

How to Receive the

Baptism

in the

Holy Spirit



"...You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Acts 1:8

By Mark and Patti Virkler

How I Received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It started with a hunger: During my senior year of high school, my hunger to live the book of Acts was kindled by reading an extended novel on the life of Paul. I wanted to be like Paul. I wanted to do miracles, hear the voice of God and move in the anointing of God. But my church was telling me this lifestyle was no longer available to Christians today.

A year later, my Bible college professors assured me of the same thing. The age of miracles was past. My Greek professor even went so far as to make extensive use of class time to mock and ridicule “tongue speakers.” So I settled down and accepted the fact that the Church Age was a dispensation in which the power of God was not present to do great and mighty miracles.

This worked all right until my senior year of college. Patti, my new wife, had been trained as a teacher. Part of her final year was devoted to doing student teaching in an elementary school setting. The woman she taught under just happened to be a charismatic who was extremely wise. She never let on to me that she was a charismatic, but instead invited Patti and me over every little while for an evening meal with her and her family. There she told us stories - stories of how she and her family used to be quite sickly and had to go to the hospital every winter with a variety of illnesses. Then, a few years ago, she learned how to pray for them for healing and none of them had been sick for the last two or three years.

Well, of course, this didn't jive with any theology I had been taught, but what was I to do with it? It was a living story in a real person's life, and it happened. How could I say it didn't?

[The power of story: Even then, God had chosen to get through to me with a story, with an experience that would by-pass all my theological hang-ups. I was experiencing the power of story to affect one's life, even though it would take me another ten years to come into an understanding of the power of narrative theology (as contrasted to systematic theology).]

God's providence: I love God's providence. He always places in our path exactly what we are ready to receive, when we are ready to receive it. I call it "divine serendipity." Serendipity means a happy, chance encounter, and I have learned to expect God in these divine "chance" encounters of life. They come often to the prepared individual.

The chance encounter in this instance was God's leading me to a charismatic cassette lending library of perhaps 1300 teaching cassettes. There I found Derek Prince, a charismatic theologian, who could teach Hebrew and Greek on the graduate level and who had written his graduate thesis on logic.

Now tell me, isn't he perfectly suited to speak into the heart and mind of this left-brain thinker who had been trained in rational Christianity? Derek Prince was exactly what I needed. I listened to several hundred of his teaching cassettes, and through them I radically reversed my theology, realizing that God is still alive in the midst of His Church and still doing miracles and healings, and speaking and prophesying, and casting out demons, and doing everything He has always done throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. There was no need to dispensationalize the power of God away just because our culture believed in rationalism. The Bible could still stand, and our culture could be challenged by it - by those who would believe it was still so, and who would demonstrate in and through their lives that it was so.

I had both theological and experiential blockages that made it difficult for me to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues, and actually thwarted me for several years. Let's examine both and see how God resolved them and brought me into a wonderful new intimacy with Himself through the Holy Spirit.

Overcoming my theological blocks

1. *I was taught that speaking in tongues was for baby Christians.*

Well, that couldn't be true because Paul said, "I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all" (I Cor. 14:18), and obviously Paul was no baby Christian! To line up with my false belief, I would have had to rewrite that verse to say, "I am embarrassed to say that I am still speaking in tongues a lot, since I am an apostle, and am a recognized leader in the Church."

2. *I was taught that tongues disappeared when the Bible was canonized.* The verse used to prove this was, "...but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). The perfect thing that was coming could not have been referring to the Bible after all, because knowledge was also going to disappear when the perfect came (I Cor. 13:8) and I sure did not think that knowledge had left the planet – although some days I might wonder whether it has or not.

Paul goes on to describe what it will be like when the perfect comes. He says, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). The Bible is great but I do not think it is the face-to-face encounter Paul is referring to. The face-to-face encounter will come when Christ returns and we are caught up to meet Him in the sky and spend eternity with Him. As you are reading this booklet I have written, you are not having a face-to-face encounter with me. But if you come to my offices or my home and meet me, then we will be having a face-to-face encounter.

I decided that that which was perfect was Christ Himself at the second coming, and that it was still in the future. Thus, speaking in tongues and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are still for today.

3. *I was taught that tongues was a lesser gift and was to be despised.* God doesn't give any gifts worthy of my disdain; God only gives good gifts. So I repented of my contempt and began seeking Him for all He wanted to give to me.
4. *I was taught that love was better than tongues* (I Cor. 13). That is probably true, but where in the Bible does it say I can only have one of them? Can't I have them both?
5. *I was taught that tongues was not for everyone.* The Bible says, "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" (I Cor. 12:30). So you see, tongues is not for everyone. However, just two chapters later, Paul says that everyone does speak in tongues: "...each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue..." (I Cor. 14:26). If your Bible puts the word "or" between the various items in this list, it is mistaken, for in the Greek there is simply a list of items with no "or" anywhere in the list.

Consequently, we have a verse saying we don't all speak in tongues and a verse saying we do all speak in tongues. My understanding of the solution to this dilemma is that even though we can all speak in tongues in our own personal prayer lives, when we are in the public worship service, not all of us will speak in tongues dominating the church service. Only a few will speak in tongues, and they will need to be interpreted so that all may benefit.

6. *I was taught that you don't have to speak in tongues.* No, you don't *have* to. You *get* to, assuming you are hungry to receive all that God has for you.
7. *I was taught that tongues was disorderly and would confuse the non-believers who attended services with tongue speaking in them.* Well, guess what: The fastest growing segment of the Church today is that part which allows for the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their services. Approximately one-third of today's Christians are seeking the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Those hungering for spiritual reality and spirit encounter in the United States often have not found it in traditional churches and have gone to the New Age in their continuing quest. Cults are the unpaid bills of the Church.

One day, when I was complaining to God that a service I was attending seemed to be very disorderly, He spoke back to my heart and asked me: "How does one get drunk decently and in order?" (Acts 2:15). You know, I had never asked myself that question. Obviously when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2, it appeared to the natural mind to be so disorderly that they were believed to be drunk, but in God's eyes, it was fine. Perhaps I needed God's perspective on these things, not mine.

8. *I was taught that I had already received the Holy Spirit at salvation, and that **was** the baptism in the Holy Spirit.* While it is true that the Holy Spirit does indwell us at salvation (Rom. 8:9), the Bible teaches that in addition to this initial experience, we can be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5,8).

So I became a charismatic, theologically speaking. I became convinced in my mind and in my heart that the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29 NASB), and that we could operate the gifts of God in our lives today.

I began by seeking the most basic and supposedly easiest gift to operate, the gift of speaking in tongues. I was comfortable with the belief that this gift could be a sign that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, something for which I now hungered. (Patti had been baptized in the Holy Spirit several years earlier, but was wise enough to keep it to herself, as she knew sharing it with me would only cause me to look down on her and try to talk her out of her “false experience.”)

Now I began to seek God for a supernatural manifestation of His power through my life, specifically through my mouth. I went to a charismatic prayer meeting and received prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues. I received the prayer, but I didn't feel anything and I didn't begin speaking in tongues. That was disappointing, because I had fasted all day and really had high expectations that something special was going to happen to me that night.

I drove home, frustrated that God had not made Himself real to me through the gift of speaking in tongues, but I didn't give up. For months I studied, read, and prayed concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues. Even though I sought it earnestly, nothing seemed to happen. I would pray for the gift of tongues, and then let my tongue hang loose and ask the Holy Spirit to move it around and give me the gift of tongues, but nothing would happen.

Finally - the gift of tongues: One Sunday morning I was too sick to attend church, so I was sitting alone in our small trailer in a rocking chair, re-evaluating everything I knew about speaking in tongues and wondering what I was doing wrong that was keeping me from experiencing it.

Hunger, divine revelation and growing faith in my heart brought me to a number of spiritual convictions (not just conceptual ideas):

1. I know that God wants me to speak in tongues (I Cor. 14:5).
2. I know that when I ask for the Spirit, God will not give me a serpent but He will give me what I have asked for (Matt. 7:7-11; Lk. 11:9-13).
3. I know that when I ask anything according to His will He hears me and I have that which I have asked of Him (I Jn. 5:14,15).
4. And now for the amazing piece - I know that in any miracle, there is a part God plays and a part I play. When Peter walked on the water, Jesus said, "Come" and kept Peter's feet afloat, but *it was Peter who was doing the walking!*

What God showed me that morning in the rocking chair was that in the miracle of speaking in tongues there was a part He would play and there was a part I must play. The two parts are recorded in Acts 2: 4: "**They spoke**" and "**the Spirit gave** the utterance." The part I must play is that I must be willing to speak, while choosing not to speak in English, my native language. Instead, I must let the Spirit within me form the syllables. I choose to articulate sounds, but I choose not to consciously form the syllables. I leave that to the Holy Spirit Who indwells me.

So, with a step of faith, birthed in revelation knowledge of the truths above which the Holy Spirit had been burning into my heart over a number of months, I prayed once again and asked God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues. In an act of obedience to God's Word revealed to me by the Spirit, I began to speak, without consciously choosing the syllables. Sure enough, I was speaking something. But what? I received two answers to that question. My rational brain skeptically evaluated each syllable and told me I was speaking gibberish. My heart chose to believe and said this had to be tongues. I chose to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit within me.

Being at a point where I desperately wanted intimacy with God and to experience His power, I decided to press on unreservedly for the next couple of weeks, doing the same experiment over and over. I found that when I let my rational mind evaluate the experience of

tongue speaking, it would tend to grind the whole process to a halt. It would evaluate each syllable coming out of my mouth and say, “That is stupid. That is not a language. That doesn’t edify me.” I had to remind my rational mind of several facts: First, *all* languages it doesn’t understand sound stupid to it, and it probably couldn’t recognize another language if it had to. In addition, the Bible is clear that speaking in tongues is not to edify my *mind*, but rather to edify my *spirit* (I Cor. 14:1-4,14).

So I told my left-brain to do something constructive and to think thoughts of praise and worship while I was speaking in tongues. This helped a lot, because now my brain was cooperating with my heart in worship unto the King, rather than pulling against it. And the flow of tongue speaking began to enlarge and come much more freely in my life. However, my fears and rational skepticism kept me from praying in tongues in a public setting for an entire year. Talk about being locked up in doubt and rationalism! I was surely handicapped, spiritually speaking. Seeing my bondage to rationalism should help you see why I am so against it today. Rationalism held me back from God for many years. My passion is that its power be broken in our culture so that people can freely experience God on a spirit-to-Spirit level.

The first time I spoke in tongues publicly was at the close of a home cell meeting. We had just prayed for an individual, ministering deliverance from several demons, and the group was worshipping together. As we worshipped softly and gently, I worshipped a bit in tongues. I “happened” to be taking a girl home afterward who had spent time in South America and who knew Portuguese. She mentioned that she had overheard me as I was praying in tongues that night, and, in Portuguese, I was saying, “Hooray! Long live Jesus!”

I was astounded. I had never considered the possibility that someone would hear me speak in tongues and recognize it as a foreign language that could be translated. Wasn’t God good to me? Knowing the rational doubts I had grown up with and needed to overcome, He graciously gave me this startling confirmation that, yes, these babbling syllables which I was speaking from the flow of the Holy Spirit in my heart were indeed more than baby talk. They were a foreign language that could be understood and translated.

Introducing the Principles of Faith and Flow: What had I learned as I had pressed into the Spirit world, discovering how to yield myself to God so that He could speak through me in tongues? I had applied two foundational principles to my life: the Principle of Faith and the Principle of Flow. I was using them together, purposefully, for the first time in my life.

1. The Principle of Faith

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6)

2. The Principle of Flow

“He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...” (Jn. 7: 38,39)

3. The “Faith in Flow” Principle

The gifts of the Holy Spirit operate through the one who, in faith, yields his outer faculties to the control of the river of God within him.

- or condensed to -

In faith, yield your outer faculties to flow.

For example:

- ❖ The mind yielded to the flow of the Holy Spirit = anointed reasoning, word of wisdom, word of knowledge
- ❖ The mouth yielded to the flow of the Holy Spirit = tongues, interpretation, prophecy, persuasiveness of speech
- ❖ The heart yielded to the flow of the Holy Spirit = God’s voice, distinguishing of spirits, faith, peace, unrest
- ❖ The hands yielded to the flow of the Holy Spirit = miracles, healing
- ❖ The eyes yielded to the flow of the Holy Spirit = dream, vision, divine perspective

An Introduction to the Principle of Faith: Hebrews 11:6 says that it is impossible to please God unless I choose to believe that He is and that He will reward me when I diligently seek Him. So **the thing that gives God pleasure is my choosing to believe Him** - that He is here with me and that He does love and guide and protect and deliver and interact with me. For so many years I had not given God this pleasure of believing in Him, because my belief in dispensationalism and rational theology had removed God's immediacy from my life. Now, finally, I could begin giving Him pleasure by believing that He is and that He would reward me as I sought Him.

Actually it is **God's faith** (Mk. 11:22 – in the Greek) that is born in our hungry searching hearts, not our faith. The Bible says that faith comes by hearing and hearing a word (the Greek is *rhema* meaning “spoken word”) from Christ (Rom. 10:17). This verse is referring to the fact that faith is born in your heart **when God speaks** into your heart by revelation knowledge. The result of this revelation (in the context of the baptism of the Holy Spirit), is that **you know** with a spiritual confidence, a heartfelt assurance and a divine certainty that you **should** receive the gift of tongues, and that you **could** receive the gift of tongues, and that you **will** receive the gift of tongues when you ask for it from a good God and speak forth in faith.

Pray for God to pour revelation into your heart. Ask God to give you spiritual understanding of the verses that deal with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues. Then prayerfully meditate on them. Also ask Him to impart the gift of faith for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of speaking in tongues into your heart. Then step out of the boat in faith, believing God will meet you with a divine miracle.

An Introduction to the Principle of Flow: In John 7:38,39, Jesus defines the Holy Spirit within us as a river that we experience as “flow.” I had never honored the flow within me. I had never had a course on flow, or weighed or considered the theological implications of flow. In the course I took in college on systematic theology, we did not cover flow as one of the doctrines. I missed the concept of flow completely, until 1979 when God taught me that “flow” or “spontaneity,” as I have come to call it, is the way we experience the river of God within us, and is one of the four keys which I needed to learn in order to begin clearly hearing His voice within my heart.

When I speak in tongues, I speak, but I do not consciously guide the formation of the syllables. I tune to flow and speak syllables which are not consciously formed by my mind, but which come spontaneously according to the dictates of the flow of the Holy Spirit within me. Syllables just flow out of my mouth. I speak in simple childlike faith. A spiritual conviction grows that this flow of syllables is coming from the river of the Holy Spirit within me. God's grace moves directly upon my heart, imparting divine faith without which it is impossible to receive anything from Him (Jas. 1:6,7)

Since grade school, high school and college taught me to scorn flow, I had a hard time honoring and believing in and operating the gift of tongues during those first months. By God's grace, I have gradually come to the point where I know that flow is the Holy Spirit within me, and my current confession is, "I honor flow, for it is the river of the Spirit of God within my heart." I encourage you to affirm these same beliefs and make this your own confession. Confess it now, several times.

It doesn't hurt to also repent of your sin by saying, "I repent of my belief that flow is nothing and that it is to be disdained and set aside. I turn from that belief and I confess the truths of God's Word that the river of God flows within me, and that when I fix my eyes on Jesus and tune to flow, the stream of thoughts and pictures I receive is coming from the indwelling Spirit of God." Make this your prayer and your confession, and let it set you free from the god of rationalism that has controlled the western world for the last 500 years.

Twenty-three years of experience before being able to clearly define the principle: Unfortunately, I was not able to state or fully understand this principle of Faith in Flow at the time I first used it for speaking in tongues in 1975. It would take 23 more years before I would be able to put it down on paper and grasp its universal application to the operation of the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, for this same principle of Faith in Flow is what is used to operate all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Oral Roberts has taught this "Faith in Flow" principle for years, encouraging people to first pray in tongues and then pray in English. He believes that the English that you pray is the interpretation of the tongues. I would say that if, when you switch from tongues

to English, you continue to speak out of the flow which has been established within as you speak in tongues, then the English will be the interpretation of the tongues, and thus equivalent to prophecy.

Take a few minutes to ponder what has been said, for you *can* press in and learn to operate the gifts of the Holy Spirit if you will but yield your outer faculties to the river of God within you. Once God gives you revelation concerning this, you will begin operating in the supernatural. Don't put it off. Stop and ponder and meditate and receive this revelation. Your life will go on whether you operate in this revelation or not. But, if you will receive it and live in it, you will be a supernatural manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in the world today. If you don't, you will be a manifestation of yourself. The world needs Christ much more than it needs you.

Some theological understandings of what happens when you receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit

I understand the following three phrases to be interchangeable: baptism **in** the Holy Spirit, baptism **with** the Holy Spirit, and baptism **by** the Holy Spirit. "In," "with" and "by" are all acceptable translations of the Greek preposition *en*.

In this experience, several things are happening. First, it seems evident that you are also filled with the Holy Spirit at the same time that you are baptized in the Holy Spirit. This was true in Acts two. Acts 1:5 declares that they would be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit, and when it happened in Acts 2:1-4, it states that they were *filled* with the Holy Spirit. I believe that when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit, you are at the same time filled with the Spirit. Now, this filling can and should happen numerous times in your life, whereas you are only baptized in the Holy Spirit once. Note that the same group of people that were filled in Acts 2:4 were filled again in Acts 4:31. However, it is not recorded that they were ever baptized again in the Holy Spirit.

Following are all the references in the Bible to being **filled** with the Holy Spirit:

Exodus 31:3-5; 35:31-35; Deuteronomy 34:9; Micah 3:8; Luke 1:15,16,41,42,67; Acts 2:4; 4:8-12,31; 9:17,18; 13:9,10,52; Ephesians 5:18-21.