

# Open to the Spirit

7

Supernatural church

## 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.).

## Opening review

Take a few minutes to feedback anything that has happened since last session. Did you manage to try and keep 'walking in the Spirit' each day and open to any Spirit's promptings? Has anyone any stories to tell of anything that has happened, or any things they stepped out in?

## Introduction

Francis Chan writes: 'Let's be honest: We could duplicate most of our successful churches by assembling the right group of talented, winsome people. If a church has the right worship leader, an exciting children's program, and an entertaining speaker, it will grow. But is that really the secret to life-changing ministry? Is that how God designed the church to operate? Where does the Holy Spirit fit into that model? As much as I believe in using our natural abilities, I simply cannot reconcile that model with the Lord's statement 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of Hosts' (Zech 4:6).'

### Watch 'Remembering the Forgotten God Session 7' (9 mins)

This can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piywDLcO8d0>

- Consider life in our church. What ways do we tend to rely on our own natural talent as we strive to fulfil the church's mission?
- Think about the 'Big Red Tractor' story on the video. Do you see yourself, your small group, or St Andrew's & All Saints pushing and pulling the "tractor" an inch at a time? If so in what ways? What would it look like for us to 'read the manual' and 'use the tractor' as it was meant to be?

## Bible discussion time and video.

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth, he had to address factions that were dividing the church. Groups were forming around attractive personalities (Paul, Apollos, Cephas). In order to address their preoccupation with human personalities and wisdom, Paul brought their focus back to the power of God, rather than the brilliance of people.

- 1) How does Paul describe human effort as compared to the power of God?
- 2) According to this passage, why is it so important to rely on the power of the Spirit?

3) Think about the way you minister to the people around you. Can you say along with Paul, “My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of people, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)? Why, or why not? What warning does this bring and what encouragement does this bring?

What’s true of the church in general is also true of our lives in particular. Ought there not to be a real difference between a Spirit-filled person and everyone else? We’re not necessarily talking about walking around raising the dead and speaking in foreign languages all the time. Remember the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5? The fruit mentioned there is not at all that shocking... we see many non-Christians who are happy, peaceful people, but ought we not, as people who have the Holy Spirit, to be people who are able to love those around us to a supernatural degree in any and every circumstance?

Perhaps we don’t recognise the Spirit’s power in our lives because we are not stepping out and doing anything where we desperately need God to show up. We can all turn up at church, sing a few songs and go home again, but when we start talking to the hurting people around us, when we dig deeper to learn how we can love and serve them, when we find ourselves in situations where we are out of our depth, that’s when we need the Holy Spirit, and that’s precisely when He shows up. God works in the most desperate situations so that no one can mistake it for anything other than his power. You might like to stop and look at some of the things the early church got up to in the power of the Spirit: **Acts 2:43-47, 3:1-10, 4:13.**

4) Can you think of a time when you did something for God which you felt that you were not able to do it in your own strength? What happened?

Have you every walked away from opportunities because it would take you beyond your natural talents? What would it look like to be open to the Holy Spirit in those situations?

Maybe God wants to take you out of your comfort zone. Maybe God wants to take your Life Group out of your comfort zone. Maybe He wants to show you just what He can do with you when you are open to His Spirit’s power and leading.

5) Allow yourself to dream for a minute. What would it look like if every Christian in your community fully submitted themselves to the Spirit’s leading and power?

6) What practical steps could you as individuals, and you as a small group, take right now to pursue the Spirit and live in dependence on Him?

## Prayer ministry and closing prayer

Have an extended time of praying for each other tonight. Begin by reading together **Acts 4:31** which describes how the Holy Spirit came on the disciples and gave them *boldness* to follow the Spirit’s leading. Invite the Spirit to come by simply praying ‘Come Holy Spirit...’

Maybe in smaller groups of 3 or 4, pray particularly for each other to be continually filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), and that each person would have boldness to step out for God at least once this week to do something that they could not do in their own strength. Have some silence to simply wait on God and see if the Holy Spirit wants to say or do anything.

**‘Homework’:** Keep praying each day this week that God would show you something that you can do to step out in the power of the Spirit to do something that you feel you could not do in your own strength... and then step out and do it and see just what God can do! E.g. It might be praying for someone, starting a conversation with someone, serving someone you feel out of your depth with... and all week remember... Zechariah 4:6...