

HOME GROUP QUESTIONS FROM SERMON **20th October 2024**

John 15:18-27 and 16:1-4 – Personal / Group Study and Reflection **“Forewarned is forearmed”**

Chapter 15

18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’

26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Chapter 16

1 I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.”

Feel free to pick and choose questions / sub-questions as appropriate for your group’s interest, preferred study style and time available. They are simply there to facilitate good discussion/reflection. Do not feel you must go through all of them.

(1) Opening Icebreaker.

(a) How do people treat you for being a Christian?

(a) Have you experienced difficulties because of your Christian faith? If so, what were the difficulties and how did you feel and respond?

(2) Opposition today. Jesus says in this passage that it is inevitable we will face difficulties and opposition if we follow Him. And it is clear that persecution is real for many globally, especially but not exclusively in Muslim countries. Look at the Open Doors website for details.

(a) How does Jesus' message make you feel ... given we are nice, loving people and naturally want to be liked and loved?

(a) To what extent do you think we are at risk of persecution, discrimination, difficulty here in the UK, now and in medium term? And what forms does this take?

(b) How do you respond to this? (e.g. make you keep your faith private; dilute your faith to avoid trouble; determined to witness despite difficulties).

(3) Why we are opposed. Jesus spells out at least four distinct reasons in this passage why we will be persecuted / face difficulty.

(a) *In v18-19, Jesus says we will be opposed by the 'world' because we do not belong to the world.* What does Jesus mean by the 'world' and 'not belonging to it'? How does that make you feel given we have family, friends etc who are not Christian?

(b) *In v20-21, Jesus says that we will be opposed because we are identified with Him.* Why does this provoke such a strong reaction? In other words, why do non-Christians care so much that we are Christian. Why are we seen as a threat?

(c) *In v22-24, Jesus says that we will be opposed because the world won't be honest about its sin and hates its sin being exposed?* Why does the non-believing world even care about sin being exposed? How might we expose sin in our every-day lives? What experience do you have of exposing sin / ungodliness and what reaction did you get?

(d) *In 16 v1-4, Jesus says that this opposition will even extend to believers being opposed and persecuted by other believers, thinking they are acting in God's name.* Can you think of examples of this today? What might lie behind this?

(4) Avoiding opposition. A natural temptation is to avoid opposition arising in the first place by conforming to the world's ways, outlook, values and priorities. Then the world will have no reason to oppose us. It is however the opposite of what the Bible tells us to do (see Romans 12:2).

(a) What does 'conforming to the world' look like in practice? To what extent do you conform like this and why?

(b) To what extent might your faith and witness have been impacted by conforming?

(c) What steps can we take to avoid conforming?

(5) Responding to opposition. Jesus explains why we are opposed because he wants us to be under no illusion about what following Him means. But he also encourages us to keep going because we have powerful spiritual weapons to help us.

(a) *In v26-27, Jesus explains that we have the Holy Spirit.* How exactly does the Holy Spirit help us witness for Jesus in the face of opposition? To what extent have you felt the Holy Spirit's help like this? What impact has it had?

(b) *In Matthew 5:43, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.* Have you done this and what effect did it have – on you and on those you prayed for? If you haven't done this, do you think praying like this would be effective and why / why not?

(c) Reflecting on the overall message of this passage and any feelings it has stirred up, what other factors might motivate you to keep living out your faith publicly, despite difficulties?

(6) Closing. Perhaps close by praying for:

(a) Christians suffering for their faith. Pick a country (the Open Doors website provides much information and prayer pointers).

(b) Those doing the persecuting (in line with Matthew 5:43).

(c) Any who might be making life hard for you or your family for being Christian.