

*I BELIEVE IN
THE
HOLY SPIRIT*

Christ Church
Home Groups
Summer 2020



christ church
moreton

2020

For I am **not ashamed**
of the **gospel**,
because it is the
power of God
that brings **salvation** to
everyone who **believes**.

Romans 1:16

This year our theme verse has focussed on the wonder of the gospel – the good news which brings salvation. That gospel is the work of the Trinity – our salvation involves God the Father, whose loving purpose planned it, God the Son, whose death and resurrection accomplished it, and God the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to our need of it.

But the Holy Spirit isn't just involved in our coming to faith – he is the one who enables us to live the life of discipleship. So following on from Pentecost, in this series we think about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the church.

The diary for this term looks like this:

w/b Mon 8th June – Home-group 1
w/b Mon 15th June – Home-group 2
w/b Mon 22nd June – Home-group 3

Wed 1st July – **Prayer Meeting**

w/b Mon 6th July – Home-group 4
w/b Mon 13th July – Home-group 5
w/b Mon 20th July – Home-group 6

1. I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

WELCOME

The last few months have seen most of our schools closed and many children having to learn at home. And I'm sure that for most of those children, there are some subjects they quite enjoyed still being able to study, and some which they ignored for as long as possible. So – when you were at school, what subject were you happiest doing? And what subject did you try to avoid?

WORSHIP

The Psalms give us many 'pictures' of God – he is our Shield (Psalm 18:2), our Shepherd (Psalm 23), our light (Psalm 27:1), our Refuge (Psalm 46:1), and our Rock (Psalm 95).

Take some time to meditate on these – and then praise God for what these pictures tell you about him.

WORD

Pentecost is one of the greatest days in history – the day the Holy Spirit was given to the church. Of course, the Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, right back to the creation in Genesis 1.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit was given to certain of God's people to equip them for a particular task. But Pentecost marks a new era, when the Spirit is given to all Christians. And it is an important event to remember, because without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be impossible, and the church could not exist. As John Stott puts it '*As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead*'.

Read Acts 2:1-13

The disciples were together, when they heard a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, and they saw what looked like tongues of fire.

- Why might wind and fire be symbolic of the Holy Spirit?

Anyone doing the reading in church on Pentecost Sunday has the worry of negotiating their way through the list of nationalities in Acts 2:8-11!

- Why do you think that Luke emphasises the international, multilingual nature of the crowd?

Read Ephesians 5:8-21

Paul contrasts two ways of life – darkness and light.

- What is the big difference between the two?
- Are there things which you used to consider to be alright before you were a Christians, which now you see are wrong?

- If so, what caused you to change?

In the N.I.V. verses 19-21 look like a series of separate commands. But in the Greek in which this letter was first written they are linked grammatically to verse 18, and describe 4 results of being filled with the Spirit (literally:

go on being filled with the Spirit;
speaking to one another,
singing and making music in your heart ...s
giving thanks ...
submitting to one another

- Why would each of these flow from being filled with the Spirit?

In his book 'Keep in step with the Spirit', Jim Packer says, 'The Christian's life in all its aspects is supernatural; only the Spirit can initiate and sustain it.'

- In what areas of your life have you been aware of the Spirit's work?

I guess that we would tend to answer this by thinking about obviously 'Christian' things, like church, worship, evangelism, healing.

- But have there been ways in which the Holy Spirit has affected your family life? Your work life? Your leisure activities?

WORK

The disciples had to wait for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:4). We no longer have to wait, because although his coming was a unique and unrepeatable event, all the people of God can now benefit from his ministry.

Before his Ascension, Jesus told his disciples that when the Holy Spirit came he would empower them to be witnesses. In the circumstances we live in at present, some of our usual opportunities to do that – church events, being at work with colleagues – have gone. But it is still God's purpose for us to be witnesses, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So – at present, where are your opportunities to do that? Pray for one another in your group, that the Holy Spirit will equip and empower you to take hold of those opportunities.

2. THE LORD, THE GIVER OF LIFE

WELCOME

Of your five senses, which is most important to you and why?

WORSHIP

As we saw last time, without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be impossible, and the church could not exist. Praise God for the work of his Spirit in your life. You might like to use the hymn 'Breathe on me, breath of God' (or the modern version by David Fellingham) to lead you into your study.

WORD

It is sometimes said that if God removed his Spirit from the church, 90 % of what we do would continue unaffected. But this is very different from the picture that the New Testament gives us. It was the Holy Spirit who brought the church into existence by his coming on the day of Pentecost. And still today, without the Holy Spirit, any church would cease to exist. It is important to realise that the Holy Spirit isn't only at work in the spectacular (though Pentecost showed that he certainly does work in that way) but also in all the 'ordinary' aspects of Christian life.

Last time we looked at Acts 2:1-13. Now we move on through the chapter.

Read Acts 2:14-41

(This is a long passage, so if you just want the key sections read v.14-21 & 38-41)

- How does Peter explain the amazing events that have taken place at Pentecost?
- How does what happens when Peter preaches fulfil both Joel's prophecy and Jesus commission to the apostles in Acts 1:8?
- What do you think is the most significant act of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

Read Acts 4:23-31

- What did the believers pray for (v.29-30)?
- What happened when they were filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How was this an answer to their prayer?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

- Why do so many people who hear the gospel still not believe? (see 1:18, 23)

- What makes us different from them? Is it that we are more perceptive? Or that we are just better people?

Paul says that his preaching was '*with a demonstration of the Spirit's power*' (2:4).

- How does what he says in 1:18 & 1:24 about the power of God help to explain this?

Read Romans 8:1-17

- What is the fundamental difference between a Christian and a non-Christian? (v.9)

In the Old Testament God gave the law, but merely knowing what God expects didn't enable his people to live it out?

- What has God done now? (v.1-4)

- What do you think Paul means by 'living according to the Spirit' (v.4)?

In v.9, Paul says, not that we *should* be controlled by the Spirit, but that we *are* controlled by him.

- How does that fact encourage us in our Christian lives?

- How does what Paul says in this passage set us free from fear?

WORK

Part of our Vision at Christ Church is that we are to be Making Disciples. But, as we've seen in this study, ultimately it is only the Holy Spirit who can bring someone to new birth. And so evangelism has two dimensions. On the human level, we need to plan for evangelism – much harder at present, but still possible, and hopefully more straightforward in the future). But at the same time, we need to be praying that the Holy Spirit will be at work through us, convicting people of sin and drawing them to Christ. Spend some time doing that.

3. CALLED TO SERVE

WELCOME

If you had to choose an animal to represent you, which one would you choose?

WORSHIP

Read / sing or listen to Graham Kendrick's song 'The Servant King' (From heaven you came).

Praise God for the things that it tells you about Jesus.

Thank God for times when other Christians have served you.

WORD

It has been said that a church can be like one of two types of ship. The first is a pleasure cruiser, where there are a few in the crew, and the rest are passengers. The second is a battleship, where everyone has a job to do, and the whole crew work with each other and for each other.

Paul's picture of the church is definitely one which means we should be like a battleship. But – how close is Christ Church to that sort of picture?

Read Acts 5:1-11

A bit earlier, in Acts 2:42-47, Luke gives us a picture of the very earliest church, freshly filled with the Holy Spirit, and committed to teaching, prayer, worship, and to fellowship. One way in which they expressed their new found fellowship was in selling their possessions to support one another materially.

Now look at the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

- What do you think was so serious about what they did?
- What do you think Peter meant when he said that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit?

Read Romans 12:1-8

- Why do you think Paul uses the imagery of *living sacrifices* to describe our response to God's mercy?

J.B. Phillips famously paraphrases v.2 as '*Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.*'

- In what ways are we influenced to conform to the world, especially in the way we treat others?
- How can the realisation that we are members of a body (v.3-8) prevent us from thinking too highly of ourselves (v.3)?

We are members of one body, and *'each member belongs to all the others'*, or to put it another way *'we are all dependant on one another'*.

- In what ways can this belonging to one another be shown within Christ Church, especially during a time when we can't meet together?
- In what ways are you dependant on others in the church?
- And In what way are they dependant on you?

Paul continues by listing some of the ways in which we need each other (v.6-8). He reminds us as well that these are 'gifts' from God – the tools for the job which God gives us. More of this next time, but for now look through this list.

- Why is each gift necessary?

Read Romans 12:9-21

- What should be the basis of all our relationships in the church?
- The list in v.9-16 of the ways in which we should function as a body is quite challenging! Which do you find hardest to do?

WORK

'From heaven Christ uses Christians as his mouth, his hands, his feet, even his smile.' (Jim Packer in 'Keep in step with the Spirit')

In what ways can you do these things for one another?

4. EQUIPPED TO SERVE

WELCOME

What is the best thing that someone else has ever done for you?

WORSHIP

Praise God for times when you have been aware of him being at work in your life. Especially thank him for any times when he has used someone else to help you or encourage you.

WORD

The challenges facing the church in this country are huge. For years we have seen declining congregations and increasing financial challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic which has meant that churches are closed has limited our ability to connect with the community, and although we have seen new people joining us for our live-streamed services on Sundays, how we continue to maintain those connections into the future is going to be a challenge.

It would be easy to become discouraged. But set against the challenges, we have huge blessings. The Holy Spirit is alive and active, he still equips God's people with all that is needed for our ministry. He does it by giving gifts to all of us. Our response to the challenges shouldn't be to panic, or frantically try to find human solutions – instead we need to allow the Spirit to be at work, using the gifts that he has given for the glory of our Lord Jesus./

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

- Why does God give us gifts? (v.10)
- What is their ultimate purpose? (v.11)

Hospitality (v.9), speaking, and serving (v.10) are all very ordinary activities.

- What is it that makes them spiritual gifts?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

- What do these verses teach us about the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts?

In v.8-11 Paul lists 9 of these gifts. Members of the group might like to mention any experiences that they have had of gifts which might come under these headings, but don't get bogged down in details – despite what some people say we don't know exactly what several of the terms Paul used actually mean. His emphasis here is on '*one Spirit, many gifts.*'

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

- How does Paul again emphasise the diversity of gifting?

5. ONE FOR ALL

- Since Paul has been stressing that all gifts are important (v.21-26) what do you think he means by 'the greater gifts' (v.31)?
- If gifts are given for building up the church, not for personal satisfaction, what gifts do you think are most needed in Christ Church at the moment?

Our vision as a church is to be Making Disciples, Growing Disciples and Being Disciples. But each element of the vision is dependent on the Holy Spirit being at work, and each requires different gifts to be used.

- How does the Holy Spirit work to fulfil each element of our vision?
- In doing this, are there gifts we need, but don't at present appear to have?

WORK

The New Testament is clear that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in them, and that the Spirit equips each Christian for ministry. What gifts do the members of your group think they might have? Are there gifts which you can see in each other?

How can these gifts be used to serve others within Christ Church?

WELCOME

If you could be part of any group (maybe a world class orchestra, or international sports team etc.), what would it be?

WORSHIP

Psalm 122 begins: *I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'* Over the last few months we have been finding out what it is like to have to live in isolation from other Christians – something that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have experienced for years. Hopefully it has made us value the church more. Praise God for making you part of his church, and for the brothers and sisters he has given you.

WORD

There are both big differences and big similarities between our world today and the world of the New Testament. Probably one of the biggest differences is that our society is much more individualistic than the one the first Christians lived in.

One way in which we see this individualism is in the emphasis on 'my rights', on 'doing things my way', and on 'having my needs met' – all slogans of our society. Surveys show that most people choose to do things (or not to do them) depending on what they expect to get out of them.

This easily spills over into the church, but it is so different to the picture that the New Testament gives us. Because New Testament Christianity is much less about what I get out of it, and much more about what I can put into it. It is not about me as an individual, but about us as a church. (In fact, in the New Testament, the idea of a Christian who was not an active part of a church would be a contradiction in terms!) All that we have explored over the past few weeks about the work of the Holy Spirit, and about the gifts he gives, is rooted in the church – we are given gifts to use for others.

Read Acts 6:1-7

- Why was it important that the workload in the early church was shared out?

- Do you think that the ministry of the word and prayer that the apostles devoted themselves to was more important than the other work?

- What was the result of this sharing of the work? (v.7)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Paul's concern was that the Corinthians should not see themselves as a body of *individual Christians* performing *their own* ministries, but as members of *the body of Christ*.

- What might make some members of Christ Church feel useless or envious of other parts of the body?
 - Have you ever felt this way?

- How does Paul respond to those who feel as if they don't matter in the church? (v.14-20)

- What might make some members of the church feel self-sufficient or superior? (v.21)

- How can we make every part of the body feel special? (v.21-26)

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Paul lists 4 ministries which God has given to the church (v.11-12). What is their purpose?

There is some uncertainty about what exactly these ministries involve, but the general idea seems to be:

- ❖ APOSTLES – Witnesses of the resurrection, and the authority behind the books of the New Testament.
 - ❖ PROPHETS – Those who speak God's words to others or to the church.
 - ❖ EVANGELISTS – Those who are able to explain the gospel in such a way as to bring others to repentance and faith.
 - ❖ PASTORS & TEACHERS – Those who help others understand and apply what the Bible says.
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- Why is each of these important?

 - Why should 'works of service' lead to spiritual maturity (v.12-13)?

6. MAKE LOVE YOUR AIM

Think of the list of gifts you compiled a couple of times ago.

- How can we make sure that they are used in such a way as to build unity?

WORK

How can using the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given you release others in Christ Church to use their gifts?

WELCOME

If you were shipwrecked on a desert island, what one luxury would you want to have with you?

WORSHIP

‘God is love’ (1 John 4:7& 16) Praise God for the love he has shown you – especially for any times when you have been particularly aware of his love. Especially thank God for Jesus – ‘This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.’ (1 John 4:9)

WORD

At the time of writing these studies, we have enjoyed amazing weather (what it will be like 2 months later as you do the study – who knows!) Our garden is coming alive with plants growing, and already our fruit trees are looking laden with fruit.

As has often been said, all that happens, not because the tree makes some spectacular effort, but because the conditions are right for the fruit to grow. And just as I want to see fruit grow on the trees in my garden, God wants to see fruit growing in my life. That fruit won’t grow because I make some special effort, but because I allow the Holy Spirit to grow it in me. As long as I make sure the conditions are

right (spending time in prayer, fellowship and reading God's word), the fruit will grow.

Read Galatians 5:13-26

It is such a well known passage – the Fruit of the Spirit. And as with so much of the New Testament, there is a tendency to read it individualistically. But Paul sets it in the context of our corporate life together (see v.14-15, 26)

- As each element of the fruit grows in individual Christians, how does that bless and strengthen the church?

Read 1 Corinthians 13

First in Paul's list of the Fruit of the Spirit is love. It would be impossible to think about love without turning to one of the most famous chapters in the Bible. It is so often used as the Bible reading at Weddings – but, of course, it wasn't written about weddings, but about life in the church.

- Why is love so important?

1 Corinthians 13 is set in the context of what Paul is writing about gifts. In the 3 other major passages in the New Testament which deal with spiritual gifts, the need for love is also stressed (see Romans 12:9; 1 Peter 4:7-11; Ephesians 4:2)

- Why do you think that Paul is so keen to stress the importance of love in the context of spiritual gifts?

- How does what Paul says in v.1-3 show the effects of gifts used without love?

- How can we know whether our own ministries are marked by love or by lovelessness?

- How does Paul define love? (v.4-7)

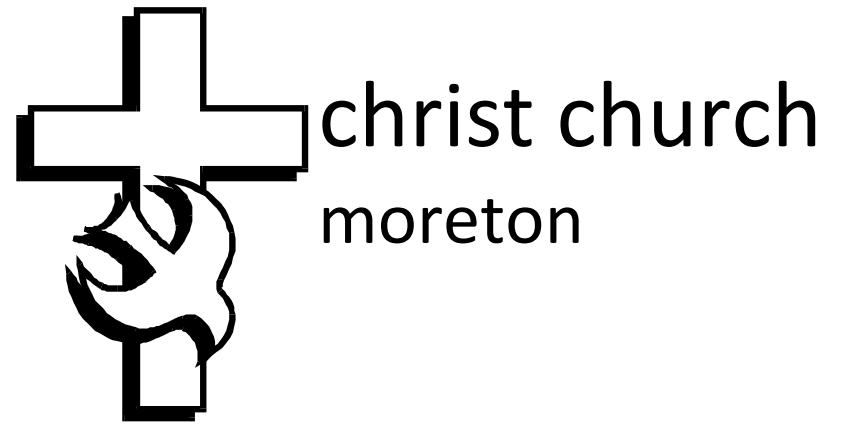
- Which of these aspects do you find most challenging?

- How can the love Paul writes of here lead to a healthy interdependence in our relationships within Christ Church, rather than individualism?

WORK

We have reached the end of this series, and our home-groups take a summer break. We'll be back in September – hopefully by then it might be possible to meet physically rather than remotely as we have been doing. But until then, please do keep encouraging and supporting one another. Let's make this our ongoing prayer:

'Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory'



making disciples
growing disciples
being disciples