

10 Things You Should Know about Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

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In an earlier installment of the “10 Things You Should Know” series, we looked at [Ephesians 5:18](#) and what it says about being filled with the Spirit. But here I want to look more closely at the issue as it is found in other portions of God’s Word. I’ve found that the best way to help people understand what it means to be “filled” with the Spirit is to compare and contrast that experience with being “baptized” in the Spirit.

(1) Spirit-baptism is a metaphor that describes our reception of the Holy Spirit at the moment of our conversion to Jesus in faith and repentance. When we believe and are justified, we are, as it were, deluged and engulfed by the Spirit; we are, as it were, immersed in and saturated by the Spirit.

(2) The result of being baptized in the Spirit is that (a) we are made members of the body of Christ, or incorporated into the spiritual organism called the church ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)); and (b) the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us permanently.

(3) Spirit-baptism is therefore instantaneous (i.e., it is not a process), coincident with conversion, universal (i.e., all Christians are recipients), unrepeatable, and permanent.

(4) Spirit-filling is also a metaphor describing our continuous, on-going experience and appropriation of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to come under progressively more intense and intimate influence of the Spirit. Spirit-filling can be forfeited and subsequently experienced yet again, on multiple occasions, throughout the course of the Christian life.

(5) One sense in which a believer may be filled with the Spirit is portrayed in texts that describe people as being “full of the Holy Spirit” as if it were a condition or consistent quality of Christian character; a moral disposition; possessing and reflecting a maturity in Christ. For this, see [Luke 4:1](#); [Acts 6:3,5](#); [7:55](#); [11:24](#); [13:52](#) (lit., “they continued to be full” [imperfect tense]). This is the “ideal” condition of every Christian. It emphasizes the abiding state of being filled.

(6) Another sense in which one may be filled with the Spirit is portrayed in texts that describe people as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” to enable them to fulfill or perform a special task or to equip them for service or ministry.

This may be (a) either life-long; an office or particular ministry - see [Luke 1:15-17](#); [Acts 9:17](#); or, (b) in a spiritual emergency; an immediate and special endowment of power to fulfill an especially important and urgent task. Thus, someone who is already filled with the Spirit may experience a further/additional filling. I.e., no matter “how much” of the Holy Spirit one may have, there’s always room for “more”! See [Acts 4:8,31](#); [13:9](#); [Luke 1:41,67](#). Also, in [Acts 7:55](#) Stephen, though “full of the Holy Spirit”, is again “filled” with the Spirit to prepare him to endure persecution and eventual martyrdom, as well as to “see” the vision of the risen Christ.

(7) There is no indication that these individuals in the texts just cited asked to be filled or empowered; it was a sovereign work of God; as they walked in obedience and made themselves available, God “filled” them in accordance with their need. That isn’t to suggest, however, that it would be inappropriate to pray that God would fill you with the Spirit. Jesus himself referred to the delight that God the Father has in giving “the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” ([Luke 11:13](#)).

(8) In no NT text are we commanded to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. There is no appeal to do something in order to be baptized; no exhortation, no imperative. On the other hand, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit ([Eph. 5:18](#)).

(9) It is possible to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, to experience the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and yet not be filled with the Spirit. We saw this above in the case of Stephen. This may also account for part of the problem faced by the Corinthian believers. They were most definitely baptized in the Spirit ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)), but their immature behavior and competitive approach to the exercise of spiritual gifts suggests that they were undeniably in need of being freshly filled.

(10) To be “full of the Holy Spirit” is to reflect a maturity of character; it is the ideal condition of every believer. To be “filled with the Holy Spirit” is to experience an anointing for power, purity, proclamation, and praise (see [Eph. 5:18](#)).

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