

Hello Everyone

'But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life' (Jude 20-21).

My Dad was a Methodist preacher and up until I was 18 years old I must have heard dozens, if not hundreds, of his sermons. Sad to say, I don't remember very many but I do remember the outline of the one on these verses perhaps because it is so simple and, no doubt, because it is very much part of the text: building, praying, keeping and waiting! A four-point sermon but none the worse for that.

'Building yourselves up in your most holy faith' – the Bible uses a variety of pictures (metaphors) of how we might grow in the Christian life. Here it is one of building. I am amazed how quickly new houses spring up but they still need planning, good foundations and proper materials. The Christian life needs building – most building projects are not done alone. They are something we share in together.

'Praying in the Holy Spirit' – there are many Christians who are prepared to admit that they don't always find praying easy. While personal or private prayer is a good thing, it's easy to allow it to be crowded out in busy lives. When we think of the needs of the world, it's possible to be overwhelmed and not know where to start. Praying together can help.

Keeping yourselves in God's love' – I have enjoyed my three visits to the USA but one thing I missed was conversation about familiar things (often English things, English news, English football and, of course, the weather). Meeting an occasional English person was a real joy. Christian fellowship is a bit like that – as we meet fellow 'citizens of heaven'. Fellowship is being Christians together in God's love.

'Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life' – for most of us 'waiting' (perhaps in the dentist's waiting room) seems like a negative experience but it is not meant to be so here. Imagine small children waiting for Christmas Day with excitement and anticipation. When believers think of heaven and eternal life it's a special kind of waiting. It's something we share together.

Where did the first year of *Tuesdays Together* go? We made a good start! The combination of worshipping together, praying together, reading the Bible together and exploring Christian faith together means that no two weeks in each month are the same. As we only meet in school term-time, we also have planned breaks in the programme too and that seems to be just about right.

I am grateful to all those who worked hard in the first year to get us started and wish God's blessing on those who are planning and preparing for the coming year. I learned a lot from our year in Isaiah. In the coming year, I am hoping to prepare a series on Genesis. If you would like the book by Phil Moore (*Straight to the Heart of Genesis: 60 Bite-sized Insights*), which will probably be about £7, just let me know.

If you did not make *Tuesdays Together* a part of your regular devotional pattern in the last church year, maybe you could do so in the coming year. There are no embarrassing or difficult moments. No one is put on the spot and expected to do something that they are not comfortable doing (e.g. pray aloud, answer difficult questions). It's all relaxed and informal and importantly – everyone is welcome.

God Bless
John Haley
Minister

