

Outline Three



WELCOME

Who or what most easily takes the place of God in your life?



WORSHIP

Connected

Requires preparation: a lead lamp (inspection light) or similar ~ a mains power source ~ the Bible.

Make a big fuss of your lead lamp, explaining how useful it is to have a bright light in the garage when you are fixing the car. Switch it on. (It will not light up because you have deliberately 'forgotten' to plug it into the mains.) Be dismayed. Say it's useless and only fit to be thrown away. 'Notice' that it is not plugged in. Plug it in and flick the switch on. Shine the light around.

Read John 15:5-6, adapting the words if you feel your spiritual point needs to be unmistakable: "I am the electricity supply. You are the lead light..."

Together confess your need to be 'connected' and filled with the Holy Spirit. Renounce other power sources in your lives (finance, relationships, status.)

Reconnect with God by praying for each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit.



WORD

2 Corinthians 4:5-9

'For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'

Read the passage slowly a couple of times, thinking about the concept of 'light'.

Background to the passage

As an amateur potter who loves nothing more (except Jesus of course) than throwing pots on the potter's wheel, this passage is close to Trevor's heart. This is simply because it talks about 'earthen vessels' or as some versions say 'jars of clay'. Trevor says: "As such I was fascinated to hear Paula Gooder (the resident theologian of the Bible Society) describe the two different types of pots available in Corinth at the time that Paul wrote this letter, making this a very powerful image in the minds of his first century listeners. The first type was rather elegant, made of very fine clay, black in colour and expensive. The second type was made of poor quality, thrown to be very thin and because of this often had small cracks in them. As an amateur potter I am well acquainted with this kind of pot! "

Paul is referring to this second type of pot. They were designed to have a candle placed inside them and the thin clay diffused the light and lit up the whole room! So, Paul compares himself and indeed us to this type of fragile container. The links are clear. It is through our weakness that the inner light can most brightly shine.

So, people were not meant to look at Paul and be impressed, but rather look through his weakness and see the inner light of God shining out. In our performance driven world this can be quite a challenge to us as so often we want to be seen to be doing well and perhaps would prefer others to see us as the first type of pot available in Corinth.

Questions

How can we become more aware of God's presence in us?

Where do our weaknesses allow the light of God to shine through us?

Pray in the Word

Which of these two pots do we most readily identify with? Reflect in silence for a couple of minutes about how much time and effort we put in to be an elegant pot? Why do we do this? Ask for feedback from the group after this silence if it seems appropriate.

Encourage each member of the group to spend a few moments in quiet asking God to reveal where an area of weakness has stopped them from allowing him to use them. We are often not very good at sharing our weaknesses. Encourage the group to be honest with themselves as they engage in the prayer in pairs. Share these and pray for each other.



WITNESS

1. Engage - John 3:16 talks about believing and uses the words 'whoever believes in me'. It is interesting to note that recent research has highlighted that 40% of people in the UK do not believe that Jesus is a real person (<https://talkingjesus.org/>) so a lot of people have a long journey to faith and this is the engaging process. It is offered to the people that we are meeting through our encounter as a choice. Would you like to come to this event, would you like to read this? We do not want to put pressure on people or violate the trust that they have given us in coming to our project. However, we do need to think about how we can create encounters for them.

Discuss and pray together about what this will mean for you as a group.

