

“How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit”

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Waterglass Filled to Overflowing - "Be filled with the Spirit." - Ephesians 5:18 - 123RF
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"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

This lesson provides practical, scriptural steps pastors, teachers, and Christian workers can take to become filled (and refilled) with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministry.

Consider: Why is it important for effective ministry to others for believers in Christ to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Is being filled with the Holy Spirit a one-time event, or a repeated, continual action?

The scripture quotations in this article are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless noted otherwise ([Ref. 1](#)).

1. The gift of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God's gift to us.

God has already given us the gift of the Holy Spirit when we first believed in Christ. The Apostle Peter spoke about this on Pentecost. After Peter's Pentecost sermon ([Acts 2:14-36](#)), the people were "cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" ([Acts 2:37](#)). Peter replied to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 2:38](#)).

God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who put their faith and trust in God's Son, Jesus Christ. God gives us the Holy Spirit:

- to be with us forever ([John 14:16](#))
- to teach us ([John 14:26](#))
- to empower us to witness effectively for Christ locally and throughout the world ([Acts 1:8](#))
- to build up the body of Christ through a variety of ministries.*

* Example ministries include preaching, teaching, healing, contributing generously, singing songs, and waiting on tables. References: [1 Corinthians 12:28](#), [Ephesians 4:11-12](#), [Romans 12:6-8](#), [Ephesians 5:18-19](#), [Acts 6:2-3](#).

2. The indwelling Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwells us.

When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit indwells us. The Holy Spirit comes and lives inside us.

- a. On the evening before his death, Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit of

truth "lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit's "will be in you" (indwelling) was fulfilled beginning at Pentecost and is equally fulfilled when people believe in Christ today.

b. The Apostle Paul wrote that the mystery which was hidden for ages God had made known then among the Gentiles "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27). The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit was for all people -- Jews and Gentiles -- who put their faith in Christ (Acts 10:44-45).

c. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in us (1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT).

3. The infilling of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit fills us and continually refills us.

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

Paul's instruction to the Christians at Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1) was that they *be continually being filled* with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The Greek verb for "be filled" is *pléroó* (pronounced *play-ro'-o*) (Ref. 2). *Pléroó* is in the Greek present tense which is a *continued, ongoing, repeated action over time*, not a one-time ("one and done") event in the past (Ref. 3, Ref. 4). The instruction, "be filled [*continually, repeatedly*]," is second person plural ("you all") (Ref. 3) addressed to the Ephesian church as a group and to all who are believers in Christ today.

Why does Paul instruct us to be continually filled (and refilled) with the Holy Spirit?

Since the Holy Spirit already indwells us (believers in Christ), why then does Paul instruct us to be filled [*continually, repeatedly*] with the Spirit?

Perhaps you will have different thoughts, but here are the thoughts that came to my mind in answer to this question:

a. Spiritual Renewal from Spiritual Depletion

(1). I am a "leaky" vessel. Perhaps you are, too.

(2). Our human bodies and our automobiles (motorcycles, etc.) need repeated food and fuel to run. Similarly, when our spiritual energy becomes depleted through continually ministering to others, we need to take time, and prayerfully seek to be spiritually refilled and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

b. Preparation and Empowerment for Ministry

This is the most important part of this "lesson." When we are ministering as a preacher, teacher, an elder or deacon, or in any role as a representative of Christ, we need to be clean (fully confessed) vessels and channels for the flow of God's Holy Spirit power to others. We need to be yielded completely to God's will and guidance. We need to be filled and refilled with God's Holy Spirit so God's power for ministry flows through us to others.

Let me give some examples where praying to be filled (or refilled) with the Holy Spirit is scriptural and wise preparation for effective ministry:

- Elders preparing to pray for and anoint others in a healing service (James 5:14)
- Evangelism teams preparing to go into the local community and the world to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8, Acts 13:2-3)
- Pastors preparing to preach sermons (Romans 10:14-15)
- Church school teachers preparing to teach lessons (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)
- Mission teams preparing to help the less fortunate and engage in construction ministries (Matthew 10:42)
- Musicians preparing to play or sing for worship services to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:18-19)

4. How to be filled with the Holy Spirit

This section respectfully suggests three scriptural steps you can go through to become filled (or refilled) with God's Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministry. Before you begin your worship service, evangelistic outreach event, or daily mission work (or other ministry), pray through these steps beforehand. You can pray either in private as individuals or together with your Christian ministry team members.

Confess - Yield - Ask

a. Confess

Confess your sins to God. In prayer, silently ask God to bring to your mind any unconfessed sins in your life. Take plenty of time to do this (10 or 15 minutes is better than 30 seconds). Tell God you are sorry for your sins. Thank God for forgiving you all your sins through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus.

Don't keep revisiting past sins that you have already confessed to God. In Christ, God has already forgiven your sins, and God remembers them "no more." (References: Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12, Micah 7:19 ESV).

b. Yield

"Submit yourselves, then, to God." (James 4:7)

Tell God, in prayer, that you yield your will, and your entire self to his direction and control. Ask God to direct you, and to reveal his will to you during the ministry event that you are about to commence. Ask God to help you and your team speak and act totally in accordance with his will, not your own. (Reference: 1 John 5:14-15).

Recall that Jesus, before he completed his great sacrificial work (his voluntary death for us), had prayed to his Father, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Reference: Luke 22:42).

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c. Ask

Peter and John and the other apostles and believers prayed. "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30). "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:31).

In prayer, ask God to fill you (or refill you) and your team members with the Holy Spirit. Ask God to enable the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through you and your team members for the specific ministry (such as a worship service or outreach event) you are about to begin. God will honor your request and will fill you with the Holy Spirit. Through the filling of the Holy Spirit, God will empower you for the purpose of effective ministry to others. God will help you know what to say and what to do as you minister to others in Jesus' name.

5. Step Out in Faith

After these steps (confess - yield - ask), step out in faith. Listen to God leading you, and then speak and act in the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit that God has given you.

Apply. Confess your sins to God. Yield your will and yourself completely to God's will. Ask God to fill you (or refill you) with the Holy Spirit to empower you in your ministry to others in Jesus' name.

References

1. <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/>
2. <https://biblehub.com/greek/4137.htm>
3. <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/ephesians/5-18.htm>
4. <https://ezraproject.com/greek-tenses-explained/>