

## Prayers and Readings for Private Use

### Sunday 25 October 2020 – Bible Sunday

By using this sheet at home, you are joining other local Christians in the worship of God and sharing in our common prayer at a time of national need. You may like to light a candle as you pray.

‘Lord, for the word, the word of life which fires us, speaks to our hearts, and sets our souls ablaze, teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us: Lord of the word, receive your people’s praise.’

(Timothy Dudley-Smith)

#### Approaching God

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The word of God is living and active.  
It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
All is open and laid bare before the eyes of him  
to whom we give account.  
We confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Your word convicts us:  
all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Your word commands us:  
repent, and believe the good news.  
Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Your word assures us:  
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love and power forgive us  
and free us from our sins,  
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to  
new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessed Lord,  
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our  
learning:  
help us so to hear them,  
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them

that, through patience, and the comfort of your  
holy word,  
we may embrace and for ever hold fast  
the hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

#### Listening for God: Matthew 24: 30-35

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in  
heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will  
mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on  
the clouds of heaven’ with power and great  
glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud  
trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the  
four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

#### *The Lesson of the Fig Tree*

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its  
branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves,  
you know that summer is near. So also, when you  
see all these things, you know that he is near, at the  
very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not  
pass away until all these things have taken  
place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my  
words will not pass away.”

#### Thought for the Day

So today is ‘Bible Sunday’... when we give thanks to  
God for the amazing, and precious, gift of his word.  
I’m sure we will all have our own favourite copies,  
and translations of the Bible - perhaps one handed  
down through several generations of family, or  
received as a gift on a special occasion? Perhaps a  
study version, one with commentaries, or with  
suggestions for daily readings?  
Perhaps we read them regularly and studiously ...  
or delve in to explore sections that are less  
familiar to us ... or we might turn to them in times  
of need, or when looking for inspiration or  
comfort?  
Or perhaps, if we’re honest, we don’t actually pick  
them up often enough!

I wonder, when we really consider *the amazing and precious gift of God's word* - how much we truly treasure it?

Perhaps this Bible Sunday might be a 'nudge' to encourage us to do so a little more!

For many Christians, one of the best-known and most loved parts of the Old Testament is The Book of Psalms - Hebrew prayers and hymns that have been at the heart of Christian prayer throughout the church's history. Often appended to copies of the New Testament, and used regularly in worship and meditation - they are a wonderful way to help in expressing joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and regrets.

The psalm assigned for today, is part of (which is a relief, as the whole psalm is 176 verses!) psalm 119. There are 2 verses in this psalm that are particularly powerful for us on this Bible Sunday:

*'Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple'*.

In 'The Message' translation (the Bible in contemporary language), those 2 verses read:

*'Every word you give me is a miracle word - how could I help but obey?*

*Break open your words, let the light shine out, let ordinary people see the meaning.'*

**'Break open your words!'** As we hear the psalmist's delight in God's 'miracle words', may that be our prayer for this Bible Sunday - for the unfolding of God's words ... and 'that the light may shine out'. That we might go out refreshed with **the word of life** ... described in our opening lines today by Timothy Dudley-Smith: *'the word of life which fires us, speaks to our hearts, and sets our souls ablaze!'*

### Response

Loving God,  
give us the grace and openness to hear your message for us today, and to allow your word to abide in us.

### Prayers

Lord Jesus, you are the living word of God who came to dwell among us.  
Help us live our lives in the light of your wisdom, and to see others through your loving and compassionate eyes.

Help us to recognise and acknowledge you in the lives and work of those around us and to be open to the possibilities of meeting you in unexpected places.

Lord Jesus, you brought comfort and healing to all who came to you in distress. We bring to you now those we know who are suffering.

We pray that you will meet their needs with your love and compassion,  
and lighten their darkness with the eternal flame of your Spirit.

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.

In their loneliness, be their consolation;

in their anxiety, be their hope;

in their darkness, be their light;

through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen.

May we go now in peace,  
knowing that we have been born again,  
not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,  
through the living and enduring word of God;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.  
**Amen.**