



LIFE WITH GOD:

The Gift

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As you study the book of Acts it's hard to miss the central role of the Holy Spirit. The power behind the "acts" is definitely the Holy Spirit. We can see how God gave us himself through Jesus, then after the resurrection, he's given us himself through the Holy Spirit. It's a gift! Let's look closer at how this works. READ ACTS 8:9-23.

Through this story we can see that the work of the Holy Spirit was *evident*. In fact, it was so obviously powerful that Simon wanted to buy the "abilities" that the apostles had. Simon had been a sorcerer and had made money doing it. But the Holy Spirit is not a type of magic that can be bought or sold!

- 1. What surprises you about this passage in Acts?**
- 2. How is the Holy Spirit different than magic or spells?**

The "filling" of the Holy Spirit can be a tricky topic. Many of us have had different experiences that have changed our views. If you find it confusing or scary, you might be closed off to the work of the Holy Spirit. While this may be for good reasons, the goal is to learn what the Bible says and discover the truth about the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, our misunderstandings can keep us from experiencing the Life with God that is available to us!

Let's consider the statement, "Every person that belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit, but not every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit." Read that again. Have you ever thought about that? What's the difference between having the Holy Spirit and being *filled* with the Holy Spirit? Let's dig into that statement.

FIRST- *Every person that belongs to Christ HAS the Holy Spirit...* Look at these verses:

"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ." (Romans 8:9)

"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." "...By this he meant the Spirit..." (John 7:38-39)

SECOND- *...but not every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit.* Look at Ephesians 5:18. This is a letter written to believers, yet Paul says, "Do not get drunk with wine...instead, be filled with the Spirit..." And it doesn't just happen once. We get filled and we keep getting re-filled! More of the Holy Spirit. We also see this in the early church. They were already believers, yet in Acts 4:31 it says, "the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

3. What do we make of this? What does it mean to be *filled with the Holy Spirit*?

I like the comparison to a pilot light. In a gas appliance like a water heater, there's often a small flame that's always lit. When it's time to heat the water, the gas really comes on and WOOSH!—It becomes a roar of flames! The Holy Spirit is like this. We all have the Holy Spirit in us when we turn to follow Jesus. He is with us and never leaves. Like a pilot light? However, we may not necessarily be *filled* with the Holy Spirit.

There were many occasions where people in the Bible were filled with the Holy Spirit. Some were *longing* to be filled, like the disciples waiting in Acts 2. They were actively waiting and pursuing the Holy Spirit. However, others, like we read about above in Acts 8, were simply *receptive*.

Paul was one who was *hostile* to the Holy Spirit, yet he was quickly converted and filled with the Holy Spirit, and even began to preach! Others are simply *uninformed* and haven't been told about the Holy Spirit. This happened in Acts 19. Paul asks them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" and they replied, "...we've never even heard there was a Holy Spirit." (Acts 19:2). Still others are seen as *unlikely*. You may think that the filling of the Holy Spirit is simply not for you!

4. Take a minute and be honest with yourself. What do you believe about the work of the Holy Spirit? What is your posture? Are you more LONGING, RECEPTIVE, HOSTILE, UNINFORMED, or UNLIKELY? What experiences have shape these feelings?

You may wonder what it's like to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's a great question that's hard to answer because it may be different for everybody. It doesn't always happen the same way. Overall, it feels like.. LOVE. Remember, the Holy Spirit is God with us and God is Love. Romans 5:4 says it this way: "...God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

When people are filled with the Spirit, various things may happen. In Acts, you often see people speaking in different tongues and prophesying. Sometimes people feel a warmth and may shake or tremble. Others may experience great emotion such as joy and laughter—or even weeping at the revelation of God's love. Some have felt a heavy weight that makes it hard to stand. If you feel this you may want to sit or lie down! Just rest in the Lord.

Remember the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self control. These should describe the experience of being filled with the Spirit. Yet many of us a fear about what may happen or feel undeserving. You are God's child and he wants to pour out his gifts on you! The key is to simply ask. Invite him and say, "Come, Holy Spirit." Be filled, and keep being filled. Seek him and keep seeking. Life with God includes being filled with the Holy Spirit, if you're willing!

5. Do you think you are open to being filled by the Holy Spirit? What keeps you from being willing to receive?

6. What is a step you can take to invite the Holy Spirit to fill you?

(This teaching is based on *Alpha Film Series: How Can I Be Filled With the Holy Spirit* by Nicky Gumbel, www.alphausa.org)