

Group Notes 12th June 2011

Welcome – Ice Breaker

How many languages are spoken within your group? If you have people with you who can speak a language other than English, ask them to teach the group how to say 'hell' and 'my name is...' in that language. If you don't have people who can speak a foreign language try and use a local dialect, a good Black Country accent for example.

Word Discussion 1 – Acts 2:1-8, 11b-12

- Read the passage from Acts out loud
- The crowds were astounded that they could understand what the disciples were saying. The disciples were local Galilean men, probably not well educated, but the visiting crowds could understand all they said even though there were hundreds of languages being spoken at the same time. The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts is central to the Christian church, probably second only to the death and resurrection of Christ. These events give us the two most recognisable symbols of the Christian faith, the cross and the flame of Pentecost. Next week is Trinity Sunday when the teaching will be on the Trinity (!), how all the elements relate to each other, but this week we're concentrating on the Holy Spirit.

Question Time 1

- Divide the group into pairs for this part, and ask each pair to discuss and feed back to the group.

'The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts is central to the Christian church, probably second only to the death and resurrection of Christ. These events give us the two most recognisable symbols of the Christian faith, the cross and the flame of Pentecost.' Do you think this statement is true? If not why not?

Feed back to the group

Word Discussion 2 – John 20:19-23

- Read the passage from John out loud
- The cross reminds us of the sacrifice Jesus made, for the forgiveness of our sins; second the flame of the Holy Spirit to remind of the first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is perhaps most difficult to identify with, God, the father the guy in charge, and Jesus the son are possibly easier to identify with. The Holy Spirit has always been there, in Gen 1:2 we can read '... and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters – NRSV', The Holy Spirit is mentioned in Old Testament too. 1 Kings 18:46 where Elijah had the power of the Lord coming upon him, and in Judges 15.14 Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in power. The Holy Spirit coming to people and giving power, is not a new thing, and has been around for 1000s of years, but before Jesus' coming the Holy Spirit would only come for a short while and not live inside of people. John 14:16-18 describes how Jesus changed this 'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you'. In the new covenant, the new promise, the Holy Spirit is to be with us, to remain with, to be our helper.

Question Time 2

- Verse 23 seems to be suggesting that the disciples have been given the gift of forgiving sins? How far do you agree with that?

- The Holy Spirit has been 'around' since before times existed, look up the Genesis verse, and are you surprised by that?
- Do you repent then receive the Holy Spirit, or receive the Holy Spirit then repent because of the changes it makes in your life?

Word Discussion – 3

- Look at the disciples after they have received the Holy Spirit, after the first Pentecost. Immediately before they were hiding, in fear, and these were the same men who'd been with Jesus for 3 years, now suddenly running scared. Once Jesus had appeared to them they started to worship in the temples again, but nothing else much. Once the Holy Spirit had filled them, Peter began preaching in temples, they could speak in other languages, they were threatened with their lives but keep on preaching the gospel, they could heal the sick, the lame and cast out demons – the only difference is that the HS is now within them. They'd witness Jesus' life, his death, his resurrection but it took the Holy Spirit to transform them. We too have that same power to transform us – we too have the potential for the Holy Spirit to be in our lives, just as it was for the disciples that first Pentecost, but so very few of us tap into that power, maybe we never have, maybe we did once but don't do so any more, maybe we've forgotten how to do it. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to witness to the world. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us words to say when our minds go blank. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us able to carry out Christ's command to preach to all the nations and make disciples of every nation. If we do not know how to use the Spirit, or are hindering His work in us. We cannot fulfil the commandment we have been given to minister. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to love the unlovable, minister to the unwanted, serve those who reject us and grow the kingdom of God.

Question Time – 3

- Have you ever witnessed a miracle, something truly amazing and out of this world?
- Have you ever been able to do something that was so out of character that the power and ability to do it could only have come from God?
- How do you feel about the thought of being filled with Holy Spirit? Can you describe these feelings to the group?

Worship Idea

Give everyone something to write on and to write with. Listen to a piece of music, something relaxing and peaceful, while the music is playing write down your thoughts, hopes, fears and anxieties about being filled with the Holy Spirit. When you've finished fold the paper up and hold it your hand and pray this prayer;

Holy Father, fill us with the Holy Spirit, the power of the living God.
 Guide us by the Holy Spirit, the giver of light and life.
 Strengthen us through the Holy Spirit, the fire of love.
 Let your Spirit come upon us and change us and all your faithful people
 That we may live and work to your praise and glory;
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 Who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
 One God, now and for ever
 Amen¹

Work and Witness

Each morning during this week, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you again, notice any changes in your daily routine, while doing this. Feedback to the group next week.

¹ David Adams – Radiance of His Glory – SPCK 2009