



The Nuts and Bolts of Ministering Spirit Baptism Part One

By: Tim Enloe

My wife, Rochelle, and I have traveled in teaching ministry for almost 15 years. Our emphasis is the Holy Spirit and His work, most specifically, leading people to understand and receive Spirit baptism. During these years, we have consistently encountered pastors who are personally discouraged with preaching or teaching on this subject — let alone actually praying with someone to receive the Baptism. On more than one occasion, even long-tenured senior pastors have confided that they have never successfully led someone into Spirit baptism.

The unfortunate but well-trodden path seems to follow a course like this. At some point, the minister addresses the subject with limited positive response. From that moment forward, this perceived lack of response dictates how the pastor views his or her own ability to minister on Spirit baptism. The next time the topic comes up, the minister often approaches it from a “spiritual risk management” perspective: “How can I talk about this without making those who don’t receive feel badly — and how can I get through this without feeling even more unproductive myself?” That person’s teaching on the Baptism begins to describe the experience as optional or, in some more unfortunate cases, as an unusual, atypical experience. It morphs from a basic step in Christian discipleship into a spiritual aftermarket accessory — or even the apologetic excuse for some people’s untimely outbursts in church services.

How can something that is supposed to increase the vitality and effectiveness of the church come to be viewed as a source of frustration — or even a liability? I believe that part of the problem is misconceptions. Just a few simple misunderstandings about Spirit baptism can actually eliminate this experience from the priorities of a minister and, therefore, the life of a church.

In our many conversations with pastors, the same simple misconceptions seem to surface. These misconceptions are what we’ll look at first. Then we’ll move on to the actual biblical process of ministering and receiving this gift — where we’ll encounter the “nuts and bolts.”

MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception #1: When

This first basic misconception greatly hinders ministering Spirit baptism and has to do with chronology. When should a believer seek to receive the Baptism? Isn’t it for the well-worn veteran? After all, something with so much potential baggage surely can’t be handled by a fragile new convert!

The church in America struggles with discipleship and assimilation. We want results similar to the Book of Acts, but we refuse to implement the clearly stated apostolic discipleship model. How can we expect Acts-like results when we reject Acts-like processes?

The two basic steps of apostolic discipleship in Acts are (1) water baptism and (2) Spirit baptism; then teaching and fellowship would follow. Jesus established this model; He told the newly born-again believers to put life on hold until they had received this gift (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8). The first Pentecostal outpouring was so strongly marked by this model that it affected the preaching of that day. Peter’s sermon thesis to the unbelievers was essentially: “If you want to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit, you need to get saved and baptized in water first” (Acts 2:38,39). We see the

Samaritan revival in Acts 8 and the Gentile revivals in Acts 10 and 19 following the same discipleship model.

The apostle Paul admits he was intentional in putting supernatural ministry before teaching because he didn't want the Corinthians' faith to rest on the wisdom of men, but rather on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:4,5). Paul went on to say that he did speak a message of wisdom (teaching), but it was to the mature—not to the beginner.

Why did they embrace such a seemingly volatile and risky model? The answer is simple. It was the same model under which they were discipled. Just ask Paul, whose life was altered following an epiphany on the Damascus interstate. Jesus prompted Ananias to begin Paul's discipleship the same way (Acts 9:17,18).

Please don't misunderstand me; I believe in teaching — after all, I am a teacher by calling. But I am convinced teaching finds a deeper resting place in the hearts of those who have spiritual experience.

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