



The Baptism in the Holy Spirit, part 1 of 2—

# The Importance of the Altar

by Dick Gruber

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**W**hen addressing the subject of how to pray and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we must begin with some basic methods in giving altar calls to children. Jesus said, “**Let** the children come to me...”

He did not say, “drag, coerce, push, force, threaten, or brow beat them to come to me.” Throughout American Pentecostal history, altar calls for and with children have included many different styles, uses, and sad to say, abuses. I have witnessed people holding children down until they received. At one camp, an adult was shaking a child by the shoulders and demanding that the child receive. I have even heard an altar worker encouraging children to repeat phrases in order to be filled with the Spirit.

I have also experienced the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit filling children to overflowing. In our church boys and girls use ministry gifts as they pray with other children. I have participated in many prayer services where children have been saved, healed, and delivered at altars.

## The Altar Call

The altar call/service should be a positive experience for children, especially when that altar call deals with the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Workers must be sensitive

to God's leading and encourage children to pray one for another. Physical contact should be limited to a hand on the shoulder, head, or back. When appropriate, a hug may be given to a child. Cry with the children. Laugh with them. Above all, enjoy the presence of God with them at the altar.

We encourage boys to pray with boys and girls with girls. In



the mid-to upper-elementary ages, more distraction is evident when children pray for those of the opposite sex. Nothing should be allowed to distract children from meeting with God and receiving all that He has for them.

The leader giving the altar call must speak with confident authority. God has placed him/her in the service or classroom for such a time as this.

Many times an altar call is referred to as the “invitation.” Think of it as an invitation and you will stay away from improper attitudes, actions, or words. A loving, Christ-like calling out of those wanting to respond will reap great results.

I often encourage every child to spend a little time with Jesus. Children are directed to find a place to pray at their chairs or at the altar area. What a blessing to see children turn and kneel to pray. You will look forward with anticipation to the experience in children's church of joyfully praying with boys and girls at the altar.

## Initial Evidence

Before I give some pointers specific to praying with children to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, let's establish one thing. Speaking with other tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Other evidences may occur, such as a rushing mighty wind, prophecies, visions, crying, laughing, and tears. Many boys and girls have cried their eyes out only to receive the baptism after they have calmed down. I know that a child has been filled to overflowing with God's Holy Spirit as that child begins to speak in another tongue as the Spirit enables him to do so.

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**Questions For Further Study—**

1. List four ways that you can make the altar call a positive experience for children.

1)

2)

3)

4)

2. Why should an altar call be thought of as an “invitation”?



The Baptism in the Holy Spirit, part 2 of 2—

# Baptism Basics

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Here are some basics to praying with or leading in a Holy Spirit altar service with children:

## 1. Be Positive!

God wants to fill every child to overflowing. Jesus is still in the business of touching and blessing the children. I am convinced that God desires to do more in the lives of children than we can even imagine.

## 2. God is Willing

Encourage children to ask God for this according to Luke 11:13. If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask? God is looking for boys and girls that will step beyond wishing and ask.

## 3. Praise Out Loud

Once they have asked God for His baptism in the Spirit, encourage the children to praise and glorify out loud. In 25 years of praying with children, I have never witnessed a child receiving this gift without first praising God out loud in his own native tongue. Psalm 51:15 says, "O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise." Psalm 8:2 says, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger."

## 4. Be Ready

Praise God in English and He will give you a prayer language at

just the right time. There is no magic formula for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God is not to be boxed in at the altars. I've found that He is really good at filling a child to overflowing at the time when that child—body, soul, and spirit—is ready.



## 5. Ask, Don't Tell

Never tell a child that he has received. Ask him what God is doing. Ask him if he is speaking in tongues. If the answer is yes, encourage him to continue. Too many children have left the altars thinking that they received because an adult heard them crying or laughing in God's presence. Anyone who has been filled to overflowing with the Spirit can tell you. They will know they have been filled.

## 6. He Who Asks, Receives

Remind children that according to Luke 11:13 those who ask will receive. God will not allow a fake or counterfeit in his altar service. He will give children a prayer language. That prayer language may not sound like any they have heard nearby. God is so big that He can give each child his own tongue.

## 7. Speak Out in Faith

Encourage children to speak out by faith when the Holy Spirit even gives them a partial word to say. Often times a child will receive a word or two, say the word and immediately wonder if this is it. I tell kids to speak out whatever God is giving them and believe that He is going to help them speak out.

## 8. Keep It Up

When you hear that a child has received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, encourage him to pray in tongues. Let him know that he can start or stop praying at any time. Let every child who has been filled know that this is a prayer language to be used every day.

## 9. It Can Happen Anytime

Children leaving the altar without having received should be encouraged to walk by faith, knowing that they will be baptized to overflowing any minute. I have done this many times with great success and awesome testi-

monies. One girl pushed the button on the elevator and she and all of her friends were baptized in the Spirit and began speaking in tongues. Another boy told me that he was walking to the bathroom and just began praising God. Before he knew it, he was speaking in a heavenly language. A girl

in one camp prayed every night. It wasn't until she was at home with her mom and dad that God allowed her to pray in tongues. As a result, Mom and Dad were both baptized in the Spirit as the girl laid hands on them.

It is important in any altar service to let God be God. Do not attempt to force a move of God or raise the spiritual level of the altar time by your own strength. Jesus is the Lord of the altar time. Let the children come to Him.

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### Questions For Further Study—

1. Who should be in charge of the altar time?
  
2. For each of the following “basics” in leading a child to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, write down something that you can do or say during altar time to encourage a child to receive the baptism.
  - 1) Be Positive
  
  - 2) God is Willing
  
  - 3) Praise Out Loud
  
  - 4) Be Ready
  
  - 5) Ask, Don't Tell
  
  - 6) He Who Asks, Receives
  
  - 7) Speak Out in Faith
  
  - 8) Keep It Up
  
  - 9) It Can Happen Anytime