

# Open to the Spirit

2

Are you afraid?

## 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

Fear of the unknown or fear of letting go of control over our lives can be factors which limit the outworking of the Spirit in our lives. This session looks at the issue of fear and helps us to step out more into the Spirit's promptings.

## Opening review and brainstorming

1) Take a few minutes to feedback (maybe in pairs) anything that struck people from last session, or any ways in which people have sought to be more open to the Holy Spirit since last time.

## Bible discussion time and video.

There can often be a lot of fear associated with the Holy Spirit, depending on people's background and past experiences.

2) In what ways can different people be afraid of the Holy Spirit? If you are being really honest are there things which you are afraid of about the Holy Spirit? If so, what?

### Watch 'Remembering the Forgotten God Session 2' (9 mins)

(This can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQv\\_vivhct8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQv_vivhct8) . Please note that gambling in Vegas is not something that we wish to encourage!)

- 3) Spend a few moments discussing your reflections on what Francis Chan says.
- What struck you and challenged you the most?
  - Imagine that the Holy Spirit took complete control of your life and showed you exactly what he wanted you to do. Why might the thought of actually following the Holy Spirit be scary?
  - Chan poses the question 'Do I really want to hear from God or do I kind of like my life right now and would God's voice almost be an interruption to that?' How would you reply?

Sometimes we can be afraid that the Holy Spirit won't show up when we ask Him to, other times we can be afraid that He will show up and that we will not be prepared for what he might do.

Adapted from Chan, F. 'Remembering the Forgotten God: An interactive workbook for Individual or Small Group Study'

4) What do James 4:2-3 and Luke 11:13 say to us about this? If we are motivated by fear, what does this say about our view of God?

### Read Luke 18:18-30

The ruler in this story had been going about his life in peace. Apparently, he was really striving to keep God's commandments. He seems to have been sincere in asking Jesus about the path to eternal life. He was confident in his efforts. But (as we often find) Jesus' answer required more than he was prepared to give.

- Why do you think the ruler was so surprised when Jesus told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor? What do you think he was expecting Jesus to say?
- What did Jesus mean when He said 'follow me' (v22)? Do you think the ruler understood what Jesus meant by this? Why, or why not?

Just like the blackjack game mentioned in the video, Jesus acknowledged that it's more difficult to follow when a lot is at stake. "How difficult is it for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24). It's easier to go "all in" when we don't have much.

5) Have you ever responded to the Spirit's promptings even when it felt really scary and that you had a lot at stake? What happened? How did you feel?

## Prayer ministry and closing prayer

Spend a few moments in silence together and in your mind try and picture yourself coming to Jesus, like the rich ruler did. In the silence ask the Holy Spirit in the quiet to speak to you. What does He want to say to you? Do you sense Him asking you to do anything?

It might sound and feel a bit strange to do, but this is a way in which we can simply come before God and be open to Him and seek to 'listen to his voice.' If you don't sense anything, then don't worry... God delights in us just coming before him, and offering ourselves to him. Keep offering yourself to God in the quiet this week and continue to ask him to speak to you. If you do sense God may be putting words, or scriptures or pictures on your mind then perhaps share that with someone else in the group and get them to pray with you about it.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 says "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything: hold fast to what is good."

Part of sharing with each other is to help each other test whether what we sense is from God or not. We need to check..

- a) Is it Biblical?
- b) Is it honouring to God? And to the church? (James 3:17; 1 Cor 14:3)
- c) Do you have peace about its truth? (John 14:27)
- d) Is it confirmed in other ways (e.g. what other people say, other promptings, scriptures you may have had recently etc.)

If we are not sure, sometimes it is good to just 'sit with it' for a few weeks or months or even years and pray that if it is from God then your sense of it being right will grow, and if not, it will fall away.