

# BACK TO THE ALTAR: MAKING ROOM FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

Sat, April 27th - 10:10AM - 10:40AM [Opening Slide #1]

## WELCOME & INTRO

Welcome...my name is Caren Petfield. I am the Discipleship Pastor for REACH CHURCH; an Assemblies of God Fellowship in White Plains, NY. I've been asked to discuss **MAKING ROOM FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE ALTAR**. [PRAY] So, let's talk about Altar Ministry.

## MINISTRY AT THE ALTAR

When it comes to altar ministry, what do you hope to accomplish at the altar? Perhaps what comes to mind are things like offering prayer support and encouragement, or providing an opportunity for people to respond to the message preached that day. Those things are great, but there's so much more that can and should happen at the altar.

## EXPECTATIONS AT THE ALTAR

- At the altar, we can encounter the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- At the altar, we can experience salvations, baptisms with the Holy Spirit, healings, manifestations of the GIFTS of the Holy Spirit, and deliverance.
- However, **none** of this happens without the Holy Spirit. [Slide #2]

Salvation doesn't happen without the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:3 says, "**No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.**"

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit doesn't happen without the Holy Spirit. Jesus does the baptizing and the Holy Spirit is the One who comes UPON the believer in power. Acts 1:8 says, "**You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come UPON you...**"

[Slide #3] Healing doesn't happen without the Holy Spirit. Divine healing is a work of the Holy Spirit. Healing comes FROM the Father, THROUGH the redemptive work of the Son and BY the power of the Holy Spirit.

The manifestations of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit do not happen without the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:11 says, "**All these [meaning: all these gifts of the Holy Spirit] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and HE gives [manifests] them to each one, just as He determines.**"

[Slide #4] And what about deliverance? Deliverance doesn't happen without the Holy Spirit. It's the anointing of the Holy Spirit that brings deliverance. In Luke 4:18, Jesus said, "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.**" What did the Spirit anoint Jesus to do? To preach... heal... deliver the captives and free the oppressed.

So, if Jesus needed the Holy Spirit for the ministry of deliverance, how much more do we need the Holy Spirit for the ministry of deliverance?

Have I convinced you yet why we need to make room for the Holy Spirit at the altar? I hope so. BUT how do we do that? How do we make room for the Holy Spirit?

At REACH, making room for the Holy Spirit starts with a question. **And if you took my workshop last year, this next portion is going to sound familiar to you.**

## TWO QUESTIONS

At Reach, when someone comes to the altar for prayer, no matter the prayer request or how long the person has been attending the church, our altar ministers have committed themselves to asking **TWO KEY QUESTIONS**. [Slide #5] These questions initiate a conversation at the altar that invites the Holy Spirit to lead the ministry experience.

**THE FIRST KEY QUESTION IS:** Why have you come to the altar today?

No matter what they say - whether it's for their marriage, their children, a healing, a financial need - no matter what they say or who they are, this FIRST question leads into the next, MOST IMPORTANT, question.

**THE SECOND KEY QUESTION IS:** Before we pray for \_\_\_\_\_, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and REPENTED of your sin?

\*If you notice, WE DO NOT ASK: "Have you accepted Jesus into your heart." We don't ask that question because accepting Jesus into our hearts is not the Biblical pattern for salvation. Accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior and repenting of sin is the Biblical pattern for salvation. If there's been no repentance, there's been no salvation. And if Jesus hasn't become Lord, then He hasn't become Savior. So, we've asked our altar ministers to eliminate that phrase. We don't ask Jesus into our hearts. We accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and repent (turn away from our sin and turn toward God).

There could be a few ways that question is answered but typically it's a YES or NO reply.

If the answer is NO - Then we ask: "What is preventing you from accepting Jesus Christ today?" Depending on their response, we will share the Gospel Message with them.

If the answer is YES, they HAVE accepted Jesus - Then we confirm by saying, “Great! So does that means you have turned away from sin (as God defines sin) and you are living a lifestyle consistent with the Word of God?”

- If that is not correct - we ask: “Would you like to turn from that and make a fresh commitment to Jesus Christ right now?”
- If the answer is correct - we say: “That’s great. Before we pray, let’s invite the Holy Spirit to search us and ask Him if there’s anything He sees. Ask the Holy Spirit - ‘Search Me, Holy Spirit. Is there anything in my life...my thoughts, my words, my actions, my attitude or my motives...that offend God?’”
- And then we wait - And almost every time, the Holy Spirit puts His finger on something.

If He does, we ask, “Would you like to repent of that? Are you willing to turn away from that?” Usually the answer is YES. And then we lead them into prayers of repentance. These types of prayers are deep and specific...and they remove the license of the enemy.

### **ABOUT FORGIVENESS [Slide #6]**

When we’re discussing repentance, we include **forgiveness**. Matthew 18 tells the “Parable of the Unforgiving Servant” saying that the unforgiving servant was handed over to the tormentors. Verse 35 says, “**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**” Dealing with unforgiveness at the altar opens the door for freedom in the name of Jesus.

The keys to making room for the Holy Spirit are repentance and forgiveness.

### **WHY DO WE DO THIS? WHY DO WE ADDRESS SIN AT THE ALTAR? [Slide #7]**

We go through this process because the Bible says “**All wrongdoing is sin**” and that “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” Isaiah 59 says, “**...your sins have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.**”

So, if all wrongdoing is sin and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...and sin separates us from God so that His face is hidden from us and He does not hear, then how can we move forward in prayer without first addressing any unrepented sin. Unrepented sin opens doors that need to be shut. Unrepented sin gives license to the enemy that needs to be cut off first...and THEN we can pray! Amen?

### **CLARITY ABOUT THE BORN AGAIN EXPERIENCE IS IMPORTANT AT THE ALTAR**

**[Slide #8]** You see, being born again is not just believing Jesus is the Son of God who died for our sins - even the devil and his demons believe that...and they’re not saved.

Being born again is believing AND accepting His Lordship. If we truly accept His Lordship, the overflow is a desire to turn from our sin and turn toward God. That's repentance. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." In fact, these were the first words of Jesus' public ministry: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is here." [Matt 4:17] **This is the opportunity that needs to be given at the altar.**

We have to change our thinking when it comes to altar ministry. When people come to the altar, they may think they're coming to be ministered by us, but the truth is that they are coming to be ministered by the Holy Spirit! He has to be the One who's leading and we have to be the ones who are partnering with Him.

When there is repentance (either from a brand new believer or from someone who is recommitting his/her life to Christ or a believer who is convicted of sin they've embraced)...the Holy Spirit may start to deliver someone right there at the altar. This is because repentance removes the license of the enemy.

### **SO LET'S TALK ABOUT DELIVERANCE [Slide #9]**

We know from scripture that demonic influence is real. We know from scripture that deliverance is the children's bread; it's for the children of God. And we know that the ministry of deliverance can happen anywhere. Jesus and His disciples delivered on the streets. Jesus even delivered IN the temple - IN the House of God. So it shouldn't surprise us that deliverance can happen at the altar. [Slide #10]

### **IF DELIVERANCE CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE, WHEN CAN DELIVERANCE HAPPEN?**

#### **1. Deliverance can happen at SPIRITUAL MILESTONES**

- Salvation (we become a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit)
- Water Baptism (we identify with Christ and bury the old man)
- Holy Spirit Baptism (we receive empowerment with the Holy Spirit)

#### **2. Deliverance can happen in PERSONAL PRAYER MINISTRY**

- Making an appointment for deliverance prayer is something we regularly offer

#### **3. Deliverance can also happen in POWER ENCOUNTERS**

- These are spontaneous clashes between the Holy Spirit and unholy spirits.
- This can happen when hearing the Truth of the Word of God or at the Altar
- You see, when TRUTH is preached with authority, the demonic gets nervous.

This is because the scriptures say that the knowledge of the TRUTH sets us free. [John 8:32] This has become a regular occurrence at the altar for us.

## TESTIMONY 1

A few weeks ago, at one of our Sunday services, a pregnant woman responded to the call to accept Christ. A friend accompanied her to the altar. I asked the woman the TWO key questions and she responded that she wanted to accept Christ and repent. When she accepted Christ and repented...and specifically, when she started to forgive those who had hurt her, there was a manifestation of the demonic leaving her. The Holy Spirit delivered her from unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness. When we made room for the Holy Spirit, this woman got saved & delivered.

Later, I found out from her friend that this was a very big deal as she had been going to churches for a long time with her husband, but had not yet made that commitment to Christ. This is what it looks like when we make room for the Holy Spirit at the altar.

## TESTIMONY 2

Sometimes it happens the other way around. A couple of weeks ago, a young lady came to the altar for prayer. I introduced myself and started to ask her the key questions. However, the Holy Spirit was already ministering deliverance before I could finish the questions. Her eyes were welled up with tears and she was trembling and then suddenly the Holy Spirit laid her down. While she was on the floor, she started getting delivered. There was a manifestation as the demonic made itself known. So, together with another altar minister, we calmly took authority over the demonic and cast out whatever had been oppressing her and gave room for the Holy Spirit to do what He does best. After a while, she sat up and I invited her to have a seat on the pew. I asked her, "Do you know what just happened to you?" She said, "I have no idea." I told her, "Well, you just received some freedom." She admitted she had been feeling very lonely and hopeless.

So then I said, "Can I ask you a question?" **[What do you think I asked her?]** "Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior and repented of your sin? She said, NO. So, I asked her if she would like to do that now. And she said, YES...and then we prayed and she accepted Christ and repented of her sin.

Afterward, I asked her, "Do you mind me asking how old you are?" I thought she was in her 20's. She said, "I'm 14 years old."

Do you see the urgency of the Holy Spirit at the altar? This teenage girl heard TRUTH preached with authority and as a result, there was a spontaneous clash between the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirits that were oppressing her. When the Holy Spirit helps someone embrace TRUTH, the demons start losing their license to continue to harrass.

If I had more time, I could go on with testimonies of Baptisms with the Holy Spirit, Healings, Manifestations of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and more. This is all happening AT THE ALTAR.

## MORE ABOUT DELIVERANCE

However, I'd like to go back to deliverance because I want to highlight some points for us. Firstly, not everything is a demon, but demonic oppression, harassment, and influence are more common than we realize.

When praying with someone at the altar, the Holy Spirit may want to deliver that person. If so, we need to consider a few things:

1. Is this person I'm praying for being oppressed, harassed, or influenced by the enemy? You can even ask them:
  - "Do you think what you're going through may have a spiritual root?"
2. If so, there has to be an open door (a permission/a license). [Slide #11]
  - Open doors include things like sin, trauma, agreement with the enemy's lies, exposure to unholy things, involvement in false religions, participation in the occult, word curses or generational curses, ungodly soul ties - and a BIG ONE - unforgiveness.
3. The good news is that every permission can be canceled. Every open door can closed. Every license can be revoked - and that's done through repentance!

Repentance and forgiveness make room for the Holy Spirit at the altar.

In ministering deliverance, demons are not so much afraid of the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is for forgiveness. Demons are afraid of the NAME of Jesus. When ministering deliverance, we tell our team to REMEMBER HIS NAME and REMEMBER HIS AUTHORITY.

[Slide #12] Luke 10:17 & 18 speak of when Jesus sent out the 72. It says they returned with joy and said, "**Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.**" And Jesus replied, "**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.**"

We have His name and we have His authority...and we don't have to be afraid.

The same Spirit Who anointed Jesus to preach the good news, heal the sick, deliver the captives and free the oppressed is the same Spirit Who lives in us. This is the same Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead. We didn't get a "Junior Holy Spirit" - **We got the same Holy Spirit as Jesus!**

## **SO, HOW DO WE TAKE AUTHORITY AND HOW DO WE USE THE NAME [Slide #13]**

If someone has repented or forgiven, the next step in making room for the Holy Spirit is to take authority in the name of Jesus and give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to minister deliverance, if needed.

### Here's what I usually do:

- First, I declare the rebuke of the Lord:
  - “In the name of Jesus & by the authority of Jesus -
    - Enemy, wherever you are oppressing or harassing this brother/sister in Christ - the Lord rebuke you.” [Zech 3:1 and June 1:9]
- Then I cast out any unclean spirits in the name of Jesus:
  - “In the name of Jesus, every spirit of [fear, rejection, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, hopelessness, grief, depression, rage, anger, perversion, unbelief...every spirit of witchcraft and rebelliousness], GO in the name of Jesus - LEAVE in the name of Jesus.”
    - ...and they must go as the Holy Spirit drives them out.

Altar ministry is so much more than prayer support and encouragement. Altar ministry can and should be an opportunity to experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

## **HOW DO WE MAKE ROOM FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT? [Slide #14]**

We make room for the Holy Spirit by making room for repentance. We make room for the Holy Spirit by remembering Who is really doing the ministering at the altar. We make room for the Holy Spirit by being open to every work of the Holy Spirit: Salvation, Holy Spirit Baptism, Healing, Gifts, and even Deliverance. Amen?!

**[If time, PRAY]**

## **LET'S CONNECT [Slide #15]**

If you would ever like to connect, my contact information is on the screen.

If you'd like to learn more about Making Room for the Holy Spirit, you are welcome to join us for a two-session course we call THE THREE BAPTISMS. It takes place at the end of May.

God bless you!