

## Episode 16. "The Spirit-Filling Crisis."

Tuesday, July 6, 2021. 52 Minutes Long.

*A fascinating probe by Shields and Allen, co-hosts of the podcast, into the controversial subject of "Spirit-filling." Spirit-filling is one of the most important Christian experiences. But what is it? How does it happen? Why don't more Christians experience it? The co-hosts offer answers to all these questions and more.*

### John (00:00):

John Shields opens the episode by saying:

### John (00:13):

Hello, my friends! And welcome to Episode 16, in our bi-weekly series of the "Saving Christianity" podcast. We're coming to you every-other-Tuesday from Christian Family Online, and I'm your host, John Shields. You may remember in the previous episode – Episode 15 – we talked about "The Growing Christian," and about how the mark and the sign of Christians in the First Century was that they were growing Spiritually by being *Spirit-filled*. We said that the problem today is that Spirit-filling *isn't* taught by many Christian denominations in our century the way it was in the First Century. And as a result, polls show that today's average Christian is *no* more Spiritual than a non-Christian. And every time I read – or say that – it's shocking to me. Now, before continuing, let's repeat: The reason Gallup polls show that the average Christian is *no* more Spiritual than a non-Christian is because today's average Christian is an *infant*.

### John (01:27):

And, infant Christians are called "infants" because they're *not Spirit-filled*. So here we are in episode 16, and the title of this episode is: "The Spirit-Filling Crisis." (Repeats.) In this episode, our co-host, Owen Allen, and I ... we're going to discuss the whole issue of Christians *not* being Spirit-filled. What problems is that causing Christians? What problems is that causing the denominations? What problems is it causing society? And that glaring question that's on all our minds: *How can more Christians be Spirit-filled?* So let's get right into it by bringing in our co-host, Owen Allen. Welcome to Episode 16, Owen!

### Owen (02:30):

Yo, John – hello! – And to all of our friends out there and their kitchens ... cars ... gyms ... wherever they are at the moment. You know, John, we've been using this word "crisis" in several of our episodes, and we talk about that Christianity is in a "crisis" and *yada, yada*. So maybe we ought to obey our own rules and slow down long enough to *define* the word, "crisis."

### John (02:56):

Yeah, I totally agree, Owen. And as we've said so often in these episodes: One of the biggest weaknesses in today's Christianity is that most Christians don't know the *meanings* of many of the key Christian words.

**Owen (03:12):**

That's right, that's right, John. So according to the dictionary, a "crisis" is a critical point ... or a decision point ... or a turning point ... in any particular situation. And that's exactly what Christians face today. As some of our friends out in Podcast Land listening to this episode this very minute – they're at a crisis point, a decision point, a turning point in *Spiritual growth*. And I guess the crisis, if I could look at it in sort of a strange way, (is that) they're asking themselves: *How long am I going to continue living as an infant Christian?*

**John (04:02):**

Or to say that in reverse: When are they going to start growing Spiritually by praying constantly to be Spirit-filled, so that they can experience "*a little bit of heaven while still here on earth*"?

**Owen (04:18):**

That's right, that's right. *A little bit of heaven here on earth*. And you know, I think that's probably the biggest crisis in many Christian's lives at the moment. I won't say *every* Christian. But probably, as I use the term "to be deathbed honest," (it is for) many Christians. But the strange thing is that I've found, John – and it was true of me personally – many Christians today don't even know they *have* a crisis. I don't know if you've ever noticed that, but I have. And as I said, it was a true in my own life. Have you ever ... why do you think that is?

**John (04:57):**

Huh. Owen, you know, we've talked about, "You don't know what you don't know." (Chuckles.) And I really think, you know, a big piece of this puzzle is that people really don't even know there's something *beyond*, something that's *expected*, that's *supposed* to be just the supernatural next step, if you will. That we are *supposed* to Spiritually grow. And that they don't ... you know, just – quote – "being saved" has just been put out there for so long that a lot of people ... I'm like you. I won't say necessarily *most*. I don't know what percentage ... are just ... think that's the sum and substance of what it means to be a "Christian." That I'm "saved" – quote – which translates, "When I die I'm going to go to heaven." And you know, your Birth Date and your Death Date (are) on your tombstone. And nobody wants to talk about the little *dash* in the middle. And what that is supposed to represent. And we're making the case on this podcast that the *dash* in between (chuckles) is supposed to be Spiritual growth. It's supposed to be *Spiritual growth*: Being, and becoming, living, experiencing, Christianity.

**Owen (06:43):**

Yeah, it's what we ... I guess it's what we're taught that it is. You know, I've told the story many times about the fact that I became a Christian when I was 11. My whole family was very active. Later my brother and I *both* became pastors. But I had never heard the term "Spiritual growth," or the term "Spirit-filling," until I was in my 30s. Yet I was very active my whole life in two major denominations. *One* my parents were in, and then when I was a teenager we changed to a *second* one. But we were always active. And I guess you think, John, that as long as you go two, three, four times a month and attend the formal *services*, that's all there *is*. And yet ... and yet ... the surveys show, and we've mentioned this in previous episodes, that today the average Christian service – according to the pollsters, people who are interviewed, that type of thing, research formerly done – most people will say that the services they go to are *irrelevant, and boring, and hypocritical*. One survey I remember reading some years ago, half of the people who attended (worship services) left more *depressed* than they were when they went. And yet ... and yet ... we dress up and go, and sit there, and we think *that's* "Christianity." I mean that's scary.

**John (08:28):**

Yeah, and I ... you've heard me say it before, Owen. A lot of people again associate "Christianity" with a *place* and a *time*. You know, and a *day*. It's Sunday. It's at 11:00 am. And it's at First and Third, or whatever, you know, Street. And that's it. It's a place and the time. And it's really nothing more than that. And I'm just like you. I was raised and what I knew to do was read my Bible, pray, and make sure I attended services. Yeah, tithe, yeah. But, nothing about *Spiritual growth*. Not to mention that it was necessary, or how that happened, or what the results of that would be. And I want to just throw in here, Owen ... and I think just as kind of a foundational to what we're talking about here ... is we always hear about "The Great Commission." The Great Commission in Matthew 28, Jesus's Final Words. (Matthew 28:16-20.)

**John (09:33):**

And we want to be "Great Commission Christians," *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. But then you have to step back from that. And that has been one of the most, I believe, misused and abused verses of Scripture in the entire New Testament. And it's created a lot of the problems that we are addressing here in our "Saving Christianity" podcast. And that is: It's been interpreted as, "Go and get people saved." Or, "Go and make people infants – infant Christians." (Laughter.) And just leave them. As you know ... nothing about ... and Jesus didn't say that! He said, "Make *disciples* (inaudible) to obey and to ... and so there's just been a tragic misrepresentation of this. And of course we see the evidence of that everywhere.

**Owen (10:36):**

Yeah. Oh, wow. You know John, there's a wonderful story – I can't remember if I've told it yet in these episodes, but it's true. It was told to me by a pastor some years ago. They had a little exercise, or contest, in the Sunday school room with the little children. I don't remember their ages. But very young children. And they said, "Draw us ..." They gave them paper and pencils and stuff. And they said, "Draw a picture of what Sunday and the service means to you." And so they did. The children did. And all the children showed their pictures. And so the pastor was supposed to pick the *best* picture.

**Owen (11:18):**

So he looked at one, and he said to the child, he said, "Well, this looks like a *fur coat*. Did you draw a picture of a *fur coat*?" The child said, "Uh-huh." And the pastor said, "Well, but you were supposed to draw a picture of what the Lord's Day Services mean." And the child said, "Yes, I did." And the pastor said, "Well, what are you talking about? This is a fur coat. How does that relate?" And the child said, "Well, the Sunday Services are something I put on, on Sunday morning, and take off Sunday night."

**Owen (11:54):**

(Yeahs and Chuckles.) And that's really – for a lot of us – you know the old joke: "We live for the devil six days a week, and for God one day a week," and all these statements that people say. But you know, John, I think a lot of it too is a question of *education*, or the way that Christians try to *educate* one another these days. We're going to talk about this in an upcoming episode. But I call it the "Classroom Model." It's intellectualism. You know, we talk "at" people. But yet, if you read any basic book on Learning Theory, people don't learn by sitting and passively *listening*. They learn by *experiencing*. They learn by *doing*. And we made the joke the other day that it's like if you had a Flight School for pilots – and then when you give them their certificates after they'd learned to read a map and do all the different things – and you said, "Okay, now go to the airport and fly a plane." And of course none of them *could*. They would all *crash*. Because they haven't had any *flight* training. And I think that's what we've got in Christianity. We went to "ground school." But we haven't had any "flight training."

**John (13:13):**

Yeah, I think of it too – you know, it says in the Bible in the Old Testament, "To *taste* and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8.) And I kind of think of that, Owen, as an illustration that if I went home this evening and my wife said to me, "Hey, John, come on over to the dinner table." And we sat down, and she opened the Recipe Book in front of me. And I'm sitting on the other side of the table. And she starts reading this *recipe* of a wonderful casserole. One cup of this, and you do two cups of that, and you stir it for 10 minutes, *et cetera*. And I'm sitting over there just, you know, *befuddled*. Wondering you know, "*Is this dinner?*" Well, I'm ... (inaudible, and then the wife says) ... "Well, I'm gonna *tell* you all about it."

**John (14:09):**

And actually, "Here's ... John, here's a *picture*. It's a picture of what the finished product looks like." Okay, so we do all that. And after a while I get up and I'm starved to death. Right? I'm hungry. I heard all about the ingredients. What it *looks* like. What it's supposed to *taste* like, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. But I never got to see it (and), "*Taste* and see that the Lord is good." And I really think that that is a pretty adequate experience of most people, of what they are experiencing. They hear the *recipe* read. And what it's supposed ... how we're supposed to "look," *et cetera*. But they never experience Spirit-filling. They never *taste* and see that the Lord is good.

**Owen (15:11):**

Never *seen* it, don't know anybody that's *done* it – including all the people on the platform.

**John (15:16):**

But it's a "delicious casserole!"

**John and Owen (15:20):**

(Inaudible.)

**Owen (15:21):**

But you know, let's think a second. *Why* is it happening that way? Because it's such a tragedy! We've said many times that in the First Century what we're calling the "Early Christian Lifestyle" ... we know that you mentioned "evangelism" a minute ago. Today we have the "Love 'em and leave 'em" process. Some famous person flies into town, speaks somewhere in the ballpark, gives an altar call, two or three thousand people come forward. They give them a brochure. He boards a plane and leaves. Everybody goes home. And that's the end of it. And that's been studied and found to be basically true. There's very little long-range *production* from these big crusades.

**Owen (16:13):**

So but the question is: *Why* is all of that happening? You know, *why* are so few people living it? And I was talking about "evangelism" there. *Evangelism* in the First Century – people were attracted, *not* to a famous speaker on the platform. People were attracted to the husband, the wife, the boy, the girl, next door ...

**John (16:37):**

To the "Lifestyle"!

**Owen (16:38):**

... because of their *Spirit-filled behavior*. And people said, "Ouch. I want that love, and gentleness, and faithfulness, that the couple next door has. What *is* that?" That's how it spread. As well as the gifts and the miracles, and that was part of it too. So we don't have any of *that* today. We have a *lecture*. Why?

**John (17:03):**

A "personality," you know.

**Owen (17:05):**

With a *lecture*.

**John (17:06):**

Right. (Laughter.) A "personality" *with* a lecture. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Owen (17:10):**

So but, *why*? Where ... how did ... where did we go wrong, John?

**John (17:14):**

Well, you know, Owen. We talked about this for 25 years. And you've written about it extensively. And you know, it doesn't matter ... what ... if you're just off a little *percentage*, as the time ... You know, if I start off and I'm saying, "Well, I'm just *two* degrees off of my flight pattern. Surely that's not going to make any difference." Well, over time (chuckles) you're going to wind up somewhere you never dreamed you would wind up. And I think that's what happened to Christianity.

**Owen (17:51):**

Yeah. Well, you know, like you said John. We've talked about it so many times. And it's simply historical facts. Nobody disputes it. The first 300 years of Christian history they had a "Behavioral Model," if we could call it that. A "Lifestyle Model," where they were empowered and motivated by the supernatural presence within them of the *Holy Spirit*. And then of course, in the Fourth Century, the Roman emperor *Constantine* came to power and just simply reversed 180 degrees everything that Christians had been doing. And within 25 years that he ruled, he completely reversed what had been *original* Christianity.

**Owen (18:48):**

He's the one that built the first *buildings*. He's the one that passed laws that Christian had to *attend* them. He's the one that *changed* what they called "the Lord's Day" to the new term "Sun Day," because he was a sun worshiper. He's the one who *outlawed* small groups in private homes. He's the one that founded *priests* presiding from the platform. (Hierarchy.) All the rest of it. We could go on and on and on. And of course, they resisted. Christian resisted that. But after all (chuckles), he was the Roman emperor with the Roman army supporting him, and Roman law supporting him. And over 25 years he did in fact kill effectively what had been the *original* Christian experience. And that was more than "two degrees"!

**Owen (19:50):**

And we've never recovered. And you know, John, we've talked about this a lot. People are creatures of habit. And think about it: These habits now of a big *building*, with a big *crowd*, with a big *platform*, with a big *speaker* have been in place now 2,000 – right at 2,000 – years. How are we going to turn *that* around?

**John (20:17):**

Yeah, yeah. I think about, you know, now in this modern time there's not ... we don't have a frame of reference. It's just ... even in my kid's history and kids that are a little bit older than them, in their twenties, you know, some of the *illustrations* I use, their eyes cross. They don't even have a frame of reference. If you talk about going to the library and putting out 20 books on a table and you're using a pencil and paper and taking notes. And all they know is a laptop, an iPad, and Google. And you just ask Google. I mean, you just type it in – and instantly, with Wikipedia, and you get your *answers* to everything. And so they live in all they've ever known, really, and so we've got now generation after generation of Christians who are ... it's just being literally passed on from one generation to the next.

**John (21:30):**

And so that's why we are so passionate about, "Okay, let's jump back to the *original*. Let's go back to the First Century." Something is clearly not working, and it's not on *God* that it's not working. It's on *us*. So we need to get to the root of this problem. Which again, I keep saying, we've been digging – we've been in an "archeological dig" for over 20 ... (inaudible) ... yeah, for 25 years. And *you* longer than that. You know, getting to the substance of this, to understand the root problem, so we could be moving towards a *solution*. And so that's what this is all about.

**Owen (22:18):**

Yeah, I heard somebody say the other day, "Mr. Google knows everything." (Laughter.) And that's how people feel. That's a very interesting thing, isn't it? And what's so sad too, John, you know a *culture* ... people talk about, "Well, that's just their *culture*." A "culture" is a composite of all of the *habits* of the people in that culture have. And that's why you can fly – it used to be, even that's changing – but you could get on a plane and fly to Germany, or Switzerland, or France, or somewhere. And get off the plane, and people looked and acted *differently*. They had different looking clothes. They ate different food. They spoke a different language. They lived in different type houses. And all of those *habits*, which they clung to bitterly, were their – quote – "culture." And so now we've got an American culture ... a *Christian* culture, really, worldwide. It's not only in America. That is completely *different*, think about that a second, from the original Christian culture.

**Owen (23:27):**

And I once said, and I say this in the early chapters of the book – I think maybe even in the introduction, I don't remember – that *everything* that we think of as "Christian" today did not *exist* in the First Century.

**John (23:50):**

Yeah, that's quite a statement.

**Owen (23:51):**

Think about that. I mean, this is scary. *Everything* you could name. Imagine, you walk into your typical Christian – quote – "church" building ... by the way, the word "church" didn't exist in the First Century ... and everything that you see: The building ... the stained glass ... the pews ... the Bibles ... the hymn books ... the candles ... the offering plates ... the altar ... the choir ... the pastor. I could go on and on and on: The musical instruments ... the praise team ... *anything* you want to name. You name me something. It did *not* exist in the First Century. Well, wait a minute, wait a minute, *why* would that be? Does that mean that you don't *need* all that stuff? Could that possibly mean that you could be a Spiritual Christian *without* candles and pews and offering plates and all the rest of it? (Chuckles.) And the answer is a screaming, wild-eyed, "Absolutely! Absolutely!"

**John (24:52):**

Yeah and I, you know, and piggybacking on that, Owen. I think a huge piece of this is: Jesus – salvation and all things Christianity – is about *transformation*. And if there is *no* transformation, if there's *no* difference, then you know a person who *is* a Christian, and a person who is *not*, then what's the point of it all? And of course we know that there is *supposed* to be a life-changing difference. And that happens, of course. And maybe a lot of people don't even *know* that it happens. The "natural" person (the non-Christian) can't understand it. It's something supernatural (that) happens. And that *supernatural* thing is the Person of the Holy Spirit. And so people say, "Well, you became a Christian. Well, what does that mean?" Is that ... does that mean that I said the right thing, or I actually believe the right thing?

**Owen (26:07):**

Joined the right denomination?

**John (26:09):**

Right. And just to try to get the word out here, none of them know that you may do those things. But what distinguishes – what literally *makes* us a Christian – is we are *indwelled* by the Holy Spirit. Now, He's invisible. He's a Spirit. You can actually say ... put it like this. Maybe this is better for some to understand: Jesus is no longer here physically. So what does He do? He gives us His Spirit. He *indwells* us with His Holy Spirit. He comes, and the Bible talks about "abiding ... indwelling ... living in." He's a "resident" of us. You say, "Well, John, that sounds kind of crazy. That sounds kind of other-worldly." Well, yeah, for sure. It is. Definitely. That's *why* it's supernatural.

**Owen (27:11):**

Beyond the natural.

**John (27:12):**

Exactly, right. Yeah.

**Owen (27:15):**



Well, and see ... and so, *why* did He do that though? See, John? People don't stop and think: What is the whole *point* of being a Christian? The best answer they can come up with is: "To go to heaven when you die." And okay, that's nice too. Most people aren't anxious to even go. (Chuckles.) But, even if they were, that would be a good thing. But in the meantime let's say that I get – as I did – I get indwelt by the power of the Spirit when I'm 11. I won't tell you how old I am now. But it's several years. (Chuckles.) So, what about in between those two? What's supposed to happen to a person who becomes a Christian as a teenager or a child, and lives to 60, 70, 80, 90, whatever age. What's *expected* of them? What's supposed to *happen* in the meantime? Just go to the local service on the Lord's day, put a dollar bill in the offering plate, dose, and then go home?

**John (28:23):**

Be moral?

**Owen (28:25):**

Surely, it's more than that?

**John (28:27):**

Right, sure. And a lot of people think that Christianity equals "morality." And so it's really ...

**Owen (28:36):**

Which "they ain't none of."

**John (28:36):**

Yeah, right. (Chuckles.) Ouch.

**Owen (28:39):**

We won't go there!

**John (28:41):**

So, right. When you start looking at that – about Jesus trans ... changing us ... *transforming* us from the inside out with His Holy Spirit that we might *experience* Him. And we've talked about it in some degree in all of our episodes. I think about the *evidence* of that, the "Fruit" of God's Spirit. What is He *producing* in us? And so it's that we might not just know *about* Him. But we might *know* Him, and experience ...

**Owen (29:13):**

And be *like* Him.

**John (29:14):**

... yeah, and be *like* Him. Experience Him. And through that influence, it should – it's supposed to – *cause* more people to want come to Him. So they can have Him, and they can experience Him. And you just see this multiplication. And of course, obviously the end-result is one day in the consummation of history, we will all be – all true Christians will be – in *heaven*. But there's a lot stuff that God wants us to be about *before* then.

**Owen (29:49):**

Yeah. What's that old saying, John? "*You might be the only Jesus that people ever see.*" And I would paraphrase that, "You might be the only expression of the Holy Spirit of God that other people might ever see." That's an interesting thought. But see, Jesus talked about ... taught something called the Kingdom of God on earth. Most people, if you said, "Hey, where's the Kingdom of God?" They'd say, "In heaven." Well, that's true. But there's supposed to be an element ... I don't know if it's a foreshadowing or what word it would be. A prophecy? Something. But there's supposed to be a way we can live *some* of the Kingdom of God *here* on this earth. You know, Paul ... doesn't Paul (the apostle) have a Scripture about that? "The Kingdom of God is *not* meat and drink, but is power and love (in the Holy Spirit)." I've forgotten exactly. (Romans 14:17.)

**John (30:56):**

And then Jesus, of course, in the Model Prayer, says ... teaches ... us to pray: "May Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done, on *earth* as it is in heaven." And so, clearly, it's supposed to be *street* level here. Right? (Chuckles.) You know, if it doesn't ever come to *us*, then you know, what's it all about?

**Owen (31:26):**

Well you know, John, think about it a moment. I know that to an extent we're *dreamers* and *idealists*. But think about it for a minute. Look at all the crime. I was watching on TV this morning how crime is increasing, not only all over the world, but all over America. Weird things are happening. I saw two people were jerked out of a car and shot and killed on the street just in recent days in one of our major cities. They were in a parade. And somebody just opened the doors, pulled them out, and assassinated them, and then ran away up an alley. And nobody knows who did it. And that's not an unusual thing now. That's happening with more and more frequency. Well God's smart enough ... you know, He's real smart. (Chuckles.) And He's smart enough to see all that, and know all that.

**Owen (32:24):**

So ... why did He create *Christianity* to have some people who didn't *do* those types of things? Imagine if everybody in the country was indwelt by the Spirit, and was letting the Spirit *motivate* them – as we said in the last segment, 51 percent or more of their brain, of their

mind, of their behavior – what kind of *world* would we have? That *would* be the Kingdom of God!

**John (32:53):**

Yeah, that'd be an answer to that *Prayer* for sure.

**Owen (32:56):**

And *that's* what Jesus wanted. And you know I love that, we've talked about it. In the book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost, Peter stands on the rooftop and he tells the crowd in the street what's happening and what they saw. I love it. And he said when Jesus left earth, I'm paraphrasing, and went to heaven, and when He got to heaven, the Father handed Him – can you visualize that? – gave Him the *Holy Spirit*. And He turned around and "poured the Spirit out." And the Greek words: They're like you're *pouring water out of a pitcher*. He "poured the Holy Spirit out" on the first people, the first 120 waiting in that house, and Christianity was *born*.

**Owen (33:52):**

They were the *first* Christians. So how is a Christian *created*? A Christian man, woman, child – whoever it is – is created *when the Holy Spirit is poured out into them*. You know, the Greek (word) on the Day of Pentecost says the Spirit "settled down in each of them." Took up "residence." Took up an "abide," a "life," in each person. I've known people who, when they prayed to be saved, *felt* that. Can you imagine? I've known people who saw the *power* of the Spirit. He looks like a blue mist entering people. That is supernatural, and is wonderful. And every living human ought to experience that, and then let it (inaudible) from there, change their lives.

**John (34:56):**

Yeah, for sure. And so like you said a moment ago. Imagine! And here's the deal. On some level, we *can* imagine it. Because we have *experienced* it at different times in our lives. We've been in a period of time where we got a little *taste* of what that is like. And we've longed for that ever since. And in many ways – and this may open up the proverbial "can of worms" perhaps – but I'm going to go there anyway. In many ways, the current, what we refer to as "Institutional Christianity," has *hindered* and in many ways it has *blocked* what we're talking about now. And it has left people discouraged, and disillusioned, and ...

**Owen (35:57):**

And Spiritually starved.

**John (35:58):**

... right! Spiritually starved. And it's just tragic, tragic.

**Owen (36:05):**

And but see, John. That was *Constantine*.

**John (36:08):**

Sure! Right!

**Owen (36:08):**

That's why he did it. He was trying at that time – we won't get into the history today – but he was trying to unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was divided into an East and a West Empire. He wanted to be emperor of the *entire* empire. So he was consolidating the armies, and the legal processes, and the courts and everything of those two empires and bringing them all under his *control*. And it struck him that he had to bring all the *religions* under his control, too. And so, over a 25-year period, that's exactly what he did. And so you stop and think about (it). Now we're *stuck* with what he did. And people think this is what we *should* have. And this is what it *is*. And let's all go to Cracker Barrel or Golden Corral or some nice restaurant and enjoy the day and forget about. And that's the tragedy. That's the horror of it. And meanwhile, you know, we've got child abuse, and spousal abuse, and affairs, and infidelity, and all the things that go on. And I hesitate to say, but a lot of the people doing that are "professing Christians."

**John (37:29):**

Yeah, yeah. For sure. Unfortunately. And you know, you just think about it. And just, to my simple mind, if Christianity has been *reduced* to ... really ... it's meaningless. I mean it just ... people don't even ... you know ... what they've seen ... what they've watched, people who "profess" to be Christians. And they say, "Well, goodness, that doesn't really seem to matter to those people at all. I see they've got a *Jesus Saves* sign in their front yard. But goodness, they're some of the most miserable people I've ever met. And they're mean as snakes. And they don't wave. And they, you know, they're not part of anything here. And so – but yet, they're Christians. And so apparently this whole "Christian" thing doesn't make any *difference* in your life. It doesn't seem to matter. And so you know, wow. I'll just, you know, I'll ...

**Owen (38:38):**

Play golf.

**John (38:38):**

... yeah! I'll be like the old show, *Cheers*. I'll just go where everybody knows my name (laughter) and you know, eat, drink and be merry.

**Owen (38:48):**

Well you know, John. In one of our ... I think in one of our earlier segments ... I told the story of my brother who was a pastor, and (who) was talking to a man one day that was very disillusioned and stuff, and trying to get him to start attending their (chuckles) congregation. And the man said, "Well, shucks," he said. "I can get more love in the nearest *bar* than I can in this

*congregation.*" And sadly, that was probably true to a large extent. But like you said in the last segment, let's talk a little bit about the *solution*. You know, one of the things that I have found – and I'm still trying to get this in my mind – one of the secrets to how to make this happen and to have the Kingdom of God on *earth*, as well as you're going to have it later in *heaven* ... but we "ain't there yet" ... so let's focus on *earth*. And one of the tricks I'm finding is that you must be around "Like-Minded" people. That's what I have found. You need to be around other people who are seeking "the deeper walk," it's called. And who sincerely want *supernatural experiences* in their lives. And to my surprise, there's not a whole heap of people with that mindset. And why do you think that is?

**John (40:17):**

Well Owen, I think part of it is just awareness – or a *lack* of awareness. I think there's just ... obviously, there's been so much that we're dealing with today. We have to really *unlearn* in order to experience what we're talking about. We've obviously over-complicated, and made something that's so simple, really, we've made it extremely *difficult*. And we've added a lot of trappings to it that are not supposed to be a part of it. And so on and on it goes. But if we can just make people aware: "Hey, listen. Let's look at this. Let's just look ... yeah ... let's just look at your life, you know, and look in my life."

**John (41:09):**

We ask yourself that question and say, "Well, what does it mean for me to be a *Christian*? Or *am* I a Christian? Or has anything *changed* in my life?" And understanding that the essence of this is to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. Not "one and done." But indwelt, but then the rest of our life we're seeking to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit. Now the manifestation of that ... as obviously it's going to come in a multitude of ways. We are going to experience the Gifts. We're going to experience the Fruit. We've talked about that extensively. Our lives are going to be more Christ-like. We're going to want to live *out* the Scriptures. We're *not* going to see them as something to avoid, but something to *absorb*. And it's just ... it's going to be ... it's ... (chuckles) you know: "Here, *taste* and see that the Lord is good to people." You know, don't just experience this here. Ask Him to *fill* you with His Holy Spirit and He will."

**Owen (42:16):**

Like we said (chuckles) in the last episode: The four words that I told the man that day, "Fill me, Holy Spirit." Here's the Good News. I don't know, I was sitting here thinking. How would you express (Spirit-filling)? The "forbidden fruit"? That doesn't sound right. But here's what I have found. Anybody – who you mentioned the Lord's saying, "Taste and see that I'm good" – anybody who has experienced even an hour of being *Spirit-filled*:

- a) Never forgets it, and ...
- b) Wants it again.

And that is the *Good News*. Because people, like you said, that happens in *many* ways. It might be the appearance of an angel. It might be a vision. It might be various things that happen.

But you're never the same. (Repeats.) I've told the story that when I flew home from New York after I'd been Spirit-filled the first time. The next day I went to work, and people that knew me didn't recognize me.

**Owen (43:23):**

It was that my life was that *different*. Just overnight. Just in one experience. And that's what it does for people. The second part of it is not only "Like-Mindedness." But as we know, it's also – the secret of it that most people never thought about – is the "Small Group Structure." And we'll talk a lot more in coming episodes about small groups. What happens in them, how to form them. But the Spirit doesn't ... I don't know exactly why ... but seem to move as much in large groups as He does ... and that makes sense when you think about it. Because the intimacy and all that you want in a Christian experience really happens in *small groups*. I meet many Christians who never knew, and were never told, that originally the first nine or ten generations of Christians met privately in small groups in private homes. And a lot of people didn't know that. And that was one of the tricks, one of the techniques, one of the secrets, for why it was successful in the First Century. And of course we're trying to move back in that direction: *Like-minded, Spirit-filled, small groups*.

**John (44:47):**

But, Owen. I'm sitting here listening and I'm thinking about something that we've referenced before. I believe that when you read in the book of Acts in the New Testament (about) the Day of Pentecost that we talk a lot about – when the Holy Spirit came and *birthed*, we say, or what the essence of Christianity and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. As Peter and the guys (the apostles) took that and started moving around the countryside, they would run into people and say, "Hey, hey, hey. What about you? You know, what about the holy spirit? Have you been *filled*? Have you been *indwelt* with the Holy Spirit?"

**John (45:29):**

And people would look at them, and go, "Whoa! We don't even know what you're talking about. What Holy Spirit? What?" And (Peter and the apostles) said, "Have you been *baptized* in the Holy Spirit? And they said, "Well, no, no, no, no." Well (Peter and the apostles) said, "Whose *baptism* have you experienced?" And (they) said, "Well, we experienced the baptism that John (the Baptizer) was talking about. Which is a baptism of *repentance*, which means in *water*. And you mean there's something *else*? Whoa."

**John (46:01):**

And (Peter and the apostles) said, "Well, yeah. Yeah, this is now the fulfillment of all of the prophecy, and what Jesus told us." And then they would pray, lay hands on them, and they would pray, and they would be filled with the Holy Spirit, and Gifts, and Fruit, *et cetera*, and all would be manifest. And so I really think one of the things that we're striving for here is – I feel like that so many people today, they have been sincere, and they've had a baptism of *water*. A baptism of *repentance*.

**Owen (46:36):**

A lot of times, as babies or children.

**John (46:38):**

Correct, yeah. But in terms of what we're talking about, which is the essence of Christianity – of being indwelled and then filled with the Holy Spirit – *they know not of*. And so we are seeking that more and more in our lives. It kind of defines us, and what we're seeking. But we want you, our listeners, and we just want to see this *multiplied*. And we're pouring ourselves into ... whether it's writing, whether it's podcasts, whether it's retreats, whether (chuckles) ... any and everywhere we can get somebody to listen. We're trying to utilize those to say, "Hey, hey, hey, listen! Don't throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water here. But you know, let's talk about what First Century Christianity *is*. And we want *you* to experience it.

**Owen (47:35):**

And you know, John, one closing point on this that I think is so important. Like you said earlier, that we (today's denominations) made it complicated. Actually, when you think about it, being a Spirit-filled Christian, a deeper walking Christian ... you know, Paul said, "Walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:16) And that word "walk" in the Greek can be translated, "*Behave* in the Spirit." And one way that happens, it has to be – we said this earlier – it has to be easy and simple and obvious or it *wouldn't* work. Think about that a minute. And so we've complicated it today: You've got to have classes, you've got to join a certain group, you've got to do certain things, *yada, yada, yada*. And that's not it at *all*. And here's one proof that I love to think about. You mentioned earlier the Day of Pentecost, after Peter stood on the rooftop and *spoke to the crowd in the streets*.

**Owen (48:38):**

They were pilgrims. They were there to worship. But they didn't know anything about the *Christian* experience, or *indwelling* – 'cause it (had just) happened that morning! So Peter told them what was happening. Then it says they were "cut to the heart." And they looked at him and said, "But brothers, what should we do?" And he told them. He said, "Just repent and be filled with the Spirit. Be baptized in the Spirit." And instantly, 3,000 of them were. And that's wonderful. That's a great story. But here's the punch line. The Day of Pentecost was a *one-day festival*. One day. It ended at sunset that night. So the next morning, those 3,000 people *left town*. And where did they go? It said they were from every known country. So the 3,000 people spread on ships, and camels, and whatever, and walking. And they went back to their home nations.

**Owen (49:41):**

And look what God had done. In *one* day, He had created a worldwide Spiritual movement. But it gets even better. Check this out. How much *experience* did those 3,000 pilgrims have? *One* day. And they got on their camels, and they got on their ships, and they went home. And what did they do? They spread that *experience* to their families, their neighbors, their cities. And so when Paul went to Rome and 60 AD, he had never been there before. Remember, the Day of

Pentecost was in 30 AD. This is 30 years later. Paul goes to Rome. What did he find? A thriving *Christian* community there. Thousands of Christians. Where they come from? They came from somebody that had been present on Pentecost morning, who took a ship home, and started Spiritual ... Spirituality, Christianity, in the city of Rome. What I'm saying is, it's *easy*. We don't have to study, think, worry, and struggle. Just ask for it. Want it. Seek it. Ask for it. And it instantly happens.

**John (51:00):**

Right. Praise God for that. Yeah. Well, we could talk about this until the sunset.

**Owen (51:06):**

I'd like to! (Chuckles.)

**John (51:06):**

Yeah, absolutely we could. But as you say so often, I think the big clock on the wall is telling us that our time is up. And would you agree, Owen? This may be one of the most important episodes we've done.

**Owen (51:23):**

I do. I think so. It's ... I hope and pray that something we've said has touched a listener somewhere. And they realize – probably through revelation of the Spirit in their mind – of what we're talking about. But you're right, John. And we want our friends to remember that this is Episode 16, that there is a script and a recording of it are on our podcast (website) at: [www.goSCpod.com](http://www.goSCpod.com). And so, I ... you know what, John. (Chuckles.) I hate to sign this one off. There's so much I want to say. And maybe we can say some of it in later episodes. But for now, this is Owen Allen ...

**John (52:09):**

... and this is John Shields, and speaking in for Shannon Wolf, our producer, and for all three of us ...

**Owen (52:17):**

... saying: May the God of our fathers bless you, and keep you, and guide you, and protect you, until we meet again.

**Owen and John (52:38):**

Owen and John end the episode.