

JIM CYMBALA

WITH

JOHN BLATTNER

FAN

THE

FLAME

LET JESUS RENEW YOUR CALLING
AND REVIVE YOUR CHURCH

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Fan the Flame

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions are provided for individuals or groups that wish to read and further discuss the content of the book. Each session matches a chapter of the book for a reading group, but they can also be used together with the *Fan the Flame Video Study* (sold separately). If you plan to utilize the video study with these questions, we recommend having each participant in the study read the chapter associated with that session before you gather. Begin your meeting time with prayer and then introduce the topic of the session. Watch the video sessions together as a group and then take time to discuss several of the questions provided in this section. You do not need to work through every question provided. Choose which questions best match the interests of your group and the time you have available. Close each session with a time of personal reflection and prayer as a group.

Each person in the group should have his or her own copy of the book and a Bible. To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, the real growth in this study will happen during your small group time. This is where you will process the content of the teaching for the week, ask questions, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives. For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so you can

build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only go through the motions, or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you're looking for during this study.

Second, remember the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build intimacy and friendship. For this reason, seek to make your group a safe place. This means being honest about your thoughts and feelings and listening carefully to everyone else's opinion.

Third, resist the temptation to fix a problem someone might be having or to correct his or her theology, as that's not the purpose of your small group time. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

Keep in mind that the discussion questions are simply meant to kick-start your thoughts so you are both open to what God wants you to hear and also how to apply it to your life. As you go through this study, be open and listen to what God is saying to you.

Note: If you are a group leader, keep the following guidelines in mind.

Group Size: While these discussion questions can be used by individuals for self-reflection, they are designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. To ensure everyone has enough time to participate in discussions, it is recommended that large groups of more than eight people break up into smaller groups of four to six people each.

Timing: Each session will take approximately ninety minutes. For those who have less time to meet, you can use fewer questions.

Facilitation: If you watch the videos, each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during discussions and activities. Facilitators may also read questions aloud and monitor discussions, prompting participants to respond and assuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Chapter 1: A Tale of Two Departures

1. According to Pastor Cymbala, what significant changes were made in the church life that began to negatively affect Matt and Sarah's walk with Christ? (What's Going On Here?)
2. How can people who are truly called to pastoral ministry get discouraged and think of departing from ministry altogether? (Discouraged, Disheartened, All but Defeated)
3. Why are fundamentals important to return to when one is facing a rut in life or particularly ministry and what are the fundamentals for Christians? (Who's Leaving Whom?)
4. How might tradition become a dangerous detour for Christian faithfulness? Provide your own example if you can think of one. (Beware of Detours)
5. How can Christians properly use tradition for Christian faithfulness? Provide an example where it can be done well. (Beware of Detours)
6. How might following the latest trends become a dangerous detour for Christian faithfulness? Provide an example if you can. (Beware of Detours)
7. How can Christians properly use the latest trends for

- Christian faithfulness? Provide an example where it can be done well. (Beware of Detours)
8. How have you seen politics become a dangerous detour for Christian faithfulness? (Beware of Detours)
 9. Explain how culture can become a dangerous detour for Christian faithfulness and provide your own example. (Beware of Detours)
 10. Why is it significant that Paul begins his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders by reminding them of his personal life and conduct among them? (Do As You Have Seen Me Do)

Chapter 2: The Heart of Ministry

1. Why is the image of a “bondservant” an important biblical image for ministers? (The Heart of Ministry)
2. Why does the spiritual condition of a church tend to reflect the spiritual leadership of the church? How ought this motivate ministers of the gospel? (Leadership Is Crucial)
3. Why can ministers have confidence that God will provide the resources of heaven to them? What should their perspective be when they feel helpless in themselves? (Leadership Is Crucial)
4. Why is it tempting to rely on programs rather than people for building up God’s kingdom? (People, Not Programs)
5. What quality does God look for most when raising up ministers and why? How do the disciples prove this is the case biblically? (People, Not Programs)
6. What are common definitions of humility you have heard? What is true humility? (True Humility)
7. How is Jesus the perfect picture of true humility? What

- should be our response to our natural tendency for self-aggrandizement? (True Humility)
8. Why do people think ministers are the equivalent of CEOs or CFOs? What is wrong with the image? (The Weeping Pastor)
 9. Why are many ministers and leaders taught they should not get close to their flocks? What is a better perspective on relating to congregants? (The Weeping Pastor)
 10. What are temptations you struggle with in being open to ministry opportunities? How can you grow in humility to be ready for such opportunities? (The Story of David)

Chapter 3: Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares

1. What are some challenging testimonies you have heard, read, or experienced that reinforced the dangers of gospel ministry? (Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares)
2. Why is it significant that Paul and Jesus engaged in their ministries knowing there were enemies who wanted them dead? How can we find encouragement by their witness? (Severe Testing)
3. How do trouble and adversity demonstrate God's power? Why does this actually help our ministries? (A Treasure in Jars of Clay)
4. Why is it tempting to think challenges and oppositions to our ministries are signs of faithlessness? How can it mean the opposite from a biblical perspective? (A Treasure in Jars of Clay)
5. What would you say are the most common discouragements in ministry? How can they lead to pastoral burn out? (Recapturing Our Calling)
6. How does Elijah provide an example of God's nourishing

- of a discouraged servant? What can we learn for our own discouragements? (Recapturing Our Calling)
7. What lesson does God teach his people with the provision of manna in the wilderness? What are practical ways we can live day by day in ministry? (Renewed Day by Day)
 8. Why is it tempting to get stuck either lamenting what we did not do in the past, or becoming focused on what is the future? Why is today a vital concept for ministry? (Today Is Everything)
 9. In addition to yourself, who else in your life and ministry would be affected by your inability to be spiritually nourished? What are practical steps you can take to be *daily* refilled in the Lord? (Daily Refill)
 10. How does a vision for the future of our Christian hope motivate our own life and ministry today? (Living in the Future, Living in the Invisible)

Chapter 4: Not Ashamed of the Gospel

1. Explain where the Great Commission is found in Scripture and what it means for the church today. (One Soul at a Time)
2. Why does Jesus say workers are needed for the fields of harvest as it relates to the gospel? How should this motivate our own ministries? (Look at the Fields)
3. What is the place of ordinary believers in proclaiming the gospel? How can they be encouraged in that task? (Look at the Fields)
4. How is the work of a pastor different than that of a life coach? How does Paul exemplify this? (Preaching for Conversions)
5. Why is it important for ministers' Old Testament sermons

- to reveal Christ to their listeners? (Learning from the Sermons in Acts)
6. What are some examples you can think of where people are tempted to add to and subtract from the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why is this wrong? (Add Nothing, Subtract Nothing)
 7. How can a church leader grow in awareness at the spiritual condition of their flock? Should they assume everyone is a believer that regularly attends? Why or why not? (The Sunday Morning Mission Field)
 8. Why is it challenging to preach a sermon that will reach unbelievers and believers alike? How can ministers utilize simplicity in their points to both without being shallow? (Preaching to the Saved?)
 9. In what ways are we tempted to be ashamed of the gospel? How can our hearts be encouraged to not be ashamed? (Not Ashamed)

Chapter 5: The Unabridged Bible

1. What truths in Scripture do you find are uncomfortable to preach? How can you resolve yourself to preach the whole counsel of God? (“I Never Held Back”)
2. How can a minister faithfully proclaim the heinousness of sin without leaving congregants in a spiral of misery and despair? (“I Never Held Back”)
3. How has biblical illiteracy become a vicious cycle that preachers have often exacerbated? (Preach the Word)
4. Why is the image of an “ambassador” an important biblical image for ministers? How can it encourage them in the face of opposition? (Christ’s Ambassadors)
5. How should the knowledge that God is always a witness

- to a minister's preaching motivate their courage in proclaiming the gospel? (Christ's Ambassadors)
6. How does the image of a wise parent or a good physician hold ministers accountable for their preaching? (Wise Parents, Good Physicians)
 7. What temptations might prevent a minister from being frank about the hardships of the Christian life? Why is it important that believers be warned about them? (Admonitions and Warnings)
 8. How should the eternal destiny of individuals motivate a minister's preaching? (Prophetic Fearlessness)
 9. Why should we not expect the Holy Spirit to work where God's Word is not honored and proclaimed faithfully? Won't the Spirit work apart from his Word? Why or why not? (Prophetic Fearlessness)

Chapter 6: Who's In Charge Here?

1. In the church, who is in charge of the church and why?
2. The Holy Spirit is what compelled Paul and his ministry. What do you think it means to be compelled by the Holy Spirit today and how would you know? (Who's In Charge Here?)
3. In what ways has the modern world and especially modern business planning entered the church? Is there anything positive or negative about this? Explain. (Following in Faith)
4. What would it look like for a church to attempt to follow its calling, but to do so without the Holy Spirit? (Following in Faith)
5. Based on your understanding of Scripture, how do you

- think the Spirit leads the church during worship? (Holy Bedlam)
6. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? How would you explain to a new convert what it means to be filled with the Spirit? (Filled with the Spirit)
 7. What does it mean to “grieve” the Holy Spirit? What steps can individuals or churches make who feel they have grieved the Spirit? (Deprived of the Spirit)
 8. What does it mean to “quench” the Holy Spirit? Why can even orthodox, Bible-believing churches fall into the error of quenching the Spirit? (Deprived of the Spirit)
 9. What does it look like to emphasize the Word to the exclusion of the Spirit? What does it look like to emphasize the Spirit to the exclusion of the Word? (Balancing Word and Spirit)

Chapter 7: Preaching in the Power of the Spirit

1. Why would Paul’s boast in preaching apart from eloquence or human wisdom have been strange to his audience? In what ways are we negatively tempted to rely purely on eloquence or human wisdom in preaching? (Preaching in the Power of the Spirit)
2. What temptations are there towards self-exaltation in preaching? What is the proper remedy for this temptation? (Preaching in the Power of the Spirit)
3. What does it look like to preach with a “demonstration of the Spirit’s power?” Is that still possible today? Why or why not? (Preaching in the Power of the Spirit)
4. What is the place of deep conviction when preaching? Why can eloquent preaching apart from conviction be stunted in its fruit? (Deep Conviction)

5. What ought a pastor do when they feel they are making no progress in moving people through their preaching? What promises can be anticipated when preaching in reliance upon the Spirit? (Holy Spirit, Help Me!)
6. How would you explain to a new convert what it means that the “Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Romans 8:26–27)? (Praying As We Preach)
7. Why is it tempting to fall into a mechanical and repetitive approach to ministry that does not rely on the Holy Spirit? How can this be avoided? (Praying As We Preach)
8. How can preaching be prophetic without foretelling the future? Why is it important for the church? (Prophetic Preaching)
9. Given the primacy and explicit place of prayer in Scripture, why do you think many churches can become lethargic or uninterested in devoting themselves to prayer? (“Lead My People to Pray”)
10. What are some practical steps you can take to encourage prayer in your life and in the life of your church? What challenges will you face in encouraging your church to that end? (Where to Begin)

Chapter 8: Unconditional Surrender

1. Why would a willingness to die for the gospel powerfully impact a person’s ministry? (Unconditional Surrender)
2. How does understanding the goal of our redemption impact our personal day-to-day life as Christians? (Or how should it?) (Eyes on Eternity)
3. In what ways should the gospel impact our view towards those who are forsaken or despised in society? In

- ministering to such, what resolve must a believer have in the face of opposition? (Loving the Forsaken)
4. What does it mean to be “consecrated to God?” How can ordinary believers be encouraged to see their entire lives can be consecrated to God? (Consecrated to God)
 5. Is it possible to acquire the power to be a living sacrifice to God by our own effort? Why or why not? (Consecrated to God)
 6. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?” How should this impact our outlook on the Christian life? (Blessed Are the Beggars)
 7. Why is it important for a minister to both finish their race and complete their task? (“It’s Always Too Soon to Quit”)
 8. How can a pastor secretly give up on their race and task without anyone knowing about it? What would you say to a pastor who was doing that? (“It’s Always Too Soon to Quit”)
 9. What is a general call for believers versus a personal call for them? How can they learn both? (True Success)
 10. What are some common views of “success” in the eyes of the world? What does true success look like before God? (True Success)

Chapter 9: Keep Watch

1. Why is the flock of a church at risk if their shepherd is not keeping watch over themselves? (Keep Watch)
2. Can congregants maintain their faith well by receiving the Word only once a week on Sunday? Why or why not? (Feed, Guide, Protect)
3. Will believers grow apart from the Spirit working in

- them? Why or why not? How can we fall into the temptation of thinking accountability structures will prevent them from sin? (Spiritual Accountability)
4. What lessons can ministers learn from the examples of Judas Iscariot and Demas? (Spiritual Accountability)
 5. Why is it important for ministers to acknowledge the hardships Christ promises will come in due time? How ought ministers to respond to this knowledge? (Hardship Is Coming)
 6. How can ministers encourage their flock to be aware of hardships and prepare them to encounter the trials they will face? (Hardship Is Coming)
 7. What makes false teachers at times challenging to identify? Should ministers engage them in some fashion? Why or why not? (Savage Wolves)
 8. How should the fact that Jesus bought the church with his own blood motivate the ministry of ministers? (The Flock God Cherishes)

Chapter 10: Division Is Deadly

1. Why did Jesus's appeal that Satan would not drive out Satan prove an effective response to the Jewish authorities' accusation that Jesus was demonic? (Division Is Deadly)
2. Why does the church suffer when it is divided against itself? (Division Brings Weakness)
3. How can major crises reveal the health of Christian unity within a church? What are some ways believers can respond in love over differences revealed through crises? (Pandemic Pandemonium)
4. How should Christ's death on the cross control our

- understanding of how we minister to and relate to all people? (The Dark Stain of Racism)
5. What are three or four significant ways we are tempted to emphasize our differences with other Christians rather than our similarities? How can we resist that temptation? (One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism)
 6. Why are schisms and divisions worldly according to Paul? How can we grow in accepting other believers who might believe secondary issues differently from us? (Is Christ Divided?)
 7. Why is it tempting for pastors to ignore divisions in their church? What dangers will arise if divisions are not addressed? (Division in the Local Church)
 8. What are some practical ways a minister can proactively prevent disunity within a church? (Dealing with Division)
 9. Do you agree that slander and gossip are the biggest culprits in creating division and strife? Why or why not? How should slander and gossip be handled by believers? (Dealing with Division)
 10. What are the dangers in focusing just on a person's giftings and capabilities when looking for leaders? How can the church encourage future leaders to be humble and kind? (Dealing with Division)

Chapter 11: Money

1. Why is the love of money capable of making a Christian syncretistic in their faith? How is this a temptation even for ministers? (Money)
2. How is being an "expert in greed" a sign of a false teacher? What are some signs you have seen of a false teacher clearly exerting this? (Beware the Spirit of Greed)

3. What leads to people being swindled by the prosperity gospel? How can ministers help their own flock with that problem? (The False Prosperity Gospel)
4. Why does losing sight of eternity provide fertile soil for greed? How can ministers maintain that vision of eternity in their own lives and their congregation's lives? (The Loss of Eternity)
5. Do you think a poor person can be greedy? Do you think a rich person can be generous? Why or why not? (The Loss of Eternity)
6. How does Paul's own ministry provide an example of how pastors can sometimes support themselves with other work? What potential benefits can arise from their work in these areas beyond supporting their living? (The Minister's Livelihood)
7. How ought ministers to approach the issue of gathering the offering from believers without being manipulative or faithless in the process? (Raising Money)
8. Why doesn't the concept "if you build it, they will come" work for Christian churches? How can ministers guard their own hearts against such thinking? (Beware the Building Program)
9. How can fear of financial pressure ensnare us to men and grieve the Holy Spirit? (The Bottom Line)
10. In what ways can financial needs provide an opportunity for faith and trust in the Lord? How can believers prayerfully wait on God without being presumptive? (Wait on God)

Chapter 12: The Apostolic Priority

1. What do you think are common priorities felt by ministers that might not be apostolic priorities? Which of them are you most tempted by and how can you overcome those temptations? (The Apostolic Priority)
2. What was the impetus for revealing the apostolic priority for ministers? Why is Acts 6 so crucial for understanding the purpose of the church? (Prayer and the Word)
3. What is reverse evangelism? How should a minister protect themselves and their church from reverse evangelism? (Reverse Evangelism)
4. Why can a misguided placing of priorities lead to pastoral burnout? What is the answer to this? (Reverse Evangelism)
5. How can we see that the apostle's success in spreading the gospel was not by their own strength? Why should ministers today be marked similarly? (Then = Now)
6. What is the first priority for every believer? Why is this so important? (To Be with Him)
7. What is our first calling as believers and what steps can we take to embrace that calling? (Our First Calling)
8. How can time dampen our zeal to commune with the Lord? How can the Spirit use time to increase our communion with the Lord? (Our First Calling)
9. If the disciples already understood the gospel message, why did Jesus send them to wait until the day of Pentecost to proclaim it? What can we learn from this in our own ministries? (A Spiritual Revival)
10. Why must God be the one who fans the flame of our hearts? What can we do to respond to his promises? (A Spiritual Revival)