

Home Group Series 2024

6. Witness in Disagreement.

A few weeks back, I was walking through Hythe when suddenly something made me stop and turn my head. It was an aroma, a smell, if you like! It came from some lady who obviously had got up that morning determined let the town know she was there, by piling on an overdose of powerful scent. Actually, it was very pleasing. It had me looking around to see where it was coming from, but by that time she had melted into the crowd – or Waitrose.

So I thought that, as that day went by, everywhere she went she would leave a trace of that passing, selfless gift, which doubtless made a lot of people smile. And according to Paul, that's the impression we should be leaving behind too. He likened what he and his fellow workers were doing to spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.

It makes us ask ourselves just what sort of impression we leave as we make our daily ways through life, meeting up with all and sundry. How do we speak to people? Are we positive? – because should be if we're indwelt by the Spirit, or negative, always grumbling about our lot? Do we, all unconsciously, shed the light and life of Jesus? Do the people we have talked to feel better because of it? Is there something about us which tells of hope, assurance, and purpose in life? And I'm not suggesting that we go through the day with a perpetual grin on our faces. Equally, as we come across someone who is having a hard time, how ready are we to offer sympathy, understanding, and simple love and encouragement?

It will not mean that every conversation we have will contain some reference to Christ (it's very possible to overdo it when we're keen!). But if the opportunity raises itself, we should be ready to put our faith into words, and tell them why we are what we are. However, it's the general impression we leave that will stay with them.

Our first church was in a heavily populated borough in North London, so we started by trying to find out who exactly we had to deal with. I sent out a circular from our church telling people who we were, and not to be afraid if someone came knocking on their door. We then trained teams whose job was to go from house to house inviting people to come and join us if they didn't worship elsewhere.

As you will understand, the replies were various! But there was one response that certainly warmed my heart. The reply we got from our question was, 'No, we don't go to Church, but if we did we know which one we would go to'. When we asked further, they told us that they would come to our church. Because their neighbours did – 'and because they were such nice people!'

Witness is often not necessarily by words, nor do we need put on stronger scent or after-shave – but if we're really living for Christ, we will already be leaving a trace of some kind wherever we go.

What a challenge!

JB



Questions for Home Groups

6. Witness in Disagreement **Acts 15 v1-11, John 17 v20-26**

1. In a few short sentences how would you describe the church of St Andrew's (not the building!)?
2. As Christians, what things should we agree on? Is the Creed helpful as a starting point?
3. How do you deal with disagreement in your relationships, at home and at work?
4. How should we deal with disagreements in the church?
5. What does it mean to you that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved?
6. We are one body with many parts. What part do you/could you play? (Don't underestimate prayer and the small things that keep the body working well)
7. Use the words of 'Make me a Channel of Your Peace' to pray together.