

Do you know how an air filter works? In a car, there is an air-intake system that feeds the engine's compressors. The intake system sucks in air but it also sucks in everything floating in the air ... pollen, bugs, dirt, everything. An air filter stops those bits and pieces of stuff from getting into the engine. Same for your home filter. It cleans the air going into the unit so your system isn't damaged by the dirt.

We have internal filters, too. We tend to filter life through what we believe ... so if I believe in reincarnation, for example, then my experience of the natural world is going to filter through that. I will see a mosquito as my uncle and I'll wonder if my déjà vu moments are really memories of other lives. Or maybe my filter is something someone said to me early on. If someone told me early on in my life that I'm worthless, that may become a filter for me ... all my relationships, all the words spoken to me, filtering through that lie. Does that make sense? The point is ... our filters determine what gets to our engines. They are how we define life.

This is what Jesus talked about with his disciples on that last day he was with them before he ascended into heaven. Here's what happened. These people who followed Jesus from the very beginning had seen miracles and heard lessons and saw what sacrificial love looks like. They also saw Jesus killed and they saw the empty tomb. Then Jesus showed up among them and then appeared to hundreds of others. And then ... there was this final conversation before he moved into the spiritual realm ... when Jesus told them about the filter.

Jesus said (Luke 24:44-45) - *"Everything I told you while I was with you comes to this: All the things written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms have to be fulfilled."* He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them how to read their Bibles this way. In other words, Jesus said to them, "Pretty much everything you've

read in the Old Testament is like a clue that points to me. So from now on, when you read anything in the Bible, filter it through what you know about me.” So that the hope found in Genesis really only makes sense when you know Jesus. And the redemption and freedom found in Exodus ... that’s about Jesus, too. The Law is the ideal way to live found in Jesus. And the passion of David’s relationship with God is the heart of Jesus. All the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Micah ... they are about Jesus.

What God wants from his children ... from us ... is for Jesus to make a difference in how we experience the world. He wants the fact of Christ and the message of Christ to change how we interpret the things that happen to us. The big things ... so that death isn’t something we’re afraid of, because we believe what the Bible says ... that God doesn’t want anyone to perish but to have eternal life. And the little things, too ... so that when rent is due in two weeks and we don’t know where it’s coming from, we don’t freak out about that because we trust God. And we don’t let our mistakes define us and we don’t let those inner voices of shame and guilt have the last word, because we believe in what the cross stands for.

What’s your filter for life? Are you filtering everything through some terrible childhood experience that has left you un-trusting and fearful of God and everyone else? Or are you filtering life through Jesus? And if so, that should make a difference in how your engine runs. So the question is: what is your center? What’s your filter?

Jesus says (Luke 24:45-48)- *“You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change (remember that) through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You're the first to hear and see it. You're the witnesses.* Jesus filtering everything

that comes in so that everything from the filter on is affected ... producing a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins proclaimed in his name.

Lewis Smedes' book wrote a great book called *Shame and Grace*. Listen to what he says about this filter of forgiveness. "The grace of God comes to us in our scrambled spiritual disorder, our mangled inner mass, and accepts us with all our unsorted clutter, accepts us with all our potential for doing real evil and all our fascinating flaws that make us such interesting people. He accepts us totally as the spiritual stew we are. We are accepted in our most fantastic contradictions and our boring corruptions. Accepted with our roaring vices and our purring virtues. We are damaged masterpieces, stunted saints; there are ogres and angels in our basements that we can hardly tell apart and that we have not dared to face up to. For the whole shadowed self each one of us is, grace has one loving phrase: you are accepted. Accepted. Accepted. Accepted." That one fact should change everything. Acceptance comes through the cross, so think of the cross as a filter for your life that screens out all the impurities.

Then Jesus says (Luke 24:49) - *What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so stay here in the city until he arrives, until you're equipped with power from on high.*" So the cross filters out sin and lets the acceptance of God flow through. And here, Jesus gives us another filter ... the Holy Spirit, filters our relationships and lets the love of God flow through. And Jesus says, don't even think of going out there until you have the Holy Spirit. Because here's the thing, brothers and sisters. The Kingdom Church is starving for Spirit-filled people who have the love of God flowing through them ... who can cast out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the Kingdom and heal the sick.

Paul says that Spirit-filled people will have a filter that changes how they see life. Listen to what he says to the Romans about the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-filled life. He says (Romans 8:9-11) - *if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!*

What Paul is telling us here is that there are **marks of the Spirit-filled life**. Paul gives us at least seven in this passage. This is what a life filtered through the Spirit looks like:

1. **You begin to think more of God than yourself.** It doesn't happen overnight, but over time your worldview changes. You begin to filter more and more of your decisions through God's values and God's desires. You begin to think more like God than yourself.
2. **You will still experience the limits of sin.** I love that Paul includes this line. It is so important for us to be reminded that Spirit-filled people are not perfect. You know, a car filter doesn't catch 100% of the particles floating in the air. But it catches enough of them to keep the engine running well. And this is interesting. A brand new filter doesn't catch as many particles as one that's been there for a while. But an old filter can have so much build up that it stops the air flow. So you have to change it every once in a while. That's why we pray daily, "Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit." Its so we'll have the

love of Christ flowing through us. But we'll still make mistakes ... and that's what makes the life-changing message of forgiveness ... just as important for a Spirit-filled person as it does for one who just got saved.

3. **You will experience life on God's terms.** I was talking to someone last week who has just gotten a personal trainer and she said the first day, the trainer told her, "You are now a person with a routine." I like that. Spirit-filled people are people with a spiritual routine. We experience life on God's terms.
4. **God will do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus.** Jesus said we would do the things he did and more, and the Holy Spirit gives us that potential.
5. **God will bring you alive to himself.** Remember this. We'll come back to it.
6. **You are delivered from the dead life.** I've said this often ... that Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people live. And to have those two filters in place ... Jesus and the Holy Spirit ... that's how we filter out death and receive both truth and life.
7. **Your body will be as alive as Christ's.** This is where Jesus takes us next in Luke 24.

Remember that ... by the time we get to the end of Luke ... Jesus has been resurrected from the dead and is appearing to people all over. And then, one last time he shows up where his disciples are and shows them how to read the Bible and how to interpret the world and how to live a Spirit-filled life. Then (Luke 24:50-53) - *He then led them out of the city over to Bethany. Raising his hands he blessed them, and while blessing them, took his leave, being carried up to heaven. And they were on their knees, worshiping him. (remember that) They returned to Jerusalem bursting with joy. They spent all their time in the Temple praising God.*

The ascension of Jesus into heaven is just as important as the resurrection. Because folks, if Jesus is not alive today in some spiritual realm in the flesh, then nothing I'm saying has any relevance for our lives. Everything we believe depends on the fact of Jesus being there in the presence of God on our behalf right now. Hebrews 9:11-12 says - *So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that great, perfect sanctuary in heaven, not made by human hands and not part of this created world. Once for all time, he took blood into that Most Holy Place. Not the blood of animals, but His own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever.*

Jesus in the flesh was sent back from the world into the presence of God, and the Holy Spirit was sent from God into the world. So now we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he will be at peace with all those who believe. And God has his Spirit here, to teach us the way of peace, and give us access to all the powers of Heaven.

And here's the kicker: It is because of the ascension that we worship Jesus. All through Luke, people respond to Jesus by praising God. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, had his voice taken away because he didn't believe the angel who told him his wife could still get pregnant. But when the baby was born and he named it John, the story says (Luke 1:64) - *Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.* In Luke 2:13 - *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God* ...Luke 2:20 - *The shepherds returned (from the manger where Jesus was born), glorifying and praising God.* Luke 2:28 - *Simeon (the priest) took (the baby Jesus) in his arms and praised God.* In Luke chapter five Jesus tells a lame man he's been healed and (Luke 5:25-26) - *Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.* 26 *Everyone (around him) was amazed and gave praise to God.* In Luke chapter

seven, a dead man is raised to life and (Luke 7:16) *they were all filled with awe and praised God.* In Luke 13, Jesus meets a woman who has been bent over because of some evil spirit for eighteen years. (Luke 13:13) - *Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.* In Luke 17, Jesus heals ten lepers (Luke 17:15). *One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.* In Luke 18, Jesus heals a man born blind (Luke 18:43) - *Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.* In Luke 19 (Luke 19:37) ... *the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen...* Even when Jesus was on the cross (Luke 23:47), *the centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."*

Running all the way through the book of Luke, there is this thread of praise. But then at the end, when the disciples see him ascend into heaven, they get on their knees and worship *Jesus*. It is the ascension that brings Jesus back into the heart of God, where he is worshiped as God Himself, in the flesh. That's why the ascension matters.

And now he is the filter through which our lives are judged by the Father. God sees us through Jesus. And so, through Jesus we are loved, we are forgiven, we are accepted, we are healed, we are empowered, we are brought alive to God.

Would you write down these two questions: What is filtering my life? Am I willing to let Jesus and the Holy Spirit become my filters? Because if your world is filtered by Jesus that you will approach life with the assurance that you are accepted and loved. But if your world is filtered by some lie someone told you along the way, then everything you experience, and all your responses will be colored by that.

You have two options right now: If you're willing, find someone and share your thoughts on these questions. If that's not your thing, then I want to invite you to write a personal prayer to God based on these questions. Your prayer might sound something like this:

God, something is in the way. I've got a clogged filter and its messing up my spiritual engine. Its keeping the wind of the Spirit from blowing through my life. God, I need to confess that I've been living my life off a lie. Someone somewhere told me I'm not good enough, that I have to prove myself, that I'm a reject. I've been filtering everything through that lie, and its killing me. Its killing my relationships, its killing my spirit, its killing my joy. So Father, I'm asking you to remove that lie from my life. Remove the effect of it. And speak your truth to me. Help me to really get it, that I'm accepted. I'm accepted. I'm accepted. And help me, God, to let Jesus and the Holy Spirit become my filters. Come into my life, Lord Jesus, and fill me with your Holy Spirit. I worship you. Amen.