

Unlocking the Power of God:

A Journey to Successful Relationships

We've completed chapter four of Ephesians, and only two more chapters remain in the book. Let's dive into Ephesians chapter five, starting from verse 18.

"Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, 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."

The Role of God in Successful Relationships

Today, we are bombarded with information and advice on marriage. There are countless seminars, conferences, and encounters available. Many people believe that seeking a counselor, buying books, or attending a weekend retreat is the first step to solving marital problems. Don't get me wrong; these resources can be helpful, and we should be grateful for them. However, the ultimate solution to our relational problems lies in the presence of God in our lives.

The Bible as a Recipe Book for Relationships

The Bible is like a recipe book, with God as the main ingredient. It has been passed down through generations, like my mom's Betty Crocker recipe book. God has offered it to every generation since the Word of God was printed. He is the main ingredient. That's why He urges us to be filled with the Spirit.

Successful relationships begin and end with God. Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord, and husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. Children should obey their parents in the Lord. This is the recipe for happy and healthy relationships, and the main ingredient will always be God.

It's simple. The key to fulfilling relationships is to follow the recipe. As Charles Spurgeon said, "When our homes are ruled according to God's word, even angels would feel at home with us."

The Significance of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

The Greek word for "be filled" can be translated as "live in a state of being kept on full." For children of God, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not optional but foundational. We need God's Spirit working in our lives to fulfill His will for us. It's not about our strength or power but God's Holy Spirit.

If we want success and fulfilling relationships, God must be actively involved in our lives. Nothing will have a more positive and powerful effect on our families' well-being than each member being filled with the Spirit. This continuous state of being filled requires daily, moment-by-moment submission to the Spirit's control.

Sure, we can rejoice in past experiences with God and hope and pray for future encounters with Him. However, we can only live in light of our current filling. What is God doing in our lives today, here and now?

Being filled with the Spirit can be compared to wearing a glove. The glove remains limp and powerless until you put your hand in it. It's useless on its own. Though designed for work, it cannot accomplish anything without the hand inside. The hand brings the glove to life.

My dad was a Navy boxer, and I can assure you that his glove never knocked anyone out, but his fist inside the glove certainly did. A glove by itself is ineffective. The force in the fist determines the outcome of a fight. That's where the power lies.

Similarly, in our lives, we need God's fullness, His power through the Holy Spirit, behind our actions. A Christian who isn't continually filled with the Spirit can achieve no more than a glove without a hand.

When God fills you with the Spirit, what God can accomplish in your life is remarkable. He can knock out obstacles with ease.

The Three Expressions of Spirit-Filled Relationships

According to our text, when God's Spirit controls us, we experience three expressions: a song in our hearts (verse 19), thankfulness to God (verse 20), and submission to others (verse 21). These expressions cover our inward, upward, and outward relationships. The filling of the Holy Spirit aligns us rightly with ourselves, God, and others.

Being filled goes beyond simply filling something up, like when a waitress fills your coffee cup to the brim with fresh coffee. In Greek, "be filled" refers to the wind filling a sail, enabling a ship to move. Being filled with the Spirit means being propelled in our Christian life by God Himself. He becomes our motivation; His motion leads to our motion. Without it, we would be idle, apathetic, and compromising.

The same dynamic that moved the writers of Scripture is at work when God fills you with the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures were written under the inspiration of God, as the Bible says in 2 Peter 1:21. God's breath moved upon those men, and they wrote under His inspiration. On the day of Pentecost, there was a powerful moment as the Holy Spirit came upon the believers, filling the whole house with a sound like a rushing wind.

Imagine being part of that prayer meeting! Led by the Holy Spirit, they were directed, inspired, and moved to become the people God created them to be. The Holy Spirit becomes the transforming influence in our lives.

When the Holy Spirit entered that house on Pentecost, He found the believers sitting, but their days of idleness were over once the Holy Spirit came to them. God transformed their lives, and they went out, anointed by the Spirit, to change the world. The Spirit set them on fire, and when someone's heart burns for God, they can't contain their passion and purpose.

In Ephesians chapter five, Paul instructs husbands to sacrifice for their wives, and wives are encouraged to submit to their husbands. Both duties involve giving rather than receiving. If you're thinking about getting married and your attitude is, "What am I going to get out of this," then you are already dead in the water.

When it comes to marriage or attending a church service, we must shift our focus from what we can get to what we can give. It's not about demanding submission or sacrifice but rather living a life of service to one another. Conflicts often arise when individuals assert their rights and seek dominance.

Stirring Up the Gift: Activating the Holy Spirit Within

However, Spirit-filled individuals, anointed by God, don't strive to be at the top; they willingly take the bottom position. They understand that our homes contain unnecessary tension and hot air when what we truly need is to allow the wind of the Spirit to fill our sails and guide us.

We need to submit to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to set our course, provide direction, and empower us to take action. Left to our own devices, we won't achieve much. We'll be like a glove without a hand or a sail without a breeze—unfortunate and aimless.

Another meaning of being filled is to permeate and exert complete influence. God desires His Spirit to permeate every aspect of our lives so that everything we think, do, and say reflects His divine presence. Wherever we go, whoever we meet, people should notice something different about us—a radiance, a glow. Examining the Old Testament, we find various offerings presented to God at the Brazen Temple. One such offering was the grain offering, a way for worshippers to express their gratitude to God. Oil was always a part of the recipe, symbolizing the indwelling Spirit of God. God pours His Spirit into us, but it's our responsibility to mix it in and activate it.

Instructing Timothy, a young preacher, Paul said, "Stir up the gift of God which is in you." The gift is already there, but it's up to us to stir and mix it. Imagine eating with someone who adds several bags of sugar to their tea but refuses to stir it. They want the sweetness but not the taste. Similarly, we often appreciate the idea of having the Holy Spirit within us—the peace, the comfort—but we hesitate to stir Him up to the point where He influences every part of our lives.

So, we must ask ourselves: Is the Holy Spirit actively stirred inside us? Is He moving in us? Because until He moves in us, He can't move through us.

What would happen in our families and personal lives if the Holy Spirit were in the mix? Are we running on full, filled with the Spirit, or are we merely running on fumes? Fumes won't take us far in our Christian walk. We need the Lord's strength, which comes through His Spirit.

Amazing things happen when we stir up the gift, allowing it to rise above our long list of priorities. We become aware of the personal presence of the Lord. Through His anointing, we sense His closeness and nearness. If we feel distant from God, it's not because of Him; there may be some stirring up that we need to do in our own lives. Christ's consciousness leads to Christ's likeness.

When we stir up the gift inside us, Jesus's sweetness permeates our existence. The Holy Spirit's presence can transform your house into a "home sweet home" with your family.

The Joy of Spirit-Filled Living

One final meaning of the word filled carries the idea of total control. Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. People give many reasons for drinking. One of the most common is the desire to be happy. The world even calls it "happy hour," and that's about as long as the happiness lasts.

How is happiness generated in your life? How do you even define happiness? On the day of Pentecost, when the believers were all filled with the Spirit, they were overflowing in the joy of the Lord.

The crowd accused them of being drunk because they were so joyful when they were brought under the intoxicating influence of the Holy Spirit. The world couldn't come up with anything better to compare it to. These people are so animated. They've got to be drunk because that's how we can get sometimes at our parties.

But that was not the case. It wasn't an external thing that was happening. It was internal. A couple of lessons we can learn from the contrast. First of all, to begin with, the drunk is under the control of another influence. Since alcohol is actually a depressant, he feels a great sense of release. All of his troubles seem to disappear. You can underline the word seem, because those problems are coming back. All alcohol does is complicate things. You can try to drown your

problems, but it doesn't work. The drunk wants to sing and dance on top of the table. He suddenly becomes Superman or Superwoman.

The local bar or tavern suddenly becomes like a counterfeit church to the drunk, and he likes attending service quite often. Why do they go to the bar every Thursday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday? Because the bar becomes his altar. The bartender becomes his pastor. He confides in him and seeks counsel. The band or the jukebox becomes his choir. He attends the service down there at that local bar or tavern.

What are these people looking for? They're just looking for a little release and happiness. Now, transfer this idea and this image to the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit. God controls his life, and He experiences a boldness that doesn't come from a bottle. To be intoxicated by the Holy Spirit's influence means to be constantly controlled by the Spirit in our minds, emotions, and wills.

God's Anointing and Boldness in Spirit-Filled Believers

Elisha wanted a double portion of the Spirit that rested on Elijah. Elisha told God, Listen, I'll have double of whatever he's been drinking. Give me a double portion of the Spirit. And Elijah, in Jewish history, was the man, the prophet who called down fire and rallied a nation back to God.

Yet this young guy dared to say to God, listen, I've seen what he's accomplished. I understand his reputation as a minister of the gospel, but I want twice as much of whatever he has in his life in my life.

Elisha would go on to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah. God honored it when Elisha stood in God's presence and said, I want more of you.

God is willing to pour it out. The problem anymore is nobody wants it. We're so full of ourselves; we don't think we need it. The church has crossed over the tracks now. We have great buildings and decent finances, but the church was at its finest when it was young. They didn't have much, and all they wanted was God. Just God.

Lord, grant me more. Give me a double portion. Imagine the potential if a young person would humbly ask God for an abundance of His presence. How might God use such a life?

Consider the drunk person—lost in the chaos, their brain affected by alcohol, entirely out of control. In contrast, believers are never more in control than when they surrender to the Holy Spirit's guidance. There's sanity and stability when God leads, directs, and guides you. God aims believers towards a purposeful and impactful life, making every moment count.

Embracing God's Presence for Impactful Living

Today is the day to decide. Do you desire more of God today? Do you long to make a difference and impact your world today, not tomorrow? With the world's condition, the return of Jesus is imminent.

Now is the time to be filled with the Holy Spirit. While the drunk often makes a fool of themselves, spirit-filled believers bring glory to God and point others to Christ. They become witnesses for the Lord. Unlike the drunk who struggles to remember their experiences once sober, the spirit-filled believer can recall the whole weekend, cherishing the glorious time spent worshipping and enjoying the Lord's presence.

You don't need alcohol or artificial stimulants to find happiness in life. Set aside the bottle and open your heart to what God has for you.

We have compromised too much in the church. What we've gained in acceptance, we've lost in the anointing of God. We strive to be user-friendly, avoiding discomfort. Consider this: Jesus dined with sinners but never drank with them.

The bottom line: don't be drunk with wine; instead, be filled with the Spirit. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is like the hand of God in our gloves, the wind of God in our sail, and the oil of God in our recipe.

As we continue discussing relationships, our desire should be for God's presence to fill every house member. More importantly, it's God's desire. He longs to do

something fresh and new as we hunger and thirst for Him. He promises that He will fill those who hunger and quench those who thirst for righteousness.