

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. **Although there is (hopefully!) benefit from looking at each of the questions, it’ll be important for us as a fellowship all to be thinking through questions 4 & 5:** 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!

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6. “.. let us go at once to entreat the LORD ..” (Zechariah 8.20-23)

[week beginning Sunday 27th November]

This short passage was the foundational text for a hugely influential little book by Jonathan Edwards (1747) entitled – “**An Humble Attempt to promote an explicit agreement and visible union of God’s people through the world, in extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom on earth, pursuant to Scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time**” [this is the snappier, shorter title: the full title is 145 words long) (it’s obtainable on Kindle for £1.99)

Along with the prophet Haggai, Zechariah prophesied (c.570 BC) to the exiles who had returned from exile to Jerusalem

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1. **Read Zech.8.20-23.** “The biblical emphasis on prayer is primarily corporate in nature. ... About 90 per cent of what Scripture teaches on prayer comes down where (Jonathan) Edwards came down – it’s about concerted prayer.”

Does this statement by David Bryant (in his introduction to the Christian Focus publication of Jonathan Edwards’ ‘*An Humble Attempt*’) surprise you?

Why do you think we tend to think of prayer as primarily an individual and personal activity?

2. **Read Ezra 3.8-5.2.** Zechariah's ministry (along with that of Haggai) was rooted in a particular context – the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem on the return from the exile in Babylon.

Why did the work on rebuilding the temple come to a standstill? What might be contemporary parallels to this?

Try and put yourself in the position of the people of Israel at that time: how do you think you would have felt?

How did the two prophets make a difference in this situation?

3. **Read Ezra 5.3-6.15** along with **Haggai 1.13-15.** Despite concerted opposition, the temple was rebuilt, under the watchful eye of God (Ezra 5.5) and through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 6.14).

How did the LORD stir up the spirit of the governor, the high priest and the people to begin work on the temple?

What lessons does this have for ourselves?

4. **Read Zech.8.20-21.** Consider whether the various different Community Groups might be similarly moved to countenance joining together on occasion 'to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty'.

How would you view a pattern whereby, on a reasonably regular basis, the Community Groups agreed to meet all together (instead of separately that week) 'to entreat the LORD'?

What sort of regularity might be appropriate in our circumstances?

Read **Zech.8.1-19**: against the rich promises of these verses (see how often the Lord says, 'I will..', for instance) for what might we be entreating the Lord if we joined together in this way?

5. **Read Zech.8.20-21**. A sense of real urgency ("*at once*") and resolve ("*I myself am going*") lay behind the proposal that the inhabitants of different cities join in 'concerted prayer'

What do you think gave rise to this urgency and resolve?

What would give rise to this same urgency and resolve on our part?

Action: *The Free Church of Scotland has called for a national Day of Prayer this week on St Andrew's Day (30th November) – a call not dissimilar to the 'call' referred to in v.21. Consider how you and/or your Community Group might identify with this call in line with Zechariah's prophecy.*

[For a bit of commentary from David Robertson on this Day of Prayer click [here](#)]

6. **Read Zech 8.1-22.** The prophet clearly understood there to be something essentially 'attractive' about the people of God.

From the previous verses in the chapter, what do you think would attract 'many peoples and powerful nations' (v.22)?

What might this have to teach us today?

7. **Read Zech.8.23.** Try thinking of 10 people whom you'd long to see drawn to Jesus by their awareness of His being with you, and commit yourself to pray for them in these terms.

How might these people (and others!) come to conclude that 'God is with you'?

In what way does this passage (Zech.8.20-23) suggest that such an outcome might be the result of 'concerted prayer'?