

Open to the Spirit

4

Intimate Spirit

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

What comes to mind when you think about relationships? Do you think of having long conversations? Spending time with someone? Going out of your way to make someone happy? Maybe your mind goes straight to a specific person and how much he or she means to you. Or perhaps your view of relationships isn't so warm and cosy. Maybe every time you've opened your heart and life to someone you've been disappointed and burned. If that's the case, the thought or relationships might be associated with insecurity.

This session looks at our relationship with God, and particularly what role the Spirit plays in that, and how the Spirit can bring intimacy with our Father.

Opening review and brainstorming

- 1) Take a few minutes to feedback (maybe in pairs or small groups with those who you prayed with last week) anything that struck people from last session. Has anyone any stories to share of their experiences of the Holy Spirit transforming them since last time?
- 2) If you had to describe your relationship with God in one word or picture, what would it be?

Bible discussion time and video.

Read Galatians 4:1-7

In the book of Galatians, Paul teaches about the role of the Law for the Jewish People in the Old Testament. He says that the Law was given to watch over and guide the nation of Israel until Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came to set them free. In order to explain this, Paul contrasts two types of people: slaves and sons.

- 3) Think about this imagery. What is the difference between a slave and a son? List some differences between the two (for example, what treatment does each receive? What privileges does each have? How does each feel? What confidence does each have?)

Slaves	Son

The incredible truth is that in Christ we have been adopted by God. Whether or not we feel like children of God, this is the reality. But God wasn't satisfied with simply adopting us; He wanted to be sure that we would *feel* like children of God. Paul says that God gave us the Holy Spirit

for that very reason: 'Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"' (Galatians 4:6). That term "Abba" was the most endearing way to address a father. The modern equivalent would be 'Daddy'. Let the significance of this hit you. It's incredible enough that we can call Almighty God our Father. But then he sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts and prompts us to cry out to him "Daddy!"

4) What is the significance of Paul's statement here? How should it affect your relationship with God to know that He sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to cry out "Abba!"? Is this something you find it easy to relate to? Why?/Why not?

Watch 'Remembering the Forgotten God Session 5' (11 mins)

This can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2KK4J4eGr4>

5) Discuss together your reactions to what Francis Chan says. What questions do you have? What do you relate to and what do you find it hard to relate to?

Though we don't always realize it, intimacy with God is the deepest desire of the human heart. Not only that but God also desires a relationship with us – so much so that he sent his Spirit into our hearts so that we could know Him intimately. But at this point, most of us start to wonder 'if this is true, why don't I feel close to Him?'

Francis Chan describes two primary reasons why this may be so: Comfort and noise.

In John 14:16 Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the 'helper' or 'comforter' or 'counsellor.' Though it is a reassuring thought to have a Helper and Comforter on hand, perhaps many of us have made our lives so comfortable and "safe" that we don't need to be comforted.

6) Have you ever found yourself in a place where you needed the Spirit to help or comfort you? If so, what was it like and how did the Spirit comfort you? If not do you think your life might be too 'comfortable' to truly know the Spirit? In what ways?

If your life isn't too comfortable, maybe it is too 'noisy.' Read Psalm 46:10.

7) In what ways do you seek to 'be still' and know that intimacy with God. What have you found helpful to do this? Have you experienced intimacy with God in this way? If so, what happened, what did you feel?

Prayer ministry and closing prayer

Spend some time being still together now.

Maybe you might like to sing or play 'Be still for the presence of the Lord.' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKDwC7tCn7k>) to allow you to focus on God.

It may be appropriate to start by a time of confession where you can confess where you have been 'too comfortable' or life has been too 'noisy', or where you have simply been afraid of intimacy with God.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into a deeper intimacy with your Father. [You may like to use the mediation on the next page]

In Romans 5:5 it says 'God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.' Pray now that the Spirit would pour out his love more into your hearts.

At an appropriate time, you may like to pray for each other, that you may each know God more intimately, through the Spirit at work in you.

Commit each day this week to spending a short amount of time simply being still in God's presence and pray that you would know God more deeply.

Meditation: Come Closer

Are you ready to be filled with more of His love?

Have you been aching, deep in your heart, for an adventure with Jesus?

Are you tired of doing the same thing?

Have you been asking yourself. 'Is this all there is?'

Right now, the Holy Spirit wants to lead you into a fresh encounter with the love of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked to the multitude about many things related to our relationship with God and other people. About our relationship with God, He said "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8)

He is calling us to trust Him that when we ask for what we want, we will have it.

Sometimes we fear that if we ask God for more, we won't get it. Maybe we think we aren't good enough or don't deserve it. These words of Jesus say the exact opposite. They invite us to approach Him with courage and faith.

God will never say, "Go away!" He will always say, "Come closer."

Will you pray with me?

Lord, I am coming closer to You. I know You accept me for who I am, and I know You know all about me. I am tired of the old religion that keeps me bound to rules and regulations and the fear of judgement from others. I am a simple jar of clay, empty but waiting to be filled now with Your Holy Spirit. I want to know you more intimately. I ask You to pour your love into me, for me to know more deeply than ever before that I am your precious child and that you are my 'Abba' my 'Daddy.

Thank you Lord

Amen.

[Adapted from Day 7 of 'Reckless Devotion: 365 Days of Inspiration' (Rolland and Heidi Baker (2014))]