



A 14-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY

14 DAYS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fill Me, Holy Spirit

The Extraordinary Adventure of the Spirit-Filled Life

BY TREY KENT

READ • REFLECT • PRAY

FILL ME, HOLY SPIRIT

Fourteen Days of Seeking

The Extraordinary Adventure of the Spirit-Filled Life

01 Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

03 Our Great Need

05 A Pentecost for You

07 Get the Real, Not the Counterfeit

09 Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?

11 Filled Again for Ministry

13 Saints, Sufferings, and the Power of the Spirit

02 Rivers of Living Water

04 Ask to be Filled with the Holy Spirit

06 A Pentecost for the Unlikely

08 Don't Become Too Narrow and Miss A Move of God

10 Filled for Ministry

12 The Holy Spirit and Your Destiny in God

14 Paul and the Power to Change the World

THE INVITATION

Be filled with the Spirit. Ask the Father. Receive. Be empowered to act.

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

When hope is gone, there is still hope. Hope is a person. His name is Jesus, and He has a future and a hope for all His people! He has a gift for each and every believer that will result in revival for all who will receive.

The great hope for a revived church—a church passionately in love with Jesus...a church fulfilling her God-ordained purpose...a church reaching the world for Christ—is found in one simple command and one simple promise. This was the source of the revolution that fueled the New Testament Church.

The simple command: Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). “This command describes a regular pattern of life rather than a onetime event” (ESV Study Bible).

The simple promise: Your Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11:13).

The distinguishing mark of the revived church is a church filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit!

The book of Acts is a book about the revolutionary work of the Holy Spirit! The before and after picture of the disciples and early believers is astounding. Before, they were fearful. Carnal. Discouraged. Purposeless.

Afterward, they were faith-filled. Holy. Awakened. On fire.

The difference maker is the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said He would not leave us as orphans, but would give us another comforter—a helper sent from Heaven—to empower us to turn the world upside down (John 14, John 16, and Acts 1:8).

The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people. - A. W. Tozer Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a special work of grace designed for a few exceptional believers, but is the right and heritage of every born-again child of God. Blood-bought saints are distinguished from the world by one simple thing: We are filled with the Holy Spirit! (Eph. 5:18, Romans 8:9). If you are filled with the Spirit of God, then you are a true believer. If you are not filled with the Spirit of God, then, you are an unbeliever. There is no middle ground.

How do so many, you may ask, who are supposedly saved and filled with the Holy Spirit live such worldly and passionless lives? The answer is simple and clear—the church is at her worst when she is walking in and being ruled by the flesh. The church is at her best when she is walking in and being ruled by the Holy Spirit.

WHAT IS THE KEY DIFFERENCE?

Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind. We are useless. - Charles Spurgeon

ASK...THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD IGNITE A FIRE IN YOU LIKE THE BOOK OF ACTS!

Rivers of Living Water

The Holy Spirit never fills a believer in order to leave them the same. The Holy Spirit enters a man or woman, boy or girl, in order to fill them with the life of God, passion for Jesus, and giftings to bring lasting change to people in the world.

The Bible is clear that when we are saved, we receive the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

The Bible is clear that we are to be filled and empowered by the Spirit over and over again (Eph. 5:18).

The book of Acts clearly shows that the disciples were repeatedly filled with the Holy Spirit!

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. - Acts 2:4

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders," - Acts 4:8

"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." - Acts 4:31

Why have we not received the living water of the Spirit on a daily, moment by moment basis? What awaits us when we do? On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. - John 7:37-39

Rivers of living water flowing out of our lives is what awaits us! A refreshed life awaits us. An empowered life awaits us. A life that overflows Jesus to the lost world awaits us!

In my experience, take the Holy Spirit out of the equation of your life and it spells boring. Add it into the equation of your life and you never know where you are going to go, what you are going to do, or who you are going to meet.

- Mark Batterson

ASK...THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FILL YOU AND OVERFLOW THROUGH YOU TODAY!

Our Great Need

SCRIPTURE

We are in an unprecedented season of need...need for the Holy Spirit to be poured out afresh and anew. Some will say, "He was given at Pentecost and we received the Spirit at our conversion, why do we need a fresh outpouring? That's a question for God to answer. He's the one who gave us a command: Be filled continually with the Spirit. And, He gave us a promise: Ask me for the best gift and I'll give you the Holy Spirit. God further verifies His desire to fill us over and over again in the book of Acts (noted above) where He filled the same disciples repeatedly with the Holy Spirit. Does it seem redundant to receive a fresh filling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit while we live in a world filled with evil, worldliness, ungodliness, and selfish pride?

To the degree we as the church neglect this simple command: "Be filled with the Spirit over and over again," and this simple promise: "Ask and you will be given the Holy Spirit,"—we will continue to be the carnal, lukewarm, half-hearted "church" that looks more like the world than Jesus and makes little to no difference in the people around us.

To the degree that we as the church obey this simple command: "Be filled with the Holy Spirit" and believe this simple promise: "I will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask"—we will become a book of Acts kind of church, fulfilling the great commission everywhere we go.

It is futile for us to try to serve God without the power of the Holy Spirit. Talent, training, and experience cannot take the place of the power of the Spirit. - Warren W. Wiersbe

We can't live on yesterday's bread. We cannot survive on yesterday's filling. We must get before the Lord and wait, confess, ask, receive, and be empowered to act!

This is our finest hour!

ASK GOD TO FORGIVE YOU FOR TRYING TO SERVE HIM WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER!

Ask to be Filled with the Holy Spirit

When we pray for the Spirit's help... we will simply fall down at the Lord's feet in our weakness. There we will find the victory and power that comes from His love. - Andrew Murray

WHAT TO DO?

1. Get Before the Lord
2. Wait
3. Confess all known sin
4. Ask to be filled with the Spirit
5. Receive
6. Be empowered to act
7. Repeat

HOW WILL I KNOW I HAVE BEEN FILLED?

AW Tozer said, "Every person in the Bible that was filled with the Holy Spirit, knew they were filled."

In other words, there are clear signs that you've been filled with the Holy Spirit:

First, you have a deeper love for Jesus and a desire to see Him exalted (The Spirit exalts Jesus).

Second, you are empowered to be Jesus' witnesses wherever you go.

Third, you have more passionate love for the Word of God.

Fourth, you are overflowing with love for people, both lost and saved.

Also, over time you can expect to see clear evidence of the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit working in and through your life.

The clearest sign is empowerment. You are empowered to follow God. You hate sin and you love Jesus. You are fueled with zealous love for Jesus and all that He loves. You hunger and thirst for righteousness.

The command:

be filled with the Spirit! (Ephesians 5:18)

The promise:

the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:13)

PRAY / RESPOND

ASK...GOD TO FILL YOU AS YOU PRAY THROUGH THE STEPS ABOVE!

A Pentecost for You

Jesus told the disciples to go pray until they were endued with power from on high! Who could have known all that God had in store for His people as those 10 days and nights of prayer came to a close. Jesus told these same disciples that it was better if He left and sent the comforter to be with them always. This had to blow the minds of these confused, unsure followers of Jesus! Jesus had more for them, more than they could imagine, on the other side of that 10 day prayer meeting. It's difficult to over emphasize the impact of God pouring His Spirit into the hearts of His children. They had been with Jesus; now, He would be in them by the Holy Spirit. God inside of man, who could imagine such blessing?

In Acts 1:8 Jesus gave a clear and directional prophesy that the outpouring of the Spirit and the spread of the gospel (they always go together), would begin in Jerusalem, move outward to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth!

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The astounding part of this plan and prophesy is that we see a Pentecost of sorts in each of these areas. We obviously see the Pentecost in Acts 2 in Jerusalem, then we see "mini" Pentecosts in Judea, Samaria, and then at the ends of the earth. The story of the spread of the gospel in the book of Acts is the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon God's people.

To minimize the Spirit is to minimize the impact and spread of the Gospel. To embrace the work and power of the Spirit will automatically increase the power and precision of Gospel advancement!

JERUSALEM/JUDEA

Pentecost was celebrated by Old Testament Jews 50 days after Passover, originally called the feast of weeks and celebrated the wheat harvest. It later became a joy filled commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Yet God had more for His people than they had ever experienced. The same is true for us. As God's disciples, some 120 men and women at this point, met in the upper room to cry out to God for breakthrough, for "power from on high", God had in mind both the blessing of the church and the reaching of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

PRAY / RESPOND

ASK...GOD TO FORGIVE YOU FOR MINIMIZING THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT. ASK GOD TO MAXIMIZE HIS WORK IN AND THROUGH YOU!

A Pentecost for the Unlikely

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

SCRIPTURE

4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city...Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:1-17

What an unlikely place for the people to be saved and powerfully filled with the Spirit. When a group of Samaritans had “received the Word” the apostles Peter and John were sent so “they might receive the Holy Spirit.” I wonder how many people who have received the Word today still are lacking a powerful and transforming filling with the Spirit.

When this happens, it’s like a transformation from the old to the new. The Spirit ignites fire for God, for His Word, to evangelize, to forgive, to love, to serve, and on and on.

What was the sign the apostles were looking for, a sign that they had been reached? The sign of the gospel taking root in the hearts of the people was a new Pentecost for the Samaritans! Unheard of until that day! May we not only look for this same sign, but may each one of us receive fresh fillings of the Spirit to keep our faith-life with delight, joy, perseverance, and fire!

That’s what occurred in Acts 8. The Jerusalem Pentecost became a Samaritan Pentecost. Before we cover that in more depth, let’s answer this question.

Whom has God sent you to bring Christ to and see filled powerfully with the Holy Spirit?

PRAY / RESPOND

Pray for them today!

If you are being persecuted or are suffering in this season—let those involved be your primary audience to reach with Christ’s love and the Spirit’s power!!!

Pray now for two requests: First, that you will be a mighty evangelist in your current season. Second, pray that the unlikely ones around you will hear the good news of Jesus from your lips and experience a mighty Pentecost!

Get the Real, Not the Counterfeit

But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles[b] performed, he was amazed.

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God,

SCRIPTURE

they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall[c] of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." 24 And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. Acts 8:9-25

Do you see what happened here in Samaria? Every time there's a true move of God (like this one in Samaria where the Spirit is being poured out), there will also be a counterfeit move of the enemy.

God poured out His Spirit upon true believers in Samaria! Peter and John "laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17) Have you ever seen such an occurrence? I have. It's beautiful to be used by the power of God to pray with another believer to be filled powerfully and clearly with the Holy Spirit! Why not pray for one another to be filled afresh and anew with the power of the Spirit?

There's also another work going on in this passage. Simon saw the power of the Spirit but wanted to get it for his own evil plans. The Spirit, through Peter, rebuked Simon the magician and a great warning was given to him and to us! Do not pursue the Holy Spirit for self-centered reasons!

We seek the Holy Spirit so He can reign in us as Lord and can give us His fruit, power, holiness, and gifts

PRAY / RESPOND

Ask....a few brothers or sisters to gather with you and take as much time as needed to put a brother or sister in the middle of the circle and pray for them to be filled with the power of the Spirit!

Don't Become Too Narrow and Miss A Move of God

SCRIPTURE

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the

word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. Acts 10:35-47

The next shocking Pentecost came to the God-fearers. They were gentiles who had adopted some of the Jewish ways and were accepted into the community. This story begins with two miracles occurring virtually simultaneously as the Apostle Peter and a God-fearer named Cornelius were being spoken to by God in order for this new salvation and Pentecost to occur. (see Acts 10:33-35)

Not only was Peter and Cornelius' meeting a miracle—we now see the results God had in mind by bringing these two men together in fellowship. As Peter began preaching, the gentile audience started speaking in tongues. The Spirit fell just as He had fallen originally on the disciples during the Jerusalem Pentecost!

What's the lesson for us? Don't become too narrow, or too religious, that you miss a move of God!

PRAY / RESPOND

Ask...God to do miracles to set you up to share Christ with men and women who seem far from God, but truly are deeply loved by Jesus.

Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. Acts 19:1-10

Paul asked those in Ephesus an astounding question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2) What was Paul asking? Here are a few options:

1. Are you truly saved? Because saved people receive the power of the Spirit

Or

2. Have you had your Pentecost yet? Because Jerusalem had their Pentecost, Samaria had their Pentecost, the God-Fearers had their Pentecost--have you gentiles had your Pentecost?

I believe Paul was asking this question for both these reasons! He was saying—to be a believer you must receive this power of the Spirit to enable you to live the Christian life. And of course He knew that the power of the Spirit had been given to all these other communities—why not the gentiles in Ephesus!

PRAY / RESPOND

Ask...Why not you? What not now? Ask Father God to fill you today so powerfully that you know that you've been filled!

Filled for Ministry

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested[a] on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under

SCRIPTURE

heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them Acts 2:1-14

Let's revisit the Jerusalem Pentecost to learn some of the key reasons God fills believers repeatedly with the Holy Spirit.

The Jerusalem Pentecost occurred after 10 days of night and day prayer by the 120 men and women in the upper room. Read Acts 2:1-4 again. Astounding things occurred that day. That day changed everything for us! God has promised in Joel 2 that the day of Holy Spirit power would endue the church of Jesus Christ! That's what we are contending for in this hour! The noteworthy happenings in that upper room include: all were filled, tongues of fire landed on them, and they spoke in languages they did not know.

That's where the miracle began...but it did not end there. The Jerusalem Pentecost caused a spiritual explosion. Thousands of Jewish pilgrims who came to the city to celebrate the festival ran to the upper room and heard the 120 prayer warriors speaking the wonders of God in a host of languages the speakers had never learned but the hearers understood.

Pentecost is given for ministry. The Holy Spirit is poured out to draw people to God, to fill them with the Holy Spirit, and to cause them to be saved, delivered, and mobilized for Jesus purpose and glory!

PRAY / RESPOND

Ask....God to fill you so powerfully that you overflow Jesus to people around you. Ask Him to do miracles so others will be saved, healed, and delivered!

Filled Again for Ministry

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in

Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus[a] is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.[b] 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men[c] by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were

SCRIPTURE

uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old. Acts 4:1-22

As we saw yesterday, Peter and the other disciples (120 in all) were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of the Jerusalem Pentecost! According to many modern day scholars and teachers, the 120 received all they needed to receive! They received the power of the Spirit!

But, we see in Acts 4:8 that Peter was filled again (only 3 chapters later...maybe a few weeks after the original filling) with the Holy Spirit! Why? Because we are filled for

ministry! Peter was filled for ministry in Acts 2, but God had new ministry for him in Acts 4 and, thankfully, a new filling of the Spirit to empower Peter's upcoming ministry!

This is the greatest news! God truly does not leave us as orphans. He's with us always by the Spirit and fills us again and again so we will be both equipped and empowered for every good work He has planned for us to do!

PRAY / RESPOND

ASK...God to fill you with the Spirit for ministry today! When you are too weak, lean on the Spirit's power and grace.

The Holy Spirit and Your Destiny in God

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists[a] arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:1-7

Have you ever had this thought: My entire future in God is based upon me being filled with the Holy Spirit? Or, to put it another way, my destiny or purpose in God is on the other side of being filled powerfully with the Holy Spirit.

This was true of 7 unknown men who were called upon to serve a social crisis in the early church. The apostles were searching for trustworthy men who could distribute food fairly to the Greek and Jewish widows in Jerusalem. Does that sound like a wonderful ministry assignment? Remember, we must never despise small beginnings, especially in ministry when God opens even a simple door to love Him and serve others.

The astounding part of this Acts 6 passage is that the men chosen had three essential qualities: they were trustworthy, they were filled with the Spirit of God, and they were wise. I would imagine most church boards would normally go with only two qualities: trustworthy and wise men would fill the bill for most modern-day churches. Not for God's church, even those who waited tables were required to be FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. Can you imagine a modern-day group of leaders choosing upcoming leaders based on whether the candidates were filled with the Spirit?

PRAY / RESPOND

Do you want to be used greater for God? Pray today to be a man or woman of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of the wisdom of God.

Saints, Sufferings, and the Power of the Spirit

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

SCRIPTURE

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together[d] at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:51-60

Stephen was "promoted" from table waiter, to preacher, and ultimately to martyr. One key often overlooked in Stephen's life was the consistent mark of the Holy Spirit upon him. He was marked by the power of the Spirit before he was selected to serve the widows, he was filled with the Spirit as he confounded the Jewish leaders, and he was overwhelmed by the Spirit as He displayed Christ's truth and love as he became the first martyr of the new Christian church.

Stephen's death seemed to result from the fact that the Spirit was so powerfully on him that the Jewish leaders could not resist or counter his words and more importantly, they could not overcoerce God's Spirit!

READ IT FOR YOURSELF IN ACTS 6:8-10:

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Being filled with the Spirit is key for you and I to minister powerfully and to suffer well. Stephen was so filled with the Spirit as they stoned him that his face shone with glory and his heart overflowed with forgiveness!

PRAY / RESPOND

Pray today that you will be filled with the Spirit so you can suffer well for and with Jesus!

Paul and the Power to Change the World

SCRIPTURE

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened. Acts 9:10-19

How did Saul of Tarsus go from the persecutor of the church to the writer of 13 books of the New Testament and the one who led in the expansion of the church world-wide?

The secret to Paul's transformation is often overlooked. God spoke to a faithful believer named Ananias to go to this persecutor. Ananias proclaimed to Saul: "The Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:17)

The rage, anger, hatred, and vitriol of Saul was transformed into love, joy, peace, and power as the Holy Spirit filled Saul and made him Paul—a new creature in Christ.

Paul recounts this in Galatians 1: "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;[7 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus."

The Holy Spirit filled Paul, revealing Christ to Him, and empowered him to be a change agent for and through Christ around the world.

PRAY / RESPOND

Pray that Jesus reveals Christ to you and through you by filling you with the Spirit!



THE COMMAND

Be filled with the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 5:18

THE PROMISE

The heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

LUKE 11:13