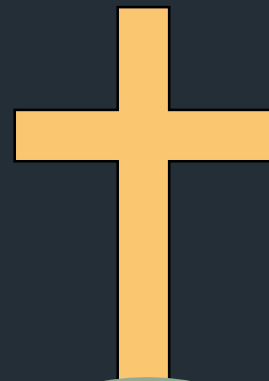




Sacred

Communion | Baptism | Your Body | The Church | Scripture



Sacred



Sacred means 'set apart', consecrated to God. Sacraments are 'outwards signs of invisible grace' and historically protestant Churches hold two distinct sacraments, Baptism and 'Holy Communion'. In this series we want to look at what is really sacred? Perhaps ultimately 'all things', the whole of Creation is to be sacred, and one understanding of Christian mission is to bring all things into a sacred relationship with God. We start however with some very particular things that are central to our discipleship.

Small Group Study Guide | 2nd October

Topic: Communion

Bible passages: 1 Corinthians 11: 17-35

Introduction

How do you feel about Holy Communion, The Lord's supper? Does it inspire and move you or does it make you feel awkward or nervous? Do we prepare for Communion adequately? How has our understanding of communion been formed? Have we a particular Church tradition? Please share your experience with your group.

Questions

- a) What is the place of communion in worship? How does it help our relationship with God?
 - b) v27-29 speaks about taking communion in an 'unworthy manner' and the need to 'judge ourselves'. What does that mean?
 - c) What is the relationship between the 'body of Christ' – the Church, and 'the body of Christ' 'bread and wine'? Which is Paul inviting us to consider?
 - d) What is the spiritual power in Communion? What does communion help us to 'get hold of' from God?
 - e) What does it mean to 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' v 26. ? How should we celebrate communion when people who are not yet Christians are present?
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Small Group Study Guide | 9th October

Topic: Baptism

Bible passages: Matthew 28:19. Roman 6:1-7. Acts 2:37-43.

Introduction

Jesus gave us two direct commands as His followers, two things that mark our identification with him, Baptism and Communion. At Woodlands we practice 'believers' baptism' by immersion, which we feel is the best interpretation of Jesus teaching. Other Christians practice infant baptism, which became particularly common after St Augustine (354-430 A.D.) who helped formulate the doctrine of 'original sin' and who saw baptism as essential for salvation, which in times of high infant mortality led to early baptisms.

Questions

- a) Why did Jesus command us to get baptised?
- b) What is the link between baptism and forgiveness of sin?
- c) What is the link between Baptism, discipleship and obedience (Matthew 3:15)
- d) What is the link between baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit?
- e) Why do you think Christians don't get baptised?

Small Group Study Guide | 16th October

Topic: Your Body

Bible passages: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Introduction

Christians believe that to be human means to have a body! That body is a vehicle to express what it means to be made in the image of God (who is Spirit- wow!). That body has been doubly hallowed because God became incarnate, and Jesus has a resurrection body. Your body is not irrelevant to your faith, but body soul and spirit are integrated in the human self.

Questions

- a) What does it mean to 'love' yourself as you love your neighbour?
 - b) What does it mean for your body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit?
 - c) How are our ethics affected by an understanding of the body as Holy? How does relate to the sanctity of human life?
 - e) How does our physical behaviour (around say sex/alcohol/drugs/food/exercise) have impact on what is a 'holy' thing, and how does it affect our spiritual relationship with God (if at all)?
 - f) How integrated are body, mind and spirit? Can we separate them?
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Small Group Study Guide | 23rd October

Topic: The Church

Bible passages: 1 Peter 2:5. Ephesians 5:25-32. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Introduction

There are many pictures of what the Church is in scripture, but one image of the Church is that she is the Bride of Christ. Individually we are not the bride of Christ! It's corporately that we can experience that special dimension of being the objects of the love of Jesus the Bridegroom. The Church is precious because Jesus loves her and is making her holy. The Church is sacred because the Church is 'a temple not made with hands'. We are the dwelling place of God.

It's very easy to disparage the Church, but Jesus is committed to her and so should his followers be. It can be that the Church loses a sense of her sacred devotion to Jesus but He is always calling her back to her first love.

Local churches are manifestations of the one Church. We seek Unity because of that. We hold Church precious because it belongs to Jesus. We hold it lightly if we are leaders because it doesn't belong to us.

Questions

- a) How would you define Church? How does the triangle (Up, In, Out) match your experience of the function of Church?
- b) How do our individual lifestyles affect the Church as a Holy people?
- c) What does it mean to be privileged as the people of God, the Bride of Christ, a temple where the Holy Spirit is? Are there aspects of God and ways of relating to God that can only be found corporately, in a Church community or setting? If so what are they?
- d) Why is it important for God's people (ecclesia) to gather?
- e) What is the difference between a Sunday gathering of worshippers, and the full nature of 'Church'?
- f) What does it mean to 'belong' to Woodlands Church?

Small Group Study Guide | 30th October

Topic: Scripture

Bible passages: 2 Peter 1:12-21. 2 Timothy 3:15-16.

Introduction

Our bible references refer to Scripture as ‘God breathed’. Things that are God breathed are sacred. God’s breath gives life. God breathed on humanity (Adam) the Church (John 20) and the Scriptures. The Bible is a remarkable and unique book, and authoritative to us at Woodlands, the wellspring of our knowledge of God. It is also a document with the hallmarks of human reflection, editing and theological understanding on it. How do we handle it? It is not ‘untouchable’ in the way some Muslims consider the Koran. We consider the ‘perfect’ word of God is Jesus!

Questions

- a) In what way is Scripture sacred? Does sacred mean ‘infallible’ which is one formulation some traditions put on scripture? Humans and the Church (both ‘God breathed’) are not infallible! What would ‘infallible’ mean in the context of a text made up of many books compiled by humans over many centuries inspired by the Holy Spirit?
 - b) How does The Holy Spirit help us interpret the Bible? How do ‘Word and Spirit’ work together?
 - c) What does it mean to see Scripture through the lens of the Living Word, Jesus? How does our view of Jesus as God’s complete revelation of Himself help us grapple with parts of the Bible that seem remote or even cruel to us?
 - d) How important is the Old Testament in understanding the New Testament? What tools do you use to help you understand the Bible?
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