

Back to the Altar

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

May 30–June 5, 2025



Preparing for Pentecost

by Mark Finley



Years ago, early in my ministry, I was invited to conduct a Week of Spiritual Emphasis at a Christian elementary school. As the week progressed, it became obvious to me that two of the teachers were having a serious conflict. Their negative attitudes toward one another regularly boiled over in staff meetings. If one suggested an idea, the other opposed it. When both of them were present in a meeting, tension filled the air. It was apparent that they did not like one another at all.

Toward the end of the week, I preached on Christ's great intercessory prayer in John 17. Jesus was about ready to leave His disciples. Soon He would be betrayed and crucified. He would rise from the grave and ascend to His Father. His earnest prayer reflects what was on His heart. It reveals what was on His mind just before His death on the cross. The Savior was concerned about the unity of the church. He prayed, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me" (John 17:21). Christ longed that the dissension, jealousy, striving for supremacy, and conflict between His disciples cease. He prayed that their unity, in spite of all their differences, would reveal to the world the power of His love.

As I shared the longing of Jesus' heart with these students and teachers, something remarkable happened. The last night of our Week of Spiritual Emphasis, we scheduled a foot washing and Communion service. The Holy Spirit broke through. God moved powerfully.

The two teachers who experienced such division knelt at each other's feet. The Spirit of God broke down the barriers. They embraced, confessed their negative attitudes and prayed together.

The disciples experienced this same sweet repentance and humility during the 10 days in the upper room that preceded Pentecost. During those ten days, the disciples confessed their petty differences toward one another. They repented of their jealousy and pride. And their hearts were filled with love for Christ who had given His all for them. How they wished they could live the last three and a half years over again!

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever wished that you could go back and correct your past mistakes?

When we see God's loving-kindness and observe the righteousness of His character, we recognize our weakness, shortcomings, and sins. In the blazing light of His

unconditional love and perfection, our hearts are humbled. We are led to deep confession and repentance. We cry out to Him for the salvation and righteousness that only He can provide. When we are overwhelmed with His holiness, with the prophet Isaiah, we cry out, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isa. 6:5). Self-examination may not always be the most pleasant experience, but it is absolutely necessary. In self-examination we ask God, “Is there anything in my life that is not in harmony with Your will?” We pray, “Lord, reveal those attitudes deep within my soul that are not like Jesus.”

God’s goal in this process is to lead us closer to Him. He does not want us to wallow in guilt or be filled with remorse over our past lives. His goal is to lead us “in the way everlasting.”

Although it is healthy to take a candid look at our own spiritual lives, it is unhealthy to dwell on the faults of our past lives. Dwelling on our faults and focusing too long on our mistakes only discourages us.

Always remember, our Lord is bigger than our mistakes and greater than our failures. We certainly need to honestly know our condition—but it is much more important to know His grace. Understanding our weakness prepares us to receive His strength. Understanding our sinfulness prepares us to receive His righteousness. Understanding our ignorance prepares us to receive His wisdom.

Ellen White writes, “There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out his Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation” (*Review & Herald*, March 22, 1887, par. 7).

The purpose of the Holy Spirit’s conviction is to lead us to Jesus. As we recognize our sins and mistakes through a process of self-examination, we can thank God that the Holy Spirit is leading us closer to Jesus, and as a result to each other. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is preparing us to receive the fullness of the Spirit in latter-day power. But before God makes us, He must break us. Before He fills us, He must empty us. Before He is enthroned in our hearts, self must be dethroned.

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Holy Spirit Baptism

Welcome to another lesson in the **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** revival series!

In the last several sessions we’ve been going deeper into what it means to discover Jesus in His Word, how to hide God’s Word in our hearts, and how to put the Word before the World. We’ve learned practical steps to memorizing Scripture and limiting distractions, primarily digital distractions.

God's Word in our hearts, and how to put the Word before the World. We've learned practical steps to memorizing Scripture and limiting distractions, primarily digital distractions.

Have you put into practice the things you've been learning? Share with a friend a verse you've memorized or share with them how you are seeking to change your digital usage habits. Every time we give expression to our new spiritual goals, it helps us grow stronger.

Now it's time to introduce **Back to the Altar Principle #4** – Asking for and Receiving a Fresh Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

When we talk about receiving a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit this isn't just about what we get. Instead, it's about the Holy Spirit getting more and more of us. As He has more of us, He is freer to work powerfully in our lives because we aren't getting in the way. Perhaps this is why Paul commanded the believers to be constantly filled with the Spirit.

Have we as a people sometimes been so consumed by all our ideas, plans, and programs that we have forgotten our need for a daily Holy Spirit baptism and filling?

Author Dennis Smith once wrote: "I have nothing against plans, programs and methods. But I am afraid that we often

depend on these things to move God's work forward. Plans, programs and methods will not complete God's work. Great speakers, wonderful Christian concerts, satellite broadcasts won't end God's work. God's Spirit will end the work—God's Spirit that speaks and serves through Spirit-filled men and women" (*40 Days—Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming*, p. 88).

Heart Connect Activity: Pause for a moment and think about things in your life that are better when they are completely filled. Take five minutes and write down as many things as you can think of that fit this description. If you have a friend nearby, grab a pen and a sheet of paper and do this exercise together.

Read/Reflect on Matthew 3:11, 16 and Luke 4:1: Then answer the following questions.

- What is baptism by water and baptism by fire?
- What practical example did Jesus give for us to follow?
- As believers today, would you say we are filled by the Holy Spirit? Why or why not, and what is the evidence to support your response? (*Journal your thoughts or discuss with a friend.*)

Ellen White writes soberly: "If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered

Supplemental Material to Take This Series Deeper

VIDEOS

Elijah Calls for Fire

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID1>

Are You Thirsty for More?

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID2>

True Repentance

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID3>

Are You an Empty or Full Glass?

<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID4>

in infinite plenitude. Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50, underline added for emphasis).

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 18 as we return to Mount Carmel, where we last saw Elijah. What powerful lessons about the effects of Holy Spirit fire does God have for us in this story?

- **Play Video 1** – Elijah Calls for Fire - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID1>

As we saw in this story, when fire fell from heaven, there was nothing left that Elijah had touched. Everything was consumed. Nobody could give any glory to Elijah. All they could say is, "The Lord He is God, The Lord He is God."

Personal Reflection Questions: Is there anything about your life, your home, or your ministry that is focused on bringing attention or glory to yourself, or is your life so consumed and filled by the Holy Spirit that all glory is going directly to God? Finally, how does your current filling (or lack of Holy Spirit filling) affect your ability to lead your family in meaningful worship?

The reality remains that we cannot give what we do not first have ourselves. If we want to pour into the lives of others, we need the Holy Spirit fire to pour into our life and consume the self within our own hearts.

Ask for and Receive a Fresh Baptism of the Holy Spirit – Bible Study

In this session we will explore what it means to ask for and receive the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. But first, let's pray!

Dear Father in heaven, bring us a hunger and thirst for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Please send the Holy Spirit to teach us about this Gift right now. In Jesus' name, amen.

1. Five Steps to Receiving a Fresh Daily Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Let's open our Bibles and discover five specific steps to being daily baptized by the Holy Spirit. We will let Pastor Don help us with Step 1.

Open your Bible to John 7:37-39 as you watch the following video. Be listening for the three-part answer for Step 1.

- **Play Video 2** – Are you Thirsty for More? - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID2>

What is your answer to Pastor Don's question? Are you thirsty for more? If so, you are on the right path because God promises to pour out His Holy Spirit on those who are thirsty.

Based on what we just learned in John 7:37-39, what makes up the three-parts for Step 1? Fill in the blank below or write your answer on a sheet of paper.

- **Step 1** _____, _____, _____

Read/Reflect on Acts 2:38 - What two steps do you find in this passage?

- **Step 2** _____
- **Step 3** _____

Read/Reflect on Acts 5:32 - What very significant step do you find in this passage?

- **Step 4** _____

Read/Reflect on Luke 11:13 - What are you to do, if you long for the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

- **Step 5** _____

Did you discover the five steps? If you aren't quite sure, the answers are as follows:

Step 1 Answer: Come to Jesus with thirst, drink of His Word, and believe in Him.

Step 2 Answer: Repent

Step 3 Answer: Be baptized with water, in the name of Jesus

Step 4 Answer: Obey God

Step 5 Answer: Ask God for this Gift!

2. The Result of a Daily Holy Spirit Baptism

What happens when we repent from our old ways and truly seek after Jesus with all of our heart? What changes will others see in our lives? Let's watch this video illustration to find out.

- **Play Video 3** – True Repentance and the Fruit and Power of the Spirit –
<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID3>

As we saw in these illustrations, revival *and reformation* will be the result of a genuine Holy Spirit filling. When the Holy Spirit lives within you, Holy Spirit fruit will be seen in your life, just as it was seen in Jesus' life.

Let's reflect a bit more on what Holy Spirit fruit will look like in the life of a believer.

Read/Reflect on Galatians 5:22-25 - What is the fruit of the Spirit? What does it mean to live and walk in the Spirit?

In *Christ's Object Lessons*, we have the following description of Jesus while He was on earth:

“Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. *Daily* He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit” (Ellen G. White, p. 139, emphasis added).

Oh, how our hearts should be moved to know that Jesus Himself received a daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. Since He needed this Gift, how much more do we need this Gift every moment of our lives?

To help make this very practical and meaningful, let's watch one more video illustration from Pastor Don and his young helpers. We encourage you to learn how to share this illustration with others.

- **Play Video 4** – Are you an empty glass or a full glass? – <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID4>

Friend, are you thirsty for more than just a little bit of the Holy Spirit? Are you thirsty for more than just a little sprinkling? Are you thirsty to be completely immersed and overflowing with Holy Spirit power, so there's nothing left in your heart, in your mind, in your thinking, in your attitude, that's not under the presence and transformational power of the Holy Spirit?

Remember, what is in our glass is what will come out. If the Holy Spirit is overflowing our heart and life, others will get wet from that sweet overflow. There will not be a mixture of bad with good. There will be no double standards or double living even in our private life.

Read/Reflect on John 4:14 and James 3:11-12 - If there is a double standard or any double living going on in your life, James 4:8 has the solution. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

If it is your desire to experience a daily Holy Spirit baptism and you want to let go of anything that's hindering God's work in your life, take some time right now to reflect on what you've learned in this lesson. Read Psalm 139:23-24 as you ask God to search your heart and show you what might be hindering your receiving this Holy Spirit filling. Ask God to give you the power to live for Him. After you've done this, pray through the five steps that we've studied and ask God again for this precious gift! Do whatever He asks you to do.

"Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you' " (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 147).

Remember, we don't ask God for this gift once. We need to pray for a fresh Holy Spirit baptism every day, for the rest of our lives.

When you've asked for the Holy Spirit baptism, receive it by faith, even if you don't feel any different. Receiving the Holy Spirit baptism is not about experiencing fireworks or special sensations or feelings. It's about a changed heart and a changed life. It's about yielding yourself to Jesus and living each day for God's glory!

3. Personal Practical Application

As you go through this coming week, here are three practical heart challenges:

- **1st Challenge:** Every day ask for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. Receive this Gift by faith. Honor Jesus as Lord by doing whatever He asks you to do.
- **2nd Challenge:** Keep claiming James 4:8 as you pray that God will cleanse your heart of any hypocrisy or double standards. Remember the Holy Spirit comes to those who are seeking to obey and honor God and His Word.
- **3rd Challenge:** If you have not been baptized yet, take this step and follow the example of Jesus in baptism by immersion, as outlined in Scripture. You don't just want a sprinkling of the Holy Spirit. You want the full deal!

You are invited to join the General Conference weekly Back to the Altar revival on Zoom that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

Bonus Material

Here's some additional resources to take you deeper in understanding the Holy Spirit, or help you review what we've learned.

- **Play Video 5:** Holy Spirit Review + Pastor Don's Testimony – <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID5>

There is increasing confusion over the necessity, nature, and person of the Holy Spirit. We recommend the below two-part video series by Dr. Frank Hasel. These are powerful and inspiring messages. There's no need for confusion.

- **The Amazing Work of the Holy Spirit** – Video by Frank Hasel
<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID6>
- **The Personal Nature of the Holy Spirit** – Video by Frank Hasel –
<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW9VID7>

“Will we wrestle with God in prayer? Will we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? This is what we need and may have at this time.... If we will walk humbly with God, God will walk with us” (Ellen G. White, *Prayer*, p. 87).

Prayer Focus

For May 30-June 5, 2025



Promises to Claim as You Pray

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Luke 11:13

"We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit." Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 507, 508

"Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

Zech. 10:1

Prayer Focus for Week 9

1. Dear Heavenly Father, help us recognize our great spiritual need and put aside any double standards. Help us recognize that apart from You, we can do nothing, but through Your Holy Spirit we can be overcomers. (Claim Ps. 51:10-11)
2. Precious Jesus, as we enjoy the Sabbath hours, baptize us afresh with Your Holy Spirit, and may this Sabbath be so full of Your Holy Spirit outpouring in our lives that everyone around us will be affected as well. (Claim Acts 1:8)
3. Dear Lord, help us not be content with the Holy Spirit filling we've had up to this point, but help us to continually dare to ask for more, because MORE is what you've promised. (Claim Eph. 3:20-21)
4. Heavenly Father, there's many details that need to come together as we prepare for the General Conference session. Please baptize us and baptize our leaders afresh with the Holy Spirit. Be Lord of all the details. (Claim Matthew 8:19-20)
5. Heavenly Father, bless the General Conference business sessions. Pour out Your Holy Spirit in every meeting. May much be accomplished for Your glory! (Claim Jer. 1:5)
6. Dear Jesus, bless all the divine appointments that will happen in the Exhibit Hall. Also pour out Your Spirit on the Back to the Altar revival sessions that will happen in the prayer room. May the entire General Conference session be touched by the many prayers that are even now being prayed. (Claim Jer. 33:3)
7. Lord, for those still wavering in the valley of decision, give them courage to stand for You and be baptized. Help them to choose You today just as You have already chosen them when you died for them on the cross! (Claim Josh 24:15)