

The Wonderful News of the Spirit-Filled Life

Many Christians Simply Don't Know

Bill Bright

The senior pastor of one of America's leading churches came to talk with me after my message on "How to Be Filled With the Spirit." He said, "My life will never be the same after tonight! I have been a pastor for more than 20 years, but until now, I have never understood how to be empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit as a way of life. I can hardly wait to share this with my church members."

A retired businessman and his wife came to my office from halfway across the continent to share their excitement. "Our lives were totally changed when we learned how to be filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of your ministry. Now we are sharing Christ with others wherever we go."

They handed me a generous check with this request. "We have come to ask you to share on television how to be filled with the Holy Spirit with millions of others. We are eager for other Christians to experience the reality of the Holy Spirit in their lives as He is in ours."

At the conclusion of one of my lectures, a man came rushing down the aisle. "This is the greatest thing I have ever heard in my life!" he began. "Today I have been liberated!" This man was on 12 boards of various Christian organizations. He exclaimed, "I have been trying to serve God so diligently that I practically ignored my business and my family. I have been trying to serve God in the energy of the flesh. I understand now why I have been so miserable and so unproductive!"

These people were all liberated from what I believe is one of the greatest afflictions in the body of Christ today. This blight is at the core of all the problems hurting the body of Christ throughout the world. The sickness I am speaking about is the epidemic of worldliness or carnality.

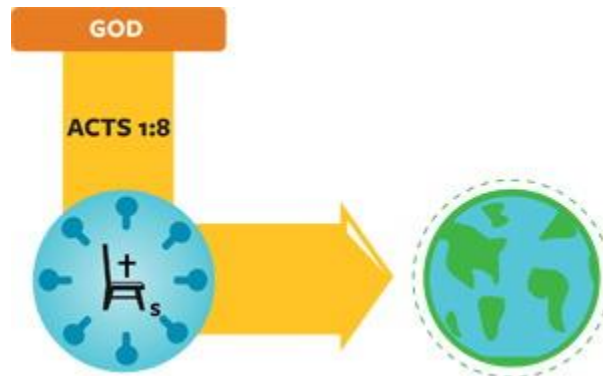
Why Do You Need the Filling of the Holy Spirit?

Discovering What God Offers to Believers Is the First Step

Learning how to be filled (controlled and empowered) by the Holy Spirit by faith can be the most important discovery of your Christian life.

Consider carefully the very last words which our Lord spoke as He met with His disciples on the Mount of Olives only moments before He ascended into heaven. Jesus had commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and to make disciples of all

nations. But He had told them not to leave Jerusalem until they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.



“You will receive power,” He said, “when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, New International Version 1984).

By these words, Jesus was suggesting, “Though you have been with Me for three years and more, it is not enough that you have heard Me teach the multitudes and have seen Me heal the sick and even raise the dead. You need to be empowered with the Holy Spirit in order to be effective and fruitful as My witnesses throughout the world.”

More Respond to the Gospel Presented in the Power of the Spirit

A very successful businessman came to Arrowhead Springs, our international headquarters, for training. He was the son of a minister, had been reared under the good influence of the church, had been a Sunday school teacher for years, a Sunday school superintendent, a deacon, a member of the board of trustees of one of the country’s leading theological seminaries, and president of all the laymen for his denomination for an entire state; yet he had never to his knowledge introduced anyone to Christ.

During the training, he learned how to be filled with the Holy Spirit by faith and how to introduce others to Christ. Since that time, he has personally led hundreds of people to Christ and has trained thousands of laypeople and pastors through our Lay Institutes for Evangelism. Thousands of others have been introduced to Christ through those whom he has trained.

The pastor of a 1,500-member church appropriated the fullness of the Holy Spirit at a Pastors’ Institute for Evangelism event at Arrowhead Springs and learned how to introduce others to Christ. During one afternoon of witnessing for Christ, 14 of the 15 people whom this pastor

interviewed received Christ. Never had he had such an experience. He returned to his pulpit a changed man. Soon hundreds of his church members had, like their pastor, appropriated the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. They began sharing their enthusiasm for Christ, and through their witness, many more responded to our Savior.



The Christian life is a great adventure. It is a life of purpose and power. Christ has given the almost unbelievable promise, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in My name, and I will do it” (John 14:12-14, NIV 1984).

The Holy Spirit Offers Strength, Guidance to Believers

Obviously, you cannot, in your own energy, accomplish these great works. It is Christ Himself — living within you in all of His resurrection power, walking around in your body, thinking with your mind, loving with your heart, speaking with your lips — who will empower you with the Holy Spirit to do these great works. It is not your wisdom, your eloquence, your logic, your good personality, or your persuasiveness that brings people to our Savior. It is the Son of Man, who came to seek and to save the lost, who sent His Holy Spirit to fill and empower you.

Jesus said, “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19, NIV 1984). First-century Christians, controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit and filled with His love, turned the world upside down.

As the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they received a divine, supernatural power that changed them from fearful men to radiant witnesses for Christ. They were used by God to change the course of history. And this same omnipotent power, the power of the Holy Spirit, is available to you to enable you to live a holy and fruitful life for Jesus Christ.

Yet, tragically, multitudes of Christians do not even know who the Holy Spirit is. Or, if they do, they do not know how to appropriate His power. Consequently, they go through life without ever experiencing the abundant and fruitful life which Christ promised to all who trust Him.

Again and again, I am reminded of the great contrast between Christ's church today and His church in the first century. In his introduction to "Letters to Young Churches," J.B. Phillips writes:

The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in these letters, the New Testament epistles, is that to us, it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian religion to a code or, at best, a rule of heart and life. To these men it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life together. They do not hesitate to describe this as Christ living in them.

This same first-century power — the power of the risen, living, loving, indwelling Christ made known through the Holy Spirit — is still available to you today.

5 Questions to Learn More About the Holy Spirit

Do you know this power in your life? Are you a victorious, fruitful witness for Christ? If not, you can be.

I believe the most important message that I can possibly give to Christians is this wonderful, revolutionary news of the Spirit-filled life. I have shared these truths around the world with millions of Christians, old and young. I have never shared any message that has been more used by God to transform the lives of multitudes.

If you are not already experiencing the abundant life which Jesus promised and which is your heritage as a Christian, if you are not already introducing others to Christ as a way of life and you sincerely desire to do so, I have good news for you!

The answers to the following questions can change your life and enable you to experience the abundant and fruitful life which our Lord promises to all who trust and obey Him.

First, who is the Holy Spirit?

Second, why did He come?

Third, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

Fourth, why is the average Christian not filled with the Holy Spirit?

Fifth, how can you be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Who Is the Holy Spirit, and Why Did God Send Him?

Third Person of Trinity Sent With Divine Purpose to Christians

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God. He is not an “it.” He is not a divine influence. He is not a fleecy white cloud. He is not a ghost or a concept. He is a person possessing a will, intellect and emotions. He is God — with all the attributes of deity. He is the third person of the Trinity — co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. There is only one God, but He manifests Himself in three persons, whom we call the Trinity.

I cannot fully explain the Trinity. No one can. Dr. Wilbur Smith, one of my seminary professors, once shared in class, “The man who denies the Trinity will lose his soul. The man who tries to understand the Trinity will lose his mind.” We, who are finite, cannot comprehend God, who is infinite.

We try to illustrate the concept of the Trinity, but the attempt is wholly inadequate. For example, I could say that a man has a body, a mind and a spirit — which one is the man? Or I could describe H₂O as a liquid, a solid or a vapor, depending on whether it was water, ice or steam. Which one is H₂O? Or a man is a husband, a father and a son — yet he is one man. No illustration is adequate. At best, they can only suggest what God is like.

As much as you and I would like to know all about the Trinity, some of our questions must wait until we are with our Lord in eternity. Then we will understand completely. In the meantime, consider what Paul says in Romans 11:33-36 (Living Bible):

Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are His wisdom and knowledge and riches! How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and His methods! For who among us can know the mind of the Lord? Who knows enough to be His counselor and guide?

And who could ever offer to the Lord enough to induce Him to act? For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by His power, and everything is for His glory. To Him be glory evermore.

Why Did God Send the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ and to lead believers into all truth. On the eve of His crucifixion, while still in the upper room, the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26, New International Version 1984).

The Holy Spirit came to enable you to know Christ through a new birth and to give you the power to live and share the abundant life which Jesus promised to all who trust and obey Him.

The Holy Spirit inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. As you read the Bible, He reveals its truth to you. I read passages of Scripture that I have read many times before, and suddenly, at the moment I need a particular truth, a certain passage comes alive to me. Why? Because the Holy Spirit makes the Word of God relevant and meaningful when I need it. It is a living Book inspired by the Spirit, and only Christians who are filled with the Spirit can understand the true meaning of God’s Word.

I pray and — except for the prayer of confession — I cannot expect God to answer my prayer unless I am walking in the Spirit. I witness, and no one responds unless I am controlled and empowered by the Spirit.

I cannot live a holy life apart from the help of the Holy Spirit for, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV 1984).

A minister friend said to me, “I don’t like all of this talk about the Holy Spirit. I want to talk about Jesus Christ.” I reminded him that that was the reason the Holy Spirit came — to exalt and glorify Christ.

It is impossible to even know Christ apart from the regenerating ministry of the Spirit. It was Jesus of Nazareth Himself who said, “Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5, TLB). It is impossible for you to become a Christian, to understand the Bible and other spiritual truths, to pray, to live a holy life, to witness or do anything for the Lord Jesus apart from the person of the Holy Spirit of God.

What Does It Mean to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit?

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with Christ. The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ. Therefore, if I am filled with the Spirit, I am abiding in Christ. I am walking in the light as He is the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse and keep on cleansing me from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7).

I am controlled by Christ because the word “filling” means to be controlled. And if I am controlled — not as a robot but as one who is led and empowered by the Spirit — the Lord Jesus will walk around in my body and live His resurrection life in and through me.

This amazing fact that Christ lives in you and expresses His love through you is one of the most important truths in the Word of God. The standards of the Christian life are so high and so impossible to achieve, according to the Word of God, that only one person has been able to succeed. That person is Jesus Christ. Now, through His indwelling presence, He wants to enable all who place their trust in Him to live this same supernatural life.

Bearing Spiritual Fruit Because of Christ Living in You

If you are willing for Jesus Christ to live His resurrection life in and through you, you will bear spiritual fruit as naturally as a healthy vine will bear an abundance of fruit.

Jesus said, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8, New King James Version). You can be a great preacher, a Christian scholar, a deacon or elder, attend church meetings daily, live a clean, moral life, memorize hundreds of verses of Scripture, direct a church choir, and teach Sunday school, but if you are not bearing fruit in the sense that you are introducing others to Christ, you are not filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit according to the Word of God.

Some people say, “I witness for Christ by living a good life.” But it is not enough to live a good life. Many non-Christians live fine, moral, ethical lives. According to the Lord Jesus, the only way to demonstrate that you are truly following Him is to produce fruit, which includes introducing others to our Savior as well as living holy lives. And the only way you can produce fruit is through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some time ago I asked one of the leading theologians of our time, the dean of faculty for a famous theological seminary, if he felt that one could be a Spirit-filled person without sharing Christ as a way of life. His answer was an emphatic, “No!”

On what basis could he make such a strong statement? The answer is obvious. Our Savior came to “seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10, New International Versions 1984), and He has “chosen and ordained” you to share the good news of His love and forgiveness with everyone, everywhere (John 15:16, King James Version). To fail to witness for Christ with your lips is to disobey this command just as much as to fail to witness for Him by living a holy life is to disobey His command. In neither case can the disobedient Christian expect God to control and empower his life, nor can he experience the reality of God’s presence and blessing.

A very discouraged student came to me for counsel after one of my messages. For several months, he had spent at least three hours each day reading his Bible, praying and sharing his faith with others. Yet he had never introduced anyone to Christ. After a time of discussion, his

problem became apparent — he was not controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, although he wanted to be.

So we prayed together, and by faith he appropriated the power of the Holy Spirit on the authority of God's Word. His life was absolutely transformed. That very day, he had his first experience of introducing a person to Christ. The next day he led another to Christ, and two days later another. He has since introduced hundreds, if not thousands, of people to our Lord.

How the Holy Spirit Changes You From the Inside Out

Not only do you receive a supernatural power for witnessing when you are filled with the Spirit, but your personality also begins to change. As you continue to walk in the control and power of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit becomes increasingly obvious in your life.

In Galatians 5:22-23 (Living Bible), Paul explains, "When the Holy Spirit controls our lives He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control."

The Christian's relationship with the Holy Spirit is both critical and progressive. It is critical in that one learns that the Christian life is a life of faith rather than a life of works and has no reference to emotions ("The just shall live by faith," Romans 1:17, KJV). It is progressive in that, as one walks consistently in the power and control of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in his life.

A word of caution is in order. Do not seek an emotional or mystical experience. Do not depend on mystical impressions. The Word of God must be the basis of your spiritual growth. There is an interesting parallel between Ephesians 5:18, which admonishes us to be constantly and continually directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and Colossians 3:16, which admonishes us to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (NIV 1984).

The end result of both letting the Word of Christ dwell in you and being filled with the Holy Spirit will be that you will talk much about the Lord, quoting psalms and hymns and making music in your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).

Distinguishing Between God's Word and God's Spirit

It is very important to recognize the importance of the balance between the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Word of God is closed to our understanding and has little meaning to us apart from the illumination given by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is hindered in speaking clear and life-changing truth apart from the Word of God.

When the emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God is in proper balance in your life, the result is a life of power and great fruitfulness in which our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is wonderfully honored and glorified. As you continue to allow the Holy Spirit to control and empower you, and as you meditate upon the Word of God, hiding it in your heart, your life expresses more and more the beauty of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit which Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23. These attributes of our Lord Jesus Himself, plus fruitful witnessing, indicate that the Lord is actually living His life in and through you!

Being filled with the Spirit results in an abundant and overflowing life. Jesus of Nazareth once cried out to the multitude, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John adds, "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive" (John 7:38-39, NIV 1984).

Truly, this is the abundant life, yet most Christians are experiencing little of it.

Why Not? Reason 1: Lack of Knowledge

What Christians Don't Know About the Holy Spirit Holds Them Back

The average Christian continues to live in disobedience to God and is not filled with the Spirit for 2 reasons:

1. A lack of knowledge
2. Unbelief

From the moment of your spiritual birth, you have the power to go on growing toward maturity in Christ. And yet, the average person, not understanding how to live by faith, lives on a spiritual roller coaster, rising and falling from one emotional experience to another.

The Predicament of the Worldly, Carnal Christian

In Romans 7:15,24 (New International Version 1984), Paul describes the predicament of the worldly, carnal Christian: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul describes a worldly, carnal believer as one who acts like a non-Christian. Although the worldly believer has received Christ, he also has allowed his flesh nature to reclaim the throne through sin. God still has possession of this person, and Christ is still in his life, but the individual has fallen into sin in one or more areas of his life.

Not yielded to God, the worldly believer is usually a miserable person — even more miserable than the non-Christian. He is in a period of stunted spiritual growth because he is not confessing and repenting of his sins, and Satan has succeeded in influencing and controlling him through the flesh.

Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth:

Dear brothers, I have been talking to you as though you were still just babies in the Christian life, who are not following the Lord, but your own desires; I cannot talk to you as I would to healthy Christians, who are filled with the Spirit. I have had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't digest anything stronger. And even now you still have to be fed on milk. For you are still only baby Christians, controlled by your own desires, not God's. ... In fact, you are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord at all. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Living Bible)

The worldly or carnal Christian certainly experiences the conviction of the Holy Spirit and will not continue in his sins indefinitely; otherwise, he is possibly not a Christian at all. But defeated and fruitless, he depends on self-effort to live the Christian life instead of drawing on the supernatural, inexhaustible resources of the Holy Spirit. Grasping self-interest in one hand and groping for God's blessing with the other, this person fails again and again to live the Christian life in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.

Having experienced the joy and blessing of fellowship with God, he has lost present contact and does not know how to recapture that lost fellowship. Yet, the worldly believer can never be satisfied with that old way of life again, and in search of happiness and fulfillment, this person has become self-centered instead of Christ-centered.

As a result, he has become increasingly confused and frustrated and does not know what to do about it. He does not know how to live by faith, and instead he lives by feeling. The worldly Christian tries rather than trusts. He does not know how to stop being worldly nor how to become a spiritual Christian. The only one who can enable him to change is, of course, the Holy Spirit.

Not Realizing What is Already There

The Christian life is a miraculous and supernatural life. Christianity is not what you do for God, but what He does for you. Apart from faith in Christ, you cannot become a Christian, and apart from moment by moment faith or dependence on Him, you cannot live the Christian life. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, Christ lives His supernatural life in and through you.

But the average Christian does not understand how to draw upon the resurrection resources of Christ by faith. As a result, the worldly believer lives in spiritual poverty, not knowing or experiencing his great riches and resources, which are his heritage in Christ.

An old Scottish woman lived in the most impoverished conditions in her hometown. Years before, her son had immigrated to America. There he had become a very successful businessman but had never found time to return home to visit his mother.

One day, a friend sat talking with the old lady in her sparsely furnished cottage.

“Doesn’t your son ever send you money to help with your needs?” she inquired.

“No,” the woman shook her head sadly. “He does write me nice letters, though. And he sends me the most interesting pictures!”

The listener was annoyed, realizing that the son was quite wealthy. But instead of speaking her mind, she simply said, “May I see the pictures?”

The aged mother proudly brought them out of a drawer. To her visitor’s amazement, they were not pictures at all. They were valuable banknotes from America amounting to thousands of dollars. For decades, the Scottish mother had been needlessly living in poverty. The problem? She did not know the value of those “interesting pictures.” She owned the banknotes, but she did not possess them.

In West Texas is a famous oil field known as the Yates Pool. During the Depression, this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates was not able to make enough money on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family, like many others, had to live on government subsidy.

Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would be able to pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told Mr. Yates that there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract.

At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, thirty years after the discovery, a government test on one of the wells showed that it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day.

And Mr. Yates owned it all! The day he purchased the land he received the oil and mineral rights. Yet he was living on relief — a multi-millionaire living in poverty! The problem? He did not know the oil was there. He owned it, but he did not possess it.

I do not know of better illustrations of the Christian life than these. The moment you become children of God through faith in Christ, you become an heir of God, and all of His resources are made available to you. Everything you need — including wisdom, love, power — to be a man or woman of God and to be fruitful witnesses for Christ is available to you.

But most Christians continue to live in self-imposed spiritual poverty because they do not know how to appropriate from God those spiritual resources which are already theirs. Like the old Scottish mother before she knew the “interesting pictures” were valuable banknotes and like Mr. Yates and his ocean of oil, they live in ignorance of their vast riches.

Why Not? Reason 2: Unbelief

Doubting God’s Character and Fearing the Unknown Are Also Obstacles

Lack of knowledge is not the only reason that Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of them basically do not believe in God’s trustworthiness and are afraid to relinquish control of their lives to the Holy Spirit for fear that God will require the impossible from them — that He will change their plans, ask them to give away their wealth, take all the fun from their lives, make them endure tragedies or something similar.

Some Fear What God Will Do

An outstanding young minister, a seminary honor graduate, once told me, “I have never surrendered my life to Christ because I have been afraid of what He will do to me.” Then he told me how, years before, he had had a premonition that, if he were to commit his life to Christ, his parents would be killed in a tragic accident. He was afraid to say yes to God for fear his parents would lose their lives — God’s test for him to determine the genuineness of his commitment.

Now does that sound like a loving Father? Who do you think put that idea into his mind? Certainly not God. It was Satan saying, as he said to Adam and Eve centuries ago, “You can’t trust God.” But I say you can trust God! He loves you and is worthy of your trust.

Suppose your child said to you, “Daddy, Mommy, I love you and have decided that I will do anything you want me to do from now on as long I live.” What would be your response?

If you were to respond to your child’s expression of trust in you as many believe God will respond when they surrender their lives to Him, you would grab your child by the shoulders and with a stern glare say, “I have just been waiting for this. I am going to make you regret

this decision for as long as you live. I am going to take away everything you like and make you do what you hate. I am committed to making your life miserable.”

Of course you would not respond like that to your child’s trust in you. I expect, instead, you would put your arms around your little child and say, “I love you, too, and I deeply appreciate this expression of your love for me. It is the greatest gift you could give me.”

God has proven over and over again that He is a loving God. He is worthy of your trust. Jesus assures you, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:11, New International Version 1984).

Others are Afraid of What God Might Require of Them

Many people come to me for counsel concerning God’s will for their lives. Often they are fearful of what God will ask them to do. Usually I ask them, “Do you believe that God loves you? Do you believe that He has a wonderful plan for your life? Does He have the power to guide and bless your life if you place your trust in Him?”

As a rule, the answers are in the affirmative. I then ask them, “Are you willing to trust Him right now to direct and empower you to live a holy life and to be a fruitful witness for Christ?” By this time most of them are ready to say yes to Him without reservation. They have begun to recognize that their feelings of doubt have been placed there by the enemy of their souls.

When you give your life to Christ, you need not worry about what is going to happen to you. Maybe you are afraid that He will take away your pleasures, cause you to leave your business or profession, take away your wealth, or terminate a friendship or love affair. You may fear that He will send you, as a missionary, to some remote part of the world where you will lose your life for Him.

He may indeed ask you to do one or more of these things, and again He may not. If He does, you will rejoice in the privilege, for God always blesses those who trust and obey Him. The happiest people I meet are not those who have all the best of what this world has to offer nor those who have achieved great success in their professions nor those who are in great positions of power and influence. The happiest people I meet are those who have learned to totally trust and obey God in their lives no matter their circumstances.

You can trust God. If He leads you to give up anything, He will give you more of His blessing in return than you will ever receive apart from His grace. God alone is worthy of your trust. I invite you to come freely to Christ and say, “Lord, here I am. Take my life, and use me for Your glory.”

As God reminds us in 1 John 4:18 (Living Bible), “We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly; his perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what he might do to us. If we are afraid, it is for fear of what he might do to us, and shows that we are not fully convinced that he really loves us.” The Word of God and the experiences of multitudes through the centuries give unqualified assurance that you can trust God with your life, your all.

The Steps to Being Filled With the Holy Spirit

By Faith, You Can Trust God Right Now to Fill You

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith. How did you become a Christian? By faith. “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, New International Version 1984). “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him” (Colossians 2:6, NIV 1984).

You receive Christ by faith. You live by faith. Everything you receive from God, from the moment of your spiritual birth until you die, is by faith. Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? You can be filled right now, by faith.

You do not have to beg God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. You do not have to barter with Him by fasting or weeping or begging or pleading. For a long period of time, I fasted and cried out to God for His fullness. Then, one day, I discovered from the Scriptures that the “just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17, King James Version). You do not earn God’s fullness. You receive it by faith.

An Illustration of Faith

Let me illustrate. Suppose that you want to cash a check for a hundred dollars. Would you go to the bank where you have several thousand dollars on deposit, place the check on the counter, get down on your knees, and beg, “Oh, please, Miss Teller, cash my check?” No, that is not the way you cash a check. You simply go in faith, place the check on the counter and wait for the money which is already yours. Then you thank the teller and go on your way.

Millions of Christians are begging God, as I once did, for something which is readily available — just waiting to be appropriated by faith. They are seeking some kind of emotional experience, not realizing that such an attitude on their part is an insult to God — a denial of faith. But faith is the only way you can please God.

Though you are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith and faith alone, it is important to recognize that several factors contribute to preparing your heart for the filling of the Spirit. First, you must desire to live a life that will please the Lord. You have the promise of our Savior: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV 1984).

Second, be willing to surrender your life totally and irrevocably to our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul admonishes in Romans 12:1-2 (NIV 1984): “I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Third, confess every known sin which the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and experience the cleansing and forgiveness that God promises in 1 John 1:9 (NIV 1984): “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

I call this process “spiritual breathing.” Just as you exhale and inhale physically, so you also breathe spiritually. You exhale spiritually when you confess your sins.

The Command and the Promise

If you have wronged a brother or have taken that which is not rightfully yours, the Holy Spirit may lead you to make restitution to right your wrong. If so, obey Him, or you will miss His blessing. The blessings of the fullness of God’s Spirit come only to those who willingly obey Him.

Jesus promised, “Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him” (John 14:21, NIV 1984).

Again, you are not filled with the Holy Spirit because you desire to be filled nor because you confess your sins or present your body as a living sacrifice — you are filled by faith.

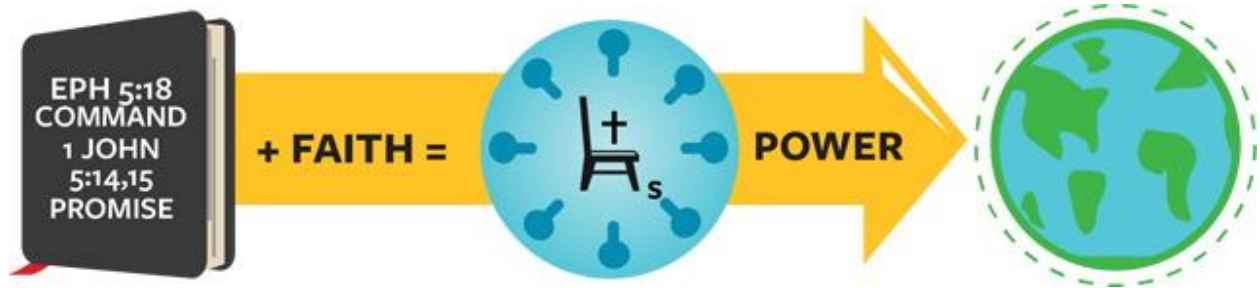
There are two very important words to remember.

The first is “command.” In Ephesians 5:18, God commands you to be filled: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (NIV 1984). Not to be filled, controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit is disobedience.

The other word is “promise” — a promise that makes the command possible: “This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears

us. And if we know that He hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15, NIV 1984).

Now, is it God’s will for you to be filled and controlled by Him? Of course it is — for it is His command! Then right now you can ask God to fill you — not because you deserve to be filled, but on the basis of His promise.



If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit already dwells within you. When you purchase mechanical items that run on battery power, frequently the notice “batteries not included” is printed on the box. The Holy Spirit — your source of power for living — is “included” when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Therefore, you do not need to invite Him to come into your life. He did this when you became a Christian, and Jesus promised that He will never leave you.

The moment you received Christ, the Holy Spirit not only came to indwell you, but He imparted to you spiritual life, causing you to be born anew as a child of God. The Holy Spirit also baptized you into the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV 1984), Paul explains, “We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.”

There is but one indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one rebirth of the Holy Spirit, and one baptism of the Holy Spirit — all of which occur when you receive Christ.

Being Filled Happens Over and Over

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, however, is not a once-and-for-all experience. There are many fillings, as is made clear in Ephesians 5:18. In the Greek language, in which this command was originally written, the meaning is clearer than that in most English translations. This command of God means to be constantly and continually filled, controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit as a way of life.

I cannot control myself and be controlled by the Holy Spirit at the same time. Christ cannot be in control if I am on the throne. So I must abdicate. This involves faith. As an expression of my will, in prayer, I surrender the throne of my life to Him, and by faith I draw upon His resources to live a holy and fruitful life.

The command of Ephesians 5:18 is given to all believers to be filled, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, continually, every day of our lives. And the promise of 1 John 5:14-15 is made to all believers that, when we pray according to God's will, He hears and answers us. If you claim the fullness of God's Spirit in prayer, He will hear and answer you. He will fill you. And in the process, you will "inhale" spiritually.

Do not think that you have to have an emotional experience or that something dramatic must happen to you. How did you receive Christ? Was it because of some great emotional pressure brought to bear upon you? Your emotions may have been involved. But ultimately, you became a Christian not because of your emotional experience but because of your faith. For the Bible says, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith."

The Holy Spirit is not given to you that you might have a great emotional experience but that you might live a holy life and be a fruitful witness for Christ. So, whether or not you have an emotional experience is not the issue.

There is no place in Scripture where you are told to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. You are filled by faith. However, since the object of your faith is God and His Word, I suggest that you pray to Him claiming the fullness of His Spirit as an expression of your faith in God's command and in His promise.

Pray to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit Right Now

Have you met God's conditions? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do you sincerely desire to be controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit? If so, I invite you to bow your head and pray this prayer of faith right now. Expect God to fill you. Without begging or pleading, just say:

"Dear Father, I need You. I hunger and thirst for a more vital relationship with You. I admit that I have been in control of my life. As a result, I have sinned against You.

"Thank You for forgiving my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now confess and turn from my sins and surrender the control of my life to the Lord Jesus. By faith I invite You to fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled. You promised to fill me if I ask according to Your will. I pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus Christ.

"To demonstrate my faith, I now thank You for filling me with Your Holy Spirit and for taking control of my life. Amen."



Now, if you sincerely prayed that prayer, you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You will begin to experience a greater love for God. You will want to spend time with Him in studying His Word and in prayer. You will want to trust and obey God and His Word. You will want to share your love for Christ with others who do not know Him.

Empowered to Share

Being Filled With the Holy Spirit Enables You to Tell Others About Christ

Christ said to His disciples, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19, New International Version 1984). The primary purpose for which you are filled with the Holy Spirit is to make you a witness for Christ through the holy life that you live and the empowered words you speak.

Putting the Lesson Into Practice

Some time ago, I had the privilege of speaking at a seminar on evangelism in Dallas, Texas. My topic was on the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to be effective and fruitful in our witness for Christ.

After I had spoken, a woman shared with me her great concern for her father-in-law. She said, “My father-in-law lives with my husband and me. I have prayed for him for many years, but he is not a Christian. He is getting along in years, and I fear that he will die without Christ. Will you help me?”

I asked her, “Are you a Spirit-filled Christian?” She said, “Yes. This morning, at the conclusion of your message, I claimed by faith the fullness of God’s Spirit.”

“That is really wonderful!” I exclaimed. “Now, this is what I want you to do. Go home and prepare your father-in-law a delicious lunch. While he is eating, read to him from this little booklet.” I showed her the Four Spiritual Laws booklet. “This booklet contains the distilled essence of the gospel and all that one really needs to know in order to receive Christ,” I said. “After you have read it to him, ask him if he would like to receive Christ as his Savior and Lord.”

She said, “You really think he will listen?”

“Yes,” I said. “God’s Holy Spirit will lead and empower you.”

Later that afternoon, she called me. She was so excited she could hardly express herself.

She told me how she had followed my instructions. As her father-in-law ate his lunch, she read to him the Four Spiritual Laws booklet. He listened intently, and when she finished reading, she asked him if he would like to receive Christ. And he said, “Of course I would.”

So they bowed together, and he opened his heart to Christ and became a child of God.

This dear woman, who had prayed for her father-in-law and witnessed to him for years, discovered that it is God the Holy Spirit who makes the difference in witnessing.

A Final Word

Remember our Lord’s final words to His disciples, and through them to you, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV 1984).

The greatest spiritual awakening since Pentecost has, in my opinion, already begun. Millions of Christians are discovering this great source of power which altered the course of history and turned a wicked Roman Empire upside down. That same power, the power of the Holy Spirit, is being released through the lives of believing and obedient Christians in our generation to turn our world around and accelerate the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our generation.

According to our many surveys, you can be sure that most of your Christian friends will want to know how they too can be filled with the Holy Spirit. So I would like to suggest that, within the next 24 hours, you tell at least one other person about how God has filled you with His Spirit.

Telling another person will give tangible expression to your decision to claim the fullness of the Spirit by faith. And by telling someone else how you were filled with the Holy Spirit, you may help them understand how they too can enjoy the abundant life promised by our Lord through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

You can continue to “breathe spiritually” for the rest of your life. “Exhale” by confessing your sins whenever you become aware that you are grieving the Spirit, and “inhale” by appropriating the power of the Holy Spirit by faith as an act of your will. Through spiritual breathing, you can live an abundant, joyful, fruitful life for the glory of our great God and Savior.

Remember, “How You Can Be Filled With the Holy Spirit” is a transferable concept. You can master it by reading it six times; then pass it on to others as our Lord commands us in Matthew 28:20 (Living Bible): “Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.” The apostle Paul encouraged us to do the same: “The things you have

heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV 1984).

Self-Study Guide

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? How do you know He is a person and not a force or impersonal power? (See John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 12:11; Romans 8:14)
2. Why did the Holy Spirit come? (See John 14:16-17,27; 16:7,13-14)
3. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? (See Romans 6:1-16)
4. What does “fruit” mean in John 15:8? (See Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23)
5. Why is the average Christian not living in complete obedience to God?
6. What do these verses tell you about God’s love for you?
 1. Matthew 7:11
 2. John 10:28
 3. 2 Chronicles 16:9
 4. John 14:21
 5. Hebrews 13:5
7. How can you be filled with the Holy Spirit?
8. What command does God give in Ephesians 5:18 and what does it mean?
9. How is the command of Ephesians 5:18 related to the promise of John 15:14-15? How can this give you assurance that you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
10. What characterizes the life of a Christian who is empowered by the Holy Spirit? (See John 15:1-11; Galatians 5:19-25)
11. What does “the abundant life in Christ” mean to you?
12. How is the Holy Spirit’s power evident in your life?

13. Explain the concept of spiritual breathing.
14. List two or three Christians you know who do not understand the Spirit-filled life. Make plans this week to share with them how God has filled you with the Holy Spirit and how they, too, can experience the Spirit-filled life.

Group Discussion Questions

1. The self-centered Christian manifests certain characteristics that reflect his worldly nature. Consider these questions in your discussion:
 1. What does he think about most of the time?
 2. What kind of person is he?
 3. What kind of things will he be doing? Talk about both good and evil, religious and non-religious activity.
2. Is the self-centered Christian really a born again believer? How do you know? (See 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)
3. How can you know for sure whether you are a self-centered or a Spirit-filled Christian?
4. Why do you need to confess your known sin to God before He can fill you with His Spirit? If you confess your sin and still feel that you are not forgiven, what must you do to receive that assurance? (See James 4:7; 1 John 1:5-7,9)
5. Once you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, will you ever need to be filled again? Why? How many times? When? How could you be filled again?
6. The Spirit-filled Christian demonstrates certain characteristics that reflect his godly nature. Identify and discuss these characteristics. What kind of thoughts, desires, actions and emotions will he manifest? (See Philippians 2:12-16; Colossians 3:1-17)
7. Perhaps you have asked God to fill you with His Spirit and to control your life, but you don't feel any different. Does this mean you are not filled with the Spirit? Or does it have any meaning at all? What should you do about it?
8. Discuss the differences between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Would you say that the fruit of the Spirit is to guide and control the gifts, or do the gifts control the fruit? Why? (See Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:10)