

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](#).

Priorities!

Although this week our study centres on a really short psalm (3 verses), I’ve continued the pattern of there being 7 (sets of) questions, in the hope that for those who find it helpful to work their way through the passage on a day-by-day basis this will be a help. The time you have in a Community Group, of course, is limited and almost certainly, therefore, you will need to be selective in which questions you look at.

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 3, 6 & 7, so do aim to cover at least these in the time that you have:** and as ever 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!

4. “.. there the Lord bestows His blessing ..”

(Psalm 133)

[week beginning Sunday 13th November]

This may be a short psalm, but it repays extended reflection; and although it may also be a simple, uncomplicated psalm, it reveals vital depths of biblical truth.

Studying this psalm should prove both challenging and encouraging. It will be challenging not so much in terms of our *understanding* what it is saying, as in our *applying* its truth to our lives. And it will be encouraging, hopefully, in terms of the huge incentive it gives for embracing that challenge, and through our seeing what it may have to teach us about *corporate prayer*.

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1. **Read the whole psalm.** It's a short read, so read it through a few times; as a spiritual discipline try and memorise it all!

Can you read the whole psalm without looking at the text?

How, in a single sentence, would you summarise the message or lesson of the psalm?

2. **Look at v.1.** The original Hebrew (אֶחָיוֹם) is more suggestive of a strong relational bond (literally, “*brothers*”) than the rather general phrase (“*God’s people*”) which is used in recent versions of the NIV.

Read 1 Peter 1.1-3, & 23. How is that emphatically *family* bond created in our lives as followers of Jesus?

What was *your* own experience of being brought into the family of God?

3. **Read Psalm 147.1-3** along with v.1 of Ps.133. In some ways these opening verses of Psalm 147 are an expanded version of Psalm 133.1.

How many verbal or thematic similarities can you identify between these parts of the two psalms?

Ps.147.2-3 highlight the Lord's work in our 'dwelling together in unity'. Look at the four verbs used of the Lord in these two verses: what insights do they offer in helping us dwell with one another in unity?

Read Eph.4.1-6. Paul's call to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' complements Ps.147.2-3: alongside all that the Lord does (Ps.147), what four actions does Paul exhort us to take? And why is it so vital to foster them in our fellowship?

4. Continue to **look at v.1.** The Hebrew uses an adverb (יחד) near the end of the verse, whose force is to intensify the word which follows – in this case the word "together" (hence the "together *in unity*" of our translations]: it's the 'togetherness' which is being given some considerable stress.

If our 'togetherness' clearly has real significance, how do you think the psalmist envisaged that being given expression?

And in what ways might that sort of 'togetherness' show itself in our own life as a fellowship of believers here at Gilcomston?

5. **Read vv.2-3a.** The psalmist uses two 'similes' to illustrate how 'good' and 'pleasant' such 'dwelling (really) together' is.

Read Exodus 30.22-33 to get some background on the first illustration: what do you think David was wanting to convey and underline by this first 'picture'?

Mount Hermon is a mountain cluster about 100 miles north of, and a good deal (c.10 times) higher than, Mount Zion. How does this 'picture' reinforce the previous one? And what important truth(s) does it help bring out?

6. **Look at v.3b.** Having been given two *illustrations*, here we are now given the *explanation*, of just why our 'dwelling together in unity' is so 'good' and 'pleasant'.

What do you think that blessing of 'life for evermore' includes?

The Hebrew (צִוֶּה) indicates that God "*commanded*" His blessing. In what ways does this statement encourage your heart, challenge your living, and inform your praying?

7. Read the whole Psalm again. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit 'dwell (in an intensively real and relational way) together', so those born into the family of God, will aspire to that 'life' of 'dwelling-togetherness'.

Why can our learning, as a fellowship of God's people, to share in corporate prayer be seen as an important expression of our 'dwelling together in unity'?

What specific practical steps (if any!) has reading and reflecting on this short psalm prompted you now to take?