

Empowered by the Spirit

Purpose: To lead you to make a commitment to live by God's power, through being filled by the Holy Spirit, on a moment-by-moment basis.

Objectives: By the end of this lesson you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the three types of people
2. Explain Spiritual Breathing
3. Give yourself to the Holy Spirit's control by faith.

Key Verses: Ephesians 5:18-21

The instructor may want to bring copies of the booklet "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?" to hand out after class. Three good sources to read to help prepare to teach this are Transferable Concept #2 "How to Experience God's Love and Forgiveness," Transferable Concept #3 "How to be Filled With the Holy Spirit," and the booklet "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?"

I. Introduction

Joe has been a Christian for some time now. He's currently a freshman and it's his first time to live away from home. He tries to read the Bible and pray every so often because he knows he should, but there's no real strong desire and he doesn't get much out of it. When he goes to church or to any Christian activity he feels encouraged and uplifted, but that doesn't seem to last very long.

When he's driving in traffic he easily gets impatient and angry at the other drivers. And, often Joe finds himself very critical of others and it's not uncommon to get in an argument with his roommate, or at least ponder how he hates certain aspects of him.

When he is away from his Christian brothers and sisters, there's little joy in his life and God seems far away. It's easy for Joe to go back to his old habit of swearing. He tries to stay busy so that he doesn't have to think about God too much. It seems like the harder Joe tries to please God the more discouraged he becomes. So Joe comes to you for help.

As Joe's Bible Study leader, how could you help him experience the abundant Christian life?

1. Is this how the Christian life is supposed to be?
2. Look up John 10:10 and Ephesians 5:19-21
3. What suggestions do you have for how to help Joe?

The instructor could ask the class for some of their suggestions. After a few minutes, mention that though God did not promise us a trouble-free life, He has promised us the power to live

above our circumstances. Many Christians though have never learned how to do so. Let's look at why this is so and what to do about it.

II. Three Types of People

Read I Corinthians 2:14-3:3

1. Identify and describe the three types of people mentioned.
2. Why do some Christians remain "babes in Christ?"

God never intended for us to remain "babes in Christ." Read these verses: Ephesians 4:13 and Colossians 1:28,29. His desire is that we become "complete," "mature in Christ". How do we do that?

The instructor could draw the three types on the white board/chalk board. Then ask, "Which ones are saved?" After they have answered, be sure it's mentioned that the Carnal Man is saved because Paul calls them "brothers" and "in Christ." But the Carnal Man is often more frustrated than the Natural Man because he has two natures fighting against each other (see Galatians 5). Evangelist Billy Graham has said that he believes that 90-95% of Christians are "Carnal." The Carnal Person is best described as one who tries to live the Christian life in their own efforts, or they refuse to confess sin in their life. They often live a roller-coaster life, finally settling into defeat.

III. Spiritual Breathing

Please take a deep breath, now let it out. What are we doing? Bringing in good air and pushing out the bad air. This is a picture of one of the foundational parts of the Christian life called, "Spiritual Breathing." When we breathe physically, we exhale the bad air and inhale the good. Spiritually, we exhale the bad (confession of sins) and inhale the good (be filled with the Holy Spirit). Let's explore these a little more. What do we mean by confession of sins?

A. Exhaling or Confessing our sins

1. Read 1 John 1:9

"Confess" is translated from the Greek word "homologeō" which means "same word." To confess means to say the same word, or agree with God on what He has convicted you (see John 16:7,8).

Our part - Confess known sins.

There's an ART to confession

A Agree that it is sin

R Repent from the sin (turn away from doing it)

T Thank God that it's forgiven, based on Christ's substitutionary death on the cross for you.

God's part - Forgive (experiential) and Cleanse (from the power of sin over us). If we are already positionally forgiven based on Christ's death, why do we need to confess? Because confession makes real what is already ours. Also, confession restores our fellowship with God. Our relationship with God is not broken due to our sinning according to Romans 8.

Ask the students if they know the difference between relationship and fellowship. After a few answers, mention that our relationship with God is secure if we've trusted in Christ as Savior. God gives eternal life, and Christ will never leave us - even if we sin. But sin does block the believer's fellowship, or communication, with God.

B. Inhaling or Being filled with the Holy Spirit

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

Instructor can point out from the following verses that the Holy Spirit is God.

- a. Matthew 28:19 "...in the Name" is singular
- b. Acts 5:3,4 "Peter equates God and the Holy Spirit as the same.

Only if some may still have questions about the third Person in the Trinity, here are some more references showing His divinity: Eternal - Hebrews 9:14; Truth - John 14:17; 16:13; Creator - Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; All-Knowing - 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; All-Present - Psalm 139:7-13; All-Powerful - Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Luke 1:35; Giver of Eternal Life - Galatians 6:8; Raised Jesus from the dead - Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18.

2. What does it mean to be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

Read Ephesians 5:18

The word "filled" is contrasted with being drunk. Just as alcohol controls a person so we are to be "filled with the Spirit." "Filled" is being Directed and Empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word, pleroo, was used for the wind filling a sail. In this case it is not a quantity or volume word, i.e. to fill a glass, but an empowering word. Just as the wind fills the sails and the boat moves, so when the Spirit fills a Christian, he moves as the Spirit directs.

3. How can we be Filled with the Holy Spirit?

- a. We need to realize that it's not by effort or good works, but by faith. (Hebrews 11:6, 2 Corinthians 5:7)

- b. We need to have the right heart attitude.
 - We are not filled with the Holy Spirit for our own personal gain or glory, but to please God (Colossians 3:23).
 - We need to be a clean vessel, so we need to confess any sin that the Holy Spirit brings to mind (1 John 1:9).
 - To be filled consistently, we must be willing to surrender all areas of our lives to the Lordship of God (Romans 12:1-2).

- c. Claim or appropriate what is ours according to the Word of God.
 - Read Ephesians 5:18. God commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - Read 1 John 5:14-15. God promises that He will hear our request and answer it, as long as we ask and what we ask is according to His will.
 - Therefore, since we know it's God's will for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit (because He commands us to be filled), then we know He will fill us when we ask because He promises to do so. This enables us to walk in this filling by faith B believing God.

IV. Point to Ponder

Aren't all Christians filled with the Spirit?

- A. The Holy Spirit indwells (already lives in) every Christian (Romans 8:9).
- B. The Holy Spirit empowers only those who allow Him to (Ephesians 5:18).

The instructor could share that he owns a car. He determines who drives his car. "You [the student] may be in the car in the passenger seat, but you're not controlling the car. I, the driver and owner, am controlling the car. That is, until I choose to let you, a passenger, not only be in my car, but now I let you drive and control it. This picture illustrates the difference between having the Holy Spirit merely being in a Christian's life, as compared to the Holy Spirit filling, controlling, empowering, and directing the Christian's life."

V. Application Point

If you have the right heart attitude and desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you can be filled by faith right now. There are two steps, exhale the bad and inhale the good. How can we formally exhale?

- A. Do a "Sin and Forgiveness" List
 - 1) Ask God to show you if there are any sins that need to be confessed.
 - 2) Write those sins on a piece of paper.
 - 3) In the spirit of 1 John 1:9, confess those sins to God.
 - 4) Write out the verse 1 John 1:9 across your list.
 - 5) Claim God's love and forgiveness for you, and tear up the list.

The instructor could say, "Exhale all the air in your lungs and hold it as long as you can."

God never intended for us to be empty, but to be filled with Himself. How then do we inhale?

We are filled by faith, and our faith can be demonstrated in prayer.

- B. Inhale: The simplest way is a prayer of faith. Following is a suggest prayer.

Dear Father, I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by directing my own life. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I ask in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.

Tell someone else about your decision today if this was the first time you've ever asked the Holy Spirit to take control of your life.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a "once-in'a-lifetime" decision (like salvation). Breathe spiritually whenever you're aware of sin.

The instructor could pass out copies of the booklet "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life."

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and explain the three types of people mentioned in this lesson.
2. Explain the first two points of Spiritual Breathing.
3. How can you be controlled by the Holy Spirit by faith?