

WHY DO YOU WANT HIM?

For more information on the material in this session, read chapter 4 of the book *Forgotten God*.

It is clear that you want to see the Holy Spirit in your life—you wouldn't have made it this far in the study if you didn't. This is a good thing. The first step in reversing our neglect of the Holy Spirit is desiring to see Him work in and through us. But at this point, there is an important question that has to be asked: Why do you want Him?

We all need to question our motives. We can't simply move on and assume that our hearts are in the right place—what's at stake is too important. Why does it matter so much? Motivation makes all the difference in the world. If we pursue the Spirit out of love for God and people, then the power of God will be clearly displayed, but if we try to use the Spirit for our own purposes, we're only demonstrating our pride. It's the difference between being powerfully used by God and being aggressively opposed by Him (James 4:6).

1. Take a minute or two to write down a few possible motivations for desiring the Holy Spirit—both good and bad.

2. Can you detect hints of any of these motivations in your heart? If so, what do you think causes you to be motivated in that way?

Read Acts 8:9–24. Simon the magician was accustomed to incredible displays of power. He used his magic arts to amaze people and convince them that he was someone great. But when he saw the miracles performed through Philip, he himself was amazed. Clearly Simon knew that something out of the ordinary was happening. When someone who spends his life conjuring up powerful displays is left in awe, something special is going on. He was intrigued by the Holy Spirit, drawn by the incredible power he was witnessing.

3. Think about Simon's response in verses 18–19. Why do you think he wanted the Spirit?

4. Try to transfer this situation to our modern day. What would Simon's motivation look like if it were played out in the American church today?

5. Have you seen any examples of this, whether in the church in general, something you've experienced in the past, or (most importantly) in your own heart? If so, describe those examples.

Peter's response highlights the importance of calling our motives into question. On some level, we might be impressed by Simon's desire for the Spirit: "Wow. He really wants the power of the Spirit in his life! He's even willing to give up his worldly possessions to gain the Holy Spirit!" But Peter swiftly addressed Simon's heart. Simon wasn't satisfied with seeing the Spirit at work; he wanted to be the one who controlled the Spirit's power.

The fact that you want to see the Spirit at work is important, but unless your heart is in the right place, Peter's rebuke should cause you to stop in your tracks. Why do you want the Holy Spirit? Your answer really makes a big difference.

The Holy Spirit works to glorify God (John 16:14), but too often, the people who talk the most about the Spirit are the ones who receive all the glory. There is no hint of what Jesus describes in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." When God truly shines through us, the supernatural is clearly manifested in us, but God gets all the glory.

6. Have you seen a person accomplish something amazing, yet receive all the glory for himself? What does that look like?

7. Have you seen a person accomplish something amazing, yet all the glory goes to God? What does that look like?

As we observed before, when Jesus returned to His Father, He left the disciples with the task of changing the world. He was very clear that they could not do this on their own. Instead, they were told to wait until God clothed them with power through the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit showed up on the day of Pentecost and empowered the disciples to proclaim the gospel in a host of different languages (Acts 2), He demonstrated that genuine works of the Spirit leave no doubt about who should get the glory. “When the Spirit moved at Pentecost, people knew there was a power present that came from God. That’s why they didn’t leave saying, ‘John is amazing! He learned a new language in a matter of seconds!’ They knew it had to be God” (*Forgotten God*, 87).

Our focus in all of this needs to be on God—not on ourselves, not even on the things we can accomplish with His power. Instead of deciding in advance what sort of supernatural display God should provide, we should simply ask God to work powerfully in our life situations and allow Him to work in the way He wants.

Sometimes we fixate on the really flashy manifestations of the Spirit, but when a proud person exhibits humility, is this any less supernatural? When a person patiently loves and prays for a grouchy neighbor or coworker for years with no results, does this not show the Spirit's power?

8. List a few of these "less glamorous" ways that the Spirit's power can be manifested in a person's life.

9. Why should these things be seen as powerful manifestations of the Spirit?

Another trap we could easily fall into is trying to lead the Spirit rather than being led by Him. The distinction is sometimes subtle, because in both cases we're seeking the Spirit. But when we go down this path, we start with our own dreams and desires, and we ask for the Spirit to work so that we can accomplish our plans. In this case, we're really following in the footsteps of Simon the magician—he earnestly desired the Spirit, but he wasn't seeking to be led by Him.

10. Practically, what does it look like to be led by the Spirit rather than trying to lead the Spirit for your purposes?

We have to prayerfully seek where the Holy Spirit may be leading. I am convinced that the Spirit communicates with us. Sometimes He lays a person or place on our hearts and calls us to action or prayer. Other times He convicts us of our sin and calls us to repent. He works in many different ways, but the point is, many times we don't hear because we're not listening. Sometimes we hear, but we write it off as nothing because we don't agree with where He's leading.

11. Being completely honest—do you really want to follow the Spirit, regardless of where He may lead you? Why, or why not?

Now that we've addressed a few wrong motivations for desiring the Spirit, we still have to answer an important question: What is the right reason for desiring the Spirit?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11.

According to Paul, the Spirit works in individual lives “for the common good” (v. 7). First Corinthians 12–14 describes the proper function of the church. God has placed each of us in a specific location. Our task is to build up the Christians around us and reach out to the rest of the world. It is actually the Spirit who empowers us to fulfill this calling by giving us supernatural abilities. The flashiest of these are things like prophecy and speaking in

tongues, but we shouldn't overlook the fact that encouragement and service are also miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Once again, our tendency can be to focus on the specific manifestations of the Spirit that Paul mentions. But even in the midst of describing how the Spirit works through us in these ways, Paul says, "I will show you a still more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). As he describes in chapter 13, that more excellent way is love.

The proper motivation for desiring the Holy Spirit is love for the people that God has placed in our lives. The Spirit works in us because He loves the people around us. Do you love the people in your life enough to pursue the Spirit for their benefit?

12. Describe the difference between someone who pursues the Spirit for their own sake and someone who does so out of love for other people.



If you have the *Forgotten God DVD Study Resource*, watch the video for session 4, particularly if you are meeting with a group. After the video, come back and work through the rest of this section.

If we're going to be open for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, we must first let go of the things that keep us from close fellowship with Him. The Spirit works through each of us so

that we can build up the people around us in love. Having the Holy Spirit is not about you being everything you want to be. It's about God working through you to help the people around you grow.

Do you trust that God can speak to you through the people He has placed in your life? Does your desire for the Spirit include openness to the Spirit leading someone else to honestly speak truth into your life? Are you willing to follow the Spirit's leading in being honest with the people around you?

If the proper motivation for desiring the Spirit is love, ask yourself how much you love the people around you. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is speak gently and honestly into another person's life.

13. Spend some time in prayer. Ask God for the humility and love to speak honestly into the lives of the people around you. And as other people are honest with you, ask the Spirit to work in your heart, removing the sinful thoughts and motivations and allowing you to grow and follow the Spirit for the benefit of those around you.

REFLECTIONS ON ...

Why Do You Want Him?

SESSION 5