

Venue Church Positions: Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We believe the need for the Holy Spirit's power and presence in a believer's life is as critical today as it was in the day of the Apostles. We do not teach a dispensational view of the Holy Spirit's power and the expression of gifts. Rather we hold the position, supported by Scripture, that the Holy Spirit's presence and power are for every believer until Jesus returns; if not, He would have told us so.

We recognize that the families and members of Venue Church come from varied and diverse backgrounds and denominations. As such, we extend the opportunity for people to grow in their understanding of the person and power of the Holy Spirit as well as their understanding of His work in their lives. Everyone at Venue is encouraged to seek the power, presence, and gifts of the Holy Spirit for themselves in a manner with which they are comfortable. No one will ever be forced to receive the Holy Spirit or any of His gifts, but all are taught the contemporary work of the Holy Spirit from Scripture and encouraged to grow in love and intimacy with God.

As we minister to individuals, we will use all the gifts available to us from God to see healing, deliverance, and freedom developed in a person's life. Public expressions of the gifts of the Spirit will be demonstrated in an orderly manner as directed by church leadership. Appropriate expression of a gift of the Holy Spirit in a corporate setting includes submission to pastoral authority and involves expression of the gifts with dignity and order so that it can be received by all.

Jesus promised His Church that they would receive a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit after Jesus' own death and resurrection. It is our view that God desires every Christian to experience this same encounter with the Holy Spirit's power. In Luke 11:13, Jesus explains that it is our heavenly Father's pleasure to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. Just like salvation, the Holy Spirit is a free gift from the Father which is received by faith.

Issues of Concern and Practice

Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, God extends His power and the blessing of His presence to all believers. Our role is to receive. This baptism is marked by an initial act of receiving and continues as a daily response of receiving what God has made available for our service and relationship with Him. Through this process of receiving, we choose to accept His good gifts and all His provision for our lives.

While we acknowledge that emotionalism has often been associated with expressions of the Holy Spirit and at times there has been failure in the Church (as a whole), to properly administrate the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, we do not think these are sufficient reasons to limit the work or expression of the Holy Spirit at Venue Church. The Pastors and Elders of Venue Church are committed to teach biblical truth and uphold a biblical standard of order in our corporate worship while at the same time allowing and encouraging an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit's work among us. We believe this is a better solution to past abuses and excesses in the Church related to the Holy Spirit and His gifts, and do not apologize about it. At Venue, there are opportunities to experience the different ways that God manifests His power as we seek Him and draw closer to Him. We encourage individuals to seek the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11. These gifts are not a reflection of spiritual maturity; they are a response of openness and faith to God. Spiritual maturity combines obedience, faith and character in a process that molds us into the likeness of God.

We believe the gift of tongues has a dual purpose as outlined in the Scriptures. When coupled with the gift of interpretation, it provides encouragement, comfort and exhortation to the congregation of believers. When used in prayer, it also provides personal edification for the believer and heavenly unction for prayer concerns that we lack words to adequately express (1 Corinthians 14). As a prayer force, it adds a new dimension to our partnership with God.

We believe a person receives the Holy Spirit when they receive Christ according to Ephesians 1:13. However, as demonstrated in numerous accounts throughout the New Testament, a believer must receive the Holy Spirit in a manner that accepts the full measure of His work in order for it to be

activated in his/her life. Many believers have been taught that the Holy Spirit's role in our day and time is to function as the seal of the promise of salvation. This teaching is true and right according to Scriptures, but it is only one aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in the believer's life. Receiving the Holy Spirit after conversion is based on an awareness that His role is more than was understood or explained at conversion. This act of receiving is accepting the broadened biblical role of the Holy Spirit by faith.

Major Points and Scriptural References

The following scriptures refer specifically to the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and are the basis from which we draw our position as stated below.

- Ephesians 1:13
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–11
- Luke 11:13
- Matthew 7:7–11
- John 1:32–33
- Acts 2:1–4

How Do You Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

You receive the Holy Spirit by faith based on the truth of Scripture and the desire of your heart to accept the promise of God for yourself. The acceptance of the promise of God's power is by faith—the same faith used to receive Christ as Savior. To receive the Holy Spirit, you simply approach God in an attitude of faith, because according to Luke 11:13, it is His good pleasure to give His Spirit to those who ask.

What Can You Expect?

You can expect things to be different in your life. As demonstrated in Scripture, when a person receives the Holy Spirit, there may be a manifestation associated with the encounter. Some become emotional or express a gift of the Holy Spirit such as tongues, while others notice a change in their insight on Scripture or boldness to witness. While manifestations are not required to receive the Holy Spirit, they are common.

What About the Gifts of the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit brings the experience of the life of Jesus into our lives. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are divided into three categories (1 Corinthians 12:7–11):

- Vocal Gifts—tongues, prophecy and the interpretation of tongues
- Knowledge Gifts—word of knowledge, word of wisdom and the discerning of spirits
- Power Gifts—healing, faith and miracles

The Apostle Paul encouraged us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:1. Although the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to every person who receives the Holy Spirit, they are only activated by faith. If you do not want to demonstrate a gift, God will not make you. If you desire His gifts but don't understand them completely, He may bypass your mind and give you a gift, but it will always be based on your desire.

Resources

- *Living the Spirit-Formed Life* by Jack Hayford
- *Part 10: Baptism of the Holy Spirit* by Lee Cummings of Radiant Church (*Foundations of Faith*)

Conclusion

God's purpose is for every one of His children to be filled with the same Holy Spirit that empowered Jesus' own life. We cannot reduce this experience to a simple formula. In fact, we are talking about the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. To receive, we simply go to our heavenly Father in an attitude of faith and ask. Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and He wants to fill His children. Through experiencing the nine gifts and the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, we can effectively share the love and power of Jesus Christ to many people. We can also find the power to overcome many temptations, trials, and tests in this life.