AIM

To provide some resources for meditation and prayer on the theme darkness and light

INTRODUCTION

In the northern hemisphere the autumn signals a time when the day length shortens and the nights are said to ‘draw in’. It gets darker earlier until at the mid-winter point in December the darkness is the longest part of the 24 hour day. This change in the pattern of day and night has been a part of human life for generations and a source of inspiration to Christian (and other) spirituality and prayer. As the winter approaches again you might like to spend sometime alone or in a small group, thinking about this theme, using some of the suggested Bible readings and prayers and activities to go with them.

Bible readings:

A slow and careful reading of any of these Bible passages can be a good preparation for prayer:

Genesis 1.1-5; Psalm 139:7-12; John 1:1-5

Prayers from darkness or light

Here are two very different prayers from the same writer. One is a prayer from the darkness and one is a prayer from the light. Spend some time thinking about them or discussing them in a small group or with another person.

• How do you think the writer felt when praying these prayers?
• Can you think of times when you could have prayed these prayers?

1. A PRAYER FROM THE DARKNESS

O Lord –
everything looks dark right now!
I don’t like it!
Do you realise that God –
I DON’T LIKE IT!
Do you care?
Are you there?
I’m shouting at you God,
’cos you seem miles away –
WHERE ARE YOU?
I’m stamping my feet!
I’m angry!!
I think I know you can do miracles,
but I wish I didn’t –
’cos where are they?
If you can heal –
why don’t you?
If you can speak –
why don’t you?
If you are the light of the world –
WHERE ARE YOU THIS DARKNESS?!
Oh! Don’t bother!
Get lost!
I don’t want to know!
(pause)
Did I really say that out loud?
I don’t suppose it matters –
you know what’s in my heart anyway –
so what’s the point of pretending?
Here I am God …
sad, angry and sitting in darkness …
but I’ve come …

2. A PRAYER FROM THE LIGHT

Many people find using a visual aid useful during prayer. This prayer was inspired by looking at a candle and asking God to speak in that experience.

I looked at a candle flame
I gazed at the wick alight
I wondered, “Why doesn’t the wick burn out - it’s very short?”
I realised it wasn’t the wick that was burning -
The wick just displays the flame;
It’s the wax that supplies the fuel,
It’s the wax that gets used up and keeps the flame alight.

Sometimes the wick gets too long and the flame goes mad -
Smoking, flickering, leaping – it’s rather alarming,
The wick needs cutting back,
Then the flame is steady, useful and clean.

I saw a lesson in that candle.
This is what I saw:
The flame is God’s light,
The wax is the Holy Spirit,
And the wick is me.

I am to display God’s light to the world.
I need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to do this -
Otherwise I will get burnt out,
(I need to be ‘in Christ’ like the Bible keeps saying).
Sometimes I need cutting back -
I might go haywire if left unattended.
(I don’t appreciate this at the time,
But once things have settled down again,
I realise it was necessary.)

So I asked God to help me.
And this was my prayer:
Harvest/Remembrance

dark and light

“Dear Lord
I want to display Your light -
Help me remember it’s Yours, not mine.
I want to be immersed in your Holy Spirit,
Help me remember it’s Your strength, not mine
And although I don’t really like the idea,
Help me remember that sometimes I will need trimming,
But you will always relight me!”

YOUR PRAYER

Spend some time quietly thinking about your prayer. Is it from the darkness or from the light or both? Can you, either alone or with others, put together a prayer on this theme which you might share in an act of worship during this season?

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more Harvest or Remembrance material please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

This material has been prepared by Ruth Sermon to whom copyright belongs and who has given permission for it to be used in the Vision4life process.

HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk