

God's Empowering Presence Week 5

These weekly studies are loosely based on the previous Sunday's sermon. If you missed it, you will find a recording on our website (www.knaphillbaptist.org.uk). They are designed for both Home Group discussion and/or personal reflection. Don't necessarily try to cover all the questions and discussion topics in your group at one sitting. You may like to think about them later in your own time.



The Spirit Filled Church

Read Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost Sunday is the day in the Church Calendar when we celebrate the first great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered church community in the Upper Room in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. 'Suddenly', Luke tells us, the Spirit of God came upon those first believers - and his coming was accompanied by three supernatural signs - a sound, a sight, and strange speech! Firstly, there came from heaven 'a sound like the blowing of a violent wind' and the noise 'filled the whole house where they were sitting' (Acts 2:2). Secondly, there appeared visibly to them 'what seemed to be tongues of fire' (Acts 2:3). And thirdly, 'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them' (Acts 2:4). These three experiences seemed like natural phenomena - wind, fire, and speech - yet, in reality, they were supernatural both in origin and character. These signs represented a new era of the Spirit of God. Jesus had told his disciples to wait in the city until they had been clothed with power from on high (Acts 1:8) and God led them to Pentecost. We too can experience our own personal Pentecost when God pours out his Spirit both into our lives but also releases his Spirit within us in new, powerful, supernatural ways. All 120 gathered in the Upper Room that day had the same experience of the Holy Spirit. This is what God wants for us. He wants us to be A Spirit Filled Church.

Questions and pointers for discussion/reflection

1. What do you think it means to be Spirit filled and what do you think are the marks of a Spirit filled church?
2. The first believers were 'all together in one place' (2:1) and 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (v.4). Does a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit increase unity in the church or cause division?
3. Has charismatic renewal been good for the Church? How?
4. Jesus expressly instructed his disciples to wait in the city until they had been baptised with the Holy Spirit (1:5,4), and God led them to Pentecost. They returned to Jerusalem (1:12) and 'all joined together constantly in prayer' (1:14). If Jesus had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, why were they praying? What does prayer do to us? What difference does it make?
5. The disciples experienced the Holy Spirit as a violent wind. Read John 3:8. What does this teach us about the Holy Spirit?
6. Read Exodus 3:1-5. God was speaking to Moses from the burning bush. Fire is a symbol of God's empowering presence. Reflect for a moment on what it means 'to stand on holy ground.'
7. Read Luke 3:15-18. John the Baptist described Jesus as the one who 'will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (v.16). What do you think is meant by verse 17 of this passage?
8. Hebrews 12:29 tells us that 'our God is a consuming fire.' How does this make you feel?
9. Read Malachi 3:1-3. How does this relate to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Is this the meaning of the 'tongues of fire' that the disciples saw alighting of each of them on the day of Pentecost?
10. A W Tozer wrote in his book The Way to Pentecost, 'The supreme need of the Church is fire.' What do you think he meant? Do you agree? How can we get on fire for God?
11. Jim Elliot was a missionary martyred in Ecuador in 1956 aged 28. He wrote, 'Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of other things'. Are you ignitable? What might 'the dread asbestos of other things' be for you? Have they ever caused you to grow cold and flat in your Christian walk? How can this be avoided?
12. When they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to speak in other tongues' (v.4). What do you think this means and what does it mean for you? Have a look at 1 Corinthians 14:1-5.