

“How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit”

Dr. Bill Bright

1. Why is the Average Christian Not Filled with the Spirit?

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

1. A lack of knowledge
2. Unbelief

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

Romans 7:15-24. Paul describes the predicament of the worldly Christian. *“I don’t understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, and what I hate I do. What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

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

Not yielded to God the worldly believer is usually miserable – more so even than a non-Christian. He is in a period of stunted growth because he is not confessing and repenting of his sins and Satan has succeeded in influencing and controlling him, through his worldly nature. See 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

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

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

As a result, he becomes increasingly confused and frustrated and does not know what to do about it. He does not know how to live by faith, instead he lives by feeling. He tries rather than trusts. The only one who can help him is the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life is a miraculous supernatural life. Christianity is not what you do for God, but what He does for you! When you are filled with the Spirit, Christ lives His supernatural work through you.

“The Holy Spirit; Activating God’s Power in Your Life.”

Dr. Billy Graham; THE HOLY SPIRIT p128-146.

The New Testament teaching on how to be filled with the Holy Spirit can be summarized in three terms: **Understanding - Submission - Walking by faith.**

1. Understanding

We must understand that God has given us His Holy Spirit and that He dwells within us. I may not feel His presence but that does not mean He is absent. It is the fact of His presence we must understand. We accept this fact by faith.

We must understand that God commands us to be filled with the Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**). This is a continual filling. God *wants* to fill us with His Spirit.

We must understand the presence of sin in our lives. Sin is what blocks the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Before we can be filled with the Holy Spirit we must deal honestly with every known sin in our lives.

There is no filling with the Holy Spirit apart from the cleansing of sin and the first step in cleansing from sin is awareness of its presence.

Sin is the great blocker, and the blood of Christ is the great cleanser when applied by repentance and faith.

There are two natures at work in our lives, the old sinful nature that wants us to live for self, and the new spiritual nature that wants us to live for God. Which one will rule over our actions? That is why being filled with the Holy Spirit is so important. Unless the Spirit controls our lives, we will be dominated by the old sinful nature.

It is not easy dealing with the sin in our lives. It may be painful. Pride is often at the root and our pride is wounded when we have to honestly admit before God and men that we are not as good as we thought we were. We must not only know our sin but repent of it.

Sin blinds us spiritually. We are blinded often about the deep awesome depth of sin. We are blind about sin in our own lives.

Confession should be as broad as sin (the little foxes that spoil the vines Songs 2:15). Little sins can destroy our fruitfulness for God; pride, un-forgiveness, jealousy, bitterness, back biting, impatience, unkindness, uncontrolled temper, unclean thoughts, gluttony, laziness, use of our time, use of our money, our lifestyle, or our use or abuse of some gift He has given us, treatment to someone near to us has become cold or indifferent, we have dishonored a parent, or compromised or come into agreement with sin in others. In other words, every sin that we can identify we should bring to God for confession. We can prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in that examination.

The deepest sin of all is our failure to let Christ rule our lives. The most basic question we can ask ourselves is: *Who is ruling my life? self, or Christ?*

“Our lives will always be marked by defeat and discouragement as long as we try to keep “self” at the center of our lives.

It is a question of Lordship. Many believers never really face this issue, yet the New Testament is full of Christ’s demand for our full commitment. *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”* Luke 9:23

God calls us to renounce our plans, and practices and seek His way. He asks us to step off the throne of our lives and let Him rule in every area of everything we are and do. *“and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”* 2 Cor 5:15

So, we need to understand:

- The Holy Spirit is in us and God wants our lives to be controlled by Him
- The depth and width of our sin in all its dimensions, which blocks the Holy Spirit
- Who is controlling our lives – we or Christ?

Only when we understand these matters can we move to the second step.

2. Submission

Submission: renounce our own way and seek above all else to submit to Christ as Lord and be ruled by Him in every area of our lives.

The essence of sin is self-will - placing ourselves at the center of our lives instead of Christ. The way to be filled - controlled and dominated – by the Spirit is to place Christ at the center of our lives instead of self. This only happens when we submit to Him – allow Him to be Lord of our lives.

How does submission become a reality in our lives?

1. **Confession and Repentance.** We move beyond understanding the depth of our sin to confess it to God and repent of it. Many people know they are sinners and can tell you what sins, are a problem for them. They may even feel sorry for them. But there is never any change because they have never confessed their sins
 - a. Confession is acknowledgement of sin. **1 John 1:9, Mark 7:15-23**
 - b. To repent is to renounce sin, a complete and total change of mind. **Revelation 2:5**

Confession and repentance are getting rid of everything that hinders God's control over our lives. **Galatians 5:24-25.**

If I have been guilty of evil thoughts, I renounce them when I repent of them and determine by God's grace to fill **my mind with things that honor Him.**

2. **Yield ourselves to God and His will. Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1.**

Yielding involves placing ourselves totally and completely into the hands of God in complete submission to His will for our lives.

The fullest meaning of the word yield is “to place yourself at the disposal of someone.”

Romans 12:1 is a sacrifice. We must hold nothing back. Our surrender – our submission and yielding – must be total. It's a surrender without any conditions attached.

Surrender – a definite and conscious act on our part in obedience to the word of God. It should occur at the time of our conversion, but for many people it may be a crisis even that comes after conversion. We may not have understood fully what it means to follow Christ as Lord, or we have resisted, but later we begin to see that Jesus Christ calls us to not simply believe in Him but to follow Him without reserve as His disciples.

The Holy Spirit may test us many times to see if we really mean business. He wants us to be willing to surrender. We must be open to everything He wants to do in our lives. **Romans 6 & 7, 2 Corinthians 3:18.**

Pray that God will take possession of our lives totally and completely. Pray to be emptied of self-love, self-will, self-ambition and be placed completely at His disposal.

"Therefore, shake off your complacency and repent. See, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone listens to My voice and opens the door, I will go into his house and dine with him and he with Me" Revelation 3:19-20.

3. **Faith:**

Learn the secret of walking in faith. When we are yielded to God and His will, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit controls and dominates us. Now we are to act on that truth and walk or live with full assurance that God has already filled us, and we are under His control and power.

Likewise reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:11

Dr. Storr *"We are simply to reckon, not to pretend it but to realize it. It is a fact. And we have to lay hold of it. We have to meditate on these truths until we believe and grasp them firmly."*

Can a married woman live as though she were still single? Supposedly she can. But let her feel the ring on her fourth finger left hand and she is reminded of the symbol of identification with her husband.

Our minds are to so grasp the fact and the significance of our death and resurrection with Christ that a return to the old life is unthinkable.

The Holy Spirit did not come to make us Holy Spirit conscious but Christ conscious. So, when we say we are filled with the Spirit, it means that every known sin and hindrance is out of the way and we can claim by faith we are filled.

Filling of the Spirit is fact, not feeling. Filling of the Spirit does not mean we are perfect and without sin. It means we are controlled by the Spirit, but sin is lurking round the corner, ready to lunge at the first opportunity. The fact is that we may not be faultless but in God's eyes, through the work of the indwelling Christ we may be blameless.

The filling of the Holy Spirit should not be a once for all event, but a continuous reality every day of our lives. It is a process. We must surrender to Him daily. Ephesians 5:18, be filled with the Spirit means to keep on being filled.

He can only fill those who wish to be emptied of self and yielded to Him. If we sin, we need to confess and repent so He can fill us again. Walk in faith that He is continually filling us as we submit to Him.

Each day walk in obedience to His Word.