

Over the past 25 plus years, North Way Christian Community has been blessed with a theological and practical balance in our understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The intent of this brief document is to re-state North Way's position on how the Holy Spirit works in our lives and what we as individuals and as a church should expect the Holy Spirit to do in order to bring about the fullness of the life of Jesus in us.

It is necessary that we begin by understanding that everything about the Holy Spirit points us back to Jesus. Conversely, Jesus frequently points us to the Holy Spirit as the source of power to live the life that he calls us to live throughout the Gospels. In fact I would say that it is

- impossible for the **person** of Jesus to be made visible in our character except by allowing the Holy Spirit to come in and dwell with us, and
- we cannot have the **power** of Jesus flowing through our lives unless the Holy Spirit comes in and overflows in us.

Now, of course, the danger of language is that if we use terms like "impossible" or "cannot", it implies that there is absolutely no evidence that the Lord is in a life unless we have defined our terms exactly the same way. This is where I want to urge the reader to be very careful to understand that we're not about trying to define terms to the point where we eliminate the reality that all the work of God's grace in our lives falls within a certain **continuum** and therefore some of the presence and some of the power of Jesus can be manifest in the beginning stages of the Christian life, but should be much more demonstrable and evident as we mature and move toward the other end of the spectrum.

The Holy Spirit dwells within and overflows in believers. One of the clearest and simplest metaphors to understand how the Holy Spirit works in our lives is to see the language that Jesus used in John's gospel.

"The Spring of Water." This is the first expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit that occurs *within* us to satisfy the thirst in *our life*. This happens when we are saved. In John 4:13-14 when Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* (NIV) Clearly, the Holy Spirit is described as an indwelling presence which satisfies the thirst in our own personal hearts. Notice that the word *spring* is singular – it refers to something for our personal need.

“The Streams” The second dynamic of the Holy Spirit flows *outward* to serve the needs of others. The overflow of our lives makes us vessels of Christ’s life to satisfy other people’s thirst. In John 7:37-39, Jesus says *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”*³⁸ *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”*³⁹ *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

Clearly, the Holy Spirit is described here as empowering the believer to reach out, to serve, to witness, to love and to give. This is the *flowing out* of God’s life into others. Notice that the words *“streams”* is plural in these verses. The one spring of water overflows and becomes many streams as God works through us to minister His love to many others. We are the well of water and God moves the well to the thirsty people. This indicates that we will be equipped to meet the needs of many people!

And so, it is imperative that we begin by understanding that the Holy Spirit, as a member of the Trinity, both *indwells us* and *empowers us*; he has a two-fold role just as Jesus said he would. It would seem that every believer would desire for both of those experiences in the same way that Jesus fulfilled the experience of **redeemer** and **restorer**. Jesus didn’t just forgive us for our sins, he restored us to the fullness of life!

Important Terminology

One of the most frequent comments that we encounter about the Holy Spirit is “when we receive Christ, don’t we receive the Holy Spirit as well?” Or, “when we receive Christ, aren’t we baptized in the Holy Spirit?”

This is one of those places where the Greek language is very helpful. It’s clear that all who come to Christ are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1COR 12:13a). In other words, the Holy Spirit is the agent that immerses them into the body of Christ and helps them to be fully part of God’s family.

It is also accurate to say that when one receives Christ you receive the Holy Spirit as the presence of God in your heart (Romans 8:9). However, it seems clear that Jesus had something else in mind. He says in Acts 1:5 *“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* (NIV) Friends, there are six different expressions to describe this same event throughout the remainder of the book of Acts. It is not accurate to say that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is the only language that can be used for the experience of the overflow of the Spirit in your life. However, being baptized *with* the Holy Spirit is different than being baptized *by* the Holy Spirit.

Being baptized with the Holy Spirit is the language of “overflow”. The word “baptizo” is a picture that is something that is immersed, or sunken, much like a ship would be that has fallen to the bottom of the ocean floor. It is completely immersed and overflowing in the water. Likewise, Jesus is saying that when we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, we are completely immersed and overflowing with His life.

Let me be clear, but kind, when I say that such an overflow of the Spirit only comes to people who open themselves up to God and are willing to receive it. People who are spiritually hungry and thirsty enough will experience the fullness of God's Spirit. However, if one is negative or unbelieving, God will not impose His blessing upon us!

So, whether you use the term baptized, poured out, given, received, filled or coming upon, these all have to do with what it means to be "overflowing" in the Holy Spirit. This gift comes from the heart of Jesus to all who ask him because he does desire your blessing! (Luke 11:13)

I cannot overstate how important it is that we come to Jesus to be filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. In my own life, this was the difference between seeking specific experiences or manifestations of the Spirit and coming to my Savior and friend and asking him for the gift that he promised to give. It was at that moment more than 30 years ago that I realized that Jesus would not withhold this gift from me, nor will he withhold it from you!

And so we can see that this experience is

- not strange and impersonal
- not to be feared
- a distinct event

I know that in my experience this helped to move me from expecting something overpowering or mysterious to happen to me and brought me into the realm of my natural relationship with Jesus and receiving the gift that he desired for me to have through faith.

Now, according to Scripture in Acts 2 there will be many "manifestations" that may take place when the Holy Spirit does overflow your heart. One of those may be a "prayer language" or "another tongue" which we will discuss in another section.

Perhaps more important would be a sense of profound love and worship for the Lord, (Acts 2:11b), an inner desire to share this love with others which may have been missing in the past (Acts 2:14 and following), and the flow of the love of God for one another in the community of faith (Acts 2:44-45).

When Can I Be Filled With The Spirit?

Having established the fact that Jesus wants all believers to be filled or overflowing with the Holy Spirit, the question is often asked about "when" this can happen. There are four main views that have emerged over the years according to broad Christian tradition:

1. The baptism (the filling) with the Holy Spirit is an event that happens simultaneously with salvation.
2. Salvation and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are two separate and distinct events (although they may occur at the same time) once and forever.

3. Baptism with the Holy Spirit happened one time only on the day of Pentecost in order to bring to birth the early church (and is no longer necessary because we have the Word of God.)
4. Salvation and baptism with the Holy Spirit are two separate and distinct events, followed by many “infillings” of the Holy Spirit as a part of the normal Christian life.

John the Baptist, who heralded Jesus’ coming, said clearly in John 1:29 “here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”, that is, who brings salvation. John then announced “this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”, that is one who empowers his followers. It seems clear from this and numerous other scriptures that there were two distinct works of Jesus in an individual’s heart. One is for salvation and one is for living His life today!

It is this writer’s opinion that many people have received Jesus as Savior and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their lives and have had significant change take place over the years. They believe they “already have the Holy Spirit” and they are correct! The real issue that they have to address is have they received “all” that Jesus wanted them to have in order to live life in full obedience and fruitfulness that Jesus purposed for them.

Several times in the book of Acts (see Acts 8 and 19) it is clear that the first Apostles were concerned that the people who heard the Gospel also knew about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Acts 19:2

According to Ephesians 5:18 we are to seek repeated “infillings” of the Holy Spirit on a regular basis. The Greek present perfect tense is correctly translated “be being filled” which indicates an ongoing experience throughout ones lifetime. Of course there is a “first time” of being filled, but it is something that should occur consistently in a fully devoted believer.

All we are really saying is that when we ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit we’re saying to the Lord “ I not only want the person of Jesus made real in my life by your Holy Spirit but I also want the power of Jesus to work through me to affect other people for the Kingdom of God.”

What are the Conditions of Receiving the Fullness of the Spirit?

Although we will not take time to study the passage in Acts 10 – 11, there’s a wonderful story about Cornelius, the centurion of a regiment of the Roman army. He and all his household are described as “devout and God fearing” (Acts 10:2). The Lord sent Peter to minister to Cornelius which was the pivotal moment for the Gospel being taken to the Gentile population, not just Jewish believers.

The story of Cornelius and his household reveals the terms or conditions that are important for a person to receive the fullness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Again, let me affirm, that this is always by grace and rarely repeated in the same way, but there are four qualities from this passage that are very helpful:

1. Obedience; wanting God's will

Cornelius had a heart for God. He was devout, which means "whole hearted". He had a simple, genuine reverence for God—a fear or healthy respect for Him. However, Cornelius did not yet have a full relationship with God as we would know it. There's no indication that he had received Jesus or been born again but his heart was open to God and he desired to be obedient.

There is no substitute for a genuine hunger for God's fullness in your life. Cornelius demonstrates this.

2. Humility

Just as Cornelius, people who desire baptism with the Holy Spirit should come with an honest, humble heart, open before the Lord, trusting his promises and desiring all that He has for them.

3. Purity

Cornelius evidences a desire to be pure as well as humble. He desired God-like character which is so essential if one is to be a vessel that is filled with the Spirit of God.

4. Receptiveness

Finally, an individual has to be receptive or willing to receive what the Lord wants to give you! In Acts 10:47, Peter describes this as what happens to Cornelius and his entire household. Willingness and receptivity are key factors to receiving this gift from Jesus.

What about Speaking in Tongues?

It's not the purpose of this document to do an in-depth study of this specific spiritual gift. However, one cannot talk about the fullness of the Holy Spirit without some mention of the gift of tongues as it is clearly associated with the Holy Spirit's work in numerous passages in Scripture in the gospels, Acts and the epistles.

I often use the term "spiritual language" when it comes to speaking in tongues because I believe it correctly identifies that the source of the unknown language that you're speaking is "spiritual", that is, the Holy Spirit within you. In most every instance in the New Testament when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit or baptized with the Holy Spirit, they are given the empowerment of speaking in a new tongue, a spiritual language.

We do not hold the position at North Way that the only true evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that you have the capacity of speaking in a new spiritual language. That is, the gift of tongues is not the only specific sign of being filled with the Spirit.

However, let me quickly say that I believe that every person who is filled with the Spirit has the capacity to speak in a spiritual language because of the fact that God's Spirit is overflowing His life through you! Normally, it is simply a matter of further teaching, spending time alone with the Lord, and understanding how to surrender to the Spirit's fullness in your life.

It is also helpful to underscore that there are two kinds of expressions of "speaking in tongues". One, it is a gift for the good of the individual believer.. Paul makes it clear that a spiritual language, when exercised in personal prayer or worship, builds up the believer. "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself" (1Cor14:4). Paul, the writer of one third of the New Testament, said "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you" (1Cor14:18). I don't believe he was bragging about his ability as much as he was affirming the fact that it is an important part of his spiritual life.

The second expression of the gift of speaking in tongues is the public gift when one speaks aloud in a tongue with other people present in such a way as to declare a message to the people. It is a gift for the common good.

It is in those instances that the expression of the spiritual language (speaking in tongues) should always be interpreted. In other words, another individual or sometimes the person who gives the message in tongues will interpret so that the people understand what is being said.

There is no small amount of confusion when people hear someone speaking in a tongue softly in the row or seat next to them and they wonder why there is not an interpretation. The reason normally is because that person is using their own individual spiritual language and not making a public statement. They are not out of order, nor do they need to be disciplined.

Other Expressions of the Holy Spirit

Although the script of this paper is not intended to include all the spiritual gifts that can be manifested as explained in 1 Corinthians 12 & 14 and Romans 12 we do want to make reference to two specific gifts that are occasionally exercised in our public gatherings.

These gifts are what are commonly known as the Word of Knowledge and the Word of Wisdom. This occurs when a believer, under the _____ of the Holy Spirit, speaks a general word to the congregation that gives insight or clarity to a specific situation or circumstance that may be of corporate or individual interest.

At North Way, such words are submitted to an elder who has access to the teaching pastor of the day. The elder considers the word and then passes it to the pastor if he believes that it is timely and should be shared with the congregation. It is the pastor's responsibility to determine if the timing is appropriate and how the word should be delivered.

We have found that the Word of Knowledge and the Word of Wisdom (wisdom is basically knowledge applied in specific ways) have been of great encouragement to the body of Christ and almost invariably used to help the congregation understand God's heart concerning a specific situation or circumstance.

Such words can also be applied to individuals but must also have affirmation of the spirit of the person who is receiving them.

Why not Now?!

For far too long there's been nothing but debate and discussion about the fullness of the Spirit. Well-meaning believers on both sides of the position have simply "staked a claim" to their spiritual high ground. Instead of moving as one body we have spent too much time debating and disagreeing about this wonderful enablement that God wants us to enjoy as part of our spiritual journey.

In my experience, people who have had the blessing of the fullness of the Spirit in their life experience a transformation on a number of levels. What was once a burden can soon become a blessing to them as they discover that the power of the Holy Spirit is truly at work in them to bring about;

- A greater love for God and a desire to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)
- A deeper love for others which enables them to overlook faults and failures and to care for their needs.
- A greater freedom to share the Gospel and be witnesses to the lost (Acts 1:8)
- An expectation that God will use you to do other miraculous things as specifically described in the New Testament (1Cor 12:7-11, 28)
- The ability for God to use your tongue as an instrument of blessing rather than sarcasm or silliness. This is no small thing. James says that the tongue is the most difficult member of the body to be tamed! Why not let the Holy Spirit help you overcome this challenge!

What are my next steps?

If you have not received the fullness of the Spirit, there are two things that you can do:

1. Examine your heart and see if you meet the conditions that have been described earlier. Understand that you come to Jesus, the giver of the gift, and simply acknowledge your deep desire to receive all that he has for you and pray earnestly that he would touch you in that moment and give you the gift that you long for.

You may or may not have a dramatic experience. That's not at all important. What has to happen is that you must believe that Jesus will do what he promised and then you will know that you received this wonderful gift.

Move forward by Faith and praise God for the fact that He will not fail you or forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

2. Ask for others in the body of Christ to pray with you and "lay hands" upon you. This is a very common way that the Holy Spirit is imparted from one person to another. This takes place many times in the New Testament and is an indication of the fact that God uses us as instruments of his blessing.

Don't be fearful or shy about it. Simply ask an Elder or other church leader if they would pray for you to receive the fullness of the Spirit and you'll find many people who are more than willing to help you discover this great blessing which can significantly change your spiritual journey.

With profound gratitude and blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Jay Passavant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Jay Passavant
Senior Pastor