

Francis Chan: 'Forgotten God'

Francis Chan, author and the senior pastor of Cornerstone  Community Church in Simi Valley, California, believes that Christians today do not fully embrace the power of the Holy Spirit; we're living half-filled. In his new book, Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit, Chan offers stories from those who have experienced real encounters with God. He says each of us has the choice every day "to depend on yourself, to live safely, and to try to control your life. Or you can live as you were created to live—as a temple of the Holy Spirit of God, as a person dependent on Him, desperate for God the Spirit to show up and make a difference."

The following is an excerpt from Forgotten God. ([Click here to purchase this book.](#))

My hope and prayer for you is that church people don't try to normalize you. What I mean is that in American churches we often try to calm people down who are just too passionate or too sacrificial and radical. I know at times I have done this to other people. And I've had it done to me.

Two years ago at a dinner I sat next to a man who runs a human trafficking awareness organization. He described how these children, most of whom were sold or abducted into the sex trade, are raped and abused every single night, again and again, how they have no one to advocate for them, and how there is no way out.

That night I lay awake in my bed for hours—literally hours—and I imagined my own children in this situation. Maybe that was a stupid thing to do, but suddenly, vividly, I was sobbing and I couldn't get the images out of my mind. I started thinking about what I would do if this really happened to my little girl. I know that I wouldn't stop until I had saved her. I

would mobilize everyone I know through whatever means possible to get them to help. Lying there in my bed that night I got more and more passionate about everything I would do to save my little girl.

Then something happened. I am not one of those people who often hears God's distinct, clear voice (though I know some people do), but on this night, the Spirit of God said to me: *I want you to love them as your own children*. This was overwhelming to me. After all, if I treated these kids as though they were my own, I wouldn't stop praying for them. I also wouldn't stop passionately begging people to figure out ways to seek them out and rescue them. I literally wept for hours. The thought of these precious children of mine being taken advantage of was unbearable. I was now on a mission. A mission from God.

I remember getting back to Cornerstone and "rallying the troops." I was so fired up, and I got others fired up. But over the course of several months I got distracted. People around me started calming me down about sex trafficking. They said, "Francis, you can't save the world" and "You're already doing so much. Don't be so hard on yourself." And the passion I believe God gave me for children in the sex slave trade slowly eked out of me.

Things like this happen all the time. As a church, we tend to do this to people who are passionate and bold. We mellow them out. Institutionalize them. Deaden them to the work that the Spirit is doing in them. In Acts 4:13 we read of the early church doing just the opposite. Peter and John testified before the Sanhedrin and "when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (NIV). The people were astonished at their courage and that they were uneducated. Right after Peter and John were released, they returned to the other believers and prayed for even more boldness and courage (4:29). Some of the

boldest people (John and Peter) were the ones asking for more boldness!

Why don't we do this today? I have found that we generally do the opposite. Instead of encouraging people who are doing courageous things for God and joining them in their discernment process of how to be faithful to what God is calling them to, we tell them to slow down and back off. Instead of being astonished at believers' courage, frequently (and unfortunately) I am astonished at believers' timidity and lack of boldness. What a contrast to the biblical model we are given!

A few months ago I was speaking at a summer camp, and I was speaking to one of the organizations there that sponsors children. This volunteer told me about a 16-year-old girl there at the camp who sponsors 14 children, on her own. I was astonished by this. Fourteen children (at about \$30 a month for each child) is a lot of money for a high school student to come up with. I talked to this girl and asked her how she did it. She told me that she works year-round and she works three jobs in the summertime to pay for the child support. While other teenagers are saving for a car, she's saving lives! Instead of spending her hard-earned money on herself and her future, she gives it to these 14 children because she believes God loves them just as much as He loves her.

My prayer is that churchgoers will not dissuade her from this calling. That they won't tell her things like: "You really need to start thinking about yourself now. Your future and your education are important. What you've done is great, but it's time to think about what's next for you." Maybe this girl will stand strong in her conviction that the children she is supporting around the world are as important as she is ... just maybe she won't be convinced out of her passionate love and sacrifice.

My wife and I recently decided to give all the royalties from

my previous book, *Crazy Love*, to a fund called the Isaiah 58 Fund. All the money goes to the needy in the world—the starving, sick, impoverished and to those in the sex slave trade. We reasoned that if we kept all this money, we would end up spending it on things we didn't need. We knew that in the long run (80 years from now), there would be no regrets. But if we bought things that wouldn't last beyond our time on earth, we would end up disappointed and regretful.

I was a bit shocked and discouraged by some of the responses we received. People told us that we were being foolish and irresponsible with the gifts that God gave us. They said we should have at least put some away in case of an emergency. My response back was, "Is it not an emergency that children in Cambodia and Thailand and even the U.S. are being raped every single day of their lives? Why is that not an emergency?" I think the church often inadvertently teaches that this is not an emergency. And this, I believe is sin. Is an emergency only an emergency if it affects me and my immediate family?

I am not saying that every person is supposed to give all the money from their jobs to support children. Or that everyone has to create a fund from the royalties of their books. Or that each and every person is meant to get involved with organizations that work against the sex slave trade. What I am saying, though, is that instead of thinking and telling people they are crazy when they feel like the Spirit is leading them into something that doesn't necessarily make sense to us, we should join them in the discernment process. Instead of discouraging people, we should pray for more insight and boldness. Instead of deadening people to the Spirit's leading with our words and our actions, we should celebrate and join the Spirit's movement in and through them!

This is not about one specific way of living radically. It is about discerning and obeying the Spirit's voice, especially when He asks you to do something that is hard, a little beyond "normal," and that requires sacrifice. This is a twofold

thing. It is both about encouraging others to obey the Spirit's leadings and about listening and obeying His leading in your own life. Do you feel bold and powerful? Whether your answer is yes or no, all of us need to ask for more courage and boldness.

So, finally, I just want to spend these last few paragraphs praying for you, the reader.

Spirit, we know that we have done wrong by You. Please forgive us for grieving, resisting and quenching You. We have resisted You through sin, through our rebellion and through our hardness of heart. At times, we have been spiritually blind. At other times, we knew what You wanted us to do, but we chose to ignore Your promptings. Yet this is not how we want to live now. We need You to change us. Only through You can we truly worship. Spirit of the Lord, You are the one who brings us to a place where we can worship. You are the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of life. Thank You for the truth, the holiness and the life that You give us.

We need Your wisdom and understanding as we seek to live this life. Keep us from disbelief, from fear. We need Your strength to help us do what You are asking us to do and to live how You are asking us to live. Speak loudly and drown out the other voices calling us to conform to the patterns of this world. You are the Spirit of love and self-control. Give us the self-control needed to deny our flesh and follow You. Give us a love strong enough to motivate courageous action. Manifest Yourself through us that we may serve and love Your bride, the church, as You do.

Come, Holy Spirit, come. We don't know exactly what that means and looks like for each of us yet, in the particular places You've called us to inhabit. But, nonetheless, whatever it means, we ask for Your presence. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

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