

OpenTheo

The Holy Spirit (Part 4)



The Holy Spirit - Steve Gregg

In this episode, Steve Gregg explores the concept of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and its implications for a fulfilling Christian life. He emphasizes the importance of a genuine spiritual transformation and highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in bearing witness to our relationship with God. Gregg also discusses the significance of obedience and seeking a deeper connection with God, rather than merely verbalizing prayers or relying on human understanding. Lastly, he cautions against equating the gift of speaking in tongues as the sole evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and encourages believers to focus on serving others rather than seeking recognition for their spiritual gifts.

Transcript

I'm talking about how to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. What I want to say is that the bible doesn't give you a three step plan or a four step plan. God is not operated mechanically.

And this is something that Christians in America have a real hard time with. They want methods. They want plans.

They want to reduce spiritual things into non-personal methods. If you just step through this hoop and this hoop and this hoop, you'll get pulled the chain and you get the deal. And that's not how God works with people.

He's a personal being. It's like trying to tell somebody how to have a happy marriage. Well, you really ought to, you know, talk with your wife.

You have no guarantee that your wife's going to be happy. You know, there's dynamics in interpersonal relationships that two people doing the same thing won't get exactly the same results in their marriage or in friendships or in raising their kids. People are people and the Holy Spirit is a person who has a plan and expectations and responses to things.

And therefore, what I can do biblically is give you what I would call prerequisites. I think that when these prerequisites are in place, there should be nothing to hinder the baptism of the Holy Spirit from taking place. But I'm cautious about this because in my

lifetime, I've seen different things happen with different people.

When I was young and people wanted to be baptized in the Spirit, sometimes they'd ask if I'd lay hands on them. I'd lay hands on them and pray for them and they seemed to have an experience that was really like mine. Other times and other seasons, same thing, didn't get the same results.

Sometimes, I just don't know what the differences are. I suspect there may be differences in the individual. I don't know.

I mean, the Holy Spirit responds to something inside of you and I can't get inside there to know what's going on inside of you. I can tell you what has to be in place and if those things are in place, I have every reason to believe that you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit. But it's not a step three or four step plan.

It's a matter of saying, here's what God expects as prerequisite to filling people with the Holy Spirit. I believe that those who are listening to me right now who may not be filled with the Spirit will probably find that God will respond and certainly keep his promises as we meet the prerequisite. So what would those be? Well, the first certainly must be we have to be regenerated, be born of the Spirit.

We need to be born again. We have to come from death into life. God does not pour his Spirit into a dead corpse.

He will give his Spirit to those who are his servants, those who are his children. And Paul says we've received the Spirit of sonship, crying out, Abba, Father. We're born again as sons and God gives us his Spirit.

And obviously, there are people in churches today who would call themselves Christians, but it's not entirely certain to my mind, though I'm not the judge, certainly. But in observing many people who call themselves Christians, I have my questions. I would have my doubts.

I'm not sure that God doesn't have his doubts about them as well. Because a lot of people interpret being a Christian differently than God does. A lot of people think that being born in the church and being baptized as an infant and confirmed when they're 12 years old and staying in the church and believing the things the church is supposed to believe, that that makes them Christians.

Other people have actually had a conversion experience of some sort, they think. They've gone forward at an altar call. They've been prayed for.

They've said the sinner's prayer. They've done things like that. But not in every case has there been a true conversion because conversion is a supernatural passing from death into life, which the Holy Spirit works in you.

Jesus said, unless a person is born of flesh and of the Spirit, they cannot be in the kingdom of God. So you have to have your, of course, your natural birth, but also you have to have a spiritual birth. You have to become alive spiritually.

How does that happen? Well, Jesus said, it's like Moses lifted up the serpent out of the wilderness. So also shall the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. So believing in Jesus.

But what does that mean? Because almost everyone believes there is a Jesus. Atheists mostly believe there was a Jesus. Some of them have their doubts, but people of all religions believe there's a Jesus and people who are nominal cultural Christians believe there's a Jesus.

What does it mean to believe in him? It means that you've acknowledged that he is the Lord. As Paul said in Romans 10, 9, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you'll be saved. That he is the Lord is a very important thing to acknowledge because it means that you're saying, I believe that I'm subject to his authority.

It means I'm his servant. He's the Lord. A Lord is somebody who owns slaves in biblical times.

I'm his slave. And the Bible makes it very plain that that's how we're to see ourselves. We're not our own.

We've been bought with a price, Paul said. And so when I come to Christ, acknowledging him as my Lord and surrendering to that reality and embracing that, saying no longer I but you, it's not my will, but yours. You know, it's not about me, God.

It's about you. That's being converted. Going to church, thinking positive thoughts about God, even jumping through certain evangelical hoops, like going down forward and saying a sinner's prayer.

Not a guarantee that you've been born again. I was trained by a major evangelistic association when I was young to counsel people who came forward at an altar call. And I went through as a young teenager, these counseling classes that the evangelistic organization wanted all the counselors to go through.

And we were always taught, and I've encountered this elsewhere too, that you teach people they're a sinner, and then that Jesus died for their sins. You tell them they have to believe in Jesus and say a sinner's prayer. And then when they say a sinner's prayer, you have to make sure they have assurance of salvation.

And how do you do that? Well, you read 1 John 4, 1 John 5, 14, which says, These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that

you have eternal life. So you read that verse and say, So do you have eternal life? And more often than not, they say, Well, I sure hope so. But that's not, you're not supposed to be satisfied with that answer.

We're told you have to make sure they know that they have eternal life. So you read the verse again, that you may know, you who believe that you may know that you have eternal life. Do you have eternal life? Well, I hope so.

And you know, you're supposed to keep working on them until they say, Okay, okay, I know I have eternal life. And you send them home happily, you've convinced them that they're saved. Now, God apparently didn't convince them they're saved, or else they wouldn't say, I hope so.

I mean, they, when you're born again, John says in 1 John chapter 5, He that is begotten of God has the witness in himself. Then say, you know, you're saved. It's not mystical, necessarily, or magical, but you know that you're a Christian, you know that you are a child of God.

How do you know that the Holy Spirit bears witness with you with your spirit that that's true? That's what Paul said in Romans 8, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God. And so also, John says, He that believes in a saving way, has the witness within himself. So I actually, I actually think it's wrong headed to try to give someone a conviction that they are saved, when they don't have any conviction that they're saved.

Because I thought, if they simply say this prayer, acknowledge these things verbally, that's becoming a Christian. But obviously becoming a Christian means something more like a complete surrender. Something more like recognizing Jesus as my Lord.

That makes me owned by Him. That means I'm His servant. And not everyone who is evangelized understands that's what they're supposed to do.

And when they repeat after me, a sinner's prayer, they're not necessarily making that commitment. Just verbalizing a prayer doesn't mean your heart is with it. And so I'm saying, the way evangelism is done in the United States for many years has always been this way.

Get people to say a sinner's prayer, then convince them they're saved. Whether they're convinced or not, make them convinced. And I don't think that I'm supposed to be the one convincing them.

I think God's supposed to be the one convincing them. So I believe we've brought a lot of people into the church who have been convinced that they're saved, but maybe they're not. If God hasn't told them so, maybe they aren't.

Maybe it's just the preacher that told them so. And preachers don't always tell the truth. Preachers certainly don't know everything.

And if you say, I know you're a Christian, because I know you. Well, I think you're a Christian, from what I know of you. You seem like a Christian.

But I don't know what God knows. And if God isn't telling you you're a Christian, I certainly am not going to do it. I can tell you that if you have truly surrendered to Christ and if He's your Lord and Savior, that you are eternally saved.

But I don't know if you've done that. Some people say, well, you should make sure that they know the Bible says they're saved. The Bible doesn't say they are saved.

The Bible says certain people are saved. It doesn't tell me whether they're one of those people or not. That's something that you've got to work out with God and you.

And when someone has finally surrendered to God in the true sense of receiving Christ as Lord, I believe they're born again. And I think they know it. They might not know exactly how they know it, but they go away with a conviction that something has changed in their life.

And if there's no conviction that anything has changed, maybe nothing has. It's hard to imagine that the God who created the universe could invade your life and you never notice He arrived. I think He's self-announcing on His arrival.

And if someone hasn't heard that He's there, maybe He's not there. I'm not saying, I'm not trying to make anyone doubt their salvation. I'm just saying I can't assume a person's saved just because they've jumped through the evangelical hoops of the American evangelical evangelistic system.

Sometimes it's not the same as the way that people were evangelized in the Bible. And so this is a prerequisite. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.

We saw that already in 1 Corinthians 2. If you're a natural man, unregenerated, you can't get filled with the Holy Spirit. You have to get saved. Being saved, really saved, is definitely a prerequisite.

And I have to say, some of the people that I prayed for who wanted to be filled with the Spirit, I thought they were saved. But in watching their lives subsequently, I'm not so sure they ever were saved. They thought they were, and I thought they were, but sometimes later behavior raises serious doubts.

And they didn't seem to receive when I prayed for them either. I've always blamed myself for it. I always think, Lord, there's something wrong with me that I'm not able to pray with faith for these people to receive.

But I have to consider there might be something in them that's preventing it. I can't take all the responsibility when I do that. And of course, that generally speaking means that you repent, put your trust in Jesus Christ, and are baptized in water.

That's the process by which people got saved in the New Testament. Yes, sometimes people were saved before they got baptized in water. The House of Cornelius.

They were not only saved, they got baptized in the Spirit before they were baptized in water. So we can't assume that baptism in water is a non-negotiable prerequisite, because in the Bible we know of at least one exception that God Himself made. But we can say that when they were asked, the apostles said, what you have to do is repent and be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So this is how you get saved. You repent, and then it was expected you get baptized at the same time. Now I believe that being baptized in water, though not an absolute non-negotiable, is certainly the norm that God expects for all people.

Even the House of Cornelius, who were filled with Spirit before they got baptized, were not resisting it. They weren't even neglecting it. They hadn't believed until that moment.

And as soon as they did, they did get water baptized. I mean, it's like when God says, be baptized, and you say, well, when it's convenient, maybe I will. That's not exactly submission to God.

I've met people who've been saved, they say, for three years and haven't been baptized. They're astonished. They say, well, how could you, why'd you go three years without getting baptized? And they say, well, I'm waiting for God to lead me to get baptized.

Well, you don't have to wait for God to lead you to be baptized. He's commanded it. He's not going to give you special commands if you're neglecting the general command that He gave.

It applies to you. You're supposed to be baptized. And in fact, biblically, people were baptized the same day they converted.

We don't ever read of a person who was a Christian for longer than one day without being baptized in the Bible. There was no such thing in their mind of an unbaptized believer. Now, there are, in my opinion, unbaptized believers today because of the negligence of the church in not practicing New Testament Christianity.

But I'm saying the norm, and certainly the universal norm, was there were no such things as believers who waited more than a day to get baptized, because that was considered their official entry into the church community. When you get baptized, you weren't baptized, you weren't in the church. And so, repentance, faith, water baptism, these are all things, of course, that most of us, I would hope, would already know.

But there also ought to be a lifestyle of obedience. Remember, Jesus said in Luke 6, 46, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things that I say? If you really are converted, you're going to be caring about what Jesus said. You're going to be caring about obedience.

You won't be perfect, but you'll wish you were. You'll want to be. You'll want to please Him.

Like I said, when I was raised in the Baptist church and converted as a child, I really didn't have a very thorough knowledge of discipleship. I don't even know if I could have told you what Lordship means. As a little kid, I didn't know what it meant, Lord.

I mean, I didn't know what the word meant. But I remember once my father, I've told this story before, we were in a market waiting for my mom to come through to checkstand. My dad and I were at the magazine rack that was closer to the door, and he was looking at a magazine.

I was reading a comic book. My mom came through, it was time to leave. My dad said, come on, let's go.

He put the magazine back. I threw the comic book down and started to leave. He said, is that how the comic book was when you came in here? I said, no, it wasn't.

It was on the rack, of course. I just left it laying there kind of messy. He said, well, if you were the owner of this store, do you think you'd want people to come to your organized display and leave it disorganized like that? I said, probably not.

He said, well, don't you remember what Jesus said that what you would want men to do to you, you should do to others? I was probably 10 years old. I never thought to apply that passage to anything in real life. But it struck me.

I remember thinking, oh, yeah, he wasn't scolding me. My dad was very gentle. He wasn't preaching at me.

He was just instructing me. It did not cross my mind that I should do to others in a situation like this what I would want done to me. I just wasn't thinking in those terms.

But when he mentioned it, I knew, yes, I need to do what Jesus said. No one had told me about lordship, but I already knew. Jesus was my lord, whatever that would mean.

What it meant to me is I should do if he said I should do it. And that's what a Christian is like. If you're born again, you know, there's some Jesus said this year, his wish is my command.

That's what I should do, because that's what happens when you're born again. You become a follower of Jesus and therefore obedience of lifestyle is a factor. We've looked

a couple of times at John 14.

But in verse 15, that's where Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. And he said, and I will ask the father, he'll give you another comfort. You keep my commandments.

I'll ask him to send you the Holy Spirit. If you're a disciple, if you're a follower, if you've got a lifestyle of obedience, in Acts 5.32. Acts 5.32 when Peter was preaching before the Sanhedrin or giving a defense, he said, and we talk about the resurrection of Jesus. He said, we are witnesses of these things.

And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. It's an interesting statement. Acts 5.32, the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

Now he's not saying if you obey him, he'll give you the Holy Spirit. But those who have given the Holy Spirit are also the ones that obey him, because they are Christians. And the Christians by definition are the people who obey Jesus.

People who are Christians live like their followers of Christ. People who don't live like followers of Christ are not Christians by any biblical definition that you can find. The Christians, the word Christian was coined to describe disciples.

As it says in Acts 11.26, the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. There's never any other definition of Christian in the Bible than a disciple. And Jesus said, if you continue in my words, you are my disciples indeed.

So a person who is a true Christian is one who's continuing to follow the words of Jesus best they know how. And that's a lifestyle. And that's a result of conversion.

I don't say it's a result of being baptized in the Spirit. That's a result of being a Christian. But you have to be a Christian to be baptized in the Spirit.

So these are factors that are like, we could say prerequisite. Then there's this other thing, and I believe that this is something I didn't notice until I saw many cases of people who were prayed for to be baptized in the Spirit, and they didn't seem to receive that. I thought, what's wrong here? And then I remembered John 7.37. He said, if anyone is thirsty, let him come unto me and drink.

And he that believes on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. He spoke this of the Holy Spirit. Thirsty.

There has to be a thirst there. There seemed to be a lot of Christians who couldn't care less about having all of God. They're satisfied.

They're content. They're apathetic. I know that I wasn't, although I wasn't thinking of this verse at the time when I was 16, I know that when I met people who had more of God

than I did, I couldn't rest until I found out how I could have what they have.

I was thirsty. When people are apathetic and say, well, I could take it or leave it, you know, I mean, I guess everyone's doing that. I guess put me in line too.

Pray for me too. I mean, if it's not something that there's a hunger from God, then there's not going to be a feeding from God. If there's no thirst, there's going to be no refreshment.

He gives his spirit to those who are thirsting for him. And we know of course, that the psalmist often spoke about the thirst after God, like a deer pants for the water, so my soul thirsts after you, oh God. Or David said in Psalm 27, four, one thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek that I may dwell in the house of the Lord and behold the beauty of the Lord and meditate in his temple.

Those who really were filled with the spirit in the old Testament, I think in the new too, were the ones who really were pursuing after God. They were hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Jesus said, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they will be filled.

If you want something from God, if you have an unfulfilled hunger or thirst, he'll give it to you if there's a hunger and thirst. But he doesn't promise others will be filled just because they're standing around and happen to be there when it happens. You have to hunger, you have to thirst, you have to desire, you have to put priority on God and being and having all that God wants.

If you're not sure that you really want everything God wants for you, you're just curious or something like that, I don't really know that you're in a position to I don't know if you're in a position to receive. I can't say God can't do it, but I'm just saying I'm not, I wouldn't expect it to happen if there wasn't this first present. There's another factor too and that of course is asking, asking God as a result of prayer.

That's the thing that came to my mind when I experienced no phenomena and I thought, wow, maybe I didn't get that touch of spirit because none of the phenomena that everyone else talked about happened to me. But then I thought it was these verses that pulled me through actually. In Luke 11 verses 9 through 13, Jesus said, I tell you, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it shall be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be open. What father among you, if his son asked for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asked for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? 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? Clearly asking to be filled with the spirit is something he said he'll respond to. In fact, he says everyone who asks

receives, everyone who seeks finds, but notice seeking, knocking, pursuing, there has to be something of a determination, there has to be some kind of a prioritizing here.

When he said ask and it will be given to you, seek and you'll find, he's not talking generically, he's here talking about receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be given to those who ask him, ask and keep on asking. Again, the Greek word seems to suggest an ongoing imperfect tense so that if you ask and nothing happens, keep on asking, keep knocking, keep pursuing.

I've met some young Christians who, I guess they were Christians, who were prayed for to be filled with the spirit because they apparently wanted that, but they assumed afterward that nothing happened and so they gave up. And I remember thinking, man, if I didn't receive anything, I'd just keep on seeking. I'm not going to give up when you're thirsty, you don't say, well, I didn't find water over this sand dune, maybe there's an oasis over there, so I'm going to keep looking.

I'm not just going to give up and say, well, I guess I'll just go without water from now on. No, you're not going to go without water, you're thirsty, you're dying, you know you need water. If someone says, well, I tried and I didn't get any fullness of the spirit, so I guess maybe that's not for me, I don't know.

Well, keep on asking, keep on seeking, not legalistically, but because if you have the kind of thirst that's mandatory, you're not going to do anything else but that. You're going to keep pursuing until you find. And that's what Jesus said, if you ask, that's what you should do, you should pray and ask God to fill you with the spirit, assuming these other prerequisites are in place.

And then of course, the act of receiving by faith. Again, my own experience was that when I thought of those verses, although I had begun to question whether I was going to walk out of that room filled with the spirit or not, though I had gone in greatly desiring it, and I didn't get what I thought I was going to get initially, I remember thinking that first and then saying, well, I believe it. I believe what God said.

I have no evidence given to me except the promise of God. But the promise of God is better evidence than any other evidence I could hope for. God cannot lie.

I believe him. If he said he gives it, I believe he gives it. And Paul seemed to tie the receiving of the spirit to faith also in chapter three of Galatians.

Galatians chapter three, he said, verse two, let me ask you only this. Did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by hearing of faith? Of course, it's a rhetorical question. The answer is supposed to be obvious.

It was not by works of the law that you received the spirit, but by faith. And then a few verses later, verse five, he says in verse five, does he who supplies the spirit to you and

works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing of faith? Once again, it's faith in the word of God that ministers the spirit to you and that you see by in the same chapter, verse 14. Paul said so that that in Jesus Christ, the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Once again, three times in Galatians three, Paul is mentioning the role of faith in the giving of the Holy Spirit. In Mark chapter 11, verse 24, Jesus said, whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive it and you will have it. Certainly this would be true of anything God has truly promised.

And he has promised the Holy Spirit. So believe that you receive it and you will have it. He said in James chapter one, verses five through seven, he says, if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and will not scold, but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.

Let not that man think that he will receive anything of the Lord. The man who doesn't have faith, who asks and does not believe, but wavers should not think he's going to receive anything from the Lord. I would say that would apply also to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There's one other thing that we might use a prerequisite or goal, although it's really kind of one of those things that's negotiable to God can do it differently, but the laying on of hands. We have five instances in the book of acts that record people being baptized in the spirit three times out of five. It was by the laying on of hands in chapter eight, when Peter, John came and laid hands on Phillips converts in Samaria.

That's how the spirit was given to them. In Acts chapter nine, when Saul was in Damascus blind and Ananias came to him, laid hands on him. So he'd receive his sight and be filled with the spirit.

There was the laying on of hands there. And then in acts 19, the Ephesians we mentioned earlier, he laid hands on them and they received the Holy spirit to were filled with the spirit. The laying on of hands was the, apparently the typical normal means by which people were baptized in spirit.

But there were exceptions. There was certainly an exception in acts chapter two on the day of Pentecost. When everyone received the baptism of spirit without the laying on of hands.

One might argue, though there was no one there who had received it previously to do the laying on of hands. This was obviously an initial outpouring. This is a, we might say a unique experience, although it was similar to things were repeated later.

It was, it's always unique when it's the first time there's never gonna be another first

time. And so we can't really be sure that that's normative. But then of course, in the house of Cornelius, the spirit came upon them when they were not having hands laid upon them in the Acts chapter 10.

That might be an unusual case too, because Peter and the Jews who were with him, who were Christians probably wouldn't have laid hands on them. These were Gentiles. The Jews had real hangups about touching Gentiles.

If they touched a Gentile, even the robe of a Gentile touched them, they'd feel like they were unclean. And Peter wasn't altogether disabused of his prejudices on that particular occasion, as the story tells us. And I mean, he was learning, but he still had his, you know, his sensitivities, you know, and it may be that almost as a rebuke to the Jewish believers who probably were reluctant to touch them, God went ahead and baptized these uncircumcised Gentiles with the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands.

What that would tell me is the two cases that are exceptions that are recorded, they are both somewhat exceptional cases, but that doesn't mean there wouldn't be other exceptional cases today. I know people who got baptized in the spirit when they're all alone, praying in their room or something else. I don't have any acts to grind about the laying on of hands.

But I know that when I studied this up before I was baptized in spirit, I noticed that this was more the pattern, the normal pattern. And so I decided I would go and have someone lay hands on me. Now, here's how I was thinking about it.

I shared this at the YWAM school this week. If you want power, if you want electrical power to light your room or to run your computer or something like that, there's a number of things you could do. One is the most normal thing is to plug it into the wall.

There's a reliable source of power in the wires in the wall and you can tap right into it by direct contact with these prongs on your plug and that delivers the power to you. Or you can put up a lightning rod in the backyard and put a transformer on it and outlet it and plug into the lightning rod and pray that lightning will strike it at the time you want the electricity to arrive. Now, could that happen? Of course it could happen.

Would it happen reliably? Probably not. If you really, really wanted the power and you had access to a socket, would you do the lightning rod option? Probably not. It's much more risky, even if it would work.

You never know. Lightning striking is an exceptional situation. Power in the walls is constant and I believe that if I want to get baptized with the Spirit, I can pray by my bed and ask for lightning to strike or I can hook up to the existing source in the body of Christ, find people who are Spirit-filled and connect, as it were.

I think that's what the laying on of hands is sort of like. In any case, if it isn't like that, it

still is the case that if you want reliably to get what God has given in the past, to follow the procedure that was normative is probably the better idea. Maybe he'll make an exception in your case, but why require that? I didn't want to take chances.

I wanted to be filled with the Spirit, so I just jumped through that hoop like everyone else. By the way, the laying on of hands was actually a very normative practice in the early church, so much so that the writer of Hebrews spoke of it as one of the foundational teachings of the church. If you were asked to list the foundational teachings of Christianity, would you put the laying on of hands in there? Probably not, but the writer of Hebrews wanting to list the foundations of Christianity, the basics of Christianity, he said, well, there's repentance from dead works, there's faith toward God, and those certainly do seem like basics, there's the doctrine of baptisms, there's the laying on of hands, there's the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment.

That's the short list. I would have made a different short list, or I made a long list, I might eventually get to the laying on of hands, but that certainly would not be near the top. But in the early church, laying on of hands was almost as foundational as baptism, because I think it was the norm.

They baptized them, they laid hands on them, and that's how they normally got baptized in the Spirit. Now, what evidence is there if you have been baptized in the Spirit? Of course, there's many who believe that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence. That's the Pentecostal doctrine.

In the revival in the early 1900s in Los Angeles and elsewhere, where the Pentecostal movement started, speaking in tongues was a very normal phenomenon among those that got baptized in the Spirit. So normal that they decided that must be what always happens. And they formed a doctrine that we now call the initial evidence doctrine.

That is the doctrine that the initial evidence that you've been baptized in the Spirit is speaking in tongues. And by definition, then, if you don't speak in tongues, you have not been baptized in the Spirit, at least on the evidence of it. Is that so? Well, it is true, speaking in tongues was very normative in the early church.

We read of it in the book of Acts, to be sure. Did it always happen? I'm not sure that it always happened. Remember I mentioned there are five recorded cases of people getting baptized in the Spirit in the book of Acts.

Certainly, there were a lot more cases that were not recorded. I mean, people must have been getting saved and being baptized in the Spirit all over the mission field. But there are four specific cases mentioned.

I don't know how characteristic they are of the thousands and thousands of other cases that are not listed. But in those five cases, we do read that people spoke in tongues

three out of the five times. They spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost.

They spoke in tongues in the house of Cornelius. And they spoke in tongues in Ephesus in Acts 19. These things happened when the Spirit came upon them.

There are two other cases that we do not read of anyone speaking in tongues, but it might have happened, though it's not recorded. One is in Acts chapter 8, when Peter and John came down and ministered to Philip's converts in Samaria. We are not told whether they spoke in tongues or not.

We are told that something sensational happened that convinced Simon the sorcerer that miracle power was afoot here. It may well be that what he saw was speaking in tongues. I would not be wishing to say it wasn't, though we aren't told that it was.

It could be that something else happened. We can't argue from silence, so we can't say that speaking in tongues is a good candidate as a suggestion of what happened. Likewise, when Paul or Saul was prayed for by Ananias, he was filled with the Spirit, but we do not read that he spoke in tongues.

And so we don't know if he did or not. He might have, but we don't know if he did. Later in his life, he said he did.

He didn't say it happened when he was baptized in the Spirit, but he did say in 1 Corinthians 14, I speak in tongues more than you all. He does speak in tongues, but did that happen when hands were laid upon him by Ananias or did it happen at some later turn in his life? He does not tell us. As I mentioned in my own case, I didn't speak in tongues at the time, but I did later.

Maybe Paul did too. I don't know. In any case, we do know from three out of five recorded cases that people spoke in tongues.

The other two cases they might have, but we don't know. But even if we allow that in all five cases that we read of the little guys, even if they did speak in tongues, that doesn't mean that in all cases that are not recorded, this happened. Remember, this is a very tiny sampling of instances of people being filled with the Spirit.

Even if they always spoke in tongues, it doesn't mean there weren't cases where people didn't. I would say I've known people, including myself, who got baptized in the Spirit and didn't speak in tongues initially. But changes more important than that appeared in my life.

To me, speaking in tongues is not really proof at all that you're filled with the Spirit because witch doctors do the same thing in Haiti. I mean, demons can speak in tongues. So just because you speak in tongues doesn't mean you're baptized in the Spirit.

But if you are filled with the Spirit and you speak in tongues, that's no doubt connected. Those two things are connected. But if you don't speak in tongues, that's not necessarily a guarantee that you've missed out because the Bible does not teach anywhere that speaking in tongues is a necessary evidence of being baptized in the Spirit.

Clearly, it's normative in many respects, but not universal necessarily. I'd say what's more important is some of the other things, one of which is boldness, really. When the disciples were filled with the Spirit, they were characterized by boldness both times.

Do you know that Peter got filled with the Spirit twice? Once he got filled on the day of Pentecost. Then later, after he'd been threatened by the Sanhedrin, he went with the other disciples to pray for boldness, and they got filled with the Spirit again. Apparently, it needs to be renewed from time to time and maintained in your life.

Well, we do read in the book of Acts that Peter, who was so shy and scared and intimidated that he denied the Lord three times when Jesus was arrested, he stood up boldly and risked his life to proclaim Christ resurrected on the day of Pentecost. That boldness happened after he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The other case is in chapter 4 of Acts.

Chapter 4, verse 8, they were praying for boldness, and we read in verse 31 that they were filled with boldness. The place was shaken. You know, in 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul's talking to Timothy about the gift that he had received by the laying on of hands, which was probably the baptism of the Spirit.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul said in verse 6 and 7, For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us not a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Timothy tended to be timid, apparently.

Actually, Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16, he said, Timothy comes to you, let him be among you without fear. What a strange thing. Why would Timothy have to be fearful among the Corinthians? Well, we know that Paul wrote to Timothy and said, don't let anyone despise your youth.

Maybe Timmy felt he was just a little boy in the sight of other people and that people wouldn't respect him. But in any case, Paul said, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind. So stir up that gift that is in you by the laying on of my hands.

That is no doubt referring to remaining filled with the Spirit because one of the results is being less fearful and less timid and more bold. That certainly was the case in some of the cases we read of. But there's also two other things that we have to think about real quickly and that is charisma and character.

Charisma is the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is character. And I believe that everyone who's filled with the Spirit will begin to manifest some kind of a gift. But as I said, it's not necessarily a sensational gift.

There are gifts like helping and giving and leading and showing mercy. People who do those things, it may not be evident that that's miraculous. They might not even know that it's a gift.

People sometimes say, how do I know what my gift is? Some churches go so far as to have spiritual gifts, you know, evaluations or questionnaires and stuff. And they say, OK, check these boxes and we'll analyze it through our computer and say, OK, it looks like you've got this gift, you've got that gift from the questionnaire. I don't know, maybe those kinds of things might yield valuable information about your gift.

I've never tried one of those and I don't think I ever necessarily would. I wouldn't give one. I wouldn't administer that questionnaire.

But to my mind, if you have a gift, in all likelihood, other people will notice it before you do. Because they'll know what it is you're doing that ministers to them. If you're walking in the Spirit, you'll do a lot of different things.

But more and more people will comment, say, you know what I really get a lot out of you, you know what I see in you, you know what really ministers to me about you. And when you start getting the same answer, you've got a reason to think, I think that's how God used me. That must be what my gift is.

I didn't try to be a teacher. I wanted to be an evangelist. And that isn't my gift.

I can evangelize. Anyone can do that, I suppose. But I'm not gifted to evangelize particularly.

My gift is, I believe in teaching. But I didn't know that and I wasn't trying to be a teacher. I was asked to teach by my companions in high school in the Jesus moment.

And I kept being told, oh, that was really great. I learned a lot there. Or whatever, you know, a lot of positive feedback about it.

And it wasn't just people being polite. It was like enthusiastic, you know, saying, oh boy, I learned a lot. And of course, in the 47 years that I've been doing this, I've had occasion to get a lot of people confirming that this seems to be the way I'm used.

I'm not used in prophecy. I'm not used in evangelism so much. I'm not used in healing or doing those things.

But I'm willing to just do the thing that people are getting blessed by because that's what God is using me in. But again, Mother Teresa didn't evangelize. She showed mercy.

But she had no question in her mind after a while what it was that people found to be a blessing about her. And everyone who walks in the Spirit will first of all be walking in love. And as such, will be ministering to those around them in some way or another.

The way that comes natural is the way that you're probably the least likely to notice. And yet it's probably the way that God is using you. Because just like a fish doesn't know it's wet, when you're living in the realm of the Holy Spirit, you're not aware necessarily of the ways in which you're contributing or interacting with some of the spiritual needs of other people.

You're just doing what you do as a Christian. And people say, boy, isn't that guy a blessing? Doesn't whenever he does this, doesn't that really minister to you? I mean, as you walk in the Spirit, you will be gifted. That doesn't mean you'll know what your gift is.

I don't even think everyone has to know what their gift is. It might help, because Paul says, your gift is teaching, then teach. If it's giving, then do it in liberality.

If it's serving, do it, you know, this way. But even if you don't know what your gift is, if you simply walk in the Spirit, God will be using you in some gifting. In all likelihood, you'll know what it is before long.

But even if you don't, that doesn't prevent you from being used in that way. It's God, not you, that's necessarily making the impact. So having gifts, some power, power of the Holy Spirit to affect spiritual and even supernatural change in people's lives, that's one of the results of being baptized in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit.

And the other would be the fruit of the Spirit. Now, some people who are nervous about the gifts of the Spirit, and there are certain cessationists is the term for those who believe gifts ceased in the days of the apostles, they don't think the gifts are for today. They'll sometimes say, well, you can have those gifts, I'll take the fruit of the Spirit.

I think, who gave us the right to decide which things we'll accept from God, which things we won't? Why should I say, I'll take the gifts, you take the fruit, or I'll take the fruit, you take the gifts? Doesn't the Bible say God gives gifts to all of us and expects fruit from us? The fruit and the gifts are both, in a sense, mandatory, in a sense normative. And the fruit of the Spirit, though, I think is more important in some ways. The gifts are necessary for service, that's what you do.

The fruit is a description of what you are. And one of the main concerns of the Holy Spirit is to transform you into the image of Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3, 18, he said, we all with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory into that same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord is changing us from glory to glory into the image of Christ. And that means we're becoming more like Him by the work of the Spirit in our life. And if the Holy

Spirit is making me more like Christ, I'm going to look more loving, more patient, more good, more faithful.

These are fruits of the Spirit. As you read Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23, you read a partial list of what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. Now, these things are not power gifts.

These are not things that even necessarily have to do with your function in the body. They have to do with who you are, how Christ-like you are. The Spirit produces in you the nature of Christ and makes you more loving and so forth.

I like the illustration that Juan Carlos Ortiz gave in his book Disciple back in the 70s. It was a great book in some ways. It had some parts that led to the shepherding moment, which wasn't so great.

But he was talking about, he was from Argentina, he was an Assembly of God pastor, Pentecostal. But he was writing about the Holy Spirit and he was saying, he says, you know, in Argentina, Buenos Aires, where I'm from, he says, we don't have many trees. And at Christmas time, people like to have trees in the house.

So they make these artificial trees, real cheap things, he said, made of wire and paper. He says, you go down and buy them in the store for two or three dollars, he said. You bring them into the house, you hang stuff on them.

And in Argentina, they'd hang gifts on the trees. So he said a cheap tree worth two or three dollars might, on Christmas Eve, have expensive gifts hanging on it. There might be a Rolex watch or a diamond ring hanging on a tree that costs two dollars or three dollars.

He said, as you see that tree and all those dazzling gifts, you might be very impressed. But you know, the very next day after Christmas, that tree is out on the curb waiting for the garbage collector to pick it up because it's worth nothing. It had valuable gifts put on it, but it didn't produce them.

It just, they were just hung up on it. They tell you nothing about the value of the tree. But he said, if you have a good orange tree growing on your yard, you get good oranges on it.

And you know it's a good orange tree because it bears good fruit. Because a fruit tree produces fruit. A tree does not produce gifts.

It produces fruit. And therefore the fruit tells you far more about the health and value of the tree than finding valuable gifts about it. There have been many people who had great gifts of the Spirit, but they weren't really great people.

Unfortunately, the Pentecostal movement has been filled with people who seem to have

a lot of power in some ways or another, either as evangelists or healers or something like that, whose personal lives were a shambles. A. A. Allen, who was a healing evangelist back in the 40s, he was an alcoholic and drunkard. He'd show up at his meetings drunk, stumbling.

He'd walk out on stage, he'd sober up. Supernaturally, he'd minister to people. They get saved.

They get healed. He'd go off stage, he'd be stumbling drunk again. It's like he had a gift, but he didn't have much fruit.

He didn't have the fruit of self-control. That's one of the gifts, one of the fruit of the Spirit. The man who laid hands on me to be baptized in the Spirit, powerful evangelist and healer.

There were blind eyes opened through his prayers. Reportedly, there were some dead raised too in Africa through his ministry. I didn't see that, but I don't have serious doubts about it, knowing the power that he did operate in.

He preached mightily. Thousands and thousands of young people were saved through his preaching. When I first heard him preach, I was electrified.

I've been a Christian all my life. I just had never heard that kind of powerful evangelism. I wanted to go forward again.

I didn't, but that's because I was already saved. This guy died of AIDS because he fell into homosexuality and destroyed him. He died young.

It's not uncommon for people to dazzle the church with amazing gifts that God has given them, but they're like a tree that's not itself superior. The tree's not superior. The gifts are, but it can contain them because somebody superior put the gifts on them.

The gifts reflect not the tree, but whoever it is that put the gifts on them. The powerful gifts shown through weak vessels in the Pentecostal movement show the great power of God. They don't show you much of anything about the vessel, about the man.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. So having gifts of the Spirit as important as it is doesn't tell you that you're spiritual. You can be extremely gifted and very, very carnal because, I mean, you wouldn't be gifted if you hadn't been filled with the Spirit, but once you've been filled with the Spirit, you have to walk in the Spirit.

If you don't, you can degenerate. You can lose ground, but the gift sometimes is still there. People say the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance, Romans 11, and that God keeps the gifts on people sometimes even when they don't deserve them.

But fruit is another story. If you meet somebody who's consistently loving or patient,

self-controlled, kind, humble, whatever, you're looking at fruit. You're looking at character.

You're looking at something that really tells you something about the kind of Christian they are, and this, I think, in God's sight is even more important. As important as it is for us to be useful to the body of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit are needed for this, it's also very, even more so important that we are what God wants us to be. Remember Jesus said, not all who say to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father and of His, as many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name.

We cast out demons in your name. We did many mighty works in your name. Those are gifts of the Spirit, and I'll say, I never knew you.

Depart from me. You know, even a non-Christian, God might do something through. Saul, pursuing David, fell among the prophets, he prophesied that he was not a believer himself.

Balaam prophesied. Even Caiaphas, while plotting to kill Jesus, prophesied according to John chapter 11. A gift of the Spirit doesn't prove that you're spiritual.

Paul said, if I could speak with tongues of men and angels that don't have love, there's nothing more to it than noise. If I had the faith to remove mountains, if I could, you know, give away all I have to the poor by the gift of giving, but if I don't have love, I'm nothing. Love is a fruit of the Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit are not that valuable to you anyway, if you don't have love, if you don't have the character of Christ. Charisma and character, the two normative manifestations of a spiritual life. There will be some gifting.

There will be fruit, and the fruit will be that which makes you appear and be truly more like Jesus. Now, I should quit there because our time is up. I don't want to take another break and come back for more, just because the time, it's gotten so late.

I'm going to take a few minutes more and just finish this out by looking at Ephesians 5, and starting where we've been already and going beyond that, Ephesians 5, 18 through 21. Paul said, do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. And this is where he said in the Greek, be being filled with the Spirit.

This is something to be maintained. You get filled with the Spirit, but then you have to be being filled. You have to continue to walk in the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit in an ongoing way.

And he says, be being filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks

always for everything to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Now, there's three things he says you need to be doing in order to be being filled with the Spirit. This is not how you get filled with the Spirit.

This is how you live a Spirit-filled life, how you maintain a fullness of the Spirit rather than letting your spiritual life diminish and deteriorate. You speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. You make melody in your heart to the Lord.

First, you have a worshipful heart. And when you speak, what comes out of your heart, the psalms and so forth that come out of your mouth are coming out of the making melody in your heart to the Lord. Your heart is worshiping the Lord.

I've known people who they just sing all the time when they walk through the house. They sing praise to God. When they wake up in the morning, I know a guy who when he woke up the morning before his eyes were open, he was singing praise to God.

And that man is a man who's been very consistently a Spirit-filled man in the years I've known him. And I'm not surprised. He's filling his heart with an environment that the Holy Spirit would be glad to fill, a worshipful heart.

And he said, giving thanks and everything to God the Father. Giving thanks and everything is a very important thing because if you're not giving thanks, you're being unthankful. And unthankfulness leads to discontent and resentment and bitterness and so forth.

And if you're not consciously expressing gratitude to God all the time about everything, there'll be some things you'll start to grumble about. There's some things you'll start to be upset about and your heart will darken. Your inner life will not be conducive to God's Spirit always being at home there and filling there.

Your thankfulness, your gratitude to God for everything. And there's always something to thank Him for. I realize there are things that you wouldn't be inclined to thank Him for because they're not good things in themselves.

But there's a couple ways to look at this. One is that even those things that are not things you would naturally thank God for are things that God has allowed to take place for your good. The Bible says that all things are worked together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

So even the really hard things that are not things you're thankful for at the moment may give you occasion to be thankful later on because it's going to work out something really good. I've had some serious trials I won't go into right now, but all of them at the time just seemed disastrous. They seemed like it was a disaster for my life, for my ministry.

And I remember thinking after one of them, I mean, I love God and He can do this to me if He wants to. But I don't understand because my ministry is over. My ministry is just over.

This is done. And I thought I was wrong. And of course, God turned things around and not everything.

Some of the things that were a trial are still bad, but they're not bad for me because God has used those things to change my circumstances in ways that I'm thankful for. And the Bible indicates that God does that. If you're trusting Him and you're going through trials, He's using those to bring something about.

If by faith you can thank Him for the trials, not because you're glad to be going through a trial, but because you know that God has given you what you need to become something that's going to be good for you, that's an act of faith. But if you don't have the faith to do that, there's still always something to thank Him for, even in trials, if not for the trial itself, certainly for trials that you don't have. Like the man who said, I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.

You know, it's a trial not to have shoes. It's a greater trial to have no feet. I can thank God I have feet even if I have no shoes.

I can thank God that I can see the people in front of me. And I didn't wake up blind like some people did today. And some have all their lives.

I have many benefits that many people don't have. I live in America. I don't live in Iran or Syria.

There's no one breaking into the house to cut my head off here. You know, I might have people who don't like me, but I've got a lot to thank God for. Let's face it.

If I focus on what I'm not thankful for, instead of what I can and should be thankful for, I'll be negative. The reason Eve fell is because she was not thankful for all the trees in the garden that God gave her. She was unthankful that God was holding one thing from her.

All the trees you can have, you just can't have that one. But I want that one too. Well, can't you just be thankful that God gave you so much? Then you won't be coveting that tree as well.

We wouldn't all be in trouble if she'd been thankful. If we remember that God has deprived us of some things, that's because he wants to and he can. That's his business.

He's God. There are things he hasn't given me that I would very much like to have. And same with you.

But he's given me far more things than I deserve that are good. And those are the things

I need to focus on. As I remain thankful, it keeps your soul clean.

It keeps your soul light. And it creates and maintains an environment that is spiritual for the Holy Spirit to honor. Paul says you need to remain filled with the Spirit by making melody in your heart and giving thanks for everything and submitting to one another.

This is a really important thing. Being a servant. Adopting a servant's attitude instead of thinking you should be getting your way.

As long as you think you should be getting your way, you're going to be pushing for your way and you're going to be being unspiritual. That's just the fact. The Holy Spirit's guidance is going to have you serve others, not demand that people serve you.

Being submissive in your heart to others is certainly one of the things that Paul says you need to do in order to be filled with the Spirit. Maintaining these attitudes of worship and thankfulness and I guess self-denial, selflessness, service, submission to others. Caring more about others needs and others happiness than your own.

That's what Paul said in Philippians chapter 2. He said let each esteem others better than self and you know look not to your own interests but others interests. And in Romans 12 10 he said in honor you should be preferring one another to yourself. As long as you're putting others ahead of yourself, you'll never be discontented.

You might be disappointed that they don't have more that you'd like to give them but you're not going to be worried about what you're not getting. As long as you're focused on you, the Holy Spirit is grieved I'm sure. But as long as you're focused on worshipping God and serving others, that's what I was taught in Sunday school as a little kid.

You know the acronym for joy, Jesus, others, you. Put them in that order. Put Jesus first, others next, you last.

That's the prescription for joy. The Bible doesn't say that in that way but that's just a very fortuitous way the English language works. That particular word is a great acrostic for you keep Jesus first in your life.

You put others ahead of yourself. You put your own interests last and you'll never be an unhappy person. And you'll feel your heart will be the right kind of environment.

It'll remain clean and it'll be that which the Holy Spirit can use and fill and you'll be maintaining that gift. You'll be stirring up that gift that was in you that Paul talked about. Well I normally go a lot longer on points like that but I've already run over quite a bit so I'm going to close there.