

Newsletter Article  
July 2021

## **PRAYER**

I apologize in advance for this bad joke, but hang with me—there is a point!

A country church was having their annual revival meeting. On the first night the preacher preached a message about repentance and the need to return to the Lord. At the altar call, a man came down the aisle saying “Fill me Lord, fill me.” The next night the preacher challenged the congregation with the need to totally surrender their lives to Christ in complete obedience. Again the altar call was extended; like the night before the same man came down the aisle saying “Fill me Lord, fill me.” The third night of the revival preacher warned his congregation of the evils of sin and urged the congregation to live lives of holiness. Again at the invitation was made to give one’s life to Christ, the same man came up the aisle saying “Fill me Lord, fill me.” To which someone in the back of the church yelled; “Don’t do it Lord, He leaks!”\*

Truth is we all leak. Including me. It feels like I’ve been leaking for some time and have not been stopping long enough to be adequately filled again by the Lord. It has lead me to this point where a sabbatical was necessary and I’m so grateful that our church has supported me in it.

Two questions come to mind: #1 What does it mean to be filled by the Spirit and #2 How can one become full of the Spirit?

It seems to me that to be filled with the Spirit has at least three meanings in Scripture. First, it is the initial filling of the Holy Spirit at the moment we become a Christian (Acts 2:38, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1:13-14). Second, there are unique moments when the Spirit of God fill us up for a particular work (Matthew 10:16-20, Acts 4:5-12, Acts 13:9-12). Then there is a third kind. It is the sense that God is with us, leading and empowering us to live as He has called us to (Acts 13:52, Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22-25). This is the ordinary work or operation of the Spirit of God in our everyday lives, but we can hinder this work. By our sin we can grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:29-32) and, perhaps by neglect, we can squelch the Spirit’s work in our lives (1 Thessalonians 5:19). However, we can also work with the Lord to live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), which gets to the second question...

How do we partner with God to experience the ongoing fullness of the Spirit of God? How can we walk in step with the Spirit so that we do not grieve Him by our sin or squelch His work in our lives by neglect? Of course we begin by repenting of the sin that grieves and the neglect that squelches the Spirit’s work. Then we must take the necessary steps to clear space in our lives to be with Him.

This is how I am attempting to do this during my sabbatical. I am reading God’s Word every day, particularly the psalms. As I come across something that speaks to me, I jot down a few thoughts in a journal. We are worshipping God on Sundays with various congregations. I attended a pastor’s conference that was filled with worship in song,

preaching and prayer. I also have spent considerable time worshipping God by listening to music that draws me close to Him and by playing music on my guitar and signing to Him. I am reading books that are nourishing to my soul and writing out a few thoughts that stand out as I go. Throughout each of these I am praying—for me, my family, and for you.

There is a final thing that has been really wonderful. I've experienced the Spirit of God through the beauty of nature that He has helped to create (we visited Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons, and more). I've included a few pictures in this article to share with you.

I thank God that, though I leak, He is faithful fill me up day-by-day. May you, too, be filled with the Spirit of God as you draw close to Him!

With Love,  
Pastor Matt

PS—I've included some of the Scriptures, music, and books that have blessed me at [www.fbckenedy.org/sabbatical](http://www.fbckenedy.org/sabbatical).

\*From a sermon by Alan Tison, *Remember What We Are To Do*, found at <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Follower/202276>