

‘Poplar trees by flowing streams’

The work of the Holy Spirit in His church

“I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground: I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams”

[Isaiah 44.3f]

This short series of studies looks at some significant aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ’s church, as He brings into being and nurtures a new community of faith which anticipates the glory of the age to come.

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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5. Eph.5.15-33 & 1 Tim.2.1-15 [w/b Sun. 17th June 18]

“.. submit to ne another out of reverence for Christ ..”

These are passages which can generate some strong feelings, and with which many, for a variety of reasons, struggle: bear that in mind as you meet and speak with others!

We've seen already how the Holy Spirit orchestrates the life of His church (1 Cor.12.4-11). In this week's passages the apostle Paul rehearses how that impacts the complementary ministries which men and women exercise together for the glory of Christ, in both the home and the church: and he also explains *why* the Holy Spirit so orders our shared life.

As a help to seeing why we land here in our understanding of the complementary nature of these ministries, those with internet access may find this [link](#) to a couple of papers (1 short, 1 longer!) useful as background reading: these papers were prepared by The Village Church for their members: Claire Smith's book, "God's Good Design", will also be helpful.

[There may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group - start with question 1 and try to ensure that you also look at questions 4, 5 and 7. As always leave good time for shared and mutually supportive prayer.]

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1. **Read Eph.4.1-7.** Paul begins applying the great truths of the gospel at this point in his letter by underlining the importance of our working at the unity we have in Christ. These verses provide a helpful and necessary starting point for a study such as this.

What qualities are pointed to here as being crucial to our keeping the unity of the Spirit? What will this mean for the way you work through these passages in your Group?

How does this passage highlight both our *equality*, and yet at the same time the *differentiation* in function we'll have?

2. Read Eph.5.15-17. Paul explains why there is a need for us to take particular care as to how we live out our lives and to think through in the light of God's revealed will what that will mean.

What does Paul mean by declaring that "*the days are evil*"?

In such a context why is there all the more need for care in understanding what the Lord's will is?

3. Read Eph.5.18. The exhortation Paul addresses here to '*be filled with the Spirit*' is pivotal for the whole section: it is framed as an instruction and thus points to action we are to take.

Read Eph.1.13-14: if Christians have already been given the Holy Spirit, what is Paul demanding of believers in now instructing them to '*be filled with the Spirit*'?

Read Col.3.15-17: how does this parallel passage in Colossians shed light on the instruction to '*be filled with the Spirit*'?

4. **Read Eph.5.18-21.** Paul elaborates on the ways in which he expects our being 'filled with the Spirit' to find expression.

In terms of vv.18-20 what is to characterize the way we relate to those around us?

How might that be fostered within our fellowship?

What's meant by the command to 'submit to one another'?
And why does it matter?

5. **Read Eph.5.21-33.** This *submissive* attitude is now applied by Paul to the context of marriage, and to the way in which husband and wife are to complement each other within marriage.

What does Paul say marriage is depicting?

What are the different 'roles' which wives and husbands are to play in their married life, and why is it important that they fulfill these different roles in their marriage?

Paul defines the 'headship' of the husband by reference to Christ's being the 'head' of the church: how will that find expression in the relationship between husband and wife?

6. **Read 1 Tim.2.1-15.** At the heart of this passage is the statement that God “*wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (v.4): the way the Holy Spirit orders the relationship between men and women in the church is with a view to making known God’s glory and the grace of the gospel.

Men and women are different! What are characteristic failings, first of men (v.8) and then of women (vv.9-10), which can obstruct the truth of the gospel being clearly proclaimed and to which Paul’s instructions in vv.8-10 allude? (*NB - he’s not saying that women shouldn’t pray or pray out loud! Look back at 1 Tim.2.1 and see 1 Cor.11.5*)

How might this apply to you?

7. **Read 1 Tim.2.11-15.** Paul clearly, and gladly, affirmed a wide range of high-profile, significant ministries exercised by women: in the ordering of His church’s life by the Holy Spirit it’s this one specific ministry - teaching, and having authority over, men - which women are not to exercise.

What two reasons are given for this?

And what bearing does each statement have on this issue?