God is His Spirit (1:2). The Spirit (or in Hebrew, 'breath') of God broods over emptiness, chaos and disorder, awaiting the Word of God to trigger action, and behind the scenes of Genesis 1, the Spirit acts in unimaginable power to put into action what God speaks. In the dramatic picture of verse 2, the Spirit is poised awaiting this action, and God Himself is ready.

We should not forget that Genesis 1 reaches its climax in the creation of people (1:26,27), and men and women are both self conscious and aware of their surroundings. The words we read in Genesis 1:1 and 2 are the result of people becoming conscious of themselves, of God, and also their surroundings, and writing this down. They are not 'primitive' just because they are ancient (we have no idea when they were written in this form), and we do a disservice to humanity if we suggest that these words are anything less than the fruit of mature reflection and passionate belief born of much human experience. When, today, we engage in the great science versus the Bible debate, we should respect the extraordinary insight, faith and revelation of those who penned this account. It is not to be dismissed as irrelevant just because what it says does not appear to fit the processes of science used by our own age for the understanding of so much. In its deeply human maturity, Genesis may yet have far much more to teach us than we know.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What do you believe about the relationship between science and Genesis 1? Would you say you have an open or a closed mind on this?
2. In what ways are you conscious of God's continuing work of creation today?
3. What does the Spirit do in creation? In answering this question, consider spiritual answers as well as physical ones.

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*I find the idea of the work of the Spirit in creation to be a powerful one. God is always at work doing things both seen and unseen to the human eye. This is obvious, of course, in the way that a child is created in the mother's womb, but there are so many more examples for us to find. If we can grasp the idea that God is always at work around us doing things which enable our world to function, then this can help us in our prayers, for we perceive in the spirit the means whereby the Lord can indeed get things done. Knowing this can enable us to say our prayers with more courage and conviction!*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *During the day, look around you and think about what God is doing even at that moment, to hold what you see in existence. Wonder at the power and majesty of God that is present in the world, and let this flow out of you in prayer.*
- *Try to talk to others about what you see God doing in the world around you, and find out whether people think of God as active in the world or largely absent from it. Listen carefully to what people say, so that you gain a greater understanding of people's attitudes to creation.*

## Final Prayer

Lord God, You see far beyond our sight, You hear above our hearing, and You speak words beyond our understanding. Yet, through our Saviour Jesus, we are privileged to see You, to hear You, and to speak with you; for in Him, Your re-creative power has given us new life! Thank You Lord God. AMEN