

**Other dates this term**

**Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept:** Sundays@7 with Wilf and Julie Mellors

**Wed 5<sup>th</sup> Sept:** *PILOT* Church Prayer Evening, 7.45pm

**Mon 10<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Evening of prayer for church building project,  
7.30pm to 9.30pm

**Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> Sept:** Small group leaders training evening, 7.45pm, at  
The Centre

**Sun 7<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Sundays@7 with Anthony Delaney

Our vision at St Mary's and the Centre is **"to make a difference where we are as we share faith for life"**.

Our vision is to be living that out in the following five ways...

by **celebrating** our faith in Jesus through our worship in the widest sense;

by **welcoming** people and helping them to belong to the church family;

by **becoming** a healing community where people find a place where they are helped in their pain and struggles;

by **equipping** disciples 'to make a difference wherever they are';

and by **delighting** in sharing our faith in relevant ways



# St Mary's Upton and The Centre

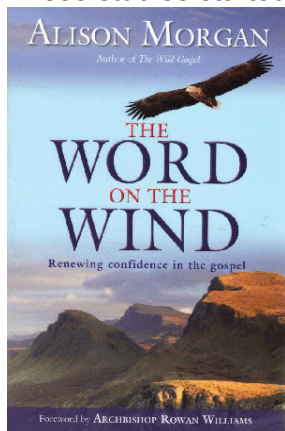


## Small Group notes on the life of the Holy Spirit

September - October 2012

## How to use these studies

These studies started out after reading Alison Morgan's book: *The Word on the Wind – Renewing confidence in the gospel*.



Alison Morgan has also written the *Rooted in Jesus* course used to teach and equip disciples in countries like DR Congo. The studies in this course pick up on themes in both the book and the course.

You don't have to buy or read the book to get something out of the studies, although you may find you want to as the series gets going. The title *The Word on the Wind* was inspired by the author's love of eagles and

the picture in Isaiah 40:31. The word "Spirit" means wind and breath and Word and Spirit are key resources to enable us to live as God intends, reaching our potential as his people and as ministers of the gospel.

If you do want a copy of the book, order one from Eleanor and Peter Davies. If you want to know more about the book, or *Rooted in Jesus*, go to [www.resource-arm.net](http://www.resource-arm.net).

Each study accompanies a Sunday sermon looking at areas where the Holy Spirit helps us in discipleship, mission and our life together. A reading from the book of Acts is the starting point for each study and could be read before to prepare.

Studies are divided into four parts (4 Ws) and members of the group can each lead a different part.

**WELCOME** - A brief icebreaker (5 to 10 mins)

**WORSHIP** - Use the suggested idea or your own (10 to 15 mins)

**WORD** - Not just reading the Bible, but also applying it. This can include prayer times as you work through the questions.

**WITNESS** - Keep time to focus your energy outside of the group. Everyone needs to make sure that time is left for this section.

### Leading the studies using Welcome, Worship, Word, Witness.

At the start of the series, please work out as a group which weeks you will be meeting and decide which study will be looked at in those weeks. Members of your group can decide which section they want to lead. It is a great opportunity for everyone to join in.

<i>The Holy Spirit and...</i>	<i>Welcome</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Witness</i>
<b>...the life of mission.</b> <i>Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-41</i> <i>Sun Sep 9th</i>				
<b>...the life of the word.</b> <i>Acts 8:1-8</i> <i>Sun Sep 16th</i>				
<b>...the life of service.</b> <i>Acts 6:1-7</i> <i>Sun Sep 23rd</i>				
<b>...the life of prayer.</b> <i>Acts 4:23-34</i> <i>Sun Sep 30th</i>				
<b>...the life of gift.</b> <i>Acts 10:9-23 &amp; 10:44-48</i> <i>Sun Oct 7 or 14<sup>th</sup> (11 &amp; 6.30)</i>				



## ***The life of the Holy Spirit.***

### **1. The Holy Spirit & the life of mission. Acts 1 & 2**

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#### **WELCOME**

It has been an Olympian summer. What has been the highlight - Olympian or otherwise - for you?

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#### **WORSHIP**

This study looks at Pentecost. Pentecost is a celebration, a festival. Find some ways to celebrate in worship. (Cake may feature.)

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#### **WORD**

The studies look at the book of Acts and the life of the Holy Spirit in inspiring mission and equipping Jesus' disciples.

**Qn 1. Read Acts 1 v 4-8.** In v4, Jesus called his disciples together to wait for the Holy Spirit who would give them power to be witnesses. Luke records that they "joined constantly together in prayer" (1v14). How do we seek God in prayer? Do we expect the Holy Spirit to fill us and use us? How do our lives reflect this?

**Qn 2. Read Acts 2 v1-21.** It was the day of Pentecost (*50<sup>th</sup> day after the Sabbath of the Passover week, when Jews celebrated the harvest. Exodus 23:16*). What were the signs that the Holy Spirit was present in a new way and what might be the significance of these signs?

**Qn 3. Looking at Acts 2 v14-21,** what did God's Spirit enable Peter to do that day? What is the difference between Peter before Jesus' crucifixion and Peter at Pentecost?

1 Corinthians 12v3 stresses that without the Holy Spirit people cannot confess Jesus as Lord, so Christians confessing Jesus as Lord have the Holy Spirit within them. Ephesians

5v18 says that every Christian should literally go on being filled with the Spirit. So, it is not whether we have the Holy Spirit as disciples, but how much of us and our lives does the Holy Spirit have. What has our experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit been? What do we think and feel about this?

From the *Rooted in Jesus* course: 'The infilling of the Holy Spirit is not something that happens gradually but it is like a container being filled, or being baptised (literally immersed) in water which is why the Bible uses this imagery. It is not a one off experience but a daily prayer for us to be filled and many Christians testify to significant times of refreshment and empowerment throughout their Christian lives.' Is this your experience? What excites or concerns us about this?

#### **Qn 4. How do we need the Holy Spirit to empower and help us now?**

*Extra. Read Chapter 1 of "Word on the Wind" for an overview of where our own country and culture is with regard to the gospel. Respond to the questions at the end about your confidence in the gospel.*

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#### **WITNESS**

Pray for each other to be filled by (to go on being filled with) the Holy Spirit. Pray for the Holy Spirit to renew your group and fill the times you meet together. Pray for St Mary's and The Centre to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and for all the church to go forward in mission.

Pentecost coincided with the gathering in Jerusalem of Jews from every nation under heaven (v5). This prepared the way for the gospel to be spoken and to spread around the world. Who is God showing us to share the gospel with?

*You might like to read Acts 8 (or whichever passage you are looking at next) before the next meeting.*



## ***The life of the Holy Spirit.***

### **2. The Holy Spirit & the life of the word. Acts 8**

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#### **WELCOME**

This needs some organisation before you meet. Ask two or three people to bring poetry, a quote, or a book, hymn etc, to say why it means something to them and how the words have helped, sustained, challenged, or comforted.

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#### **WORSHIP**

Thanksgiving. Choose from words like mercy, grace, peace, love, salvation. Give thanks for what they mean to you.

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#### **WORD**

There's a bit of reading this time. If you've got a copy of Alison Morgan's *Word on the Wind*, chapter 8 is good on building confidence in how God reveals his purpose in his word.

**Read Acts 8 v1-8.**

**Qn 1. How is the church of Jerusalem doing? (v1)** How far has she got with the commission Jesus gave in Acts 1:8?

**Qn 2. What happened to move the church to share Jesus beyond Jerusalem? (v4-8)** How was the news of Jesus shared as Christians left Jerusalem?

**Qn 3. Read Acts 8 v26-35.** Can you relate to this account of finding faith through the Bible and someone inspired by the Spirit coming alongside you? Have you been a Philip to someone else? Can you imagine being someone who shares the good news of Jesus through the bible with someone who doesn't yet know Jesus?

How does the Holy Spirit help and empower Philip to explain what the Bible is saying to the Ethiopian?

**Qn 4. Acts 8v26 and v30 tell of an angel and then the Holy Spirit speaking to Philip.** What has been your experience of God speaking directly to you? How are we attentive to God's voice?

**Qn 5. Read I Thessalonians 2v13** *'We also give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.'* In what ways has the word of God changed you? How does it give you confidence that it will change others? Read the account of one person's transformation through reading the Bible in pages 180-182, *Word on the Wind* or here:

<http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10030176.htm>

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#### **WITNESS**

Pray for our mission links and their work in opening up the bible to people in hard places.

Pray for each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit and led into unexpected places in sharing Jesus with others.

If Bible reading and prayer is dry, stale, and uninviting, what can change to enliven and inspire it? Pray for the help and strength of the Holy Spirit.

*You might like to read Acts 6 (or whichever passage you are looking at next) before the next meeting.*



## **The life of the Holy Spirit.**

### **3. The Holy Spirit & the life of service. Acts 6**

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#### **WELCOME**

What has been your experience of really good service? What were the characteristics of being treated well?

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#### **WORSHIP**

Read together aloud Philippians 2: 5-11. Thank God for Jesus' example of service and for who He came to serve.

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#### **WORD**

**Qn 1. Read Acts 6v1-7.** The church in Jerusalem is growing rapidly. At this point there are now probably over 20,000 Christians. One of the challenges of their growth is that Jewish Christian widows originally from countries outside Palestine and more Greek in their outlook, were not being looked after as well as widows from Palestine with a traditionally Jewish/Hebrew lifestyle. It's a time of growth and stretching of resources. How might the Jerusalem church respond to this new situation?

**Qn 2. How do the disciples address the challenges of growth? (v2-4)**

**Qn 3. What does it look like when someone is full of the Spirit and wisdom? (v3)**

**Qn 4. Read Acts 6v8-10.** One of those chosen to wait on tables is Stephen. How is his service in the Jerusalem church expressed? What does this tell us about service in the name and power of the Holy Spirit? How do we discern how and where to serve, and where to make a difference in the world?

**Qn 5. Read 1 Peter 2v4-5:** 'like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house'

*"Peter offers a beautiful, practical and innovatory way of thinking about what it means to be a Christian. Individually, we are like living stones – stones which are of little use on their own, but together can be built into a spiritual house where people can relate in new and immediate ways to God... if we are going to count for anything in the world in which we now live, we must allow the presence of the Spirit within the gathered community of Christ to shape the way we do things."*

Alison Morgan -*Word on the Wind*, p300 – 301

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**How does the Spirit shape the way we do things? How can we discern His prompting and challenge?**

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#### **WITNESS**

Where do you see your living stone fitting into a life of mission and ministry in the church, at home, at work, caring for others? How can we help one another to build together to discern Holy Spirit led service? Pray for one another wherever we serve, and pray for the word of God to spread (6v7).

Through the *Wirral Life Expectancy Project* St Mary's is paired with St Oswald's, Bidston. We would like to help wherever we can by offering practical support where it is welcomed. Do you have a spare two hours over the next few weeks to help with something practical such as baking a cake, helping someone who is housebound or light gardening. If so, suggest some time and a skill you could offer and email [nikki@stm-upton.org.uk](mailto:nikki@stm-upton.org.uk) or send me a note in the churches' internal mail. This is for a season only. Offering some time and help now does not mean doing it forever.

*You might like to read Acts 4 (or whichever passage you are looking at next) before your next meeting.*



## ***The life of the Holy Spirit.***

### **4. The Holy Spirit & the life of prayer: Acts 4**

#### **WELCOME**

Apart from your small group, when have you been part of a really good group working together towards a common purpose? What was good about it? Have you been part of a group working together and praying for something to happen? How did God work?

#### **WORSHIP**

If you usually pray at the end of your time together, try praying at the beginning. As we're looking at Acts, you could use the word ACTS as a basis for prayer together – A for Adoration; C for Confession; T for thanks; S for Supplication or Seeking prayers.

#### **WORD**

We're in Acts 4 this time. It's a stretching time for those following Jesus. If you have time before meeting, read Acts 4:1-21 for background. Peter and John, filled with the Holy Spirit have been giving an account of their faith to the Temple Guard, the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law. After they are released without charge they return to the rest of the disciples.

**Qn 1. Read Acts 4 v23-34.** In our churches, when are we together in the way of these first believers? Are there areas of our shared life in St Mary's and The Centre that reflect the way the first believers met together?

**Qn 2. How do the believers pray to God, for themselves and for the world they live in?** How do our prayer meetings together reflect this pattern?

**Qn 3.** Looking at 4:31-34, what are the characteristics of the life the believers share together?

**Qn 4** How can your group and our churches pray together more and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God boldly?

*Extra: Read Alison Morgan's Word on the Wind chapter 13 for inspiration on re-imagining church and being good news to those we live, work and rest with. There's a quote on p303 about church and then some follow up questions asking what our dreams for church might be.*

*Extra, extra: The book of Acts is powered by the action of the Holy Spirit filling and inspiring the church. Acts 2 and Acts 12 for example show the strength of believing, praying, worshipping, acting together empowered by the Holy Spirit. Read the whole of Acts through in one go to see the unstoppable power of the Holy Spirit in mission.*

#### **WITNESS**

Make a date to share a meal together. Life for the first believers was lived more publicly than we do in the western church today. They lived 'out loud' and people would notice that they acted and lived differently. It's challenging to live out loud. Can your group meet together somewhere publicly – a pub or restaurant - occasionally, or invite new people to an event that you share together?

*You might like to read Acts 10 (or whichever passage you are looking at next) before your next meeting.*



## ***The life of the Holy Spirit.***

### **5. The Holy Spirit & the life of gift. Acts 10**

#### **WELCOME**

Have you ever been to a sporting event and ended up in the wrong part of the crowd – an away supporter among the home team's fans? Or, have you been the only tourist in a part of the world that is very different to ours? What were your reactions? What is it like being in a minority of one against a crowd of people holding the opposite view?

#### **WORSHIP**

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."*

Psalm 19:1-4

Spend some time thanking and praising God for His creation. (There are images and words on the St Mary's website, or use pictures and phrases of your own.)

#### **WORD**

**Qn 1. Read Acts 10 v9-23.** Peter's experience of the church up to this point in Acts has not included non-Jewish believers. The idea of Peter making a house call to a Gentile leader of a foreign army of occupation was surprising and shocking.

God's call to the Jewish people through Abraham (Genesis 12) was to be a missionary people, but this call had been lost along the way. In what ways has the church lost its missionary call today, and why? Do we have groups or individuals that we cannot imagine being asked to make house calls to – like Peter and Cornelius?

**Qn 2. Read Acts 10 v23-29.** Going to people outside where we might feel comfortable may cost us something. In what ways did it cost Peter to go to a gentile house? Share ways in which you have given up something in the name of the gospel?

**Qn 3. Read Acts 10 v44-48.** What part does the Holy Spirit play in the transformation of Peter and those listening?

**Qn 4.** How can we, individually and together be open to God speaking to us in new ways, and equipping us to be part of his mission? Where do we see new areas of the Holy Spirit's gifting in our lives?

**Qn 5.** *The gifts of the Spirit are not given to provide us with the spiritual equivalent of a trip to Alton Towers, but so that we might take the victory of the cross into the world.* – Bishop Tom Wright

Read Hebrews 2 v3-4. What does that mean for us today?

**Extra** Read *Word on the Wind* chapter 10. It describes the variety and diversity of life and gifts found through the Holy Spirit. Where do we see this life and God's gifts to the church and the world at work today?

#### **WITNESS**

Pray for people at work, in your street, in your community, and people that you spend time with socially. Or, look at a map of your local area and pray for any streets or areas that may have become somewhere we don't know or go to. Are there new ways to meet people with the gospel?