



Small Community Notes

Introduction

Jesus says 'I will build my church...' We recognise that building the church is primarily the work of Jesus and that he invites us to play our part in this work, as living stones being built into a spiritual house.

1 Peter 2:4-5

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

These notes are designed primarily for small communities and include many invitations to share conversation with others as we explore how, together, we play our part in Jesus' work of building the Church of tomorrow. If you would like to join a small community, please get in touch with us at office@ccweb.org.uk.

We, as the people who are Christ Church, exist for the heavenly transformation of people and culture in Bristol. We do this by helping people find Jesus and follow him wholeheartedly. And we work this out through our values of Encounter plus Family plus Generosity which leads to Transformation. These notes continue the shared learning from

last term to equip us as increasingly wholehearted disciples of Jesus in playing our part in building the church as Jesus leads us by the Holy Spirit.

This term we will be exploring the practical ways in which we can build a community with a shared purpose, that prioritises prayer and realises God's call to be holy. The aim is that we will further increase our confidence in the gospel and become even more effective in helping people find Jesus and follow him wholeheartedly.

Additional resources are available at www.ccweb.org.uk/build.

Overview of the term

Building a community with a shared purpose | 7th - 20th January 2024

... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Building a community that prioritises prayer | 21st January - 2nd March 2024

This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ... Matthew 6:9-10

Building a community that is holy | 3rd March - 30th March 2024

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy. 1 Peter 1:15-16

These sessions build towards Easter at Christ Church and the specific opportunities that season presents to introduce our communities to Jesus.

Building a community with a shared purpose

Introduction

Jesus had a very clear sense of his purpose on earth:

Luke 4:18–19

¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Luke 19:10

‘ ... the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’

He was just as clear in his instructions to his followers:

Luke 5:13–14

¹³ ‘You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ ‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’

Week 1

7th to 13th January Acts 1:8

‘ ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

He embedded this sense of purpose in the words we know as The Lord’s Prayer

 Matthew 6:9–10

⁹ ‘This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Notes

Why do we exist?

The leadership of Christ Church has a clear answer to this question:

We exist for the heavenly transformation of people and culture in Bristol

Our core values are – Encounter, Family, Generosity and Transformation. We sometimes put this as an equation. When people Encounter Jesus, experience Family, and find Generosity, the result is Transformation.

We believe that Jesus changes everything. It’s important that we recognise that Transformation is not something we produce – rather, it’s the vision and work of heaven. One day, when Jesus returns, he will bring heaven to earth and make all things new.

His heart’s desire – and his design for the church – is that we work with his Spirit to see something of that final, perfect restoration in the here and now.

This is what we mean when we talk about the Kingdom of God. Jesus told us to make that our priority and that, as we do so, he will build his church. So often, our energies have gone into doing what Jesus said was his work, to the neglect of what he said was ours.

When Jesus said that he came to seek and to save the lost.’ (Luke 19:10), he didn’t just

Week 1**7th to 13th January**

mean individual souls. The word for save, sozo, has a much broader meaning – Jesus came to recover everything that was lost in the Garden of Eden, when our first ancestors chose self-satisfaction over obedience to the Word of God.

We believe Jesus is interested in the culture in which we all live. Jesus wants to see society become more just, economics more equitable, politics more honest, creativity purer, the poor lifted up, the marginalised included, the hungry fed, the sick healed, and the lost found.

What a privilege that he has invited each of us is to play our part in this!

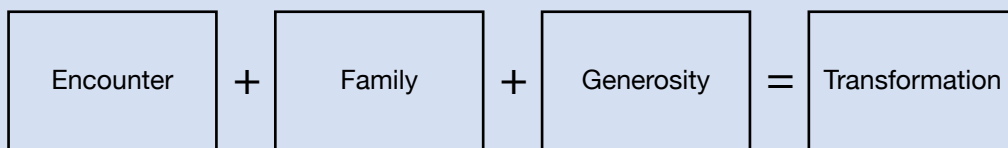
As Chris wrote at the start of last term, our small acts of obedience to the Holy Spirit enable the kingdom of God to permeate and transform every area of society and culture.

Questions

- What excites you about what you have read?
- What do you find challenging?
- What questions does it raise for you and your small community?
- What is the Holy Spirit inviting you to do as we seek together to build the Kingdom of God?

Application

- Share with each other in your Small Community the story of how you ended up worshipping at Christ Church.
- Copy the following onto a large sheet of paper:



- Fill each box with examples from the life of your Small Community / wider church family.
- Give thanks to God for all he is doing through our church family.
- What would it look like for your family, community or place of work to experience heavenly transformation? Describe this to one another as vividly as you can.
- What one thing can your group do in the next month to invite everyone to follow Jesus? Now make it happen!

Building a community with a shared purpose

Introduction

We saw last week that Jesus had a very clear sense of his purpose on earth, which included a mission to the lost:

Luke 19:10

‘... the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’

We also saw that he handed this mission on to his followers:

Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’


Acts 1:8

‘... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

We considered our leadership’s answer to the question, Why do we exist? We exist for the heavenly transformation of people and culture in Bristol, and we reviewed our core values. We believe that when people **Encounter** Jesus, experience **Family**, and find **Generosity**, the result is **Transformation**. Jesus changes everything.

So what’s our part in this equation? How do we work with God to bring heaven’s transformation to our families, communities, friends, places of work, learning and leisure? In short, what do we do?

The answer is simple: We invite everyone to find Jesus and to follow him wholeheartedly.

 **Luke 19:1–26**

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’ ⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’

⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’

¹¹ While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. ¹² He said: ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. ¹³ So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. “Put this money to work,” he said, “until I come back.”

¹⁴ ‘But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, “We don’t want this man to be our king.” ¹⁵ ‘He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

¹⁶ ‘The first one came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned ten more.”

¹⁷ “Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. “Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.”

¹⁸ ‘The second came and said, “Sir, your mina has earned five more.”

¹⁹ ‘His master answered, “You take charge of five cities.”

²⁰ ‘Then another servant came and said, “Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. ²¹ I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.”

²² ‘His master replied, “I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?”

²⁴ ‘Then he said to those standing by, “Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.”

²⁵ ““Sir,” they said, “he already has ten!”

²⁶ ‘He replied, “I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”

Week 2

14th to 20th January

Notes

Of course, even simple answers require work, and *helping people find Jesus and follow him heartedly* is no exception. In Luke 19, we learn some valuable lessons:

1. Jesus entered Jericho *and was passing through*. There's always a sense of movement with Jesus. He's a man on a mission — always seeking out the lost. How can we make the lost more of a focus in our own lives? Are we spiritually dynamic ... or static? Have we stopped moving with purpose, and settled for the way things are?
2. We often associate Jesus with the least, the last and the little. Luke has a particular eye for those on the margins; those whom society regards as outcasts. Yet here Jesus brings salvation to one of the wealthiest men in the City of Jericho — an important reminder that everyone needs Jesus
3. Zacchaeus is eager to see Jesus. Are we confident that there are people all around us who also want to see Jesus? The Evangelical Alliance conducted its latest Talking Jesus Report in 2022 ¹ — of 4000 UK adults interviewed:
 - 75% of non-Christians felt comfortable when a Christian talked about Jesus
 - 41% felt closer to the Christian as a result
 - 33% wanted to know more
 - 36% were open to an experience of encounter with Jesus Christ
4. But the most intriguing question in this encounter is: how on earth did Jesus know that a man named Zacchaeus would be hiding up that particular tree? The only possible answer is that, as Jesus prayed beforehand (that might have been the night before, that morning, or even as he walked through Jericho), the Holy Spirit supernaturally gave him this information — what St Paul calls 'a word of knowledge' (1 Corinthians 12:8). As the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus (and is therefore the same today as he was 2000 years ago), he can give us similar words of knowledge to help us introduce people to Jesus. We can all develop the habit of praying before we head out into the day, "Holy Spirit, please give me something so that I can help someone find Jesus today."
5. ⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.' Note our core values as they appear in this passage. Zacchaeus has an Encounter with Jesus, who shows him Generosity in the gift of salvation. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus, despite his wealth, would have been shunned by his community. Jesus restores him by declaring him to be a son of Abraham. St Paul tells us that all who put their faith in Jesus are also invited into his family:

¹ <https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/talking-jesus-report>

 **Romans 4:16–17**

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

GENEROSITY

The fruit of Transformation in Zacchaeus' life is evidenced by extravagant generosity. The old joke is that the last thing about a Christian to be converted is their bank account ... Not Zacchaeus: here is someone who has found Jesus and is following him wholeheartedly.

Tellingly, Luke places the parable of the talents immediately after this encounter. Ten servants are entrusted by their Master with an identical sum of money each [a *mina* was about three months' wages], and instructions to 'put this money to work' while he's away.

When the Master returns, he's eager to hear how his servants have done. This parable often confuses readers, because the third servant's description of the Master (who we know represents God) seems so unattractive: 'I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man.'

The key lies in the maths: Jesus wins 2 – 1! The behaviour of the first two servants reveals that the third doesn't really know his Master at all. The other two know him to be someone in whose service they can take risks, confident in the knowledge that he will back them if they are obedient and follow his instructions. Success in the Kingdom of God is measured almost entirely in terms of obedience.

So the question for us is: what are we each doing with what God has given us?

Questions

- How can you support one another in asking the Holy Spirit to lead you to your own Zacchaeus day by day?
- Who has the Holy Spirit already placed on your heart as someone you'd love to help find Jesus?
- What skills, gifts, influence, position, time, material wealth, financial resource do you enjoy?
- What are you doing with it? Have you buried it safely away, or are you *putting it to work* in the service of the Kingdom, while the Lord is away?

Application

- Last week ended with a challenge to do something in the next month to *invite everyone to follow Jesus*. Have you made any progress yet?!
- Sellotape a sheet of paper onto everyone's back. Everyone moves around the room writing on the piece of paper the spiritual gifts and natural talents they see in that particular person. When everyone is finished, each person can read their own paper. How do you respond? Do you agree with what others have written about you?
- Consider together what gifts/talents you have within your group. How can you use these to generously serve the vision of Christ Church? How can you use these within your Small Community setting?
- Generosity involves not just our gifts and talents but our finances and resources as well. Spend time as a group considering what resources you have individually and collectively. How can these be used in service of God's kingdom? What can you do this week to begin to action this?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Introduction

Prayer is as essential to our life in Jesus as oxygen is to sustaining our physical life. Simply put, we would be unable to sustain our individual life in Christ and our corporate life in Christ without prayer. Throughout history God has chosen to bring Revivals in response to the prayers of his children.

☞ At the heart of all the various ways of knowing God is both public and private prayer.

Tim Keller

Prayer is our two-way conversation with God. Whether on our own or with others we should be as expectant of God's eagerness to speak to us as we are eager to speak to him. Prayer is as much, if not more, listening to God as it is speaking to him.

☞ Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer.

(Charles Finney)

Praying with other Christians strengthens our unity in Jesus Christ, as we join together in listening to God and in speaking to him. When we hear our brothers and sisters in Christ opening their hearts to God we are privileged to see something of their inner relationship with God, and invited to join with them in sharing our own heart's cry.

Key to praying together is our decision to accept each other as we are, and to enable each other to pursue Jesus with increasing wholeheartedness. We don't have to prepare our prayers in advance because we're worried that our words might not be accepted. We don't have to put on a public persona through worry that our authentic engagement with God might be judged. We need to feel just as free to express ourselves to God when praying together as we are when we pray on our own. We pray in the confidence that not only will God respond to our prayer, but that those we are with will both encourage us in and be encouraged by our prayer.

Modern society is highly individualistic and this individualism has infiltrated the corporate prayer life of the church. We have to relearn how to be together in

☞ Here all fear of one another, all timidity about praying freely in one's own words in the presence of others may be put aside . . . likewise all comment and criticism must cease whenever words of prayer howsoever halting are offered in the name of Jesus Christ. It is in fact the most normal thing in the common Christian life to pray together.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Week 3**21st to 27th January**

prayer. We have to be prepared to try new-to-us ways of praying together. Ways that were common to the early church. Praying together is not only, as Bonhoeffer put it 'the most normal thing in the common Christian life.' It should also be one of the most exciting aspects of the common Christian life. It should be something that we desire to prioritise above other things. This is challenging and essential work in which the rewards are vast. Over the next six weeks we will explore together how we can rediscover the excitement of praying together.

**Acts 1:12–26**

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."

¹⁸ (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰ "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms: " 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, " 'May another take his place of leadership.'

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Week 3

21st to 27th January

Notes

In Acts 1:14 we read that the believers “all joined together constantly in prayer.” Their community life is shaped by a continuing rhythm of corporate prayer in which they all contribute. It is in this community that Peter leads people to choose someone to replace Judas. After they have nominated Joseph and Matthias they pray “Lord, you know everyone’s heart.” this is a declaration of truth about God. In this they are letting God know that they believe this and reminding each other of this truth.

Jesus taught his disciples to begin prayer by declaring the truth of who God is — “our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

There are many occurrences in the New

Testament of this type of declarative prayer. Here are a few examples:

- “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth ...” (Luke 10:21)
- “His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation ...” (Luke 1:50)
- “Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.” (Acts 4:24)
- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort ...” (2 Corinthians 1:3)
- “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father ...” (Ephesians 1:17)
- “Now may the Lord of peace himself ...” (2 Thessalonians 3:16)
- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” (1 Peter 1:3-4)

🙏 Prayer is both conversation and encounter with God. . . . We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence.

(Tim Keller)

There were about 120 believers gathered to pray together (Acts 1:15). Their declaration of truth about God reminds each person there of God’s sovereignty. When we gather with others to pray, with few or with many, we encourage and build faith in each other by declaring together who God is. That requires us to be able to hear each other. It’s remarkable that the believers in Acts manage this without microphones, amplification, or projectors; they must have spoken up in order to encourage one another in the faith. We have the same opportunity at our weekly gatherings and in our small communities. These

Week 3**21st to 27th January**

are times when together we can remind each other that God is faithful and true, full of grace and mercy. How many different and creative ways can we think of together to do this?

The declaration “hallowed is his name” is both a statement of truth and an act of worship. We honour God as holy for he is holy. When we worship God together in music and song we are also praying. We are saying to God “we honour you as holy for you are holy” and we are saying to each other “let us worship the Lord together for he is holy.” In this way, corporate prayer and worship are both an action towards God and towards each other. This calls me to worship and pray in ways that make it clear to the others present who God is to me. That is one reason we use our bodies in worship and prayer. When we kneel before God we honour him and communicate to those around us that God is worthy of our reverence.

 **Questions**

- What is your experience of hearing others declare the truth of who God is?
- How would you feel about declaring the truth of who God is in the midst of 120 believers?
- In what ways do you think that prayer and worship overlap?

 **Application**

- Grab a large sheet of paper and as a group list of every truth about God you can think of – try to fill the sheet with as many truths as possible!
- Pick one or two of the key truths – what worship songs do you know which focus on these truths? Spend time in worship as a group using these songs (either recorded versions or “live” if you have musical talent in your group!)
- Spend time in prayer declaring these truths and praising God for who he is.
- How did you find this time? How could you incorporate a time like this into your regular Small Community evening?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

2 Chronicles 6:12–21

¹² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. ¹³ Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the centre of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. ¹⁴ He said:

“LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. ¹⁵ You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

¹⁶ “Now, LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.’ ¹⁷ And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

¹⁸ “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! ¹⁹ Yet, LORD my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. ²⁰ May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. ²¹ Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

Notes

In corporate prayer we often focus on supplication (asking God for our needs) and intercession (praying for the needs of others). Jesus teaches us to begin with declaration. Last week we looked at how we declare the truth of who God is. This week our focus is on declaring God’s ongoing work of establishing his kingdom here on earth.

Week 4**28th Jan to 3rd Feb**

When we join together in declaring “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven” we acknowledge before God and to each other that we prioritise his ongoing work of establishing his kingdom here on earth. We begin to play our part in God’s work.

In 2 Chronicles 6 we see that declaring the truth of who God is is not exclusively a New Testament practice. Solomon, kneeling before the whole assembly of Israel with his hands spread out towards heaven, declares that God is set apart, like no other and that God demonstrates his love through covenant.

As Solomon continues his prayer he makes further declarations about God: “you have kept your promise ... with your hand you have fulfilled it.” His prayer continues in what might seem a rather audacious manner. What we are seeing here is Solomon’s confidence that God will do what he has promised. Solomon is simply reminding God of his promises and calling on God to fulfil them. Solomon speaks directly to God in a way that recalls Moses’ boldness in pleading with God for the city of Sodom in Genesis 18:16-33.

Solomon does this from an understanding that God is far higher than he is. God cannot be contained even by the highest heavens. When Solomon was considering building the temple he acknowledged that it could not contain God (2 Chronicles 2:6). Here, in his prayer, he calls on God to “give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy.” He acknowledges that he cannot force God to listen to his prayer, let alone act on it. God is sovereign, set apart and above all, it is God who chooses to respond to us. And God does respond to us. He says, through the prophet Jeremiah, “Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:12-13). Solomon is confident that God will hear the prayers of his servants - and that when he hears he will forgive.

There are many different ways we can, together, declare “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.” We can read Bible passages aloud, we can speak aloud in our own words. We can do this at the same time, or one after another. We can speak the same words, or each speak different words. Whatever approach we take, we can be confident that:

- We have been given the authority in Christ Jesus to do this.
- That the Holy Spirit will lead us in this.

🙏 Prayer is oxygen for the Christian. It sustains us. So it follows that prayer must be a source of life for any community of Christians. It is to the church what it is to individuals—breathing. Yet many of our gatherings could be likened to people coming together merely to hold their collective breath. This would explain why people seem to have so little energy for actually living out the Christian life.

(John Onwuchekwa)

Week 4**28th Jan to 3rd Feb**

- That God will hear and respond to our declaration.
- That we are playing an essential role in God's work of establishing his kingdom.

That's an amazing and exciting privilege to be involved in.

 **Questions**

- How do you feel about having authority in Christ Jesus?
- In what ways and contexts might you declare "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven"?
- In what areas are you aware of the Holy Spirit being at work through you?

 **Application**

- As a group, make a list of the areas where you would like to see kingdom breakthrough - situations that need more of heaven. Focus on areas that are personal to those in your Small Community rather than global issues.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine what each situation would look like if touched by heaven. Describe to each other what this new reality would look like.
- Recognise the authority you have in Christ to declare impact and change for the kingdom (Matthew 16:19). Pray Matthew 6:10 authoritatively together for each of the situations you have listed.
- How did you find this time? How could you incorporate a time like this into your regular Small Community evening?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

Give us today our daily bread.

Acts 12:1–19

¹ It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!” ¹⁵ “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

Week 5

4th to 10th Feb

Notes

In Acts 12:5 we read that ‘Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.’ In their response to this situation we see the corporate act of petition modelled by the first followers of Jesus. The church came together to pray. We’re not told how they prayed or the words they prayed but God’s response suggests that they asked God for Peter to be freed. God answers their prayer by miraculous intervention, freeing Peter from prison. The church had a need and their first response was to ask God to provide for their need. They are simply doing what Jesus taught them to do.

🔗 Prayer meetings are dead affairs when they are merely asking sessions; there is adventure, hope and life when they are believing sessions, and the faith is corporately, practically and deliberately affirmed.

Norman Grubb

When we come together as church and pray, “give us today our daily bread,” we shift from an individual focus on ‘my’ needs to a collective focus on ‘our’ needs. We acknowledge that there are resources we need to sustain our life as a church family, and that we are called to be consistently active in trusting God for what we need as a church to play our part in his work. This is an integral part of our ongoing rhythm of prayer where we acknowledge our dependence on God to him.

Coming to his senses after his miraculous escape from prison, Peter makes his way to the very house where his church family is praying. What follows is both amusing and ironic - the fact that they gathered to pray for his release reveals their faith and trust in God; and yet they can’t bring themselves to accept that he’s actually at the door! Once they do, and let him in, Peter shares his story of God’s provision and asks for the story to be shared with others.

Our corporate prayer is an essential aspect of our ongoing conversation with God and with each other. Sharing stories of how God has answered our prayers is a great way to encourage each other to persevere in prayer. Sharing stories of what the Holy Spirit is doing in and through us is a great way to understand more fully the work that God is calling us to as we play our part in his mission. As our understanding grows, we listen to the Holy Spirit more intently, pray more specific and bolder prayers and we get to see God respond to those prayers. The church meeting in the house of Mary the mother of John was not praying in general for all believers, they were praying for Peter.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, could have given us more detail about how these followers of Jesus prayed together. In many ways, it’s good that he didn’t. We are required to work out for ourselves the different ways we can pray together. What we can glean is:

Week 5**4th to 10th Feb**

- there were many people gathered
- they were all praying earnestly
- there was sufficient noise from their prayer that Peter had to 'motion with his hand for them to be quiet'

That last point suggests that on this occasion their prayer was loud. If there was only one person speaking, Peter could simply have asked them to stop. But Peter has to use hand signals to ask *them* to be quiet?

 **Questions**

- What are our needs as a church? What do we need to sustain our life together?
- What might earnest prayer look like in our community?
- How can we pray loudly when many of us are gathered?

 **Application**

- Last time we prayed for kingdom breakthrough in our personal situations. Where have you seen kingdom breakthrough in the past week? Spend time as a group thanking God for answered prayer.
- What personal needs do you have within your Small Community at present? What needs are you aware of within your wider community / wider church family? Note them down together.
- Spend some time in worship by reflecting on the truth of Jehovah Jireh (the Lord will provide), then as a group bring the needs you have identified before the Lord – declaring his goodness and seeking his provision.
- How did you find this time? How could you incorporate a time like this into your regular Small Community evening?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Ezra 10:1–17

¹ While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. ² Then Shekariah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. ³ Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law. ⁴ Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it.”

⁵ So Ezra rose up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel under oath to do what had been suggested. And they took the oath. ⁶ Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. While he was there, he ate no food and drank no water, because he continued to mourn over the unfaithfulness of the exiles. ⁷ A proclamation was then issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem for all the exiles to assemble in Jerusalem. ⁸ Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and elders, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles. ⁹ Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of God, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain. ¹⁰ Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel’s guilt. ¹¹ Now honour the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.”

¹² The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: “You are right! We must do as you say. ¹³ But there are many people here and it is the rainy season; so we cannot stand outside. Besides, this matter cannot be taken care of in a day or two, because we have sinned greatly in this thing. ¹⁴ Let our officials act for the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at a set time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us.”¹⁵ Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this. ¹⁶ So the exiles did as was proposed. Ezra the priest selected men who were family heads, one from each family division, and all of them designated by name. On the first day of the tenth month they sat down to investigate the cases, ¹⁷ and by the first day of the first month they finished dealing with all the men who had married foreign women.

Week 6

11th to 17th Feb

Notes

When was the last time you wept bitterly and threw yourself down before the Lord? If we go back a chapter we find these words of Ezra, “I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled” (Ezra 9:3). In today’s society these actions might seem strange, somewhat extreme even. However, there is much we can learn from the prayers of Ezra and the people of Israel.

Our focus here is on prayer and therefore we will not be exploring in depth the situation that is going on in Ezra 9 and 10, other than to say that this is about the holiness of God’s people and the restoration of their covenant relationship with him. The surrounding nations mentioned in Ezra 9:1 observed religious practices, such as child sacrifice, that were detestable by any standard. Intermarrying with people from these nations risked bringing these practices into the lives of the people of Israel and compromising their holiness.

Returning to our focus on prayer, Ezra’s outward actions demonstrate the shock and disappointment he is experiencing in response to the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel. There is no evidence of separation between Ezra’s inner emotions and outward actions. Those around him would have known how Ezra was feeling because they witnessed his outward actions. ‘Everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around him’ (Ezra 9:4). ‘A large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly’ (Ezra 10:1). Ezra’s actions draw others to join him and a proclamation is issued. ‘Within the three days, all the men of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem’ (Ezra 10:9). The people of Israel come to recognise they have ‘sinned greatly’ (Ezra 10:13) and they repent of their unfaithfulness through words and actions.

🔗 The body of Christ needs to lament together. The church has been given this biblical prayer language, and we need each other to do it well. We need to weep with those who weep.

Mark Vroegop

We live in a society and culture where outward demonstrations of emotion are often moderated. We may cry a little in public but weeping bitterly may be considered unbecoming or an act of drawing attention to ourselves. Similarly with our body language, we may kneel in a church if those around us are kneeling, but throwing ourselves to the ground before God, that is simply not the way we do things here. This cultural conditioning of our behaviour constrains us to a mostly inward experience of grief, repentance, and lament. We feel despondent or angry or appalled whilst appearing to others to be quiet or thoughtful or perhaps simply a little bit sad.

Week 6**11th to 17th Feb**

If we are to pray *together* “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,” then we have to find ways to demonstrate our inward thoughts and emotions through external words - and possibly actions - that enable us to call on God *together*. We’re not called to copy a two and a half thousand year old culture in our outward expressions. However, we are invited to find outward expressions by which we as a church family can come together, in small and large numbers, in collective grief, repentance, and lament as a people united in Christ Jesus.

 **Questions**

- What experience do you have of gatherings where people have physically demonstrated their lament and repentance? What was it like?
- How do you feel about physical demonstrations of lament and repentance? For example, kneeling, weeping etc.
- What are some ways that we can lament together in small and large gatherings?

 **Application**

- Last time we prayed for our personal and wider community needs. Where have you seen God’s provision in the past week? Spend time as a group thanking God for answered prayer.
- Spend time as a group in corporate confession – focus particularly on where we have lacked passion for communicating the gospel and failed to pray for those who don’t yet know Jesus. Receive God’s grace and forgiveness.
- Spend time in silence asking the Holy Spirit to show you if there is anyone you need to forgive. Note their name on a piece of paper. Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do anything as a result? Share this with another member of your group and commit to action.
- How did you find this time? How could you incorporate a time like this into your Small Community evening?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

1 Kings 18:18–39

¹⁸ “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

²⁰ So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.

²² Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³ Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

²⁵ Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” ²⁶ So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

²⁷ At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹ Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. ³¹ Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” ³² With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.” ³⁴ “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

³⁶ At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

³⁷ Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

Notes

In response to persecution the followers of Jesus pray, “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29–30). They pray in the name of Jesus because their authority over the powers of darkness comes from him alone. The Holy Spirit’s response to their prayer is physical: ‘the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly’ (Acts 4:31).

We are in the midst of a spiritual battle and are called to minister in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Acts 3:6–7; 4:30). This spiritual battle between God and Satan has been ongoing through time, but there has never been any doubt that the victory belongs to God. Jesus, through his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension conquered sin and death once for all. God has chosen to invite his followers, through their prayer and action, to participate in the work of overcoming the kingdom of darkness and establishing the kingdom of God by drawing people to Jesus, in whom they will find salvation and eternal life.

In the 9th century BC, Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, followed the disobedience of some previous kings and led his people to worship the Canaanite gods, Baal and Asherah; and thereby rejecting their covenant with the Lord God. God calls the prophet Elijah to show Ahab that there is but one true God, sovereign over all creation and that Baal and Asherah are false gods. The battle on mount Carmel represents a far greater battle in the heavenly realms. These Canaanite false gods are evidence of the work of Satan and his demons drawing people away from worship of the one true God.

Elijah is responding to God’s command to “present yourself to Ahab” (1 Kings 18:1). Elijah demonstrates his great confidence and trust in God by challenging the prophets of Baal and of Asherah to meet him on Mount Carmel. Elijah even loads the challenge in favour of the false prophets. Having drenched the wood, bull and seed with water he steps forward

Week 7**18th to 24th Feb**

to call on God. He prays “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” In his prayer, Elijah declares who God is, that he is the God of their ancestors (by implication, Ahab and the false prophets should worship him). Elijah declares his own position and purpose as a servant of God - he’s done these things at God’s command that it may be known that Yahweh is the one true God, and that the hearts of the people may be turned from their false gods back to him. When the people see the power of God at work they acknowledge his sovereignty crying out “The LORD—he is God!”

Today the battle happens in different contexts from that of Mount Carmel and the false gods of Baal and Asherah. However, the battle is still that

- God may be known as the one true God, sovereign over all; and
- that the hearts of people may be turned from their false gods (power, money, sex, consumerism, etc. - anything people put their hope in that is not God) back to the one true God, and
- that all may cry out The LORD Jesus—he is God!”

When we enter the spiritual battle in prayer we speak into the heavenly realms, declaring who God is, declaring that we have chosen to be his servants, that Jesus is the only certain hope for people and that in the name of Jesus all that is evil must flee. James writes ‘Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (James 4:7).

The devil wants us to believe that the spiritual battle is either fiction or a thing of ancient history, and that we have no part to play in it. When we recognise that the spiritual battle is still raging, that God has declared his victory through Jesus and that we are called to play our part in it through prayer and action, then we see God’s kingdom come ‘on earth as in heaven.’ We see people released from oppression, we see lives transformed by Jesus. We see people move from darkness to light.

🔗 In our Christendom - and cessationist - shaped Church we have often reduced prayer to a functional requirement of the Christian life instead of our lifeblood and weapon in the spiritual battle.

John McGinley

Questions

- What do you think about there being a spiritual battle going on today?
- Where do you see evidence in your locality, this city, this nation, the world, of oppression, injustice, worship of false gods?
- What can you learn from the prayers we've looked at above that will help you play your part in the spiritual battle?

Application

- Last time we considered if there was anyone we needed to forgive. Are there any stories from the past week within your group as a result of this? Sensitive share them together.
- In pairs, spend some time reflecting on the areas of your life which are challenging and difficult at present. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if any of these challenges are the result of a spiritual battle.
- As a group, reflect on the different elements of the *Armour of God* from Ephesians 6:10-17.
- In the same pairs as before ask which parts of the armour would help you now? Spend time considering how you can practically use these in your particular "battle".
- How did you find this time? How could you incorporate a time like this into your Small Community evening?

Building a community that prioritises prayer

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Revelation 4:1–11

¹ After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“ ‘Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.’ ”

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Notes

We end where we began, with a declaration of God’s eternal sovereignty. The words of those gathered around heaven’s throne are a beautiful declaration of God’s sovereignty and provide an excellent focus to bring our prayer together.

Week 8

25th Feb to 2nd Mar

When we declare to God, “the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever,” we acknowledge the transcending reality of God throughout all eternity. This is a vast prayer in which we join in with the heavenly worship before the throne of God.

The vision John has of the heavenly throne, described in Revelation 4, gives us a glimpse of the majesty and glory of God and the constant worship that is offered to him. The Holy Spirit is showing John a fraction of what is going on in the heavenly realms. In the

language John uses you can almost feel him grasping for words that will adequately communicate what he is being shown by the Spirit. There are precious stones, thrones surrounding the throne, garments of white, crowns of gold, seven lamps, a sea of glass and four living creatures covered in eyes. We don't have reference points in this world for the images we are being shown. Each of the symbols and images has layers of meaning that make reference to various aspects of the grand narrative of God's story. Here, we are interested in what we can learn about prayer.

In verse 8 we read that the four creatures ‘never stop saying: “ ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.” ’ They do this to ‘give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever.’ And when they do this, ‘the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”’ There is a constant declaration of who God is and a constant recognition of his glory.

We are invited to join in with this declaration in the heavenly throne room. What an awesome privilege that is. We get to add our voice to that of the twenty four elders. They worship God through their physical action of falling down before God and laying their crowns aside. Similarly we can kneel or lie prostrate before God, throw **off** any sense of pride or self importance and acknowledge the Lord ‘who lives for ever and ever.’ The twenty four elders add their voices to those of the four living creatures, declaring that God alone is worthy to receive glory and honour and power, for he alone is creator of all things, he alone is the one who gives life. Similarly we can raise our voices in the declaration that “the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours Lord now and for ever. That is one mighty heart cry of prayer.

🙏 Praying together foreshadows our heavenly future when we will join that ‘great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice’

Megan Hill

Questions

- What mental image of the heavenly throne do you have as you read Revelation 4?
- What is your understanding of the sovereignty of God as creator of all things and the one who alone gives life?
- How does it feel to be invited to join in with the heavenly worship of God?

Application

- Last time we applied the armour of God to particular “battle” areas we are facing. Where have you seen God’s victory in the past week? Share any stories and spend time thanking God for answered prayer.
- Reflect together over the last five weeks where we have sought to embed different aspects of corporate prayer into the life of our small communities. Which aspects have stuck? Which aspects have you found most challenging?
- Make a Small Community action plan to ensure that your group continues to grow in confidence in corporate prayer over the weeks ahead.