

# Open to the Spirit

3

Being transformed

## Welcome, opening prayer and worship

Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group. You may like to have a short time of worship too (singing, listening to some music, meditating on a psalm together etc.).

## Introduction

In this session we look at How the Spirit seeks to make us more like Jesus. This particularly reviews Rhythm 3 of the Rhythms of Grace 'By God's grace I seek to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.' And goes with the sermon on May 19<sup>th</sup>.

1) Take a few minutes to feedback (maybe in pairs) anything that struck people from last session. Has anyone any stories to share of their experiences of the Holy Spirit since last time? Particularly from their frontlines?

2) What do you think it means to be 'transformed to the likeness of Christ?'

## Bible discussion time.

We have already mentioned how the Spirit of God lives in all those who are Christians (John 14:15-17). But what difference does this make? Shouldn't there be a difference between someone who has the Spirit of God living inside of them and someone who does not? If we are honest, do we often struggle to see any difference between us (who have the Spirit) and others around us who don't.

### Read Romans 8:1-17, 26-27 – Life in the Spirit

3) Reading through that passage again, describe some of the different ways in which the Spirit works inside of us (v2, v5-7, v11, v15-17, v26-7).

For each one in turn, try and work out what that actually means for us today. Has anyone got any stories of how they have seen the Spirit working in this way in their own lives?

4) Paul makes it clear in the book of Romans that, although because of the cross and the Spirit coming, the power of sin and our old nature is broken (we are 'dead' to our old nature, and no longer controlled by it), there is still a battle raging between our old nature (sinful nature) and our new nature (in the Spirit). He therefore urges those he is writing to, to 'live according to the Spirit.' What do you think it means in practice to 'live according to the Spirit' and allow the Spirit to be at work in us? What would this look like for us?

5) In the light of what this passage says about the Spirit, what would you say to a Christian friend (and what might you advise them to do) who says the following to you...

i) 'That's just who I am. I've always been an angry person, and nothing will change that.'

ii) 'I find myself controlled by fear which stops me stepping out into what I think God might want for me.'

iii) 'Because I was abused by my dad, I've never really known and experienced the love of God for myself, and I find it really difficult when the Bible talks about God being our Father'

iv) 'I see the 'super pray-ers' in church who have all the clever words and who seem to hear clearly from God every time they pray for someone, but I just never know what to pray and it doesn't seem to make a difference anyway.'

## Video

### Watch 'Remembering the Forgotten God Session 4' (5 mins)

This can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw1FCJZQzok> . (Warning! This is very challenging and might make you feel uncomfortable... go with it though and be as open as you can!)

- Spend a few moments sharing your thoughts on what Francis Chan said. How do you feel about this? What are you challenged by?
- How could you become more open in your life group and deepen your relationships so that you can spur one another on more to becoming more like Jesus?

## Prayer ministry and closing prayer

When we first did the Rhythms of Grace, many people found it helpful to consider the analogy that Larry Christenson uses in his book *The Renewed Mind*. He describes the process of transformation, as like putting up a concrete structure. Before the concrete can be poured in, wooden frames ('shuttering') are put up which form the shape that the cement will take and act to hold it in while it is setting. After the concrete has set, the wooden structure is taken away and the concrete remains.

This wooden framework he says, represents *our role*. We are to construct the outward form of Christ, the 'outer temporary framework' into which God will pour his enduring work of transformation (the 'concrete') by his Spirit. We construct this temporary structure by choosing to go God's way... to 'live according to the Spirit' (e.g. choosing to 'put on' patience, love compassion etc. and choosing to follow the way of the spirit and not our sinful desires). But it does not end there, for if it did, when we did not keep it up it would all fall down again and we would have to start from scratch. No, into this temporary framework that we 'put on,' God pours his spirit to transform us from the inside in a permanent way. He transforms us and gives us a new heart and new desires (Ezekiel 36:26-7) aligning them with his.



Therefore being transformed to the likeness of Christ is about us co-operating and working together with the Holy Spirit. ***We are called to do the temporary outer work (imitation), for God to pour his grace in, and bring the inner and lasting work of transformation.***

### Asking God to transform you...

Spend some time in your group allowing each individual to be open to God's transformation.

- a) Invite everyone to bring one area of their lives to God where they want God to transform you. It may be a particular struggle you are having with sin, it may be something you want freedom or healing from, it may be that you want to know and experience God's love in a deeper way.
- b) Identify three or four things that *you* could intentionally do to seek to 'live in the Spirit' (this is the "wooden shuttering") e.g. pray blessing for my difficult neighbour, speak words of affirmation to my spouse, set aside time to 'just be' and experience God's love, put on a worship CD when I am tempted to view internet material that is unhelpful, pray that God would give you a forgiving heart for someone etc. ...and then seek to live them out in the coming days.
- c) **Pray** now, and commit to praying each day, for the Spirit to give you the specific 'grace' that you are desiring (that God will pour in the concrete of permanent transformation) e.g. 'I pray for the grace to be patient with my neighbour', 'I pray that I will know God's love for me,' 'I pray for the grace to be free from fear about XXX.'

When you have spent time individually on this, you may wish to share what you have prayed with someone else in the group and pray for each other – invite the Spirit to come and bring transformation in each other's lives.