

IN CHRIST

CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Confident in Christ (Talk given by Richard Saint on 01/09/19)

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging?
3. How confident in Christ do you feel today?
4. How might being confident in Christ affect your daily life?
5. If God has begun a good work in you, how might this internal change be reflected externally in your life?
6. When life is tough, difficult, or your plans are not working out, how easy do you find it to remain confident that God is in control?
 - a. What might help you to remain confident in all circumstances or help someone else who is going through tough times?

2. Living in Christ (Talk given by Keith Brindle on 08/09/19)

The first part of Keith's talk focussed on Paul's sharing of the gospel whilst in prison and during the 2nd part he focussed on verse 21, 'For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.'

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging?
3. Paul shared the gospel in the most unlikely of circumstances to the most unlikely of people. How do we share the gospel today? (How do we not share the gospel today?)
4. How can we encourage one another to share the gospel? (Does anyone have a testimony of being a part of someone's journey to faith?)
5. At some point, if we want others to know God's love for them, we need to talk about Jesus. The best way to do so is by telling your own story. Sharing what Jesus means to you. What would be essential to your story? Could you share some of your story now?
6. Keith focussed much of his talk on verse 21 'For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.' What do you live for? (money, status, happiness, good health, etc). How do we make these (often good) things not compete with, but come under and be a part of what it means to live in and for Christ?
7. Keith shared what his wife Anna and her family are currently going through presently. There are many others in our church family who are going through tougher times. The Christian faith doesn't shield us from the realities of life. Someone once wrote that 'The way to know joy in every circumstance is to know Christ in every circumstance.' For some of us who are going through difficult stuff 'The way to getting through every circumstance is to know Christ in every circumstance' may be closer to the truth. How do we, in those difficult circumstances know that Christ is with us?
8. Can we share some of the difficult stuff we are going through and pray for one another.

3. One in Christ. Part 1. (Talk given by Mike Wilmott on 15/09/19)

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging?
3. In his letters, Paul often urges the churches to be united/like-minded. Why does he see it as so important, and what are the benefits of working together?
4. We won't always agree on everything - How should we as Christians handle conflicting views?
5. Paul describes the Philippians as 'citizens of heaven' (v27, also 3.20). Do you think of yourself as 'a citizen of heaven'? What does it mean to be such a citizen? (Might be helpful here to think of the rights and privileges Roman citizens had in Philippi and compare/contrast those with the ones enjoyed (?) by citizens of heaven.)
6. Paul mentions love, fellowship, compassion and humility – how can we make these an integral part of our lives?
7. Does 'citizenship of heaven' guarantee an earthly life of peace and prosperity?
8. How can we better reflect the grace and love of Jesus?
9. What may be stopping you having a 'bigger heart' for Christ?
10. One day, a visitor arrived at a church service. At the end, he approached the Minister and asked 'What kind of church are you? The vicar turned to one of his church members and asked "Our visitor wants to know what kind of church we are'. The member paused to think and then said, 'Open to God'. If someone walked into St James and asked the same question, what would you say?

4. One in Christ. Part 2. (Talk given by Richard Saint, 29/09/19)

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging about the talk?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging about the talk?
3. What do you find most often captures your gaze?
4. What aspect of Paul's portrait of Jesus struck you most?
5. How might we help each other to fix our gaze upon Jesus?
6. How might expressing the humility of Jesus affect our relationships?

5. Obedient in Christ (Talk given by Steve Ibbetson, 13/10/19)

This is a dense passage and the sermon only touched on some aspects of it.

1. Discuss what caught your attention. What might have been missed?
2. Your thoughts on the difference between religious obedience and faithful obedience
3. Obedience - is it an order or is it submission to authority or a mix of both?
4. Marks of obedience:
 - a. Apostles - how are we messengers for St James and Jesus?
 - b. Witness the risen Christ
 - c. Generous
 - d. Selfless
 - e. risk takers
 - f. Servant - service beyond what is required and this service is at a person's personal expense.
 - g. Concern for the well-being of others
5. What do we need to address personally and as a church?
6. How does St James display these marks of obedience?
7. What could we improve on?
8. If we are being obedient in Christ why might there be grumbling or arguing?

6. Righteous in Christ (Talk given by Keith Brindle, 27/10/19)

1. What has been most striking from the reading the talk Keith gave?
2. Paul lists his impressive religious qualifications in Philippians 3:5-6. What similar things do people today think will make them acceptable to God?
3. What is Paul's view of those religious qualifications now? (See verses 7 and 8.)*
4. Paul no longer puts any confidence in who he is or what he has done. According to verse 8, who is he placing his confidence in now – and why?
5. What does it mean for us as followers of Jesus to “consider everything a loss” (verse 8)? (See Luke 14:33.)
6. We must ‘watch out’ (Philippians 3:2). If we think God will accept us because of the good things we’ve done, or that we have to earn God’s love as if Christ had not done enough. What areas of your life do you need to ‘watch out’ wrt feeling you need to get them right before you can be right with God?
7. What kind of righteousness has Paul now gained, according to verse 9?
8. How can you and I get this righteousness? (See verse 9.)

* Paul's religious credentials. Circumcision/circumcised (v 3, 5): For Jewish people, this is a sign that a man is one of God's people. Some taught that circumcision is necessary for a Christian to be acceptable to God, but Paul knows only Christ is necessary. God ... Spirit ... Christ Jesus (v 3) | Scripture reveals God to be three “persons” in one: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Spirit. Tribe of Benjamin (v 5): All Jews came from one of twelve tribes. Benjamin was one of only two tribes that kept following God in the Old Testament. Hebrew (v 5): Another word for a Jewish person. Pharisees (v 5): A group of Jews who followed religious rules and customs very strictly.

7. Transformed in Christ (Talk given by Paul Jakeman on 3/11/19)

1. What do you remember about the sermon? Were you encouraged or daunted?
2. What do you think are Paul's "goal" and "prize"? (See verses 10-11.)
3. Is Christianity just about avoiding hell and going to heaven? Read again verses 10-14 and see what you think.
4. How do you understand the idea that we should "become what you already are"?
5. What are the sharp contrasts between the enemies of Christ (verse 19) and the disciples of Christ (verse 20-21)?
6. This week, how can we "press on toward the goal" (verse 14) of knowing Christ and becoming more like him?

8. Rejoicing in Christ (Talk given by Richard Saint on 17/11/19)

1. What did you find most helpful / encouraging about the talk?
2. What did you find most difficult / challenging about the talk?
3. What helps you when you are facing seemingly impassable walls?
4. In the passage (verse 8), Paul asks the Philippians to think on things that are true, noble, pure, admirable etc...
5. What things do you try and focus on to expand your field of view from difficulties?
6. What does the peace of God that transcends all understanding feel like to you?
7. How can we help, support, and pray for each other in times of anxiety, conflict, or difficulty?

9. Content in Christ (Talk given by Keith Brindle on 24/11/19)

1. What has been most striking for you during this session?
2. If you're being honest, how would you finish this sentence: "I can be content, as long as _____"?
3. If we currently feel discontent, what would Paul say to encourage us? (See Philippians 4:11-12.)
4. Where does Paul find true contentment, according to Philippians 4:13? (See also 1:21, 3:10-11 and 4:7.)
5. Paul is in chains as he writes. He's been "hungry" and "in want," and has had many "troubles" (4:12, 14). Yet he is content in Christ. Briefly skim through Philippians to find some of the things that make this possible.
6. Which of these realities do you most struggle to believe?
7. Now that the In Christ series is finished, what steps would you like to take next? Are there any resolutions you'd like to make, or is there anything your brothers and sisters in Christ could help you with?