

Discovering The Joy Of The Spirit-Filled Life

By Don Kimbro

We have a gas-fired furnace in our home. It has a pilot light that stays on all the time. The pilot light's very quiet and you'd never know it was there unless you got down on your knees to look. It uses very little energy and puts out a small flickering flame. The main burner of our furnace, however, is a different matter. When we need some heat in our house, we turn up the thermostat and WHOOSH — it comes on and on those cold mornings, are we ever glad!

Christians, I've noticed, are much like our furnace. Some are like the pilot light and some are like the main burner. Some just go through their Christian life and flicker and some make a WHOOSH. What makes the difference? The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:18-21 that it's the Holy Spirit. So, I pose this question to you dear reader, "Are You a Pilot Light Christian — Or a Whoosh Christian?" There is a difference. A BIG difference!

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit living within them. That was God's promise through the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39). The apostle Paul repeats this truth to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). In fact, he tells the Romans that if we don't have the Holy Spirit living within us, we are not Christians (Rom. 8:9-10).

But not every Christian is "*filled with the Spirit.*" If we were filled with the Spirit all the time, then there would be no point in God giving us this command in Scripture — and it is a command. Literally, this phrase says in the present tense, "Be you continually being filled with the Spirit."

Now notice the results of Christians who are "*filled with the Spirit.*" Our speech will include "*psalms,*" which are the songs of the Old Testament; "*hymns,*" which are the scripture songs of the early church and "*spiritual songs,*" which are new songs borne and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Psm. 33:3; 40:3; Rev. 14:3). But that's not all. A spirit-filled Christian will always be "*giving thanks to God for everything*" and continually be submitting to one another "*out of reverence for Christ.*" Just imagine for a moment a church full of spirit-filled believers, full of scripture, full of thanksgiving to Go, full of joy and loving and preferring one another. It could happen. Wow!



How will this happen? How can we be "continually being filled with the Spirit?" How can we be a "whoosh" Christian? I believe it all has to do with the spiritual gifts. When God gave us the Holy Spirit, He also gave us spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 7:13; Eph. 4:7-8). The key then to being "spirit-filled" is in using our spiritual gift or gifts that God has given us. 1 Peter 4:10 says it like this, "*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*" So God gives us the Holy Spirit along with spiritual gifts and tells us to use them to serve others and administer His grace.

Now before we go any further let me share an amazing truth with you. The word for *grace* in the Greek language is the word, "charis." The word for "spiritual" *gift* in the original language is "charisma." The plural of "charisma" is "charismata." We get the word "charismatic" from that word which is a transliteration of the Greek word. Notice the connection with grace. In fact, some translators of the Bible literally interpret "charismata" as "gracious gifts" or "gracelets."

I asked a wise older pastor once, in my own ignorance on the subject, if he had any "charismatics" in his well established traditional church. He replied, "Yes, if they're Christians, they're all charismatics." I was taken aback but he was absolutely right. Whether some of us like the term or not, we're all "charismatics" because we all have spiritual gifts. We are, by definition, a charismatic church.

Now for one more connection. Each one of these words, "charis" (grace), "charisma" (gift) and "charismata" (gifts) come from a common root which is "char." Guess what "char" means? It means JOY! God's gifts of grace bring us JOY. Isn't that a blessing? Praise His holy name!

I believe that Christians should be the most joyful people in the whole world because of what Jesus Christ has done in our behalf. It has always bothered me when so many of them aren't. In my twenty-five years of ministry, I've watched Christians come and go in the church. So many come to service with a long look on their face. They never smile. They criticize and nitpick and create division. They complain about everything. They don't like the music, the worship style, the preaching, the teaching, the fellowship, the color of the carpet, the temperature in the church, and on and on and on . . . ad nauseam. Nothing seems to make them happy.

The reason? They are not using their spiritual gifts to serve and administer God's grace to others. How do we change that? By discovering and using our spiritual gifts — the gracious gifts that bring joy. I have found that the happiest, most joyful people in God's kingdom, are Christians who know their spiritual gifts and are using them for the glory of God. They don't have time to moan and groan and complain, because they're doing what God has gifted them to do.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-28

What are the spiritual gifts and where do we find them in Scripture? God has given us several lists, the first being in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. You can read that passage on your own but here we see nine spiritual gifts listed: *wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues*. In verses 27-28 of the same chapter, Paul lists four more spiritual gifts not previously mentioned: *apostles, teachers, helps and the gift of administration* for a total of 13.

Romans 12:6-8

In Romans 12:6-8, there is a list of five more gifts: *service, encouragement, giving, leadership and mercy*. Imagine five Christians who get together every week to pray and all of these gifts are represented and exercised. The one with the service gift would recognize unmet needs in the group and take the initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully, and without a need for recognition. The gifted leader would take charge, begin the meeting and give direction to the others in the group and get everybody involved. No one would be upset by it.

The encourager would respond to the problems of the others by putting an arm around them and saying, "You can make it because God loves you and so do I. They would bring out the best in the group. The giver would press a \$50 bill in the palm of someone who was going through a financial struggle and promise more if necessary. The mercy person would weep while praying for others with difficulties, asking God for grace for those who have strayed. None of them would gossip, criticize or speak down about their church or leaders and each, when leaving, would look forward to coming together again and to going to church on Sunday as they looked for opportunities to use their gifts once again.

Ephesians 4:7-13

Two more gifts are in this passage that have not already been mentioned, *evangelists* and *pastors*. We are all called to share our faith with others, but there are those who are gifted to preach the gospel clearly to the multitudes. Pastor literally means, "shepherd." It's a spiritual gift. Men make terrible pastors who have not been gifted. They may have other gifts but if they aren't gifted by God in that area, they will be miserable, ineffective and frustrated — and so will the sheep.

1 Peter 4:9-10

The gift of *hospitality* is presented in this passage. Someone with this gift has the ability to make others, especially strangers, feel warmly welcomed, accepted and comfortable in the church. Now we have listed 21 spiritual gifts.

Other Possibilities

But that's not all. There are the spiritual gifts of *missions* (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 13:2-3), *celibacy* (1 Cor. 7:7-8; Mt. 19:10-12), *intercessory prayer* (Jas. 5:14-16), *exorcism* (Mt. 12:22-32; Lk. 10:12-20), *discernment* (1 Jn. 4:1-6), *martyrdom* (1 Cor. 13:3; Rev. 20:4), I don't want that one, and *voluntary poverty* (1 Cor. 13:1-3) mine's involuntary! That makes 28. But again, that's still not all. There's the gift of craftsmanship (Exo. 31:3-11) and music (Psm. 150). That makes 30 — and that's probably not all of them.

Do you really want to change your spiritual life by discovering the joy of the Spirit-filled life? You can experience the glow of the Christian life and the tasty, ripe and delicious fruit of the Holy Spirit. Just do as God commands you to do — "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" All we have to do is ask (Lk. 11:9-13). If your pilot light's still on and you let God turn up the heat — you'll become a WHOOSH Christian! Won't that be a nice change? You might even do a little dance!

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