



Do Children NEED Holy Spirit Baptism?

Written by Kathy Creasy

"We have failed to cultivate the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit in both corporate and individual existence. We have not born witness to the dynamic, activating experience of Spirit baptism to our children..."

This is one of several confessions made by the Commission on Discipleship of the Empower 21 movement. This confession supports a suspicion that the passionate desire for Holy Spirit baptism and Spirit-filled living is waning among some who claim to be Pentecostal. In congregations where this is true children may not witness individuals seeking for Holy Spirit baptism, exercising the gifts of the Spirit in corporate worship, or testifying of miraculous healings and life transformations.

Regardless of the passivity of Pentecostal believers in pursuing Holy Spirit baptism and Holy Spirit fullness in their lives, God has promised that the outpouring (baptism and fullness) of the Holy Spirit is for children and whomever the Lord calls. In Acts 2:37, 38 Peter, immediately after experiencing Holy Spirit baptism, declares, "...you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Luke's narrative of Jesus' birth further verifies that Holy Spirit baptism and the full blessings of Spirit-filled living are not just for adults. Luke begins his story with the angel's visit to Zacharias as he burns incense in the temple of the Lord. Even though Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth are childless and very old, the angel tells him that they will soon have a son. That son will be named John. The angel then prophesies that John will be "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

When Zacharias returned home Elizabeth became pregnant. Her cousin Mary soon came to visit. The moment Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby John leaped in his mother's womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth spoke of the unborn babe's response in her prophetic words to Mary, "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy," Luke 1:45. Leaping for joy in his mother's womb was John's first response to the Son of God. It was his first act of ministry. As an infant in the womb he did not purpose to leap nor did he have knowledge of what his action generated. But this movement had a special significance. He leaped because the Holy Spirit moved him to leap.

God intends that children experience Holy Spirit baptism and Spirit-filled living. It is not a superfluous gift. It is a necessity. Children need what the Holy Spirit supernaturally provides.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children,” Romans 8:16, NIV.

Holy Spirit baptism verifies the presence of God in the life of a child. Through the work of the Holy Spirit the child experiences the joy of God with her. He feels the presence of God. He senses God’s affirming love. She freely responds with Spirit-initiated thanksgiving and praise. (Just as John leaped with joy in His mother’s womb at the recognition of the Messiah.)

My mother received Holy Spirit baptism at a late night prayer meeting when she was only ten years old. Early the next morning she was bringing the cattle back to the barn on horseback. She shares, “As I rode over the hill and saw the early morning sun glistening on the snow the Holy Spirit began to move within me. All the way back to the barn I praised God for giving me His Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit brought awareness of His presence to John in his mother’s womb and to my mother when she was only ten years old. The Holy Spirit initiated John’s response. He leaped with joy. The Holy Spirit initiated mother’s response—praise and thanksgiving to God. How much our children NEED this Spirit-initiated awareness and response to God’s indwelling! This awareness of God’s loving presence will sustain, protect, guide, and empower. The Spirit-initiated responses of praise and worship will fill our children with deep desire, joy, and confidence. This Spirit-initiated intimacy will forever bind the hearts of our children to their loving heavenly Father.

BOLD DISCERNMENT

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth,” John 16:13, NIV.

Consider the many different influences in the lives of children—family, peers, education, media, culture, religion, government and more. Everyday our children hear messages that are not aligned with the truths of who God is, what God does, and what God says. Without discernment our children are susceptible to these influences. For example several years ago two teens testified that the idea to plan and carry out two sniper-style shootings came from playing “Grand Theft Auto,” a video game rated “M” for mature audiences. Rather than being influenced or guided by truth, their actions were influenced (at least partially) by the violent content of a video game.

Discernment is the ability to distinguish truth from error and act on truth. While discernment can be taught, the discernment that is initiated within Spirit-filled children is supernatural and powerful. This discernment will protect children from evil. It will make

them aware of deception. It will enable them to discern good from evil and God's will versus self will. Holy Spirit baptism will enable children to hear and respond in obedience to the guidance only the Spirit of truth can give. Discernment initiated by the Holy Spirit will give our children boldness to confront deception, sin, and evil. How much our children NEED the Holy Spirit's discernment in their lives!

EMPOWERED MINISTRY

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" Acts 1:8.

Immediately after the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples in the upper room Peter boldly declares the gospel to men from every nation. Through his witness more than three thousand were added to the number of believers that day. The church continued to grow as the Holy Spirit was manifested through bold declaration and signs and wonders.

Believing children still need the Holy Spirit's power that enables them to be bold witnesses and exercise their spiritual gifts and callings with divine authority. Our younger son experienced Holy Spirit baptism when he was eleven years old. He came to the breakfast table quite frustrated. When asked why he said, "God told me that He wants me to filled with the Holy Spirit today." His frustration was that he didn't know how to receive Holy Spirit baptism. After a brief explanation our family began praising God. In just a few minutes our son received the baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced with speaking in a heavenly language. Immediately he led our family through every room of our new house praying for God's presence and rule. It was in those moments after our son received the baptism of the Holy Spirit that a call to intercession and spiritual warfare was birthed and affirmed within him. As a youth he continued to grow in sensitivity to the Spirit and in compassionate ministry to others. As a young adult he established an intercession and worship ministry where salvation and life transformation occurred continuously.

Many Christians never become engaged in kingdom work. They never seek to know their spiritual gifts or understand the purposes for which God called them to salvation. Some will serve out of duty. Some will follow the example of parents or other admired Christians. However, children who experience baptism in the Holy Spirit have a Spirit-initiated awareness of calling, gifting, and empowerment. God has always used children in ministry and He still uses them today. How much our children NEED to experience divine calling and empowerment to serve that is initiated through Holy Spirit baptism!

While the desire for Holy Spirit baptism and Spirit-led living may be waning among Pentecostals, Holy Spirit baptism continues to be available to children—all children. And how much they NEED Holy Spirit baptism to fully experience the intimate communion with their heavenly Father, to exercise Holy Spirit discernment that allows them to live holy lives, and to minister from a Spirit-initiated consciousness of divine calling and empowerment.