

Monthly Home Group Bible Study

February 2012 – The Holy Spirit – Remembering the Forgotten God

Study Three – Introducing the Theology of the Holy Spirit

Home groups meet this month at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 8th February. In this study we are learning about the Holy Spirit and His work in the life of the Christian. If you have access to *Forgotten God*, by Francis Chan, please read chapter 3 (*Theology of the Holy Spirit 101*). Use of this book is not necessary to benefit from the Bible study. In our meetings we will watch a short video by Francis Chan and then discuss some relevant Bible passages and questions with application to our lives. Copies of this study guide can be downloaded from www.deep-river.co.uk.

Venues

The **Dingwall North** Group meets at the MacKenzie's home, *Langabhat*, Kinnairdie Avenue, tel. 01349 864123. The **Dingwall Tulloch** Group meets at Rosemary Harding's home, 17 Logan Drive, tel. 368234. **Dingwall South** meets at the MacMaster's home, Rose Villa, 2 Hill Terrace, tel. 861052. The **Conon** Group meets at Aslan, 64 Braes of Conon, tel. 861543. The **Strathpeffer** Group meets at the MacKenzie's home, *Drumpellier*, 31 Ulladale Crescent, tel. 01997 420177. The **Pelaig** Group meets at the MacArthur's home, *The Lodge*, Pelaig, on the old road between Dingwall and Evanton, tel: 861250.

Introduction to the Bible Study

What we believe and know about God (our "theology") really matters. The knowledge that we have of God is not neutral. What we know about God makes demands of us and pushes us in a particular direction. Have we yet grasped the significance of Bible teaching on the Holy Spirit? In the video we will watch at our study Francis Chan compares our response to the Holy Spirit to a group of over excited American football players who meet in a noisy "huddle" to carefully plan their "play" in a football game, but who then do precisely nothing with that knowledge on the pitch. Does our theology of the Holy Spirit change our lives in any way, so that our church experience is more than a "holy huddle" on a Sunday where we talk about God and seek to feel his Holy Spirit, but in a way that is ultimately disconnected from authentic godly living during the rest of the week? If so we need to change!

In his book Chan warns us that "bad theology will always point us in the wrong direction. When we study the Holy Spirit, bad theology can lead to ineffective lives or, worse yet, lives spent striving after what God opposes." (P. 64). However a good theological understanding still needs to be followed through with changed and obedient lives, with a clear service and witness to others that demonstrates the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Rev Andrew Fraser has produced a summary of Francis Chan's chapter 3 on the theology of the Holy Spirit. If you do not have access to a copy of the book, it will be helpful to read through the summary as outlined on the next page before we meet for our Home Group study.

Summary of teaching Chan's teaching from *The Forgotten God*, chapter 3.

1. **The Holy Spirit is a Person** (not an "it") John 14:17. "This calls us to relationship with the Spirit, instead of allowing us to think we can treat the Spirit as a power to be harnessed in order to accomplish our own purposes. The Holy Spirit is a Person who has personal relations with not only believers, as we have seen, but also with the Father and the Son. We see the Spirit working in conjunction with the Father and the Son multiple times throughout the Scriptures (Mat.28:19; 2 Cor.13:14)"

2. **The Holy Spirit is God** - Acts 5:3-4. "In these verses we see that Peter explicitly refers to the Holy Spirit as God. This is vital to remember. When we forget about the Spirit, we really are forgetting God."

3. **The Holy Spirit is eternal and holy** - John 14:16; Heb.9:14. The Spirit is just not a flighty, whimsical Spirit Who comes and goes like the wind. He is an eternal being. The Spirit is also holy. Obviously, we also call Him the Holy Spirit, and this is reinforced throughout the New Testament (Rom.1:4,2:5 are two examples). But consider this truly amazing fact: because the Spirit is holy and dwells in us, our bodies are holy sanctuaries from God's vantage point. Too often we disdain our bodies as the source of sin and our fallenness; yet they are precisely where God the Spirit chooses to dwell"

4. **The Holy Spirit has His own mind and prays for us** – Rom.8:27. "I don't know about you, but I find the thought of the Spirit of God praying for me according to the will of God extremely comforting In any given situation we may not know exactly how we should pray or what we should do. But we can take confidence in the fact that the Holy Spirit knows our hearts and the will of God, and He is always interceding on our behalf."

5. **The Holy Spirit has emotions** – "For a long time, whenever I read that we were not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Is.63:10; Eph.4:30), I thought that was a bit of an exaggeration. It almost seemed sacrilegious to say that I could grieve God. Who am I to have such power over the Spirit? That doesn't seem right. In fact, it even seemed wrong to say that God had feelings; for some reason I believed it belittled Him. I struggled with these thoughts for a while until I finally realized where they were coming from. In our culture, having feelings or emotions is equated with weakness. This is a lie that is deeply ingrained in many of us. God created feelings. Sure, like anything else, they can be misused and abused. But the intent and purpose of feelings came from God. Since He created emotions, why is it difficult to believe that He Himself has emotions? The Spirit is grieved when there is a breach of relationship, whether it be relationship with God or relationship with other people. When we are disunified, unloving, hateful, jealous, gossipy, etc., that is when we grieve the Spirit of God. And since He is the Creator of emotions, I believe that the Spirit grieves more deeply than we can understand. How do you respond when you hear this? Does it bother you? When was the last time you were saddened because your sin pained the Holy Spirit..? I believe that if we truly cared about the Holy Spirit's grief, there would be fewer fights, divorces and splits in our churches. Maybe it's not due to a lack of belief but a lack of concern. I pray for the day when believers care more for the Spirit's grief than for their own. In fact, I pray that some of you readers would be broken over the grief you've placed on the Holy Spirit. So broken that you actually put down this book and work to resolve any conflicts you have with other believers."

6. **The Holy Spirit has His own desires and will** – Cor.12:1. This is an important

reminder of *who* is in control. Just as we don't get to choose which gifts we are given, so also we don't get to choose what God intends for us or for the church. The Spirit has a plan for our lives, for each of us. He has a plan for the church, including your individual church body and the worldwide body of Christ. If you are like me, you probably have a plan for your own life, for your church, and maybe even for the larger body of Christ. That's why we all desperately need to pray, as Christ did, "Not my will but Yours be done"

7. The Holy Spirit is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient – These are theological words that essentially mean that the Spirit is all-powerful (e.g. Zech.4:6), present everywhere (e.g., Ps.139:7-8), and all-knowing (e.g., 1 Cor.2:10b) respectively. Those are some of His attributes that we will never fully grasp as finite human beings. In Isaiah we read, "Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as His counsellor? (40:30). Though we will never be able to perfectly articulate or completely understand these attributes, may these aspects of the Spirit lead us to praise, even with imperfect words and incomplete understanding."

QUESTIONS FOR HOME GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Romans 8:22-27.

Get one member of the group to pray for this study. Ask for deeper understanding of the Spirit, but keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is God. We cannot fully understand God, but pray that we would worship aright, and that as we grow in knowledge we would grow in a life of showing the Holy Spirit and living by His power.

VIDEO – now watch the DVD for session 3. (*Theology of the Holy Spirit 101*)

Think about the football huddle analogy. Too often the church is like a football team that huddles (it meets/ it plans), it calls a play (plans a move) but then it sits on the bench – never to run the play that everyone got so emotional or excited about. Is the Holy Spirit neglected in the church because we don't really need the Spirit to manage a huddle (our meetings) but we do desperately need His power to step out into the world and live and witness for Jesus Christ?

Think about our gatherings for worship. Have you been running from the "huddle" to "the bench"? If so, in what ways?

God gave us His Spirit so that we might change the world by His power. How do you think the church would look if we began "running the plays"?

Think about who the Holy Spirit is. We will now consider some of these truths, helped by some of the seven truths that Francis Chan has listed for us (see above).

Below each of the following headings write down your thoughts about how that truth should affect our lives.

The Holy Spirit is a Person:

This truth means...

Give an example of how we may relate to the Spirit as a person, and not as a "thing".

The Holy Spirit is God:

This truth means...

How should this change the way we relate to Him?

The Holy Spirit has His own mind and will and prays for us:

This truth means...

How should this truth affect how we think and plan?

The Holy Spirit has emotions:

This truth means...

What does disunity and lack of love do to the Spirit?

How should our understanding that we can grieve the Spirit affect our attitudes towards sin?

We think now about the help that the Holy Spirit gives to us as Christians.

The Spirit is promised to help when we are in precarious situations (Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12). He will also comfort and advise us and bring us strength (Psalm 143:10, 1 Cor. 2:9-10 and much of John 14-16.)

Can anyone in the group share how one of these passages, or similar verses, have blessed them in the past?

How does the Spirit help us in our battle with sin? (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor 3:18).

How does the Spirit deepen our intimate relationship with God? (Rom 8:15-16).

How does the Spirit help with fear? (Rom 8:26-27; Rom 15:13).

Conclude with a time of prayer.

Ponder the amazing power of God's Holy Spirit. What might He be calling you to do through His Spirit? Ask God to help you apply the truth about His Spirit, and to so fill you, and the folks in our church, that the world around us may see God's power at work.