

# CONTENTS

What Some People Are Saying . . . . .	2
Who Is The Holy Spirit? . . . . .	4
Who Can Be Filled With The Holy Spirit? . . . . .	6
What Is The Filling Of The Holy Spirit? . . . . .	7
How Can I Be Filled With The Holy Spirit? . . . . .	10
<i>Essential One:</i> <i>Be Christ-Centered</i> . . . . .	11
<i>Essential Two:</i> <i>Be In The Word</i> . . . . .	12
<i>Essential Three:</i> <i>Be Submissive</i> . . . . .	14
<i>Essential Four:</i> <i>Be Confident</i> . . . . .	16
How Can I Tell When I'm Spirit Filled? . . . . .	19
Two Wrong Answers . . . . .	23
What Is The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit? . . . . .	26
Checklist For Being Spirit-Filled . . . . .	29
"A Spirit-Filled Man" . . . . .	30
A Final Word . . . . .	32

# HOW CAN I BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

And just exactly what does that mean? If I am filled with the Spirit, will I know it? These questions are being asked today by Christians who want to walk with God and please Him. Yet some are afraid they are missing out when they hear about others who claim to have had a special filling of the Spirit.

RBC senior research editor Herb Vander Lugt has examined what the Bible has to say about this subject. We pray that this booklet will help many to have a deeper understanding and experience of the Spirit-filled life.

*Martin R. De Haan II*

Managing Editor: David Sper

Cover Design: Brian Fowler

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 1986, 2003 RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in USA

© RBC Ministries. All rights reserved.

## WHAT SOME PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Every follower of Jesus Christ should want to obey the biblical command to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But what does that involve? Some see it as an experience that is recognized by:

- speaking in “tongues”
- feelings of wild ecstasy
- feeling the Spirit take them over
- being overcome with great joy
- being “slain” in the Spirit
- having the ability to prophesy
- being able to interpret “tongues”

But other Christians say they have never had any of these experiences. They claim that a person does not have to have any of these things happen to him to show that he is filled with

the Holy Spirit. They believe that a Christian can be filled with the Holy Spirit as he lives his day-to-day life.

To them, Richard Wurmbrand, who still carries scars from beatings he received in a communist prison camp, exemplifies the power of a Spirit-filled life. He tells of singing for joy in a cell where he was cold, sick, and hungry. To many, he is a good example of someone who is Spirit-filled.

A Christian named John, who died in a Grand Rapids nursing home a few years ago, was considered a Spirit-filled man by those who took care of him. During the last 2 years of his life, as cancer ravaged his body, his joy was irrepresible. He told everybody he met about Jesus Christ.

During the first year, John asked the aids to wheel him into rooms where people were

discouraged and depressed. His testimony was used to lead many of his fellow residents to the Lord.

After he could no longer be placed in a wheelchair, he talked to people who came into his room. He radiated such joy that they couldn't help but feel they were in the presence of a Spirit-filled man.

---

***He radiated such joy that they couldn't help but feel they were in the presence of a Spirit-filled man.***

---

According to the Bible, the privilege for every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit began at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

The disciples were praying together when they suddenly heard the sound of rushing wind, saw tonguelike flames, and spoke in languages they had never learned. As a result, 3,000 people in Jerusalem trusted Christ that very day. The apostles were filled with courage and power, witnessing boldly and performing miracles. As time went on, and despite persecution, these Spirit-filled Christians presented such a powerful testimony that even their enemies spoke of them as men who had "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

We would all like to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But most of us don't experience the same victory, the same joy, or the same power as these early apostles. So, this leads us to ask, "How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?"

# WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**B**efore we can discuss being filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to know who the Holy Spirit is. Some people insist that the Holy Spirit is an influence—a power or source of God-given spiritual energy. Others see Him as a ghostlike force, entering or leaving us at will. Others picture Him as a kind of cosmic magician, elusive and vague, who drops mysteriously into our lives to make religious things happen and then leaves just as quickly as He came.

The Bible makes it clear, however, that the Holy Spirit is a person who lives within every Christian. It also teaches that He is God, the Third Person of the Trinity.

## HE IS A PERSON

The Scriptures give us five clear evidences that the Holy Spirit is a person, not just a mystic force or strange power.

**1. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as “He.”** Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “He.” He promised His disciples: “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He [the Holy Spirit] may abide with you forever” (Jn. 14:16).

**2. The Holy Spirit has intelligence.** He knows the “deep things of God” and reveals them to us (1 Cor. 2:10-11). Only a person has this kind of intelligence.

**3. The Holy Spirit makes decisions.** He gives gifts to the Lord’s people, “distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). Only a personal being can make decisions.

**4. The Holy Spirit has emotions.** He feels

love (Rom. 15:30) and grief (Eph. 4:30). An influence cannot feel emotions like these.

**5. The Holy Spirit is active.** He does things only a person can do:

- speaks (Rev. 2:7)
- intercedes (Rom. 8:26)
- teaches (Jn. 14:26)
- leads (Rom. 8:14)
- appoints (Acts 20:28)
- empowers (Acts 1:8)

## **HE IS GOD**

The Holy Spirit is also referred to in the Bible as God. He is the Third Person of the eternal Trinity, one with the Father and with the Son. The following factors show His deity:

**1. The Spirit's name appears as equal with the Father and the Son in the formula for baptism and in some of the New Testament prayers** (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

**2. The apostle Peter said that the Holy Spirit**

**was God.** When Ananias' sin was exposed, Peter told him that he had lied to the Holy Spirit. He went on to say that this lie had not been "to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4).

**3. The Holy Spirit is called "Lord"** (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

**4. The Holy Spirit possesses qualities that belong only to God:** eternity (Heb. 9:14), the ability to be everywhere at the same time (Ps. 139:7-10), sovereign power (Lk.1:35,37), and the knowledge of "the things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10-12).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit, who lives within every Christian, is a person and that He is God. Admittedly we can't grasp the great mystery of how the Holy Spirit can live within us. But we don't have to understand it. We just have to trust that what the Bible says is true.

# WHO CAN BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**T**he filling of the Holy Spirit should be the desire of every Christian. But listening to how some people talk, one could get the idea that it is reserved only for privileged, spiritually sensitive, special people. We are convinced, however, that the filling of the Holy Spirit is for everyone. But there are two important prerequisites.

First, to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit **a person must be a Christian**—he must be born again. This new birth is given by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again, He referred to it as being “born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3:6). He later told His disciples, “It is the Spirit

who gives life” (Jn. 6:63).

When the Spirit gives this new life, He also enters into the new Christian to live within him permanently—to indwell. Anyone who does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit is not a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Even though the indwelling of the Spirit is *not* the same thing as the filling of the Spirit, only someone who is indwelt can be filled. So, the first prerequisite to being Spirit-filled is to be a Christian.

Second, the filling of the Holy Spirit is **only for those Christians who want to be filled**. Although He dwells within all Christians, He does not fill them just because He is present. To be obedient to the command to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), a person must want the Spirit’s filling and then be willing to yield to His control.

## WHAT IS THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**B**efore we can answer the question “How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?” we must know what the filling of the Spirit is. The filling of the Spirit is the influence or control the Holy Spirit exercises over us when we yield ourselves to Him. The Spirit of God, who has given us new life and who has taken up residence within us, wants to fill our lives with His goodness and power. He wants us to let Him take control of our lives. Even so, He does not use His power as God to overwhelm us; rather, He fills us only as we submit to Him.

In this sense, then, being filled with the Spirit means that we have placed ourselves under His influence and control. We

have yielded to Him, letting Him take over our lives.

We often speak of something that so fills a person’s mind that it strangely influences everything he thinks and does. For example, a person can be filled with:

- anger
- fear
- jealousy
- remorse
- sorrow
- pride
- love
- anxiety

The Bible itself uses the word “filled” in the same way (see Lk. 6:11; Acts 5:17; 13:45).

To be filled with something, therefore, means to be under its control. This truth is stated clearly regarding the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5:18.

*Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*

Paul used this analogy because a person who becomes intoxicated with alcohol places himself under its influence or control. Similarly, a Christian who submits to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit puts

---

***A Christian  
who submits to  
the leading of  
the indwelling  
Holy Spirit  
puts himself  
under His  
influence or  
control.***

---

himself under His influence or control. Both the person who consumes enough alcohol to become drunk and the Christian who yields to the Holy Spirit have placed themselves under the control of

something or someone outside themselves.

On the Day of Pentecost, people who heard the apostles speak in languages they had never learned accused them of being drunk. Moreover, in the pagan ceremonies of Paul's day, worshipers often got drunk to have a "religious experience." The analogy, therefore, had some background in Paul's thinking. And if you stop to think about it, a group of Spirit-filled Christians singing with great enthusiasm may have a superficial resemblance to a band of pagan worshipers, drunk with wine, singing praises to their gods.

The similarity, as already indicated, is only on the surface. A person who is drunk with wine, and therefore under its control, suffers impaired judgment. He says and does things he normally wouldn't do, and

he often can't remember what he did. On the other hand, a person filled with the Holy Spirit,

and therefore under His control, enjoys improved judgment, acts in a sane and responsible manner, and rejoices in the

memory of what he said and did while under the control of the Holy Spirit.

We are greatly influenced by whatever it is that "fills" us. If we are filled with anger, we will be influenced to such an extent that we will say and do things we may later regret. A person who is filled with anger against God may become so controlled by his hatred that he becomes irreverent, blasphemous, defiant, and rebellious

toward everything.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit, then, is to be so influenced by, controlled

**A person who is drunk with wine:**

- walks different
- talks different
- acts different
- thinks different
- feels different

**Alcohol's control results in *impaired* judgment.**

**A person who is filled with the Spirit:**

- walks different
- talks different
- acts different
- thinks different
- feels different

**The Spirit's control results in *improved* judgment.**

by, or permeated by Him that we will reflect God's moral character and be strengthened by His power. We will be

loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled—virtues that Paul referred to as "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23).

# HOW CAN I BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**P**aul commanded the believers at Ephesus—and every Christian—to be “filled with the Spirit” (5:18). This clause could be literally translated, “Let the Holy Spirit keep filling you,” or “Keep letting the Holy Spirit fill you.”

But just how do we obey this command? What must we do to let the Holy Spirit keep filling us? How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Well, we know what it means to be filled with excitement or happiness. Excitement or happiness so permeates our thoughts and feelings that it dominates us. When a young woman first becomes engaged, she is often so excited and

happy that it influences everything she does.

When Paul told us to be filled with the Spirit, he was telling us to let Him so fill us that everything we think and do is influenced or controlled by Him.

But the crucial question is still, “How?” God’s part is clear: He will fill us. But what is our part? Being filled with the Holy Spirit involves four essentials. We must:

- (1) be Christ-centered,
- (2) be in the Word,
- (3) be submissive, and
- (4) be confident.

We will now look in detail at each of these four essentials for being filled with the Holy Spirit. Graphically, we will represent the filling of the Spirit as a square. The four essentials will make up the sides of this square, indicating the equal importance of each one.

## 1. BE CHRIST-CENTERED

**FILLED  
WITH THE  
HOLY SPIRIT**

### **ESSENTIAL ONE: Be Christ-Centered**

The first essential for being Spirit-filled is to center our lives on Jesus Christ. He must be the focal point of our thoughts and aspirations. In all we do, we must be conscious of following His example and doing His will. When we are Christ-centered, we are pleasing the Holy Spirit because that's what He wants us to do. In fact, Jesus said, "He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16:14). In a good marriage, the wife

or husband enjoys seeing the other receive honor. Similarly, the Holy Spirit derives great pleasure from seeing us cooperate with Him in glorifying Christ. He Himself wants to remain hidden, so that nothing diverts our gaze from the Lord Jesus.

Whenever we focus our attention on Christ, the Holy Spirit is in close partnership with us. The Spirit is pleased when we are glorifying the Lord. We can do this by:

- Observing the Lord's Supper to remember Christ in His suffering and death for our sins (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- Making Jesus our example (Jn. 13:15; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Pet. 2:21-24).
- Longing to know Christ better, so that we may be more like Him (Phil. 3:10-14).
- Not being afraid of dying because we're looking

forward to being with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

- Living in anticipation of the day we will appear at “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10).
- Being comforted by the fact that Christ is our intercessor in heaven (Heb. 4:14-16).
- Purifying ourselves from sin as we’re living in the light of Christ’s return (1 Jn. 3:2-3).
- Looking forward to Christ’s rule over the earth (Isa. 2:1-4; Jer. 23:5-6; Rev. 20:1-4).
- Rejoicing in the assurance that every mortal being in God’s universe will bow before Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).

The Holy Spirit keeps Himself out of the limelight so that Christ may be honored. He is pleased when we praise and adore

the Lord Jesus. He views us as partners with Him in glorifying Christ. Being Christ-centered, therefore, is an essential in being filled with the Spirit.

## 1. BE CHRIST-CENTERED

**FILLED  
WITH THE  
HOLY SPIRIT**

2. BE IN THE WORD

## ESSENTIAL TWO: Be In The Word

The Christian who wants to be Spirit-filled should be spending time in God’s Word. His mind must be so filled with its truths that Bible passages automatically come to his mind when he encounters the situations of life. Just before Paul gave the command “do not be

drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” he wrote:

*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).*

How do we know God’s will? Primarily through the Scriptures, which came into existence when “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

The importance of the Bible in the Spirit-filled life was demonstrated by the Lord Jesus in His encounter with Satan at the beginning of His public ministry. Luke told us that Jesus was “filled with the Holy Spirit” when He entered into the wilderness for testing (Lk. 4:1-2). In response to each of Satan’s temptations, our Lord answered by quoting the Scriptures—specifically Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13, and 6:16. Since Jesus took on our genuine humanity, He

“increased in wisdom and stature” (Lk. 2:52) like other boys. So we can be sure that He had to study to know the Scriptures. Christ’s familiarity with the Bible, therefore, was an important element in His being “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

As noted earlier, Paul pointed out the close relationship between “knowing what the will of the Lord is” and being “filled with the Holy Spirit” when he wrote Ephesians 5:17-18. He made the same connection in Colossians 3:16, which says:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

The last part of this verse is almost identical to Ephesians 5:19-20 where Paul described the

characteristics of a Spirit-filled Christian. In other words, letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly is an essential in letting the Holy Spirit keep filling us.

If you want to be a Spirit-filled Christian, then, you must be in the Word of God. Give the Bible ample room in your life by reading it, studying it, and reflecting on it. The Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit and are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Read the Bible! Study it! Be instructed by it! Obey its commands! Let it correct you! The Word of God has been given to make you a complete, well-equipped Christian. You cannot be Spirit-filled without it.

## 1. BE CHRIST-CENTERED



## 2. BE IN THE WORD

## 3. BE SUBMISSIVE

### **ESSENTIAL THREE: Be Submissive**

The third essential for a Spirit-filled life is to be submissive to God and His Word. Paul indicated this attitude of submission by the language he used when he wrote Ephesians 5:18. Translated literally, the latter part of this verse reads, “Keep letting the Holy Spirit fill you.” We must continuously *allow* the Holy Spirit to fill us. We can do this only when we possess a submissive attitude toward Him.

The analogy Paul used of being drunk with wine carries the idea of

submission. Paul wrote:

*Do not get drunk with wine . . . but keep letting the Holy Spirit fill you [literal translation].*

A person who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol. If he is very drunk, he is under its control. A person who keeps letting the Holy Spirit fill him will consciously, continuously, and voluntarily place himself under God's influence or control. No, he doesn't lose self-control. In fact, he exercises far more self-control than a person who does not possess the Holy Spirit. When a Christian consciously, continuously, and voluntarily submits to God, he is freed from slavery to the sinful habits and drives that once controlled him.

This attitude of submission is also present in Colossians 3:15–4:10, a passage that parallels

Ephesians 5:18–6:9. When Paul told the believers in Colosse to place themselves under the rule of Christ's peace, and to give the Word of Christ a dominant place in their lives (3:16), he was calling for a submissive attitude. You place yourself

---

***A person who keeps letting the Holy Spirit fill him will consciously, continuously, and voluntarily place himself under God's influence or control.***

---

under God's influence and control when you do these things. The result of letting the Holy Spirit keep filling you (Eph. 5:18) and letting the peace of Christ and the Word of Christ have

dominance in your life (Col. 3:15-16) is the same—joy, mutual encouragement, praise, and gratitude.

When you have a submissive attitude toward God and His Word, the Holy Spirit can keep filling you. This is because:

- You place yourself under the authority of the Bible when it tells you to “put off” and “put to death” the sins of the flesh and to “put on” Christian virtues (Eph. 4:17–5:7; Col. 3:5-17).
- You humbly confess your sins so that you will experience God’s fellowship and cleansing (1 Jn. 1:9).
- You submit to others as an expression of your love for God, thus becoming a good marriage partner, a good citizen, and a good representative of Christ (Eph. 5:2-33; 1 Pet. 2:11–3:17).

## 1. BE CHRIST-CENTERED

4. BE CONFIDENT

**FILLED  
WITH THE  
HOLY SPIRIT**

2. BE IN THE WORD

## 3. BE SUBMISSIVE

### **ESSENTIAL FOUR: Be Confident**

The fourth essential in being filled with the Spirit is to be confident. When you have centered your life on Jesus Christ, when you are in the Word and it is in you, and when you have submitted to the Holy Spirit’s leading, you can know that you have done your part. And, having done that, you can be absolutely certain that God has done His part. He has responded to you by filling you with His Spirit. Because of that:

- You don’t need to wonder if you are spiritual enough to

be filled with the Spirit.

- You don't need to compare yourself with other believers.
- You don't need to keep looking for some spectacular sign from heaven.
- You don't need to wait for a great feeling of tingling excitement to sweep over you.

Rather, you can know with absolute certainty that because you are doing your part, God is doing His part.

---

***You can know with absolute certainty that because you are doing your part, God is doing His part.***

---

---

And this confidence will help you live day-by-day in the assurance that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

But if you live with a

defeatist attitude, it is probably because you feel that you are losing your battle with sin. Your lack of confidence, though, shows a failure to trust in the Lord's provision for you and in His power to keep His part of the bargain.

Look at the apostle Paul. Although he was very much aware of the power of the old nature and of the ongoing battle with the flesh, he was brimming with confidence. In Romans 7, for example, he was painfully honest in describing the battle between his old nature (the "law of sin") and his new nature (the "law of my mind"). But he then went right on to point out that the way of victory is through "Jesus Christ our Lord." He then said:

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*. . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the*

*law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4).*

This walking “in the Spirit” occurs when we are filled with the Spirit. It includes the four essentials we’ve just looked at in a blend of divine and human activity to overcome sin.

The walk in the Spirit is a walk of confidence in God. And this confidence produces spiritual victory because of:

- A continual awareness of the Spirit’s presence (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- A conscious dependence

on the Spirit’s power (Eph. 5:18).

- An acceptance of the Spirit’s help in fulfilling the law of God (Rom. 8:4).
- A deliberate “putting off” of the flesh (Eph. 4:22).
- A willful rejection of sin (Rom. 6:1-2).
- A determined pursuit of what is right (Eph. 4:24).

The fourth essential in a Spirit-filled life, then, is confidence. This is especially true in our battle against sin. But when you have done your part—when you have repented of all known sin, confessed it, and replaced it with obedience to Christ—you can be certain that God has done His part in forgiving you and in giving you the power for spiritual victory. You can move ahead with your heart filled with confidence and the knowledge that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

## HOW CAN I TELL WHEN I'M SPIRIT-FILLED?

Some people say that the way you can know you are filled with the Holy Spirit is to speak in tongues or to just “feel it.” A woman called one of the counselors at RBC Ministries, for example, to say that she had times when she was so filled with the Holy Spirit that she couldn't speak a word of English. She said that anybody who doesn't speak in tongues is not Spirit-filled.

When Paul described the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit, however, he didn't mention tongues-speaking or a tingling feeling. But he did mention “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:19-21; cp. Col. 3:16). He also listed nine fruit of the Spirit as evidence in Galatians 5:22-23.

### FOUR EVIDENCES

<b>FILLED WITH</b>	
<b>Joyful Fellowship</b>	<b>Heartfelt Praise</b>
<b>Abounding Gratitude</b>	<b>Reverent Submission</b>
<b>THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>	

According to Ephesians 5:19-21, a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit will know it because of four evidences in his life: joyful fellowship, heartfelt praise, abounding gratitude, and reverent submission. Let's look briefly at each of these.

## **1. Joyful Fellowship.**

The first evidence of being Spirit-filled is joyful fellowship with other Christians. Paul described it as “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (v.19). The texts of these songs often take the form of mutual exhortation.

Singing with God’s people had its roots in Hebrew worship. Psalms 29, 33, 37, 40, 95, 96, and 100 are only a few of the songs in which the Israelites encouraged one another to join together in praise, gratitude, and obedience.

Spirit-filled Christians love to sing with one another. For example, in our hymns we call on one another to praise the Lord: “Come we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known.” We comfort one another: “God will take care of you.” We challenge one

another: “Must I go, and empty-handed?”

## **2. Heartfelt Praise.**

The second result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is heartfelt praise to God: “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (v.19). The term “in your heart” is sometimes taken as referring to singing on the inside, singing that isn’t expressed outwardly. But that is unlikely. It probably means singing from a sincere heart, as expressed in Colossians 3:16, “Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

## **3. Abounding Gratitude.**

The third evidence of being Spirit-filled is abounding gratitude: “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.20). In his letters, Paul repeatedly gave thanks to

God, and he encouraged his readers to follow his example (Phil. 1:3; 4:6; Col. 1:3,12; 2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2; 1 Th. 1:2; 2:13; 5:18; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:1; 4:3-4). He told us to give thanks to God in everything and for everything.

#### 4. Reverent

**Submission.** The fourth way we can know we are filled with the Holy Spirit is reverent submission: “Submitting to one another in the fear of God” (v.21). A Spirit-filled person is humble, gentle, and meek. He is not proud, aggressive, or self-assertive. His reverence for Christ is the source of his humility. As a servant of Christ, he possesses a servant’s spirit. Therefore, he does not find it difficult to submit to his fellow believers.

## NINE FRUIT

FILLED WITH		
Love	Joy	Peace
Long-suffering	Kindness	Goodness
Faithfulness	Gentleness	Self-Control

**THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul pointed out that the life of a Spirit-filled person will be marked by nine moral qualities that he called “the fruit of the Spirit.” When they are present, it is further evidence that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit. He wrote:

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23).*

Let’s look at each one of these spiritual qualities:

**1. Love:** an attitude that moves us to put God and others ahead of ourselves. A spirit that impels us to give, to serve, and to forgive.

**2. Joy:** a spirit of gladness rooted in our faith, expressed through song, and accompanied by an optimistic spirit.

**3. Peace:** inner serenity derived from God and based on the reality of our peace with God through Christ's sacrifice.

**4. Longsuffering:** patience in the midst of difficult circumstances and in our relationships with difficult people.

**5. Kindness:** practicing the golden rule of treating others as we expect them to treat us.

**6. Goodness:** open, honest, pure, and generous behavior.

**7. Faithfulness:** we can be trusted and depended on in all our relationships.

## **8. Gentleness:**

a tenderness of spirit that enables us to discipline others properly, to endure persecution graciously, and to witness to others sensitively.

**9. Self-control:** the quality that gives us control over our desires, especially those that relate to the body.

If the Holy Spirit is producing these nine moral qualities in your life, you are Spirit-filled. Paul's comment, "Against such there is no law" (v.23), means that nothing in the Mosaic law or any other law opposes these virtues or is needed to restrain them. In fact, when a person's life is marked by the four evidences of Ephesians 5:18-21 and the nine moral qualities of Galatians 5:22-23, the demands of the law are being fulfilled. When they are present, they provide evidence that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

## TWO WRONG ANSWERS

Anybody who reads widely or listens to many preachers will soon discover that conflicting answers are given to the question: “How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?” Let’s evaluate two wrong ideas that are being circulated today.

**I. “The Bible does not command us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.”** Some Christian leaders do not emphasize the filling of the Holy Spirit. In fact, some even say that to talk about oneself as being Spirit-filled is a form of spiritual pride. They acknowledge that in the book of Acts the apostles are sometimes described as “filled with the Spirit” or “full of the Holy Spirit.” But they say that the Bible nowhere commands us

to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

To support their claim, they point out that Ephesians 5:18 literally reads, “Do not be drunk with wine; but be filled *in spirit*.” Because the word *spirit* is not modified by the word *Holy*, and because it has no article, they say Paul was talking about the human spirit.

---

*Some people say that to talk about oneself as being Spirit-filled is a form of spiritual pride.*

---

Even if we grant the possibility that Ephesians 5:18 should be translated, “be filled in [your] spirit,” we have ample biblical evidence for emphasizing the importance of a Spirit-filled life. In Galatians

5:16-26, Paul commanded us to “walk in the Spirit” and then told us that such a life will produce the “fruit of the Spirit.”

---

*“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. . . . But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. . . . If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

**Galatians 5:16,18,25**

---

In Romans 8:1-11, we are told that freedom from the power of indwelling sin comes to those who walk “according to the Spirit,” the

Spirit who is referred to as the indwelling “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” (v.9).

Furthermore, the terms *filled* and *full of* do refer to the Holy Spirit in other passages (Lk. 1:15,41,67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9), and the contrast between being drunk with wine and filled with the Holy Spirit was also given in Acts 2:13.

So, the teaching that every believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit does not stand or fall on one’s interpretation of Ephesians 5:18. However, we are convinced that this verse does command every Christian to let the Holy Spirit keep filling him.

## **2. “You need to seek a second blessing.”**

Followers of John Wesley, the Pentecostals, and the Charismatics believe that the filling of the Holy Spirit is a dramatic

experience that takes place sometime after salvation. The Wesleyans prefer to speak of it as “entire sanctification,” viewing it as a second work of grace in which the sin nature is removed and the Holy Spirit takes control. Pentecostals and Charismatics refer to it as a baptism of the Spirit, claiming that it is usually accompanied by speaking in tongues.

The problem with this view is that the New Testament never tells us to seek or anticipate a dramatic, post-salvation experience. We are justified the moment we believe (Rom. 5:1). And we receive the new birth and the permanent, indwelling Spirit at the instant of salvation (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). True, we may have many wonderful experiences after salvation. And we may even have an

encounter with the Lord that revolutionizes our way of life. But we have no biblical basis for expecting a second work of grace or a baptism of power that brings instant holiness. Rather, Paul called on us to “present [literally

---

***The New  
Testament never  
tells us to seek  
or anticipate  
a dramatic,  
post-salvation  
experience.***

---

‘keep presenting’] your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) and to “let the Holy Spirit keep filling you” (Eph. 5:18).

# WHAT IS THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**T**he baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act of the Holy Spirit by which He places a person into the church, the body of Christ. The first “baptism of the Holy Spirit took place in the upper room at

---

*The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act of the Holy Spirit by which He places a person into the church, the body of Christ.*

---

Pentecost when the church began (Acts 2:1-13). Today it occurs the moment a person receives Jesus Christ

as his Savior. Referring to this time when every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church, Paul wrote:

*By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).*

Some Christians disagree. They maintain that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same as the filling of the Spirit. They say that it takes place sometime after salvation, and that it is accompanied by the sign of speaking in tongues. Those who hold this view say that their teaching is found in the book of Acts. But the phrase “baptized with the Holy Spirit” appears only twice in Acts (1:5; 11:16), and in neither place are we told that it is something we should seek sometime after salvation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was first announced by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8;

Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33). And the Lord Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit before He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:4-5). That promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the day

---

***A Christian who is looking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is wasting his time looking for something he already has.***

---

the church was born (Acts 2:1-13,32-33). The disciples were baptized into the church in the upper room. When Peter preached later that day, some 3,000 people believed (Acts 2:41-42). Then we are told:

*The Lord added to the*

*church daily those who were being saved (2:47).*

The book of Acts records three additional mini-Pentecosts. They took place with three different groups: the Samaritan believers, whose religion and ancestry were part Jewish (Acts 8:14-25); the Gentile family of Cornelius (10:44-48); and 12 people who had believed in Christ and received John's baptism but knew nothing about what had happened at Pentecost (19:1-7). When Peter saw that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Gentiles, he remembered the Spirit-baptism promised by Christ. He wrote:

*Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord*

*Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God? (Acts 11:16-17).*

By giving visible signs in these three instances the Holy Spirit confirmed the fact that Jesus Christ was building His church. These signs were given during the transition from the Jewish beginnings of the church to the full inclusion of the Gentiles. When the transition was over, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was no longer accompanied by visible signs. When a person trusts Christ today, he is placed into the church, the body of Christ, that very moment. Paul wrote:

*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).*

The words translated “we were all baptized” speak of an action that took place in

one instant of time. The baptism of the Spirit takes place at the moment of salvation, is not repeated,

---

***The baptism of the Spirit takes place at the moment of salvation, is not repeated, and is not to be sought after salvation.***

---

and is not to be sought after salvation. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is the placing of the believer into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

# CHECKLIST FOR BEING SPIRIT-FILLED

**A**s you think through the whole topic of being filled with the Holy Spirit, you may wonder where you are spiritually. Answering the following questions honestly will help you evaluate your relationship to the Holy Spirit:

- I have submitted to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to lead me.
- I am learning from the Bible through regular reading, study, and meditation.
- I am relying on the Holy Spirit to help me overcome my sinful desires.
- I enjoy getting together with God's people for fellowship, Bible study, and prayer.

- People who know me think of me as a happy, joyous Christian.
- When trouble comes, I am at peace in my innermost being.
- When I become aware of sin in my life, I immediately confess it and ask God to help me to gain the victory.
- I am gentle in my relationships with other people and patient with God.
- I can point to certain times when the Holy Spirit has given me the power to perform a certain task or carry a heavy burden.
- I am growing in self-control.

## “A SPIRIT-FILLED MAN”

A good friend of our RBC Ministries staff says he feels uncomfortable about saying that he is a man who is filled with the Holy Spirit. He says that it would bother him if someone were to introduce him from the pulpit as “a Spirit-filled man of God” before he began speaking. He adds that he struggled with the concept of being filled with the Spirit as a young man. He wrote:

For more than 45 years I have wrestled with this matter of being Spirit-filled. As a young man of 18, I often passed out tracts on street corners and preached in open air meetings. I knew I needed the Holy Spirit and I asked Him to help me. But I felt so unworthy, and I wondered how He

could ever use a person like me. Yet, in spite of my feelings about myself, He blessed my efforts and people were saved.

When I was 23 years old and in the army, I went forward in a Pentecostal church to receive what they called the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” But things didn’t change very much. And when I attended a Bible school later, I learned that I already had the baptism of the Spirit when I trusted in Christ years before. As I reflected, I realized that I was probably looking for the assurance that the Holy Spirit was really operating in my life.

This man’s experience is probably similar to that of many young Christians who want to please and obey the Lord. But he has been serving the Lord for many years. How does

he feel today? He said:  
Through the years, the Lord has given me the joy of an assured and victorious Christian life. He has given me a satisfying and fruitful ministry. He has used me to help people trust in Christ as their personal Savior and then to help them grow in their faith. I have seen spiritual victories won and Satan defeated. In that sense, I can say that I know the blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

But I'm still far from being perfect in my private life and in my work. Because of that, I would still be embarrassed to be called a Spirit-filled man. I know that I am sometimes selfish or envious. I think worldly thoughts. I'm inclined to be too competitive. Sometimes I feel terribly sinful.

We who know this man consider him to be Spirit-filled. We all feel that he is a man of God. He grieves over sin. He submits to the Spirit's leading. He studies the Bible diligently and does his best to obey it. And he is generous and compassionate. We all agree that he is a man who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

---

***Being filled with the Spirit is not something you'd normally say about yourself.***

---

But he's probably right—being filled with the Spirit is not something you'd normally say about yourself. It's like saying, "I'm humble." You just don't talk about yourself that way. But we can say of him with confidence, "He's a Spirit-filled man."

## A FINAL WORD

**W**e have seen that to be filled with the Holy Spirit we must be Christ-centered, in the Word, submissive, and confident.

What about you? If you are a Christian, being filled with the Spirit is not an option, it's a command. Is Christ at the center of your thoughts and aspirations? Are you trying to follow His example? Are you spending time studying the Bible so that your mind is saturated with God's truth and His will for your life? Are you yielded and submissive to God? Are you confessing your sins? Are you sensitive to the Spirit's leading so that you are not quenching His power in you? Do you have the confident assurance that you are Spirit-filled when you are Christ-centered, in the

Word, and submissive? If you can answer yes, you are Spirit-filled and His fruit will be evident in your life.

But perhaps you are not a Christian. If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit because He is not in you. To bring Him into your life, you need to admit your sin and inability to save yourself (Eph. 2:8-9) and ask Christ to save you. He has promised to save all who desire to turn from their sins and call in faith on Him. The Bible says:

*As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name (Jn. 1:12).*

Trust Christ today. Then you'll have taken the first step to being filled with the Holy Spirit.

# Get your free Bible Resources catalog!



Discovery Series booklets can be valuable guides to help you learn what the Bible says about a broad range of topics. Each 32-page booklet can be used in your personal Bible study or in a small-group setting.

Your free Bible Resources catalog includes a brief

description of each Discovery Series booklet. To get your copy, write to us at the address below and ask for a catalog. Or follow the link below to request your copy today.

[www.discoveryseries.org/catalog](http://www.discoveryseries.org/catalog)

USA: PO Box 2222, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2222  
Canada: Box 1622, Windsor, ON N9A 6Z7