

How do we get the confidence to speak up?

Aim of study: to show that boldness to share our faith only comes through the Holy Spirit and we need to yield our lives to his leadership. Fear hinders us from speaking up for God.

Review: Ask two or three to read their Anything to Declare answers. Encourage honest helpful critique. Is it clear? Is there jargon phrases in it? Would it encourage the listener to ask more questions?

Launching question: What hinders us from being more definite and open about our faith?

Distribute notes and read the following:

All your life you have wanted to try skydiving. You have a close friend who has tried it and waxes lyrical about the experience. Everything about the challenge motivates you. You finally decide to go for it. You phone the flying centre; find out how much it will cost; save up the money; complete a course of instruction on how to prepare, how to jump, how to fall, how to pull the cord. You investigate the reliability of the equipment, the instructor and the safety procedures. The day comes; you turn up at the airport. Now the hour has arrived, you're quaking in your boots. Fear in this situation is normal.

What is the best way for this person to handle his fear?

Trust safety of parachute / take step of trust / will only experience benefit of parachute if he takes that step of faith / not to trust feelings

Divide group into 4 & give each small group one passage to read and answer the 3 questions. Get feedback after a few minutes.

John 14:16-18; John 14:25-27; John 15:26-27; John 16:8-11

In John 14-16, Jesus teaches the disciples more about this vital, personal resource he promises to send.

- How will the Holy Spirit help us?
- How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit?
- How will the Holy Spirit help others?

Counsellor, companion, guide – to us just as Jesus was to the disciples. Christ's replacement / with and in believers / divine tutor / brings truth / convinces people of the truth of the message of Jesus

Remind the group that the Holy Spirit is God, not an 'it'. He is the Spirit of Jesus. God is Father Son & Spirit. [H₂O is a liquid, solid and vapour – which one is H₂O?] The Spirit takes up residence in the believer at the moment of conversion.

John 15:1-17

1. How does Jesus describe the relationship between Christians, himself and his Father?

Jesus – the vine (the main stem), the Father the vineyard keeper, us the branches

2. What is to be the outcome of this relationship? (15:1-8,16)

Fruit / on the increase / takes time / involves transforming our lifestyle to be more like Jesus / involves relationships – how we look after others' needs / should be lasting benefit to others

3. In what way could *lost* people who come to faith in Christ be classed as 'fruit that lasts'?

A product of our witness who will be with Christ for eternity

4. What is God's part in the process of producing fruit? (v 1-8)

It's God's business to produce fruit – his presence, life & strength working through us that produces fruit. God trims the non-productive parts away.

5. What is our responsibility in the fruit-producing process?

To remain in Christ

6. What does it mean for us personally to *remain* or *abide* in Christ? (See John 14:15 & 21; Galatians 5:16,17,22-25; John 7:37,38)

Jesus has our best interests in mind / we show our trust by thanking him for difficulties he allows to come into our lives / trust him to equip us to do what he asks us to do

7. Jesus said in verse 4, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you". To whom does the 'I' in that statement refer? (see John 14:17-19)

Holy Spirit. When Jesus says "I will come to you" he is referring to his Spirit, the one who would be sent to be with you forever. The Holy Spirit is the sap of the vine.

Acts 4:5-13, 24-31

1. How were the disciples transformed in their witness for Christ, by the coming of the Holy Spirit?

Changed from fearful to bold. [What is 'to be filled with the Spirit'? - see Ephesians 5:18,19 - person drunk with wine is influenced by wine; a person filled with the Spirit is controlled by the Spirit.]

2. Think about the story of the scared sky-diver. How does this illustration relate to us as we look for opportunities to share our faith?

Being scared is normal. Instead of trusting our fears, we need to act in obedience and trust that Jesus will do as he promised. Our 'parachute' is the Holy Spirit.

Ask - In what do we put our faith?

Depend on Jesus - the trustworthiness of his promises, not our feelings

3. When will we experience the Holy Spirit's help in our witness?

If Jesus is at the centre of our life we will follow his leadership and, at the appropriate moment speak up for him, trusting that his Spirit will work in us and alongside us and in the other person. We won't experience this until we speak. God wants us to walk by faith not by sight.

4. Can you remember a situation where you sensed the Holy Spirit helping you to speak up about Jesus to someone?

Encourage group to share, then invite them to read through the next section quietly.

Apply - personally

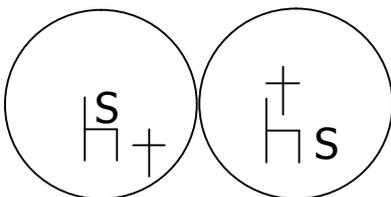
For Jesus to be at the centre of our life, self must get out of the driving seat. Otherwise, our Christian life will be stuck on the level of human self-effort.

- Is there any un-confessed, self-centred attitude or action in my life that is short-circuiting my relationship with God my Father?

If so, confess it now and know the reality of God's forgiveness.

- Am I ready to let Jesus take central place?

Consider the following two diagrams:



If you are a Christian, the spirit of Jesus Christ has taken up residence in your life. But he may not have his rightful place. Self (represented by S) may be running the show. (see left hand diagram). Perhaps you have handed over the driving seat to Jesus in the past but have taken the controls again. Maybe you want to ask Jesus back into the driving seat.

As a way of expressing your trust in Christ, you could say this:

Lord Jesus, thank you for forgiving my self-centredness. I want to allow you to take your rightful place at the centre of my life. Thank you for being willing to live in me. Help me to trust you for the courage and power to reach out to lost people by speaking up for you. Amen.

Pray

That God will help us walk in the power of the Holy Spirit this week, moment by moment.

Pray for one of the names on Five in Focus.

Before next time...

Continue praying for your Five in focus

Be ready to share your answers to 'Anything to Declare?' next time if you haven't already

Pray for an opportunity to use your answers to 'Anything to declare' in a conversation with someone.

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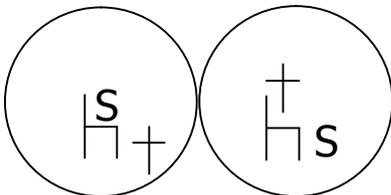
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