

7 Steps to Being Spirit-Filled

Some people have suggested that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was only for the early disciples who needed an extra “charge” or a unique gift to get Christianity started. Well, we need it too! God's power is for today. You can have your own personal experience with the Spirit

1. Remember that the Holy Spirit is holy. He will not enter an unclean vessel. Only Christians receive this experience. It belongs to no other religion and cannot occur unless a person accepts Jesus as his or her personal Lord and Savior.

2. Understand that this gift is for you. Some are afraid of the experience because they grew up in a denomination that was critical of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But you have nothing to fear from any of the gifts He has for you. Jesus said, “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13, NIV). The promise is for anyone who asks!

3. Hunger for all God has for you. There must be a holy ambition, a desire for more of Jesus, and a pure devotion in our hearts when we seek anything from God. There can be no impure motivations or any desire to have the gift so that we can use it for our own benefit.

4. Ask God to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Some people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation. Others come into this experience decades after their conversions. For whatever reason, they did not ask for it. If you want to receive it, schedule a time to be alone with God or to attend a Bible study or church where this experience is common. Then ask Him to baptize you in the Spirit.

5. Believe that God will give you the promise by faith. When my wife and I give birthday gifts to our grandchildren, they reach out their hands and take the gifts. We are eager to give and they are happy to receive. They do not need to beg us. So it is with the infilling of the Spirit. It brings God great pleasure to give you this gift.

6. By faith, worship God in the new language He gives you. When you begin praying in tongues, remember that your spirit is praying. The devil has no idea what you are saying, but God understands the language of your spirit. You may not know what you are saying to God (see I Cor. 14:2), but you can sense that you are communicating with Him from your heart.

7. Live by the Spirit. Every day you can choose to live a holy life, be sensitive to God's will and serve God with all your heart. When people live by the Spirit they have a tender heart toward the things of God and are sensitive to the needs of others. Their lifestyle will include repentance, forgiveness, holiness, boldness, courage and power. As you walk in the Spirit you will discover a spiritual power that is greater than human strength. Now is the time to plug in!

6 Things That Block the Holy Spirit's Power

Is there anything blocking you from receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit? (*Vitaly Vitorsky*)

Last weekend while I was preaching at a church in central California, a young man came to the altar to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was eager to go deeper spiritually. Someone prayed for him for a while, but nothing happened.

I walked over to the young man a few minutes later and told him I would pray for him some more after the meeting was dismissed. I've learned that sometimes there are blockages that can prevent people from receiving the fullness of the Spirit, so I always try to discern what must be moved out of the way.

In this guy's case, his heart was in a great deal of pain because his father had abandoned his family. He wanted God to baptize him with the Spirit, but the pain of rejection was like a gaping wound that needed urgent attention. As soon as I began to address this problem, he began sobbing in my arms.

After we prayed about his father issues, and he got the healing he needed, he quickly received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A fresh joy filled his heart. And a new heavenly language began pouring out of his mouth. I encouraged him to pray in tongues for a while as he received the Spirit's anointing.

This next Sunday, May 24, is the official day of Pentecost—when Christians all over the world celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. But Pentecost should also be a very personal experience for you. Have you, or someone you know, struggled to receive this supernatural infilling?

Here are some reasons why there might be a blockage:

1. Doubt or intellectual pride. In the 1960s a journalist named John Sherrill decided to write a book discrediting the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. But after he interviewed countless people about this experience, his doubts were shattered and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit himself. His book, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, became a Christian classic. Spiritual experiences cannot be figured out with the mind. To receive the Spirit's infilling you must let go of your intellectual arguments and display childlike faith (see Matt. 18:2-4).

2. Religious tradition. I knew an Episcopal priest who was filled with the Holy Spirit in the 1970s in New York City. He was excited about the new vitality he felt in his faith—and thrilled that his wife had experienced a physical healing. But when he shared his testimony with his bishop, he was told he was crazy! And the bishop referred him to a psychiatrist! Religious people who are locked into "the way we've always done it" find it hard to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You must be willing to break free from tradition.

3. Fear of the supernatural. Some Christians grew up in denominations that taught against the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They were told that Pentecostals are all fanatics who go into trances, speak mindless gibberish and swing from chandeliers. Actually, the first disciples in the New

Testament spoke in tongues and experienced miracles—yet their faith was not strange. It should be the norm! People who are afraid of God's supernatural power will struggle to receive it.

4. Unconfessed sin. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit can be "quenched" as well as "grieved" (1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30). Because He is so holy, our sinful habits and attitudes can cause Him to withdraw. This is why it's so important for us to walk in constant communion with God, and to be willing to repent quickly when we know we have sinned. Some people "stuff" their secret sins in the closets of their hearts. If you want to be filled with the Spirit, you must be willing to open those closets and invite the light of God's holiness into every dark corner of your life.

5. Emotional wounds. Like the young man I prayed for last weekend, some people are just too burdened with emotional baggage to be filled with the Spirit. Some have been abused, others weighted down by anxiety, others grieved or depressed. They need healing first. Like Lazarus on the day he was raised from the dead, they are bound by the grave clothes of the past, and they need to be unwrapped before they can experience God's full anointing (see John 11:44). Healing is often needed before a person can receive the blessing of Holy Spirit baptism.

6. An unyielded spirit. You cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you are full of yourself. Some people are too willful. They have not surrendered their plans, finances, relationships or time to God. They have their lives planned out and they don't want God interrupting their agendas. Yet God is looking to fill hearts that have been emptied and surrendered. Only the fully yielded can experience the fullness of His power.

If you have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or if the flow of the Spirit has been blocked in your life, empty your heart today and prepare for your own personal Pentecost.