

BEYOND TODAY

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Prayer for God's Kingdom

Each day many request that Christ's reign comes to this earth.

When He walked the earth in human form, Jesus Christ's message was to "repent" because the Kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:14-15). The apostle Paul later explained that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Much of the New Testament elaborates on what we must do to be forgiven of our sins and receive the gift of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Your Kingdom come

Our Saviour's model prayer reveals that God's Kingdom is not yet established on the earth. When asked to teach His disciples how to pray, Jesus included in His outline: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. *Your kingdom come . . .*" (Matthew 6:9-10).

We are encouraged to prioritise God's Kingdom over preoccupation with day-to-day cares of this world (Matthew 6:31-33). Everyone will know when that Kingdom is finally inaugurated, as Christ returns visibly in the clouds and gathers His faithful followers (Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Christ will then reign in Jerusalem and set about restoring the earth, bringing peace and prosperity for all (Isaiah 11:1-9; Micah 4:1-5). His faithful followers will reign with Him (Revelation 20:6).

The earth restored

We should be mindful of the prophesied end of this present age and the commencement of the next one and pray for God to hasten that time (Matthew 24:6, 14). In addition, we can pray for the gospel to be preached without hindrance and for the effectiveness of the ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Furthermore, part of our prayers



Christ's reign will be one of peace, abundance and renewal of the earth.

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might include sighing and crying over all the abominations carried out in our age (Ezekiel 9:3-4).

Even now, those called by God already accept Christ as their King, are striving to be like Him and are subject to the laws of His Kingdom. Jesus prayed that He would be glorified in those given Him by His Father, that the Father would keep them in His name, and that they may be unified just as He and the Father are (John 17:9-11).

The peace Christ will restore to this earth will be far more than the absence of daily turbulence. Harmony will extend between all peoples and nations and even throughout the animal realm (Isaiah 11:1-10).

Today's governments, with their inability to solve problems that are rooted in humanity's reluctance to choose the right way to live (Proverbs 16:25), will be

replaced by a form of government that can at last resolve such issues. Jesus Christ Himself will rule the nations of the earth: “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15).

This is an element of the Gospel – the good news – that Jesus Christ brought. The focus of Christ’s message was the announcement of a coming world government (Luke 21:31). This government will not be ruled by selfishly motivated humans but by Jesus Christ Himself, under

the direction of the Almighty Father.

This then is what the Kingdom of God will be like. There will be real peace on earth lived as an everyday way of life as opposed to a contrived one. Let’s give thanks to God for this future and redouble our efforts in prayer as we ask for His Kingdom to come and for the peace that will permeate it.

To read more about this prophesied Kingdom, please request or download our study aids *Christ’s Reign on Earth: What It Will Be Like* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

David Fenney

Prophecies of the coming Kingdom of God

What kind of future does God have in store for planet earth? Through His prophets God reveals details of how this world will be transformed by the Kingdom of God. Notice a few prophecies about the marvellous world planned for us:

A world of unparalleled peace

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:3-4).

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

Nations will learn God’s ways

“Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD . . . He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion the law shall go forth’” (Micah 4:2).

A world of agricultural abundance

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it . . . They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them” (Amos 9:13-14).

“I will cause showers to come down in their season;

there shall be showers of blessing. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase” (Ezekiel 34:26-27).

Wastelands transformed

“Waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water” (Isaiah 35:6-7).

Wild animals’ nature transformed

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

Sickness and disease healed

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Mankind given a new heart and spirit

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them . . . that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgements and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

Jesus Christ will rule the world

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Fear of the Lord

Respect not terror

Respect seems to be something everyone wants but is often less willing or able to give. This seems especially true where God's instructions are concerned.

When found in Scripture the word “fear” often appears to evoke a whole range of human emotions, from annoyance that God would want us to be afraid of Him, to confusion as to how we can love someone of whom we are to be afraid, to indignation that God should want us to follow His instructions.

Often, however, the word “fear” signifies deep respect. Dictionary definitions for respect include a feeling of deep admiration for someone, or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements.

The apostle Paul instructed the Christians in Philippi, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3). Here Paul pinpoints the reasons that a lack of respect for others exists. It all boils down to considering oneself better, greater, wiser or more intelligent than everyone else (Romans 12:3). In other words, human pride.

Benefits of “fearing” God

Psalms 34 verses 9-11 read: “Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

The word “fear” here signifies respect, deep reverence or admiration towards God. He wants us to always consider how we should reflect Him and Jesus Christ by our actions.

The fifth commandment states “Honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). As children perhaps we sometimes found it difficult to understand our parents, especially when we were being corrected or given advice. We may have lacked proper respect during these times. In the same way, our Heavenly Father expects us to accept His decisions concerning our requests. Whether it be “Yes,” or “No,” or “Maybe,” we need to trust His judgement.

All authority originates with God

Governments and rulers of every persuasion are allowed by God, so we need to conduct ourselves with submission and respect towards them. To do otherwise is to resist the will of God, as Paul warned the Church of God in Rome: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves” (Romans 13:1-2).

The apostle Peter wrote in a similar vein in 1 Peter 2:13-17. It is likely that when he penned, “Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” in verse 17, that the “king” referenced is the Roman emperor Nero, who holds a reputation for carrying out tyrannical acts.

Fear means respect, deep reverence or admiration towards God.

We are not even to speak evil of “dignitaries” (those in authority). Christ’s half-brother Jude records that when the archangel Michael disputed with Satan, the present ruler of the world, over the body of Moses, Michael “dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” (Jude 1:8-9).

At times rulers may demand obedience that is directly contrary to the law of God as we read in Revelation 13:12, 15. Then we will need to obey God rather than men. Until that occurs, God commands that we submit to man’s ordinances, even if we don’t agree with them.

Each day we can pray that God show us how to fear Him in all that we do and to respect everyone around us. When we truly fear God, we will not be so conceited that we fail to show appropriate respect to others.

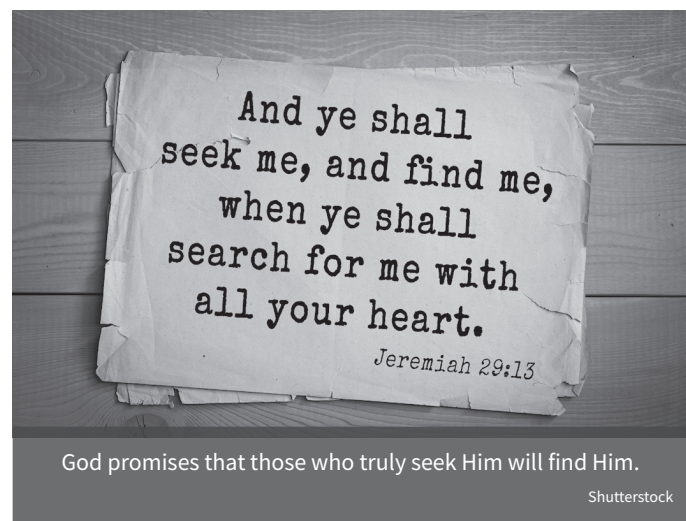
Stuart Hull

With all our heart

Is God above everything else in our lives, or do we put our own desires first?

Followers of Christ should be seeking to please Him and our Heavenly Father in everything we say, do and think.

The first commandment states, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, quoted from



Deuteronomy 6:5). This suggests a deep abiding love for God which supersedes all else.

Of first importance

Disciples must strive for a close personal relationship with our Heavenly Father, seeking to reflect the example that Jesus Christ set for us. Regular prayer, praising our great Creator and requesting a continuous supply of His Holy Spirit is a necessity.

Our calling is precious. In this age, not everyone has that blessing (John 6:44). We must be aware that we only have our understanding of God's word because God has revealed it to us. If we don't value that calling and regularly give all praise to God we can lose it.

There are tools revealed in Scripture to draw nearer to Him. These include prayer, fasting and meditating on His word. Committing to making these tools a regular part of our lives will help us maintain our calling and His Kingdom as the priority in our lives.

We would not have the promise of a future living within God's family forever without the sacrifice Jesus

Christ made on our behalf. Are we humbly seeking to serve God and follow our Saviour's example? He took all our sins upon Himself and died, shedding His blood to cover the death penalty we so justly deserve for our sins. Our whole purpose of life, the reason we were given physical life by our loving, merciful Creator is so that we become like Christ, and thereby obtain eternal life within God's family.

Pride provides an opportunity for Satan

If we can relinquish our self-will and surrender our lives totally to God, He can mould us into the image of Christ that He is seeking (2 Corinthians 3:18). If, however, we put a higher value on our own importance, opinions and attitudes, then God will be unable to have the relationship with us that He desires. We must cooperate with the process and not risk our salvation. In all matters, God's will must come first.

A high opinion of self is usually fuelled by pride. Satan recognises pride – it was the cause of his downfall (Isaiah 14:12-14) – and he will be quickly attracted to it, seeing a potential target, a weakness he can use to his advantage. The apostle Peter warned: “Be sober be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Instead of arrogance, seek humility and stay close to God, asking Him always to protect our minds from the devil. Our Father sees us when no one else is around to

In all matters, God's will must come first.

watch us. He knows our hearts and can mould us in the manner He would wish if we allow Him to. Letting go of our own self will, our own desires and turning from our sin is not easy, but if we make serving God our priority, He will guide us and shape us. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, “But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (Isaiah 64:8).

To study further, please request or download our booklet *Tools for Spiritual Growth*.

David Riddell

A promise of divine help

We need God's help, through His Spirit, to obey Him from the heart and bring our thoughts, attitudes and actions in line with His.

A cornerstone of the New Covenant is God's promise to "put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). In Ezekiel 36:26-27 He tells us how He will accomplish this: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (NIV).

If we have been baptised and have received a downpayment of God's Spirit, we must allow that Spirit to become the guiding force in our lives so that we might have this "new heart."

Divine help through God's Spirit

How does God's Spirit lead us? Let's consider a few ways.

It keeps us in contact with God's mind. God's Spirit works with our mind. The apostle John describes it this way: "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit [which] He has given us" (1 John 3:24). Through God's Spirit, which He gives us, we can be influenced by God for the good. This is in stark contrast to the world around us and our own nature, which influence us towards evil.

God's Spirit also helps us come to a deeper comprehension of His truth. When Jesus promised the apostles He would send the Spirit to them, He said it would "guide [them] into all truth" and would declare Christ's words to them (John 16:13-14). Jesus also confirmed that it would bring to their remembrance all things that He had said to them (John 14:26). Like us, they would have needed a good knowledge of Christ's teaching to be sure any instruction was of the Messiah and not their own imaginations.

God's Spirit inspires a deeper understanding of His Word, purpose and will. As 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 tells us: "But as it is written, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what

man knows the things of a man except [by] the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except [by] the Spirit of God."

Without that Spirit a person cannot fully understand God's Word and will, "for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Holy Spirit makes overcoming possible. Nothing that God asks of us is too difficult to achieve with His power working in our lives. Romans 8:26 tells us that God's Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. Paul spoke for us all when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Jesus promises Christians, "With God all things are

When Jesus promised the apostles He would send the Spirit to them, He said it would "guide [them] into all truth" (John 16:13).

possible" (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27). The Christian life is to be one of overcoming. God doesn't want us to remain just as we were when He called us. Instead, He tells us to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Christianity is a lifetime of overcoming and growing – of transforming our thoughts and mind to become like Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5).

The Spirit of God convicts our conscience and helps us see sin as it really is. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, which would be given to His followers after His death, Jesus said it would "convict the world of sin" (John 16:8). God's Spirit within us, working with our conscience, helps us to recognise and avoid sin.

The Holy Spirit produces godly fruit in us. Paul lists aspects of the fruit that should be evident in those who are led by God's Spirit as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV).

The Spirit of God also comforts, encourages and

otherwise helps us. Jesus Christ promised to send His followers a “Helper” (John 14:16) or “Comforter” (KJV). True reassurance and strength come from God’s Spirit dwelling within us. We need not be unduly worried about what may happen to us. God’s Spirit gives us the assurance that whatever happens will work for good “to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Growing to spiritual maturity

Correctly understanding the scriptural truth that the Holy Spirit is God’s power that can transform our lives helps us to understand His purpose and will for us.

It is also a key to understanding the whole purpose and intent of the New Covenant. God did not establish the New Covenant to abolish His laws, which are holy, just and good (Romans 7:12). He established it to remedy the flaw that was in the people (Hebrews 8:8) – the weakness,

disobedience and lack of faith inherent in all of us that leads us to sin (Romans 3:10-18). Through His Spirit, God empowers us to develop holy, righteous character and resist temptation and the pulls to sin.

With God’s Spirit at work within us, God’s wonderful promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:33-34 can be fulfilled: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

To investigate this topic further, please request or download our Bible study aids *The Power of the Holy Spirit* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

You may also be interested in *What You Need to Know About Baptism*.

Not what it used to be

*Seeing a deteriorating world around us can make us nostalgic for the past.
But was life really any better back then?*

Wistfully looking back to former glories has always been a tendency of the English. Maybe it occurs in other nationalities too. Yet a realistic assessment of the past often reveals many disasters, errors of judgement and missed opportunities. Whether it’s memories of better weather, idyllic holidays or safer streets, there were other issues such as war, or smog, or fatal diseases. The book of Ecclesiastes advises: “Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For you do not inquire wisely concerning this” (Ecclesiastes 7:10).

Ancient Israel had this nostalgic view when looking back at their time of slavery. After God freed them from Egypt and provided food for them in the wilderness, they cried: “We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!” (Numbers 11:5-6).

Looking backwards or looking forwards

The apostle Paul counsels: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting

those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

Whilst we should not dwell on past sins once we have repented of them and are living a changed life in Christ, forgetting the lessons learned is not wise. Philosopher George Santayana wrote in 1905 that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The Bible is replete with examples of past events from which we are admonished to learn (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

We have all sinned, but upon genuine repentance, baptised Christians can look forward to God’s glorious Kingdom on earth. Revelation 5:9-10 says of Christ “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

That is the destiny of the redeemed in Christ – eternal life in the family of God.

To study further please request our booklet *Why Were You Born?*

Philip Perry



Adam's line through Seth. Like the angels, Adam was a "son of God" by creation (compare Luke 3:38). Of this family line through Seth it is stated, "Then men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26), which could also be rendered "... began to be called after the name of the Lord." In the next chapter, Genesis 6, we see "the sons of God" (men of Seth's godly line in this explanation) intermarrying with "the daughters of men" (women of Cain's ungodly line).

An alternative is to translate "sons of God" as "sons of the gods," as the Hebrew word *elohim* is plural and can refer to false gods instead of the true God. In this explanation, wicked men forcibly "took" innocent women as wives – an example maybe of their evil conduct.

Human beings were the problem, not angels. God says, "My Spirit shall not strive *with man* forever" (Genesis 6:3) and "I will destroy *man* whom I have created from the face of the earth" (verse 7). Thus, the "giants" must have been human also, descendants of Adam and Eve.

It is possible that the word translated "giants" here, *nephilim* – from a root meaning to fall or make to fall – could refer to tyrants. But the word is used of people of giant stature later in Numbers 13:33.

So the very powerful, and possibly very tall, people of Genesis 6 were destroyed in the Flood. But there would be other giants later on, who were descended, just as everyone else in the post-Flood world, from Noah – not from angels (compare Deuteronomy 2:20-21; 3:11). Consider Goliath, whom David slew. He was more than nine feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4). But he was still just a man (verses 24-25, 33) – not some human-demonic hybrid.

Let the Bible answer...

What does the Bible say about purity?

The pure in heart will be blessed: Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5.

Our conscience must be pure: 1 Timothy 3:9.

Our words reveal our hearts whether pure or defiled: Matthew 12:34-35; 15:18-20.

God can make us clean through our repentance and baptism: Proverbs 30:12; Hebrews 10:22.

We are to keep ourselves pure and avoid sin: 1 Timothy 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:2-3.

God is purifying a people for Himself: Daniel 12:9-10; Acts 15:7-9; Titus 2:11-14.

Q Did angels interbreed with women to produce giants? Genesis 6:1-4 seems to indicate this.

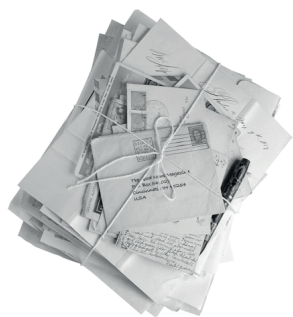
FAQ

A Genesis 6 tells us that in the days before Noah's Flood: "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose . . . There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" (verses 1-2, 4).

Some have taught that this refers to fallen angels interbreeding with human women to produce half-demon giants. *Halley's Bible Handbook* gives two possible explanations: Firstly, that "the 'sons of God' are thought to have been . . . fallen angels" or secondly that they were "leaders in Sethite families [those descended from Adam's son Seth] who intermarried with godless descendants of [Adam's son] Cain" (25th ed, 2000, p. 96).

The first suggestion is not possible. Whilst angels are referred to as "sons of God" in Job 38:7 because God is their "Father" through creation, angels are spirit beings, not fleshly creatures. They neither marry nor sexually reproduce (Matthew 22:30). To teach otherwise would violate the statements in Genesis 1 that each living species reproduces only "according to its kind." The risen Jesus explained that fallen angels, or demons, cannot manifest themselves materially as He and the righteous angels can (Luke 24:39). In Scripture demons either possess individuals or appear as ghostly apparitions.

The second explanation given by Halley is more realistic. Genesis 4 gives the account of Cain and Abel and the genealogical descent from Cain. Genesis 5 is called "the book of the genealogy of Adam" (verse 1) and continues



Letters From Our Readers

Helpful publications

Thank you so much for your magazine. Whether I agree or disagree, it is always informative.

Reader in Essex

It's nice to read something sensible.

Reader in Colchester

Thank you for your *Beyond Today* booklets. I find them very informative.

Reader in Ireland

Thank you for your magazine and Supplements which I find very interesting and eye-opening, as some things I did not know. I look forward to receiving the *Bible Study Course*.

Reader in Southampton

Thank you so much for these helpful booklets. They are very insightful and offer a clear explanation/interpretation of some very difficult passages in the Bible. They are a great source of guidance and encourage-

ment during these unrestful times. I look forward to reading about *God's Holy Day Plan* and the *Sabbath Rest*.

Reader in Norfolk

Taking the next step

Thank you for your magazines every month. I recently lost my husband and I find your stories and information really interesting and comforting. I have decided to be baptised again in September.

Reader in Wolverhampton

Editor's comment: Our condolences for your loss. We are pleased to hear you are considering baptism and hope you found our booklet What You Need to Know About Baptism helpful.

I am finding it difficult to attend a Sabbath fellowship. Do you have live face-to-face Sabbath meetings in Watford?

Reader in Northwood

Editor's comment: Your details have been passed to the local contact in your area.

May I please request prayer for estrangement from my three adult children? I am in alcohol recovery but they don't forgive. I'm 64 years old and in poor health. I have been a Christian for five years.

Name and address supplied

Editor's comment: Whilst we can and do pray for those requesting help, we always encourage individuals to establish his or her own deep relationship with God. To this end we recommend reading "The Privilege and Power of Prayer" chapter in our booklet Tools for Spiritual Growth.

For help with alcohol recovery and the legacy of an alcohol problem readers may be interested in our study aid Overcoming Alcoholism: There is Hope!

Our literature can be downloaded from our website at www.ucg.org or requested from the address at the bottom of the front page.

How you can help

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Jesus Christ instructed His disciples that as they had freely received they were to freely give (Matthew

10:8), so we supply our literature free of charge, making Christ's message available to all. Our gratitude goes to those who assist financially in this aspect of the Church's work.

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