

Discipleship Groups — Level 4

WEEK 1

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Hello, everyone! And welcome to these next rounds of discipleship groups. Over the next weeks, and even in the next round of groups after this one, we are going to be looking at the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that He gives as a result of this baptism.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is different than baptism in water. Hebrews 6:2 talks about doctrines of baptisms! That is plural, meaning more than one! We are commanded to be baptized in water, which is baptism into Jesus Christ, but we are also to receive the baptism into the Holy Spirit and the power that is available to us as a result.

So, what is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? First of all, it is something Jesus Himself experienced. When Jesus was baptized in water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Jesus experienced the fullness and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in that moment! It is interesting to note that Jesus did not do any preaching or any miracles until the Holy Spirit had empowered him to do so. Throughout all of His miraculous ministry, Jesus did not do what He did because He was God; He did not draw on His divinity to perform miracles—He was a human like you and I are, and He drew off the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Secondly, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a promise to us. In John 14:12 Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same **works** I have done, and even **greater works**, because I am going to be with the Father.” How can we do the same works or greater works than Jesus? We aren't divine or God-made-flesh like Jesus was! Yet we are promised that we can do these same works because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus also said in Luke 11:13 that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire. In Acts 2:1-4, we see that this promise was fulfilled in Jesus sending the promise of the empowering work of the Holy Spirit to His disciples in a rather dramatic way, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church was born, and the disciples began to do the same miracles that Jesus did.

So, what does the baptism in the Holy Spirit do? This is easy—it is in this baptism, or this immersion into the Holy Spirit—that He gives us the same power that Jesus had to minister to other people and to serve His Church.

It's like plugging in a toaster—or any other appliance. The toaster works. The toaster has all the components necessary. There is nothing wrong with the toaster. But if the toaster is not plugged in, then it can't perform its function! It's no different with us. We are made in God's image, we have all the components necessary, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit is like plugging us into the power source! These miraculous, charismatic gifts—or “power gifts” as some call them—are precisely what we are going to be studying over the next weeks.

Now, a few things need to be said before we move on. First, these gifts of the Holy Spirit's empowerment do not make us “super Christians.” They do not make anyone better than anyone else. These gifts are available to all who ask, and these things are standard for any believer! If there are people who have not yet entered into this experience, they are no less a Christian than anyone else. Our salvation is not based on anything but the repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross and in the Resurrection. The gifts and work of the Holy Spirit are not for our salvation, nor are they for spiritual prowess or pride, but they are for serving others and building Jesus' Church.

Second, these gifts are not a replacement for discipleship. You can have the power of the Holy Spirit, and still decide to walk in the flesh. Functioning in the gifts of the Spirit is not a shortcut to godliness. Godliness is formed day by day as we choose to walk with the Lord and become more and more formed in His image. Functioning in the gifts of the Holy Spirit's power is one thing, but having the flesh of our sinful nature cut away is quite another. Being a growing disciple of Jesus and “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” is to go hand in hand with working in the power of His Spirit—one does not replace the other.

Following Jesus is a lifelong pursuit, and there is a tenacity of pressing further and further into His grace to receive all that God has for us. God certainly gives us great grace to follow Him, but Following Jesus also requires a response from us. There must be a desire to push further into His Kingdom; it requires us to follow hard after Him; it requires us to reach out and ask, and not sit on the sidelines as if we were unworthy second-class citizens undeserving of what He has promised to give us.

1 Corinthians 12:31 says to “earnestly desire the best gifts.” This “earnest desire” is a pursuit of all the good that God has to give. These are to be desired and sought after, because they are promised to us! We are not neglecting to seek the Lord, nor do we love Him less, but if we are commanded to “earnestly desire” these gifts, then as our love for God grows, so will our desire to lay hold of all His promises.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 tells us what these gifts are:

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of *all*: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by ☐the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

So, HOW do we receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit that empowers us to serve with these amazing gifts? Luke 11:9-13 is immensely instructive for us, “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

So, according to this verse, what is the promise? The promise is that the Father is going to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask! Let’s go further...

According to this verse, how do we receive this promise? We receive by asking!

How easy is that?! When you ask, you receive the Holy Spirit and all that He gives, and He is not going to give you anything different than what was promised. Some people are afraid that something strange will happen, as if God would give you the bait and switch of promising something, and giving you something different that is not of Him. In Matthew chapter seven, Jesus says something similar to Luke eleven, He says that if your child asks for bread, will you give him a rock? “Dad, I’m hungry!” “Well, chew on this, kid!” BAM!

This is ridiculous! Of course, we would never do this to our children, so why would God give us anything different than what we are asking Him for? We are not asking for anything unbiblical; we are asking for the very things that He promised He would give!

So, if we ask, we will receive, and if we receive, then we have everything the Holy Spirit gives us—including the gifts of His empowerment, which means that they are already there and available. So, start using them!

The most common manifestation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit we see in the Bible is speaking in other tongues, or, speaking in a “spiritual language.” This is not weird or strange; it is supernatural and it is a promise from Jesus Himself in Mark 16:17, “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues...”

In your small groups, take time to talk about this teaching, and then I want you to pray for each other. If you have never experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the leader of the group can give some instructions on receiving it. Remember, once you've asked, you have already received. Once you've received, you can start using those gifts! They are already there and available!