

Need A Spiritual Tune-up?

from Doug Perry (www.FellowshipoftheMartyrs.com)

In the last couple of years I have visited dozens and dozens of different congregations. Sometimes I will fellowship with four or five different congregations on one Sunday. As the Lord has led, I've had the great privilege to get familiar with more pastors of more denominations than most anybody I know. I've seen the good, the bad and the ugly in all the different styles and traditions and doctrines.

The most common thing that I've seen is that almost universally there is a tendency toward putting on programs and ignoring the individual. The bigger the congregation, the greater the tendency. (Read the Undeniable Axioms article online.) In reality how that manifests always includes a statement about family and concern for the individual but then it's offset and negated by the reality of a structure seemingly engineered to disregard individual needs. However unconscious this may be, the reality is clearly that millions of Christians are NOT walking in the fullness of Christ or worse, walking around with massive oppressions that continue to go untreated.

There are TONS of people leaving the institutional churches. Millions of them per year. Why? Because they don't feel like their individual needs are getting addressed. They may sit through a good sermon that has some life application, but they don't see or feel the radical transformation that should come as a part of the normal Christian life. Or worse, they have a crisis or a need and nobody in the "church" responds appropriately.

We are NOT honoring God. We are singing and dancing and pretending everything is fine while people are bleeding to death in the pews (not to mention in the streets). Listen to me, God does NOT want you to praise and worship Him while you're ignoring the person sitting next to you who is having a crisis! It DOES NOT bring Him honor for you to raise your hands and tell Him how great He is while you FAIL to act like Him and heal those nearest to you. Heal them – or at least TREAT them – and THEN you can go praising and worshipping and telling Him how great He is. He just DOES NOT want to hear you singing while you're ignoring people that are crying inside! Your prayers are going to bounce off of the brass over your head until you act like Jesus. Just knock it off – or else. He's not going to ignore their cries much longer.

The church should be like the TV show "M*A*S*H". If they're having a party and someone shouts "Choppers!" then the music stops and everybody rushes into action to do triage. That means rapidly identifying and categorizing the wounded based on needs - the bleeding, sucking chest wounds go first, then the broken legs, then the scratches. AFTER everybody is treated and in Recovery – THEN you can go back to your party. But what kind of hospital would you be if you let them bleed to death in the compound because you refuse to stop singing and dancing because you had a schedule to keep?! You planned for this party to take an hour and a half and, by golly, you're going to stay on time no matter what.

Even when Jesus was right in the middle of a great sermon and had them all in the palm of His hand, if a paralyzed guy dropped down out of the roof, Jesus STOPPED TALKING and healed him. THEN He could go on with his sermon - AND everybody was REALLY impressed because of the miracle that had just happened in front of them! I'm not sure which would be the bigger miracle in some churches, that a paralytic rose and walked away or that the pastor stopped in the middle of a sermon!

The people of God need to be trained up in how to rapidly identify the physical, emotional and spiritual warfare oppressing and killing their brethren and they need to be empowered to go and treat them on the spot. The music needs to stop until EVERYBODY in your camp is bandaged up. "Church" will not be **The Church** until it stops being a show and starts being a hospital, first and foremost. The reason it's not that now is because we abdicated to paid leadership to do all the work for us and they can't possibly keep up. In fairness, many of them got to liking it and now don't trust the Body to help them - so it's a vicious cycle. But it's got to stop. The Body has to learn to care for the Body, whether or not there is a paid staffer. We need the Gifts of Discernment of Spirits and Knowledge operating in force and we need to get back to fulfilling the Great Commission - first by cleaning up the messes in our own congregations, then by GOING. We can't wait for them to COME - cause when we do, they're mostly not staying, and it's because they're not getting healed (which is because we're not acting like Jesus).

If any of this stuff has convicted you and you realize you played a part in sustaining a system that hasn't been working or you ever ignored someone that was bleeding because you had your own agenda, now would be a good time to find a quiet place, hit your knees and say you're sorry. Crying helps God know you're serious. You might also want to admit it publicly to the people affected. How are they ever going to learn how to repent really good if somebody doesn't show them? Don't wait for somebody else to do it. It has to start with you.

So what is a Spiritual Tune-Up?

First it's aimed at people that already have Jesus, but the process is the same regardless. A person who is lost could turn their life over and push through lots of the steps right away and be that much more effective sooner. It's just a matter of hunger level and God's sense of your preparedness. The goal is immediate radical transformation, not gradual incremental change culminating in perfection after death. We believe that it's possible that God can heal and deliver and restore and sanctify instantly and we're going to aim for that. If He chooses to take longer, that's fine, but we're going to ASK for maximum change in minimum time - even if it hurts. Which it will.

Typically, we would take a hard look at each of the three factors; Body, Soul and Spirit. Asking the Holy Spirit to help us discern any areas where there is resistance to the will of Christ, we would "scan" through each layer looking for whatever the Lord would choose to reveal. It might be a physical illness that has a spiritual cause, it might be a soulish anger or bitterness or unforgiveness that is blocking Him and bringing down physical curses, or it might be a spiritual problem of diminished capacity for Him because of limitations or "filters" that have been placed on God. It might be a demonic oppression that has really old roots in abuse or addiction or some unresolved, past sin that opened a doorway and allowed legal ground for the enemy. All of these are resolveable within the scope of the power granted to us through Christ. Some can be settled nearly instantly and done away with once and for all. Many people have experienced through this process an immediately lightness at the removal of some old yokes of oppression. Some experience immediate physical changes as healing to their illnesses or removal of addictions comes at the same time. We want to allow God room to act in ANY way He sees fit. We don't want to put Him in a box anymore! We want to believe that He is big enough to conquer anything and that He wants us free. He is big enough, right? And He does want us fully free, right? All the way free? Of everything?

When you do a tune-up on a vehicle, you want to find anything that is keeping it from running at peak efficiency. A misalignment, a missing part, low fluids, bad filters, even burnt out bulbs - anything that needs to be changed or adjusted so that it can be renewed back to the way it was designed. It's all in Romans 12. In thanks for His mercy we offer our bodies as living sacrifices - holy, pleasing and acceptable - that is our spiritual act of worship.

So first, we have to be willing to offer our Body - the vehicle, and all that it holds - as a sacrifice. We need to be willing and we need to commit to hold NOTHING back anything. That verse does NOT say we offer half of our body as a living sacrifice - or even 90%. The whole thing needs to go on the altar. ALL means ALL.

Before we can do anything else, we need it to be a holy, pleasing and acceptable sacrifice. And since our sinfulness screams against our holiness, and our own nature confirms it, it's clear that only by the atoning Blood of Jesus is there any chance that we can be a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice. So before any tune-up is going to do any good, we need to scrub the whole thing down with the Blood of Jesus. You have to have acknowledged your needfulness for the Blood and asked Him to wash you clean of every sin.

Said less religiously, you have to tell Jesus you're sorry for all the bad stuff you let in and you have to really mean it - and you have to believe that His sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to wipe you clean. This IS NOT an acknowledgement that Jesus existed or that He was the Son of God - even the demons believe that. This is not a statement you repeat after someone else so that you can join a church. This is a full-on commitment to humble yourself before Him and to give yourself over to Him so that He can be in charge from now on. That you would like to bow down and let Him be who He is - Master, King, Commander, Ruler, Lord - in your life from now on. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Way too many churches are making it way too easy - and the result is sick, powerless, shackled, unwise people in the pews.

Ok, NOW you're an acceptable sacrifice. So what's next? Get up on the altar and shut up. You don't need to figure out your personal purpose. You don't need 40 days to figure out what YOU can do for God. You're the sacrifice! Get cleaned off, climb up on the altar and lay there naked. By doing this, by really doing this, really laying there naked - fully exposed and willing to accept anything that comes - you are most definitely NOT conforming to the "world".

When He's good and ready, He'll move on to the next step. Which is that He will take a big sword and begin to hack chunks of your head off and put His head on. It's painful at times and folks around you may not understand what's happening during that strange in-between time while you're trying to figure it all out and get the pieces of your head and His head to get on the same frequency. But eventually, unless you panic and jump off the altar, He will hack off all the bits that stand in His way and then you'll have the mind of Christ. He will have transformed you by the renewing of your mind. RE-newed, that is, back the way it was supposed to be when it was new. Back the way He designed it. Back in His image. Rebooted and set back to the defaults the way it was before you mangled it up and the "world's" viruses corrupted it. Read Matthew 18:1-4, Mark 10:15. He wants faith like a child.

Then and ONLY then will you know what is the pleasing, perfect will of God. And then you can go do it. It's not just so you can bask in the knowledge of what He wants, it's so you can OBEY. GO - reach, heal, save, deliver, free the captives. Do the stuff that's on HIS heart - and now that your mind is renewed and you know what is His will, it should be a lot easier. You probably won't need a committee or demographic studies or anything. If you didn't hold anything back, by this point, you're probably hearing Him really well and you don't really need any Man (or group of them) to tell you what God wants for you. And I can tell you this, it's going to cost you everything. But you won't miss any of it. Besides, none of it was yours anyway. But you better count the cost, because this is a hard walk. Job, family, money, comforts, control - all could be taken away or destroyed. If you pray to be like Jesus and He answers it, you'll be hated and ridiculed by the world. Guaranteed.

Sound like something you want to try? If you're lukewarm, it might just be better for you to stay where you are than to taste the goodness of God and then turn your back on it. Persecution is going to come with every step that gets you closer to walking in the fullness of Christ. But if you don't care what it costs and you're still willing, we can proceed.

Jesus affirmed repeatedly that these two commandments are the greatest. That if you understand and implement these, you have pretty well grasped the Kingdom of God.

Here it is quoted in three different Gospels: (Please go read them in context)

Mat 22:37-40 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mar 12:30-31 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment. And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Luke 10:27-28 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he (Jesus) said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

So, it boils down to this - the most important commandment, the most central task before us as individuals and as the Church, is to love God with every component of our being - Mind, Soul and Heart and to do it with all of our Strength. How are you doing with that? That's what we're going to find out. If you haven't got that one down, the second commandment - loving your neighbor as yourself - is going to be a pale imitation of what it should be. You will love them to the degree you love God. If you're clearly not loving your neighbor as you should, it's a pretty good indication that you're not loving the Lord your God with all your mind and soul and heart and strength. If you're loving your neighbor with 10% of your strength, then you're probably loving God with 10%. It's like a math equation, just plug in the percentage.

Submission to God x quantityN = manifestation of Love for Neighbor x quantityN

If they will know us by our love and we're not evidencing much love for each other (especially inside the Church) and for those in need, then we must not be very submitted to God. What other conclusion can you come to? Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I know it stings a little, but try to embrace it. (Try Psalms 141:5-6)

Paul says this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and [I pray God] your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We are made of these three. Body, Soul and Spirit. and they are to all be in submission to Christ. All means ALL! Let's try one of those verses again:

Mar 12:30-31 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind, and with ALL thy strength: this [is] the first commandment. And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Before we go any further, now would be a good time for the warning label.

WARNING!

DANGER! DANGER!

Proceed at your own caution!

We will NOT be responsible for ANYTHING that happens from here forward. You have been warned.

We want you to be ABSOLUTELY clear that this is FOR SURE, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT going to hurt A LOT.

You can drive 20 miles an hour and you probably won't get hurt too bad in an accident. If you drive 200 miles an hour and you make a mistake, it's going to get really ugly.

This IS NOT for sissies!

If you have ANY desire in you to slow down, DO IT NOW!
DO NOT GO THIS WAY!! DO NOT take our advice on this stuff!!
It will totally transform your life and things you love will be ripped from you.
Nothing – NOTHING – that you have will be your own any more.
So He can rebuild you His way, God will IMMEDIATELY start yanking chunks out of you. Probably stuff you really liked. The fire will get VERY hot!
If you even so much as TRY to do this in your own power, you're gonna be toast!
ONLY Jesus in you can get you through this.

**Last chance. Get out now! ALL the darkness WILL come for you!
We've seen it over and over. We ARE NOT kidding around!
If you miss a step you could end up on crack or beating your wife or drinking like a fish or in jail. We've seen it happen to good, Jesus-loving people who weren't all the way sold out. God will get you through, but it will hurt even more if you bail out. You BETTER mean it! We're serious.**

We love you very much. We want to see you refined and purified and REALLY dangerous to the enemy, but we want you to be FULLY READY before you pull into the Fast Lane!

**Still here? Great! Now go back and reread the warning again.
We're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He's serious.**

OK? Back again? Good. Let's proceed.

So which part of ALL don't you understand?!

Where do you think you have an option to love Him "some"? Remember this old song? Have you really looked at it? How many times have you sung it and not really meant it? I know I did for years!

I Surrender All

by Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896:

ALL to Jesus, I surrender; **ALL** to Him I freely give; I will **EVER** love and trust Him, In His presence **DAILY** live.
I surrender **ALL**, I surrender **ALL**, **ALL** to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender **ALL**.
ALL to Jesus I surrender; Humbly at His feet I bow, Worldly pleasures **ALL** forsaken; Take me, Jesus, take me
now.
I surrender **ALL**, I surrender **ALL**, **ALL** to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender **ALL**.
ALL to Jesus, I surrender; Make me, Savior, **WHOLLY** Thine; Let me feel the Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art
mine.
I surrender **ALL**, I surrender **ALL**, **ALL** to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender **ALL**.
ALL to Jesus, I surrender; Lord, I give myself to Thee; **FILL** me with Thy love and power; Let Thy blessing fall on
me.
I surrender **ALL**, I surrender **ALL**, **ALL** to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender **ALL**.
ALL to Jesus I surrender; **NOW** I feel the sacred flame. O the joy of **FULL** salvation! Glory, glory, to His Name!
I surrender **ALL**, I surrender **ALL**, **ALL** to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender **ALL**.

A whole lot of us have been singing that but really meaning, "I surrender SOME." Or maybe, "I surrender more than that guy over there." There are certainly lots of leaders in the churches that aren't meaning it! Very few people really mean ALL. And yet that is the specific and direct command of God and affirmed three times by Jesus Himself as the most critical commandment of all. More than any doctrinal statement or theological construct or interpretation, we must do THAT. First and foremost in the Christian walk MUST BE a love for God that holds back nothing. Anything less means that you have missed the mark. Can there be any other interpretation? Where does the Bible say, "Invite Jesus into your heart and then do whatever you want."? Where does it say that you can give Him SOME and He won't mind. It says that God is a jealous God (Ex. 25:5, Ex. 34:14, Deut. 4:24; Deut. 5:9; Deut. 6:15; Josh. 24:19; Nahum 1:2; and elsewhere!). In fact, it says the Holy Spirit in us envies intensely when we give ourselves over to the world (James 4:4-5).

This is hard stuff, and not what you may be used to hearing, but I don't see how you can find any other interpretation. We're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. How much fear and trembling do you have if you go down the aisle at youth camp in 8th grade and accept Jesus into your heart and you're all done? The "Narrow Path" has just GOT to be more narrow than that! In fact, I believe the VAST majority of church goers are not going to heaven at all. I believe we've been lied to for years about what it is that God really expects of us. The New Testament would be VERY short indeed if the path to heaven was as simple as, "Repeat this prayer after me ..." What's the point of all the rest of it if that's all it takes?

If you're still with me, the rest of this is going to be about helping you identify ANY areas of Body, Soul or Spirit that may yet be unsubmitted to God and doing whatever is necessary to bring them into full obedience with Christ. Bite down on something, this might hurt a little.

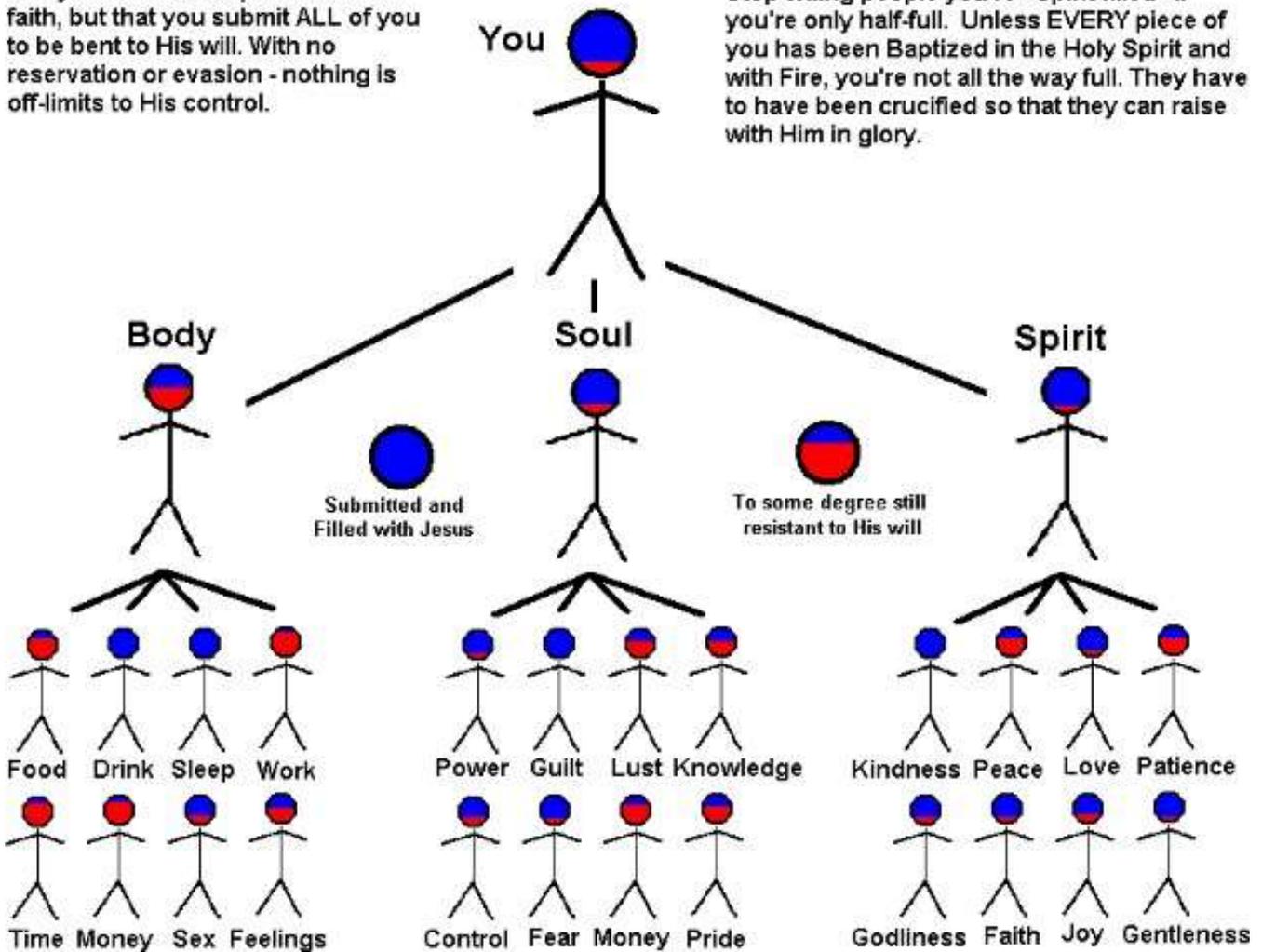
The enemy is going to try everything possible to keep you from walking this out. The darkness DOES NOT want to lose a single inch of ground! So let's pray this first:

Lord, don't let the enemy keep me from this. Don't let the enemy distract me or confuse me. Give me wisdom, Godly wisdom and as much of it as You think I can handle. Speak to me clearly and I'll follow. Please bind up anything in me or around me that would try to mess with me during this time. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

I like pictures, so let's start with this:

Holiness means EVERY piece of you is in obedience with Christ. Not just that you've made a "profession" of faith, but that you submit ALL of you to be bent to His will. With no reservation or evasion - nothing is off-limits to His control.

If there are parts of you that are not submitted, then you ARE NOT "filled" with the Holy Spirit. Stop telling people you're "Spirit-filled" if you're only half-full. Unless EVERY piece of you has been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and with Fire, you're not all the way full. They have to have been crucified so that they can raise with Him in glory.



This is a very simple graphic, not at all meant to be thorough or all-inclusive. Let the Holy Spirit show you all the areas in your life that need addressing. I'm sure He wants to! For now, we're just going to hit a few so you can see how this works. If you're not hearing very well from God on what might be unsubmitted, just ask someone close to you – I'm sure they'll tell you the parts that don't look like Jesus. Spouses are good for that!

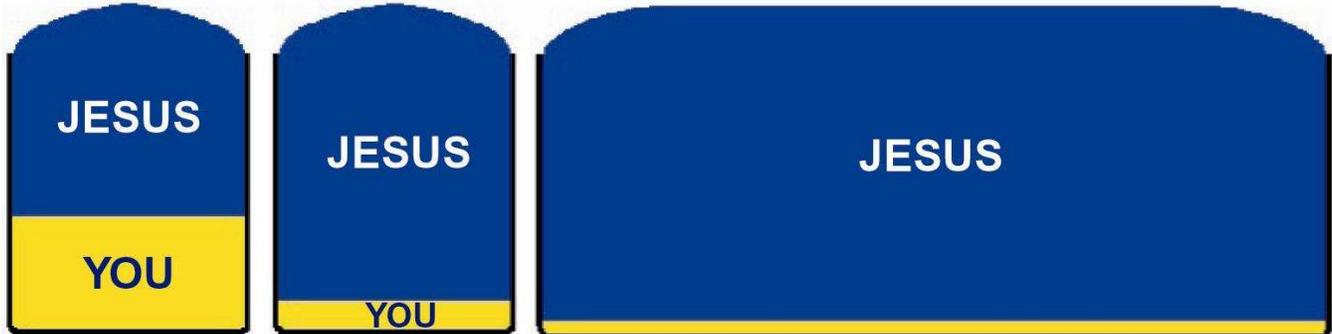
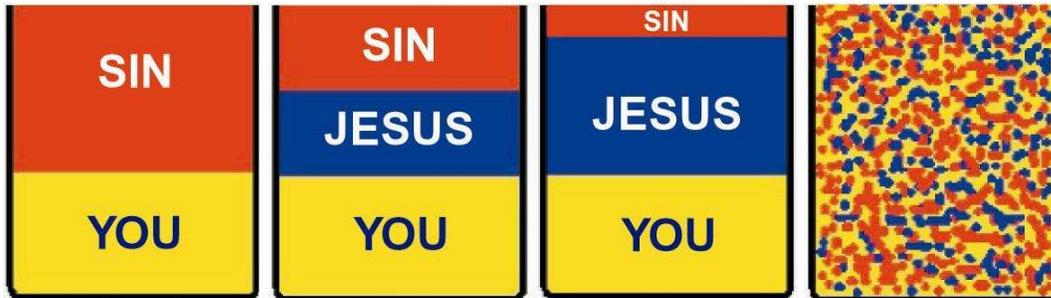
If we had lots of people in the churches with the gift of discernment of spirits, you could go to one of them and ask them what's messing with you and they could just tell you and help get it off. If you know somebody like that, by all means, get them in on this. But don't take ANYBODY'S word for anything. Check everything with God. Even if you can't normally hear God very well, I'm just SURE He wants to talk to you about THIS stuff! So you should be expecting that, as it relates to areas of your life that are unsubmitted, you're going to hear Him really well.

I suspect He's been waiting so long for you to ask Him what the problem is that as soon as you ask you're going to get LOTS of feedback. It may not be an audible thing, but somebody or some situation or a cloud or a little kid or a song on the radio or SOMETHING is going to be used to get through to you and show you the problem. Just EXPECT an answer and listen for it.

Body

We are all jars of clay, vessels to hold His glory, cups of one sort or another. We are humble earthen vessels that are flawed and cracked in many ways and yet He pours His glory into us. We become the temple of His Spirit and He lives in us! Isn't that cool!!

Anyway, it's important first to understand that the Word commands us repeatedly to "be filled with the Spirit" and in the tense it uses it means "to be being filled" - a constant in-filling, a constant effort to keep our cups topped off. (The graphics here are from the full article "Fill My Cup, Lord." on the website – FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com)



There are basically these options:

- You have NO JESUS.
- You have some JESUS and lots of SIN.
- You have more JESUS and a little SIN.
- You're all shook up by the World and "life" and can't figure out what's what.
- You're washed clean, but there's too much YOU.
- JESUS has killed off lots of YOU so He can increase and YOU can decrease.
- You've been a good steward, so He gave you a bigger cup and lots more JESUS.

And it's not a one-time thing. He's our Daily Bread, so you can move from one to the other fairly fluidly, even in the midst of one day. It's not a one-time thing just cause you went down the aisle and got "filled with the Spirit" one day. If you're not constantly STAYING FULL then you're going to drain off - or get lukewarm and stale. Over and over we're commanded to be full and to stay full – or to "be being filled".* And there's no point at which you shouldn't be striving for a bigger cup. We need Him in increasing measure every day to keep from being ineffective and unproductive (II Peter 1:8). You get a bigger cup by pouring yourself out on those in need, then getting refilled again.

* (Acts 2:4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Ephesians 3:19 *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* Colossians 1:9 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;* Ephesians 5:8 *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;* Philippians 1:11 *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*)

The Greek word used repeatedly for “filled” is “pleroo” (Strong's #4137). Here is Strong's definition of it:

- 1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
 - a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally
 - 1) I abound, I am liberally supplied
- 2) to render full, i.e. to complete
 - a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
 - b) to consummate: a number
 - 1) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect
 - 2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)
 - c) to carry into effect, bring to realisation, realise
 - 1) of matters of duty: to perform, execute
 - 2) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish
 - 3) to fulfil, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment

(Thayer's Lexicon also has a lot to say. Do a search for “filled” on www.BlueLetterBible.com and see.)

The point is, Jesus wants us FULL and He knows that only HE can do it. We're all going to be full of SOMETHING. If our bodies are the temple of God and He lives in us, do you really want Him sharing space with that icky stuff? Shouldn't you be purified and cleansed of all unrighteousness so that He can reign supreme? It says “the prayers of a righteous man availeth much” - so I guess the prayers of a kind-of righteous man availeth practically nothing. Why is HE going to listen to YOU when you ask for something, when YOU won't listen to HIM about getting the red stuff out (and the stinky yellow stuff)? Proverbs 25:26 says: “*Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked.*” That sounds to me like a cup that should be clean, but isn't.

Areas of direct disobedience or unresolved pain result in a draining off of that with which we are filled. Sometimes we have a really hard time keeping our cup full because we have a big crack in our cup caused by an unforgiveness or a bitterness or a fundamental character flaw, and so we drain out almost as soon as we get filled. Sometimes we can't ever get all the way full because of the goo we refuse to clean out that's taking up too much space in our cup. Really entrenched red stuff keeps us from being able to be filled to capacity. Sometimes there are physical oppressions and sicknesses that have resulted from spiritual problems. These, too, need addressing through the power of Jesus. More on all that later.

So, as it relates to the Body, let's start with this:

- Is God telling you to do something with FOOD other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with DRINK other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with WORK other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with MONEY other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with SEX other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with TIME other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?
- Is God telling you to do something with your TONGUE other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey?

Get the idea? Odds are pretty good that if the Holy Spirit is convicting you of something and you're not obeying, it's because you've given the enemy room in your heart or because your own soulish nature just wants to rebel. Either way, it's not really giving ALL and you need to do something about it. Stop thinking that He's just going to overlook it and cut you some slack. He REALLY doesn't like being in there with that stuff and He's a really big God. More fear of the Lord would be good. You might want to pray for that. Crying is good, too.

If the Holy Spirit is NOT convicting you of any of that stuff, then either you are not listening and you've got a giant pride problem blocking your hearing OR the Holy Spirit has already beaten you into submission on all those levels. I've met both kinds. Just in case, now would be a good time to pray sincerely and ask the Lord to show you ANYTHING that displeases Him or any area of rebellion as it relates to your Body.

Ok, OK!! You caught me, so what do I do about it?

Well, the first thing is to tell God you're really sorry. That would be good. He's been waiting a long time to hear that. And if you've been saying it before but then going back like a dog to his own vomit, then He's probably not going to take your apology very seriously until you start sticking by your commitments to Him.

If you've tried to turn away from stuff and haven't been able to, it's probably because you're doing too much of the fighting in your own power - because you've tried to force obedience with the YOU in your cup. That just puts more and more pressure on you and more and more guilt when you fall. Jesus lives inside of you and HE is not addicted to cigarettes or donuts or porn or work or anything. He has faced down every failing of Man and beaten it. If you will get out of the way and let HIM fight your battles, it will be much easier. Much. We'll cover that more later since it applies to all three of these components.

You need to be clear that SIN means missing the mark. Whether it's murder or disbelief, it's sin and it keeps you from walking in the FULLNESS of Christ. You will not reach your maximum potential in Him if you remain unsubmitted in some areas – ANY areas. Jesus said, if you LOVE Him, you will OBEY Him. If you're not obeying Him 100%, then you must not love Him 100%. And 90% isn't going to cut it! He wants ALL – and ALL means ALL.

Soul

Let's try this same process again:

Is God telling you to do something with ANGER other than what you are doing? If yes, why won't you obey? What about Guilt, Lust, Control, Fear, Money, Pride, Jealousy, Lying, Disbelief, Self-pity, Power, Bitterness, Unforgiveness, Gluttony, Idolatry, Rebellion or others? Got any of those?

Simplified substantially, the soul is the mind - our emotions, our mental state, our rationalizations and reactions internally to the world around us. It is what makes us distinctly us. This, too, needs to be brought fully into submission with God.

In a sense, you could see it like this:



Body is where Sin manifests into the physical realm.

Our spirit is dormant until replaced with His Spirit and revived. Then it can take up the slack if we allow it to rule and reign.

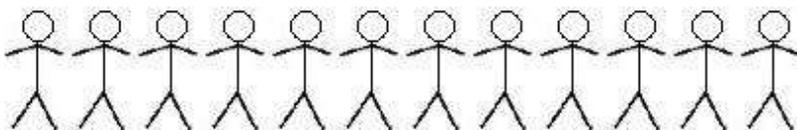
Soul/Mind is where Sin begins and gets invited in. Can still be Sin even if it doesn't manifest, just by "dwelling." Our fallen nature always tries to open doors to Sin.

The yellow stuff is our soulish nature and it's not that much better than the red stuff. In fact, the Blood of Jesus washes away all of our sins in an instant when we ask for forgiveness, but if we don't fill the gap with Jesus (and keep it full), the badness will just jump back into the vacuum. It's our yellow stuff that invited all the red stuff! The Blood of Jesus is sufficient to heal us, but it's not the same process as with the red stuff. The Word says we're to crucify pieces of us so that Christ in us can live. We're to carry our cross daily. Well, that's about denying ourselves pleasures that might be red stuff, but it's also about watching chunks of Self die so Christ can increase and YOU can decrease. And I can tell you from LOTS of experience with this - getting the red stuff out is A LOT easier than getting all the yellow stuff out that displeases Him! One is about behavior and the other is about our nature. Habits are far easier to change than character. Beating the yellow stuff into submission is the crucifying ourselves part.

No physical trial you will ever go through - not climbing Mount Everest in winter, not sawing your own arm off with a pocket knife, not doing a marathon on your knees - will EVER be as hard as getting your tongue and your mind beaten into submission. THAT is the great battle in our lives and the difficulty is evidenced by how really rare it is to find someone that has accomplished any substantial measure of success in that! In fact, I'm convinced the only way to do it effectively is to let Jesus do it. We can fake it for awhile in our own power, but all we've done is suppress it. Only Jesus can terminate it once and for all.

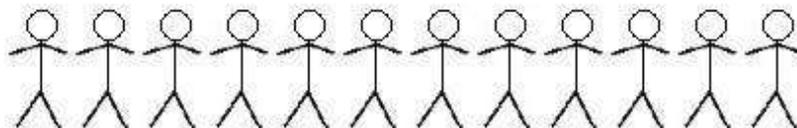
In fact, it's not possible to walk in holiness at all without the Holy Spirit doing it. You can't use the yellow stuff to beat down the yellow stuff. That just won't work. Jesus is our righteousness and He alone is worthy and holy and capable of making us like Him. We can't get to be like Jesus in our own power. We have to be clothed in Christ, we have to run into Him who is our strong tower. We have to be dead so that Christ in us can live. And not just a little dead either - ALL of those component pieces have to die. Maybe this will help you figure out which is which.

Component Pieces of YOU - Which is Which?



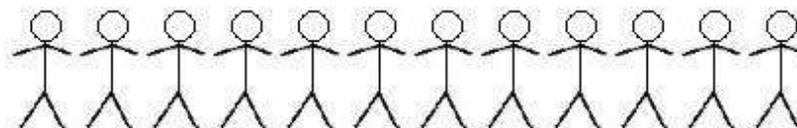
**Fully Dead
and Submitted**

List:



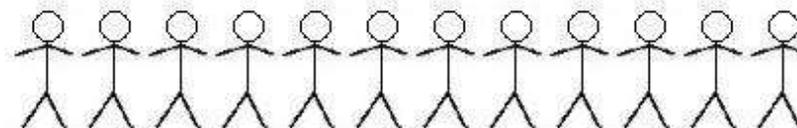
**Partially Dead
But Dying Quickly**

List:



**Partially Dead
But Stubborn**

List:



**Unwilling To Die
Even A Little**

List:

He doesn't want to purge you of ALL the yellow stuff, that would eliminate you completely and He kind of likes parts of you. Once I asked Him what parts of me He wanted to keep and He said, "Basically everything from before about six years old." Just the faith like a child parts. That thing in David that made him fearlessly go out to face Goliath because he just KNEW His Dad was bigger and tougher than THAT guy's Dad!

There's a lot more to be said, but you'll need to pray through this yourself and ask God to show you very clearly all the areas in which you are partially or completely unsubmitted. I know it's a prayer He wants you to pray, so I KNOW He will answer it and show you stuff. Then it's up to you to lay it down.

I find that this kind of prayer helps a lot and gets nearly instant results - if you have the guts to pray it:
(If you forgot, go back and read the Warning first!)

Dear Lord, I'm really sorry for all the sin that I should have never let in. I'm sorry for all the old stuff that I've let take root and boss me around. Please purge me of all unrighteousness right now through the power of Your Blood. I stand in faith, knowing that Your Blood is sufficient to cleanse me of all unrighteousness. Please show me ANY area of my life that displeases You – anything that stands in the way between us and keeps me from being able to walk in the fulness of all that you have for me. Whatever it is, I don't care how much I like it, I don't care how long it's been there, I don't care how much it hurts, it's got to go RIGHT NOW in the Name of Jesus. So Lord, rip it, tear it, burn it, shred it, crucify it – whatever it takes. If I won't lay it down, rip it from my grasp. I don't care how much it hurts, I trust You. Do whatever it takes, but do it RIGHT NOW. I won't flinch and I won't try to hop out of Your refining fire when it comes. Dial the heat up. I'm going to stand. Give me the strength to stand. Please hold my hand. I'm going to really need You. Thanks, Lord. You're the best Dad ever and I trust You. Please burn it all off and don't stop no matter how much I whine. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

Hear me – your growth in Christ is directly proportional to your willingness to seek out and embrace His refining fire. When He is pounding on you and life seems horrible, if you will go to Him and find out what He's trying to teach you, embrace it, learn from it and thank Him for it - then maybe you can move on. If you whine and complain and keep asking Him to turn down the flames because it's too hot, it shows a lack of trust that He knows what He's doing and it just slows down the whole process. How long is it going to take to cook a turkey in an oven set at 50 degrees? How long if it's set at 450? That's the difference between Christians in China and India and those in America. We have our ovens set at 50 degrees and they have theirs on full blast. Persecution dials up the heat really fast – and results in explosive growth in Christ (and a sifting of those who mean it and those who don't).

So don't be such a sissy. Jump in the fire and learn to like it. Is He God or isn't He? Will He protect you or won't He? Are His promises good or aren't they? Buck up, ya big weenie. Go kill some yellow stuff.

Spirit

OK, so we got the red stuff out (for today) and we begged Him to kill the yellow stuff. So you probably have a void in the top of your cup now. What are you going to do? If you leave it like that the enemy, who ranges to and fro like a hungry lion, will try to jump in there right away and mess with you again. You've got to get your cup full of Jesus and keep it that way. And not just full to 100%, full to overflowing – up and over, mounded up on top.

So do you know how? Well, you can read your Bible. You can listen to worship music. You can pray. You can just spend time at the feet of Jesus before the throne of God. Whatever is the best way you have found to drink in Jesus. But be careful that you're not DOING to get filled. That just means that you're trying to get more blue stuff by engaging the yellow stuff. That's a long uphill battle and can border on legalism. What it ends up doing is inviting in the red stuff again in the form of guilt, condemnation, self-righteousness, pride or some other nasty thing.

Maybe there's a better way. What does the Word of God say about this?

John 7:38 says: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' "

John 4:10 says: Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Rev. 7:17 says: *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Here's a couple of Old Testament reference so you know God doesn't change:

Jeremiah 17:13: *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, [and] they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.*

Jeremiah 2:13: *For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, [and] hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

In that last one we see that they committed two evils, they didn't drink of the living waters and they had containers with cracks in them. (A cistern is just a really big cup.) In fact, they made their own cisterns to store up water because they didn't trust in God's unending supply from the fountain. And the result was they had neither – AND they made God mad!

It sure seems to me like those fountains of living water are the Holy Spirit. It says Jesus is the "Fountain in the House of David" (Zech 13:1) The Holy Spirit is that blue stuff that fills us and displaces all the other stuff. It would be great if He would just shove everything out of the way, but for some reason we're involved and we have to participate in the process – or at least be willing and ask Him to do it.

This being true (I hope you agree), then we don't need to DO anything to fill our cup. We just have to believe that Jesus wants our cup full, that He promised that springs of living water would flow up from INSIDE of us and then just turn on the tap. We just need to ask Him to fill us in whatever way HE wants to fill us and teach us how to keep it that way. Remember; trust the Lord your God with ALL your heart, lean NOT on your OWN understanding, but in ALL your ways acknowledge HIM and HE will direct your paths. (Prov. 3:5-6)

I think our job as a church is to find those who are poor in spirit – those whose cups are running low – and share with them. Pour ourselves out into them so that they can be filled. Not with our yellow stuff! God forbid! But from the abundance of the riches that have been given to us that we would share – of our wealth, of our physical energy/strength/time AND of the fountain of living water that is inside of us.

Haven't you ever been around somebody that, just being in the same room with them or getting a hug, made your spirit feel full? I bet they had a cup that was overflowing – or they deliberately and selflessly poured themselves out on you. They may not have known that's what they were doing or been able to explain it that way, they just knew that they had Joy and Peace and that you needed some, so they shared.

The Lord gave me a vision once of how the church should operate and it looks a pyramid of champagne glasses at a wedding where they pour in the top one and as it overflows, the glass below gets filled and overflows and so it continues all the way down. Those who have the biggest cup of Jesus should be constantly pouring themselves out onto others and teaching them how to keep it going.

Shouldn't church be a filling station? How often do you go and leave feeling just as empty as when you got there? Some churches are really great filling stations and you can leave FULL of Jesus – but you can't make it past Monday afternoon without running out again. That's because we think we have to go to a building to get our cups full. The Word of God doesn't say anything like that. The Word of God says rivers of living water will flow up from INSIDE of US. We have an endless supply! And WE are supposed to be the filling station for those that don't know how to tap into it. It's not about the building or the pastor or nice music that gets us in the mood – every Christian has access to the river of God! Isn't that COOL!! So, stick a straw in and suck! Better yet, just dive in.

Below we're going to talk more about all the things you can be filled with, why you need to help fill others and how to get full and make sure you stay full. I know this may sound weird, but it's all in the Bible. No question about it. We're supposed to perceive things in the spirit, not with our natural mind. This is NOT the "real" world – this is not our home. We are spiritual beings and we need to get a lot more familiar with what's happening in the spirit. That's where the war is and that's where our hope comes from.

I Corinthians 2:14 - *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually** discerned.*

Romans 8:6 - *For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Communications – Hotline to Headquarters

So, we got the red stuff out, we're getting more yellow stuff out, we learned how to get more blue stuff, now what? Well, now it's time to get your filters unclogged so you can hear God really well and HE can direct ALL your paths. This works better as a question and answer thing. Ready?

First, what exactly are we talking about? Does God really speak to people today?

Yes. In a whole bunch of ways from a gentle nudge, to instruction through the Word, to using other people and circumstances to speak to you, to sending dreams and visions (or angels) – and/or even conversing directly with you.

You can hear God and converse with Him?! You're kidding, right?

Not kidding. You can absolutely talk to God and He'll talk back. There are millions of people all over the world that rely on God for constant daily instruction on all sorts of things. But, there's a difference between hearing God audibly (with your natural ears, outside of your own head) and hearing the inner "still, small voice". It's pretty rare for God to speak to people audibly (like thunder), but there are plenty of folks out there that say they've heard Him – and the evidence is that once they did, it changed them forever! Many of the house churches in China are under such persecution that they can't set a regular time for meeting or even tell each other when the meeting will be – they all just pray independently and God Himself sets the time and place and tells each to be there. I've experienced that kind of coordination myself and hear Him speak to me all the time. This is totally for real and the birthright of every believer!

Wait ... people hear the God of the Universe tell them stuff? Like what tie to wear and whether to turn left or right? What job to take? What to have for dinner? Not just big stuff?

Sure. The Bible says, "In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths." (Prov. 3:5-6) What do you think "ALL your ways" means? And how is He going to direct you if you can't hear Him?

But my pastor said God doesn't talk to people like that!

Hmmm. Well, God used to talk to people all the time in the Bible. Wonder when He stopped? Did He say He was going to stop? Isn't He the same yesterday, today and forever? If anything, once the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2, there were LOTS more people talking to God directly! Never mind the MILLIONS of people all over the world who you have to conclude are thoroughly and certifiably nuts – including many of the most effective leaders of the church. In order to sustain that argument you have all kinds of logic problems.

Consider this;

IF God used to talk to people but doesn't now, **THEN** we must not need to hear from Him anymore. Can that be? By all measures we're worse off than ever. If there is a war between Good and Evil, we're losing pretty badly right now and really desperately need to be getting commands directly from Headquarters, not from flawed man-made sources and tradition-soaked interpretations of Scripture!

IF there is a battle between Good and Evil, **THEN** who would benefit most if the people on the "Good" side were told they couldn't ACTUALLY talk to their Commander in Chief? Now, you know the Evil side is absolutely clear to EVERYONE that if you try to talk to THEIR leadership you WILL get an answer REAL fast! Even Christians are afraid to mess with Ouija boards and call on the names of demons because somewhere inside they believe something VERY real will show up almost instantly. But at the same time, the forces of darkness want us to buy that OUR God is mute! Doesn't that sound like something the snake would say in the Garden? Despite hundreds of examples in the Bible that He is available and accessible all the time, we have too often bought the lie that God is unwilling or unable to actually talk to His children. It's a lie from the pit and we've bought into it for too long.

IF we receive the Holy Spirit when we are saved, **THEN** 1/3 of the Godhead is living INSIDE of us all the time! (I John 4:13-17) But He doesn't have anything to say?! He's not interested in our daily activities? God's not big enough to know what we should have for lunch? He knows the hairs on our head and monitors our every coming and going, but has no opinion about it or desire to give us advice? What kind of Father is that?! **IF** we're dead and it's Christ in us that lives, **THEN** shouldn't HE be running the show? (Romans 7:4-6)

The most common argument I hear is that when the Bible was done being written then "that which was perfect has come and that which was in part was done away" (I Corin. 13:10) so we don't need to talk to God anymore. The argument is that I Corinthians 12 talks about tongues and prophecy and then chapter 13 tells about the way it

SHOULD be when the perfect is come so you should do away with all that. But they don't seem to notice that then chapter 14 starts with Paul urging them to seek the gift of prophecy! Said another way, I think "when that which is perfect is come" refers to Jesus returning, NOT the Bible being completed.

IF the Bible is what's being referred to there, **THEN** why hasn't knowledge ceased? **IF** it's the "perfect" thing mentioned there, **THEN** nothing could stand against it. **IF** the Bible is perfect, **THEN** could somebody tell me which version is flawless? And **IF** none of them are because we don't have the original manuscripts anymore, **THEN** something DID stand against it! **IF** the perfect is come, **THEN** why do we have 37,000 denominations and we seem to be losing the battle with the darkness? There are just big giant logic problems with that argument – not to mention the personal experience of millions of reasonable, Jesus-lovers all over the world.

But my pastor says even HE doesn't hear God conversationally like that!

Ok, well, you see, Matthew 18:18 says that, "what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and what you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." It goes on to say that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by the Father in heaven. (v. 19) So, could it be that we have whole groups of Christians that have agreed that God doesn't talk to people? And if they were convinced of that, don't those verses say that God will honor it? So maybe the problem is that if you're convinced God WON'T talk to you that way, He probably won't. And who would you blame? The pastor? Probably not – in fairness, we gotta lay it at the feet of the Snake and the generations of tradition that have been built up to keep us from being truly "Spirit-led".

There could also be other problems that would keep a person from hearing God. One possibility is that you're on the wrong team - even if you think you're not. You know it's possible to make up your own "Jesus" and you'll get a response from that one about as good as if you were praying to a stick of wood. Another is that you have unrepented sin that stands between you and God – and God has convicted you of it so many times that He's just given up trying to talk to you about it.

Oh, and by the way, you're going to have to get over that thing about the pastor being more "holy" than you. This is a one-on-one relationship with Jesus you're supposed to have. You can't do it by proxy through the guy that gets paid to hear God (especially if he admits he's NOT hearing God!). We are ALL the Church. We are EACH temples that hold God's Spirit. Any one of us that are adopted sons of God have the ability to petition the Throne directly and seek His face. God loves each – in fact, He's especially fond of those that come to Him with faith like little children. Sometimes pastors have a hard time with that. (I don't think there are "Faith like a Child" classes in seminary.)

This is just crazy! How could this be true and I never knew it before? Wouldn't somebody have told me?

Well, I think you underestimate the damage the enemy has done and how long he's been plotting this. The vast majority of the church in the West doesn't live the "normal" Christian life. That is, Biblically speaking, we're to be full of power and might, we're to be free of the bondage of sin, we're to NOT conform to the world, we're to be dead to ourselves, we're to be ONE Body and loving and serving each other with all our heart. That's just a few. Can you see how far away from that we actually are as a "church"? We're not even CLOSE! There MUST be something missing. Somebody left something out! It has to be this – God Himself is supposed to be directing you and you're supposed to be listening and OBEYING. Now ... who would benefit most from us leaving that little piece out? Yep, the guy in the black hat.

Now, what do you think a close encounter conversationally with the God of the Universe might do to a person? Trust me, it would change everything. It would show them the power of the relationship they have as adopted sons, they would lose all fear, they would sacrifice anything to keep hearing Him, they would obey and walk in HIS ways, they would know (really KNOW) that God Himself lives IN them and they would want more of Him, they would do the things on HIS heart – like feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, saving the lost. They would be in awe of His holiness and seek to please Him out of reverence and honor, not out of legalism or church requirements.

So, **IF** this is a war between Good and Evil, **THEN** wouldn't our most immediate and urgent need be to get people to where they can hear clear, timely, reliable commands from Headquarters? If you have a guy in Basic Training that refuses to listen to the Drill Sergeant and does his own thing, wouldn't you want to leave him at home? He's just going to get himself killed when the enemy starts shooting and leadership says 'DUCK!' and he can't or won't hear them! He's no good to anybody. Maybe he could be a supply clerk – but he really shouldn't be on the front lines. He should stay home and send his money to the folks on the front lines that hear God really well and obey ALL the time, no matter what the cost.

But we have the Bible. God's Word is what we are to use to direct our paths!

Ok, sure. Not got anything bad to say about the Word! Everything God tells us to do will line up with His own Word. But no matter how well you know the Bible, it can't accommodate for every possible situation and what you should do. There's lots of stuff not covered in there – like which of these two jobs God wants me to take. And there's stuff in there that men have been arguing about for centuries without ever getting agreement. Lots of wasted time trying to figure out how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. (By the way, which side benefits most when God's people fight over stupid stuff? You getting the hang of this yet?)

Think of it like this. You're in the Army and they give you a Manual. All kinds of stuff is covered in there – what to wear, how to salute, how the weapons work, how to survive in a battle, what to eat in the forest, how the chain of command works, even what the enemy is like and how to resist them – there's even stuff in there about what the enemy WILL DO one day, whether they like it or not! It's a REALLY good Manual – in fact, it's inspired by God! It covers an amazing array of stuff and could probably handle most any situation. So would the Drill Sergeant ask you to read it, maybe even memorize it – and then send you into battle with nothing BUT that? Are you going to be able to know what to do when the bullets start flying? What about group strategy and deployment of forces and anticipating enemy movements? Is the Manual going to accommodate for every possible scenario on a rapidly changing battlefield? Are you sure you're interpreting it right? Is there time in the foxhole to be arguing with other soldiers that are reading it differently? What if some idiot published like TWENTY different translations and paraphrases of the Manual?! Then what?! Are you REALLY sure you have the right version? Isn't there a chain of command? Isn't there somebody in charge calling the shots that's supposed to tell you what to do next? Aren't you supposed to be listening and OBEYING? Want to go into battle without the Manual? No. Want to rely on it alone when you have other resources available? No. Want to take an order from somebody that goes against the Manual? No. When the bullets start flying, do you want to hear personally and directly from Headquarters so that you can know that help is coming and know what to do? You betcha!

We need a radio to headquarters that works really good, with no static on the line and no enemy transmission sneaking in. If you insist that you don't want to hear God, I still love you, but I'm not going to the front lines with you.

I don't know. This is kind of scary. What if I hear wrong? What if it's the enemy messing with me? Maybe this is all in your mind.

Wow! That's a whole mess of stuff. Let's try this one at a time.

Maybe it's all in your mind.

Well, it's not just me. There's hundreds of millions like me that hear God. In fact, most of the growth in the Church worldwide is because of those people. The "mainline" denominations are shrinking. It's the Spirit-led revolutionaries that are exploding into new territories and pushing back the darkness. The growth in this arm of the Church went from about ZERO in 1900 to about 500 MILLION people in 2000. God is pouring out His Spirit and people are listening.

Ok, let's try it from the opposite direction. It all sunk in for me one day when it struck me that satan never creates anything – he just makes weak copies of whatever God is doing. He's a liar and a deceiver and a fake. So ... while it may seem far-fetched, most folks (even Christians) will admit that evil is a real force in the world and the supernatural is real. (The Bible verifies repeatedly that witches and mediums and sorcery are real, by the way ... and that you're headed for hell if mess with them. – Deut 18:10-12, Col. 5:20) The enemy has psychics and mediums and astral-projection and Ouija boards and demons and zombies and spells and curses.

So where's OUR stuff?! If this is a war, why does only one side get cool weapons? Was my church leaving out important stuff that I needed for warfare? Because in the first century they had amazing weapons and defenses available to them. They had the Holy Spirit telling them stuff they wouldn't have known (Acts 5:1-11), they had people hearing from God (Acts 13:2), they had people writing stuff as God dictated (Rev.), they were caught up in the Spirit to heaven (2 Corin. 12:2-4), they had dreams and visions (Acts 10:9-23), they saw angels (Acts 12), they saw Jesus Himself (Acts 9:1-22), they cast out demons (Acts 16:16-18), they were bitten by deadly snakes and didn't die (Acts 28:1-10), they spoke in other languages of men and of angels (Acts 2, 1 Corin. 12 & more), they healed people (Acts 5:15), they prayed and miracles happened (Acts 5:12, Acts 12) – even teleportation (or as I prefer "theoportation" - Acts 8:39) and they raised the dead (Acts 9:32-42)! They even had people who were against them drop dead (Acts 5:1-11) or go blind (Acts 13:6-12) – on command! And that's just ONE reference for each! There are lots more!

Now, the argument is that all that ended when the Bible was done being written – but it didn't end for the other team, so how come just all OUR cool stuff got taken away? Wouldn't it have really benefited the enemy a LOT to spread that story that we were powerless around for a couple thousand years? Do you see? This is no kind of way

to fight a war! There MUST be stuff we've been leaving out! The enemy has us twisted up into a thousand pieces (37,000+ denominations to be specific) and we can't STAND because we're not ONE Body. Because of all the arguing over stupid stuff – which we would NEVER have done if we had all been hearing the voice of God personally and reliably and walking in the Gifts!

This is kind of scary.

No kidding! It's the biggest thing ever in your life! That the God of the Universe wants to be intimately involved in everything you do and say and eat and wear and think. That's massively scary! And yet, we can never have peace and joy and victory until we have relationship with Jesus and are led by His Holy Spirit. You see, under our own power, we just screw everything up. There has never been any strategy of Man that has led to anything good in the long run. Oh, it might work for a little while, but you get enough sinful people involved in it, add money, mix in a little satan – and it's toast. Or worse, you get Communism or Fascism or something and millions of people die. There are just two options – if it's of Man it will fail and if it's of God nothing can stand against it. (Acts 5:38-39) Since the "church" in America is failing, somebody other than God must be in charge. See a logic problem there?

Anyway, yes, it's scary. But what a payoff!! To walk in holiness because God Himself is fighting off the temptations and snares of the enemy, to hear Him all the time and get direction on anything and everything, to know that He is completely and totally in charge at all times in every situation. How are you going to find peace WITHOUT hearing from God? How is what you have NOW working for you?

And hearing His voice is not even a GIFT of the Spirit! It's just an automatic for every believer! We haven't even talked about prophecy and discernment of spirits and knowledge and wisdom and tongues and healing and all the other gifts God gives His children! Trust me, the payoff is amazing, but it's going to cost you everything – but everything you THINK you have isn't yours anyway, so who cares!

What if I hear wrong? What if the enemy is messing with me?

Well sure, that can happen. He's certainly going to try to confuse and frustrate you. We are specifically instructed, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1). That MUST mean that other spirits are potentially messing with us, and since there is no indication that THIS ended when the Bible was completed, then there must still be demons putting thoughts into our heads. And if there are still demons putting thoughts into our heads, then we must still have a need to test and see if they are from God. And if they're NOT from God, then we resist them and they flee. But it must also mean that one of the possibilities is that the spirit we're hearing IS from God! (Again, proving the point that God still speaks to us despite I Corin. 13:10.)

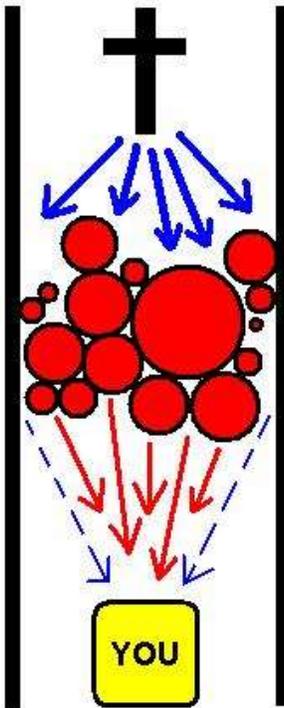
You see 1 John 4 goes on in verses 2 and 3 to lay out how you can know what it is that is talking to you and from where it comes, "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

When we get a thought in our head we have to figure out who it is. There are only three choices: You, God or the enemy. Sometimes other people tell us stuff, but they're still playing to one of the three. We're to bring every thought into obedience with Christ (and the Word). That means our own thoughts that are out of line AND the ones inserted by the enemy. I find that, sadly, the enemy and I sound a lot alike. The red stuff and the yellow stuff aren't really that different after all. I apply this filter to everything, "If I follow through with this thought that just came into my head, who is glorified most – God, satan or me?" If it's anything other than God, even if it's me, I rebuke in the Name of Jesus. And if it WAS me, I ask the Lord to hunt down whatever in me wanted to suggest something that wouldn't glorify Him – and kill it.

Could you screw it up? Sure. Particularly if the voices are VERY sneaky. Which they will be because demons are smarter than us and know the human condition very well after all these years of torturing and twisting us. Without God fighting for you, you haven't got a chance. You have to be constantly on guard, constantly armored-up and expecting anything from any direction. But His arm is long and His shields are mighty. He will always get you through if you are sincerely seeking Him and trying to walk in holiness.

OK. I'm getting that it's possible, but I'm going to have to hear Him for myself. I'm willing to try. What do we do?

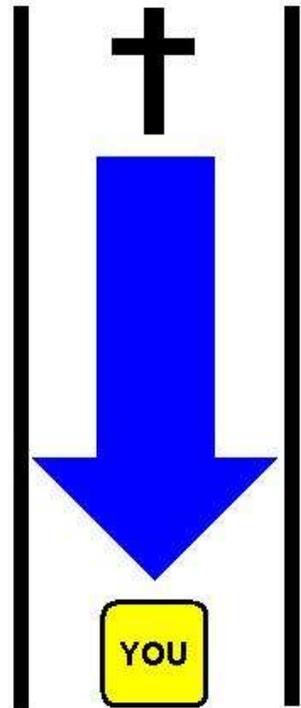
Great! Yeah, don't take my word for it, seek Him yourself. Well the first thing is to ask the Lord to show you anything that stands in the way between you and Him. It's like this;



There is a pipeline of information that flows between us and God. He ALWAYS hears us, but if we can't hear Him, it probably because of things WE have put in the way.

ANYTHING that we put between US and GOD is an idol. God never puts those things there, WE do. The most common thing is "religion" or the "pastor". Then ALL messages from God have to filter THROUGH that and get garbled. Others include sins and habits and addictions and disobedience of one sort or another.

They ALL have to go. Only THEN can we get clear commands from Upstairs. Don't let ANYTHING come between You and God.



The point of the church coming together should be so that we can crucify pieces of ourselves so that Christ in us can live. Said another way, it's to help each other identify the things that stand between us and Jesus – and pluck them out.

The most common thing we put in the way is our belief that God won't talk to us. That's got to go! If you don't think He's a Living God and active and able to speak and desiring relationship with you, then you're going to have to lay that down.

One of the other possibilities is that you're worshipping the WRONG Jesus. Paul said that would happen, that someone would come preaching another Jesus and people would accept it. It's very simple; if you make up your own Jesus, don't expect an answer when you pray! Prosperity-Jesus, Emergency-Only-Jesus, Not-Quite-As-Good-As-The-Virgin-Mary-Jesus, and a zillion others are all MADE UP. If you make your own god from scratch, expect about as much response as if you were praying to a stick. Those are NOT Bible Jesus - who doesn't like to be toyed with and put in a box.

Other things in the way are a reliance on someone else for your holiness or connection to God (Pastor, wife, mother, etc.). That's got to stop. This is a ONE-on-ONE relationship with Jesus. Nobody is going to do it for you. Other pipeline blockages include addiction, pride, selfishness, bitterness, anger, laziness, fear and so many others that keep us from experiencing the fullness that is IN Christ.

Ask the Lord to show you what is in the way and He is faithful to ALWAYS do that if you'll listen. Ask some other folks to pray with you if possible and just pray in agreement that the Lord will make Himself very clear to you about what to do next.

Just pray and believe. He'll come and help unclog you. Believe that He wants to talk to you and start conversing with Him. Find someone to be accountable with that knows God really well and make sure you don't act on anything that sounds fishy without verifying it with the Word of God. Now, not with doctrine of Man, mind you – with the Word of God.

If you like, pray something like this:

Lord, I'm sorry I ever put you in a box. I'm sorry I limited You in any way. I'm sorry that I haven't been hearing you as well as I should and I acknowledge that I clogged up my pipeline with stuff. Please, Lord, whatever it takes, scrub it all out of there with the Blood of Jesus. I just want You, Jesus. You direct my paths and organize my days. You tell me what You want and I'll do it. Help me hear You better. Help make me dangerous to the enemy. Increase the Jesus in me, even if it hurts. I love you, Lord. You be in charge now. Amen.

Appendix

You Can Be Filled With Good Stuff:

The Lord - Psalm 16:5; 1 Cor 10:21
 Fullness of God - Eph 3:19
 Spirit of God - Exod 31:3; Exod. 35:31; Eph 5:18
 Glory of the Lord - Num 14:21
 Holy Ghost - Luke 1:15; 1:41; 1:67; Luke 4:1; Acts 2:4; Acts 4:8; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:3; Acts 7:55; Acts 9:17; Acts 11:24; Acts 13:9
 Goodness of the Lord - Psalm 33:5
 Blessing of the Lord - Deut 33:23
 Fear of the Lord - Luke 5:26
 All Knowledge - Rom 15:14
 Knowledge of the Lord - Isaiah 11:9
 Power by the spirit of the Lord and judgement - Micah 3:8
 Knowledge of the glory of God - Hab 2:14
 Knowledge of His will, wisdom and spiritual understanding - Col. 1:19
 Spirit of Wisdom - Exod. 28:3; 35:35; Deut. 34:9
 Wisdom & understanding - I Kings 7:14
 Wisdom and grace - Luke 2:40
 Wisdom and beauty - Ezek. 28:12
 Judgement and righteousness - Isa. 33:5
 Light - Matt. 6:22 (Luke 11:34-36)
 Grace and truth - John 1:14
 Faith and power - Acts 6:8
 Salvation - Psalm 116:13
 Righteousness - Matt. 5:6
 Fruits of Righteousness - Phil 1:11
 Comfort - 2 Cor 7:4
 Consolation - Jerem. 16:7
 Joy - John 15:11; John 16:24; Acts 2:28; 2 Tim. 1:4
 Mercy - Psalm 119:64
 Mercy and good fruits - James 3:17 Blessing - 1 Cor 10:16
 Good - Psalm 104:28
 Good things - Luke 1:53
 Good things - Job 22:18
 Good works and almsdeeds - Acts 9:36
 Goodness and all knowledge - Rom 15:14
 Praise and honour - Psalm 71:8
 Laughter and singing - Psalm 126:2
 Precious and pleasant riches - Prov. 24:4
 Horses, chariots, might men of war - Ezek. 39:20
 Wonder and amazement - Acts 3:10
 Trembling (to enemies) - Zech 12:2
 Full of days - Job 42:17
 Children - Psalm 127:5

Need Clean Cup:

Matt 23:25; Luke 11:39; Prov. 25:4; Isaiah 66:20; 2 Tim 2:21; Hebrews 9:21

Need Pliable Cup:

Matt. 9:17 (Mar 2:22, Luke 5:37)

Need FULL Cup:

Matt 25:4; Ruth 1:21

Chosen/Special Vessel:

Acts 9:15; Romans 9:21; I Thes. 4:4; 2 Tim 2:20

Hated Vessels:

Rom 9:22

Things that are NEVER Full:

Hell and destruction - Prov. 27:20
 The Sea - Ecc. 1:7

Or You Can Be Filled With Bad Stuff:

With sin - Jerem. 51:5
 Evil and madness - Ecc 9:3
 Confusion - Job 10:15; Acts 19:29
 Heaviness - Psalm 69:20; Phil 2:26
 Travail and vexation of spirit - Ecc 4:6
 Tossings to and fro - Job 7:4
 Drunkenness and/or nakedness - Lam. 4:21; Jerem. 12:12
 Drunkenness, Sorrow, astonishment and desolation - Ez 23:33
 Violence - Ezek. 8:17
 Satan, lies - Acts 5:3
 Devils - 1 Corin 10:21
 Abominations and filthiness - Ezra 9:11
 Abominations, filthiness of fornication - Rev. 17:4
 Adultery, cannot cease from sin, beguiling, covetous practies, cursed children - 2 Peter 2:14
 Bitterness - Lam. 3:15
 Sorrow - John 16:6
 Envy, contradicting, blaspheming - Acts 13:45
 Unrighteousness, fornication, wickeness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful - Rom 1:29-31
 Wickedness - Lev. 19:29
 Blood of innocents - Jer. 19:4
 Hands full of blood - Isaiah 1:15
 Bloody crimes and violence - Ezek 7:23
 Blood and perverseness - Ezek. 9:9
 Trouble - Job 14:1; Psalm 88:3
 Sin of youth - Job 20:11
 Cursing, deceit, fraud, mischief and vanity - Psalm 10:7
 Mischief - Prov. 12:21; Psalm 26:10
 Subtilty and mischief - Acts 13:10
 Deceit - Jerem 5:27
 Violence, lies and deceit - Micah 6:12
 Lies, robbery, blood - Nahum 3:1
 Extortion and excess - Matt. 23:25
 Hypocrisy and iniquity - Matt. 23:28
 Cursing and bitterness - Rom 3:14
 Cruelty - Psalm 74:20
 Strife - Prov. 17:1
 Darkness - Matt 6:23; Luke 11:34; Rev. 16:10
 No pleasure - Hosea 8:8
 Their own devices / His own ways - Prov. 3:10; Prov. 14:4
 Dead men's bones and uncleanness - Matt 23:27
 Wrath - Esther 3:5; Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28;
 Wrath of God - Rev. 15:1; Rev. 15:7; Rev. 16:19
 Fury of the Lord - Isaiah 51:20; Jerem 6:11
 Fury - Dan 3:19; Jerem. 25:15
 Snare, fire and brimstone, tempest - Psalm 11:6
 Trembling - Isaiah 51:17, Is. 51:22,
 Indignation - Esther 5:9; Jerem. 15:17; Acts 5:17; Rev. 14:10
 Judgement - Isaiah 1:21
 Reproach - Lam 3:30
 Scorn and derision - Psalm 123:4; Ezek. 23:22
 Shame - Hab. 2:16
 Contempt - Psalm 123:3
 Plagues - Rev. 21:9
 Madness - Jerem 51:7; Luke 6:11

Appendix B

Cup Troubleshooting

Let's talk more about this cup thing.

There are two ways that I know of to get your cup completely filled up with God. There is the daily walking in obedience and seeking and prayerful living that just pushes out the Sin a little at a time and creates habits of effectiveness and faithfulness. One day you look up and you've achieved sanctification (holiness, no red stuff). Or there is the experience that the first Christians had at Pentecost - the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It's kind of like if you have a swimming pool in your backyard you want to fill, you can stick a garden hose in it and let the water run until it's full - or you can call the forestry service and have one of those giant helicopters that dump water on forest fires just flood the whole block and fill your pool in one burst. Far be it from me to tell someone that however much God they got in them they did it the wrong way! I have dear, dear friends that did it both ways and both are as full of God as anyone I know. I have had Pentecostals describe the first method as "old school" and unnecessary since the Azusa Revival and the "awakening" in 1900. Even delegitimize it as a method to build that relationship with God. (Mostly they say we don't have time for that.) But that makes no sense to me at all. It may not be the fastest, but it sure seems more lasting and less likely to be taken for granted. To build a habit of daily struggle and faithfulness rather than to rely on one "burst" seems perfectly reasonable.

If you're not into church linguistics, one of the terms you'll hear used a lot is "Spirit-filled". What most folks want you to think it means is that their cup is totally full of God. What they REALLY most likely mean is that at some point in their life they had a dramatic experience in which the Holy Spirit came on them and something happened. Most probably what they really, REALLY mean is just that they speak in tongues. I've had folks ask me if I was Spirit-filled and I (and they) know darn well that what they really want to know is if I speak in tongues - NOT if I'm walking in holiness and am completely filled with nothing BUT the Holy Spirit. It seems that for many people, we've put the emphasis on the Gifts, not the relationship.

You see, what I think has happened with a LOT of people is that they were in churches that put a lot of emphasis on the spiritual gifts that can come when your cup is filled (especially tongues) and so they seek that experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit just FOR that. That is, they're not laying everything down and seeking sanctification and willing to do whatever it takes to live victoriously and conquer sin consistently and fearing an awesome God - they just want to speak in tongues like everybody else at their church. So they seek God and they ask to be filled and they either don't (because God sees right through wrong motives) or else they do get a burst, but not enough to really push out all the sin. Their cup's level rises enough for that gift but they can't maintain it because they're not committed to keeping the sin out consistently. They didn't get training on cup management, they just had an urgency for a manifestation of some sort. Since what God gives are GIFTS, He will let a person keep them even later the level in their cup drops to dangerously low. That's how we end up with some revivalists and others who can heal people and yet are complete selfish stinkers.

There are plenty of people that I've met that describe themselves as "Spirit-filled" - and I'd rather spend time in a bathtub with a wolverine than hang out with them. Whatever they once had is LONG gone! Our lives are FLUID and dynamic, in constant motion and flux. Like the dilation of the iris of your eye, we are tuned to the world around us and it affects us in all kinds of good and bad ways. That's why Cup Management is so important.

We should never worship the creation instead of the Creator. We should never seek after experiences or feelings or manifestations. That's just NOT going to get your cup filled up all the way because it's comes from a selfish or prideful motive that is inherently sinful. You just can't pray for the Sin to be poured out and be sanctified so that you'll be cool or because you covet what someone else has or because you want to show them up. See the problem? Sin is motivating the removal of sin. A house divided can't stand. Doesn't work. God sees right through that. He may give you manifestations, but it's just going to wreck you if you keep walking down that path.

We should seek ONLY that Jesus fill us completely and do His work through us, that we should decrease so that He can increase. We should seek OBEDIENCE - pure and complete. The other stuff is just side-effects of that. Signs and wonders will FOLLOW - they will trail behind, not lead the way.