

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 40, No. 45, November 11 , 2014 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is **a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

How to Recognize a Spirit-Filled Church

by [Eric Davis](http://www.cornerstonejh.com/how-to-recognize-a-spirit-filled-church/) / <http://www.cornerstonejh.com/how-to-recognize-a-spirit-filled-church/> [The article is slightly edited for easier understanding by giving definitions for certain words. These additions will be enclosed in brackets! Some caps and underlining added]

Church advertisements can be interesting. I've seen things like, "Always an open door," one that advertised a concealed weapons class, and "You have a friend request from Jesus: Accept? Ignore?" But one that confused me the first time I saw it was "Spirit-filled." What does that mean? And are only some churches Spirit-filled? Or all of them? Or partially filled? **What's the difference between a Spirit-filled and non-Spirit-filled church?**

Generally, the advertisement means that the Holy Spirit's power and presence are observable in that local church. Praise God if that's true. And there's nothing inherently wrong with such advertising. But, assuming accurate advertising, **what ought we expect from such a church?** What will that look like?

Here are 11 evidences of the Spirit's power and presence in a local church:

1. A focus on the biblical Person and work of Christ.

Previewing the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus indicated the Christocentric [Christ-centered] focus he [The Holy Spirit] would have:

[John 14:26](#) “But **the Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in [My name...](#)” [John 15:26](#) “When **the Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, [He will testify about Me.](#)” [John 16:14](#) “He will glorify Me...” Beyond this, Paul elaborated that central to discerning the Holy Spirit’s presence in a someone is an affirming and embracing of the lordship of the biblical Jesus ([1 Cor 12:3](#)).

J.I. Packer says it this way:

“When floodlighting is well done, the floodlights are so placed that you do not see them; you are not in fact supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you see it properly. This perfectly illustrates the Spirit’s new covenant role. He is, so to speak, the hidden floodlight shining on the Savior” (*Keeping in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, 57).

The Holy Spirit fills a people to floodlight Christ in all they do and say.

We can take this a step further. Since Christ is about building and blessing one institution [His Church!] ([Matt 16:18](#)), the Spirit will be likewise. We should expect to see him busy as Christ’s agent to facilitate that building and blessing. So, the Holy Spirit is at home in the local church because Jesus loves his church.

All that to say, **the Spirit-filled church will floodlight**, from many angles, the biblical Jesus.

2. A congregation converted to Christ.

Since the birth of the church by the Holy Spirit, the most powerful thing he does is convert dead sinners to faith in Christ. No one in the universe except Him has the power to bring spiritual life.

Scripture pictures conversion in ways beyond anything like a decision, prayer, or act of the human will. **Instead, it’s pictured, for example,**

as a birth ([John 3:5](#)) and a brittle bone pile coming to life ([Ezek 37:1-14](#)).

So when the Spirit fills a congregation, expect to see the miracle of spiritual life in that place. People will be genuinely saved. Don't take for granted when you see it; even a church of 10 people converted to Christ. What you're seeing is a colossal display of power; the greatest in the universe. It's a glorious sight. And you can't miss it any more than you can miss the wind. A Spirit-filled church is filled with regenerate [Genuinely born again!] people.

3. A [congregation] of godly people.

Even if you're not a dendrologist [One who studies trees and plants], identifying a particular fruit tree is simple: look at its fruit. So it is with identifying the presence and power of the Spirit. **His fruit (singular) in those he indwells is:** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ([Gal 5:22-23](#)).

Along those lines, humility evidences a Spirit-filled church. In [Philippians 2:1-8](#), humility (on our part), has the idea of, out of response to the incarnation and atoning work of Christ, accurately seeing oneself in light of God, resulting in a servant's mindset towards others. Thus, true humility is not possible apart from conversion to Christ, which is not possible without the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, Spirit-filling will look like a mutual yielding to one another in a congregation out of reverence for Jesus ([Eph 5:21](#)).

To this, you could add holiness (being the *Holy* Spirit, those he indwells will bear his mark of personal holiness) and thankfulness ([Eph 5:20](#), [Col 3:17](#)).

Overall, a Spirit-filled church will have the mark of godliness.

4. A love for God's Word.

[Ephesians 5:18](#) and [Colossians 3:16](#) are parallel passages where the ideas of being "filled with the Spirit" and the "Word of Christ" dwelling "richly" within are synonymous. **So, a Spirit-filled church will look like a church where Scripture richly abides and is at home.**

Practically that will look like many things: a hunger for the Word, a love for hearing and reading the Word, a desire to discuss the Word, a reverence for the Word, a church governed by the Word, and a people being transformed by the Word. It will look like a priority to be equipped by the Word over being entertained by the world.

Though some biblical truth will be piercing and hard to swallow, Spirit-filled people will not be saying, in response, “Umm, this is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” Though they may wrestle, that Spirit-filled congregation, will be moved and humbled by the Spirit to say, **“Where else shall we go? These are the words of eternal life.”** The Holy Spirit will tame the otherwise boisterous flesh to embrace what he has said in Scripture.

5. A love for biblical preaching.

One thing that is obvious about that newly, Holy Spirit-hatched people in Acts is that they loved biblical preaching. In the early church, it appears that there was biblical preaching going on about every day ([Acts 2:42-47](#)). Further, when the Spirit decided what to preserve for his people in Acts, a large chunk of it was biblical preaching ([Acts 2:14-36](#), [3:12-26](#), [7:2-53](#), [10:34-43](#), [13:16-41](#), [17:22-31](#), [20:18-35](#)). Combine that with the [Eph 5:18/Col 3:16](#) idea, and we can say that the Spirit-filled church will be a place where the pulpit is central. You can be sure that the Spirit is powerfully at work where the people crave the Bible... and doctrines explained; where there is a love for the explanation, illustration, and application of Scripture. A Spirit-filled church loves large doses of biblical preaching.

6. A lot of people serving.

In Paul’s... [teaching on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit] to the Corinthians, he makes a telling statement regarding true spiritual gifts: **“each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”** ([1 Cor 12:7](#)) and “edification of the church” ([1 Cor 14:12](#), cf. v. [26](#)). So, one certain expression of the Spirit will be people actively working to build up the church.

Also, many instances in Acts where God's people were "filled with the Spirit" are revealing. In most of those cases (cf. [Acts 2:4](#), [4:8](#), [4:31](#), [13:9](#)), Spirit-gifts were exercised powerfully to both put Christ in lights and edify people.

So, the power and presence of the Spirit in a local church will look like an army of servants doing the work of the ministry, unprovoked by people, but in light of Christ's love. The Spirit-filled church is the church full of people serving in many ways for the common good.

7. A humble focus on conviction and repentance of sin.

This is one of those unmistakable evidences of the Spirit's power. **You will never hear your flesh say to you**, "I delight to cause you to see, hate, and turn from your indwelling sin so that you become more like Jesus." **The flesh cherishes sin** like a good mom cherishes her newborn. It loathes the idea of anything putting it to death. And that is precisely what Jesus sends the Spirit to do. **Whatever we say about the Holy Spirit, this is certain: He puts sin to death in everyone he indwells (Rom 8:13).**

Sin is that thing that deceives, wrecks, kills, and damns humans. Yet nothing and no one has the power to execute it but the Holy Spirit. So, since Christ cares deeply for the well-being of his people, he sends in the big-guns to slay our indwelling sin. And when the Spirit lands, conviction and repentance will signify that the war is on and God is winning.

What the Spirit will do is enable knowledge of personal sin, hatred of it, sorrow over it because of its offense against God, confession of it, and turning from it ([Ezek 36:31](#), [John 16:8](#)). But he doesn't stop there. In those healthy moments of conviction, He floodlights Christ so that the repentant see, embrace, and rejoice in him and his overwhelmingly adequate righteousness for us.

So then, the Spirit-filled church will look like a people humbly confessing their sin without fearing one another, sorrowfully discussing their sin without fleeing one another, intentionally turning from their sin without isolating one another, **and always ending up at the cross.**

The Spirit-filled church has a humble focus on the conviction and repentance of sin.

8. An atmosphere where it's the norm to lovingly confront sin.

This is to be expected since the Spirit will employ those means of putting sin to death which he has spoken in his word. One of those means is other Spirit-indwelt people coming alongside of us.

Following his explanation of the Spirit in Galatians 5, **Paul exhorts believers to gently address each-others' sin** for the purpose of restoration on the basis that they are Spirit-indwelt ([Gal 6:1-3](#))

In a Spirit-filled church, then, this will look like an atmosphere where sin is **safe but not safe**. It's safe, in the sense that there is a loving, family-like trust among one another where we can be confronted if necessary, but know that we will not be condemned. **However, sin is unsafe** because it will necessarily be confronted and eradicated by the Spirit.

A Spirit-filled church is one in which it's the norm to lovingly confront sin.

9. A place where the flesh cannot last long.

Overall, the Spirit-filled church will be a place **where the flesh can run, but it can't hide**. Christ cares too much for his church to have it any other way. This means that **doctrine** which is fleshly will be exposed and eradicated. **Methods** of doing ministry which are fleshly will eventually be discovered and destroyed. **People** who are fleshly will only be able to tolerate a Spirit-filled church for so long. If they are not converted by the power of the Spirit, they will typically leave.

That's because the flesh hates nothing more than the Spirit. It won't bow to it. And even if it wanted to, it could never do so ([Rom 8:7-8](#), [Gal 5:17](#)). Consequently, the flesh will be appropriately cornered in a Spirit-filled church.

One of two things will result: repentance by the power of the Holy Spirit, or fleeing to a place more conducive to sheltering the flesh.

10. An orderliness and intelligibility when gathered.

Much of the spiritual spanking Paul administers in the first letter to the Corinthians, as far as chapters 12-14 go, **boils down to his desire that they focus on love, edification, and orderliness**. Among other things, when they gather, it's to be done in an orderly manner, where

unintelligibility is absent and comprehension is present. That is what would reflect a presence and power of the Spirit. And it's to be done in "all the churches" (v. 33).

Though the Corinthians might disagree, so far from hindering the power of the Spirit, an **orderliness** when gathered **invites and evidences** His power.

A Spirit-filled gathering will be orderly and intelligible.

11. A desire to exist in unity with each other.

The Spirit-filled congregation will be one who prioritizes unity in the name of Christ ([Eph 4:3-4](#)). A refreshing instinct to do so will be present. **Consequently that which produces true biblical unity will be visible. For example:** humility, believing the best about one another, looking for common ground, serving each other, a desire for relationships, grieving over and attempting to biblically solve division in the congregation, and an overall sharing of life among people with many surface differences.

Not only that, but there will be a desire to unite with Spirit-filled people from the past. The Spirit is eternal; the same God doing the same things generally as he carries out our Lord's building plans for his church.

[Therefore, a Spirit-filled congregation is especially consumed with faithfulness to what the Spirit has set forth in the New Testament for local churches— thus, they faithfully study and seek to understand truth and applications from the New Testament.]

A Spirit-filled congregation carries a refreshing desire for unity in Christ.

We could add many things to this list: an assurance that we are God's children by the finished work of Christ ([Rom 8:15-17](#)), a perseverance in suffering ([Rom 5:2-5](#)), a cheerful diligence to obey God's commands ([Ezek 36:27](#), [Rom 8:4](#)), and a delight to sing biblically-sound songs with one another ([Eph 5:19](#), [Col 3:16](#)). **All that to say, when the Holy Spirit is present in a local church, it's going to be gloriously obvious.** When he blows through a congregation, it will be unmistakable: he will gather a

converted people whose lives are being enriched in Scripture such that they love, serve, and repent with the result **that Christ is put in lights!**

PS. *“All is in Christ! **By the Holy Spirit!** For the Glory of God! All else is vain!”* – Aldophe Monod

Grace to one and all!

James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Questions call Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

**** WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM; IN THE CHURCH AUDITORIUM!**

**** NOTE:** Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service. **YOUTH GROUP:** Wednesdays 6-8pm... led by Byron Smith

➔ NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY— TBA

*** SATURDAY MORNINGS @ 8am: Men’s Fellowship/Bible Study!**

SCHEDULE FOR Sunday, November 16

- 1. 9:30am-** Sunday School Bible Study/Small Group Fellowship
- 2. 10:45am-** Morning Worship / Children’s Church / **LORD’S SUPPER**
- 3. NO fellowship lunch** // Be a part of a Sunday Evening HOME GROUP!

SCHEDULE FOR NOVEMBER 23, 30— all Regular Schedule, including Fellowship Lunch. (**NO** 5th Sunday Evening Praise Service)

1. **9:30am**- Sunday School Bible Study/Small Group Fellowship
2. **10:45am**- Morning Worship / Children's Church
3. **NOON FELLOWSHIP MEAL** 4. **1:00pm**- **Early Afternoon Service**

UPCOMING December Sundays: **[12/7]**— Regular Schedule // **[12/14]** — Sunday School; and a **SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICE REJOICING IN CHRIST'S BIRTH**; followed with Lunch

[12/21]— **Annual BRUNCH** during 9:30am Sunday School; followed by Morning Worship; concluding at the LORD'S SUPPER. **[No lunch] NOTE; [12/21 Evening Home Groups...** each group decide to either have or take a December break] // **[12/28]**— **Sunday School and Worship Service, only.**

_____ **Southside Christian**

School_____

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>