

What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

Rich Nathan

February 4 & 5, 2017

Spiritual but Not Religious?

Ephesians 5:18-21; Luke 4:18-19

You probably heard about the plans to close more Macy's, Sears, Kmart and other department stores across the country and here in town. A lot of the mid-range department stores are having trouble staying in business. Now, certainly part of the reason that many department stores are having such a hard time is because of the rise of online shopping. Those who are at least occasionally shopping online report that they're making a majority of their purchases now online. Online shopping is growing a few percent every single year.

But another major reason for the struggle at department stores and the closure of many malls is because there's been a massive shift in the spending habits of Americans. Americans have shifted from spending our money on things to spending our money on experiences. The American economy has moved in the last 20 years towards becoming an experience economy.

So, air travel, media, restaurants, video games – they are all doing really well, but department stores and shopping mall... forget about it. You really see the shift toward an experience economy, purchasing experiences over things, here in Central Ohio. Shopping malls in our city are dead or dying. Northland no longer exists. City Center is

gone, so is Westland. Eastland is on life support. Tuttle Mall is struggling. There are only two shopping centers that are doing well in Columbus – Easton and Polaris. Both have heavily shifted toward selling experiences.

Easton has 25 million visitors per year. It's all about experience. They have a tree lighting ceremony that used to be conducted downtown. But now we tree lighting at this fake neighborhood called "Easton Town Square". So, it's all about experiences. Watching stand-up comedy or lingering over coffee or a cocktail at dozens of restaurants. Playing with stuff at the Lego store or the Apple store. That's what's selling.

You know, the shift in spending away from buying things toward experiences is actually a good thing if you want to maximize your happiness. There's a 20 year study conducted by Dr. Tom Gilovich who is a Psychology professor at Cornell University. The bottom line of Dr. Gilovich's study is this: If you want to be happy, don't spend your money on things. Experiences – going camping or planning a trip or throwing a party or having people over for dinner. Experiences become a part of us in a way that things never do.

Those who label themselves "Spiritual but not Religious" are making more room in their lives for spiritual experiences. They say, "We might not go to church, but we value many of the things that you church people value. Gratitude for the blessings in our life.

Awe at the vastness of creation. A profound sense of humility in the face of our own limitations. A need for connection with other people.”

The focus on the importance of experience is not just a 21st century fad that’s part of our experience economy or a 21st century discovery by the “Spiritual but not Religious” crowd. A focus on the importance of experience is something that the most casual reader of the Bible will discover in both the Old and the New Testament. We read hundreds of stories of people who experience God in dramatic, life-changing ways through a person known as the Holy Spirit.

I want to talk about the Holy Spirit today and experience in a message I’ve titled, “What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Holy Spirit?”

Let’s pray.

Vineyard Columbus has a mission statement that reads:

“Our mission is to develop a community of disciples who experience God, love one another, and partner with Christ to heal the world.”

One of the reasons that we do church here at Vineyard Columbus is to assist people to experience God. Not just to know about God or believe things about God, however

important those things are. One reason that Vineyard Columbus is in business is to assist people to experience God.

Experiencing the Spirit

Here what we read in Acts 2:

Slide Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The experience of the disciples in Acts 2 has two aspects to it. One is power – the power of the wind. The other is the purifying effect of fire that burns away every form of impurity. A fire that leaves pure gold behind.

Very often in the Bible, the Holy Spirit is associated with an experience of God. It may be an experience of power. It may be an experience of purifying. It may be an experience of passionate love. Here's what we read in Romans:

Slide Romans 5:5

⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit results in a life-transforming experience of God's love in our hearts.

There's something more to Christianity than something to believe. There is also someone to receive. Someone to experience. Now, listen, the church has always had creeds – The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed. Christianity absolutely has a certain truth content to it. But Christianity goes so far beyond creeds and propositional content. You are not a Christian by simply believing certain creedal statements. You also must receive a person named the Holy Spirit.

Becoming a Christian involves an encounter with God the Spirit. Much of the church today says, "Don't worry about experiences. Don't worry about feelings. Just concern yourself with obedience and that's enough." On the one hand, that's partially right. You don't have to wait for a feeling to obey God and to do what is right. Someone asks you a question, you don't have to wait for a feeling to decide whether to tell the truth or whether to lie. We don't wait around for a feeling to do what is right, what is just, what is loving. But if you never feel God's presence in your life, never feel God's love, never

feel the peace of God, then you are not living out New Testament Christianity. God wants to not only be believed in, but also to be experienced, to be felt.

I've often used this illustration regarding my wife, Marlene. You know, it's appropriate that I hug and kiss my wife whether I feel like hugging or kissing her or not. And it's appropriate that she kiss me whether she feels like it or not. Now, typically, I feel like kissing her a lot more than she feels like kissing me. But if while we were kissing we never felt anything, while I was hugging my wife I said to her, "Marlene, as I look into your beautiful blue eyes I want you to know that I feel absolutely dead inside. I am coolly, reasonably, and utterly indifferently in love with you but my emotions toward you are ice cold, frozen like a glacier. I base my next kiss on the truth that you are my wife."

Now, if I told you that I never experienced any feeling of love or affection for my wife, you would say, "Gosh, that's really tragic. I'm sorry to hear that. There's something wrong here. Either inside of you or in this relationship." And, yet, the church for centuries has taught that regarding our relationship with God, you ought not to expect a feeling of his presence, a feeling of his love, an overwhelming experience of his power. Instead of experiencing his Spirit, what the church has been guilty of is

Taming the Spirit

The scriptures speak to us about the Holy Spirit being a mighty, untamable person. The Spirit is likened to a violent wind. An all-powerful person who is free to do whatever he wants, wherever he wants to whomever he wants. When the Spirit comes, he is like an invading army. But over the last 2,000 years, the church has done a great job in taming and domesticating the Spirit.

You know, we human beings like to domesticate powerful things so that we can be in control and not be frightened by something else or someone else's power. Over the course of thousands of years, we've turned a powerful creature like this:

Wolf picture

Into something like this:

Jack picture

That's my dog, Jack, whose wolf-like character can clearly be seen in this photo.

We've turned wild cats:

Wild cat picture

Into this:

Kitten picture

We've even tried to harness the wind:

Violent Storm photo

Into this:

Wind farm photo

You know, we try to do the same thing with the Holy Spirit – to tame, domesticate all-mighty God and to bring him under our human control. In the liturgical parts of the church, among Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox and Episcopalians, we try to tame the Holy Spirit by suggesting that he comes whenever a priest or bishop lays hands on a person in their confirmation or ordination. So long as you have the right person laying hands on you – the right bishop, the right priest, then you can be assured that you have the Holy Spirit.

In the Protestant tradition, the church has tried to tame or domesticate the Holy Spirit by saying the Spirit is locked up in the Bible. You want to experience the Spirit today,

study the scripture. Even among those who say, “Well, the Spirit is not confined simply to our church life or even the God inspired scripture.” The Spirit can still speak in a “still, small voice”.

But where is the mighty wind that we read about in Acts 2? Where are the tongues of fire? Where are the revelations that we read about in Acts 2:

Acts 2:17-18

¹⁷ “In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

Prophecy, visions, dreams, the pouring out of the Spirit. The Bible promises the gift of the Holy Spirit who cannot be domesticated. The Spirit is not tame. And it speaks to us about filling with the Spirit.

Slide

Filling with the Spirit

Craig Keener, who is one of the world's great New Testament scholars and who also happens to be a member of a Vineyard church near Asbury Seminary where Craig teaches, in a great book called *Gift Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*

Craig said that in the church today there is so much debate about when and how someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, but not why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Every Christian who is within Christian orthodoxy believes that we receive the Holy Spirit at conversion. As the Apostle Paul says,

1 Corinthians 12:3b

...no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

You may a nice person. You may be a loving person. You may be a moral person. You may work for social justice. But you are not yet a Christian if you haven't received the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some who say that at the moment of conversion, when you receive the Holy Spirit, you've got it all. Conversion the moment when you're baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. They would describe conversion as like God putting a billion dollars in your bank account. Now, you just need to draw on that account, but at conversion you have all that you will ever need.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of my favorite preachers ever, preached at Westminster Chapel in London for nearly 50 years. He lamented the state of Christians who say that they got everything that they would ever need from God when they were converted. He lamented the state of Christians who said that there is nothing more of God to receive and experience. Lloyd-Jones said,

“Got it all? I simply ask in the name of God, why then are you as you are? If you have got it all, why are you unlike the New Testament Christians? Got it all? Got it all at your conversion? Well, where is it, I ask?”

Other Christians say that you need a second blessing. After you receive the Holy Spirit at your conversion, you need a second blessing, a second filling with the Holy Spirit. A dear, old friend who was an Anglican Bishop named David Pytches was asked, “Bishop Pytches, do you believe in the second blessing?” To which he answered, “Oh, yes. I believe in a second blessing. It comes between the first and third blessing of God.”

The Bible is far less concerned with when you receive the power of the Holy Spirit. It’s far more concerned THAT you receive the power of the Spirit. For those who say, “I was filled with the Holy Spirit back in 1987”, let me say to you, with all affection, since 1987 you have leaked! You need to be refilled with the Holy Spirit. Again and again and again.

So, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Again, there are two main aspects to the work of the Spirit in a person's life. Two aspects that are symbolized by the fire and the wind that came at Pentecost. The fire symbolizes the purifying work of the Spirit. And the wind symbolizes the empowering work of the Spirit. We need both!

We see each aspect of the Spirit emphasized in different ways by two great New Testament authors. When the Apostle Paul speaks about the Holy Spirit's filling, he mainly focuses on the purifying work of the Spirit – the fire. And when Luke speaks about the filling with the Spirit, he mainly emphasizes the empowering work of the Spirit – the wind. Let's take these in turn.

First,

Filling with the Spirit in Paul

Here's what we read in Ephesians:

Ephesians 5:18-21

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for

everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Despite the way that this is broken up in our English Bibles, it's actually one long sentence in the original Greek. It is one imperative, one command followed by five participles. We have one command:

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

There's one imperative, one command in this text. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. And then there are five participles. Participles are that part of speech that ends in -ing. So the Apostle Paul goes on and describes five results of being filled with the Spirit.

- Speaking to one another
- Singing
- Making music
- Giving thanks
- Submitting to one another

Paul is not saying, “Here are six things I want you to do.” He’s saying, “Here’s one thing that you need to do. Be filled, literally be continuously filled with the Spirit. And the overflow of being filled with the Spirit will result in these five things.

Now, it’s interesting that the Apostle Paul contrasts being drunk with wine with being filled with the Holy Spirit. When someone is drunk, we say that they are “under the influence”. An individual might be charged with a DUI, driving under the influence. And we know that when you are under the influence of alcohol there are some really obvious signs.

Your speech might become slurred. You might stagger. It might be difficult for you to walk a straight line. Your self-control will be suppressed. You might say or do things that you would never ordinarily do except that you’re under the influence of a powerful drug, namely alcohol.

Paul says, “Don’t be under the influence of alcohol. Be under the influence of the Spirit. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Are you filled with the Holy Spirit, friend? Are you? How would you know?

Well, just as you can tell if somebody is under the influence of alcohol, you can tell if somebody is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you are speaking to one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the

Lord, you are likely filled with the Holy Spirit. When people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they are going to love to worship. The worship we see here is in two directions – speaking to one another and to the Lord. If you find worship boring so you get to church just in time for the message, whatever the style of music. If you don't like to make music in your heart to the Lord, and if you don't like to worship, and if you never have any energy to praise God or to encourage others to worship, then it's likely that you are NOT filled with the Spirit.

You can tell that the Holy Spirit is filling a church or a movement when there are new worship songs springing forth and when people love to worship. Dead, sleepy worship is the fruit of dead, sleepy Christians.

Here's another way to tell if you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Are you always giving thanks? A Spirit-filled Christian is a grateful Christian. You see someone who is always complaining about their situation in life. It's always, "Woe is me." They always feel like they've gotten a raw deal. They are never grateful for even small blessings. If a person never expresses gratitude, guaranteed that that person is not filled with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul and his friend, Silas, were singing and giving thanks while they were in jail on trumped up charges, after they had been beaten. The reason they were able to do it was because they were filled with the Spirit.

Those who are filled with the Spirit are going to be worshipping Christians, they are going to be grateful Christians and they are going to be relationship-building Christians.

Ephesians 5:21

²¹ Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Spirit-filled Christians are the opposite of “me-first” people. They are the opposite of “You must serve me. You must meet my needs.” How about how I feel, what my opinions are? Spirit-filled Christians are always looking for ways to promote the interests of others, to serve others in their home, in their marriages, with their friends, in their workplaces. How can I help you? How can I encourage you? How can I meet your needs in the larger community?

But as I said, there are two aspects to the filling with the Spirit. The first is purifying and the second is empowering. It’s this emphasis on empowering that the Gospel writer, Luke, draws our attention to in the Gospel of Luke and in the Book of Acts.

Filling with the Spirit in Luke

In the Gospel of Luke, Luke reminds us that every aspect of Jesus Christ’s life was lived in dependence upon and by the filling of the Holy Spirit. You remember that Christ is not Jesus’ last name. No one sent him a letter that began: Dear Mr. Christ, we have a credit

card offer that we know you'll be interested in. Christ was the title that was given to the person who was anointed by the Holy Spirit. That's what it means to be the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is the One uniquely filled with the Spirit and who will usher in the age of the Spirit. Everything in Christ, the Anointed One, the Spirit filled one's life was done in dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus carried out his ministry. Here's what we read:

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

And Jesus says that the Spirit of God was given to him for four purposes: to preach, to deliver people, to heal and to work justice. The Spirit of God was given to Jesus to preach powerfully.

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

The Spirit of God was given to Jesus to deliver people from demonic oppression and from all that oppresses, social structures, traditions, superstitions, fears, prejudices, emotional wounds.

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free

The Spirit of God was given to Jesus to heal people.

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free

And the Spirit of God was given to Jesus to work justice

Luke 4:19

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

The year of the Lord's favor was a reference to the Old Testament Year of Jubilee in which all debts would be cancelled and the land would be given back to the poor. So, we see in Jesus' ministry anointed preaching, deliverance, healing, and activities of justice. How did he do that? Through the filling with the Holy Spirit.

Where does this leave you and me? Friend, if you consider yourself to be a Christian, which means that at some point in your life the Holy Spirit entered you and made you born again; he gave you the gift of spiritual life. If you consider yourself to be a Christian, do you believe that you have as much of the Holy Spirit as you need?

Let me put it a little differently. If you consider yourself a Christian, if you've received God's Spirit into your life, do you believe that you have as much of the Holy Spirit as God wants you to have? Almost every Christian that I've ever met would answer no to these two questions. I certainly would.

You say, “Rich, I don’t have as much of the Holy Spirit as I need. I need more. Rich, I don’t have as much of the Holy Spirit as God wants me to have. I want more.” How can we have more of the Holy Spirit?

Classes – Here at Vineyard Columbus we have created environments beyond weekend services where you can learn about and experience more of the Holy Spirit.

Meeting God 301, Thursday, Feb. 9 @ 6:30-9:30pm

Meeting God 304, Wednesday, Feb. 22 @ 6:30-8:30pm

Meeting God 302, Sunday, Feb. 26 @ 2:30-4:30pm

How can we have more of the Spirit? The Bible says,

James 4:2b

You do not have because you do not ask God.

Throughout scripture, we’re told that especially regarding the Holy Spirit we need to ask God for more! Jesus says this in Luke 11:13

Luke 11:13

¹³ 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 the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Will you ask God for more of the Holy Spirit? Will you ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit to overflowing? Will you ask God to drench you, to overwhelm you, to take control of you, to purify you, to empower you, to fill you to overflowing with his Spirit?

Let's Stand.

Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

What Does it Mean to be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

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Spiritual but Not Religious?

Ephesians 5:18-21; Luke 4:18-19

- I. Experiencing the Spirit

- II. Taming the Spirit

- III. Filling with the Spirit
 - A. Filling with the Spirit in Paul

 - B. Filling with the Spirit in Luke