

WITH ONE HEART & VOICE

a people who pray together

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” [Romans 15.5-6]

We hope this series of studies will help us get to grips with the principles behind corporate prayer, and then discern together how best they may be worked out among us here in practice. You'll find the background to the series [here](#).

No pressure!

Please don't feel any pressure to answer *every* question in your Community Group! I've stuck with the pattern of there being 7 (sets of) questions, as much as anything to provide a set of daily study notes for those who find it helpful to work their way through the passage like that. The time you have in a Community Group is limited and inevitably, therefore, you may need to be selective in which questions you look at.

Priorities!

You'll know your own group, so use what you'll find most helpful. Key questions for us all as a fellowship this week are probably questions 6 & 7, so do aim to cover at least these in the time that you have: and again please feed back any insights which would seem to be of benefit to us all!

Prayer!

Do try also to make a point in your Community Group of leaving time for praying together!

3. “.. may they also be in Us ..” (John 17.1-26)

[week beginning Sunday 6th November]

This chapter of Scripture has often been called ‘the holy of holies’ – our great High Priest at prayer on our behalf, and pouring out His heart before the throne. If there’s anywhere in Scripture, therefore, where we’d do well to take off our metaphorical shoes, it’s here! Be careful, then, to approach this passage with due reverence, wonder, and awe: not as camera-laden tourists, intent on a few impressive snapshots, but as faithful, foot-sore pilgrims, intent on encountering God.

And while, of course, the passage is a fruitful field of study in the grace of prayer itself, both the **context** (Jesus prayed both for and *with* His disciples), and the **content** (He prayed for a oneness among them akin to the one-ness which the Father and the Son enjoy) are instructive on the theme of *corporate* prayer.

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1. **Read the whole of John 17...** slowly! This is the culmination of the final evening which Jesus spent with His friends in the upper room. He knew what was coming: not only what He would be having to bear, but what they, too, would face. At this critical time He both joined them and led them in prayer.

At a time of crisis or trial in your life, how does it help to have someone else pray with you and for you?

Have you ever prayed with and for someone else in their time of trial? What did you find hard about it?

2. **Read vv.1-5.** The gift which God purposed to give to His people is described in terms of *relationship*: eternal life is knowing this God of glory.

How many words and phrases can you see in these verses which in one way or another are *relational*?

How would you describe the difference between knowing about a person, and knowing that person?

3. **Read vv.6-8.** In these few verses the work which Jesus came into the world to accomplish is rehearsed before the Father.

What two things does Jesus say He has done for His disciples? In what ways can these be seen as *relational* in their intent?

What does Jesus say has been the result of what He has done in the lives of His disciples?

4. **Read vv.9-12.** These verses show us Jesus praying for His first disciples. It's instructive to see that He does not pray in merely general terms, but is specific in terms of what He requests.

Think about your own praying. What can make it hard to be specific in the requests which you make for others?

What specific request(s) does Jesus make for them? And why do you think this is the burden of His praying?

When Jesus speaks of their being 'one as we are one' (v.11), in what do you think that 'oneness' between the Father and the Son consists?

5. Read vv.13-19. Jesus' disciples are not *of* this world, but they remain still *in* the world: He clearly recognized that this is not an easy balance to maintain!

Why and against what will the disciples of Jesus need to be protected? And how did Jesus envisage that protection being given?

How might this inform our praying for one another – and indeed for fellow Christians?

6. Read vv.20-26. This is Jesus' prayer for us ("*those who will believe in Me through their [the apostles'] message*"). His single prayer is for the 'oneness' of His people.

How many times through these four verses does Jesus express His prayer for the 'oneness' of His people?

Why does it matter so much to Jesus that there is this 'oneness' between and among His people?

7. **Read v.21.** The 'oneness' which Jesus prays for among His people is both *likened to*, and *incorporated into*, that between the Father and the Son.

How, then, would you describe that 'oneness' between Father and Son?

And why will our praying together, therefore, become the fullest outward expression of the prayer of Jesus being answered?