

Home group notes - w/b 5th Jan 2015 'Shine like stars...'

Take Motto cards for all group members not at church on Sunday

Use as much or as little as you wish. Allow time for prayer even if you cut short some of the study. You don't have to use all of these notes, and it doesn't matter if you get diverted into something else the group needs to study.

Read Phil 2:12-13 What do you make of '... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling'?

- If you have been a Christian for a long time, especially if you can't remember a time when you didn't believe, how do you keep your faith fresh and active?
- If you are a relatively new Christian, are you dependant on someone who brought you to faith, or whom you see as your main inspiration? If so, how can you take more responsibility for your own faith – Eg if the significant person were no longer here?

Why 'fear and trembling'? NB **Not** *fear that you are not good enough, but fear in the sense of awe before God the creator and redeemer, and of being given the immense responsibility of verse 5.*

- If you (or you might be able to help someone you know) are fearful of losing your faith, or of not being worthy of God's love, what verses can you share?
- How do you sense the awe and wonder? You may be able to help one another. New Christians are often better at this. So are people who have a constant battle with something which reminds them of the powerlessness of human nature alone

But see verse 13: it is not actually we who have to strive to prove anything – God is already at work in us. How easy do you find the balance between relaxing in God (knowing his presence and promise) and being active to fulfil his will?

- Do you find it easy to ask people to come to events, Alpha, etc?
- If not, why not? Again usually those who are newest to faith find it easiest to invite others – why?

Read Phil 2:14-18 Notice different translations of verse 16 – motto is taken from GNB. Greek word means both 'to hold on to' and 'to hold out'. So either / both hold firmly yourself, and/or offer it to others.

- How do you hold on to the word/message of life? Are you in need of encouragement to do this?
- Is it **really important** to you that others are given it? *This is the root of many excuses/misgivings about evangelism. If you don't believe in heaven and hell, what incentive is there?* How can you help each other to pray and invite others to faith? (*The forthcoming Beautiful Lives course should help*)

Think about some of the pictures brought to mind by 'shining like stars'. In the ancient world there was no light pollution... stars were seen as beautiful; signs of God; prophetic; the prime aid to navigation; compass bearings; light givers when the moon was not visible; delicate (compared with the sun); tellers of stories (constellations); dynamic.

How might our church(es) be like that? How can you make a start? See verses 14-15, and 17-18.

Pray the motto verse over each other and begin to pray for more boldness in proclaiming the Good News while we can. Pray for those who need to know the truth more firmly for themselves before trying to reach others. Give thanks for one another's gifts, especially for new Christians who can sometimes feel as though they don't know enough, yet are actually used amazingly by God.