



Gaining Control of your Life

Note: The Scripture references in this hand-out are taken from the New King James Version.

Warm-up Discussion: The Cross-Talk curriculum titles this lesson as “Needle on Full.” Is having your needle on full a good thing or a bad thing?

If you’re talking about a road trip in West Texas, it is definitely a good thing. However, if you’re talking about your life and this applies to your work, schedules, family activities, and other commitments; this is a far different feeling.

How it is that things which fill our lives actually control us?

Things that fill our lives limit our ability to make choices because the choices have already been made for us.

The Bible exhorts us to fill our lives with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to fill your life with the Holy Spirit?

The extent to which a person is filled with the Spirit is a choice they make, it is an act of the will. The filling of the Holy Spirit refers to our yielding our lives to be under God’s gracious control. This seems contradictory and is at odds with the prevailing world-view: giving up control of your life to be in control... but it is a clear Biblical concept...

Matthew 10:39 - He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

The Bible also says that those who are living in a state separate from God are in bondage...

Galatians 5:1 - Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

How is it that a person who lives separate from Christ is in bondage?

Those who do not have a relationship with God can not please Him and so they do not have the option to act in their own best interests from an eternal perspective. Those who know the Lord have an option to act in accordance with God’s will thus pleasing Him and laying up treasures in heaven for themselves.

Let’s take a look at a passage to help us better understand the concept of being filled with the Spirit...

Ephesians 5:15-21

¹⁵See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another in the fear of God.

What does this passage say we should do to be wise?

- Walk circumspectly – being careful about what we do, analyzing it in light of what God says we should do.
- Redeem the time – make good use of our time by acting in accord with God’s will... we have limited days in our mortal bodies and how we use our time will have a bearing on our eternity.
- Not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit.

Why do we need to redeem the time?

Because the days are evil – time is part of this world and it is passing away with the world. If we just bide our time in this world, we will have nothing of lasting value to show for it at the end of our lives. Instead, we should make good use of our time to accomplish things of eternal value...

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 - For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Why do you suppose God designed our lives to be filled with His presence?

God desires a personal relationship with each one of us... that is why He created us in His image with will to freely choose a relationship with Him. Since we have the opportunity to spend eternity with Him, life is a test to determine first who wants a relationship with their Creator

and second to what extent they what to experience what the Creator has to offer.

Why do you think Paul contrasted being controlled by the Holy Spirit with being controlled by wine?

Drunkenness is an excellent analogy for not being in control of your life... People who are drunk are impaired, they say and do things that they would not consider if they were in control of themselves. They may think they have control but they are deceived by their intoxication. Those who are under the control of the Holy Spirit are in that state because they have chosen to be that way.

What does Paul tell us is clear evidence that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit? (see Ephesians 5:19-21)

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

Who is the “one another” that we are to be filled with the Spirit in front of?

Certainly this applies to those in church meetings but I believe that this also applies to those who are prospects for being part of the church... notice that it says, “*giving thanks always.*” There is no time when it is not to our advantage to being filled with the Spirit.

- Just like worship is not just for Sunday mornings, it is supposed to be a lifestyle; being filled with the Spirit should not be limited to church activities.
- Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost where 3,000 people were saved (Acts 2:4) and before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8).
- Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit when he sought to witness to the proconsul on the island to Paphos (Acts 13:9).

What does it mean to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs?

I take this literally that we should sing together in corporate worship, but also this includes a deeper aspect...

- Psalms are expressions of what we have seen God doing in our lives, it is sharing a testimony of our personal relationship with God.
- Hymns praise God whether we speak with music or not... praise is always music to one's ears. God's people have reason to rejoice, and to sing for joy – our countenance should reflect our joy.
- Spiritual songs may contain a greater variety of matter including taking actions that glorify God... after all actions do speak louder than words.

What does it mean to sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord?

We should get control of our thought life to think about things that glorify God... acknowledging Him for what He has done, praying to Him and meditating on His Word.

How should we give thanks always for all things?

We should continually be acknowledging the good things in our life and thanking the Source of these good things in our prayers. And this applies to all aspects of our lives, there is nothing about us that God is not interested in...

Matthew 10:30 - the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

...God has other aspects of my life to keep track of.

Why should we submit to each other in the fear of God?

While it pleases our Father when we get along with each other by submitting, the reverse is also true, it displeases Him when we sow discord by not submitting. There will be a judgment regarding how we have done in this regard and so there will be eternal ramifications.

How is it that we can gain control of our life by yielding to the Holy Spirit?

God created us for a purpose and He wants us to fulfill that purpose. When we are yielded to the Holy Spirit, we are working toward fulfilling His purpose for us. This is the most rewarding thing we can do, it feels right and God will make us successful doing it.

Wrap-up Discussion: How do we apply what we've learned about being filled with the Spirit to our work?

- speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs – acknowledging the hand of God in the good things and the bad, doing things that represent Christ and Christians in a good light.
- singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord – involving God in our work praying about our needs and seeking His will in our decisions.
- giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – thanking God for His help in our work.
- submitting to one another in the fear of God – having a servant's heart in the course of our work.

What practical things can we do to be more yielded to the Spirit in our work?

Make sure that your priorities are set through an eternal perspective filter. Don't allow ourselves to become over-committed... we all need margin to take advantage of the opportunities that God presents us with and for our own well-being emotionally, physically, and spiritually.