

Truth-3: Spirit-Filled
The Amazing Plan God
Designed To Keep Us Filled
Ephesians 4-5

DISCIPLESHIP IS EXPLAINING WHAT GOD HAS SAID

Discipleship is all about explaining what God's Word says about God's desires for our lives as believers. Every generation needs those who will explain God's Word to the next generation. Not just the facts, but also the application. As the Great Commission puts it: "teaching them to observe all things".

I have spent an immense amount of my life explaining God's plan as it has been recorded for us in God's Word. That is what you have joined today, an explanation of what God says. That is why my friend, John MacArthur, once called what he does: "Explanatory Preaching".

We are in the midst of going through the Basics of discipleship, which always has two parts: 1). Explaining what God designed us to be (this can be called our Position); and then, 2). Explaining how that translates into daily life (the can be called our Practice) .

First we looked at **Truth-1: Saved**, saw that disciples are born-again Christians, those terms disciples & born-again are synonymous; and we also saw that normal, First Century believers were baptized after they were saved, as a testimony of obedience to God.

Next we saw **Truth-2: Scripture Fed**, with God's Word as the food for our souls, and the map for our lives.

Then we came to **Truth-3: Spirit-Filled** lives, and are right now in the midst of seeing what God has said it means to live life in step with the Spirit of God.

LIVING LIFE THE WAY GOD DESIGNED IT TO BE LIVED

Last time we saw:

How to Get Full, Stay Full & Live Full of the Holy Spirit

Now we need to examine:

The Amazing Plan God Designed To Keep Us Filled

As we open to Ephesians 5, think with me what your answer would be if you were sitting across the table from someone in a discipleship session, and they asked you, “Are you living the way God designed you to live?” How would we answer that depends on how much we understand who we are in Christ.

Let me illustrate this profound spiritual truth from scenes we could come across in every day life.

What you would think if you can upon a huge group of bicyclists along a country road, and they were all walking their bikes? One simple thought should be: Why are they doing that? Walking bikes along a country road would not be using the bikes for what they were designed to be. Bicycles are designed to glide along as they are mounted, not to be pushed.

If those bicyclists were pushing their bikes because they all had flats tires, they just need to get their flats fixed. Looking at each bike we could see the tire repair kit attached to their bicycle, but unused. Continuing to walk and push a flat tire is not the best plan, the best plan is pull over, repair the tire, and get on the way.

That sight of pushing a bike that has a fixable flat would be a perfect illustration of what goes on so often in the Church Christ purchased. Believers were:

DESIGNED TO OPERATE BEST WHEN FILLED

Now apply that to life in Christ. Simply stated, our life in Christ is to live out what God designed us to be. Life is most of all about who we are because of Christ, and that determines what we do.

Since God uses the term “filled”, in Ephesians 5, as we turn there, we will start to think of that truth illustrated in life.

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be **filled** with the Spirit,

Filled is the normal state of life we are to pursue as believers. It is not for only the few, it is for all. It is not for only super-saints, rather for every saint, every believer, and each of us today.

Now, let me share how I explain this to a believer when we sit down in a Bible study. This lesson is so vital because many believers are stymied by this term, what it means, what it looks like, and so on.

Spirit-filled living is like riding a bicycle:

We either get our tires filled or they are empty; and

We either keep our tires repaired and filled or they go empty; and

We either go through life riding as God designed us to do, on full tires or we trudge through life pushing what God designed for us to ride, and live with “flat-tired, spiritually-emptied” lives.

Each of those contrasts reflects a series of choices. If our spiritual life were compared to the tires of a bicycle we ride, then the three “states” of bicycle riding would closely parallel the three pillars of our spirit-filled lives described by Paul.

PILLAR-1: GOD DESIGNED US TO OPERATE FULL OF HIS SPIRIT

First, the “normal” state of a bicycle that is in use, that works, that is used to ride places is “full”. That means the tires are full. You can jump on at any time and just peddle off. “Full tires” means that the bike is functional, it is what it was designed to be as a transportation tool, the bicycle works, and the bike can be used at any moment.

That is the Ephesians 5:18, “full” condition Paul just described. Paul commands us all to stay what we were designed by God to be which is full. Then he mentions the evidences in v. 19 of the Spirit overflowing our life.

Normal believers were designed by God to be over-flowingly “filled” by God’s Spirit.

PILLAR-2: NORMAL SPIRITUAL LIFE INVOLVES REPAIRING ANY LEAKS

Second, Paul alludes to another way our spiritual lives can become, which is also illustrated by how our bicycles can become. Have you ever had a bike with a leaky tire? You always had to check that tire and grab the pump and get it back to full inflation? You find that need when you jump on and it can’t hold you up.

The tire is soft and the bike isn’t working the way it should. That is the state that we as believers can find ourselves in, as described in Ephesians 4:30. Now turn there with me and see the warning about the ‘leaking’ spiritual life.

Ephesians 4:30 (NKJV) And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption

In Ephesians 4:30 the word “grieve” is the Gk. *lupeo*, which means to make ‘sad, heavy, sorrowful, distressed’. That is what makes our Spirit-filled lives leak, when we grieve the Spirit.

Using our bicycle analogy, think about a soft tire. There are many reasons for tires to lose air pressure: it can have a puncture, a bent wheel rim, a valve cut, and so many other possibilities.

Since I am not a master-bicyclist, just roll that thought over to Ephesians 4:25-31. Paul gives a list of the types of actions that puncture, damage, and hinder spiritual lives staying full or useful for God.

DRIVING TIP ONE: BEWARE OF THESE ITEMS THAT LEAK OUT OUR SPIRIT-FULLNESS

Look at this amazing list of items that can injure us each day. I think of them as all sorts and sizes of road hazards, like potholes, nails, sharp objects.

With that picture in your mind, look with me at all the ways Paul says believers get deflated, un-filled, and unusable in their spiritual walk. Each of these dangers litter the road of life, we all drive over, around, and can get injured by these on a regular basis, because they grieve the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:25 any falsehood

Ephesians 4:26 sinful anger

Ephesians 4:27 occultic exposure

Ephesians 4:28 any theft

Ephesians 4:29 rotten talk

Ephesians 4:31 bitter attitudes

DRIVING TIP TWO: WHEN PUNCTURED PULL OVER & GET REPAIRED

Now the question is, “When your bike tire gets soft because of wear, damage, or puncture, do you park the bike, and say it is useless, it will never work?” Or do you check the damage, repair, or replace, and re-inflate the bike’s tire so you can keep on riding?

Do tires wear out? Yes.

Do they get injured? Yes. It is expected. It happens quicker if we choose to ride over nails each day, and crash the bike against curbs, and rise through piles of trash, sharp objects, and so on, right?

Now here is the spiritual lesson of the Spirit-filled life explained by Paul: avoid those things that “grieve” the Spirit. When the Spirit is grieved we get less and less able to operate the way we were designed to operate. We slowly go flat, and we can’t go through life the way we were designed by God to go.

Pause now and ponder the lessons:

DRIVING TIP THREE: EXPECT TIRE DAMAGE

Life is full of dangers, punctures, sharp objects, many unseen, and unexpected. Disciple-makers come to spiritual bikers and say, that’s all right, we all get leaks. You are not a bad bicyclist, you are normal, and here is what to do to ride longer between leaks.

Just because we lose our fullness is it time to give up and never ride? No. We pull over, get repaired, re-inflated, and go on. That is normal life as a believer. No one stays “full” every day, all day, from start to finish. Not Paul, not the heroes of the faith, and not any of us.

It is normal to expect tire damage.

DRIVING TIP FOUR: USE THE TIRE REPAIR KIT

That is what the “be renewed” of 4:25-27 is all about. The put off, be renewed, and put on is the constant cycle of spiritual living. God made us to keep getting re-filled because we only operate as He designed us when we are full. But a mechanism for repairing leaks has also been sent by God, and He is also always there. It involves confessing to God that I am leaking, asking Him to help us check what happened, and coming to Him as the only one that can refill us. Then going right on immediately after getting fixed.

It is normal to need and get repair.

DRIVING TIP FIVE: START AVOID ANYTHING THAT DAMAGES YOUR TIRES

That is what the sanctified, mature, and godly walk is all about.

If you always crash when operating in the dark: **stay in the light.**

If you cut your tires each time you are on a certain road: **start avoiding it.**

Tell others how you always get deflated there and ask them to remind you not to go that way.

See how we all work together? We all are on bike tires that are equally vulnerable. We help each other stay on safe road, and repair flats. God wants us to avoid anything that punctures and destroys our ability to stay filled.

It is spiritual maturity to avoid things that always damage your tires. Why? Because:

PILLAR-3: UN-REPAIRED LEAKS LEAD TO FLAT-TIRE LIVING

Turn over with me to 1 Thessalonians 5:19. In this verse we see the most miserable condition a believer can operate in: a time of the Spirit of God being quenched. Note how simply Paul says it:

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NKJV) Do not **quench** the Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19 the word “quench” is the Gk. *sbennumi* which means ‘extinguish, stifle, retard, choke’.

Go back with me to the image of someone trudging along, pushing a bike with a flat tire? Or think of one of those cars abandoned by the road after a tire blows? Both are constant reminders of a spiritual condition we also can face.

Bikes pushed long distances: *are not living up to what they were designed to be.*

Cars left by the road because their tires won't hold them up for travel: *are not living up to what they were designed to be.*

Believers who are empty spiritually, not overflowing with the Spirit's fruit & power: *are not living up to what they were designed to be.*

This morning, no matter how far we have trudged along through life instead of riding filled with the Spirit, it is only one step back.

The words of an old hymn from 1922, written by Helen Lemmel says it all. That once step back, of putting off, being renewed and putting on is captured in her poem:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.