

## Final Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, open up our lives to the possibilities of Your grace. May we value the disciplines of our faith and also the freedom of Your Spirit, both of which are essential to the life of faith we seek to live. Lead us graciously, and show us how to live graciously, we ask You; AMEN

## Prayer

Thank You Lord God for all the amazing things You have done through millions of Christian people through the centuries. You alone comprehend the vast numbers of people who have responded to Your love and have accepted Your call. You alone know the truth about people's lives and all they have done, and You alone are the One True Judge. Make us worthy of Your call, we pray, and worthy to join Your saints in glory: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Security

*Pray for the police, whose fundamental work is to provide for the security of people within society. Pray for senior police who have the job of matching resources to needs.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for countries of the world that experience internal strife*
- *Give thanks to God for the victory of love over all evil*
- *Pray for people who have lost much during the recession*

## Meditation

*(a prophecy for God's people, first given 13/03/07)*

Be liberated, my people, be set free to be.  
I made you, I have loved you, and I saved you;  
No-one has ever been greater in my Kingdom.  
My church is made of servants, not masters.

Read my Word faithfully, and I will guide you:  
Pray to me and I will reveal the truth to you:  
Worship me; seek me, let nothing distract you,  
Enter my presence with an honest, contrite heart.

I knock upon your door, so open up and trust me:  
I am with you as you break bread; remember me:  
I build my church; I challenge and empower you,  
I have given you your work, and I will protect you.

Be liberated, my people, and love each other,  
Do what I tell you to do, but do not stand in my way;  
Let me build my church; for if I am not welcomed,  
I will build where my people really want 'new life'.

## Bible Study - Psalm 95:1-7

- <sup>1</sup> *Come, let us sing out to the LORD;  
let us shout joyfully to the Rock of  
our salvation.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Let us come into His presence with  
thanksgiving  
and let us sing with joy to Him in  
psalms.*
- <sup>3</sup> *For the LORD is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.*
- <sup>4</sup> *In His hand are the depths of the  
earth,  
and the mountain peaks belong to  
Him.*
- <sup>5</sup> *The sea is His, for He made it,*

and the dry land, made by His hands.  
<sup>6</sup> Come, let us worship and bow down,  
 let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

<sup>7</sup> for He is our God  
 and we are the people of his  
 pasture,  
 the flock under the care of His  
 hand.

## Review

Today is the first day after Easter day, and after the excitement and joy of Easter, there can be a tendency for us to say 'what next'? How can there be anything more magnificent or important than the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection, which ensures that all of us who believe in Jesus have a sure hope of redemption? All who experience chronic illness know that in Christ they have a sure hope of release; all who are aged know that in Christ they have a place in God's heaven; all who are newly converted may know that their experience will not let them down if they stay close to the God who has saved them! There are so many implications of the resurrection for so many people, it is almost impossible to generalise meaningfully!

### Worship

However, we are all called to do one thing in response to the resurrection, and this is to worship the Lord. Indeed, it may be that amongst those who believe in Jesus and accept what He has done for them by His resurrection, the worship of God is the one thing in which they can be, and must be, totally united. All of us are called to come unreservedly to God and give Him thanks for what He has done, especially at Easter time. The first seven verses of Psalm 95 are a call to worship, but in contrast to many psalms that have a brief call to worship before moving towards a different theme, worship is the sole focus of these verses. God is to be worshipped because He is 'the Rock of salvation' (95:1), He is a 'great God' above all others (95:2,3), because He has created all things (95:4,5), and He is therefore worthy of all praise from those who are His own (95:6,7).

### Worship from those who are saved

When we study a psalm, we might expect to find that God is praised because He is the Creator and therefore the greatest of all the 'gods' we read about in the Old Testament. Of course, there can only be one God who has made all things, and this is said frequently in the Old Testament as part of an argument against the many different gods believed in by different peoples of ancient times. We can find the praise of God as Creator in the middle of this psalms, but this is not the main theme here; the important feature of this psalm is its starting point, in which people are encouraged to praise God because He is the 'Rock of our salvation'. Now throughout most of the Old Testament, the words 'salvation' and 'deliverance' mean something like God's help, mostly for things in this life such as the winning of battles and saving from drought. However, as we have seen in our recent studies of the psalms, the Lord gave His people occasional glimpses into His bigger, eternal plan, indicating something far more than just 'earthly help'. From the beginning (Gen 3) God's plan of salvation was to restore a relationship with all people through His own chosen nation, and the psalms recognise this greater plan of God far more than any other part of the Old Testament (e.g. Psalm 47:1f. 98:2, 148:11 etc.). For this reason, the first few verses of Psalm 95 express very well our Easter joy at the saving work of God in Jesus Christ. Our God is to be praised firstly because He has saved us (95:1,2)! Only when we know the saving power of God will our eyes be opened further to the awesomeness of God in other ways, as Creator, or as King or Shepherd, for example.

### Worship Him in different ways

One feature of these verses is the many different ways in which people are described as worshipping the Lord. Some of these are somewhat obscured by translational issues, but the range of words used to describe worship remains considerable. The psalm speaks of singing (95:1,2), shouting joyfully (95:1), coming into God's presence (95:2), kneeling and bowing down (95:6), to name some of the features present in this translation of the psalm. All of these means of worship are only a sample of many others mentioned in the Old Testament, and then more are mentioned in the New. Here in this psalm, however, the Bible describes things that indicate an attitude of heart, such as singing, coming, and bowing. It does not mention reading God's Word, for example, because although this was done in Old Testament as well as New Testament times, the act of reading does not itself indicate a state of heart. What the psalm is keen to tell us here is that true worship comes from a heart that 'gives' to God in whatever is done, and we give God our worship because He is worth it! He is worth the time we give in our praise, he is worth our attention, and indeed, He is worth our giving of the whole of our lives, because He has saved us!

The great challenge of Easter day is to continue our worship of God from day to day, because of what He has done for us in Jesus Christ on the Cross and through His resurrection. The Psalms can help us do this, if we will let them!

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Is it realistic to talk of a heart of praise being sustained over a period of time, or do we naturally alter in our attitude of praise?
2. Share in your group a list of things for which you would praise God. Compare the different things you bring to the group.
3. What is essential to our attitude of worship?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The psalms frequently speak about singing in praise of God, and it seems that singing is a universal expression of praise. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is a danger that music has overtaken the expression of praise within some worship. What I mean is this. It is possible for people to sing simple songs in a worshipful way, and such songs will usually have an appealing tune and lyric. Too often, good quality performance songs are assumed to be appropriate for worship, and I have often seen congregations struggle to sing songs that are highly attractive, but very difficult to sing and require a virtually professional band. I do not advocate a return to old hymns and styles of song, but I do advocate discernment on the part of musicians about what can be sung by people in a worshipful manner.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Think carefully about what happens in worship, and what truly enables you to 'give' yourself to God, spiritually. Think about the different things you do in church on Sunday, but think also about the things your heart longs to do to honour God in any situation in life.*
- *Pray for leaders of worship in your church as they plan, Sunday by Sunday, the different things that are done, and attempt to organise worship that is honouring to God.*