

So Full, Yet So Empty

DR DAVID RYSER

“Here!” And with that one word, my two-year-old son taught me a lesson about the Kingdom of God.

I was serving as a full-time associate pastor. With four children between the ages of 9 and 2 to house and feed, money was tight. We had just returned from the grocery store. We’d splurged on two bottles of soda and were going to enjoy them as soon as the groceries were put away.

“I’m thirsty.”

The two-year-old had been an angel at the store. But now he wanted something to drink. My wife answered, **“Hang on a minute, honey.”** He was in no mood to wait and made his displeasure known in typical two-year-old fashion. **“I’m thirsty!!!”** Unable to convince him to wait, my wife poured a glass of water and gave it to him.

He was happy...but not for long.

In a couple of minutes, we had put up the groceries. My wife laid out some glasses, put in the ice, and poured out the soda. She passed out the glasses to everyone... except the two-year-old. He had observed the preparation of the soft drinks with increasing interest and anticipation. He was obviously disappointed he had not received one.

“Where’s my pop?”

My wife answered, **“Sweetie, I’d love to give you some pop. But your glass is already full.”** I’ve mentioned my son was two years old. I never said he was stupid. It took him no time at all to pick up his glass of water and hand it to his mother.

“Here!”

In Luke 4:1a, the Bible tells us that Jesus was filled with the Spirit. This verse occurs in the time between Jesus’ baptism by John and His temptation in the wilderness. The implication is that Jesus was filled with the Spirit when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism (Luke 3:22a).

If Jesus was filled with the spirit at His baptism, then what was He filled with before His baptism?

Nothing.

According to Philippians 2:7, Jesus emptied Himself (literal Greek translation) and took on human form. Emptied Himself of what? Theologians have argued this question for centuries. Whatever it was He emptied Himself of, we are encouraged to have the same attitude as Jesus (Philippians 2:5). The same attitude will produce the same results. So we should empty ourselves also. Empty ourselves of what?

Have you ever heard a person being described as **“full of himself/herself”**?

The scriptures command us to lay aside our old nature (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:5, 8, 9). We are told to

*How can any vessel be
cleansed without first
being emptied*



cleanse ourselves (2 Corinthians 7:1a; James 4:8b). Our effectiveness as carriers of God's life depends upon our doing this (2 Timothy 2:20, 21).

How can any vessel, a glass for example, be cleansed without first being emptied?

God desires that we be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b). We are called to be carriers of the treasure of God's presence (2 Corinthians 4:7a). We are commissioned to pour out the Spirit of God from within ourselves (John 7:38, 39).

How can we be filled with the Spirit without first being emptied of ourselves?

Even a two-year-old child knows you cannot fill a glass that is already full. If we are going to be God's wineskins, we need to follow Jesus' example and empty ourselves. Then, and only then, can we be filled with the Spirit.

Jesus is described as filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1 a) before He is described as empowered by the Spirit (Luke 4:14a) and anointed by the spirit (Luke 4:18a). This empowering and anointing of the Spirit is what enabled Jesus to fulfill His ministry.

Spirit empowerment and Spirit anointing flow out of Spirit filling. Spirit filling follows emptying. Jesus emptied Himself. Then He was filled. Then He was empowered and anointed.

If Jesus is our example, then this works the same way for us.

"Here!"

My wife took my son's glass, emptied it, and rinsed it out. Then she put ice into it, filled it with soda, and handed it back. As my son enjoyed the fruits of his wise decision, God was speaking to me.

I wish I had listened then.

So what do we want? Do we want to be filled with the Spirit? Do we want to be carriers of God's life? Do we want to touch the lives of others with God's power and anointing?

And how badly do we want it?

Are we willing to be emptied? Will we hand our glass over to God? What is in our glass so precious to us, that we would rather have it than have Him?

It's so simple. Just hold out your hand to God and repeat this simple prayer: **"Here!"**

By the way, I have an idea for a faith-based reality television show. I'm going to call it **"Are You Smarter than a Two-Year-Old?"**

Would you like to be a contestant?