



# Credentials and Our Distinctive Doctrine

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Seeking credentials with the Assemblies of God is a great step in pursuing a call to ministry. The AG continues to be a relevant, paradigm-changing Movement with global impact and multicultural influence and has held true to its 16 Fundamental Truths since its inception. After all, our purpose in this cooperative Fellowship is to evangelize the world and hold to the purity of biblical doctrines that do not change with the passing of time or cultures.

Coming up on your interview for any level of credential with sectional and district leadership, you can expect to be asked about the distinctive doctrine we maintain that separates us from the Nazarene, Free Methodist, Evangelical Free, Calvary Chapel and a host of nondenominational evangelical groups: our Pentecostal distinctive—the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues.

By this point, you already have had to acknowledge that you have experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in other languages and that you believe in this experience which is a secondary experience to salvation. However, are you aware that it is anticipated that you also have a full understanding of this vital teaching that our Movement holds in esteem? Unlike other evangelical groups, we believe this was a vital experience given to the Church, planned by Christ, and foreshadowed and communicated at least as early as the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

**John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16 NKJV).**

Luke is often not recognized as the theologian he was nor for the fact that he wrote more content in the New Testament than Paul. In fact, Luke and Acts could have easily been the epistles of 1 Luke and 2 Luke. Luke tracks the teachings of Christ and the historical experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit throughout the life of Christ and the formation and work of the early church. In the Assemblies of God, we recognize that the last days began with Pentecost, continues today, and will continue until Christ returns and that the baptism in the Holy Spirit, initially evidenced with speaking in other languages along with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, have never ceased but were intended to be a part of the fiber of the Church until all knowledge is fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ.

Just a sideline—you cannot make a doctrine from experience; but we are expected to fully experience the doctrine of the Word of God, especially that which Jesus promises! The baptism in the Holy Spirit is one of those promises made to the entirety of those who choose to follow Christ. It is not a gift of the Spirit but the gift OF THE SPIRIT.

Consider that as Jesus ascended into heaven as seen in [Acts 1](#), He promised to send power to the Church.

**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (v.8 NKJV).**

Jesus had already breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples prior to His ascension.

**So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21-22 NKJV).**

This is the equivalent to our receiving a measure or deposit of the Holy Spirit at salvation which Paul mentions in [Ephesians 1](#).

**In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (v.13 NKJV).**

However, Jesus promised a second experience, one that He told His followers to go and wait for in Jerusalem. In fact, He told them to do nothing until this power had come upon them. This shows us the importance Christ placed on His Church’s receiving not just the deposit of the Holy Spirit at salvation but also the fullness of the Holy Spirit—the baptism of fire that John prophesied the Messiah would bring.

In [John 7:37-39](#), Jesus promised an infilling and outflowing of the Spirit like rivers of water.

**On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (NKJV).**

In [Acts 2:1-4](#), a chapter that is every Pentecostal preacher’s case and point, we see the gift of the Spirit given, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power upon the church!

**When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (NKJV).**

What happened here? When the power came down and fire appeared upon the heads of all in the Upper Room, they began to speak with other languages, earthly languages represented for sure; but Paul also mentions languages of angels in his dissertation on the gifts of the Spirit, a whole separate “charismata” from the baptism. These tongues appeared to be a common thread of evidence that the individual believer had received the immersion (baptism) in the Holy Spirit and

the power that accompanied that. The tongues were simply an outward evidence proclaiming to those around and to the individual believer that they had received Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit and His power.

Speaking in tongues is not the gift itself. The gift itself is the Holy Spirit, but tongues were the initial physical evidence that occurred—like saying you get wet when it rains. The dampness you feel is the first evidence you experience when rain falls from the sky. Of course, the presence of the Holy Spirit is going to produce other evidence; but when this overflowing baptism takes place, tongues are the Lord's choice of the first tangible sign that the power had fully come upon a person.

Baptism means immersion—immersed in the presence of the Holy Spirit! Remember, however, that Jesus said in [John 7](#) that it would not just flow into us but would also flow out of us. There must be evidence that the Holy Spirit is flowing outwardly; and certainly on the Day of Pentecost, all the people on the street witnessed this evidence as they heard the miracle of the proclamation of the Lord's mighty deeds being spoken in their own languages.

**And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" (Acts 2:5-12 NKJV).**

Language (tongues) was what the Lord used to divide mankind at the Tower of Babel when man was in rebellion. He would now unite His Church on the day His Church was birthed by releasing tongues for all the languages of the world to hear of His power. This was not in the ability of the believer but by His mighty power being evidenced in the believer's full surrender to the Spirit.

James mentions that no man can tame the tongue, but we know the Lord can and we know He did and that He still does!

**But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (3:8 NKJV).**

This evidence not only happened the first time the Jewish believers received it but also the first time Gentile believers received it.

**While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days (Acts 10:44-48 NKJV).**

Notice that the Jewish believers were astonished because the Gentiles received the same evidence as they had—they spoke in tongues! It was this evidence that was used by Peter with the Jews at Jerusalem and later with the Council that they should accept Gentiles into the church. They “received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” The similarity was speaking in tongues.

**“As I began to speak,” Peter continued, “the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord’s words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?” When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, “We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life” (Acts 11:15-18 NLT).**

**So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us (Acts 15:6-8 NLT).**

Some have said that tongues are not mentioned in the Book of Acts every time someone receives the Holy Spirit/baptism in the Spirit; but we must realize that in literature when a precedence is set, the full explanation does not need to be fully recited. For example, once it has been stated that a Holstein cow is black and white, we can assume that every time a Holstein cow is mentioned, it will be black and white; consequently, these words do not need to accompany every mention of a Holstein cow in the same piece of literature.

We see at a later point in the book of Acts that a group of believers who were previously baptized by John not only received baptism in water in Jesus’ name but also the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the same evidence of speaking in other languages. This passage shows John’s baptism which was of repentance—baptism as identifying with the church of Christ—and Spirit baptism and the distinct difference of each while also maintaining the first tangible evidence as tongues.

**And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all (Acts 19:1-7 NKJV).**

Many have tried to make a doctrine for Spirit baptism based on individual experience instead of scriptures addressing Spirit baptism. They have cited personal experience as evidence, and perhaps there is evidence thereof; but the Lord has shown us that there is a demonstrative sign of

initial or the first tangible evidence of being immersed in the full power of the Holy Spirit which is tongues.

Believers often have powerful experiences of the Spirit flowing into their lives in seasons of prayer and times at the altars, but it is that overflowing from the depths of our being that Jesus spoke of that becomes tangible evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Imagine an 8-ounce glass of water and a faucet. The empty glass which represents our life is filled with air. Let us call that our spirit man. The water in the faucet is the Spirit. At salvation, we receive a measure of the Spirit when we yield our hearts to Christ and confess our sins. Some receive an ounce of water or a few ounces of water, and some even receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit simultaneously. However, most do not; but as they come to understand the love of Christ and truth of His Word, they surrender more and more and the water flows into their lives displacing the air. Many believers live their lives with 7.9 ounces in the glass but during periods of time in prayer or at an altar call, have had that glass full to the top.

Yet there is the last place of full surrender and yielding—a place no one can tame, but when a person is yielded to Christ, Christ takes the reigns and pours the Spirit into our lives until the Spirit overflows. Now the glass with water is spilling over the sides and into the sink. This is the picture of the power of the Holy Spirit poured into our lives and overflowing into the world around us. Of course, if we stop the flow, if we drink from the glass, or if it is poured out to others without being refilled, that flow ceases which is why we need to come back to the source (Christ) to be refilled.

Many say, “I am full of the Holy Spirit,” and that may be so; but the Lord wants us to be immersed and overflowing. We know this is occurring because there is some outward, tangible, physical sign; and for that reason, the Lord chose tongues to be that sign—something man could not tame on his own but by surrendering to the Lord can experience.

Errors of interpretation and application have occurred and caused confusion between the teachings of Luke and the teachings of Paul when applying the same standard to two different events. Luke presents the baptism in the Spirit while Paul introduces the teachings on the gifts of the Spirit. The two are not the same and are not to be comingled in their application. The issue is a theological and practical difference between the gift of the Holy Spirit given by Christ to the individual and the gift of tongues given by the Holy Spirit through an individual to the church as Paul speaks of in [1 Corinthians 12-14](#).

Many have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit filling them without overflowing from them and think they have been fully immersed in the Spirit without having this first tangible sign of speaking in tongues. They then use Paul’s teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, which vary among different believers, to confuse Luke’s explanation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In other words, they use the fact that not all receive the same gifts of the Spirit, of which one is speaking in tongues to edify the entire congregation, as an excuse as to why they did not speak in tongues when seeking the personal edifying baptism in the Holy Spirit, a gift given by Jesus that is available to every believer.

Tongues are the first tangible evidence of the gift of the Spirit when Jesus gives His Holy Spirit to an individual believer to edify and empower them. The gift of tongues is one of the nine gifts of the

Spirit, an actual gift, that proceeds from the Holy Spirit through an individual for the benefit of the church receiving a message. This gift requires a second gift of the Spirit called interpretation of tongues. In both instances, we see the presence of speaking in other languages; however, they proceed from different sources to different recipients for different purposes. The baptism in the Spirit is for the individual to receive power and proceeds from Christ—simply confirmed by speaking in another language. The gift of tongues is the actual gift being given by the Holy Spirit and is for the church. The person of the Trinity dispersing the gifts, the gifts themselves, and the recipients are all different from each other and therefore the application of not speaking in tongues according to Paul cannot be intermingled with what is available to all, according to the teaching of Luke.

For over a hundred years now, the Fellowship of the Assemblies of God has cooperatively adhered to this reality which is based in Scripture. Yes, people have other evidences of the Spirit at work in their lives such as the fruit of the Spirit; but there has been no other unilateral evidence for having received this baptism in the Spirit given in Scripture. This same evidence has been experienced worldwide, even by the deaf and mute.

Why is knowing this so important? Because you are seeking to join a Movement where this biblical interpretation in the context of Luke's writing is what separates us from other evangelicals. Our growth and blessing in the AG have been founded in this expression; and if it is to be taught and maintained, everyone seeking credentials should understand and agree that this is what we mean when we say we have cooperative Fellowship—for the agreement of what we believe and teach. If we are to join a movement and be credentialed to serve, there needs to be a demonstration not only of understanding but also of believing these truths—our distinctive truths based on the Word of God.

Your confidence of knowledge in this area in addition to personally experiencing this distinctive gift with its initial physical evidence assures us that you are not only passionate about Christ and work of the kingdom of God but that you also understand the source of the power that exploded on the Day of Pentecost to give birth to the living Church of Jesus Christ.