

What Do You Do When You Are Out of Gas?

Rich Nathan

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“I Believe in the Church” Series

Ephesians 5:16-21

A few years ago our associate pastor, Danny Meyer, and I were on our way to Indianapolis. We had passed the Indiana border and we were talking away in my van, solving all the church’s problems and the world’s problems, when my van began to slow down. It started to chug and I thought it was having engine problems. And then it stopped. With my great knowledge of auto mechanics, I wondered if there was a problem with the fuel pump, or some type of computer problem.

And then I noticed the little needle on the gas tank was significantly below the “E.” We were out of gas and we literally were a million miles from nowhere – just an empty stretch of I-70 next to some Indiana farms. It was mid-January. There were no houses near by and we didn’t have a cell phone.

But down the road about two miles was an overpass. And so the two of us got out of the van in the freezing cold of an Indiana winter and started to trudge toward the overpass. About 20 minutes into our little hike, a highway patrol officer pulled over and said, “What are you guys doing walking along the highway? Why don’t you get in before you get killed?” Apparently, a sympathetic trucker saw these two fools walking along the road and he radioed to the highway patrol and this very kind officer picked us up and drove us to the nearest exit

where we got some gas. He then drove us back to our car where we put enough gas in to get to the gas station.

Have you ever run out of gas?

Our family just moved to a new house and I decided that I was going to clean up the yard, so I got my weed-whacker out, which I haven't used for a year. And I tried to start it up. I got a very good workout. I pulled on the cord about 15-20 times...nothing. Until finally it occurred to me that maybe the problem wasn't going to be solved by more force. Maybe I had drained the tank before hanging it up for the winter. Sure enough...I was out of gas.

Again, I would ask have you ever been out of gas? Not in the literal sense, but physically or emotionally?

There are lots of ways to express the feeling of being out of gas. We talk about being burned out, exhausted. We are burning fumes and living on empty. We are spent and wasted. We are fried. We have a case of the blahs. We are depressed. We are flat. We have no margins in our life.

How do we get there? How do you get to the place of burning fumes and living on empty?

Well, one reason is like Danny and me on the highway, you neglect looking at your gas gauge. You have too much activity going on and the needle is dropping, but you aren't paying attention to your gauge. You are just focused on plowing ahead and keeping going

and gotta keep pushing. Well, eventually, you find yourself totally out of gas – too much activity.

The apostle Paul talks about weariness in well doing in Galatians 6. Surely, you have experienced that at many points in your life.

I remember about ten years ago our church had grown to about 800-900 people and we were in the midst of constructing our first building here on Cooper Road. We only had three pastors on staff at the time – John, Danny and me. Linda Heselton, at the time I think, was a Children's Ministry Coordinator. But along with preaching every week and leading the church and leading our small group ministry, all of the administrative and financial details of the church fell to me as well, especially the myriad number of details regarding negotiating the building contract and securing financing. So for about 9 months or a year I was working an average of 60-70 hours a week every week. I just kept going. I thought, "Well, there's not a whole lot of choice here. Someone has to do it and I don't see anyone else around who is able to do it. So just stop whining and do it."

Well, I remember I was walking around a park with my wife, Marlene. This was well into the building process. And she said to me, "So how are you doing?" For some reason her question arrested me. I said, "How am I doing? Gee, I don't know." I stopped along the path and thought how am I doing? Gosh, I can't remember the last time I asked myself that question, how am I doing? And then as I started to think about it and we talked, I said, "You know, Marlene, I don't think I have felt joy for easily six months. In fact, I think I've been depressed for as long as I can remember. I guess I am out of gas. I've been so busy

doing that I haven't watched the needle in my life dropping to the point where I am just burning fumes."

Certainly, one reason for running out of gas is too much activity, too much work, too many responsibilities, too many plates spinning in the air at once for too long a period of time. Too many phone calls, too many items on your to-do list. Too many people making demands.

Now, there are some things in life that can immediately and quickly drain your tank. If you haven't been working 60-70 hours a week forever, but something has punched a hole in your tank so that all of the gas ran out at once. Something is a crisis. You suddenly discover that your mate is having an affair or your fiancée ends your engagement. Or you get fired from your job. Or you discover that an employee has been embezzling from your business. Or you go bankrupt or you are facing a major lawsuit. Or a loved one dies or you are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. It is like a punch to the solarplexus. All the air just comes out of your body.

You run out of gas.

I know for a lot of people the loss of gas is not the result of a crisis, but something more like a slow leak in the gas tank. Living in chronically bad or stressful situation – your child has some type of chronic illness that requires you take them back to the hospital over and over and over again. Just a slow, steady leak. Or you are living in a chronically bad marriage that drains you. It drains the life out of you. Or you live with the stress of a declining parent,

who is gradually losing their life energy or their intellectual abilities through dementia. Or you live with chronically bad health – lupus or MS or arthritis.

Just drip, drip, drip...the gas runs out of our lives. Any of you identifying with any of this?

As I continue in my series from the book of Ephesians, I've called today's message, "What Do You Do When You Are Out of Gas?" Let's pray.

Ephesians 5:16-21 – Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

You know, running out of gas is not just a modern problem, or some 21st century made-up psycho-babble issue. We see folks in the Bible who have all of the symptoms. The great prophet Elijah, if you are taking notes – in fact, I think one of the follow-up Bible studies for this week is from 1 Kings 19. Every week my wife, Marlene, writes Bible studies for your devotions that follow-up the message. They are on the back of your outlines. You can take them home and try a few of them.

You see the symptoms in Elijah's life – the complaining, the exhaustion, the depression, the feeling of being all alone, running out of vision. You see it all there. If you find yourself

regularly grumbling or always discontent, judging other people because they aren't doing as much as you, becoming cynical towards everyone and everything; "Oh sure, the church is doing this new program, but it probably isn't going to work that well." If you see your heart shrinking and shriveling, if you are grumbling and complaining, it may be that you are out of gas.

One of the secrets to refueling is wise living. V. 15 – *Be very careful, then, how you live. Not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of God is.* Wise living...

You know a lot of folks who are out of gas want to have an experience that will immediately fill their gas tanks. Will you pray for me so that I might be instantly refueled from years of abusing my body and neglecting my health and running down my emotional battery. Instant refueling, or if I can change the metaphor just a little bit, you know when your battery runs down in your car, as the voltage becomes too low, it is not enough to hook the battery up to jumper cables. I'll just get one more start out of this baby. I'll hook it up to jumper cables. You talk with a mechanic and they say, "No, what you need is a trickle charge." They will take your battery and slowly recharge it over the course of 8-12 hours. I think a lot of folks come to church looking for spiritual jumper cables to be applied to their lives. Just an instant bam and my marriage will be fixed and my attitude will be instantly changed, when sometimes God is saying "No, you need more of a trickle charge, a restructuring of your life, a lasting change. You need wisdom from above for living in this very difficult world."

I know that when I finally realized that I was completely out of gas after talking with my wife, the Lord directed me to sit down and to write out all the things I enjoy doing. All the things that fueled me emotionally. Not things that I was necessarily supposed to do, but things I enjoyed doing. For example, I enjoy getting together with good friends that I don't have to counsel over dinner. We just mutually enjoy each other's company. It is nice getting together with a couple that at the end of the evening you don't have to do a deliverance from some demons. There is a time and a place for that, but a restaurant may not be the time or the place.

I enjoy bike riding. I enjoy taking walks with my wife. I enjoy reading for no purpose other than the sheer pleasure of reading. I enjoy traveling. I enjoy lifting weights.

After I got done constructing the list, I looked down the list and discovered that I was doing nothing outside of my responsibilities to my family and to the church that I enjoyed doing. There was not a single item on the list that was part of my life. The Lord was saying, "You need to restructure your life. You need the trickle charge approach, the slow refueling. Spiritual jumper cables, a couple of days off, simply won't do it. You need wisdom for living."

Bill Hybels, pastor of the very large and influential Willow Creek Community Church outside of Chicago, once said that most Christians pay attention to only one of the three warning lights on their dashboards. We look at the spiritual warning light regarding our devotions, our walk with God, our current level of sin and if the spiritual warning light isn't flashing, we say we are doing OK. But we neglect to take a look at the other two warning

lights on our dashboard – the emotional warning light. Our hearts are shriveling. We feel depressed. We feel angry or irritable a lot of the time. We feel disconnected. We neglect to pay attention to the emotional warning light on our dashboard.

Or we neglect to pay attention to the physical warning light. We are not exercising. We are eating improperly. We have a high fat diet. Wisdom for living means that we pay attention to all three warning lights on the dashboard.

So let me ask you a few questions. Would you say you are living wisely? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you spending some time most weeks doing things that fuel you emotionally and physically, as well as spiritually? Have you ever sat down and constructed your own list based on your talents, personality and interest? Maybe for you, you just enjoy playing the piano or singing in a choir or playing a pickup basketball game. Have you ever sat down and constructed your list and said, “What outside of my responsibilities do I really enjoy doing?” Fishing, hiking, taking an art class? And then ask yourself, “Do I ever actually do it?”

The church council, which is the governing body of our church, recommended to me that after 14 years of intense ministry, I take a sabbatical this summer. They are allowing me the opportunity to step away from the church for the months of July and August to refuel. To dream again. To think with out the pressure of the daily running of the machine. To read. To pray. I have no idea what God is going to say during this summer’s sabbatical, but I am so thankful to be able to actually take it. I will be talking to you a little more about this sabbatical in the next few weeks.

You know, the great temptation when you are out of gas is to try some quick and cheap way to feel good again. The apostle Paul in v. 18 says, *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery*. When you are weary and burned out, it is easy to reach out to a counterfeit. You just want to feel OK again.

So you have an affair. Or use pornography. Or you run up your credit cards. Well, I feel temporarily better when I buy something, so I will just go out and buy something for the house. Or you gamble, get high or get drunk. Cheap thrills.

Have you ever noticed that the Bible focuses a great deal of attention on the problem of drunkenness? After just a quick search of the Bible, I found over 50 condemnations for drunkenness in the Bible. I believe there are more, but I found over 50 in just a quick search of the scriptures. Drunkenness is repeatedly spoken of in the prophets as a cause of God's judgment on Israel. In the New Testament it is regularly seen as a mark of pagan society. Historically, there has been a lot of criticism of the Bible's focus on drunkenness.

Oh, come on, what's the big deal? So what if someone gets a little silly or high? Why not focus on more serious problems like date rape or family violence or poverty? What's wrong with a little partying even if you do get drunk? Come on, Christians, lighten up.

You know, we Christians really need to come to a place of total faith. That when God warns us against something, whether it is premarital sex or drunkenness or adultery, or not marrying out side of the faith – when God warns us against something, it is not because he is

a cosmic killjoy or a prude or doesn't like his children to have a good time. We have to get to the point where we are convinced in the very fiber of our beings that the "thou shalt nots" of God are for our own good because our heavenly Father loves us and desires the very best for us and he does not want us to injure ourselves.

It would not take you very long, if you search the internet, to discover that alcohol abuse is at the root of so many of the social problems in America.

Let me share with you some national statistics.

OVERHEAD:

- 90% of all campus violence is alcohol related.
- 80% of men who commit date rape have consumed alcohol prior to the incident.
- 55% of all date rape victims have drunk excessively prior to getting raped.
- 20,000 people in America die each year from alcohol induced liver disease.
- There is a strong link, doctors believe, between chronic alcohol abuse and several types of cancer. 75% of all esophageal cancer is related to excessive alcohol abuse. 50% of cancers of the mouth pharynx and larynx are associated with heavy drinking.
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is the leading known environmental cause of mental retardation. Up to 12,000 babies a year are born with the symptoms of FAS.
- 14,000 die each year in alcohol related traffic crashes.

- The combined number of deaths from alcohol exceeds 100,000 annually. It is like have two Vietnams every year in America. Far more than all other illegal drugs combined.
- The number of abused and neglected children doubled in the 1990's fueled by drug and alcohol abuse.
- 80% of all reported cases of child abuse involved the abuse of drugs or alcohol.
- 6.6 million children live in homes of alcoholics.

And, of course, the effects of living in homes of alcoholics include a much increased risk of addiction, lots of emotional problems, especially depression, problems in future relationships. Many of you grew up in the home of an alcoholic parent. Or you have someone, perhaps you, who used to be or are an alcoholic.

- The problem of alcohol and drugs is so severe that it is now sited as the #1 problem of families according the child protective service agencies, ahead of poverty for the first time in American history.

The #1 problem in terms of child protection and child safety is drug and alcohol abuse. Have any of you ever been victimized because of drug or alcohol abuse in your family – do you have a parent or grandparent who was or continues to be an alcoholic? Have any of you ever suffered harm or have seen harm to a love one because of the abuse of alcohol? Do you understand that when God says something in the Bible over 50 times he does so because he loves us?

Paul goes on and tells us his reason for not drinking excessively. He says, *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery*. Literally, it could be better translated, “which leads to dissipation or leads to waste.” The word used here for debauchery was actually used in Luke 15 for the Prodigal Son, who used his inheritance on wasteful, riotous living.

Here’s the problem. The Bible never condemns drinking wine or alcohol per se. The Bible’s approach to life is generally not abstinence. The Bible’s approach to life is generally moderation, self-control. The Bible doesn’t condemn a glass of wine with supper. We see even the Lord Jesus turning water into wine as his first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. But the way the human mind works is that we say if a little bit of something is good, then a lot of it must be better. We Americans cannot be moderate in anything.

I remember growing up we used to beg my parents not to make us eat dinner at one of my mother’s friends. Because my mother’s friend had an approach to cooking that said, “Well, if a little bit of spice is good, a lot of spice must be really good.” You literally needed to cut the spice off the top of her meatloaf with a knife. It was about an inch thick.

We approach everything that way as Americans. Well, if losing weight is good, then being anorexic must be better. If it is good to exercise, then it must be better to run a couple of marathons a week or lift weights for 4 hours a day at the gym until our bodies totally break down. If you are a teenager and you have a car, driving 70mph is fun, you will get a real rush if you drive 110. Hard work is good, well, workaholism must be better.

In moderation, regarding virtually everything in creation, always leads to waste – a waste of money, a waste of opportunities, a waste of your family, a waste of your body, a waste of your talents, a waste of time, a waste of your sexual purity, in the case of drunkenness, a waste of a good mind.

Now by way of contrast, the wonderful thing about being filled with the Holy Spirit is that rather than rob, exhaust and waste us as every cheap thrill does and every excessive indulgence does, rather than spend us down, the Holy Spirit fills us up. Rather than take away life, the Holy Spirit gives us life inside. The Spirit of God never diminishes a person, but adds to us, replenishes us, refuels us. Life in the Spirit is a life of fruitfulness, as we found last week. Ever increasing, ever abundant.

One writer, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who I've mentioned on several occasions and who was a physician before he became a preacher, did a marvelous contrast between alcohol, which pharmacologically is a depressant, depressing key regions of your brain so that your judgment is impaired and your reason is impaired and your balance is impaired and your self-control is impaired, contrast rather than depress key regions of your brain, Lloyd-Jones says that the Holy Spirit acts as a stimulant. The Spirit of God makes you sharper. It gives you more self-control, clearer thinking, better judgment, more wisdom, greater focus, better relationships, more pure speech.

V. 18 is so important when Paul says *Do not be drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery*, it leads to waste, it leads to depression. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Biblical commands

are not just negatives. These are not just morals. Don't do this; don't do that; don't get drunk. Biblical commandments are also positives. Don't do this, but rather do that.

So, for example, way back in Ephesians 4:25, *Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor* - don't lie, tell the truth. Or v. 28, *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work*. Don't steal, instead work hard. Or v. 29, *Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful*. Don't tear other people down, instead build other people up. Or Ephesians 5:4, *Nor should there be obscenity or foolish talk or coarse jesting, but rather thanksgiving*. Don't curse, instead give thanks. And here, *Don't get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery, instead be filled with the Spirit*.

You see, the Bible is different than mere morality or reformation. It is not enough Jesus taught to simply sweep the house clean. The house needs to be filled, or we find ourselves in a worse place than where we began. There are a lot of folks who want to change and so they resolve to stop behaving in a certain self-destructive way. But they aren't filled. They don't have Christ at the center. Yes, I want to stop doing bad things in my marriage, or I want to stop this self-destructive pattern with men or with women. I want to stop drinking. But without Christ at the center, without going on and being filled with the Spirit, you are going to have something else bad fill the hole.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Let's look at this command more closely. The alternative to running on empty, or seeking cheap thrills, excessive indulgences, is to be filled with the Spirit. The grammar here is key. It is a plural imperative. In other words, Paul is speaking a little southern here. He is saying, "Ya'll be filled." All of you, all

Christians – not just the spiritually elite. But every one of you. I want every single Christian to be filled.

See, it is possible to be a Christian and not be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, it is not possible to be a Christian and not have the Spirit living in you. Romans 8:9 says *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ*. If you are a child of God, you are so only because the Holy Spirit lives in you and has birthed you into the family of God. But you can have the Spirit of God living in you and not be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is a plural command. It is for everyone.

And the command is written in the present tense, which some of you know in the Greek implies continuous activity. This is not a one time experience where you come to the altar and you suddenly get drenched with the Holy Spirit. The filling that the apostle Paul was talking about here in Ephesians 5 is something that we live in all the time. We get filled and we keep on being filled. There are drenching experiences that we read about in other places, in Acts 2 for example, in Acts 4, but those drenching experiences, which sometimes are labeled as being filled with the Spirit, are for the purpose of accomplishing a certain spiritual task. The Holy Spirit comes on a person like a downpour of rain so that the person might prophesy, or preach with effectiveness, or heal the sick, or cast out a demon. And we see this drenching of an individual at various times in the book of Acts.

But the experience of downpour, of sudden drenching, is not what the apostle Paul is talking about here in Ephesians 5:18. Instead, he is talking about walking in a steady drizzle, not for the purpose of performing some miraculous activity, but simply for the purpose of living

well and being refueled so that you don't run out of gas in the Christian life. The continuous fuel of the Christian life is being filled with the Spirit. He is the gas. He is the engine. Apart from him, we run on human energy and we run on empty.

Now, the effects of living under the Spirit's influence are just as obvious as the effects of being under the influence of alcohol. If someone is under the influence of alcohol, you can tell. Their speech is slurred. Their judgment is impaired. They can't walk a straight line. Well, the work of the Holy Spirit is not secret either. You can tell when a person is filled with the Spirit. And the Bible says it will come out in four ways. There are four clauses here. Literally *speaking with each other with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Speaking, singing, thanking God and submitting – these are the obvious effects of living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at this quickly. Speaking to one another – that's literally what it says, it's a participle – speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the Lord. Wherever we find the Holy Spirit's renewing presence, there is always going to be fresh worship songs and singing.

The fruit of being filled with the Holy Spirit is new worship songs and singing. That's what v. 19 and 20 is telling us. And this has been true in every age of the church. In the early church, the churches burst out in songs. The church fathers talk about being in meetings where one person has a prophetic song and then another person comes forth with a song and another person sings a psalm and another person sings a New Testament hymn. During

the Reformation, there were new hymns brought into the church by the great Reformer Martin Luther. It was especially true in the 18th century, during the great evangelical awakening in England under John Wesley and George Whitefield. Charles Wesley alone wrote over 6000 hymns.

During the Jesus movement there was a fresh outpouring of new worship and new worship songs. And I think that God has used the Vineyard over the last 20 years to really make a contribution to fresh worship and fresh worship songs to the entire Christian world. Here in Vineyard Columbus one of our prayers, and some of you have been regularly praying this, for years is to give us our own indigenous worship, to give us songwriters, to give us our own sound, our own songs. This is not just an issue of skill. You know, God, give us great musicians. Give us people who know how to write commercial jingles. This is an issue of the Holy Spirit's outpouring.

If we want worship songs to spring up from this church, then we will pray, "Spirit of God come, by way of renewal and revival" because where the Spirit of God is there you will find songs and singing. In fact, you can almost measure the spiritual temperature of the church or the spiritual temperature of an individual by asking how much the church or the individual loves to worship God in song. How much freshness is coming forth in worship? The overflow of the Holy Spirit is a deposit of songs.

And its interesting that in v.19 Paul says, *Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs* I don't know if there is a great deal of difference between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The commentators try to divide it and end up sort of overlapping Old Testament

psalms and some of the New Testament songs and songs that are immediately inspired on the spot. But Paul says we speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and then we read, *singing and making music in your heart to the Lord*.

Great worship songs are sung in two directions – to one another and to the Lord. In other words, great worship songs have a horizontal dimension to them and a vertical dimension to them. A parallel passage in Colossians 3 really lays this out. But there is in great worship songs, those songs that come from the overflow of the Holy Spirit, there is a teaching element. Songs are sung to one another. There is a teaching element. It is not enough to say “I love you” 75 times. The songwriter needs to ask “What am I teaching people about God, about Christ, about the Trinity, about salvation, about our future as Christians, about our own lives? What is the content of the song? How will this song strengthen people’s grip on biblical truth?” It doesn’t have to be complicated. It could be simple. It could be the simple truth about our friendship with Jesus or the faithfulness or love of God.

But it is not enough to just be a great teaching. A great worship song needs to draw people toward the Lord. Great worship songs draw our hearts, hands, faces, and our inner beings toward the Lord. We sing not just to each other, but to the Lord. This, of course, is true in all biblical worship. We see this in the psalms. They are so useful in teaching us about who God is. They describe God’s being, his activity, his power, his salvation, his eternity, his knowledge, his love, his grace.

But the psalms do more than teach. Psalms are not the same as the book of Romans. They are aimed at God. Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love. Forgive us;

visit us, O Lord. Come to us, O God. Remember us, O Lord. Praise to you. Halleluiah.
We worship you. We adore you.

One way to evaluate a worship song is does it work in two dimensions? Does it build people up and does it draw us to God?

The Spirit is not only the key to worship and singing, but also to thanking God. V. 20
Always giving thanks to God, the Father, for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus and to submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.

Over the next several weeks we will be talking about this whole business of yielding one person to another. But here's the deal. We all know that having a good attitude, being helpful, yielded on the job, is so hard. The boss is telling you what to do. He is breathing down your neck. You are living with lots of pressure. How do you deal with that?

We get cynical. We start grumbling and complaining about our work. We have all these cover up strategies. I'll smile and say, "yes, sir" and then do whatever I want to do. I will gossip about him. The only way to submit, the key to joyful yielding, is being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Let me finish with a couple of thoughts. The Holy Spirit is not only the key to worshipping and thanking and submitting. But worshipping, thanking and submitting are means by which you can become filled with the Holy Spirit. These kinds of things work in a circular fashion.

The Spirit fills us, refuels us so that we become thankful, worshipful and submissive. But as we thank, submit and worship, we get filled with the Spirit.

You say, “I’m not interested in a cheap thrill. I am not interested in spiritual jumper cables. I want the slow trickle effect of living under the influence and by the energy of the Spirit. How do I get filled, Rich?”

We start with the premise that God wants to fill his people. You do not have to convince your Father in heaven that it would be good for you to live under his influence. He wants you to. He wants you to experience his presence. The command “Be filled” is in the passive voice. It is something that happens to you. God wills to fill you, his child, with the Holy Spirit. One way that you get filled is that you stop resisting the influence of God in your life. Stop resisting God. Yield to God.

We looked at 4:30 a few weeks ago – *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit*. If you are deliberately disobeying God in an area of your life, if you are regularly bringing sadness and grief to the heart of God, then you will not be filled with the Holy Spirit. Walking under the Spirit’s influence implies that you are not resisting him in any place, in any way – you are obeying his impulses. And you will find yourself being filled as you worship and thank God and submit in the various situations of your life. You know, the Bible teaches that God dwells in the praise of his people.

Here’s how it works. You are empty. You are out of gas. But you choose, as an act of your will, to lift your hands in worship. You acknowledge before God, “O God, I feel so empty,

so dry, so cynical. My heart is shriveled up. But you are still God. You are still my Lord. I still fear you and want to honor your name. So I will choose to worship you.” And as you worship, God comes and he brings his presence to you.

The more a church worship God, the more we will find ourselves living under the influence and being filled with the Spirit of God. There are wonderful examples of this all through the Bible. 2 Chronicles 5 has a lovely example of the priests and the Levites all worshipping in the Temple and then the cloud comes.

Thanking God is a means to opening yourself up to the filling of the Holy Spirit. There is always something to thank God about. Your roof leaks? Thank God you have a house. Your car is a junker? Thank God you have a car. Your bills are piling up? Thank God you have food to eat. A loved one dies. Thank God that you had them for so long. Everything good in our lives, everything good – the love of our families, the church, our health, our life up to this point – everything good; you don’t like your job? Thank God you have one. It’s all been given to you by God. As you thank God, God will come and fill you with the Holy Spirit.

And when we yield to one another, we defer, we don’t just assert ourselves and our rights, God comes. For we read in Psalm 133, *How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard. For there the Lord bestows his blessing even life forevermore.*

Are you empty? Are you out of gas? Are you tired and exhausted? Too much plate spinning? Too much crisis living? You need wisdom for living and you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let's pray.

What Do You Do When You Are Out of Gas?

Rich Nathan
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"I Believe in the Church" Series
Ephesians 5:16-21

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 - 1. Singing (Eph. 5:19)
 - 2. Thanking (Eph. 5:20)
 - 3. Submitting (Eph. 5:21)
 - C. The Causes of Spirit-Filled
 - 1. Stop Resisting
 - 2. Start
 - a. Singing
 - b. Thanking
 - c. Submitting