

# December 2021 Prayer News

## PRAYER TOPICS FOR THE MONTH

**This month pray that you stop striving for grace and begin striving in grace**

Week start	Prayer topic
5 Dec	Remember in prayer a culture like ours that does not want to know about the coming of the Christ-child, yet so desperately needs to know and experience the love, joy and peace that Christ alone can bring to their empty lives. Honour him.
12 Dec	Pray to be light and to bring the Light of the world to the people who sit in darkness around you amidst the flashing lights and tinsel decorations.
19 Dec	Rejoice and celebrate the coming of the Saviour into the world—but prayerfully remember those for whom this season brings sorrow and hardship, and those who cannot afford to mark his coming.
26 Dec	You have received much—food, gifts, friendship and love. Now give to those who are without what you have and pray that they may receive a bounty of good things from Christ Jesus through you.

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with your prayer news for next month

## *The Season's Grace*

What can we say new about Christmas? A teenage girl having a baby; about shepherds, angels, a manger, wise men and a wicked king. However, we could look more closely at something we might have just missed or forgotten.

We may not admit it openly, but so often we're looking for a formula that ensures our "arrival." We want a fix for the fear of not getting it right. We want to know what we can do to ensure we hit the mark. So we live worn out, fearful, and anxiously striving lives—lacking and unable to measure up.

We're in a culture that is obsessed with measuring achievement and striving to control the results—the approval ratings, or our sense of belonging. We're stuck on the hamster wheel of striving in our own

strength, when we were created for so much more.

Why do we live as if we are lacking resources, time, achievement, clarity, purpose, energy, confidence, or acceptance and welcome from a holy God? Why do we live as if we are unable to measure up as friends, as colleagues at work, as parents, as husbands or wives, as daughters or sons, or as Christ's followers?

It surely means that we have forgotten the significance of what Christmas is pointing out to us. Of course, there again, we may be insecure—how inadequate our decorations are; not enough lights on the house; or the need to spend more on presents than we can really afford so that we can be seen to be giving better than anyone else, or providing more food that

no one will eat, because certain relatives are coming and we don't want to be outshone. What would they think of us? We are more anxious, overwhelmed, and weighed down than ever at Christmas.

### Striving in Our Own Strength

We continue reaching for formulas for success, strategies for life's direction, or for the feel-good pep talks that we think must be the fix for our feelings of inadequacy. But God has given us a better way.

What actually changed everything from triteness was the coming of God into the world—into our mucky, twisted world. His coming changes all the ways we can feel discouraged. Yet we downplay the grace that sent him to come to us, instead we want to lean back on ourselves.

Look again at that outlandish claim of the gospel—that Jesus accomplishes what we can't! We think of him as less than sufficient to transform and change our lives, to give them meaning and worth. We figure we must add something to his grace.

### True Means for Change

As good Reformed Protestants we might

not say we believe in Jesus plus our efforts, but when we rest in our performance (or lack of it), we're not relying on the grace of God. We're worshipping the gospel of self-reliance. Self-reliance is something we can control, manipulate, and measure according to our efforts. Grace, on the other hand, is counter-cultural with its rejection of self-sufficiency and its relinquishing of power.

The amazing grace of God is that he fulfilled his own standards on our behalf through the finished work of Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection. The result of Christ's redemptive work was that we'd be made wholly fit for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, enabling us to no longer work to gain access to the Father—but to be children, trained and equipped to do as he instructs.

Whether we recognise it or not, our culture is sadly intoxicated with the lure of self-reliance, even for those who claim to represent the gospel of Christ. We say we trust that Jesus is enough, but we spend our lives trying to prove that we are. We end up substituting self-help and formulas for our true means for change: the transforming

grace of God. What wears you out today? Is it impossible standards? The comparison? The baggage of trying your best and it not being “good enough”?

It's easy to fall into a pattern of striving for grace rather than striving in grace. Grace makes it possible for you to stop striving for yourself and to strive out of love for God instead.

Grace isn't an excuse to be lazy or apathetic about the marks of a Christian life; it's the catalyst by which we can partake in it. Your loving Father has good work for you to do when you stop striving to produce the fruit on your own (Ephesians. 2:8–10). Grace really does fuel what striving cannot.

## A New Life Resolution

**In this season resolve to stop striving for grace but to strive in grace in the future ahead of you.**

*Have a blessed Christmas and  
a peaceful New Year*