



# Christ our Light: Praying with Rembrandt's Etchings of the Life of Christ

*Anne Margot Boyd*

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Fifteen etchings from the life of Christ by the incomparable Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69), with a commentary highlighting each scene's religious significance.

When Rembrandt was a young artist in 17th-century Holland, paintings and statues had been removed from Protestant churches. But people still desired to see Jesus. They wanted pictures of the life of Christ in their Bibles and prayer books and to hang on their walls at home. Rembrandt was working in a long tradition of Eastern and Western Christian artists who made images of Jesus that reveal him as Emmanuel, as God with us. They are not trying to depict God?impossible!?!or simply show the human side of Jesus. Rather, they show us a human life radiating the light and force, the energy, of God. When an artist approaches the making of an image of Jesus in a spirit of prayer and reverence, as Rembrandt seems to have done, the result is an image that invites us to open ourselves to God's action. Such an invitation?to let God transform us through the contemplation of a prayerful image?is similar to opening ourselves to the word of God in slow, meditative reading of the Bible. In using visual images in prayer, the "viewer" takes the opportunity to pause and to ruminate, exploring the depths of the image, so that heart speaks to heart in silent communion.

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