

# Being Filled with the Spirit

Acts 1:6-8

(03ReimaginingChurch)

*<sup>6</sup> Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"  
<sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)*

Few years ago, my oldest grandson, Mason, was anticipating his fourth birthday. If you asked him, "What do you want for your birthday?" his immediate response: "I want to be four!" He is very mature; everyone in our family knows where he gets his wisdom from (from Marilyn). Toys, things, clothes, parties - he knows all those things are temporary; but "four" stays; once you're four you can't go back to three. So being four is the main thing! At four, he already knew the importance of keeping the main thing the main thing. A wise young man!

**The sad part is that as we get older we often forget what the main thing really is...**

Frank Laubach was a missionary to the Philippines in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when his life fell apart; today he's the only missionary to ever appear on a U.S. postage stamp

Three of his children died of malaria; he had to separate from his wife and remaining son for health reasons. Alone, depressed and discouraged...he met God. He discovered it was possible to live in intimate communion with God through the Holy Spirit; his world and a part of this world changed. Laubach is best known today for his "*Each One Teach One*" literacy program (now known as *ProLiteracy Worldwide*) that has taught millions of people to read in over 34 developing countries. (He got this process from Jesus' disciple-making process).

But what he himself wrote, is a powerful reminder of the "main thing"

*"Clearly my job is to live, wrapped in God, trembling to His thoughts, burning with His passion. And that is the best gift that you can give..."*

*"I look at this page, and it is not red hot as my soul is now... It is black ink. It ought to be written with the red ribbon. You will not see the tears that are falling on this typewriter -- tears of a boundless joy broken loose."*

*"As for me, I had never lived. I was half-dead; I was a rotting tree... until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty, resolved and re-resolved that I would find God's will, and I would do that will, though every fiber in me said, 'No.' And I would win the battle in my thoughts. It is as though some artesian well had been struck in my soul, and strength came forth. I do not claim success, even for a day, yet, in my mind -- not complete success all day, but some days are close to success. And every day is tingling with the joy of a glorious discovery."*

Anyone interested in living a life like that? Scripture calls it *“being filled with the Spirit.”* It’s the story of how the Holy Spirit is unleashed in our lives.

How did that happen in Frank Laubach’s life? Frank says by *“Keeping God in mind for at least one second of every minute of every day”* (*The Game with Minutes*).

I challenge you to begin each day asking God to release His Spirit into your life. Long ago, Jesus promised, *“Ask and you will receive...”* Now he says, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...”*

**Acts 1:6-8 is the thesis statement and outline for the book of Acts and the building of Christ’s church.**

It begins with the churches in Jerusalem becoming his witnesses... The disciples know this moment is the major turning point for everything: *Is now the time to restore the kingdom?* I.e., is now the time to overthrow Rome? How about we march against Caesar? Can we start the movement now? What do you want us to do? Jesus’ response: *“Don’t do anything. Don’t leave Jerusalem. Just wait...in my time...in my way...”*

After the stoning of Stephen in **Acts 8**, it says the followers of Jesus were scattered into the world because of persecution in Judea and Samaria. Then after the commissioning of Paul, the church spreads to the whole world. **When the Holy Spirit comes (Acts 2), the wait is over. The adventure begins!**

## WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**The Holy Spirit, for many, even for seasoned believers, is confusing. We confess...**with the Heidelberg Catechism (Q/A 53) *“He, as well as the Father and the Son, is eternal God. He has been given to me personally, so that, by true faith, he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings, comforts me, and remains with me forever.”* That is a great summary...but this morning, let’s dig a bit deeper into the Scripture...

**So let’s start in the beginning Genesis 1:2** - *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.”*

Note the Spirit was there in the beginning; he wasn’t **created**; he’s **eternal**; he is fully **God**. This says the Spirit is not an impersonal force; He is not a vapor; he’s not a ghost; he is not an afterthought in the Trinity.

So many (most) of us already know him better than we think. If you know God - our wise, loving, gracious God - then you know the Spirit. If you have an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus - you already know His Spirit.

Part of our struggle is that we have mental images of God as **Father**; we think of Jesus as our rabbi/**teacher**, Savior, and Lord (he was a human being like us). Scripture also provides some images for the Spirit: **counselor**/ advocate (**John 14:26**), **teacher** (**John 14:26**), or **guide** (**John 16:13**).

How many have ever had a (trail, tour) guide who helped them avoid certain pitfalls and pointed out sights we’d otherwise miss (show of hands)? We know that picture... How

many have had a teacher who has impacted them positively (show of hands)? We know that picture. How many have seen a counselor (therapist) because they were wacked out (show of hands 😊) and have experienced listening, support, and encouragement. We know this picture too.

So the Spirit is intimately involved in creation - especially in the creation of life.

The Hebrew (OT) word for "Spirit" is "**ruach**." The Greek (NT) word is "**pneuma**." One of their primary meanings is "wind." We know something about "wind." It's **powerful**; it packs a tremendous, yet **mysterious**, force. (We just watched Laura, with winds of over 150 miles per hours, devastate everything in sight). You can feel the wind (so you know it exists), but you can't see it or you certainly can't control it. It's tremendous power that can be used for good (e.g. wind power) or destruction (tornados and hurricanes).

**John 3:8** - *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear it's sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

Since the Spirit is like the wind (powerful and mysterious) and can't be manipulated or controlled, we need to think about the Spirit humbly...

**Isaiah 40:13** - *"Who has understood the [Spirit] of the Lord? Or instructed him as His counselor?"*

But while the Spirit may be mysterious and powerful, we do not need to be **afraid**.

## WHAT DOES HE DO?

**Let's jump to Psalm 104:29-30** - *"When you hide your face they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust. When you send your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth."*

The words for "Spirit" are also translated as "**breath**" (i.e., the presence of life). This is underscored in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (**37f**) where the bones come together and are fleshed out but have no breath...so God calls Ezekiel to prophesy.

Then God explains, "This is a picture of what will happen with my people"

Then God promises, *"I will put my Spirit within you, and you will live"* (**37:14**). The primary sign of the Spirit's presence is **life**. When the Spirit is present... People are awakened, empowered, energized, renewed and inspired. A "spirited person" is one in whom life and vitality flow freely

We were not designed to do life apart from the Spirit.

Story is told of a couple going door to door in "Evangelism Explosion" calling using the question, "Would you like to know how to receive eternal life?" A woman came to the door - screaming kid in one hand, a vacuum in the other, more screaming kids running through the messy house and jumping on the furniture. They asked the question - *"Would you like to know how to receive eternal life..."* She said, *"Frankly, I don't think I could stand it..."*

For most people, simply stretching out this life is not their idea of paradise. So understand, the “life” the Spirit brings is not just about quantity (more), it is also qualitatively different. The Holy Spirit brings “Life” as God originally designed it to be.

**In Exodus 31:2**, God tells Moses to call Bezalel - *“I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge of all kinds of crafts...”* The Spirit is gifting Bezalel to assist others in making creations of gold and silver and bronze, the Art of the Covenant, and the Tabernacle.

Notice the Spirit didn’t (and doesn’t) give gifts for personal gratification but to **enrich** the whole **community**. The Spirit’s gifts are always for the edification of the community.

**In Judges 3:9-10**, Israel needs a leader - *“When they cried out to the Lord, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who saved them. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him so he became Israel’s judge...”*

Throughout the Old Testament we read phrases of the Spirit filling people like *coming upon them, resting on them, poured out on them, placed on them, entering into them, catching them up*. (All are attempts to express the inexpressible).

The Spirit of God is giving us capacities beyond our normal limitations, skill beyond our abilities, wisdom beyond human strength - never for our glorification, always for the building up his community.

**Then Joel prophesies about a day when every believer will have the Spirit:**

**Joel 2:28** - *“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men will see visions...I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”*

**Poured** (not sprinkled)!; Don’t miss that! No holding back; no temporary measures; no select few; Everyone - men and women; young and old. Lit., the Spirit will **flow** like a **flood** - like a deluge of water on a barren, drought-stricken land. This is a picture Joel’s readers could relate to.

This is what Jesus means by “You will be baptized.”

## **WHAT IS “THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?”**

**This phrase is used only in NT and only seven times: once in each gospel, twice in Acts; once by Paul to the Corinthians.**

**In Acts 11:16**, Luke quotes Jesus’ statement in the Gospels; he contrasts the **Holy Spirit** baptism to the baptism of **John**. John baptized with water; Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John’s baptism was for the forgiveness of sins; Jesus’ baptism is about the entrance into a new, transformed life. It is empowered by, and requires, the Spirit.

Jesus picks up on the “water” picture - you’ll be poured upon, drenched, immersed in the Spirit

In **Acts 1:5**, Jesus said to His followers, “*You will be baptized in the Spirit...in Jerusalem...in a few days.*” And it happened...just as Jesus said it would. Remember the wind (*pneuma*) and the (tongues of) fire Jesus mentioned...

In **Acts 2:17**, Peter quotes Joel as he reminds his listeners that what they are experiencing is the fulfillment of Joel (and Jesus’) prophecy

In **1 Corinthians 12:13**, Paul is writing the Church about our **unity** in the **Spirit**: “*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one spirit to drink.*” Paul uses another liquid metaphor here: We’re only to drink of (i.e. to be filled up with) the one Spirit.

**Sometimes people use this phrase, “baptism of the Spirit,” differently.** Some use it to refer to a dramatic encounter; a special gifting... Some say there is a two-step process - first you become a Christ follower, then (after a time), you are baptized in the Spirit. But there is absolutely no evidence of that process in Scripture - anywhere; the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is always a reference to the pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost.

## **BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT**

**Luke** uses the phrase “to be filled with the Spirit.” in Acts

**Acts 6:3, 5** - (Selection of first “Deacons”) “*Brothers, chose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.*”

**Acts 7:55** - “*But, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father.*”

**Acts 4:8** - [Peter is boldly proclaiming the gospel] “*Then, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...*”

**Luke is not saying these Christ-followers didn't have the Spirit...and now they do.** The phrase doesn’t mean the Spirit is this vapor or liquid you can fill a glass with; the Spirit is not a force or a substance, the Spirit is a person - a person we can, must have, a relationship with.

“*To be full of the Spirit*” is a statement of **total surrender** to His Spirit - Christ the King - allowing the Spirit control of my thoughts, my perceptions, and my actions. It’s what happens when my normal tendencies towards anger, narcissism, and deceitfulness are replaced by the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, generosity). It’s what happens when we surrender to the Spirit - to live fully in the kingdom of God. It’s the full and active pursuit of the pearl of great price

Just like we’ve heard people say “You’re full of it;” here, the “it” is the Spirit.

**So here is the challenge so we can be filled with the Spirit as Jesus commands.** In order to fill a vessel with something, it must first be **emptied**. We need to empty ourselves of everything that prevents the Spirit from filling us. Things like busyness, noise,

strongholds, our personal agendas and opinions, withholding forgiveness, bitterness, etc.

Then we need to **fill** the vessel with the **Spirit**... Time in **silence** to hear the voice of God; time in **solitude** to feel the gentle breeze of the Spirit; time in the **Word**; time on our **knees**; time focused on God... until we know Him, love Him, and trust Him.

Or as Frank Laubach suggested “*Keeping God in mind for at least one second of every minute of every day.*” Or asking God **every day** when we get up, “God, fill me with Your Spirit”

Let's focus together on the **main** thing - keeping the **main** thing the **main** thing.