

## My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

### Prayer of Confession:

Lord Jesus, today, the day after we celebrate Your birth, we confess to You how often You have come to us unwelcomed. We confess how often You have visited, yet we have been too busy to notice. We confess how often You have spoken to us, yet we have been too full of ourselves to pay attention. Change all our insensitive habits and help us to do better during this Christmas season, and throughout the coming year. Make us more sensitive to how You come to us in the ups and downs of each ordinary day, so that we may truly live in the Light of Your love. We pray in the Name of the Light of Life, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

Have you ever visited an underground cave where they turn off all the lights? Sometimes we are amazed at just how dark it really is when there is no light at all. You can't see to do anything at all—you're not even sure how far away someone is who is right next to you! The Bible compares people who don't know about Jesus to people being in a place, like a cave, that doesn't have any light at all. Without Jesus to guide them, they can't make good decisions about where to go or what to do, because they can't see what the right things to do are. But God also wants people who DO know about Jesus to help other people to have a Light—just like when the cave tour guide turns the lights back on! How can you help other people to know about Jesus in the New Year? Can you share your Light?

## MONDAY 12.27.21

## John 3:1-21

One of the unique qualities of the writings of John in the New Testament is his use of the contrast between the darkness of the world before Christ, and the Light that Jesus brings to this dark world. From the outset, in 1:4-5, John writes "In Him was life, and that life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." This week, we will look at several passages from John's writings that draw out this theme, beginning with today's reading concerning Nicodemus' visit to Jesus—notably, at night, under cover of darkness. Jesus' "verdict" in verse 19 alludes back to John's opening comments in 1:4-5 as well as in 1:9-11. The Light has penetrated the darkness, but evil people hate the Light, moving deeper into the shadows where they can continue to try to hide. Jesus is drawing a contrast between those who reject Him and those who embrace Him, in order to encourage Nicodemus to be among those who "come into the Light." He who chooses to stay "in the dark," Jesus says, "stands condemned already" (1:18).

- Given Jesus' words, what does Nicodemus' night-time visit suggest he currently believes about Jesus? Why is worshipping Jesus in secret not an option?

## WEDNESDAY 12.29.21

## John 12:19-36

Remember that in yesterday's reading, Jesus had said "I am the Light of the world." Today's passage begins with the Pharisees complaining, "the whole world has gone after Him" ... and as if to prove the point, immediately John relates the story of some Greeks (non-Jews) at the Passover Feast seeking an audience with Jesus! Notice that Philip, who they first approach with this request, seems unsure of how Jesus will respond, so he goes to tell Andrew before the two of them together approach Jesus with the Greeks' request. Will Jesus receive these Gentiles? In His response to Philip and Andrew, Jesus seemingly avoids the question. But on a deeper look, we can see that Jesus recognizes in the Greeks' seeking of Him the signs that His time on earth is nearing its conclusion. He goes on to speak of "drawing all men to Himself," when He is "lifted up from the earth." It is immediately after Palm Sunday that these events occur, so we can see in the Gentile inquiry and Jesus' self-identity as the "Light of the world" that God's plan of salvation for the whole world, through Jesus, is about to reach its fulfillment. The time for the Gentiles to seek and find God in Jesus Christ is nearing.

- Why do you think these Greeks want to see Jesus?

## TUESDAY 12.28.21

## John 9:1-7

Blindness in John's Gospel is often a metaphor for failing to see the truth about Jesus. In today's story, Jesus' disciples assume that someone must have sinned for a man to have been born blind. Declaring, "I am the Light of the world," Jesus takes the opportunity to simultaneously perform two different "enlightening" acts. The blind man, himself, is cured, receiving his physical sight, but at the same time, the disciples are cured of their theological blindness, being taught by Jesus that their pre-conceived notions assuming a close association between physical infirmity and personal sin were ill-conceived. Jesus also makes a fleeting reference to the fact that the "Light" will not always be with them—"Night is coming," a reference to Jesus' coming death. In the meantime, "as long as it is day," the disciples are encouraged to DO God's Kingdom work. The healing of the man born blind demonstrates the physical nature of this Kingdom work—helping those in need—but also serves as a metaphor for seeing the truth about Jesus. The continuation of the story in verses 8-34 clearly demonstrates that Jesus' opposition, the Pharisees, are the ones who are *really* blind, refusing to "see."

- What pre-conceived notions of your own has the Light of Jesus challenged? Are you growing more able to "see"?

## THURSDAY 12.30.21

## 1 John 1:5-10

The letter known as "1 John" was also written by the apostle John, as was the Gospel we read from for the first three days this week. Notice how John once again picks up the theme of Light versus darkness, this time stating emphatically, "God is Light; in Him there is no darkness at all." The text suggests that there may have been people around John as he wrote this letter who were claiming to be in fellowship with Christ, but whose actions gave evidence of walking in darkness, not Light. But notice also that John is not suggesting that people claim to be sinless when they are not—that is mere self-deception. He is talking about people failing to understand what living in the Light of Christian community really means—people who continue to try to hide their sins "in the dark," without bringing them forward, "into the Light," in confession. Those who have fellowship with Jesus should not 1) claim to be sinless or 2) hide their sins in the darkness. Thus, John insists, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Living in the Light of Christ includes open and honest confession of sin. Laying it out in the open is the prerequisite to having it erased.

- Why does John consider confession a necessary part of "living in the Light of Christ"? What does John expect?

