



Christmas. I would think that the ideal Christmas for all of us would include quite a number of the following:- Time off work, money in the bank, all bills paid, time with members of the family not normally seen, food on the table and heating.



As we lived on a poultry smallholding, the three days before Christmas were manic, with feathers everywhere and poultry all over the place in various stages of readiness. By Christmas Eve

the 'Christmas dinners' were all wrapped and labelled with a name and a price ready for Dad to deliver.



As we were a large family, Christmas Eve was a day of anticipation and expectation. We were each given one of Dad's socks, with Mam ingeniously keeping back one of each pair in readiness for a quick exchange at the appropriate time. As the family grew this sometimes must have caused quite a problem remembering who had been given which sock and on more than one occasion the one that was there at the bottom of my bed on Christmas morning did not seem to be the same one that I had previously placed there. There was also the year when I had a sock with a hole in, with the hole miraculously disappearing by Christmas Day!



The evening of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were spent in the much under-used parlour. There was a lovely fire, box of chocolates, Dad with the nut crackers and of course, the inevitable box of sticky dates. Like many others, ours was not a church-going family and 'Jesus' did not form part of the conversations; however, I have always felt that at Christmas time there is a general aura of God's presence and peace everywhere.

#####

I think it is appropriate for us to think of a different sort of peace at the current time; that of peace between nations. There are a number of conflicts taking place in various parts of the world which are causing situations that are far from peaceful. Perhaps you would like to think of a conflict that is of particular concern to you. Saying prayers may not be part of your normal style of life, but maybe this Christmas would be a good time to change that.

Here are some suggestions about which we could be praying:-

The leaders of BOTH sides of the conflict. Ask God to touch their hearts so that a peaceful solution may be found. These are very powerful men who have the lives of thousands of people in their hands. Some of these wars have been taking place on and off for years. We may see glimpses on our televisions of

what is taking place now, but we are often not aware of the basic cause of the animosity, sometimes going back for years, about land ownership.

The men fighting. For some of these men it is their choice, but others may not be given any option. Men from both sides are being killed or are receiving life-changing injuries.

The families. Families are being left without husbands/parents/children. Any war is devastating for families whose loved ones have been killed. In addition to this, many families have lost their homes and everything that they possess.

Nuclear weapons. Pray earnestly that these will not be used. Gone are the days when two groups of men line up against each other to fight. These weapons are capable of wiping out large numbers of people indiscriminately at the touch of a button. Technology is excellent when used for good, but unfortunately, it can also be used to gain power and control, regardless of the suffering and death that may be caused.

Unity of nations. At present peace is very precariously balanced. None of us wish to see a World War III. Nations getting involved in wars between other nations can easily upset the balance. Ask God to give wisdom to the leaders of each nation, especially those that are dominant as regards power and authority.

Thanks. Remember to thank God for hearing your prayers. He hears **EVERY** prayer that is thought or spoken. You may never know the result of your prayers, but every prayer makes a difference in some way to an individual, a family or a leader. In a game of football, only one man's foot kicks the ball into goal but it is the effort of the whole team that enables him to do that. Prayer is also a team effort. You may be one of millions saying the same prayer, but, it could be your little bit that kicks the ball into the net and brings about the end of a conflict.

We each want a peaceful Christmas. Let us not limit that desire for peace to ourselves and our own families but earnestly pray for a worldwide peace.

PEACE

John 14: 27 Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you."

Romans 14: 19 'Let us pursue what makes for peace.'

Colossians 4: 2 'Continue steadfastly in prayer.'

