

The B!G Idea

How to be a Holy Spirit Movement



1. The Great Commission
2. A Big Idea of God
3. The Role of the Holy Spirit
4. Fasting for Spiritual Purposes
5. The Holy Spirit's Agenda
6. Christian Community
7. Some Special Situations

1. The Great Commission

Christ's clear goal to build God's Kingdom

By John Mallison and Ian Robinson

GOAL

To make clear and practical the greatness and privilege of carrying forward the Great Commission .

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)



Q. What fires you up when you hear that verse? What challenges are you feeling at the moment? What other scriptures speak to you most powerfully of the global mission of the gospel?

Q. Share one thing your church (or other churches) is doing to reach out to those with no interest in Christ. What kinds of resistance are you finding? What other ways do you think you or your church could seek to reach those in the community with Christ's gospel?

INTRODUCTION

In Australia, we have noticed that (long established) “**Mainline**” churches (e.g. Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Lutheran, and Presbyterian), are finding that the majority of church attenders are older in age. **Newer churches** have found more ways of reaching not-yet Christian people with the gospel.

But the other churches are not the biggest challenge - the mass popular **media** have been enormously powerful at making people who do not care at all – apathy is bigger than agnostic or atheist.

As secularism grew through commercialisation and shallow communication, we tried speaking against ‘the sinners’, tried ‘shouting louder’, tried ‘bigger music and events in the media’, and we tried ‘social welfare’ projects. But our relevance had already lost the race to the pursuit of wealth and the pursuit of morally cheaper lifestyles. When we lost our evangel (good news) we lost our relevance.

Q. How true is this in your church and in your region? Why is it so?

BIBLICAL TEACHING

1. 'Make Disciple' New Testament Greek: matheteusate=all one word

- A favourite word of Matthew's – who uses it 73 times.
- The disciples in this gospel are those who follow Christ, are committed to him and his teachings. They call him 'Lord' because they have him as their Saviour, their master, their king and their God, and seek to live in obedience to him.
- **'Disciple' means 'learner'.**
- **Luke's** parallel account records Jesus calling them out to be his **witnesses** (Luke 24:48) A witness is someone who gives evidence of what they observed personally - a personal experience. They are not the judge or the prosecutor!
- In **Acts**, in the first five chapters, Luke refers **7 times** to the disciples as witnesses. The two words **'disciple'** and **'witness'** are balanced.

Q. If we do NOT carry the Gospel of God to others, what other "way of life" will rule their lives? How will they go in the Judgement?

Q. If we do NOT evangelise, what other Way must be ruling our church?

2. 'Go'

- Christ instructs his followers to make a move, to take the **initiative**, to reach out to those who as yet don't know him as their Lord and Saviour.
- **A way of life.** This part of Christ's great commission can also read **'as you go'**, implying 'in the routines of daily life', 'in our daily encounters'. Christ calls us to make disciples as a way of life.
- **Enculturated** and counter-cultural, guided by the Spirit with new practices adopted together.

3. 'To all peoples'

- **All the ethnic groups**, cultures – not just your own! The early church had trouble with Gentiles coming into full membership. Jesus affirmed the despised Samaritans.
- Ever noticed how God moves his people around the world. Why is it so?
- Who are the 'others' in your midst? Tourists, expats, other languages?
- In the west, the decline of the first 'mission-sending' churches. Send back?
- In the non-west, European believers are not welcome, but others are.

Q. Is God nudging you to some far-off place?

Q. How does your church **fit in** to your current context or culture? How does your church **stand different** from your cultural trends?

4. 'Baptising into the name'

- The importance of deciding and belonging. Some people decide quickly all at once, others go slow, others make lots of mini-decisions along the way. Whatever, it really helps their faith if they name where they are up to from time to time.
- '**into**', has a profound meaning. Controversy has surrounded the symbolism of baptism so that often this main aspect of a direct relationship to God takes a lesser place.
- '**The Father**' –families really matter and men should become nurturers
- '**The Son**' – Jesus is the role-model and the source. God is like Jesus.
- '**The Holy Spirit**'- alive in the world, but given in full by Christ.

Q. What does 'baptism' say about the Christian church that makes us different from simply belonging to one tribe or nation or culture?

5. 'Teaching them'

- Provide ongoing teaching. '**Babes** in Christ' need to be nurtured.
- '**Making**' does not mean 'enforcer' or 'insisting'
- Our loving, **gracious God** is the "discipler". Christian disciplers work under God and seek to reflect His character. Grace and love need to govern all our 'making'. Galatians 5.24 is this you?
- When adults learn, you can't just pour it into them, nor can you leave them simply to learn by themselves. The **adult learning** process is guided by the principles of:
 - Wanting to learn
 - Visual, audio, text, activity, interactive
 - mutual respect and learning together,
 - action arising from reflection, and then 'what worked- what's next',
 - self-direction.
- The **importance of good role-models** (especially by the teacher/discipler) in what is being learned. Be a living demonstration of the gospel. E.g. Paul's example (Philippians 3:17, 4:9 ("Join with others in following..."))
- Content and method must be appropriate to the stage of maturity of the learner, and their way of learning (generations change).
- **The role of the Holy Spirit** in unlocking Jesus' teachings - (John 14:26; John 16:13,14; 1 John 2:20,27)
- Preachers beware: Use visuals and action. People learn twice as much from what they *see* as from what they *hear*. People learn twice as much from what they *do* as from what they *see*.

Q. A very basic question: What is a disciple? What does God actually want from us? What does scripture say? HINT: Who are we supposed to love if we bear the mark of Christ?

6. 'To obey'

- The goal of obedience is 'transform not conform' Romans 12.2
- Repent = change your mind, change your ways. **Decisions** help us.
- James' warning (James 1:22-25 "therefore **rid yourself** of all moral filth...")
- All followers of Christ need to endlessly be seeking to **understand, to apply** to their own lives and to put into practice the teachings of Christ.
- Fortunately we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us to do this. (Romans 8:1-17, 26, 27 "Therefore there is now no condemnation...")
- AND if we follow a role-model (Jesus) we don't have to understand everything

Q. What teachings of Jesus do you struggle to understand or impart to others at the moment?

7. 'Everything I have commanded you'

- Gandhi: " I would become a Christian if I **ever met someone** who followed the teachings of Jesus."
- Jesus clearly explains in the gospels the **core of the body of truth** on which we are to focus. Much of Christ's teaching is disturbing - Jesus was a radical! If Christ is taken seriously, it will result in costly discipleship.
- Most people need to make decisions for deeper conversion steps. Called 'sanctification'. Becoming **more like Jesus**, is to know the Father's love as much as he did. 'From one degree of glory to another'. Romans 3.23 ;1 Corinthians 10.31 ;2 Corinthians 3.18.

8. 'I am with you always'

- Some **church decisions** and meetings would be no different if the Holy Spirit had packed and left long ago. They would just go on unchanged. So, how is Christ the Head of YOUR church (1 Cor 12)
- A remarkable promise! We never have to try to serve God alone.
- To you, is this a daunting task or a daring task?

Q. How significant is this promise in shaping what you do and decide, in recent times?

Q. How does your heart respond right now to know that Jesus is with you always, interceding for you? (Hebrews 7.25; Romans 8.26,34;11.2)

9. 'All Authority has been given to me'

Q. How does Jesus wield his authority? Philippians 2.1-11

Q. Matt 28 is not the only word on evangelism. If it were, we might become like colonialists!
What are the values and attitudes that show the Holy Spirit is at work in your communication -
See Galatians 5.24; 1 Peter 3.15-16?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Some preach boldly to call others to a personal faith in Christ but do not do very well at teaching a new disciple ('discipling').

- When have you seen discipling done effectively?
- What is the outcome in a new disciple's life when it is neglected?
- What would you do about that situation?

Some people are good at 'breaking the mould', that is, creating in the world some fresh, winning impressions about Christianity, but do not do very well at talking further about personal faith.

- When have you seen it done well that the question of personal faith was first raised?
- What do non-church people say about this beautiful Christian who stops at this barrier?
- What can you do in this situation?



2. A Big Idea of God Is Essential

for unhindered growth in God

by John Mallison and Ian Robinson

GOAL OF THIS SESSION:

To explore the character of God, so that the person faith-sharing can recognize God in his greatness and breadth even when his name is not spoken.

alf of Egypt

INTRODUCTION

God has many names, just like us. Father, son, brother, friend, pastor, chaplain, cousin. The best, fullest, defining name is Jesus.

Q. Begin in Pairs

1. What are some **names** you (or others) commonly use to speak of God?
2. Choose ONE each. Talk about the idea or picture of God that this name suggests.
3. What was the name of God which your wider family have used most often - maybe 20 or 50 years ago, or before the Christian gospel came to your village / country? Is this now different?

The above is to be followed by some feedback to the whole gathering.

BIBLICAL TEACHING

Introduction: The recent popularity of the name "Father God". I wonder why? Why not 'dad'?

The Need

Remember in Exodus the story of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32). With Moses, God was in the fire and cloud above them, but they still sacrificed their personal golden jewellery to build a small calf-idol. Afraid of God's great goodness, they **shrink God down to the size** they could handle. We do that!

Many things can shape our thinking about how we live as Christians and how we approach Christian teaching. It comes from the ways that we understand the nature of God. That is, our ideas about: Who God is? What God is like? What does God want? How God looks on the world and all that is created?

Why is God quiet? How we should live in our communities?

Our cultures all speak about God, but what does this mean? Every culture has tried in their own ways to make sense of the world, to get ahead, to order our lives, to explain suffering, to respond to the awesome beauty around us. Biblically, however, some of our thinking is not reliable. To answer these questions and others we need to have **an adequate idea of God**. That is, a B!G idea. Good teaching (doctrine, frameworks, perspectives, stories, wisdom) creates reliable expectations of God, deeper experiences of God, and greater trust. We need these if we are to flourish.

So many people, even Church leaders, have unbalanced, poorly developed, or even wrong ideas of God. This impacts our ability to grow. Why is it so?

- Spirituality: Are we in the habit of making God to seem what we want?
- Learning: Do we have a poor learning of scripture?
- Psychology: Have we copied onto God the dominant model from our earthly-father?
- Environment: Do we conform under pressure from others around us?

e.g. We may regard God as all-powerful and mighty and focus on that in our preaching and teaching, yet neglect his gentleness and undeserved kindness.

On the other hand, we may be a teacher or leader who talks about his loving closeness and undeserved kindness and not have respect for his holiness towards anything that spoils the beautiful plan he has for each human being and the creation.

Q. In what ways do unbalanced or inadequate ideas of God hinder MY Christian life and witness?
Are any of the four points above strong on me?

Q. In Romans 11:22, Paul encourages his readers to balance God's kindness (grace) with his sternness (severity). What are some of the consequences of over-emphasising one to the neglect of the other?

Our task is to discover a RELIABLE view of the nature of God. This may challenge the ideas we have grown up with and cause us to look more deeply into who we are and the values we hold.

The Opportunity

God's revelation of himself in Scripture presents a robust, strong, healthy understanding of who he really is. The Bible introduces us to a God **we can rely upon** - sufficient for all our needs and therefore **deserving of our trust**, our love and our worship. With this God we can take great risks, expect great

things, rejoice in love and hope for resurrection.

Q. How reliable is God? Read these texts: 'With God, **all** things are possible' (Genesis 18.14; Matthew 19:26), Jesus taught. Paul wrote, 'My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:10; Ephesians 3.20-21).

The faith, hope and love we all need to live and serve Christ in a way that will bring praise to him – and build the kingdom of God – grow out of this big picture of God.

Discuss the following

- Each small group will be assigned ONE of the following sections to seek to discover what the Scripture passage(s) teach us about the true nature (and a more adequate picture) of God. Read and discuss the passage and answer the questions in your own book.
- The goal of your group **working together** now is to **write a 25 word prayer** of worship to our great God based on that one scripture passage alone. Remember to KISS- Keep it Short and simple! You are talking to God as 'you', not as 'He'. You are not talking to people but to God.

1) **Isaiah 40:9-31** "You who bring tidings to Zion, go upon the mountain... here is your God"

Look for, and write in your own words, verses in this passage which teach us that God is -

- All powerful, almighty.....
- kind, gentle
- all knowing
- incomparable, unique.....

Add other things that we learn about God here.

.....

Write your 25 word prayer of worship in the margin of the page.

2) **John 14:8-16** "Philip said, Lord show us the Father.... Anyone who has seen me has seen (God) the Father..."

Look for and write in your own words, verses which teach us that Jesus Christ is -

- One with the Father.....
- Able to perform miracles.....
- Gives glory to God.....
- Able to do anything.....

Add other things that we learn about God here.

.....
Write your 25 word prayer of worship in the margin of the page.

3) John 14:17-26 “...The Spirit of truth... you know him...”

Look for and write in your own words, verses which teach us that the Holy Spirit -

- Lives with you.....
- Will not leave you as orphans.....
- Loves those who love him & obey him.....
- Will teach his followers.....

Add other things that we learn about God here.

.....
Write your 25 word prayer of worship in the margin of the page.

4) Colossians 1:15-21 (about Jesus)

Look for, and write in your own words, verses which teach us that God in Jesus & in the Holy Spirit is

-

- Creator.....
- All powerful.....
- Supreme.....
- Mystery Revealed (Ephesians 1.9;Mark 4.11; Colossians 4.3)

Add other things that we learn about God here?

.....
Write your 25 word prayer of worship in the margin of the page.

When we rejoin as the gathered meeting:

- The prayers of each small group will be spoken as a litany of praise, finishing with a suitable hymn that we will choose at the time.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Select for yourself just one aspect of God's nature which is especially relevant to your life situation. Ask yourselves the question: In what ways would I be different if I took this characteristic of God seriously?
- In what ways would our Christian communities be different if leaders took these characteristics of God seriously?

- In what ways would your family life be different if you modelled your parenting on the heavenly father, rather than bringing God down to be like your earthly father?
- Share your feelings and thinking with the group over the meal or some other time.

Another time, you may also like to study:

Holiness of God

see Isaiah 6:1-3

Compassion of God

see Lamentations 3:22,23; and Mark 1.40-45

Generous and great love of God

see 1 John 4:8-12

Forgiveness of God

see 1 John 1:9



3. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Our Life and Witness

By John Mallison and Ian Robinson

GOAL OF THIS SESSION: To grasp the particular nature of the Holy Spirit, so that the witness can work along with Him in the fullest possible ways.

INTRODUCTION: We long for a work of the Holy Spirit to come to our land. Will it be shallow, like a quick shower of rain, or will it last, like a spring that is constant for the generations?

Q: What is meant by these to seemingly opposite statements about being led by the Spirit?

The Spirit is like the wind. John 3.8

Do not be blown to and fro. Ephesians 4.14

Q. Share a time when you personally experienced the work of the Holy Spirit.

Q. Where do we particularly see evidence of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit **in the life of the church** in our country today?

BIBLICAL TEACHING

REBORN

The Holy Spirit makes possible the whole process of re-birth (being 'born again' or in another translation 'born from above' - either way means born through the Holy Spirit). John 16.7-8

He makes not-yet Christians aware of their need to get right with God and enables them to understand what God has done for them in Jesus Christ. He awakens their faith, so that they come to be aware of the need to confess Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Only then do they experience his life-changing power. We do not have just one birth and one death, we have two.

John 3:3-6 (NIV) – 'In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.'

Q: What confidence do you have that you have been reborn in the Holy Spirit?

Q: What confidence do you have for eternity? Are you looking forward to dying in Him one day when your calling is finished?

CONFIDENT

The Holy Spirit **assures** believers in Christ that they are made right with God as indicated by the promises of Scripture, and **through an inner certainty** and peace and a change in their attitudes and behaviour. Psalm 139.

Romans 8:13-17 (NIV) – 'For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "'Abba," Father.'" ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.'

Q. Tell each other of a time when you felt that God cherishes you as his special child. If you have never felt so cherished, pray for one another now for Abba to draw you closer and heal your hurting heart.

TRANSFORMED

The Holy Spirit **progressively transforms into Christ's likeness** through the believer's faith, prayers and their understanding of and putting into practice the Scriptures

Romans 12.1-2 The world wants us to conform in our thinking. Spirit transforms, so we are non-conformists. We teach for transformation, not just information.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV) – 'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.'

GUIDED

The Holy Spirit inspires Christ followers to **understand and act in ways that are according to God's will.**

John 14.23-27

Galatians 5:22-25 (NIV) – 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.'

Q. Others try to get us to act in ways that are according to their will, and they are sometimes **not** according to the Holy Spirit. E.g. community expectations, saving face, avoiding conflict, spouse requests, church expectations. Which of these do you feel exerts most pressure upon you? How do you manage the internal conflict that it brings?

SERVING

The Holy Spirit equips believers with **gifts to enable them to witness and serve effectively**, so that Christian communities and the wider community will be enriched.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV) – 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.'

Your *first birth* gift is being who you are as a disciple, made in the image of God, showing up with an open heart and empty-handed - even more than your skill or profession or personality. You are a gift to us.

Your *second birth* (spiritual) gift(s) , your part of the Body of Christ, will be seen in the ways that you show your passion and persistence, and will be confirmed by its godly fruit and the testimony of others. God has made you a gift to us.

Q. What does it mean to you today to realize you are a double gift to others?

PRAYING

The Holy Spirit **prays in and for followers of Christ making their prayers effective**.

Romans 8:26 (NIV) – 'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groans that words cannot express.'

'Intercede' means two-way traffic. HSpirit speaks from our heart to God and from God's heart to ours. So there is prayer also in silence, weeping, groaning, lament, and waiting.

For HSpirit to be allowed to set the agenda, he has to get around the blockages in us – ego and pride, sin and blindness, our human traditions in world and church, our wants and desires – and in this he needs us to learn to co-operate.

Q. It is often said that Christianity is not a "try-harder religion" as though seeking to live for Christ essentially depends upon our own efforts. How would you respond to this?

PRAYER EXERCISE TO CONCLUDE

- The Holy Spirit is in 'you who believe'. Ask him what he would like you to pray about and follow any intuition in prayer that arises from that request. If uncertain check it out with your group.
- We are in the Holy Spirit. Ask him where he is flowing in your life? With whom?



4. Fasting for spiritual purposes

GOAL: To describe the importance, value and practice of fasting for spiritual purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Fast “secretly” : Matthew 6.16-18 Jesus said “when you fast...”. Joyous not heroic.

BIBLICAL TEACHING

Who in Scripture has fasted and why?

- Moses fasted for forty days at Horeb (Exodus 24.15-18), as did Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) in order to purify themselves for divine encounter.
- Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 8:21; Nehemiah 1:4),
- Esther (Esther 4:16), Joel (Joel 2.15)
- King Jehosaphat (2 Chronicles 20.1-4)

They all proclaimed national fasts, in order to prepare for a significant event or to influence its outcome.

- Zechariah 8.19 records four fasting days each year.
- King David (2 Samuel 12:16), the prophet Daniel (Daniel 10:3),
- Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:37),
- John the Baptist all fasted (Matthew 9.14; Luke 18.12) for personal reasons. In Psalm 35.13f, the author practises fasting with mourning in sackcloth.
- Our Lord Jesus practised fasting to a high degree. “Man shall not live by bread alone”. The power of the Spirit comes.

For some Christians, God makes this form of prayer their main ministry; for **all others**, it is only a part of many aspects of ministry.

Notice how **choosing a place** for special prayer is very important. E.g. ‘Jesus went out to a desert place’. Desert island or prayer hut? High peak? What is your region’s ‘desert place’?

There is a **variety** of ways of doing this. In the instances above there are both short and long periods, both occasional and regular disciplines, mostly fasting from food only, or only from some foods (‘The Daniel Fast’), but on rare occasion also from water. Scripture also talks about fasting from noise (quiet

times of solitude) or from sleep or from sex between married couples for an agreed season (1 Cor 7.5). We might add fasting from TV, stimulants, use of car or mobile phone.

Barriers?

It is up to God to show you what barriers you have against this form of prayer. Maybe just the discomfort of hunger which won't actually hurt you. Or resistance to change? Worried about the effect on your body? With the general loss of experience in this practice, it is possible to be both **over-zealous** and **too cautious** about regaining it. How long can I fast? In 1981, ten Irish Republican prisoners, under British Army medical supervision, died of a hunger strike, the first dying after 46 days and the longest lasting 73 days. In 1996, twelve Kurdish political prisoners participated in the Death Fast in Turkey, which lasted for 69 days.

Therefore, we may conclude that Jesus' forty day fast was safe. He probably lost one third of his body weight, but recovered within two weeks or so. (see footnote).

When to fast?

When you realize that God's desire is not just for our first repentance but to keep making more room in us for more Grace.

Practised in many religions, fasting has been a practice with several layers of meaning:

- a. When we want to focus our discipline and remove the desires which obscure godly desires. What is our desire for the beauty of holiness?
- b. When we want to perfect obedience, or change history. This belief, that the collective will of a fasting and praying people will usher in a time of change in history, is seen in Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah and other biblical accounts cited above. It is a paradox - induced physical weakness produces radical historic change, because we are totally reliant on and totally tuned into God.
- c. Medical sources affirm the value of going without food for a period of time for both spiritual and physical health benefits.¹ It is not good for weight loss.

¹ Fasting is not dangerous to the body. 'If the person does not eat for a prolonged period, the body begins to mobilise fatty acids. The nervous system continues to use glucose, or ketone bodies, whilst the rest of the system can oxidise fatty acids releasing carbon dioxide and water to release energy. As a result of the glucose sparing and use of fatty acids a person can fast for several weeks, provided they drink water, and the blood glucose level does not fall by more than 25% of its normal range.' Stevenson, P. (2002) 'Fasting', Australian Naturopath Network, 6 Dec 2005, <http://www.ann.com.au/MedSci/fasting.htm>

Where is the light of God pointing in you at this time? A new repentance? or an old repentance revisited?

Choose to fast with the approval of your family and colleagues. Be very quiet about it. It will make you weak and may push some of your jobs on to them. Start slowly so they can see the benefit.

How to fast personally- gradual build up

- One meal – Wesley: Wednesday one or two meals. Also Friday.
- 24 hours three meals
- 40 hours
- 3 days
- Longer periods - up to 40 days
- Always begin with a gradual slow down and end with a period of low-sugar high-fibre breakfasts.
- If you are on medication, ask your doctor for advice, and do not be deterred from trying.

How to fast together

- **You** practise it 'secretly' so that all may see its benefit.
- Invite other leaders to join in 'secretly' . Do bible study and study this.
- Leadership group agrees to a 'season' of fasting and prayer for the church .
- Explain its benefits or the decision you are waiting upon.
- Provide options for others to join in differently. Degrees of fast, length of time they can keep. Maybe join in again later. Make no judgements. Enrol secretly, be warmly invitational.
- Support one another. Someone needs to be available in case physical strength is needed in an emergency.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

This week we offer the opportunity to fast for one meal on Wednesday. You do not have to do it.

Do not 'eat up' before or after it, be very moderate, or you will be worse off for doing it.

Your workload on that day will be the same as other days, so you will need to practise Matthew 6.

While hungry, pay attention to your thoughts and desires and see what they tell you about yourself.

Learn to Discern- make notes on your experiences around every two hours

- Physical reactions
- Spirit promptings
- Business back home

Discuss these notes in your group. Seek to learn from each other's experiences.



5. The Holy Spirit Agenda

Goal: How can the church work within the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

OR How is it possible for a large organisation to be

led by the Spirit of God?

HISTORY AND BIBLE

1. Historically there are **Three Patterns of Revival direct from God.**

- **BREAK OUT:** e.g. Read **Day of Pentecost Acts 2.**
e.g. Pentecostal revival of the twentieth century. Usually - Noisy expressive meetings.

- **BREAK IN:** e.g. **Read Mount of Transfiguration 'tell no one' Matthew 17.**

e.g. Desert Fathers and Mothers 3rd to 6th centuries. Usually - Quiet prayer islands/ mountains/ caves/ desert.

- **BREAK OPEN:** e.g. **Read Acts 10 the gospel goes to Gentiles.**

E.g. 16th century European Reformation understanding of the Grace of God towards all believers. Usually – careful scripture studies.

NOTES:

- Other examples could be given from both scripture and church history.
- All these revivals arise from concerted prayer.
- All these revivals involve you being broken.
- All receive opposition.
- Don't try to predict or control what God is bringing forth right now.
- Don't try to control what God is bringing forth, nurture the life.

2. **Management of church where things are moving fast.**

- Spend 20-30 minutes at the start of your team meetings to **catch up** with each other's real needs and feelings at present. Don't fix each other up. Just hear and hold and pray.
- Spend one meeting in every meeting, **simply waiting** on God before closing the discussion

and making your decision. Take care about this: prophets may speak but then it is apostles make the decisions from their wisdom.

- Decide together from scripture what three or four **core values** will be priority at this time to guide this organisation.
- **After listening to people, and fasting** before God, praying and thinking together, set the standards and budgets that really do reflect the ministry priorities not just the manager's guess.
- Employ good managers with accountable systems that are dutifully carried out each year. Set their **parameters** for their goals and the **perimeters** within which you can **trust** them to move.
- Review all role descriptions thoroughly every 2-3 years. If it's been working, things have changed, it needs to change now. If it hasn't been working, it needs to change now.

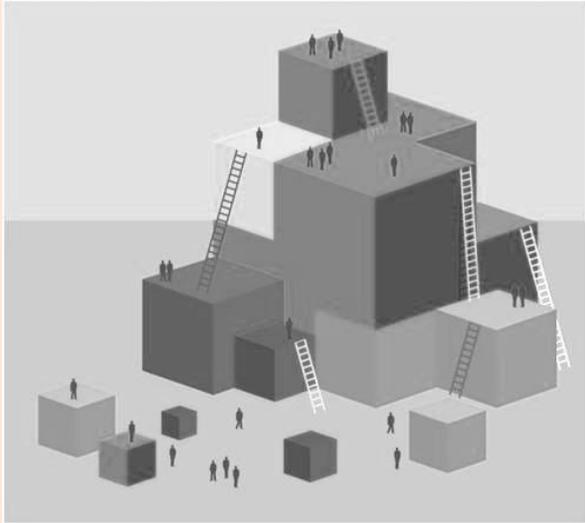
3. If revival comes

- Organise nurture groups to teach new disciples.
- Support inexperienced leaders with resources and an education system.
- Preach whole-of-life conversion and deeper discipleship, not just more revival.
- Thank God for all the godly aspects of your cultural heritage then name and redeem the other aspects.

DISCUSS

What do **you personally** find most encouraging in the above teaching about the Holy Spirit?

How would it change **your church's** disciple-making if believers understood what the Scriptures teach us in the passages here and then acted in faith upon this?



6. Bible Study on Biblical Community

The credible Church has a diversity of approaches to their community. It is very important to welcome that diversity and not be too precious.

Every single approach that I have ever seen has reached someone and offended someone else.

There is NO perfectly safe approach. If you want to avoid doing anything, try to find the perfect approach! In my experience, the 'street corner preacher' who offends many has been the only one who could have reached the drug addict on the streets. The nice intellectual who has offended no one but earned the right to be heard in one place has bored some others silly. Get used to that diversity. It is God's idea.

If we can know where our own part fits in with other aspects of Christ's work, and where our real allies are, and where we need to draw someone else alongside us, we together would be more full of the Holy Spirit for the witness of the gospel. (Acts 1:8)

Let's have a brief look at what it could mean. In this passage in Luke, Jesus says that he was filled with the Holy Spirit and then names many kind of work that show it. We might be able to find ourselves in there somewhere and that would be fantastic: Read together Luke 4:1b-30.

CONTEXT

1. Jesus comes out of a disciplined **contemplative** exercise (fasting in the wilderness (v1-13))
2. Jesus stays in the context of **the worship and preaching** in the local church (synagogue) (v14-17,20-22)

CONTENT

He makes some clear statements (v 18-19) about the work of the Kingdom. Write in the space what you think it means.

3. Spirit upon me – sounds like a **Charismatic** statement
4. Evangelise the poor - sounds like an **Evangelical** statement
5. Liberty to captives - sounds like **Liberation theology**

6. Sight to blind - sounds like **Healing** ministry
7. Free the oppressed - sounds like **Social Justice** statement
8. Announce the time - sounds like **Prophetic** ministry
9. Lord will save his people - sounds like **Revival** and **Justice** statement, touching even the economic structure of the land.

All of these are aspects of Jesus' ministry in the kingdom of God. His Spirit gives us gifts of service so He can be doing his work through us. No one part can do without or look down upon another part (1Corinthians 12:14-27). We must not stand apart. Mission is a rough road, so we must be firmly **welded together** if we are going to have what it takes - to last the distance and to make the difference in our time. It doesn't mean that we can't argue and criticise, after all the welding process throws off a few sparks. But it does mean that we do not live by our prejudices.

Question

Form groups of five or six to discuss these.

There will be no subsequent discussion on it altogether this time.

- i. Which of this list of nine is closest to what you do the most? Say, it gets a very positive reaction in you.
- ii. Which of this list is strangest to what you do? It gets a 'suspicious' reaction in you.
- iii. Does this show you any part of the Body of Christ towards which you have not been very welcoming?
- iv. Are you putting limits on what God can do with your life?

CONCLUDE

Close with prayer in your own way at the end of the time in the group. Leader should keep time.

Some suggestions:

1. Wait silently for two minutes searching your heart. Then ask God to do anything with you in prayer now, so that the Gospel might be seen as credible across the broad mass of society.
2. Ask that we all do our part in solidarity. Pray for any Christians with whom you feel in conflict?
3. Take up your personal responsibility to evangelise your world. e.g. "Lord, I will try to reach my world".
4. Pray for one another by name.



7. Some Special situations

Not everyone is the same, sorry. There are no formulae for evangelism. Here are some tips in dealing with certain special categories of persons. Discuss them in your group:

When have you come across this sort of person and engaged with them? (Don't discuss people at a distance, please). What did you gain from the engagement? How would these tips help next time?

Muslim

- Muslim love to discuss God in religious terms. But build a **relationship also**.
- Do not be tricked into witnessing when you are in a **hostile environment**.
- Use **creative words** to avoid directly raising rejection .eg Son of God, Holy Trinity. Use 'author of life', 'God of many names'. Affirm your belief in ONE God.
- Pray for them to receive a **direct revelation** in a dream or for a miracle to happen near them
- If someone is considering baptism, arrange for their **protection** from possible backlash.

Psychiatric Illness

- Many "disordered" persons are **very open** to God. Their illness makes them know that they need Him.
- They are often good at discerning the truth, they have to be. They are equally likely to be confused. **Both sides** of this are true. Do not mistrust their hearts simply because their mind is disordered.
- Normal group situations are often too **anxious** for them. Plan to do one-on-ones.
- Often think they have demons or special godly powers, but mostly they are **just ill**. Rarely, they may be demonized. This needs study and discernment, since much damage has been done by rushing in.
- Create with them a way to act, through safe **frame of behaviours** and maximize their contribution in ministry, don't side-line them.
- Keep in touch with their psychologist or **doctor**. Ask if they are taking their meds.

Famous Persons

- See them as especially **vulnerable** due to their fame, not powerful.
- **Never ask** them to do anything for you. Your only focus is discipling them.
- Keep your conversations **entirely confidential, never boasting**.
- With conversion, get them to take **20-40 days** (like St Paul) to work out how to act in public now that the gospel has found them. Support them 1 to 1.
- Be available to them at a moment's notice. Three or four should **covenant to be available** when needed.

New Language Group

- Start with one person or family, building trust and understanding, giving **and receiving** deeds of kindness. Keep spreading the contact base widely as opportunity arises.
- Use **visual** aids and stories a lot. The Jesus film.
- They must lead **their own church** in their own language, and create their own arts/music. They will decide what aspects of their culture God wants them to turn around. Not you.
- Expect **no return** favours.

Unusually Intelligent Persons

- Often feel **rejected** by their community, may lack healthy friendships or social skills, may be playing up and getting into trouble (like Einstein).
- Often ask **questions** no one else ever thought of, which can seem annoying. Respect that question, strive to understand, and ask them “Why is this important to you”?
- Often break **the rules** when they cannot see the purpose. Invite them to learn to get on with everyone by respecting their boundaries.
- Find 1 or 2 Christian **peers** anywhere you can, which may be difficult.
- Provide **access** to the best books and apologists in the world.



Dialogue with other religions – in general

This may surprise you. It doesn't matter initially whether you believe “Jesus is the only way” (exclusivist) or “Jesus is one way among many” (inclusivist) or “Jesus is great and I can't comment about anyone else's religion” (pluralist). When meeting together as two or more religious communities, we always must engage with gentleness of heart and respect for their position and humility in our choice of words (1 Peter 3.16). That's **REG – respect, engage, gently**.

If we proceed instead with the ‘**cup of tea and sympathy**’ approach, or with the ‘a smile reveals the teeth’, we can rightly be accused of arrogance or falsity. Anyone who pretends to listen, just so they can get to their own speech, is being rude.

You can't know whether you are exclusivist, inclusivist or pluralist or variations on these, until you have entered the process. The great books you read are someone else's great journey – what's yours? You can't do it from **an offshore theoretical island!**

If we proceed by ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’, that is, by undermining major Christian beliefs with **an easy nod and acceptance of another view**, we are actually trying to avoid the dialogue. You will frustrate your partners in dialogue. We must be who we are, followers of Jesus Christ. To be anything else is to be disrespectful of self, and that too is a manipulative stance. It is not about you, it is about communities.

With these three points above in place, Christians who join in inter-communal dialogue report that they learn more deeply and strongly about their *own* faith. A few persons are converted after a long time, by the Grace of God. Many more will take Jesus on board where they are at, and theologians are looking at that afresh.



WHY DO THIS STUDY?

Many of us are tired of the structures that try to straighten out the wild and unpredictable nature of life. Yet life is where God is.

Many of us long to be in the centre of God's will but we know that if left to our own devices we will mess it up. How can we be a genuine Holy Spirit Movement?

- **The Great Commission** will set our sails for us.
- **A Big Idea of God** will help us form reliable expectations of what God is doing.
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit** will connect us with how God works in people like us, not very perfect.
- **Fasting for Spiritual Purposes** will help us to become more receptive, less cluttered, at depth.
- **The Holy Spirit's Agenda** is for leaders of groups and churches, who have their own agenda for God!
- **Christian Community** is a bible study on the ways we can build open relationships towards each other.
- **Some Special Situations** will provide some tips in unusual situations that pop up.

These are not just intellectual, 'find the right answer' small group studies. I hope your group likes to understand God and themselves at more depth.

HOW to do this Study?

In your group, you don't have to do all to topics. You don't have to do them in this sequence. You can adjust the content so that it suits your language and particular emphasis.

Other topics in the PURPLE COW WORKSHOPS for Christian small groups and THE WONDER WORKSHOPS for secular groups, can be found on

<http://makesyouwonder.yolasite.com/small-group-exercises.php>

Feedback from other users of this material can be seen on

Purplecowworkshops.wordpress.com

YOUR FEEDBACK from your experience will help others. Send it to idtr@westnet.com.au

Published 2013 by MACSIS 33 Evans Street, Shenton Park, Western Australia 6008
ISBN