

Presence for today

Questions

Way in

Can you think of ways that God has brought changes in your life or in the life of people you know well? What areas in your life do you think there is still plenty of change to take place?

Read **John 14:15-30**

1. When Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit he uses the word 'Counsellor' twice. This word could have been translated 'helper' or 'comforter' or 'advocate'. What images do these words bring to mind?

2. Look at the ways that Jesus explains the Holy Spirit as God the Father and Son dwelling in us (verses 17,18,20,23). How confident are you that the Holy Spirit lives in you? To what extent is the presence of the Holy Spirit something we earn or a gift from God (verse 26)?

3. We often feel unworthy of such an amazing gift and have doubts as to whether God is really living in us by his Spirit. Have a look at Ephesians 1:13-14. When does Paul say that God places his Spirit in us?

4. So we can be sure that God places the Holy Spirit in us when we become a Christian. The big question to ask is this: in what ways can the Holy Spirit change us? Look back through the passage and see what differences a deep work of the Spirit could make in your life (especially verses 23, 26 and 27).

5. The peace that the Holy Spirit brings is not so much a sense of tranquillity but more the 'order' of God in our lives. How does Galatians 5:22-26 explain what this 'order' might look like?

Concluding Prayer

Holy Spirit I want to know you more. I want to know and experience you like many of the great men and women of God have. Create in me a stronger desire to experience you in my life. Raise up a new generation of world changers who will do extraordinary things for your kingdom. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

False confidence

Questions

Way in

From childhood, what are the things that you have been taught to trust in for our lives as we grow up? Which have you found trustworthy, and which less so?

If you were to write a CV for your whole life (i.e. not just work-related things) what would be the things you are most proud of in your life?

Read **Philippians 3:1-7**

1. Paul is trying to protect the Philippian Christians from people in their midst who were trying to distort the message of Jesus. They were doing this by insisting that Christians who didn't come from a Jewish background should adopt Jewish customs, such as circumcision. Why does Paul, therefore, think it is important to prove his exemplary Jewish heritage?

2. As you reflect on Paul's 'spiritual C.V.' in verses 4-6, what strikes you about the list?

3. If you were writing a similar list about your own spiritual 'confidence', what would you write? Why?

4. How does Paul describe his past achievements? Why is Paul's attitude to his past so significant for both his readers and for those that oppose him?

5. One day, after church, a friend says to you, 'You're such a great Christian - the way you pray and your knowledge of the bible is just inspiring.' What would you say? Why?

6. It is noticeable that Paul doesn't condemn his past achievements. Rather he now knows that they are irrelevant compared to knowing Christ. What are the things that we might be tempted to have confidence in, rather than in Christ?

Quote for Reflection

'Paul was a man of incredible stature. I think it would be hard to disagree with the view that he is one of the six or seven most influential leaders in the history of the human race. One of the most influential people in history. He had enormous ballast, tremendous influence, incredible confidence. He moved ahead and nothing fazed him. And yet, in 1 Timothy, he says Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (1 Tim. 1:15). Not I was chief, but I *am* chief. Or 'I am the worst'. This is off our maps. We are not used to someone who has incredible confidence volunteering the opinion that they are one of the worst people. We are not used to someone who is totally honest and totally aware of all sorts of moral flaws – yet has incredible poise and confidence.' (Tim Keller)

Take some time to reflect on where Paul's confidence was placed (v3-4). Pray with others that your confidence would also be placed there.

Concluding Prayer

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