

*You do not need to persuade Jesus Christ to be kind and baptize you in His holy fire. He has already promised. Come with boldness to collect what He is offering you. It is a gift, and you must believe the Giver before you reach out to receive what the Giver is giving.*

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Prayer Study #289

## **HOW TO RECOGNIZE A HOLY SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH**

First Love Ministries, Inc. of Perry, Georgia

I come from a very traditional, mainline denominational background. In my early adulthood several different circumstances led me to become a member of a powerful, charismatic fellowship totally open to the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit, but a church that walked in balanced and stood on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures. In the intervening years, I have been able to visit and sometimes to minister in a variety of churches, and I have noticed that those who are empowered by the Holy Spirit and open to the Holy Spirit *baptism have the following characteristics:*

1. **They are very evangelistic in nature, often going after and welcoming broken, highways and byways people whom much of the American church ignores:** Timothy 4:5: *But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
2. **There are obvious changes taking place in the following:**
  - A. **A change in the people-From sad to glad:** Acts 2:37-41: *Now when they [the people listening to Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost] hear this, they were cut to their heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. There is a lot of joy in spirit-filled services, and joy is a defining characteristic of the members. Acts 2:28: *You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.**

**B. A change in places-whole towns or at least the Body of Christ in a town is abuzz about this new experience:** Acts 5:28: [The high priest and council] *Saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you [the Apostles] have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"* Luke 24:18: *Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"*

The whole town was talking about what the Apostles were saying. Today these spirit baptized churches are known in the community. Sometimes their reputations are negative and there is much opposition, but people *know* they are in the community.

**C. A change in the operation of faith in the church:** Before the baptism experience on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples' faith was weak. Afterwards there are numerous scriptures, such as when Peter and John went to the temple to pray and meet the lame man in Acts 3 and healed him, that testify to their new power in faith. Before Pentecost, Jesus had to almost scold the disciples for their lack of faith in healing an epileptic. Matthew 17:20: *So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief, for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."* Spirit-filled churches don't just talk about faith; they exercise faith. There is a supernatural trust in God for the miraculous, even when the people often have to walk by faith instead of by sight (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:7).

3. **They go against the flow of the world system:** Acts 17:6: *But when they [men from the marketplace] did not find them [Paul and Silas at Thessalonica], they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."* These churches do not hesitate to maintain scriptural principles even when these are at odds with the politically correct worldly stands.
4. **There is conviction in the Body:** John 16:7-11: *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they do*

*not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.* The Holy Spirit convicts in three ways: First, He convicts the world of sin, especially the sin of unbelief, the greatest sin of all. This conviction makes it possible for men to repent and accept Jesus. Secondly, He convicts the world of righteousness. J. Vernon McGee explains this second conviction this way: “Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification. Jesus Christ returned to the Father because He had completed His work here. When He died on the cross, He was delivered for our offenses. But He was raised for our justification. He was raised from the dead that you and I might not only have our sins subtracted, but so that we might have His righteousness added...We cannot stand in God’s presence if we are nothing more than pardoned criminals. Christ has made us to have *His* righteousness.” Thirdly, He convicts men that the power of Satan has been broken. He has already been judged and so have all of us. We have been judged *guilty* because we are sinners and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and because our own righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Only by responding to the first two convictions can we stand as the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus (Romans 3:22, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9).

5. **The preaching and teaching is very much *Word* oriented:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:2: *Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.* These churches don’t spend time telling “Chicken Soup Stories” and entertaining but speak the Truth of the Word in love.
6. **The music reaches the point of real worship:** The music should never dominate over the Word, but there is an anointing and freshness in these churches concerning their worship. People really do worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24: *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*
7. **Miracles, including healing miracles, are taking place on a consistent basis:** Acts 5:12-16: *And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And*

*believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out in to the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

8. **There is a sense of His presence (The Ruach Ha Kodesh-The Holy Spirit) in the building and in the hearts of the people in that church:** Acts 9:31: *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.* Psalm 91:1: *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* Luke 24:32 foreshadows the Presence of the Holy Spirit: *And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

**HOLY GROUND**  
**GERON DAVIS**  
**1982**

As I walked thru the door, I sensed His presence,  
And I knew this was a place where love abounds;  
For this is the temple; Jehovah God abides here,  
And we are standing in His presence on holy ground!

In His presence there is joy beyond measure,  
And at His feet peace of mind can still be found;  
If you have a need, I know He has the answer.  
Reach out and claim it; you are standing on holy ground!

**CHORUS**

We are standing on holy ground  
And I know that there are angels all around;  
Let us praise Jesus now,  
We are standing in His presence on holy ground!