

Spirit Filled Life

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[0 : 00] Tonight we're kicking off a new series. We're doing four weeks on the Holy Spirit. And I'm going to teach the first two weeks and Chris Bowditch, our youth pastor, is going to preach the second two.

And it's all going to culminate in that carol service that I mentioned earlier. So make sure you're here for the next four weeks. We're not just preaching on the Holy Spirit because being God, that would take forever.

So what we're doing is really narrowing the focus down to thinking about what it means as Christians to be filled with the Spirit. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit dwells in us?

And what difference should that make in the way that we live each day? So we're not going to be talking about the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Because we talked a lot about that in our Tulip series, the series that we did on salvation.

We're also not going to talk too much about how to avoid sin in your life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Because we talked a lot about that in Galatians and Ephesians as well. What we want to do is really take a positive approach to this series and think, how can I be proactive in my Christian life as a result of being filled with the Spirit?

[1 : 15] So tonight I'm going to be talking about what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. A little general topic to start off with.

And next week we're going to look at what it means to bear fruit as a result of being filled by the Spirit. That's Galatians 5, so we'll be there next week. And then the following two weeks, Chris is going to talk about the gifts of the Spirit.

What it means for each one of us as Christians to receive gifts from the Holy Spirit, to be used in the church, to build the church up. And the following week he's going to be talking from 1 Corinthians 13, which is really the guidebook on how to use your gifts.

And the main sort of principle there being love. So that's how it's going to go. Make sure you're here each week. And make sure you get into a community group. Because we're not going to be talking about the really big contentious theological issues around the Holy Spirit.

But in those groups you can discuss that stuff. We're just narrowing the focus, making it really practical. So make sure you get along to community groups. I'm going to pray for us, and then we'll get started. Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that you have poured out on each and every Christian here tonight.

[2 : 24] Thank you for your Word, which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. I pray now that your Holy Spirit would be at work in each one of us to help us to understand your Word.

And help us to be encouraged to go out and live bold, fruitful lives. For Jesus' sake. Amen. So that's my big idea tonight.

How do we live a Spirit-filled life? What difference does it make to be filled by the Spirit? What kind of thing should we expect from Christians who have been filled by the Spirit?

And I've got a definition of what a Spirit-filled life should look like. So I'm going to say that a Spirit-filled life is marked by boldness and fruitfulness in living out the Great Commission.

Unpack that throughout, and I'm going to say it a hundred times. But let me just say it another time now for you, okay? I'm going to say that a Spirit-filled life is marked by boldness and fruitfulness in living out the Great Commission.

[3 : 34] I wonder if you've ever met a Spirit-filled Christian. I wonder if you've ever met someone and it was just plainly evident from the way that they lived that they were full of the Holy Spirit.

And to stand out as someone who is absolutely in tune with the Spirit in the way that they live their lives. I've met a lot of people like that, and they come in all different shapes and sizes and different personality types.

But this one guy I once met, I haven't seen him for a while, but he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Just a joy about this guy and the way that he went about life.

There wasn't anything particularly extraordinary about him, but he had a joy and a generosity and a love for people that was so evident in the way that he lived. He was bold in his witnessing to people about the Gospel.

He wasn't ashamed of the Gospel. He wasn't afraid of sharing his faith. And he was fruitful, both in seeing people come to faith and just fruitful in the way that he lived his life.

[4 : 48] I wonder if you've ever met someone who's been full of the Holy Spirit. The kinds of Christians that we look up to, the kinds of Christians that we want to emulate, the kinds of Christians that we imagine the apostles to be.

Spirit-filled Christians, bold and fruitful in their faithfulness to God. Before we go any further, maybe I should say a little bit about the Holy Spirit.

You might be here tonight, you're not a Christian, you're a new Christian, and you're not really sure who this Holy Spirit is. And probably for a lot of Christians here tonight, we're a little bit unsure about who the Holy Spirit is.

I mean, we know the Father, don't we? We know the Father. We've prayed to the Father since we were little kids. If you grew up in a Christian home, you can understand a little bit about what a father might be like from your own experience of fathers.

We know how to relate to the Father as a person, as a personal God. And we know about Jesus, don't we? We focus every week quite rightly on Jesus, on his work on the cross, on his resurrection from the dead, on his coming again.

[5 : 58] We know Jesus. We know how to relate to Jesus. But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, at least in my experience, I find it hard to relate to the Holy Spirit. And one of the big reasons this is for each one of us is probably that we misunderstand who the Holy Spirit is.

And we think that the Holy Spirit is kind of like an impersonal force that's kind of around in the ether somewhere, a holy ghost that exists somewhere off in limbo.

But that would be a mistake for us to think that way. The Holy Spirit is a person. The Holy Spirit is a person. He's a personal God.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as he. It's not an it. The Holy Spirit is he. He is the Holy Spirit who inspired the scriptures.

He is the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, as we're going to see. He is the Holy Spirit who, as we heard in Genesis 1, was hovering over the waters at the creation of the world.

[7 : 10] The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Each one of them a person in their own right. And yet part of the one triune God.

So we need to start thinking in those terms. If you've ever thought about the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force, forget that. We need to think about the Holy Spirit as a personal God.

A member of the Trinity. The God whom we worship and love. We also hear in the Bible that the Holy Spirit not only is a personal force, not only at work in creation, not only at work in our redemption, our regeneration and our salvation, but also that the Holy Spirit, when we become Christians, comes to dwell within us.

Just think about that for a second. You might have heard that before, but have you really thought about what that means? If the Holy Spirit is God, our personal God, what does it mean that he dwells within us?

What does it mean that the Holy Spirit lives in us? Romans 8 talks about this quite a bit, actually.

[8 : 30] Let me dial it up. You can look to if you like, but I'll turn there and read it for you. This is what Paul says about the Holy Spirit in Christians. He says, you are not in the flesh.

You are in the Spirit. Since the Spirit of God dwells in you. He dwells in you, lives in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies, also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

If you're a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of erroneous and bad teaching going around today, and it's been going around for a long time, that you may be a Christian, but you may not have received the Spirit yet.

That you might confess Christ, but you need another experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. And quite often, if that happens, you might be given the gift of speaking in tongues. Paul doesn't believe in that teaching.

[9 : 47] The Bible doesn't profess that teaching. Paul says, if you believe in Christ, you have the Spirit dwelling in you. Each one of you, as Christians, has God himself living in you.

And the rest of this series is really going to be unpacking what that means. What difference does that make? What difference does that make? What difference does that make? My fear is that you get around a lot of Christians today, and there isn't a lot of difference in their life from before they were a Christian to afterwards.

If the Spirit dwells in us as a result of our trusting in Christ, there ought to be significant difference in the way that we think, the way that we act, the way that we love, the way that we serve.

So that's what we're going to be talking about during this series. The Holy Spirit is also called the helper or the counselor in Scripture. It's true.

We're going to shine a spotlight on Jesus, and we shouldn't spend too much time thinking about the Holy Spirit because he wants us to be thinking about Jesus. And I think there's a lot of truth to that. The Holy Spirit wants us to be saved and does the work of regenerating our hearts so that we'll praise Jesus forever.

[11 : 36] But I do think that in our culture, perhaps in our church culture, we have started to overlook the Holy Spirit. We have started to stop asking the questions about what kind of gifts the Holy Spirit has given us and how the Holy Spirit might be guiding us.

We forget sometimes that God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit. We forget to ask God to give us the Holy Spirit in greater measure.

So let's get back to my main point. The Spirit-filled life is marked by boldness and fruitfulness in living out the Great Commission.

Do you remember what the Great Commission is? If you're here tonight and you're a Christian, you need to know the Great Commission. This is Jesus' mission for you. Remember, Jesus has died on the cross.

He's risen to new life. We're at the end of the book of Matthew. He's about to ascend to be at the right hand of God, and he's got his disciples there in front of him. Some are doubting.

[12:57] Others are believing. And he says to them, All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. And then he says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all that I've commanded you.

Surely I'll be with you even to the end of the age. That's Jesus' Great Commission to his followers. And it wasn't just then, it's now.

If you call yourself a disciple of Jesus, if you call yourself a Christian, his Great Commission to you, which should become your life mission statement, is that Great Commission to go out into all the world.

It could be overseas. That could be Templestowe. It could be RMIT. But he wants you to go out. He wants you to make disciples of all nations.

And he wants you then, when they confess Christ, to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them all that he has commanded. That's his Great Commission.

[14:10] And I'm saying, if you're living a Spirit-filled life, you should experience boldness and fruitfulness in living out that Great Commission. Boldness in witnessing to the Gospel.

Witnessing to the good news about Jesus. Boldness in sharing Christ with friends, with neighbours. And you should experience fruitfulness.

And by that I mean, you should see people become Christians. I mean, all over the world today, people became Christians. Someone told them the Gospel, and they put their faith in Jesus.

They became Christians. That's fruit. The fruit of sharing the good news. And I think for many of us, we don't do evangelism. We don't share the good news. We don't do the Great Commission, because we're afraid that it just doesn't work.

We have a sneaking suspicion that people just don't become Christians anymore. And maybe we need a new kind of tact.

[15:11] We need a new strategy. We had the Great Commission, and that worked for a few hundred years. But now we need something else. But no, no. Jesus has set it up this way.

That when we speak the good news, the Spirit comes in and works in tandem with what we say. To awaken people's hearts to the Gospel, so that they might come to know Jesus.

It's not your job to make anyone a Christian. It's your job to share the good news. And when you do, the Spirit comes in and regenerates hearts. So it's the Great Commission.

And the disciples received that Great Commission. And then Jesus left them. He ascended to heaven. And they were left there with this Great Commission, not knowing exactly what to do, not knowing exactly how it would work out, perhaps doubting the power of this commission.

And so they're in the same position as us, perhaps. We know the Great Commission. We know that we're meant to share our faith with people. We know that we're meant to love others. We know that we're meant to read God's Word.

[16:23] We know that we're meant to pray. But perhaps we just lack the power. And that's where our reading tonight comes in. It's Acts chapter 1.

I want you to go there. Acts chapter 1. That's page 884.

We've seen the end of Matthew 28. This is the start of the sequel to Luke's Gospel, Acts of the Apostles. And he starts it like this.

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day he was taken up to heaven. That's what we've just seen. After giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, after his suffering, he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. He's given them the Great Commission. Then he said, Wait here in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father.

[17 : 40] This, he said, is what you have heard from me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. So then, so when they come together, they asked him, Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?

He replied, It is not for you to know the times or the periods that the Father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power.

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

He's told them to go out into the world to witness to the good news about Jesus. But then he says, Wait here, and the Holy Spirit will be given to you, and he will give you power, and then you can go out to the world making disciples of all nations, because you will have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to those people.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. It gives power. It gives boldness to share the good news of Christ.

[19 : 02] Every time you open your mouth, you need to know. Every time you open your mouth to share the good news, you're not alone. Jesus says, I will be with you to the end of the age, and his Holy Spirit will be there, present, to work, to work to save souls, regenerate hearts, and fill new people with the Holy Spirit.

Guys, this is our mission. This is our great commission to make disciples of all nations. The problem is that so many of us feel like it's an impossible mission.

For so many of us, that great commission, we hear it in our minds, and we just feel guilty. We feel like, well, we don't have that kind of personality, or we're just not natural evangelists, or we just don't know enough about the Bible, or we don't know enough apologetics, or what if they reject us?

What if our friends leave us? What if no one ever becomes a Christian, and we end up doing nothing? We feel disempowered. We feel guilty.

We feel like we could never live out this great commission. Maybe Jesus just said it to the evangelists. Maybe he just even said it to the disciples, and it wasn't really meant for us. Maybe we should just leave it to the ministers in the church, and the people who have been to theological education, and we should just do nothing.

[20 : 36] I think for many of us, just the distraction of daily life can get in the way of us fulfilling this great commission.

Maybe it's the distraction of things that seem greater to us. Making money, climbing corporate ladders, you know, being in relationships, buying cars, I don't know, the myriad of things that go on in our lives that just seem to be far more important than something that Jesus has told us to do.

For others of us, I think a real barrier to being filled with the Spirit is habitual sin. You know that sin that you just keep struggling with, and struggling with, and you just keep committing, committing, and it's just building up this wall between you and God, and it stops you from being filled with the Spirit.

Paul says in Ephesians 5, don't get drunk on wine, for that's debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. Sin in our life can stand in the way of being filled with the Spirit.

I want to say again that every one of us here has the Spirit. If you call yourself a Christian, if you claim Christ to be your Lord and Savior, everyone here has the Spirit, but Paul's injunction for people to be filled with the Spirit implies, in my mind at least, that you can have the Spirit and not be filled with the Spirit.

[22 : 14] That you can be a Christian and go out throughout your life and never be filled with the Spirit. And that's reflected in the way that you live. Your church life is just reduced to rocking up on a Sunday night.

and leaving after the sermon. Never reading your Bible, never being in prayer, never leading anyone to know Jesus. Sharing your faith.

Those kind of things mark a person who's not full of the Spirit, even though they may have the Spirit dwelling in them. So the obvious question that you should have been asking yourself all this time is, how can I be full of the Spirit?

How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? If the Holy Spirit is God and the Holy Spirit is a personal God, then we can't just command the Spirit to fill us up and expect Him to do that for us.

We can't command God to do anything. But are there things that we can do so that we might be filled with the Spirit? So that therefore we can live empowered lives?

[23 : 30] Lives marked by boldness and fruitfulness in living out the Great Commission. I think there is. I'm going to name three things. There's probably more than this. And I think there are going to be three things that are really going to disappoint you.

They might sound really boring because you've heard it all before. But these three things, if you actually put them into practice, you'll be filled with the Spirit.

You'll be empowered to live out the Great Commission. The first one I want to say is you've got to pray. You've got to pray and ask God to fill you with the Spirit.

Let me read to you Luke chapter 11. Jesus has just been teaching His followers the Lord's Prayer. He said, this is how you should pray.

And He outlines it for them and then He says this about prayer. Luke 11 verse 9. He says, So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you.

[24 : 42] Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened for you. How many of you are doubting that even now as I read it? How many of you will refuse to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit because you just aren't sure if God will come through?

How many of us don't pray in general because we're worried that if God doesn't answer us, if God doesn't give it to us, then God must be a liar?

Let me keep reading. I'll start again. So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you.

Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives. And everyone who searches finds. And everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Is there anyone among you, if your child asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

[25 : 51] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? All you need to do is ask him.

Ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Tell him that you want to be a witness to the world. Tell him that you want a life marked by boldness and fruitfulness and faithfulness and tell him quite rightly that you'll never be able to do it unless you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

And do it every day. Ask and it'll be given to you.

Secondly, I want to say, read your Bible. I need you to pray. I need you to read your Bible. I've mentioned before that this Bible, this word, these pages, that's not just a dead book.

[27 : 02] It is spirit inspired. It's the very words of God. Remember 2 Timothy 3.16? All scripture is God breathed. All scripture is God inspired.

same word for spirit. All scripture comes by the Holy Spirit and is useful for teaching, correction, training in righteousness.

If you want to live a fruitful life, a bold life, read the Spirit's word to us. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth for that reason.

He inspires all truth and all Holy Spirit inspired truth. He's here for us. I'll tell you what, just from my own experience, let me give you a testimony here.

I'm someone who throughout my life has really struggled with this, prayer, Bible reading. I heard it from when I was a kid and I'd gotten rid of the idea by the time I was a teenager and then I went through a long period of life without ever, ever opening the Bible, without ever listening to a sermon, without ever praying unless I was in real trouble.

[28 : 20] And to this day, I find that getting into a good, solid routine of Bible reading and prayer is a difficult thing. For many of us, life is so busy that it can be difficult to maintain this kind of routine.

Prayer, Bible reading, prayer, Bible reading, but I tell you the truth. When I consistently pray to my heavenly father and ask him to give me the good gift of being filled with the spirit, and when I read his spirit inspired word regularly, things happen.

things change in my life for the better. I experience a confidence in God's providence that I don't experience otherwise.

I experience a victory over sin and a resisting of temptation that I don't experience otherwise. I experience a fruitfulness in my ministry that I would never experience otherwise.

I experience relationships with others, with Renee and others that are never as rich, never as beautiful otherwise. I've never felt full of the Holy Spirit when I've been neglecting asking God to fill me with his spirit, and when I've been neglecting to read his word, and you won't either.

[29 : 59] So pray, ask our Heavenly Father, ask him, he's a good Heavenly Father, and he's going to give you those good gifts.

Read your Bible, it's inspired by the Spirit. And finally, start to cultivate in your life a love for people. Start to hang out with other Christians in community.

Start to look for areas in which you can serve other people. Someone who's filled with the Holy Spirit has never been given to selfishness.

One of the major things that marks out someone who's full of the Spirit is their overwhelming generosity towards other people, their love for other people, their service of others.

people. If you read at the end of Acts chapter 2, so we read Acts chapter 1, Jesus says you'll be filled with the Spirit and you'll do amazing things. In Acts chapter 2 it happens and things get really crazy and the apostles just start preaching the gospel and thousands come to know Jesus.

[31 : 12] And then at the end of Acts chapter 2, this is the picture of a church full of Spirit-filled people. verse 43 to 47.

I'm just going to finish with this, alright? This is what happens when a church full of people is filled with the Holy Spirit. All came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common. They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had a need. Day by day as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God for having the goodwill of all the people and having the goodwill of all people.

And day by day the Lord added to their number those who are being saved. Do you like that? Is that the kind of church you'd want to go to?

It'd be scary. They would expect things of you. It's the kind of church I want to be a part of.

[32 : 25] It wasn't a perfect church. It was a church full of people who were marked by boldness and fruitfulness in living out the Great Commission. I'm going to pray for us now.

I'm going to practice what I've just preached about praying and asking God to give us his Holy Spirit. And what I want you to do right now is just join with me by faith and just attach yourself to this prayer of mine if you yourself want to be filled with the Spirit.

Perhaps some of you have been struggling in sin. Perhaps some of you have been going through a dry patch in terms of your ministry. Perhaps some of you have wandered away from the faith.

Perhaps for some of you the Great Commission just sounds like a nightmare. I want to pray for us and ask God to fill us with his Spirit. All right, let's pray.

Father, I want to thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. I want to thank you that he's a helper, that he's an encourager, that he's a counsellor, that he prays on our behalf, that he gives good gifts to those who love Jesus.

[33 : 57] And that when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, not even the gates of hell will prevail against us. Father, I pray for each one of us who's a Christian here tonight.

I want to pray that you would fill us with your Spirit. Lord, some of us have sinned in our Christian walk and we've got off track and all we've wanted is to be filled with knowledge.

some of us come to church because we want our lives filled with friends. Some of us come here because we want our lives filled with experiences and highs.

And all of those things are good, Lord, but they all fall short of the fullness that you want us to experience as we're filled with your Spirit. So would you come now, Lord, and fill us so that we could go out from here and live the other 98% of our lives on mission, sharing the good news of Jesus with those who don't know you, spending time in prayer in general, and also time in prayer asking for your Spirit to fill us, spending time reading your Spirit-inspired word, and also spending time in community, encouraging one another and building one another up as we use our Spirit-given gifts.

So, Lord, please be with us in this series. Help us to learn more of who your Spirit is and what difference having the Spirit within us makes to the way that we live and do ministry and live out the Great Commission.

[36 : 09] And pray all these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well, thank you, John.
Amen.