

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 05 May - 10:30AM. Lance speaking
Sunday 12 May - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Pentecost Sunday 19 May - 10:30AM.
International Sunday and international food
Sunday 26 May - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 02 June - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Dr John Oakes (<https://evidenceforchristianity.org/>)
Sunday 14 July - 10:30AM. Visiting speaker Kerry Mathurin

New Creation - New Spirit

"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 11:19 NIV11)



Ezekiel made this remarkable prophecy many centuries before the time of Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, Peter sees a connection between these prophecies, the words of Joel and what is taking place in his time:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." (Acts 2:17 NIV11)

Transformed people who look like Jesus don't develop out of sheer willpower. They grow because God's Spirit is in them and at work. This is not an exclusively New Testament idea either.

"So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." Zechariah 4.6

We might start in the right place, but where are we right now?

"Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" Galatians 3.3

Here is your question for the week - who is doing the work to make you more like Jesus? You, or the Spirit?

Aren't I supposed to work for Jesus?

Isn't discipleship hard work? Jesus was often hungry and thirsty, as were his disciples. Am I saying following Jesus is a piece of cake?

Not at all. Loving people the way Jesus did is demanding. Cooperating with Jesus for our spiritual growth requires conscious self-sacrifice. However, the point here is where our *confidence* lies.

Paul put it well when writing to the Philippians. If you're talking about talent, skills and gifts, Paul had them to the max. But those, he understood, were all matters of the flesh, not the Spirit.

"For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless." Philippians 3.3-6

He put no confidence in the flesh because it has no divine power to change him.

Is the Spirit at the core of my Christian life?

Jesus said it was better for us that he went away so that the Spirit could come.

“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16.7

Let's face it Paul was a very busy man. He worked hard. However, in his 14 letters, he references the Spirit 160 times. Seems like it was a big deal to him. Where does transformation come from? Where is the power? It is in the Lord who is the Spirit:

“...we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV11)

Signs we may not be in tune with the Spirit

- Talking, when praying would be a better activity. Prayers can be spoken or listening.
- Distracting ourselves with social media etc. when we could be serving, reading the Scriptures or praying (speaking or listening).
- Paying too much attention to the voices of our critics.
- Busyness. Hyperactivity can be a sign of attempting to prove our worth instead of accepting the worth given to us by God's grace.

Some ways to live in the power of the Spirit

- Work enough margin into your life to create the space for God to speak to you.
- Eliminate distractions by turning off notifications and unsubscribing from newsletters, apps and media feeds.
- Turn up the volume of helpful voices and turn down the volume of unhelpful voices.
- Practice consistent times of silence and solitude.
- Ask God for grace in abundance—both for others and yourself.

For reflection

God is working for our good (Romans 8.28) and doing so through the Spirit:

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the

thewatfordchurch@gmail.com

Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27 NIV11)

Timothy Keller writes about this passage saying: *“Prayer is the way to experience a powerful confidence that God is handling our lives well, that our bad things will turn out for good, our good things cannot be taken from us, and the best things are yet to come.”* Prayer, 73

- Which Scriptures help you to be confident in God growing Christ in you?
- When was the last time you read a book on spiritual growth?
- What does it mean to you to depend on the Spirit?
- Could you discuss these questions with a friend this week and support one another?

Your brother, Malcolm

Correction

Last week I mistakenly wrote that the unity discussions were taking place that weekend. Instead, they are happening over this weekend. My apologies for any confusion caused.

Malcolm

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