

# 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 same pattern remains, with 7 (sets of) questions, as some of you find it helpful to work your 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. **The key questions this week are probably 4 & 6, though there’ll be benefit (hopefully!) in looking at all of the questions:** 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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## 8. “.. with the prayers of all the saints ..” (Revelation 8.1-5)

[week beginning Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December]

The final study in this series on corporate prayer comes, perhaps appropriately, from the final book of the Bible. This particular short section of the book highlights the significant part which the prayers of God’s people play in the outworking of His great purpose in Jesus.

Like much of the book of Revelation, these verses use a lot of ‘picture language’ and draw quite heavily on the Old Testament: which means that they’re not always all that easy to understand without a little bit of careful thought. Stick with it, though – the effort will be worth it!

An integral feature of the purpose of God being worked out in history, according to Revelation, is His patient persistence in *warning* humanity of both the gravity of sin and the certainty of coming judgment. The seals being opened (5.1-8.5), the trumpets being sounded (8.6-11.19) and the bowls with their plagues being poured out (15.1-16.21) are all expressive of such ‘warnings’, growing in their intensity and urgency.

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1. **Read Rev.8.1-5.** These verses are the ‘bridge’ between the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets.

What is the general impression you get from these verses?

Which bits of this ‘picture language’ leave you confused?

2. **Read Rev.8.1.** The 'silence in heaven' is highlighted. It may be understood, at least in part, as God's gracious provision of time and space for reflection on what the opening of the seals has revealed.

In lives which are often busy and noisy (not least during the festive season!) how do you ensure there is time and space for reflecting on what the Lord is doing and saying in your life?

Do our worship services adequately provide for such time and space?

3. **Read Rev.8.2.** The prayers of God's people will issue in the trumpets being sounded: after the first series of 'warnings' (the seals being opened), the trumpets will 'step up the volume.'

Read **Ezekiel 33.1-11**: why does the Lord sound out His warning?

Skim read your way through **Rev.8.6-9.21**: the sounding of the trumpets release adversity. How does God warn us through such adversity? Can you think of instances of this in your own experience?

**4. Read Rev.8.3.** The prayers of all the saints are combined with the 'incense', almost certainly a reference to the redeeming work and priestly ministry of Jesus.

Jesus takes our stuttering, flawed prayers and presents them, perfected, before the throne: how does that knowledge help you in praying, both in your own personal praying, and when you pray with others?

The reference to *'all'* the saints is suggestive: what do you think is the significance of that word being added?

**5. Read Rev.8.3, 4.** This is a graphic picture of what's happening when we pray.

What (if anything!) do you find encouraging and helpful in this picture?

If we were always aware that our prayers reached the throne of God, we'd surely be praying more! Why do you think we struggle to have and retain that perspective?

**6. Read Rev.8.3-5.** Here's what results from the prayers of God's people: fire is hurled from the altar!

Read **Rev.8.6-12**: what do you make of the fact that in one way or another the first four trumpets to be sounded involve *fire*?

What other instances in the Bible can you think of where 'fire' comes from heaven? And how might that have application to our praying?

**7. Read Rev.8.3-5.** When the seals are all opened, the trumpets all sounded, and the bowls with their plagues all poured out, there is this same recurring statement of the effect (compare **8.5** with **11.19** and **16.18-21**).

What do think is meant by this repeated reference to thunder, lightning, and earthquakes?

Read **Acts 4.24-31**: remember – this is what 'the prayers of all the saints' issue in! How will your reflecting on this passage affect your praying?

What have you found helpful about this whole series?