

# 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!**

The passage for study this week is again short. The same pattern remains, with 7 (sets of) questions, in the knowledge that some find it helpful to work their way through the passage on a day-by-day basis. 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 as ever use what you’ll find most helpful. **Given that the concern through this series of studies is to think about our *praying together*, it will probably be most helpful in this study to be aiming to cover at least questions 2, 4 & 7:** 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!

## 5. “.. let us not give up meeting together ..” (Hebrews 10.19-25)

[week beginning Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November]

The letter to the Hebrews was addressed to Christians who, in the face of increasing persecution, were tempted to ease back on their commitment to Jesus. Key to the encouragement which the writer sought to give is his stress on the ‘superiority’ of Jesus –in terms both of who He is and of what He has secured for us.

*Think what you’d be losing if you ‘shrink back’ from following Jesus!* That’s his point: pretty much everything of any lasting value would be lost. And not least among the privileges and blessings secured for us by Jesus, he makes clear, is the ‘access’ we have to Almighty God: the theme of prayer (whereby we enjoy and use this ‘access’) is an undercurrent running through the whole letter.

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1. **Read Heb.10.19-25.** The writer envisages followers of Jesus living out a communal life and together ‘drawing near’ to God.

Have there been particular times over the past week or so when you have felt very near to God in prayer?

What has made it hard for you to ‘draw near’ to God, or to feel that you have indeed ‘drawn near’ to God?

2. **Read Heb.10.19-25.** Although this is a short passage, it is (like much of the letter) full of exhortation.

Try setting out the 5 exhortations which the writer addresses to his readers here as 5 'bullet points'?

What common tendencies in us do you think they are intended to counter?

3. **Read Heb.4.14-16** along with **vv.19-20** of Heb.10. These two short passages highlight the basis on which we are able to 'get close' to God in prayer.

By referring to these two passages why, according to the writer, can we 'have confidence' (or literally 'boldness in speaking') in approaching God in prayer?

How does the writer describe prayer in chapter 4, as compared with the way he describes it in these two verses in chapter 10 (vv.19-20)? Which do you find more helpful? And why?

4. **Read Heb.10.21-22.** Here the basic exhortation to 'draw near to God' is spelled out for us, with a simple statement of *why we can* (v.21), and *how we should*, draw near to Him (v.22)

In v.22 what are set out as important features about the way we draw near to God?

How can we ensure that this, indeed, is how we approach God? And why do these things make a difference?

5. **Read Heb.10.23.** Hope is one of the three distinctive marks of the followers of Jesus: read **Heb.10.34-39, 11.8-10, 13-16, 24-26, 39-40, and 12.28** to catch a flavor of this later in the letter. Such 'hope', and hopefulness, will always inform our praying.

How would you describe the 'hope we profess' to which the writer is alluding?

Why are we able to hold 'unswervingly' to the 'hope' we have? And how does this help our praying?

6. **Read Heb.10.24-25.** The exhortation to ensure we are 'meeting together' is sandwiched between exhortations to 'spur one another on' and 'encourage one another'.

This is more than 'pat on the back' encouragement: it has a clear aim and focus. What is the intended outcome of such encouragement?

And how do you think we can most helpfully 'spur one another on' and encourage each other in this way?

7. **Read Heb.10.19-25.** Try in your thinking to start from a 'blank canvas' in looking at the passage as a whole and applying its lessons to our meeting together (in one way or another) to pray.

In 'meeting together' to draw near to God, how might such a gathering best reflect these different ends –

- the expectancy and hopefulness to which allusion is made in v.23?
- the encouragement and support to which reference is made in vv.24 & 25?
- the urgency and solemnity inherent in the prospect of 'the Day' mentioned in v.25?

What form could you envisage such a gathering taking to secure those ends?