

## QUESTION: Being filled with the Holy Spirit...

### 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

### 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

"The spiral is a spiritual picture of your life. Only it's incomplete. And, of course, the way you complete it will differ from everyone else's life story. All of us begin the same – on the spiral down away from God, toward ever greater destruction. That's life without the Spirit. But life with the Spirit is another story – the story of an upward spiral toward God. That means toward ever greater likeness to Jesus and ever more intimate companionship with Him.

"The glorious spiral up: the more I know Him, the more I trust Him; the more I trust Him, the more I love Him; the more I love Him, the more I obey Him; the more I obey Him, the more I become like Him; the more I become like Him, the greater capacity I have to love Him; and the more I love Him... That's no halfway Christianity – it's full throttle!"

"The New Testament often uses picture language to describe the relation the Spirit desires to have with us. The picture word he uses is "full." We are to be constantly filled with the Spirit, Paul teaches (Eph 5:18). But what does "full" mean literally? There are three ways the word is used in Scripture to describe what happens between you and the Spirit. So if you ask me, "Are you Spirit filled?" my answer would depend on which idea you have in mind. Depending on your meaning, I might say, "Yes" or "Sometimes" or "You tell me!"

"Occasionally in the New Testament "full" describes a relationship between two people, and you're full of the Spirit when He's in full control. So if you mean who's in charge in your life, I'd have to say, "God is, so far as I know my own heart."

"But sometimes the Bible seems to refer to a subjective feeling – a person *feels* full, just as he does when he finishes Thanksgiving dinner. "Filled with joy in the Holy Spirit," Scripture says. For many people that's what they have in mind when they say they're filled with the Spirit – they have that ecstatic inner sense of God's presence. If you have that meaning in mind when you ask whether I'm Spirit-filled, to be honest I'd have to answer, "Sometimes."

"By far the most common Bible use of the phrase "*filled with the Spirit*," however, is something else entirely. It's the *result* of the relationship, the visible evidence of God being in charge. If a person is truly Spirit-filled, there'll be lots of evidence in a supernatural quality of life: attitudes and actions that defy human analysis, and abilities to make an eternal impact through ministry to others. If that's what you have in mind when you ask if I'm Spirit-filled, I'd have to respond, "You tell me." For in Scripture you never find a person claiming to be Spirit-filled. It's always used to describe others: "They, filled with Spirit..." For example, the evidence might have been a supernatural response to adversity – courage or joy or peace when you would have expected fear or discouragement. Or the evidence might be in powerful ministry. Others saw that and identified the source as full-blown Holy Spirit activity."