



NG Study Guide: Ephesians 5:18-21 :: “In Christ You Are Spirit-Filled” [6.16.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: Every human has a desire to fill the void in their life created by our separation from God. Some try vainly to fill that void apart from God. Others look to God, but all still struggle with the flesh and the temptation to satisfy the longing for wholeness outside of God. The hope is discovering the Spirit-filled life, and today we learn how.

Subject: The filling of The Holy Spirit

Object: Be Spirit-filled

Context: Chapters 4-6 re the practice of Christian living. In Christ we are to imitate God, walk in His love, light and wisdom (5:1-17).

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

A. The problem of abusing (18) *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation*

1. Every sinful attitude and action flows from our fallen sin nature and a desire to satisfy our longing for wholeness apart from God. Thus, alcohol and drug abuse, gluttony (food abuse), pornography, any sexual behavior outside of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman, gambling abuse, pride, self-righteousness, emotional, physical or spiritual abuse inflicted upon others all flow from this dynamic.

Paul knew the struggle of the flesh, despite being an apostle, when he lamented things he wanted to do he did not do, and things he wanted not to do he did (Romans 7:13-25).

2. The problem of intoxication: *Drunkness* or intoxication is forbidden. A fair reading of the gospels seems to reveal that Jesus drank wine, but he was never intoxicated. Intoxication is *dissipation*. It refers to excessive indulgence, and is used in reference to the prodigal son (Luke 15). It can also be translated wasted. As in a *wasted* life is a wasted life.

Intoxication was an Old Testament problem (Genesis 9) a New Testament problem (1Corinthians 11:27-30), and remains a present problem in presumably every corner of the globe.

In 2024 there are an estimated 50 million Americans (16.7%) 12 or older who battle substance abuse disorder (other countries have higher or lower percentages but the problem is global). We would be naive to assume that followers of Christ are excluded as evidenced by countless Christians in support groups such as Celebrate Recovery (which meets here Friday evenings).

There is a great deal of scientific evidence that abusing is linked to genetic as well as environmental factors such as the home where you were raised, present environment, and perceived stress and loneliness. Thus, there is no

clear answer in the nature vs. nurture causation or cure quest. If a follower of Jesus chooses to identify as an alcoholic/addict or recovering alcoholic/addict as they navigate their desire to drink or use excessively we should accept them as a follower of Christ, redeemed by the gospel as they seek to yield to God's authority in regard to behavior regardless of a title they prefer. God can clearly take away the temptation to abuse alcohol, or drugs but all of the empirical evidence of the last fifty years shows that those instances are a very small percentage. In essence, the desire or temptation may continue, and this does not mean the person is lacking in faith, love for God, or self-control.

Thus, understanding eschatology (end times) we need to realize that the battle with the flesh will continue until we go to be with Jesus or He comes to get us. The battle with the flesh and this fallen world will not cease this side of eternity.

After being filled with the Spirit, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). And Jesus is the only One who has ever perfectly resisted the devil and temptation.

Yet, despite temptation there can be progress in behavior, actions and attitudes.

B. The hope of the Holy Spirit (18) *but be filled with the Spirit.*

1. God wants to satisfy your longing for wholeness in Christ by the Holy Spirit. The source of hope is the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. *Be filled* means to be controlled by. The Greek present tense means, "Keep being filled." The Greek middle voice renders, "Let the Holy Spirit fill you." In contrast to trying to fill our longing for wholeness apart from God, we learn to recognize God's sufficiency through the filling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, whether alcohol, drugs, or anything else that I've habitually sought to make me whole there will be adverse consequences. There will likely be pain caused by those wrong pursuits, and there will likely be pain in seeking to withdraw from them. Yet, it is only in accepting the pain, rather than seeking to escape it, that I can discover the truth that Christ is sufficient. He wants to fill the void and make me whole.

2. The work of the Holy Spirit related to a believer

The Holy Spirit draws people to Christ as they are convicted of their sin and see their need for Jesus (John 14:17, 16:8). The Spirit guides us in all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit is the guarantee that we belong to Jesus (1:13-14). It is the Spirit that assures us there is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1). The Holy Spirit is the power to represent Jesus and progress to be more like Him (Acts 1:5, 8, Luke 24:49). It is the Holy Spirit that gives us hope of progress, and victory in this age, or the age to come, when we are discouraged in the battles with our flesh (Romans 7:24-8:39).

3. The work of a believer related to the Holy Spirit

We are called not to grieve the Holy Spirit nor quench the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30, 1Thessalonians 5:19). Grieving flows from our inappropriate response to Christ's redemption. It saddens God when we rebel, because it causes pain for us and others; and keeps us from being satisfied by God. Despite the injunction not to quench or suppress the work the Spirit is seeking to do in and through us, each of us will to varying degrees quench and grieve the Spirit.

4. The importance of gospel-centered culture

A gospel-centered culture recognizes that Jesus' followers are perfect in their position in Christ, but in practice we are all learning to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and become more like Jesus. So, people need to know that they are loved, accepted in Christ, cared for, and shown compassion. The gospel is based on Jesus' perfection, and our acceptance is based on faith in Him, and the desire to be controlled by the Spirit, and not the flesh (Romans 8).

C. A measure and possible means of progress (19-21)

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Here Paul describes some of the traits of the Spirit-filled, but these may also be seen as a means to progress in being yielded to God's Spirit. In other words, these actions and attitudes may reveal that you are yielding, and help you to yield to the Holy Spirit.

1. Relationships with other believers (19) *Speaking to one another.* Being part of Christ-centered community is evidence and an aid to being Spirit-filled. Forging community where you are accepted in Christ, and can share your struggles and triumphs is so important to being controlled by God's Spirit. Yes, God alone wants to satisfy

your longing for wholeness, and He uses gospel-centered community to help you discover how to better experience that reality.

2. Praise and worship (19) *Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*

Psalms are the inspired word of God and were the Old Testament songbook of praise. *Hymns* are the songs of praise declared by the Church. *Spiritual songs* praise God. *Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord* can also be translated “with all your heart.” Expressions of praise, adoration and worship flow from a life controlled by God, and also help remind us of why we should yield control to God’s Spirit.

3. Gratitude (20) *Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thanksgiving and grace come from the same root. It is arguably very difficult to be grateful to God for *all things*, especially as we process real life pain, heartache, tragedy and brokenness in real time. It is upon Christ-centered reflection that even trials, as well as blessings, past, present and future are used by God to help us to discover His sufficiency (Romans 8:28).

4. Accountability (21) *Submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

We are yield to other believers because of our respect for God. Seeking to create meaningful accountability with other followers of Jesus is evidence of yielding to the Spirit’s control, but also would seem to be conducive to being better controlled by God’s Spirit.

Much recovery and restoration from hurts, habits, and hang-ups is accelerated in the context of accountability created by 12 step programs generally, or Christ-centered programs such as Celebrate Recovery. Fostering safe environments where people can navigate their challenges, and are encouraged to share their struggles. The fear of rejection, judgment, or being outcast keep many of us from creating accountability. Christian relationships in the context of friendships, Neighborhood Groups (small groups) and/or with spiritual leaders is arguably an important step forward.

Conclusion: To be filled with the Spirit, we first need to receive Christ and the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:11-13). Then we learn to trust God, yield more of our will to the Spirit’s control. We help one another through the process of learning to embrace Christ rather than escape our pain; and we learn to allow God to satisfy our longing for wholeness more and more. It is challenging in this life, but soon we will be perfectly yielded to God for eternity with no sin nature to compete with and it will all be worth it.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. What are some of ways that people try to fill the void in their life created by our separation from God?

Q2. Why might it be important to know that people who love Jesus will still struggle with temptation (and are unlikely to always prevail)?

Q3. How might the filling of the Holy Spirit offer hope, but also present a challenge?

Q4. How can gospel-centered culture where progress is modeled and encouraged help?

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a short video and helpful article about grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit: <https://www.gotquestions.org/grieve-Holy-Spirit.html>

2. Here is a video related to how to be filled with the Spirit: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Spirit-filled.html>.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Share what you learned this week about God, yourself and the Spirit-filled life with someone.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

Next week's passage:

Ephesians 5:21-33 :: "Reflecting Jesus in Marriage"