

Parish of Ferndown
Study sheet for week commencing 15th June 2008
Praying Together – Acts 4: 23-31

The Welcome discussion:

Discuss as freely as you feel able what church activities you have most enjoyed in the last year. Don't get side-tracked into less enjoyable ones. Does it matter how much we enjoy ourselves when we come together as all or part of our Church?

Worship:

Light a candle and place it on a table in the middle of the group. Pray individually in silence prayers thanking Jesus for being the Light of the World, as you look at the lighted candle. After two minutes, finish you silent prayers with all saying together "Amen! Come Lord Jesus and light up our lives and warm our hearts!" as firmly as you are able to manage.

Study:

Read Acts 4: 23-31. Just answer the questions you find helpful, and feel free to ignore the rest!

1. What got everyone praying together on that occasion? How important is it for a group to have real purpose for group prayer? How natural is it for us to pray together with others? How important is it for us to pray in company with others?
2. What are the two phases of the prayer they made (verses 24-28; 29-30). Is there any difference in the way we pray when others are around compared when we pray alone? Why?
3. How conscious are you of others when you pray in company? Does that matter? Are you more conscious of God or of those around you? What does that tell you about yourself?
4. Discuss the different ways in which we can pray together. Discuss which opportunities you prefer. What do you think of Christians who prefer a different way of praying together? How open are to try something new? Share practical ways we can concentrate on supporting the prayers of others, remember what to pray about in a group, and become conduits for the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers.

5. In what ways is praying together challenging? If you feel able, share the experience you have had of praying in company in different ways and circumstances, and some of the results with the rest of the group.
6. If you have experience, discuss the place of 'tongues', prophesy, vision, in group prayers. (See also 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 and 14: especially 26-28).
7. Re-read verse 31. Have you ever known any shattering response to group prayer? Do we need to be careful what we pray? Do we need to consider possible responses from God before we pray?

Action:

Perhaps your group might send a 'results of praying together' sheet to Martin via the office, so as a Church we can celebrate what God is doing amongst us. (After all, we often don't know half the remarkable things that He is doing amongst us). Or volunteer to make a 'Group testimony' of the impact of praying together at a service. The main action, however, follows – so leave enough time for prayer and thanksgiving tonight!

Prayer and Thanksgiving:

Before you start, agree some different 'ground rules' for the session. Experiment: for example, try a rule that for today only, no prayer may be more than a sentence long. Or before you pray, make a 'shopping list' and agree who will pray about what, so everyone gets an agreed praise, thanks, or request prayer to make? Maybe divide requests into three sections: requests for Ferndown, the country and the world; requests for our Church; finally requests for our families and friends, and for ourselves. Let everyone write down the topic(s) they will pray on behalf of the group. If the group is musical, trying singing some of the prayers! Now spend a while together in prayer, giving God praise and thanks before moving on to pray for Christ to meet the needs which, as a group you have identified as important to you.

Please turn over...