

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The two most important things a person can do in life is: **1. Become a Christian, 2. Be Filled with the Spirit**

From Tim LaHaye's book: *Your Temperament: Discover its Potential*, "The filling of the Holy Spirit" is not optional equipment in the Christian life, but a command of God! Ephesians 5:18 tells us, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Since God commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, it must be possible for us to be filled with His Spirit. I would like to give five simple steps for being filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. Self-examination (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 11:28).

The Christian interested in the filling of the Holy Spirit must regularly "take heed" to "examine himself," not to see if he measures up to the standards of other people or the traditions and requirements of his church, but to the previously mentioned results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. If he does not find he is glorifying Jesus, if he does not have power to witness, or if he lacks a joyful, submissive spirit or the nine temperament traits of the Holy Spirit, then his self-examination will reveal those areas in which he is deficient and will uncover the sin that causes them.

2. Confession of all known sin (1 John 1:9).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

After examining ourselves in the light of the Word of God, we should confess all sin brought to mind by the Holy Spirit, including those characteristics of the Spirit-filled life that we lack. Until we acknowledge as sin our lack of compassion, our lack of self-control, our anger instead of gentleness, our bitterness instead of kindness, and our unbelief instead of faith, we will never have the filling of the Holy Spirit. However, the moment we recognize these deficiencies as sin and confess them to God, he will "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Until we have done this, we cannot have the filling of the Holy Spirit, for He fills only clean vessels (2 Tim. 2:21).

3. Submit yourself completely to God (Rom. 6:11-13).

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Do not make the mistake of being afraid to give yourself to God! Romans 8:32 tells us, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If God loved us so much as to give His Son to die for us, certainly he is interested in nothing but our good; therefore, we can trust him with our lives. You will never find a miserable Christian in the center of the will of God.

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be not drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit." When a man is drunk, he is dominated by alcohol. So with the filling of the Holy Spirit, man's actions must be dominated by and dictated by the Holy Spirit. For consecrated Christians this is often the most difficult thing to do, for we can always find some worthy purpose for our lives, not realizing that we are often filled with ourselves rather than with the Holy Spirit as we seek to serve the Lord.

When you give your life to God, do not attach any strings or conditions to it. He is such a God of love that you can safely give yourself without reservation, knowing that His plan and use of your life is far better than yours. And remember, the attitude of yieldedness is absolutely necessary for the filling of God's Spirit. Your will is the will of the flesh, and the Bible says that "the flesh profiteth nothing."

Someone has suggested that being yielded to the Spirit is being available to the Spirit. Peter and John in Acts 3 make a good example of that. They were on their way to the temple to pray when they saw the lame man begging alms. Because they were sensitive to the Holy Spirit, they healed him "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." The man began leaping about and praising God until a crowd gathered. Peter, still sensitive to the Holy Spirit, began preaching; "many of them which heard the Word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

Many times I fear we are so engrossed in some good Christian activity that we are not available when the Spirit leads. When a Christian yields himself unto God "as those that are alive from the dead," he takes time to do what the Spirit directs him to do.

4. Ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

When a Christian has examined himself, confessed all known sin, and yielded himself without reservation to God, he is then ready to do the one thing he must do to receive the Spirit—very simply, to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus compares this to our treatment of our earthly children. Certainly a good father would not make his children beg for something he commanded them to have. How much less does God make us beg to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But don't forget Step 5.

5. Believe you are filled with the Holy Spirit! And thank Him for his filling.

"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23)

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. 5:18)

For many Christians the battle is won or lost right here. After examining themselves, confessing all known sin, yielding themselves to God, and asking for His filling, they are faced with a decision: to believe they are filled, or to go away in unbelief, in which case they have sinned, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

The same Christian who tells the new convert to "take God at His Word concerning salvation" finds it difficult to heed his own advice concerning the filling of the Holy Spirit. If you have fulfilled the first four steps, then by faith thank God for His filling. Don't wait for feelings or for physical signs; fasten your faith to the Word of God, which is independent of feeling. Believing we are filled with the Spirit is merely taking God at his Word, and that is the only absolute this world has (Matt. 24:35).

The two most important things a person can do in life is: **1. Become a Christian, 2. Be Filled with the Spirit**

A COMMON QUESTION

The most common question I am asked after my lectures on the Spirit-filled life for overcoming temperament weaknesses is, “How often should I ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit?”

My answer is: every time you think you are not! Some Bible teachers think the Spirit’s filling is automatic whenever we ask forgiveness for our sins (1 John 1:7-9). Personally I am not convinced. I like to make sure by asking. In fact, I ask for his filling when I awaken in the morning and many times through the day. The Greek in Ephesians 5:18 literally means, “Keep on being filled with the Spirit.”

Occasionally someone protests, “But that is all too simple; being filled with the Spirit must be much more complex!” Why? As an eight-year old boy I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He instantly answered my request. Why should he not answer when I ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit? A. B. Simpson used to say “Being filled with the Spirit is as easy as breathing; you can simply breathe out and breathe in.”

One of the reasons some Christians are reluctant to think they are filled with the Spirit is that they don’t see an immediate change in their lives, or the change is of short duration. Two factors have an important bearing on this: temperament and habit, and they work together. The weaknesses of our temperament have created strong habits that involuntarily recur.

For illustration, let us consider a fearprone melancholy or phlegmatic Christian. These people have a deeply ingrained habit of doubt, negativism, worry and anxiety I can predict the thinking pattern of such a person after he follows the five steps of being filled with the Spirit. Before long his negative thinking habit will stir doubts: “Am I filled with the Spirit? I don’t feel any different. I’m still afraid.” This mental attitude is sin, and the Spirit’s filling and control ends.

What such people need to realize is that our feelings are the result of thought patterns. We need to learn that feelings are reliable only when they are based on truth and righteousness. God’s people need to fill their minds with the Word of God so their feelings will correspond to God’s.

The feelings of the perennial doubter who is filled with the Spirit will gradually change, but it will take time. If he looks to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness each time he feels doubtful or unbelieving, he will gradually be assured by the Lord. But if he continues to think negatively or doubtfully and justifies it by saying, “I’ve always been this way,” he will remain that way. Or he may get worse, because he is quenching the Holy Spirit by indulging in this sin and etching the habit deeper on his mind.

Mr. Sanguine and Mr. Choleric have a similar problem with their pet sin of anger. It isn’t long after they are filled with the Holy Spirit that their ingrained anger feelings rise up to grieve the Holy Spirit. Unless they immediately confess this sin, they will no longer be filled with the Spirit and the old feelings will control them. Each time they think self-righteously of how they have been offended or insulted or cheated, they cultivate feelings of hostility. These easily-triggered feelings are the result of years of hostile thoughts that can be overcome only as the Spirit of God is given access to and control of the conscious and subconscious mind. He replaces these hostile thoughts with love, kindness, and gentleness, but it will take time for a permanent change to be accomplished.

How to Walk in the Spirit

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:25).

Walking in the Spirit and being filled by the Holy Spirit are not one and the same thing, though they are very closely related. Having followed the five simple rules for the filling of the Holy Spirit, it is then essential to learn how to walk daily in the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is just the beginning of Christian victory. We must “walk in the Spirit” to be effective (Gal. 5:16). It is one thing to start out in the Spirit-filled life and quite another to walk day by day in the control of the Spirit.

The following procedure for walking in the Spirit can be a practical tool for victorious daily living.

1. Make the filling of the Holy Spirit a daily priority. You cannot walk in the Spirit unless you sincerely want to and unless you have His filling. As we have already seen, old habit patterns sneak back to haunt us. If we enjoy them more than the peace of God, we will indulge in the sins of the flesh. Let’s be honest—lust, worry, self-pity and anger are fun, temporarily. Only when we want the filling of the Holy Spirit more than anything else in the world are we willing to give up lesser emotional satisfactions of lust, worry, self-pity and anger.

2. Develop a keen sensitivity to sin. Sin short-circuits the power of the Holy Spirit in us. The moment we are conscious of any sin, we should confess it immediately so the time between grieving, or quenching, the Spirit and reinstatement is minimal. The main advantage to the study of temperaments is that we can diagnose our most common weakness. Consequently we are on our guard for “the sin that doth so easily beset us.” When it rears its ugly head, confess it, forget it (God does, so you might as well), and press on toward the fulfillment of the will of God for your life. The main secret to victorious living among those I have counseled has been the practice of instant confession.

3. Daily read and study God's Word. It is my conviction after a good deal of observation that it is impossible for a Christian to “walk in the Spirit” unless he develops the habit of regularly feeding his mind and heart upon the Word of God. One of the reasons Christians do not “feel” as God does about life issues is that they do not know God’s way from his Word.

Since our feelings are produced by our thought processes, we will feel as carnal worldlings do if we feed our minds on the “wisdom of the world.” If we feed our minds on the Word of God, we will feel as the Spirit does about life issues. (Remember that it takes some time to reorient our minds from human wisdom to divine wisdom. So regular reading is essential.)

Sometimes Christians object that this will make them legalists. Yet they don’t seem to view coming to the table three times a day as legalistic. We do it because we sense a need and enjoy eating. In the same way we can feed spiritually on God’s Word from a sense of need, but it takes time to build our spiritual appetite. Many Christians feel something is very wrong if they miss reading the Word of God, but they didn’t start out that way.

A consistent feeding of one’s mind upon the Word of God produces some interesting results. Consider the following revolutionary benefits.

Joshua 1:8.....It makes your way prosperous and gives success.
Psalm 1.3..... It produces fruitfulness.
Psalm 119:11.....It keeps us from sin.
John 14:21.....God reveals himself increasingly to keepers of his Word.
John 15:3.....The Word cleanses us.
John 15:7.....The Word produces power in prayer.
John 15:11.....The Word brings joy to our hearts.
1 John 2:13, 14.....The Word gives victory over “the wicked one.”

With these transforming results from filling our minds with God’s Word, it is a tragedy that so many Christians live a second-rate life with feelings of insecurity, uncleanness, discontent, anxiety, and impotence. The character of our feelings depends on the character of our thoughts, and the sincere Christian should ask himself, “What is shaping and filling my thoughts?”

A careful comparison of the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18-21) with the Word-filled life (Col. 3:15-17) is revealing. Both passages promise a song in your heart, a thanksgiving attitude, and a submissive spirit. A mind that is filled with and yielded to the Word of God will produce the same effects on the emotions as the mind filled with and yielded to the Holy Spirit. We may legitimately conclude from this that the filling of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit depend upon our being filled with the Word of God!

Reading the Bible at night is especially helpful. The mind digests the events and thoughts of the day, particularly the last things we think about before going to sleep. For that reason it is very profitable to read God’s Word just before retiring-that way you can go to sleep thinking about the things just read. It is amazing how this helps us awaken with a positive outlook for the day. Get into the habit of reading the Word just before sleeping, and your subconscious mind will mold your feelings in God’s patterns.

Another valuable habit is **meditation**. The mind is always working, and our will determines whether our mind works for or against us. To work for good, the mind must meditate on the truths and insights of God’s Word. There is one catch: you must **memorize** in order to meditate profitably, because you can’t meditate on what you don’t know intimately. Whether it is a phrase, concept, or whole verse of Scripture, you must memorize it in order to meditate on it.

A simple method I use to inspire meditation is to write down special verses that bless my soul, then put the sheet of paper in my Bible or notebook. I learn at least one of these verses every week. It is hard work, but I don’t know any mentally lazy Christians who walk in the Spirit.

4. Guard against grieving the Holy Spirit. The next step for walking in the Spirit is an extension of step two-developing a sensitivity to sin. Ephesians 4:30-32 makes it clear that all forms of hostility including anger, bitterness, and enmity, grieve the Holy Spirit. All anger-prone believers should memorize those three verses and develop a particular sensitivity to hostility. In addition to making instant confession, they should resolve to be loving, kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving toward others. This grace is markedly unnatural for a sanguine or a choleric, but the Holy Spirit will develop in the believer a new capacity for thoughtfulness and love.

The importance of our will becomes apparent at this point of walking in the Spirit. When we feel the rod of injustice or someone's wrath, we can hate the offender or forgive and pray for him. Our overall feelings as well as our walk in the Spirit depend upon our decision. Don't be surprised if you fail repeatedly at first. But be sure to confess the sin as soon as you are aware of grieving the Spirit, and let him reestablish your walk. As you choose to forgive and to let the Holy Spirit react through you with patience and love, you will find your temperament weakness changing into a strength.

5. Avoid quenching the Spirit through fear and worry.

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19, we quench the Holy Spirit when we doubt and resist his dealings in our lives. When a Christian says, "I don't understand why God let this awful thing happen to me," he has already quenched the Spirit through fear. The Christian who is trusting God could face the same circumstances and say "I thank God he is in control of my life! I don't understand his dealings with me right now, but I trust his promise that he will never leave me and he will supply my every need."

We have seen that melancholy and phlegmatic people have a predisposition toward fear, just as the more extroverted temperaments have a predisposition toward anger. Some people possess both introverted and extroverted temperaments, and consequently may have deep problems with both fear and anger. God's grace is sufficient to cure both problems through his Holy Spirit. But if you have these tendencies, you need to watch carefully your reaction to seemingly unfavorable events. If you groan or complain inwardly you have already quenched the Holy Spirit. This can be remedied immediately if you are willing to call your doubt-induced complaining exactly what it is-sin-and ask God to transform this habit pattern and fill you with his Spirit.

God is not nearly so interested in changing circumstances as he is in changing people. It is no victory to live without worry when there is nothing to worry about, and becoming a Christian did not exempt you from trouble. Job said, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Jesus warned us we would face tribulation in this world, and the Bible tells us God sends testings to strengthen us. Many Christians flunk the tests by seeking their removal rather than rendering obedience in the Spirit.

It is impossible for a fear-prone Christian to walk in the Spirit any length of time without strong infusions of God's Word to encourage his faith. (Rom. 10:17) The more God's Word fills his mind, the more his feelings will abound in faith. But worriers usually enjoy wallowing in their misery, especially with God watching the piteous scene. All worriers should memorize Philippians 4:6, 7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

These verses direct prayer to be made "with thanksgiving." You cannot genuinely pray with thanksgiving and finish with the same burdens you started with. Consider the following two prayers-and the emotions they create-offered by Christian parents with a sick child.

“Dear Lord, we come to you on behalf of our little girl so near death. The doctor tells us there is no hope for her. Please, dear Lord, heal her. You know how much she means to us. If this sickness is caused by sin in our lives, forgive and cleanse us that she may live. After all the other tragedies in our lives, we do not think we can bear another. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

“Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are your children and can look to you at this time of need. You know the report of the doctors, and you have promised that all things work together for good to folks like us. We don’t understand our dear child’s sickness, but we know You love us and are more than able to heal her. We commit her little body to you, Father, asking for her healing according to your perfect will. We dedicated her to you before she was born, and we thank you that you are able to supply all her needs right now as well as ours. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

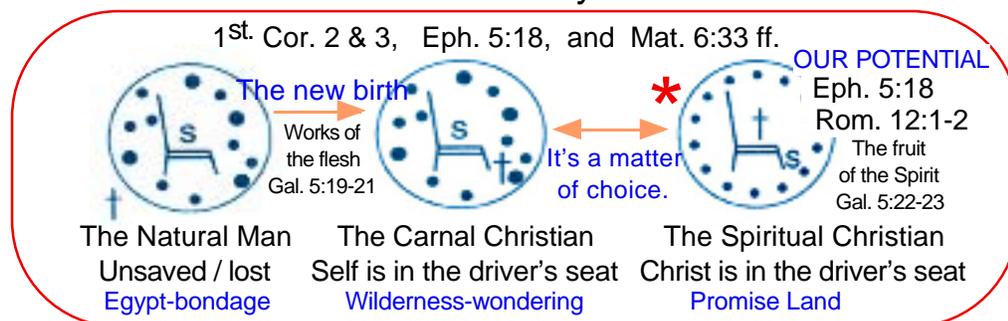
It is obvious which set of parents will feel the “peace of God” and during this time of deep need. The difference comes in learning the attitude of thanksgiving from the Word of God. Lest you think the above prayer is hypothetical or idealistic, let me share a personal experience. The blonde, blue-eyed cutie named Lori that God sent to us is the apple of my heart. Several years ago I stood at her bedside in Children’s Hospital and prayed that prayer. Frankly I don’t know how people without Jesus Christ go through such trials. My wife and I can testify that in spite of Lori’s raging fever and delirium, and no known hope, God imparted peace to our troubled hearts. However, not until we prayed with thanksgiving beside her oxygen tent did we receive that peace.

If you tend to worry or grumble, you will find that you are not a very thankful person. You may be a fine person in many other respects, but unless you learn to be thankful you can never walk far in the Spirit, nor will you be consistently happy. The secret to a thankful attitude is in coming to know God intimately as He reveals himself in His Word. This will require consistent Bible reading, studying, and meditation. When your faith is established through the Word, it is easier to give thanks, but it is still an act of the will. If you have not accepted His full leading for your life, you will complain because you will doubt things will turn out all right. And doubt quenches the Spirit and sidetracks your real progress.

One last practical suggestion for walking in the Spirit is in order. Although mental attitude is important at all times, prayer is of paramount importance twice during each day: when we go to bed and when we arise. It is very important to pray with thanksgiving, as well as to read the Scriptures, at night. Though it may be hard, the other strategic time to give thanks is the first thing in the morning. The psalmist helps us: “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa. 118:24).

After beginning your day with thanksgiving, yield yourself anew to God according to Romans 6:11-13. Tell him you are available to share your faith with the needy one He sends to you. Yield your lips to the Holy Spirit and let Him open the conversation. Walk in the Spirit, and you will bear fruit for God. As soon as you sense you have grieved or quenched the Spirit, confess your sin and again ask for His filling. If you follow these steps, your spirit will improve regardless of your temperament. And when you improve your spirit, you permit God to make the most out of your life.

THE THREE CIRCLES: Which circle are you in?



Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled (yielded to, controlled by God) with the Spirit;

Ephesians 4:22-5:21 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

The Spiritual man is dead to self and alive to God.

Romans 6:11-14 "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

The Spiritual man has the mind of Christ.

Colossians 3:1-3 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Ephesians 5:18-21 "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

Luke 22:42 "Saying, Father, ... not my will, but thine, be done."

The two most important things a person can do in life is:

1. Become a Christian, 2. Be Filled with the Spirit

You can move to the third circle if you want.

THE CHOICE IS COMPLETELY YOURS.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, (salvation) and that they might have it more abundantly." *

John 10:10