



DETOURS


OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL
ROADBLOCKS IN
MINISTRY

Devotion #1 - Stephen, Full of the Holy Spirit Acts 6:1-8

January 2021

Introduction

Acts 6 describes the establishment of the role of deacon within the community of believers. A dispute over meeting the needs of the Greek and Hebrew widows led to the leadership making the decision to find people who could meet the needs within the community.

The leaders looked for people who were described as being full of the Holy Spirit. They found Stephen who is described as being “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5) 


Filled with the Holy Spirit

The fact that the apostles specifically looked for people who were full of the Holy Spirit suggests that some of the congregation were not! So were some only half full? Were others empty? Just exactly what did the apostles mean when they looked for people full of the Holy Spirit?

When we look at the original language, the English word “full” is translated with several

Greek words. These Greek words all have slightly different nuanced meanings.

In Acts 6, the word used for full describes a state of being full rather than the act of being filled.

The Apostles were looking for people who demonstrated by their lives and character that the Holy Spirit was at work within them. The Holy Spirit was doing the work of sanctification within them, conforming them to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). 



Rest Stop

The twelve decided that they needed to find seven people who would meet the practical needs of the community. These seven needed to be ‘qualified’ to serve in this position.

- What qualities would you have looked for in these seven?
- Now compare your list to what the apostles came up with in Acts 6:3. What are the similarities? The differences?



Rest Stop

Take a moment as a group to discuss together what it means to be full of the Holy Spirit. Give an example of where you've seen this 'quality' in another person.


How do we make sure that we are full of the Holy Spirit?

There are people in our lives who we know well, and there are some who we would describe as just being an acquaintance. When the apostles were looking to appoint deacons, they did not want people who were just acquainted with the Holy Spirit. They wanted people who knew him well!

It is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is the third person of the trinity. As such,

he is not a force or power. R.A. Torrey, American evangelist, pastor, and educator, said:

"If you think of the Holy Spirit as a mere influence or power, then our thought will constantly be, 'How can I get hold of the Holy Spirit and use it?' But, if you think of Him in the biblical way, as a person of divine majesty and glory, your thought will be 'how can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?'"

So the question is not how full of the Holy Spirit am I, but how much of my life is surrendered to the Holy Spirit? The apostles were looking for people within the congregation who were surrendered to God. They wanted people growing in relationship with the Father and the Son through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. 

So how do we get to know the Holy Spirit?

God's Word tells us about the Holy Spirit. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the Spirit is shown to be actively at work within our world. As we read Scripture, we get to know a lot about the Holy Spirit. While that is important and necessary, it does not bring us into a relationship.

Just as in a human relationship, a relationship with the Holy Spirit develops through spending time together. We need to spend time with Holy Spirit, and we do that through prayer. Prayer is a supernatural gift from God that brings us into a close relationship with



Rest Stop

When we look at our personal lives, how much are we allowing the Holy Spirit to change us, sanctify us, and make us more like Jesus? What kind of relationship do we have with the Holy Spirit? How is that evident in our diaconate?

God the Father through the Holy Spirit. As we enter into prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal who he is, who the Father is, and who Jesus is. Then the Spirit will do just that!

We need to give the Spirit some space to speak to us. This might mean we need to pause and spend time listening to Him rather than just telling God what we want.



The Scenic Route (optional)

Below is a prayer exercise that may help to create a space where you can grow deeper in your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Encourage your fellow deacons to do this as well and help keep each other accountable. If you agree, share your experiences. This can also be done individually for those wishing to go deeper.

- Take 15 minutes out of your day. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. For some, that could be in a comfortable chair in your living room. For others, it might take place as part of a walk outside in a local park. (Fifteen minutes may seem like a long time, but in reality, it is just 1% of your day!)
- For the first 5 minutes, focus upon praising God for who he is and what he has done. You could make a list of his attributes as a way to stay focused.
- For the next 5 minutes, move into a time of prayer. Ask the Lord for the things you need (petition) and others' needs (intercession).
- Then in the final 5 minutes, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about your relationship with God, and then listen to what He has to say. He may give you the impression of Scripture to look up or a picture for you to think about. If a distracting thought comes, simply choose to ignore it and return to asking the Spirit to speak. It may be helpful to write down in a journal what you hear the Holy Spirit say.

Note:

This might not be easy at first, and some days will be more challenging than others. But as you persevere and allow the Holy Spirit to speak, you will begin to grow in your relationship. The Spirit will bring words of encouragement as well as point out areas where change needs to happen. He will highlight areas of God's Word to be attentive to. And the Spirit will begin a change within. You will find that you are as Stephen was, full of the Holy Spirit, and will be able to bring wisdom, faith, and grace into the ministry situations in which the Lord places you as a deacon.