



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG95: Listening To Jesus On ...
The Holy Spirit

John 16:5-26

Home Group Study Notes

8th June 2014 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Should Christians always be happy? What is the difference between happiness and joy?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: The Spirit prefers to remain in the background and promote Jesus instead. How do you think this affects the way we view the Holy Spirit?

2: How do we know that it is the Holy Spirit leading us and not something else?

3: Has the Holy Spirit ever convicted you of anything?

Their sorrow was turned to joy, but whatever Jesus meant here one thing is for sure, because the resurrection is established and rooted in history it is an event that happened and it cannot be undone, the joy Jesus offers can never be taken away. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. The joy that the world offers is always lacking and does not last but the joy we have in belonging to Christ lasts forever. There is still more though because up till now the disciples had brought their requests to Jesus, but now with his death the barrier is removed that was between us and God. With the departure of Jesus there would be a new relationship between us and God and we would be able to go straight to him and to call him Father. Through Christ's death we discover for ourselves that the Father's heart is filled with nothing but love and his door is always open to us, not only that, but that he loves hearing from us, he is waiting to hear from us, we can ask him for anything and trust that as a father who loves a child he wants only the very best for us.

Don't Quench the Spirit

Now although I said that the Holy Spirit was a free Spirit and constantly on the move that does not mean that he is elusive, Thomas Merton said, *"He is closer to us than we are to ourselves and that's why we do not notice Him."* The Spirit is on hand ready to help us find the way that best suits us to help us to grow spiritually and to get to know our Father better. No two people are the same, what helps one person is a disaster for someone else. John Ortberg in his book, *"The me I want to be,"* says *"God never grows two people the same way. God is a hand-crafter not a mass-producer."* It's good to hold on to that thought next time someone tells you that they get up a 5am to pray and the very thought leaves you cold because you are not a morning person but at the same time you are tempted to give yourself a hard time because that just sounds *so* spiritual! The Holy Spirit wants to help us to become God's very best and the way he does that in us will be different for each of us but he is tenacious in his quest, and the very best thing we can do to help him is never to quench him. Those habits we form which lead us to be anxious, worried, negative, critical of others, jealous of others gifts all serve to quench the Spirit but when we do quench him, and there will be many times when we will, all we ever need to show Him of our desire to change and get back on track is a sincere heart that wants to submit to his leading.

There is no one like Him!

Jesus made it possible for us to have a new and secure relationship with our heavenly Father and it is because of him that our joy can never be taken away. When he left to return to the Father he did not abandon us because he sent us the glorious Holy Spirit who reassures us, who beckons us and leads us further on into more intimate relationship with the Father and closer and more loving fellowship with one another and yes we will get things wrong, and yes there will be times when we doubt, there will be times when we get lost and meander down wrong paths but he is patient and beguiling and relentless in his mission to reassure us of our home in Christ, there is quite simply no one like the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Life the bringer of joy, the Helper in all situations, he the Advocate who is on our side and although he would not thank us for promoting him as he is at pains to remain hidden whilst he glorifies Jesus he deserves our utmost praise, our biggest and warmest welcome and our willingness to serve and to follow him where ever he leads.

Lets honour him by recognising that he is always in our midst, he is the one who is there with us in every situation, crying with us, laughing with us, leading us and teaching us, cheering us on, correcting us when we need and inviting us to work with him to share Jesus with others.

The Spirit will prove the world to be wrong about righteousness because Jesus Christ is *the* Righteous One and he was vindicated by his death and resurrection. The Jewish authorities claimed that the crucifixion of Jesus was a righteous act, they said it had to be done in order to preserve the law and the temple worship, but the reverse was true. At Pentecost Peter, full of the Holy Spirit declared, *“But God raised him from the dead freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”* and *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2: 24 and 36),”* The Jewish authorities claim to righteousness was cast aside when they realised what they had done and they were filled with remorse and guilt. It is the same for us when we remain in a state of rebellion against God and we fail to see Jesus Christ as the Righteous One. The Spirit helps us to realise how foolish and how lost we are without Christ. He also brings to light the guilt in our hearts in respect of judgement. At Pentecost on realising their guilt, those who accused Jesus were in despair as to what they could do, the cross for them brought judgement and they were without hope. *“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).* The Spirit brings the answer of God’s grace, which is totally undeserved, and Peter’s message of *“repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus” (Acts 2:38),* offers the good news which is, turn to Christ for the forgiveness of sins and be saved. The Spirit is the powerful Advocate who goes out to the world and brings it under conviction.

The Spirit of Truth

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth because the role of the Spirit is to testify to Jesus and to reveal Jesus to us. (v13-16) The Spirit doesn’t come with anything new, because there is complete unity and consistency in the message from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, instead he tells us about Jesus, about who He is, what he has said and what he has done and he helps us to understand, he reveals the significance to us whilst all the time He shows us more of the heart of God. He helps us to understand what has already been revealed without ever drawing attention to himself. When we don’t understand he sheds light and he gives us insight, we’ve probably all had those lightbulb moments when suddenly something just makes sense, we understand, that is the Spirit at work in us. He does not reveal anything new.... but he’s always at work. We mistakenly think that we come to the Lord through an Alpha course or through a friend or a talk or something humanly engineered. Not so, these things are but tools of the Spirit because it is the Spirit at work in us, a gracious work of God through the Spirit as he prompts us, and leads us to believe in God, as manifest in Christ. The Spirit always points us to Jesus and glorifies him, he is completely happy in the background, testifying to the righteousness of Jesus who sits with the Father, he never takes the credit, in fact he is rather modest, and if we don’t know who he is its because he never takes the limelight, he puts the spotlight on Jesus, saying *“look what he’s done” “look at Jesus, isn’t he magnificent.”* He always draws attention to Jesus and to the Father and when he leads us to a place of repentance he then reveals to us the glorious life giving news that in Christ we are forgiven and saved.

Sorrow Turned to Joy

Although Jesus is preparing the disciples for his departure he goes on to give us and the disciples reasons for joy because although he’s going, he’ll be back! He says in v16 *“In a little while you will not see me any more; and again in a little while you will see me.”* Confused? They must have been, and so it seems are we because interpreters are divided on what Jesus meant. Some see the *“little while”* as being a time in the future when Jesus will return at the second coming, but before that time comes Christians will have to go through terrible times experiencing persecution and pain like that of labour pains in childbirth. Others see this saying of Jesus as his promise to his disciples that he will return after his resurrection, and in fact if that was the case it was indeed a very little while, for it was only days later on the first Easter day when they saw him as the Risen Lord and they were filled with unspeakable joy.

4: Why do you think that Jesus said the disciples would be unable to bear what he had to say? (v 12?)

5: The disciples were reluctant to ask Jesus what he meant about *“...in a little while.”* Why do you think that was? What makes you reluctant to ask questions?

6: The disciples struggled to understand Jesus at times, whose counsel do you seek first when you find things difficult to understand, others or the Holy Spirit?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG95: Listening To Jesus On ... *The Holy Spirit*

John 16:5-26

Home Group Sermon Notes

8th June 2014 - Pauline Woolnough

Who is the Holy Spirit?

In his book *Cafe Theology* Michael Lloyd wrote this little ditty. *“There was an old man who cried, “Run! For the end of the world has begun. The one I fear most is the old holy Ghost, I can cope with the Father and Son.”* There is a measure of truth in that because although Jesus was divine he was also fully human so we can relate to Him. We also know what a father is, or should be like, so we can relate to the Father but the Spirit somehow seems less personal, thankfully he is less likely to be referred to as a ghost, that was just too spooky, but by calling him a spirit he can be seen as “a thing” as opposed to a person and the third person in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is certainly hard to pin down and if ever there was a “free spirit” it is the Holy Spirit, He is always on the move and going wherever he wants. The grammatical gender of the word spirit varies according to the language. While the Greek word for spirit is “*pneuma*” and is neuter, the Hebrew word “*ruach*” which means wind, is feminine and in Aramaic the language that Jesus spoke the word spirit is also feminine. Of course the gender of a word whether in Greek or Hebrew has nothing to do with gender identity, for example the word for book in French is *livre* and of masculine gender but we don’t say we are sitting down to read him, but maybe it simply highlights the feminine qualities of the Holy Spirit - of always being busy and creative, of being interested in the nitty gritty of our lives just like a mother is, meeting us where we are in our hurt and confusion, comforting us, relentlessly being there for us, wanting us to be the best we can be and not ever being offended by the mess we sometimes make of our lives whilst just getting stuck in to help us to clean it up.

The Holy Spirit is a real person, He is not some airy fairy divine fluid type substance that can be poured out into our lives, He is a person to befriend, to welcome, to know and to love. It is all too easy to impersonalise the Holy Spirit and at other times act as if he is at our beck and call as we call on him to come into our prayer meetings and in a sense reducing him to some kind of force or a power, he *has* power but he is not *a* power. He is not “up there” somewhere waiting for us to remember to invite Him into our prayer meeting, He is everywhere “down here,” inside our harsh world of sin and shame and He wants us to experience the relationship that Jesus experiences with the Father. He is known to be the Spirit of Truth, of God, of Jesus, of Adoption, he is the Comforter, Advocate and Helper and he can be both loved and grieved. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, baptised in the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, his entire life on earth was lived in the Spirit, and that anointing was fully expressed in his death resurrection and ascension. The Holy Spirit is not Jesus in another form, he is distinct from him, we know that because Jesus says that he will send another to us, and he says that he will bring glory to Jesus Himself.

What does the Holy Spirit do?

It was always the Fathers intention that we would know him and have relationship with him. The reason he created us was that we would share in the love and fellowship that existed within the Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Each one of us matter to the Lord and because he gave us free will he respects our choices, whether those choices are good or bad, and it is the Holy Spirit who is alongside us in those choices. He walks with us as we go up blind alleys, and into dark places, he is patient while we take the wrong route, and he is not put off or offended by where we take him nor is he put off by the sometimes distasteful job of getting us free from the sins that have a hold on us, in fact the Spirit loves it, its what he most likes to do, but all the time he is working on our hearts taking every opportunity we present to him in order to show us Jesus. We make so many choices but the only choice the Spirit wants us to make involves us choosing Jesus.

The disciples did not fully understand who Jesus was even though they had been with him for 3 years They had seen him do marvellous things, but they were slow to grasp his full identity and could not have imagined how everything would change forever for every human being by the death of their master and friend. They had been given clues, but like a cryptic crossword puzzle, clues that were hard to decipher. In Jn 14:20 Jesus told them, *“When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”* They must have thought he spoke in riddles, morbid and unsettling talk about death and being raised to life again, but in that one sentence there are 3 critical truths. 1. that Jesus is in the Father, 2. that we are in Jesus and 3. that Jesus is in us. In that one sentence Jesus covered all bases, it would have been good enough news to know that Jesus is in both the Father and in us but He doesn’t stop there because he then tells us that we are also in Him. By that one fact we see that we are right there in the centre of the fellowship that Jesus shares with His Father and the Spirit, because not only is Jesus down here in us by the Spirit but we are where he is. Eph 2:6 *“...And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”* It is the Spirit’s purpose and joy to lead us into the knowledge that just as Jesus is in the Father and because we are in him and he is in us, we are included in his relationship with his Father. We are no longer alienated, we are no longer separated, we don’t have to work ourselves up to a frenzy trying to be accepted, we are in that circle of fellowship within the Trinity because the Trinity resides in us and that truth that sets us free. In some unknowable and mysterious way, because Jesus represents us, and because he is on the throne at the right hand side of the Father, therefore we sit there too, we share in all that Jesus has. We can choose to keep that knowledge in our heads, we can choose to ignore that truth but it doesn’t make it any less true and it is the Spirit who helps us to discover and understand these things when we are ready.

Sin, Righteousness and Judgement

The ascension would mark the end of Jesus earthy appearances and in 16:10 he warns the disciples of a time that was coming when they would no longer see him, he would no longer be around in the way that he had been around up till now. It is now with Jesus going that the Holy Spirit is let loose and set free in a liberating way into the world and it is his job to convict us of sin, - he has a big job on his hand. His chief aim is to help us turn away from our sins, turn to Christ, to trust in him and to commit ourselves to Him. Jesus says in v 8-10 that when the Spirit comes, *“he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father where you can see me no longer, and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”* We see sin as being something that we do wrong, but according to this scripture and to what Jesus is telling, that is a pretty shallow way to view sin. Whilst we preoccupy ourselves with sins in the plural, Jesus says that sin is about one thing, its about not believing in Him, it is our refusal and rejection of God’s grace and a proud belief that we have in ourselves that leads us to think that we can atone for our own sin, that we can earn God’s favour, or as many people think, - that Jesus was just a good man. All sin comes out of that one sin, that is the root problem, the things that we do wrong and which we call sin is the fruit that comes out of the one sin, the sin of unbelief.