

- Occult practices: There are a great number of false religions, magical practices or occult spiritualism through which people may have previously opened themselves to bondage. These need to be repented of and then commanded to leave if this has not been done before. Address it using your authority as a believer (Lk 10:19).

- Misunderstanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit: Some people fear receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and particularly speaking in tongues, because they assume they will be seized by a spirit who turns them into a helpless puppet. Pictures of bizarre behavior or helplessly losing control flood their minds. Our answer to this fear is that He is a holy Spirit so whatever He does will be pure and filled with love. He doesn't enslave us. We must willingly yield to Him as He inspires us. Nothing is more heavenly than sensing His presence flow over you.

- Feelings of unworthiness: Though we discussed this earlier these feelings can be so persistent, we need to mention them again here. Remember, no one can earn or deserve this gift. It is freely given to those who have been made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3). Take your eyes off your own worthiness and place them on Him.

**6. Ask specifically for the baptism with the Holy Spirit.** Tell God you want His gift (Lk 11:13) and tell Him you'd like to speak in tongues and prophesy just like they did in the New Testament (Ac 2:1-18; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7).

**7. Ask someone who has been baptized with the Holy Spirit to lay hands on you and pray for you to receive this gift (Ac 8:14-17).**

**8. Expect God to give you the baptism with the Holy Spirit.** No matter how definite any promise of God's Word may be, we never realize it in our own experience until we believe it. Unless we confidently expect God to do what He has so definitely promised to do (Ac 2:38, 39), our prayers will bring no result. We must have the kind of faith that puts out its hand and receives the very thing it asks of God (Mk 11:24).

**9. Remember, Jesus is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49; Jn 14:16) & focus on Him.** Soften your heart so you can receive what He's giving to you. Don't focus on feeling something. Focus on worshipping Him (Ac 1:14). Freely and spontaneously praise Him, telling Him you love Him and thanking Him for baptizing you with the Holy Spirit.

### ■ Knowing You've Received It

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience which a person knows whether they have received it or not. However, what matters isn't that you have an experience which fits certain expectations you may have, but that God powerfully touches you so that you know it. Every person who is baptized with the Holy Spirit is given the gift of speaking in tongues—at least the capacity for tongues is there in potential. But it's important not to confuse the two. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not merely an event in which you speak in tongues. It is your "ordination" into ministry with power. So the most important sign indicating that you have it is that you are released to minister "in the Spirit." You'll find you are now able to hear His "voice," feel His anointing come upon you and let the gifts of the Spirit (1Co 12:8-10) function through you. By cooperating with His leading and depending on His power you will become supernaturally fruitful. You'll see remarkable things happen and know God did it, not you. This new walk is the unmistakable proof you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the brochure "Speaking in Tongues and the Gifts of the Spirit" we discuss the important role that speaking in tongues will play in this process.



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# Holy Spirit Baptism

How to Receive the  
Baptism with the Holy Spirit

by Pastor Steve Schell



## ■ What Is This Baptism?

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a blessing from God which causes ordinary people to become extraordinarily effective as witnesses for Jesus Christ (Ac 1:5, 8). By it God equips believers today with the same power we read about in the New Testament. Since the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2), God's plan has been to supernaturally equip every believer so that the ministry of Jesus Christ may continue through us (Jn 14:12). His ascension into heaven (Ac 1:9) did not mean that Jesus' ministry on earth stopped, but rather it was an essential step which released even more of His ministry. As the Head of His Church He now directs growing multitudes of Spirit-empowered men and women to carry His Gospel around the world (Lk 24:45-49). The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the impartation of this necessary power so that God's servants can carry out their calling. In effect, it is the moment when God "ordains" them. In the Old Testament prophets, priests and kings were ordained by having oil poured on their heads (1Ki 19:16; Ex 40:15; Ps 133:2; 1Sa 16:12, 13). When this symbolic action was performed God's Spirit came upon them. From that moment on they ministered with new power. Today, following His resurrection, Jesus Christ pours out an even greater "anointing" on those who enlist into His service.

## ■ Why Do We Need It?

In order to properly answer this question we must first make a very important observation: the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a work of the Holy Spirit distinct from and additional to His regenerating work in the "new birth." When someone repents, believes and confesses Jesus Christ there is an immediate infusion of the Spirit (Ro 8:9). He comes inside and joins Himself to our human spirit in a bond similar to the "one flesh" bond of a husband and wife (Mt 19:5, 6). In this way we become "living temples" (1Co 6:19) of God's presence (Jn 14:16, 17, 23). But this indwelling is not the same thing as the baptism with the Holy Spirit. A person may be saved so that he or she is prepared to go to heaven, but not yet baptized with the Holy Spirit so that he or she is empowered for God's service.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit should not be thought of as an optional gift which one may or may not wish to receive. Since it is God's way of

equipping believers for New Testament ministry, refusing it severely limits His ability to use us. Every child of God should consider it to be a solemn privilege to receive this gift. Without it we cannot properly function in the miraculous dimension He intends for us.

## ■ Who Can Receive It?

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter announced that God would give the baptism with the Holy Spirit to everyone who repents and openly confesses Jesus Christ, and he mentioned that children could receive this gift as well (Ac 2:38, 39). So each of us as Christians can be confident that God wants to give us this blessing. In fact, because we have been joined by faith to Christ we should think of it as something we have already been given "in potential" even though we may not have yet received it in our personal experience (Eph 1:3). Therefore everyone who belongs to Christ is already qualified to receive it. Like salvation, we don't earn it or deserve it, it is a gift.

**1. Be born again.** The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a gift God gives to those who are already born again. Therefore if we wish to receive it the first thing we must determine is our true standing with God. The problem is many people who go to church or consider themselves Christians have never really understood what God requires. So before trying to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit please read through the brochure, "How to be Born Again."

**2. Be water-baptized.** The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for the secret believer, but for those who openly serve Jesus as His disciples. God's appointed way of beginning our life as Christ's witness is water baptism. This is not to say water baptism is essential for salvation—it is not. But Jesus clearly expected all His followers to be water-baptized (Mt 28:19, 20). So, if you have not been water-baptized please arrange to do so as soon as possible. However, a person does not have to wait until he or she has been water-baptized to seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Ac 10:44-48).

**3. Draw near to God.** The power of God needs to be actively at work for a person to receive this gift, so worship until you strongly sense His presence.

**4. Realize you desperately need God's power.** Jesus said He would give the baptism with the Holy Spirit to those who "thirst" for it (Jn

7:37, 39). As long as we think we can succeed without this gift of power we are not going to have it. Only when we realize our utter need of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and long for it at any cost will it be ours.

**5. Prepare your heart.** Once you strongly sense His presence there are some matters of the heart that may need to be addressed:

a) Offer yourself to Him in complete surrender: Though you must have done this when you were born again it is the sort of attitude which tends to disintegrate over time. It's important to repeatedly check our hearts. Remember, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is intended for disciples who completely surrender their lives to serve Jesus Christ. God is calling us to Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered ministry so we must be able to say to Him, "Send me where You will, do with me what You will, use me as You will." If this is a fearful thought, remember you are putting yourself in the hands of His infinite wisdom and love (1Jn 4:16).

b) Freely confess any areas of sin which come to mind: Choose to renounce all forms of disobedience, letting the Holy Spirit and God's Word convict you of matters that need to be confessed. In some areas where there has been habitual failure, it would be good to confess that sin to a mature Christian (Jas 5:16).

c) Remove common hindrances: Some people receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit quite easily, but others may try repeatedly without success. Here is a short list of obstacles that hinder people from receiving. Remember to seek pastoral help with any of these if you need it. Once these are removed people often receive quickly:

- Previous teaching against the baptism with the Holy Spirit or speaking with tongues: Study the Bible and talk with a believer you respect about your concerns. Then at some point you will have to renounce the false elements in what you were taught.

- Unforgiveness: Nothing clogs the flow of the Holy Spirit like bitterness. It makes no difference whether or not you have a "right" to be bitter. Be totally honest with yourself. There may be people you've rejected so long it seems normal. Forgive them in your heart, but you may also need to take steps to reconcile (Mk 11:25; Mt 5:23, 24).