

## The Baptism in the Holy Spirit, part 1 of 2—

# The Importance of the Altar

by Dick Gruber

Children's Pastor at Bloomington Assembly of God, Bloomington, Minnesota

**W**hen addressing the subject of how to pray and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we must begin with some basic methods in giving altar calls to children. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me..."

He did not say, "drag, coerce, push, force, threaten, or brow beat them to come to me." Throughout American Pentecostal history, altar calls for and with children have included many different styles, uses, and sad to say, abuses. I have witnessed people holding children down until they received. At one camp, an adult was shaking a child by the shoulders and demanding that the child receive. I have even heard an altar worker encouraging children to repeat phrases in order to be filled with the Spirit.

I have also experienced the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit filling children to overflowing. In our church boys and girls use ministry gifts as they pray with other children. I have participated in many prayer services where children have been saved, healed, and delivered at altars.

## The Altar Call

The altar call/service should be a positive experience for children, especially when that altar call deals with the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Workers must be sensitive

to God's leading and encourage children to pray one for another. Physical contact should be limited to a hand on the shoulder, head, or back. When appropriate, a hug may be given to a child. Cry with the children. Laugh with them. Above all, enjoy the presence of God with them at the altar.

We encourage boys to pray with boys and girls with girls. In



the mid-to upper-elementary ages, more distraction is evident when children pray for those of the opposite sex. Nothing should be allowed to distract children from meeting with God and receiving all that He has for them.

The leader giving the altar call must speak with confident authority. God has placed him/her in the service or classroom for such a time as this.

Many times an altar call is referred to as the "invitation." Think of it as an invitation and you will stay away from improper attitudes, actions, or words. A loving, Christ-like calling out of those wanting to respond will reap great results.

I often encourage every child to spend a little time with Jesus. Children are directed to find a place to pray at their chairs or at the altar area. What a blessing to see children turn and kneel to pray. You will look forward with anticipation to the experience in children's church of joyfully praying with boys and girls at the altar.

## Initial Evidence

Before I give some pointers specific to praying with children to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, let's establish one thing. Speaking with other tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Other evidences may occur, such as a rushing mighty wind, prophecies, visions, crying, laughing, and tears. Many boys and girls have cried their eyes out only to receive the baptism after they have calmed down. I know that a child has been filled to overflowing with God's Holy Spirit as that child begins to speak in another tongue as the Spirit enables him to do so.

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**Questions For Further Study—**

1. List four ways that you can make the altar call a positive experience for children.

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2)

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2. Why should an altar call be thought of as an “invitation”?