

NEW HOPE CHURCH OF GOD

ALTAR WORKERS TRAINING

LESSON 3 Part A: Ministering at the Altar. . . Actual Ministering.

THE HOUR HAS COME.

“Jesus replied, The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified” (John 12:23), Jesus made this statement as He was going to His own sacrifice on Calvary. Up to now we have shown how to prepare to be a priest in the altar of God. This is the place where Jesus’ own death, resurrection, and victory will be reenacted in the lives of those who come. **But all the preparation and preliminaries cannot substitute for the moment when we step up to the place where God lives and take our place as priests and workers. It is this moment—and the altar time which follows—to which we now turn our attention.**

A. SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER

1. It should not go without saying that the altar worker should prepare themselves with prayer before going to the altar (see Mark 14:32).
 - (a) Before becoming both sacrifice and High Priest for our sins, Jesus Himself went to pray.
 - (b) It should be noted, however, that Jesus, even as God’s Son and God Himself, did not wait until Gethsemane to pray, and neither should we.
 - (c) **Our prayer before we go to minister should be the goal of a consistent prayer life, not the beginning of an inconsistent one.**
 - (d) In praying before altar time, we should accomplish the following:
 - (1) Put our problems behind us.
 - Our minds and emotions should be clear of the baggage we have.
 - Our problems with our spouse, our children, our brothers and sisters-in-Christ, our job, should stay in the pew while we’re in the altar.
 - People needing something from God should not have the view of the Father obscured by our problems.
 - If we do not put things behind, as we minister to others we should come to realization that our problems are not as big or important as we thought they were.
 - Ministering to others has a way of making our difficulties smaller.
 - (2) Ask God to direct what we do in the altar, and to make us sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit.

- (a) The men's department does have a program, **Pastor's Prayer Partners**; it is an option for men to move into the altar after praying for the pastor's office through the service.
- (b) This is good, but if your church doesn't organize such a time, don't neglect this time with God.

B. LOOKING IN A MIRROR

1. *"For now [in this time of imperfection] we see in a mirror dimly [a blurred reflection, a riddle, an enigma] ..."* (1 Cor. 13:12a Amp. Bible)
 - (a) Mirrors in the Roman world were generally hand-polish metal, so the reflection they gave wasn't very good.
 - (b) The ones we have today do a fine job, although some of us spend too much time before them.
 - (c) This is one case where a little time in front of a mirror may have some spiritual benefit, because people may judge us by our appearance and there is no need to obscure the work of God either by what is inside us or what is outside.
 - (d) **We need to look our best while we are in the altar, without calling attention to ourselves.**
2. One leading publication tells the story of Prince Valdimir of Kiev, in what is now the Ukraine, who felt his people needed a new religion (they were pagans at the time).
 - (a) So he sent a delegation to check out Islam, Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy.
 - (b) Orthodoxy won out in part because the delegation sent to the Muslims was dissatisfied with what it saw.
 - (c) The delegation reported, "There is no happiness about them [the Muslims], but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench."
 - (d) Think about it; Islam suffered a major setback in part because their personal hygiene was deficient.
 - (e) **We can suffer major setbacks on this account, and this includes our breath. It is hard for someone in the altar to concentrate on receiving from God when a "bad whiff" is about. Don't give them that distraction.**

C. COME ARMED

1. *"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Eph. 6:17)
 - (a) Irrespective of how we avoid the term because it may be overused the **fact remains altar work is spiritual warfare!**
 - (b) We need to be armed.
 - (1) Our best weapon is the Word of God.
 - (2) Memorize as much of the Word as possible, but for the rest bring a Bible that you know you way around. (Today electronic devices are heavily depended on, the choice is yours).

- (3) You should also take a pen or pencil in case you need to record necessary information for follow-up; or maybe your church has in place a system where the ushers help in this area.
2. Personal evangelism courses generally emphasize bringing a small bible when witnessing, so as not to intimidate the person to whom you are talking.
 - (a) This is even more important in altar work, but for a different reason.
 - (b) If you need glasses to read do not forget those either.

D. GET A POLE POSITION!!

1. Anyone who watches NASCAR understand the importance of **pole position** in the race. The car in **pole position** has the most “direct shot” at getting in front of the pack.
2. **While we’re not racing with our fellow altar workers to see who’s going to the altar first, we need to make sure that wherever we sit during the service, we have a “direct shot” at the altar when the time comes.**
 - (a) Where this position is depending on the layout of your church, but spend a little time finding it. It is where the best position to be in in order to serve at the altar effectively or even in the congregation as we have seen at time.
 - (b) It will make your approaching the altar of God a lot easier. The Altar Worker should always **“Be Prepared!” “Be Ready to Serve!”**

E. IN A FITTING AND ORDERLY WAY

1. *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Cor. 14:40)
 - (a) Some Pentecostals, justifiably fearful of getting out of the flow of the Holy Spirit in their lives and worship, instinctively get nervous when asked to do things in church with any kind of routine.
 - (b) **But God’s way is an orderly way. He isn’t glorified by our disorganization.**
 - (c) Once altar workers are trained and set forth, they will know what to do.
2. Here is where pastoral direction is critical.
 - (a) In a given church the pastor gives the vast majority of altar calls.
 - (b) The pastor wants the peoples who needs to come to the altar so that they might receive from God; therefore, he should expect the altar worker to respond so they can be ready to minister.
 - (c) The pastor thus needs to establish some kind of **“standard routine”** by which the altar worker knows when they are expected to take their place at the altar.
 - (d) If God moves and things change, this is good; but how can God interrupt our routine when we don’t have one?
 - (e) **Questions the pastor needs to clarify are:**
 - (1) When do the altar workers come?
 - Before or after those from the congregation who respond to the altar call.
 - Or should they come at a signal of the pastor?

- If the altar workers can come before those responding to the call, they have a better chance to pray specifically for the individual needs.
- (2) How should the altar workers arrange themselves?
- Some churches line up their altar workers side by side, facing the congregation (***Keep in mind this as well as some other ideas in this lesson applies to churches where altar workers pray for seekers.***)
 - Some allow the altar workers to mingle with those praying in the altar.
 - Some set up “healing lines” in which case the altar workers need to form the lines on both sides.
- (3) Does the pastor need any “armor bearers” himself? This is a special classification of altar workers who are available for the pastor, helping when needed. In some churches the “armor bearer” serves separately.
- (4) Do some altar workers have “specialize” task? That will be for the leadership of the church to decide.
- (f) **These are things that need to be considered before service starts.**
- (1) Pastor (s) and altar workers need to recognize that things will change.
- (2) A visiting evangelist, for example, will probably want to do things differently.
- If an evangelist were coming to run a revival, perhaps some training beforehand would be appropriate.
 - If things are organized properly, though, the altar workers become an army for God during the time of prayer.
- (3) One characteristic of a good organization is the way it responds to changing conditions.
- (a) Although our training is a preparation for what might happen in the altar we must be prepared to be flexible and open to the move of the Spirit.
- (b) **The altar workers should NOT be obstacles but facilitators.**
- (c) As with wisdom, this comes through prayer and experience.

F. CHOOSING THOSE FOR WHOM WE PRAY (*Please note: This varies from church to church . . . know the guidelines in your church and abide as required*)

1. Depending upon how things are set up, altar workers generally have some discretion in choosing people with whom they pray.
If God leads you to pray for a specific person, then do it; however, as we said before, wisdom need to be a quality the altar worker cultivates, and needs to be applied to the kind of people you pray for.
2. Altar workers should pray first for those with whom they have the most in common.
 - (a) They should definitely pray with people of the same sex or age, although the age of a person is not critical.
 - (b) **As a rule, men should pray with men and women with women. Two reasons:**
 - (1) The subject matter of the prayer may be “gender specific.”
 - (2) Altar work involves physical contact as we lay hands on people.
 - (c) We do not need to do anything that will mar the purity of our work.

- (d) We live in a fast-changing society where people tend to satisfy (differentiate, etc.) their views of life, interest and problems by their age.

G. ASK THE PEOPLE

1. We now come to the most important point of this discussion.
 - (a) **As altar workers, our first task when we start to pray for someone is to ask what needs to be prayed for.**
 - (b) The main weakness of the traditional “preacher-does-all-the-praying” approach, to altar work is the lack of inquiry about or from those who they pray, which leads to ignorance of their needs.
 - (c) The problem is unsolved unless the altar workers ask what the people need from God.
2. The questioning doesn’t have to be sophisticated.
 - (a) “What do you need from the Lord?” or
 - (b) “What do you want God to do for you?” are good places to start.
 - (c) Etc.
3. From here, the most important follow-up would be:
 - (a) Clarification in case you do not understand what the need is or . . .
 - (b) Whether the person is born again.
 - (c) The latter [that is (b) above can be done in several ways; which is taught in evangelism training.
4. **One important thing to ask individual is their name.**
 - (a) This allows you to personalize your prayer and gives them the sense that you really care about their needs.
 - (b) God cares about their needs and you as God’s representative, should likewise show this.

H. COUNSELING IN THE ALTAR

1. Once you have found out what the person you’re praying for needs from God, you have the option of counseling the person.
 - (a) This is critical subject, because what you say sets the tone for everything that comes after and whether it is successful or not.
 - (b) What is appropriate to say is a source of confusion. Sorting out this issue involves some knowledge of history of altars and altar work.
2. Until the Reformation, altars in Christian churches were places the communion elements were consecrated during the mass or Divine Liturgy.
 - (a) Calling the place an altar was based on the idea that the Mass—along with the transformation of elements into the body and blood of Christ—was a sacrifice, the altar being the place of sacrifice.
 - (b) A discussion of the theology of the Lord’s Supper is beyond what we can cover at this time.

- (1) It is enough to say that *“because by one sacrifice he [Christ] has made perfect forever those who are made holy” (Heb. 10:14 NIV).*
- (2) Disregarding the concept of Communion as a sacrifice put an end to altars of this kind in most Protestant churches.
3. The real ancestor of the altar in Pentecostal churches came about in the early 19th century with the “anxious seat” or “mourners bench” in front of the church.
 - (a) The name imply, the idea was that persons would come under conviction that they would come to the front and sit in this seat in a state of total desperation waiting for God.
 - (b) Ministers such as Charles Finney frequently called people to come down to this place while he was in the pulpit.
 - (c) Others were directed to come down by others in the congregation.
4. Ever since Finney’s days the vision of deep conviction coming over many people who then come forth crying out for God has been the revivalistic ideal.
 - (a) Some altar workers, and ministers as well, have attempted to speed this up by delivering a message of condemnation to those who come to the altar.
 - (b) This idea was that if they “hit” those who came forward hard enough with condemnation, the people would break down.
5. ***“And if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself: (John 12:32 NKJV).***
 - (a) When God sends revival, He brings the people to the altar, many in conviction, and everyone will know it.
 - (b) However, most people today don’t have the deep sense of guilt they had in Finney’s day, and if, confronted in a negative way, will usually react by turning you out or walking out on you.
 - (c) **This being the case, altar workers today should take a gentle but straightforward approach to counseling people in the altar unless they know for sure that God is telling them differently. Such an approach includes the following:**
 - (1) Put the seekers at ease up front. Show them you care about their needs.
 - (2) Avoid interrupting an individual who is praying. Your ultimate goal is to facilitate their talking to God and getting an answer.
 - (3) Your counsel should be Biblical and straightforward. This is where your memorization is important, but even if you have to get your Bible out and show them the text, stick to the Word.
 - (4) **Avoid a doctrinal argument.** One of the principles of evangelism is that once you argue with seekers you have lost them. In any case, lengthy discussions are difficult in most altar settings.
 - (5) Keep your emphasis on their relationship with Christ, Obviously, if they need to be saved, that is the focal point of your prayers. Let them know that their relationship with Christ is based on what He did for them and not how they feel at any given moment.

- (6) Don't forget to listen. You will learn far more by listening to people than talking to them. As time constrains permit, let them talk about their needs.
6. **Think about how Jesus handled the wide variety of situations and people.**
- (a) He spent more time scolding His disciples and the Pharisees than He did sinners.
- (b) This should give us an indication of how we should deal with the people who come to us for prayer in the altar.
7. In his book "*Expect a Miracle*," Oral Roberts tells the story of a crusade in California where one of those who came up for prayer was Robert's own uncle Lute. Lute had been a "desperado" [a bold reckless criminal] in his younger days who carried a gun at all times and sought to kill a man named Jody Robertson who had murdered Lute's younger brother. Lute came forward and introduced himself to Roberts, who had never actually met him, even though he was his mother's brother.
- (a) The first thing that Roberts asked Uncle Lute to do was to take off his gun, which Lute did.
- (1) Roberts then asked Lute what he came for.
- (2) He answered, "A complete healing."
- (3) Roberts then explained to the audience who uncle Lute was and what he had done.
- (4) Robert knew that Lute understood "a complete healing: meant—body and soul, sins past and present, and my desired vengeance.
- (b) Roberts then went for the central question in Lute's life.
- (1) "Are you willing to forgive Jody Robertson?" I [Roberts] asked. He didn't say anything. I knew he wasn't refusing to answer. People with lots of Indian blood usually don't talk quickly. You have to wait them out.
- (2) I could feel the crowd hanging on to every word. Finally, he said, "Yes, I forgive Jody Robertson."
- (3) "Once and for all?"
- (4) "Yes"
- (5) "Never to kill him?"
- (6) "Never"
- (c) Finally, Roberts led his uncle lute in the sinner's prayer, and lute tearfully repented. Then, with a smile on his face, Lute turned to the crowd and gave a clear public confession of his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.
8. We always want to take the high-leveled approach, but the gospel is as high-powered as it gets. **If we present it clearly and let God do the work, we will see miracles after miracles in our altars.**

I. ASK GOD

1. Once your counseling is complete, it's time to pray.
- (a) In our performance-oriented concept of ministry, we measure our spirituality by the result we get.
- (b) If the expected results do not come, we get discouraged, and others start to think that we're lacking something.

- (c) The thing we must remember is that what we are doing is God's work; without His empowerment, it will not be done.
2. The good news is that God is ready and able to come to the aid of those for whom we are praying and has empowered us to do the work.
- (a) **Mark 11:23-24 NKJV**
"So Jesus said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he shall have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.'"
- (b) Meditating on these verses (Mark 11:23-24) German theologian W. Bousset noted:
*"Behold, the wonders: man clothed with all the powers of God. ... Here, therefore, is the great miracle of Jesus Christ. Not only is He all-powerful, but here He renders man all-powerful and more power than He had himself is, constantly performing greater miracles, and all through faith and through prayer. **'And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive'** (Matt. 21:22). Faith, therefore, and prayer are all-powerful and they clothe man with the omnipotence of God. **"If you can believe,'** said the Savior, **'all is possible to him who believes'** (Mark 9:22).*
3. The performance of miracles therefore, is not the difficulty.
- (a) Rather, the difficulty is to believe. **"If you believe."**
- (b) That is the miracle of miracles; to believe perfectly and without hesitation. **"I believe Lord, help my unbelief"** (Mark 9:23).
- (c) Thus the great miracle of Jesus Christ is not to make us all-powerful men, but it is to make us courageous and faithful believers who dare hope!
- (d) We must understand, therefore, that that this faith that can do all, is inspired: to dare make this act of faith which can do all, it is necessary that God gives us motion, the power to act.
- (e) And the fruit of these precepts of the gospel, which we read today, is to abandon ourselves to His divine motion, the power to act.
- (f) **No matter how great it might be, one must dare, and not hesitate for an instant—let us dare all, and no matter how slight our faith may be, let us fear nothing!**
- (g) A small grain of faith, the size of a mustard seed, enables us to undertake anything.
- (1) Grandeur has not part in it, said the Savior.
- (2) I ask only for truth and sincerity; if it becomes necessary that this small grain grow, God who has given it will make it grow.
- (3) Act then with the little you possess, and much will be given to you:

And this grain of mustard seed and this budding faith will become a great tree, and the birds of the air will dwell in the branches. (See Matt. 13:31-32).

J. JUST THE FACTS

1. Once prayer is complete, we need to get one more piece of information—what actually happened.
 - (a) Many altar programs “come up short” because the altar workers do not write down the results of their prayer and counseling.
 - (b) **A spiritual journey does NOT end at the altar, it merely begins.**
 - (c) The next step takes place outside of the altar as the church continues altar work of its assimilating process (“*assimilating*”: comprehending, understanding, soaking up, etc.).
 - (d) **The church that is serious about winning and keeping converts and discipling believers will follow-up on what happens at the altar.**
2. Spiritual Results Cards are highly recommended.
 - (a) Since they are given to people who either have had a spiritual experience at the altar or have been counseled extensively, literature more substantial than the average tract is suitable.
 - (b) There are a host of booklets that are available to help in this area.
3. While we are on the subject of paperwork, it might be useful to have tracts and other literature available at the altar.
 - (a) Since they are given to people who either have a spiritual experience at the altar or have been counseled extensively, literature more substantial than the average tract is suitable.
 - (b) There are a host of booklets that are available to help in this area.
4. **One of the most important step in assimilating people into the church is follow-up!**
 - (a) Studies have shown that people who are contacted within 24 hours of their first visit are most likely to be back!
 - (b) Although altar work is a special case, it would be good if someone from the church contact a person who fills out a card after they visit the altar (follow-up has been highly neglected and its importance must be full realized!!).
 - (c) In a smaller church, the altar worker may do the follow-up. In a larger church this may be done by other people.

*We have covered a basic outline of particular steps altar workers should perform during the altar service. **Anyone who has worked an altar service knows that there are surprises and obstacles of ministry even in the place where God lives, and it is to these that we now turn.***

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

*We now turn to those special issues that altar workers deal with in the course of their ministry. These issues are selected not because they are rare but **because they require special attention!***

A. "I CAN'T GET SAVED"

1. Given the fact that the altar is where God lives and that people who come there come with expectancy, you would think that evangelism in the altar would be straightforward business.
 - (a) Most of the time it is. However, there are exceptions.
 - (b) Many people come expecting salvation or other things but are not too clear on how to get from where they are to where God wants them to be.
 - (c) This is where you as an altar worker and counselor become critical in the process because you can interact with the person who has come for help.
2. Personal evangelism courses refer to this process as "meeting objections."
 - (a) In doing this our goal is not to beat the individual down but to lead them to the point where they feel that they have worked out the problem themselves.
 - (b) We present some examples of this kinds of "objections" people might have and the appropriate response.
 - (1) **"I don't know how to get saved."**
 - This is the simplest thing to respond to, if you have your gospel presentation memorized and ready.
 - Simply go through the Gospel Presentation, explaining things as they come up.
 - (2) **"The Lord doesn't want me to be saved" or "The Lord isn't hearing me."**
 - John 3:16 should take of the first one.
Emphasize the fact that God sent His only Son from heaven so that all of us could be saved.
 - As for the second, refer to Isaiah 55:6-7.
He is near us in all places, but the altar is a special place where God lives and invites us to especially close times with him.
 - (3) **"I have sinned so much; I cannot be forgiven."**
 - Magnitude of sin from human standpoint is meaningless from God's view (see James 2:10).
 - It doesn't matter whether a person breaks a "minor" commandment of God or all of them; they are guilty of sin and deserve the punishment of hell.
 - The root problem of this objection is that the penitent believes to some extent in "works salvation" and this is not correct—for example see Galatians 2:16.
 - (4) **"I have committed the unpardonable sin."**
 - A variation on this concerns people who are afraid they have committed the unpardonable sin (see Matt. 12:24, 31).
 - The sin of the Pharisees was that they called the good Son of God evil.
 - Their hearts were hardened they could not receive what (or who) God had for them.
 - The fact that someone sin is in the altar repenting is a sure sign that they have not gone this far.

(5) **“I do not feel like I am saved.”**

- There is the story of a newlywed young man who told his friend, “I don’t feel like I am married.” His friend replied, “You need to align your feeling with the facts.”
- Our salvation in Jesus Christ is a fact, not a feeling, based on Jesus’ finished work on the cross, the washing away of our sins, and our acceptance of all of this through repentance and trusting Him.
- **In responding to this, you need to first go through a quick gospel presentation making sure that they have all the steps and understand them.**
 - In some cases, they may not be saved, but you should know how to lead them to that saving event.
 - If they are saved, you need to explain the business about feelings and facts, and that we are not saved by feelings.
 - In the modern world we spend too much time worrying about feeling. for example, if people viewed their marriages as facts and not just feelings, marriages would last much longer.

(6) **“I am not willing to make the sacrifice to be saved.”**

- This objection usually does not come out directly, but comes in a number of more subtle forms such as “I cannot give up this sin or that,” “I am afraid it will hurt my business or damage my income,” “I am afraid of what others will say.”
- **Life in Christ involves two things: giving up everything to God and getting more back. This I best summed up as follows . . . see Mark 10:29-31.**
- In their book **“Logic or Art of Thinking”** Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole puts it this way:

“Only infinite things, such as eternity and salvation, cannot be equaled by any temporal advantage; and such one cannot compare them with the things of this world. This is why the least degree of means to be saved is worth more than all of the goods of this world put together, and the least peril of being lost is more considerable than all the temporal evils.

This is enough for all reasonable persons to make them come to this conclusion, by which we end this logic: the greatest of all unwise things is to use one’s time and life for something that never ends, since all of good things and all of evil of this life are nothing in comparison to those of the other, and that the danger of falling into these evil is great, as well as the difficulty of obtaining the good things.

Those that come to this conclusion, and who follow them in the conduct of their life, are prudent and wise, whether they be little correct in all of

the reasonings concerning matters of science; and those who do not, whether they be correct in all of the rest . . . make a bad usage of logic, of reason, and life.”

(7) **I cannot forgive.”**

- This subject we have dealt with otherwise also in one of our upcoming lesson.
- **Forgiveness is NOT optional!**
- Un-forgiveness not only bars the way to eternal life, but also creates bitterness and stress in this life.
- Forgiveness is one of the greatest releases one can find in this life.
- There was a businessman who saw in excess of a million dollars in sales siphoned (drained, extorted, etc.) by a former employee who went to work for a customer.
 - It wasn't easy but the Christian businessman forgave the employee.
 - All the while the former employee had been making copies of the product on the side, selling them to the customer, and pocketing the profits.
 - This scheme was exposed shortly after forgiveness, returning the customer to the businessman and sending the former employee to prison.

(8) **“I must be a better person,” or “I cannot live the Christian life.”**

- These are two side to the same problem.
- Penitents believe that their works will get them to heaven.
- We have already dealt with this problem.
 - Knowing the plan of salvation will also give you the knowledge to deal with those who are trying to work their way to heaven.
 - Today we have all kinds of people who think they are doing good.
 - Consider Hitler's final solution to the Jews.
 - He thought he was doing mankind a favor by the holocaust, but we all know it was one of the most monstrous crimes of the 20th century.
 - This is an extreme example but it shows a serious problem with any kind of “works salvation.”
 - Little wonder God said: ***“But we all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, He taken away.” (Isa. 64:6 NKJV).***

(9) **“I have been hurt in church” or “There are too many hypocrites in the church.”**

- All of us including the hypocrites in the church—are ultimately accountable to God for what we do.
- See Matt. 10:26-28

(10) **“I am not ready to be saved now**

- See Heb. 3:12-19.

- There is no better time than the present, and there may be no other time either (Isa. 55:6; 2 Cor. 6:2).

B. THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is a subject that we have discussed extensively, however, the additional study is worthwhile pursuing. This actual presentation is focused on helping seekers receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Few things are more important to pray for in the altar than the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) However, a great deal of confusion has been created on this topic.
 - (b) **Traditionally, people prayed for the baptism while being exhorted to “hold on” and “let go” at the same time. The result was that people felt they were torn in two directions.**
 - (c) Ignoring the baptism altogether has more serious problems.
2. Before we get into a discussion on how to pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit—and not how not to pray—we need to make two important observations.
 - (a) **The first is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the uniquely defining, event for Pentecostal churches and people.**
 - (1) The simple fact is for Pentecostal churches to be Pentecostal they cannot shove the baptism in the Holy Spirit “under the rug.”
 - (2) Pentecostal churches are obligated to facilitate the reception of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The best place to do this is at the altar.
 - (b) **The second observation is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major event in the life of the believer.**
 - (1) It is not just an emotional outpouring any more than salvation is.
 - (2) It is an outpouring in the life of the believer based on the facts of salvation history and promises of God.
 - (3) **Although tongues are not all there is to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, this alone involves turning over control of a very important part of a person’s life to God (see James 3:5-10).**
 - (4) With our nature the way it is, turning over control of any part of our lives to God is difficult but a necessity not to be ignored.
 - (5) The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a **watershed event** in the life of the believer and should be treated in this way. (**“water shed”**: *unique or historical change of course; defining moment, turning point; etc.*).
3. With these in mind, we can make **some** recommendations on how to pray with those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) **Make sure the person is saved.**
 - (1) The baptism in the Holy Spirit is for believers.
 - (2) You can use the same approach you use to ask people if they are saved or lost.
 - (b) **Make sure the person is sanctified.**

- (1) The formula *“saved, and sanctified, and baptized in the Holy Spirit”* is still valid.
- (2) With sanctification, the real test concerns the state of a person’s heart.
 - Is there bitterness or forgiveness in the person’s life?
 - Are there any serious sins that weigh down the believer?
 - These need to be gotten out of the way before the baptism in the Holy Spirit can take place.
- (c) **Make sure they know it’s for them.**
 - (1) See Acts 2:17.
 - (2) Some people have the idea that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is only for the “super-spiritual” elite.
 - (3) The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not for a selected few but for all believers.
 - (4) Once they get pass this, receiving will be much simpler.
- (d) **Do not make it a burden.**
 - (1) Too many times altar workers attempt to put pressure on people to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) The baptism of the first Day of Pentecost was a release for the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. It still is for those who receive it.
 - (3) Trying to “corner” your prey may be fine when out hunting, but won’t do in the altar.
 - (4) The great preacher Ray H. Hughes Sr. had lunch with an associate and paid for the meal at the end.
 - The associate was surprised and said, “You didn’t have to do that.”
 - Dr. Hughes replied, “If I had to do it, I wouldn’t have done it.”
 - (5) **Compulsion can be counterproductive.**
 - (6) If God wants to put someone under conviction, let God do it. This is not the work of man.
- (e) **Be encouraging.**
 - (1) This follows the last point.
 - (2) We need to be encouraging and upbeat when we’re preparing for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) Encouragement will eliminate a lot of the nervousness people have.
- (f) **Keep the main task central.**
 - (1) One temptation that should be avoided when praying for the baptism for the baptism is to simply pray in tongues.
 - (2) Keep in mind that **speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, NOT the other way around.**
 - (3) **The baptism in the Holy Spirit involves MORE than speaking in tongues.**
 - It includes power to witness, preparation for receiving spiritual gifts and so forth. Do not forget the Fruit of the Spirit!!
 - Looking at it this way enables us to avoid many of the things altar workers sometimes employ to get people to speak in tongues such as making them repeat phrases, talk fast, and the like.

- Keep in mind also that on the Day of Pentecost: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
 - **People are filled with the Holy Spirit first, then speak in tongues, and the Spirit does the enabling.**
- (g) **Allow the Spirit to pray in tongues through you.**
- (1) This may seem obvious.
 - (2) Unfortunately, many Pentecostals have the idea that tongues are only for special occasions.
 - (3) What occasion can be more special than to be in the place where God lives?
 - (4) If we have freedom with the language of the Spirit, it will act as an encouragement to others.
- (h) **Don't be in a hurry.**
- (1) If someone needs something to pray for this, be available.
 - (2) Remember: **“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which’, He said, ‘you have heard from Me; . . .’”**
 - (3) They waited ten days, but look at the reward!

C. ALTAR WORK WITH CHILDREN

1. Up until now, we have assumed that most of the people coming to the altar are adults.
 - (a) People who have worked in the altar that eventually they will have the experience of praying for a precious child at the altar.
 - (b) Since ministry to the children and youth is different from adults, one might be led to think that the rules are different from adults.
 - (1) However, this is not the case.
 - (2) **If anything, the requirement of asking what the need is, praying specifically for it, and being direct and compassionate, is more important with children than with adults.**
 - (3) All of the things mentioned elsewhere in these lessons apply to praying for children at the altar.
2. **There are a few things that need to be avoided when praying for children.**
 - (a) **Assuming a child's response, or expecting a certain response.**
 - (1) Do not assume children will respond in the way you think they will.
 - (2) Let them speak for themselves and respond accordingly.
 - (b) **Not taking the child's response seriously.**
 - (1) Children live on a different level than adults do.
 - (2) Things that seem silly to us are very serious to a child.
 - (3) If it is serious to them, it should be serious to you as well.
 - (c) **Using Religious lingo (language).**
 - (1) We discuss this at the start of these lessons.

- (2) Lost people do not know our lingo and most children have not lived long enough to learn it either.
- (3) It is not a bad idea to make this a practice with adults as well, especially if they are lost.
- (4) Well-learned evangelism training should deal with this problem.
- (d) **Agreeing with a misdirected request.**
We should listen to the child's request, but if it is unbiblical, we need to let the child know that.
- (e) **Not letting the child pray.**
 - (1) the best time to learn how to pray is when we are young.
 - (2) Children will learn not to pray if they are not allowed to do so.
- (f) **Rebuilding a child.**
LEAVE THAT TO THEIR PARENTS.
- (g) **Letting the child get out of control.**
If a child has a behavior problem at the altar, it is best for them to make a discreet exist.
- (h) **Failing to follow-up**
This is the same as adults. See notes discussed earlier.

D. WHEN THE DEVIL SHOWS UP.

1. Every now and then any active altar ministry will encounter someone who is demon possessed.
2. Many altar workers fear this moment
 - (a) They have been taught that casting demons is a job left solely to specialists.
 - (b) They may also be influenced by one of two extreme opinions (myths to be real) that are common in the church today:
 - (1) There is no such thing as a personal devil. He doesn't have subordinates either, so they never look for a demon to come around.
 - (2) We all have at least one demon and usually more in our lives, so casting them out is a regular occurrence.
 - (c) **Neither of these is biblical. Demon possession, however, is a serious matter.**
Following are some things to remember about it:
 - (1) **Remember whose team you are on.**
"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4 NKJV).
 - (2) **This is God's work.**
 - We must do this in His strength.
 - **We cannot cast out demons in our own strength, and we cannot resist the devil without God's strength.**
 - In this response it is no different from any other altar work.
 - (3) **Get some help.**

- If you feel or have direction from God that you are dealing with a demon-possessed person, get the help of your pastor and others.
- In addition to the strength created by unity of prayer, demon-possessed people can be violent and incredibly strong.
- Follow your pastor's lead from this point forward.

Overcoming the devil in the altar is very much like overcoming him in our lives.

Eph. 6:7 NKJV

“. . . with goodwill doing service as to the Lord, and not to men, . . .”

LESSON 3 Part A: Review Questions

1. At what point in Jesus' ministry He made the statement: *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."* (John 12:23).

2. Despite all the preparation and preliminaries made as altar workers what is considered even more a necessity?

3. As we (altar workers) pray preceding entering the altar what two things must be accomplished?

4. It is important to pray in preparation before going to the altar. However, this should not be the only time for us to pray. Explain why.

5. Before ministering at the altar, why is it important to put our problems behind us? List three reasons (as given in our lesson).

6. Explain, briefly, what is meant by “**The Pole Position,**” as applicable to the altar worker?

7. As with the situation regarding Prince Valdimir of Kiev (now Ukraine) in search of new religion (see Page 2): (a) what was his major setback with the Muslim religion? (b) In what areas can we be distracting while ministering at the altar?

8. Altar work is spiritual warfare; with what must we be armed?

9. “**Let everything be done decently and in order.**” (1 Cor. 14:40 KJV)

(a) Briefly explain the message conveyed in this verse. (b) Whose direction is critical in this situation . . . as it relates to serving at the altar (*noted in our lesson*)?

10. How should altar workers arrange themselves?

11. Do some altar workers have “specialize task?”

12. Why is the choice of gender important while serving at the altar?

13. What is the altar worker’s first task when he starts to pray for someone in the altar?

14. The use of the altar in Pentecostal churches:

(a) At what period the term “*altar*” became popular? (b) What name was given to the altar in Pentecostal churches and where was it located? (c) Why it was thus named?

15. What approach is recommended as we counsel seekers at the altar?

16. Complete the following:

“If we will present the gospel clearly and let God do the work, we will (a) _____
(b) _____ after (c) _____ in our altars.”

17. When counselling at the altar is finished, what should be done?

18. Once praying is completed, what one more piece of information is necessary?

19. (a) What is one of the most important steps in assimilating people into the church? (b) What is the best timing in which this should be done *[base on the answer you gave for Part (a)]*.

20. We have noted some objections raised by seekers when counselled; briefly explain how you would respond to the following:

- (a) "The Lord doesn't want me to be saved."
- (b) "I have sinned so much; I cannot be forgiven."
- (c) "I can't forgive."

21. As noted in our lesson, what two important things were emphasized before discussing how to pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit (*i.e. praying for others to receive the baptism*).

22. Some recommendations were made on how to pray with those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit. List all recommendation, noting only the caption for each.

23. Briefly explain: ***“The baptism in the Holy Spirit involves MORE than speaking in tongues.”***

24. In working with children in the altar, what very important areas to be aware of and addressed . . . seven were in our lesson list three with brief explanations.

25. As altar workers, what are somethings to be remembered when dealing with demon possession?

LESSON 3 Part A: Answers for Review Questions

1. **Answer:**

This statement was made at the final phase of His earthly ministry. He was going to His own sacrifice on Calvary. Page 1

2. **Answer:**

All the preparation and preliminaries cannot substitute for the moment when we step up to the place where God lives and take our place as priests and workers.
Page 1

3. **Answer:**

(a) Put our problems behind us.
(b) Ask God to direct what we do in the altar, and to make us sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit.
For more information, see Pages 1-2.

4. **Answer:**

(a) It should be noted that Jesus, even as God's Son and God Himself, did not wait until Gethsemane to pray, and neither should we.
(b) Our prayer before we go to minister should be the goal of a consistent prayer life, not the beginning of an inconsistent one. Page 1

5. **Answer:**

(a) Our minds and emotions should be clear of the we have.
(b) Our problems with our spouse, our children, our brothers and sisters-in-Christ, our job, should stay in the pew while we're in the altar.
(c) Etc.
For more information, see Page 1.

6. **Answer:**

Knowing in advance where is the best position at the altar, in order to serve effectively . . . it is a state of readiness and alertness for effective service.
Page 3

7. **Answer:**

(a) There was no happiness about them and there was a dreadful stench.
(b) Many things . . . some examples:
(1) Our lack of enthusiasm.
(2) Having a mundane attitude to the altar service.
(3) Lack of proper hygiene (*example bad breath mentioned in our lesson Page 2*)
(4) Etc.
Page 2 and other sources.

8. Answer:

- (a) The Word of God (it is our best weapon).
- (b) Effective memorization of Scriptures.
- (c) Note taking material.

Pages 2-3

9. Answer:

- (a) God's way is an orderly way. He isn't glorified by our disorganization.
 - (b) In this situation the pastor's direction is critical.
- For more information, see Page 3.

10. Answer:

This will vary from church to church. Follow the instructions/guidelines given at your local church.

Page 4

11. Answer:

This will vary from church to church. Follow the instructions and guidelines given by the leadership of your local church.

Page 4

12. Answer:

- (a) The subject matter of prayer may be gender specific.
- (b) Ministering at the altar involves the laying on of hands.
- (c) We do not need to do anything that will mar the unity of our work,
- (d) Etc.

For more information, see Page 4.

13. Answer:

- (a) Ask what needs to be prayed for.
- (b) Also ask their name which help to make a good connection.

Page 5

14. Answer:

- (a) The early 19th century.
- (b) It was referred to as the "*anxious seat*" or "*mourners bench.*" It was located at the front of the church.
- (c) As the name imply, the idea was the persons under conviction that they would come to the front and sit in the swat in a state of total desperation waiting for God.

For more information, see Pages 5-6.

15. Answer:

- (a) A gentle but straight forward approach.
- (b) **Note carefully all guidelines on Pages 6-7**

16. Answer:

- (a) see (b) miracles (c) miracles.

Page 7

17. **Answer:**

Once counselling is complete, it's time to pray.

Page 7

18. **Answer:**

Find out the result of praying for the seeker and document same for follow-up. . . without this we generally fall short.

For more information, see Pages 8-9.

19. **Answer:**

(a) The church that is serious about winning and keeping converts and discipling believers **will follow-up on what happens at the altar.**

(b) Studies have shown that people who are contacted within 24 hours of their first visit are most likely to be back.

For more information, see Pages 8-9.

20. **Answer:**

(a) **"The Lord doesn't want me to be saved."**

(1) Refer them to John 3:16.

(2) Emphasize the fact that God sent His only Son from heaven so that all of us could be saved (See Page 10)

(b) Etc.

For more information, see Pages 9-12.

21. **Answer:**

(a) The first is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the uniquely defining event for Pentecostal churches and people.

(b) The second observation is that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major event in the life of the believer.

For more information, see Page 13.

22. **Answer:**

(a) Make sure the person is saved.

(b) Make sure the person is sanctified.

(c) Make sure they know it's for them.

(d) Etc.

For more information, see Pages 13-15.

23. **Answer:**

(a) It includes power to witness, preparation for receiving spiritual gifts and so forth. There is also the living out in our practical life **"The Fruit of the Spirit."**

(b) Etc.

For more information, see Page 14.

24. Answer:

- (a) Assuming a child's response, or expecting a certain response.
 - (b) Do not assume children will respond in the way you think they will.
 - (c) Let them speak for themselves and respond accordingly.
- For more information, see Pages 15-16.

25. Answer:

- (a) Remember whose team you are on. (See 1 John 4:4)
 - (b) Etc.
- For more information, see Page 16

These lessons were compiled exclusively ONLY FOR USE AT NEW HOPE CHURCH OF GOD for the sole purpose of Altar Workers Training.