

"Perception, Purpose, Prayer"
20 May 2018
Little Trinity Anglican Church, Toronto

Discussion Questions

*Take as many as you want, in any order
(though it wouldn't be the worst idea to spend your entire group time on #7)*

Read John 14.15-27 and Acts 2.1-11

1. Some questions to uncover what your group thinks about the Holy Spirit (HS):
 - a. Who do you think the HS is? What do you think the HS does?
 - b. How often do you think about the HS? How important is the HS to your Christian discipleship? Do you talk to the HS?
 - c. Do you believe that the HS dwells within people? Does the HS dwell within you? How and when did/does that happen? Can/does the HS leave?
 - d. Have you ever had an experience of the HS? What happened? How did you know it was the HS? How do we distinguish experiences of the HS from other experiences (e.g., of other spirits, or physiological/psychological phenomena)?
 - e. Do you think the HS gives supernatural gifts/power in certain circumstances? Why/when/how?
 - f. What Scriptural texts guide your answers to the above questions? Do you hold any convictions about the HS that aren't grounded in/shaped by/accountable to Scripture?

The sermon suggested that the Holy Spirit 1) changes our perception of God from God without to God within, 2) transforms us for God's purpose, and 3) drives us to prayer.

Perception

2. What's the difference between God as an object of our belief (i.e., we believe *in* God in that we believe things *about* God, and we *trust* God) and God as the ground/basis of our belief (i.e., we can believe in God because we are in the HS/the HS is in us)? Do you experience both of these realities?
3. How do you understand what it means that the HS "dwells with" and "will be [is] in you" (John 14.17) and that Jesus and the Father "will come to" and "make [their] home in" the "one who loves Jesus" (John 14.23)? Does God live in you? How does that affect your life? How does it change how you are at work/in a traffic jam/at the grocery store/with someone difficult/when you're tempted/_____?

Purpose

4. What happens at Pentecost (see Acts 2)? What's the purpose of Pentecost? How does this purpose relate to God's broader purpose/mission as revealed in Scripture?
5. What connections (if any) do you see when reading the Pentecost story in parallel with the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1-9)?

6. How does the HS transform believers for God's purpose? Does it vary according to time and place? How do you see the

Prayer

7. The sermon suggests that we cannot "apply" preaching about the HS because we cannot produce the HS out of our own strength/will – and that a true awareness of our incapacity, paired with a sense of the stakes (God living in us) should create a chain reaction:

despair → desperation → longing → prayer for the HS to wash over us.

Do this as a group.

Extra Credit

8. Is the gift of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2) the same gift of tongues described in (e.g.) 1Corinthians 12.10?

9. Read Mark 3.28-30. What constitutes "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" and why is it an unforgivable sin?

The concluding prayer from the sermon was adapted from *The Fire of Your Life*, by Maggie Ross.

Almighty and ever-living God,
by your Holy Spirit in the burning bush, in chariots of fire,
and in tongues of flame
you have made your people partakers
in the radiance of your transfigured Christ:
Strengthen the hearts of your servants:
Give us courage in temptation and comfort in desolation;
Show us your paths in the desert
that we may find streams of living water;
Make us a whole offering for your people,
pure channels of your love,
and receive us into the fire of your life.
Amen.