

Word notes Sunday 11/03/2012 Tony Hodge
Spiritual Health - 1

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Ephesians 3:14-19

Paul's prayer for the Christians at Ephesus reflects God's heart for them and us – that we would connect with the Holy Spirit in our inner-most being - our spirit, that as a result Jesus would dwell in our hearts (our souls) and that being so rooted in love we would be empowered to really “get” the greatness of God, indeed to be filled “to the measure”.

We may not wake up feeling “full to the measure” every day and even if we do does that last through the day with all the pressures, trials and temptations it brings? Even so this is obviously Paul's desire for Christians. If we're not experiencing that then something is amiss or incomplete in us and we can be assured that God has more - any insufficiency is not on God's part since this is coming out of “His glorious riches”.

It is in our “inner-most being” that it all starts – our spirit. We know from scripture that we are spiritual beings (Zech 12:1, 1 Cor 2:11) and it is from there that true worship or communion with God flows (Jn 4:24). Our primary connection with God is spirit to spirit and nurturing that relationship is essential so that we may be strengthened in our inner being.

Once that connection is made and our spirit determines what goes on in our soul – the expression of who we are in our mind, will and emotions – and not the other way around, once these start to get in line then Christ himself dwells in our hearts. (NB that although the Greek “kardia” is translated as the physical heart it also means the centre of our non-physical life ie the soul.)

Here is the really important bit: as Christ dwells in us we are rooted and established in love, this enables us to really “get it” about God: how great he really is and how much we mean to him. This changes us from the inside out. Knowing we are loved is a key developmental process in our psyche (from the greek “psuche” or heart/soul). Unless we know we are loved and have a sense of belonging we struggle to develop a proper sense of self-esteem, confidence, achievement and respect of others or to feel respected. Knowing and growing in love is perhaps the most important thing that can happen in our lives. We may not have known that as children, or even now, but Paul's prayer is that we can **more than** know love – we can be rooted and established in love through Jesus and as a result thrive and grow!

What's more this love surpasses knowledge – “knowing about” God becomes “knowing God” and then grows into a deep-seated unshakeable awareness of His amazing greatness and closeness. It's no longer about what I know about God, how many scriptures I can recite by heart or even how long my quiet-time is. God now fills me “to the measure” – up to the brim and even overflowing and so I can live the abundant life promised, being able to rejoice in times of hardship against all the odds.

When our spirit is rightly aligned with God, and Christ dwells in our soul (mind, will emotions, thoughts etc – actually reigns there), then our bodies come into line – our actions (what we do), even our health. Wouldn't you like to be like that? Suffused with the fullness of God, more than knowing Him in your head, knowing His love so deeply within and flowing out that you can weather all kinds of storms?

How? the \$640,000 question! – see next week's talk but for a starting point let's look at our beliefs and attitudes that result. Do you really believe and know, deep in your inner-most being, such that no thought or emotion can question it, that God Loves you, has forgiven you and His Spirit lives in you? Love leads to significance, security and acceptance. If you don't believe God loves you'll have difficulty accepting His grace, and growing in Him.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

1 (a) Do you really believe and know, deep in your inner-most being so that no thought or emotion can question it, that God Loves you, has forgiven you and His Spirit lives in you?

(b) Probably we all have shaky moments, is there a pattern to these?

2 On The Marriage Course we encourage couples to find out which is their partner's main “love language” – do they receive love through gifts, through verbal affirmation, acts of service, quality time together

or physical touch, or maybe a mixture of these? What ways might there be for us to best connect with God “spirit to spirit” which might be our “spiritual love languages”? What works for you on a regular basis and what is useful for “emergencies”?

3 Watchman Nee says in “The Spiritual Man”: *“It is imperative that a believer knows he has a spirit, since every communication of God with man occurs there. If the believer does not discern his own spirit he invariably is ignorant of how to commune with God in the spirit. He easily substitutes the thoughts or emotions of the soul for the works of the spirit. Thus he confines himself to the outer realm, unable ever to reach the spiritual realm.”*

(a) Discuss that statement – in particular can anyone share their experience of how emotions and thoughts can get in the way of what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in our spirits?

(b) How do negative thoughts and emotions impact on our living “life to the full”?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Read Romans 1:16. How does this connect what we’ve been discussing with our call to evangelise?