FAMILY PRAYERS

FOR CHRISTMAS THROUGH NEW YEAR

FESTIVE AND MEAL EVENTS IN THE CYCLE OF LIGHT

For Christmas Eve, Christmas Morning, Christmas Dinner and New Year



BY DAN WILT



Welcome To Family Prayers

For Festive And Meal Events In The Cycle Of Light
Christmas Through New Years Day

Did you ever wish you had just the right prayers and readings for those special family moments during the Christmas holidays? In the best traditions of praying at meals, during special events and during sacred, holy seasons, *Family Prayers* brings you words for table (meal) prayers and the powerful worship moments your family celebrates all year.

The following collection of family prayers is built around the Christmas holiday season, and is designed to welcome adults of any age, as well as children, into a meaningful reflection on the event. This series of prayers includes:

- ***Hear The Angels Sing:*** A Christmas Eve Family Prayer (responsive)
- ***Christmas Morning Is Here:*** A Christmas Morning Family Prayer (responsive)
- ***Lord Immanuel, God Is With Us:*** A Family Table Prayer for The Christmas Meal (responsive)
- ***With You, We Walk:*** A Family Table Prayer For New Year's Eve or Morning

Bonus material also included:

- Lyrics to ***O Come All Ye Faithful*** and ***Joy To The World*** *(for optional use with prayers), and*
- ***The Christmas Story:*** *Ordered and Selected Readings for Reading Through The Christmas Story*

My goal in creating these prayers and readings for you is simple. Out of years of praying with my own family during the very special season of Christmas, which is a part of the Cycle of Light in the Christian Worship Year, I had a felt need to create prayers that "worked" for us through the holidays.

While we can spontaneously pray as well, these prayers are meant to be rich with meaning, encouragement and rich theological teaching as you pray through Christmas Eve, Christmas Morning, the Christmas Meal and New Year's Eve/Day. Our prayer, is that these enrich your family's holiday worship experience for years to come.

Dan Wilt, M.Min.



O Hear The Angel Voices

The Christmas Eve Family Prayer

Celebrant: Tonight we give thanks for the day that is tomorrow!
Family (and friends): *Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains!*

Celebrant: On this Christmas eve, we offer worship from our hearts, and thanks from our lips.
Family (and friends): *And the mountains in reply, echo back their joyous strains.*

Celebrant: Tonight Lord, as we consider again the most important event in all of human history, your advent among us as Jesus our Lord and Christ, we are filled with songs of praise.
Family (and friends): *Gloria in Excelsis Deo; glory to God in the Highest.*

Celebrant: We are filled with appreciation that we are never alone, because You came to us, You pursued us, You found each one of us. Now, you live within us by Your Spirit.
Family (and friends): *Gloria in Excelsis Deo; glory to God in the Highest.*

Celebrant: Let's join hands *(all join hands)*. Lord Jesus, on this Christmas Eve, our joy is made complete by knowing that you look into each one of our lives, imperfect as they are, and You bring transformation by your Spirit within. May we become people who "shine like stars in the heavens," declaring Your goodness and Your faithfulness in the world you so love.

On this Christmas Eve, we join in the song of the angels that glorious night, and say,

ALL: Fall on your knees
O hear the angel voices;
O night divine, O night when Christ was born.
His power and glory we evermore proclaim.

Amen.

(optional: sing first verse of O Come, All Ye Faithful*)*

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O Come All Ye Faithful

(Words: John Wade, 1743, trans. by Frederick Oakeley, 1841 and William Brooke; Music: Adeste Fidelis, att. to John Wade, John Reading or Simao Portogallo)

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;

Refrain

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

(optional verses for Christmas Eve)

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

Refrain

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

Refrain

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Christmas Morning Is Here

The Christmas Morning Family Prayer For Around The Tree

Celebrant: Christmas morning is here!
Family (and friends): *Joy to the World! The Lord has come!*

Celebrant: We've been waiting all year, and here it is!
Family (and friends): *Joy to the World! The Lord has come!*

Celebrant: Let's pray. Lord, the lights on this tree, and the shining decorations, remind us that Your love for us is higher than the stars beyond us, and more radiant than all that glitters in this beautiful world.
Family (and friends): *Joy to the World! The Lord has come!*

Celebrant: The gifts under this tree, and the love that went into picking each one, remind us of the greatest gift we have ever received at Christmas - Your presence with us, Jesus our Immanuel.
Family (and friends): *Joy to the World! The Lord has come!*

Celebrant: The family (and friends) gatherered around this tree, and the stories we share together, remind us that You have been faithful to us for generations – and You will be faithful for generations to come.
Family (and friends): *Joy to the World! The Lord has come!*

Celebrant: Let's join hands *(all join hands)*. Lord Jesus, because of Christmas, we can be made new by Your Spirit who lives in us. You are the reason we give these gifts, and You are the reason we live our lives. May this Christmas Day remind us of all You have given; we give you on the day of Your earthly birth, the best gift we can give - our lives.

In Jesus name, our Immanuel, we say,

ALL: Joy To The World! The Lord has come!

(If desired, insert singing of the first verse of *Joy To The World*.)

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Joy To The World

(Words: Isaac Watts, 1719, based on Psalm 98;
Music: Lowell Mason, 1839)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

(optional verses for Christmas Morning)

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

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Lord Immanuel, God With Us

A Family Table Prayer For The Christmas Meal

Lord Immanuel, God with us,

We come to you with grateful hearts for this meal that we are about to eat.
It is a reminder of the Feast of Love that awaits us when Your Kingdom comes
In all its fullness at the completion of time.

We worship you today, Jesus, for being the Word of God, in our midst.
"In the beginning," the Apostle John said,
"Was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
Through you all things were made, things visible and invisible,
Nothing was made without You, and in You all things live and move and have their being.

You give meaning to our lives, Lord Immanuel, God with us.
You give purpose to each minute,
And for this we are truly grateful.

By becoming flesh, by dwelling among us, by living Your life in our midst,
We have seen You, touched You, and learned from You what it means to be human.

Lord Immanuel, God with us,
To Your great glory and honor we raise our glass to
Toast Your coming among us,
To celebrate this feast before us,
And to look forward to the Great Feast that is to come – when you return to
Heal and restore; to bring justice and true shalom peace on the earth.

For Your Love, for Your Life, for Your Spirit in our midst, we give thanks.
For this meal, we are very, very grateful.

In Jesus' All-Powerful Name, we come. Amen.

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The Christmas Story

Ordered Reading Selections To Take You and Yours Through The Christmas Story

Reading through the Christmas Story is a wonderful way to remember what the holiday season is all about, and to connect all family members with the heartbeat of God's initiative in sending Jesus to us in the Incarnation.

These verses, in this order, provide a way of reading through various Gospels accounts related to the Christmas story in a way that feels like it flows together as one story. Details are given beside each set of verses for you to mix and match the story in a way that you would prefer to read it.

One suggestion: Have family members, in a male/female order, read the verses. Then conclude with a prayer.

Luke 1:26-38

(The Angel visits Mary, Mary's response, the Magnificat - Mary's song of worship)

Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-7

(Matthew: The engagement, Joseph's dream, and the birth of Jesus; Luke: Census and birth short narrative)

Luke 2:8-20

(The Shepherds see the Angelic Host)

Matthew 2:1-12

(The Wise Men come from the East)

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With You, We Walk

A Family Table Prayer For New Year's Eve or Morning

Another year has turned its page, O Lord.
We feel promises about to be fulfilled, hopes that may be realized,
And sorrows unknown – that may become ours to bear.

All of this, we carry into a New Year.

We declare at the doorway into this year, that our trust is not in any man or woman to fulfill us,
Nor is our trust in circumstance, or a belief that the days ahead will be easy.
We do not expect, in this New Year, for our every prayer to be answered in a way we would like.
You are in control, and we release our lives to you.

We put our trust in this:
That You who have been with us through this past year, Immanuel,
Will be with us in this New Year.

It is in You, Immanuel, we trust.
If you go ahead of us, we will go; if you go behind us, we will go.
If you will lead us in a cloud by day, and if you will light the night and its shadows with Your fire,
we will faithfully follow.

This is our prayer: In all things that happen this year we ask
That we would be aware of Your presence, O Lord.
In this walk that will always be by faith and not by sight, let us percieve Your nearness.

We will stumble and fall, and we will also succeed and triumph. We will laugh, and we will also weep.
But in those moments in which we cannot sense You near,
Let us see with the eyes of faith the marks of Your presence all around us, beneath us,
Carrying us boldly into Your future.

With You we walk, with confidence and trust, into this New Year.
Amen.

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