

FRESH WIND, FRESH FIRE STUDY GUIDE

Week 1

This study guide is based significantly off the one found at the back of your *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* book. Modifications have been made to the study guide so that it better fits our church and our goals for this study.

Opening Fun Question: If your life was literally flashing before your eyes, what three moments or scenes from your past that you would expect to stand out?

CHAPTER ONE: THE AMATEURS

1. Were you able to finish reading chapter one? What are some of your first thoughts and impressions after reading about the beginning of Pastor Cymbala's story?
2. When Jim Cymbala, the new pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, realized the church didn't have enough money to pay its mortgage, he prayed and asked God to provide. In what way(s) did God's faithful provision of a \$100 anonymous donation help to prepare Jim and his wife, Carol, for what was to come in their ministry?


After a Sunday evening service that began with Pastor Cymbala being too depressed to preach, God helped him discover that *"God is attracted to weakness. He can't resist those who humbly and honestly admit how desperately they need him. Our weakness, in fact, makes room for his power."* (p. 19)

3. Read **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**. What does it mean to be "weak" as a follower of Jesus Christ?
4. Why is coming face to face with one's own weakness so important for a follower of Jesus Christ?
5. Have you seen God's attraction to weakness evident in your own life? Have you witnessed your weakness making room for His power to show up? If you feel comfortable share about that experience(s).

While Pastor Cymbala was on a fishing boat recovering from a lung ailment, he sensed God saying to him, *"If you and your wife will lead my people to pray and call upon my name, you will never lack for something fresh to preach."* (p. 25) God then affirmed his commitment to provide vital funds.

Many times in the Bible, God uses the word **if** when talking about the way he wants to bless us: **if** we seek him, **if** we love one another, etc.

6. Why does God sometimes make what he will do for us conditional on our hunger for him?

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7. Throughout *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Pastor Cymbala emphasizes the importance of prayer. How would you describe the relationship between prayer and seeing the Holy Spirit work in our lives? In our churches?
 8. What do you imagine it looking like for us as a church family to call upon the Lord? Describe a couple of the imagines that come to mind.
 9. What would you say right now are 3 items we need to call upon the Lord to do?

PRAYER REQUESTS



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Week 2

Opening Fun Question: What is one event in the future whose outcome you would really like to know now?

CHAPTER TWO: CATCHING FIRE

"The format of a prayer meeting is not nearly as important as its essence—touching the Almighty, crying out with one's whole being. What matters most is that we encounter the God of the universe, not just each other."

- Pastor Cymbala (p. 30)

1. What is it about encountering one another at church or a Christian gathering that sometimes seems sufficient for us?
2. What kind of expectations do you typically bring into worship gatherings or growth group in regards to encountering God? Do you think your expectations are too high, too low, or right on?
3. Why do we need to an encounter with God when we gather?
4. Why, as we seek to share the message of Jesus with hurting people, is it important for us to have faith in God's ability to transform anyone's life, regardless of his or her problems? Is your faith at that place where you believe God is truly able to transform anyone?
5. As people who attended the Brooklyn Tabernacle were energized by the Holy Spirit, what happened among the different races represented in the congregation?
6. Pastor Cymbala writes, *"In America it would appear that there is more openness, acceptance, and teamwork in the gym [among people of different races] than in the church of Jesus Christ."* Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Illustrate your answer if possible.
7. We live in a predominantly white area but what might you, your growth group, and/or those who are a part of Shalom, do within the next month to increase openness and respectful acceptance between races in our church? In our community?
8. Over and over again, Pastor Cymbala and members of the Brooklyn Tabernacle congregation have wept and pleaded before God for last-minute help. How do you approach God when you need his intervention in what otherwise would be an impossible situation?
9. Why is it important for us to be persistent in calling on the Lord?
10. What is your biggest takeaway from what you read in chapter 2?

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Week 3

Opening Fun Question: What is something that you really enjoy doing that many other people really wouldn't enjoy at all?


Chapter Three: A Song for the Desperate

Pastor Cymbala shares how he plans a service but allows for plans to change if the Spirit is working, like in the story he shared in the beginning of the chapter of a testimony shared by a former drug addict led into an invitation to receive Jesus Christ instead of the third song the choir had planned to sing. (p. 39-40)

1. How sensitive do you feel that you are to the leading of the Spirit in your life?
2. How does one capture a greater sense of leading from the Holy Spirit in their life? Read **Psalm 46:10** together. What is the connection between stillness and knowing God?
3. What do you think the balance should be between spontaneity and following the plan for a church service?
4. A large part of the chapter is the testimony of Roberta Langella. How did Roberta's testimony of God's grace in her life impact you? What did her story reveal about who God is?

When Roberta found herself at the altar declaring her desperation to God and surrendering her life to him, she said that *"From that point on, I began to believe that God loved me...I knew—I really knew deep down—that God loved me and accepted me and I could relax in His love."* (p. 44-45)

5. Why did it take Roberta reaching the place of desperate surrender to God before she could believe that God loved her?
6. What is the difference between really experiencing God's love and just knowing it intellectually?
7. Do you feel you have reached a place where you can "relax in God's love?" Why or why not?
8. What do you understand Pastor Cymbala to mean by the following comment: *"Prayer cannot truly be taught by principles and seminars and symposiums. It has to be born out of a whole environment of felt need."* (p. 49)?



Many of us would affirm that *"prayer is the source of the Christian life, a Christian's lifeline."* (p. 50) Cymbala follows that statement up by saying that the greater emphasis on teaching in today's churches is producing limited results because many listeners do not have an active prayer life.

9. What is your response to that statement?

10. Would you describe yourself as a person who is devoted to prayer? Why or why not? How might a greater devotion to prayer change your life?

11. In Genesis 4:26, we read, *"At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD."* What would it mean for us to "call on" the name of the Lord with all of our heart and soul?

PRAYER REQUESTS



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Week 4

Opening Fun Question: What do you think is the best conversation piece in your home? What makes it so?


CHAPTER FOUR: THE GREATEST DISCOVERY OF ALL TIME

Pastor Cymbala touches on God's commitment to listen to our prayers and respond to us. He writes that God is not aloof, that God says continually through the centuries, *"I'll help you, I really will. When you don't know where to turn, then turn to me."* Cymbala then shares how he and Carol had prayed for Chrissy, their daughter, and God did answer their prayers.

1. In Psalm 4:3 King David writes, *"Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him."* What does this verse tell us about God's relationship with those who love and follow Him?
2. Read what Jesus shares with His disciples in **John 14:12-14**. What is Jesus communicating to His disciples about His willingness to answer prayer?
3. In what way(s) does our view of God influence our desire and willingness to call on him in the day of trouble (Psalm 50:15)?
4. How is your view of God influencing your prayer life right now? Has God been changing your view of him through *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*?
5. There is a significant effort in the American evangelical church today for church to be engaging and even entertaining, which has resulted in a more presentation-style of church. What affect has this had on how we typically pray together as believers? Is that affect healthy or unhealthy? Why?

Pastor Cymbala writes, *"Satan's main strategy with God's people has always been to whisper, 'Don't call, don't ask, don't depend on God to do great things. You'll get along fine if you rely on your own cleverness and energy.'" (p. 56)*

6. What are some signs that a believer has abandoned crying out to the Lord in favor of getting by on their cleverness and energy? What are some signs that a church has abandoned crying out to the Lord in favor of getting by on their cleverness and energy?
7. Why is it that we find it so compelling to rely on our own cleverness and energy instead of humbling ourselves, calling on God's name with all our hearts, and depending on him to do great things?

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8. Where do you fall personally in the spectrum between calling out to God and depending on Him to do great things and relying on your cleverness and energy to get you through life and its challenges?
 9. Psalm 50:15 says, *“Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”* What trouble are you facing today that you need to call on the Lord concerning?

PRAYER REQUESTS




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Week 5

Opening Fun Question: What is your biggest pet peeve?

CHAPTER FIVE: The Day Jesus Got Mad

1. Why is it important for those of us who are doing ministry to look at why we are doing these things, to examine whether we do these things with hearts that radiate God's love or for some other reasons?
2. Pastor Cymbala writes, *"I have seen God do more in people's lives during ten minutes of real prayer than in ten of my sermons."* (p. 71) What results of heartfelt prayer have you seen?
3. The Holy Spirit was poured out, as recorded in Acts 1-2, when the disciples were waiting on God. What do you think would happen if more Christians in Hutchinson spent time waiting on God?
4. If prayer is the key to a strong church and dynamic gospel outreach, what do you think is keeping many Christians from spending more time praying and calling on God's name? What do you see as your two biggest obstacles to spending more time praying and calling on God's name?
5. What do you anticipate happening if you begin to earnestly and diligently pray that God will reveal his power in your life and lead you toward people whom he wants you to love? Are those two prayers you feel comfortable asking God for?
6. One of the values at Shalom is serving our community through service projects. How might getting out in the community reshape the kind of prayers you pray and who you pray for?
7. Often Pastor Cymbala describes people who come to the Brooklyn Tabernacle as being in desperate straits. How do you typically respond when "unusual", desperate, or even very difficult people show up in your life? In church?
8. When we truly believe that God can change people from the inside out, regardless of how sinful or hopeless they may be, as opposed to viewing God as only changing those who are generally good people, what effect does that have on our direct contact with desperate, needy people? On our prayer life?
9. How did Pastor Cymbala's sharing of Ricardo's testimony impact you? What did the story of Ricardo teach you about God? About prayer?

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10. Revelation 5:8 reveals that "the prayers of the saints" are so precious to God that he keeps them like a treasure! How might that truth encourage you?
 11. Pastor Cymbala repeatedly emphasizes the importance of realizing that prayer is God's channel of blessing and then praying, not out of legalistic habit but out of strong desire. If one doesn't have a strong desire to pray, how can they hope to gain it?
 12. A habit of consistent prayer in your life requires a time each day set aside to pray. Do you have a set time each day to pray and really talk with God about your troubles, your challenges, your persecutions, those around you who don't yet know him? If so, when? If not, is anything stopping you from starting today?
 13. Which area(s) of your life needs prayer? Your marriage? Your children? Your business decisions? How much are you willing to invest each day in crying out for God's grace and power?
 14. How are you going to grow from what you've learned this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS



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Week 6

Opening Fun Question: If you had to spend an entire summer working at one of our country's national parks or historic sites, which one would you choose?

CHAPTER SIX: A TIME FOR SHAKING

Read **Ephesians 5:18-19** together.

1. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul writes that we need to "*be always being filled with the Spirit*" (literal translation). Why is it important for each of us, no matter what denomination with which we associate ourselves, to recognize that we need to be continually filled with God's fresh wind and fresh power?
2. In Ephesians 5:19, Paul says that we should speak to one another in various forms. Why is speaking to one another an important step to take after being filled with the Spirit?
3. Pastor Cymbala writes that "*God has never lacked the power to work through available people to glorify his name.*" (p. 97) What do you think it means, in practical terms, for us to be "available" to God?
4. In the story of David and Goliath, David runs toward the battle lines (1 Samuel 17:48). Cymbala then writes, "*That is the picture of what God wants for us today: running toward the fray!*" (p. 98) What does running into the fray as a church in McLeod County look like? Are you running into the fray? If so, how? If not, what is holding you back?
5. Even though you feel weak in your own strength, what might God be calling you to prayerfully and boldly accomplish for his kingdom in your neighborhood? At work? In your family?

After a young man carried a pistol up to the pulpit while Jim Cymbala was preaching, Carol Cymbala suffered from deep, oppressive fear that only went away after choir members joined together to pray over her after being prompted by the Holy Spirit to do so.

6. Why do you think Satan often uses fear as a tactic against Christians?
7. Are you experiencing some fears that are limiting your faith in God and advance of the gospel? How do Christians experience release from fear?
8. Read **Revelation 3:20** together. According to Revelation 3:20, God is ready to draw close to us and provide his love and power. Yet some of us refuse to open the door of our hearts and minds to him. Why do you think we do this?

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Week 7

Opening Fun Question: If you could have 50 lbs. of anything other than money, what would you want?


CHAPTER SEVEN: THE LURE OF NOVELTY

Pastor Cymbala writes, *"In the church today, we are falling prey to the appeal of 'New!' The old truths of the gospel don't seem spectacular enough. We're restless for the latest, greatest, newest teaching or technique."*

1. Have you seen novelty or innovation or methodology supplant calling out to the Lord as the means to spiritual and numerical growth of the church? If so, in what ways?
2. Can novelty or innovation or methodology be used in a good and healthy way in the church? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Has the pursuit of the "new" in place of the enduring truths of the gospel affected Shalom in some way that you see? If so, how? Where do we need to be the most guarded?
4. What are the enduring truths that need to be always be part of our core message as a church?
5. Why do you think people are attracted to things other than the "plain gospel" Jesus proclaimed?
6. As you look back on your life, what impact has the basic gospel message had on you?
7. The lure of novelty is based in a desire to witness the power of God. Instead of pursuing novelty, what should a Christian pursue in order to witness the power of God at work in them and around them?

Pastor Cymbala writes, *"The Bible speaks more about resisting the devil than it does about binding him [1 Peter 5:8-9]."*

8. How does one go about successfully resisting the devil? Read **James 4:7** and **Ephesians 6:10-18** before discussing the answer to this question.
9. How does a community of Christians together resist the devil and his attacks against an entire church?

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10. Pastor Cymbala writes, *"As a minister I firmly believe that I am not allowed to preach what is not in the Bible."* (p. 116) Does additional wisdom from life experiences or experts in certain fields like counseling have a place in the pulpit too? Why or why not?
 11. Some people in the church blame the devil instead of facing the sin in their lives and repenting of their own wrongdoing. What is the result when people tend to focus on how they have been victimized rather than focusing on their personal responsibility and the transforming power of God that can enable them to work in his service regardless of their past?
 12. Jim Cymbala declares, *"God is more powerful than anybody's past, no matter how wretched. He can make us forget—not by erasing the memory but by taking the sting and paralyzing effect out of it."* (p. 119) Have you personally experienced this truth in your own life? If you feel comfortable, share how God has done this great work in your life.

PRAYER REQUESTS



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Week 8

Opening Fun Question: If you could be the spokesperson for any product on the market, what product would you choose to enthusiastically represent?


CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LURE OF MARKETING

Read **1 Timothy 1:7** together.

1. What does the Spirit give believers? What then are the implications for the Christian life?
2. How should the church measure success? If it is not by numbers, does that mean numbers are not important? Explain your answer.
3. Do you agree with Pastor Cymbala that in order to build the church Jesus intended, we must have a *“bold, aggressive attitude in proclaiming God’s Word?”* Why or why not? Explain your answers.
4. How do you feel that Shalom is doing as far as boldly proclaiming the whole will of God within the various contexts of ministry that we have—Sunday morning, Awana, youth group, etc.?
5. Would you describe yourself as bold about proclaiming the gospel in your home, school, work, friendship circles? Explain your answer.
6. Is boldness a temperament issue (i.e. you have to be “outgoing” to be bold) or a spiritual issue? How does one gain boldness? You’ve been here before but take a look at Acts 4:29 to see where the early church went to find boldness.
7. What is the effect if the church is not bold in speaking about sin, repentance, grace, and salvation through Jesus Christ alone?

Jim Cymbala writes, *“The truth is that ‘user-friendly’ can be a cover up for carnality. The same people who want sixty-minute worship services rent two-hour movies and watch NBA and NFL games that run even longer. The issue is not length, but appetite. Why the misplaced desire?”* (p. 132)

8. What do you think of what he says? Do you agree or disagree?
9. Why is there a lack of appetite among Christians for God and His Word? How is an appetite stirred in a Christian that has stopped hungering for God?

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10. Cymbala feels that churches are so programmed that *“God couldn’t break in if he wanted.”* (p. 134). What do you think he means by that?
 11. What do we who are a part of Shalom need to do to ensure our plans doesn’t stifle the work of God at a given gathering?
 12. How does one’s personal preparation for a worship service impact their ability to receive something fresh and powerful from God on a Sunday morning?
 13. How is God challenging you to personally grow after reading and discussing this chapter?

PRAYER REQUESTS



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Week 9

Opening Fun Question: Suppose that income taxes still had to be paid, but instead of going to the government, your tax dollars would go to any cause or charity of your choice. Assuming the money would have to go to the same place each year, where would you want it to go?

CHAPTER NINE: THE LURE OF DOCTRINE WITHOUT POWER

1. In Acts 4:30 the Christians prayed, *“stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders.”* Is this a prayer request Christians should be asking of the Lord to do today as well? What kind of expectation of the supernatural should we ask for and expect from the Lord today?
2. Why do people—Christians and non-Christians alike pay attention when they see and hear firsthand that God actually changes people and sets them free?
3. What are some signs that a church is settling for academic rigor instead of the genuine power of God?
4. Just as Jesus touched lepers and died on the cross for all sinful, evil-hearted, unholy people, God calls us to reach out compassionately to people whose lives are in chaos, who are different, who are dirty, who are unlovely and need his love and forgiveness. How do you personally feel about reaching out to people like that?
5. Pastor Cymbala asks, *“Where are the crowds of new converts? Where are the joyful baptisms? Where are the vibrant prayer meetings?”* (p. 144) What is the value of thinking about these questions in relationship to our lives and our church? What conclusions shouldn’t be drawn strictly from the answers to these questions?
6. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: *“If we do not yearn and pray and expect God to stretch out his hand and do the supernatural, it will not happen.”* (p. 145) Why or why not?
7. On page 150 Cymbala makes a bold statement, *“Christianity is not predominantly a teaching religion.”* What is your response to that statement? What is it predominantly about then?

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Week 9

8. Pastor Cymbala writes concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, *"Satan's tendency is always to push us toward one extreme or the other: deadness or fanaticism."* (p. 152) Where should healthy Christians be in their pursuit of the Holy Spirit's role in their lives and the churches?
9. Do you feel like you are you experiencing the living Christ in your life? If so, describe what that is like in your life right now. If not, is this something that you desire to pursue?
10. God, through Jeremiah, said, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart"* (Jeremiah 29:13). Where do you need to see God show up in power in your life? As a group lift up the places each of you need to see God show up in power in your life.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FRESH WIND, FRESH FIRE STUDY GUIDE

Week 10

Opening Fun Question: Cleaning is a necessary evil in our lives. What is one around the house cleaning task that you don't mind doing, maybe even enjoy? What is one that you really hate to do?

CHAPTER TEN: TOO SMART FOR OUR OWN GOOD?

1. On page 159 Cymbala shares from the story of King Asa what the first step to any spiritual awakening is. What is it? Why must this be a precursor to receiving God's blessing?
2. Why is it important for us to "clean house" and deal honestly and fully with the sin in our lives?
3. Pastor Cymbala writes, "*Sin grieves the Holy Spirit and quenches his power among us. Without his blessing we miss out on what God has for us and wants us to be.*" (p. 159) If that is so, why do we so often rationalize our sin and refuse to completely "clean house" in confession and repentance?
4. What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us about those who earnestly seek after God? Does Hebrews 11:6 describe where you are at in your pursuit of God? If so, do you expect God to reward you? How have you seen God reward your earnest seeking of Him?
5. What causes Christians to stop feeling their need to seek the Lord, as the older Asa did when he cleverly (so he thought) used the Lord's money to pay King Ben-Hadad of Aram to help him out? We obviously don't pay off kings, but what similar things do we do?
6. What kind of response was God looking for from Asa and also looks for from us when we are confronted with our sin?
7. What are the consequences of refusing to listen to godly rebuke for sin?
8. How can you protect yourself against developing a harden heart to the Lord like we see in Asa?
9. Cymbala shares how seriously he challenges new members to his church to not entertain gossip and slander (p. 160). What would you define as gossip and slander?
10. What is the godly and right way to handle a grievance against someone else?
11. Are you committed to confronting gossip or slander at Shalom and not personally spreading it?

FRESH WIND, FRESH FIRE STUDY GUIDE

Week II

Opening Fun Question: What do you enjoy the most about the Christmas season? What do you enjoy the least about the Christmas season?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: IN SEARCH OF ORDINARY HEROES

1. Was there a thought or a story that particularly spoke to you or challenged you from this chapter?

Pastor Cymbala speaks of the mighty men who served King David and then writes, *"These heroes did not just sit back, as many do today, saying, 'Well, God promised, and I'm sure he'll fulfill His word.' They Stepped up and took action to make the promise become a reality."* (p. 170)


2. What has God promised us that we need to step up and take action to bring into reality?
3. Action for David's mighty men meant physically fighting courageously. What does action mean for us as Christians in McLeod County?

Cymbala connects the records of the mighty men of King David to us today, saying, *"When it comes to spiritual matters, you and I will never know our potential under God until we step out and take risks on the front line of battle...He meets us in the moment of battle. He energizes us when there is an enemy to be pushed back."* (p. 173)

4. What kind of thoughts and emotions does the challenge to take risks for God and the advance of the gospel evoke in you?
5. Where do you see risk-taking for God and the gospel taking place right now in our church and community? How do you see yourself contributing to that risk-taking?
6. What kind of risks is God calling us to take on the front lines in McLeod County to turn back today's slide away from a passionate pursuit of God?
7. Why does God typically wait until the moment of battle to meet us and energize us?

"God's plan for the local church," writes Pastor Cymbala, *"has always centered in evangelism."* (p. 179)

8. Why is evangelism so important to God's plan for the local church?

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9. Do you think the challenge of 2 people a week or 100 people in a year saying “Yes” to Jesus is too lofty of a goal for a church to have? Why or why not? What kind of goal do you think Shalom should have?
 10. To end his book, Jim Cymbala asks, “*What is it really that stops us from becoming mighty warriors in the Lord?*” (p. 182) How would you respond to that question personally? If there is something stopping you, how can you overcome that barrier?
 11. As we end our reading and study of *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, how has this book impacted you? Is there a change you feel compelled to make in your life? How do you want to be different? How can you encourage that change to truly occur in you?

PRAYER REQUESTS

