

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

How To Stay Safe In A Confused Spiritual World



QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

Copyright © 2019 Cleland Thom.

First Edition.

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.
This work is protected by Creative Commons Licence 4.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Attribution — You must give an appropriate credit.

Non-Commercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

No Derivatives — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

All content enquiries to hello@clelandthom.org

First published 2019.

Cover image: Burning question mark. CC0 Public Domain.

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®
NIV®

Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc. TM
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

About Cleland Thom

God healed me of an incurable back condition in 1978 and later said I would be called a prophet.

I have been called many things since then!

But the Holy Spirit has enabled me to bring words and insights to his church over the past 40 years.

I just provide the eyes, ears and the mouth, and he does the rest.

The results always surprise me.

Despite my fears, flaws and insecurities, Jesus has healed and delivered people, and transformed lives, situations and churches.

I have preached and conducted healing meetings in the UK and Europe and have trained leaders and leadership teams.

I was a trustee of Freedom Road Ministries, a charity that brought God's healing and deliverance to thousands of damaged lives for more than 20 years.

I have spoken and ministered at festivals and conferences including Cross Rhythms, FGBMI and Good News Crusade and have worked on teams assisting Derek Prince, Don Double, Jonathan Conrathe and John Barr.

I served on the Evangelical Alliance's Coalition on Occult Issues and was leading elder of an Elim church in East London.

I have appeared on the God Channel, BBC Radio Sussex, Premier Radio, Cross Rhythms Radio and UCB.

I have also written several books and am a blogger for Cross Rhythms.

I am part of the Yapton Free Church family in West Sussex and have three sons.

By the Same Author

Moses, the making of a leader. Published by Kingsway in the UK and Victory Press in America. Book of the day at Spring Harvest.

Abraham, friend of God. Published by Kingsway.

Broken hearted believers. Published by Kingsway in the UK and Karas Sana in Finland.

Friends of God. Co-written with Jeff Lucas. Published by Crossway.

The Power to Persuade. Published by Pioneer.

Destiny Calls. Published by Canaan Press. Ghost-written for Norman and Grace Barnes.

Donations

I do not make any money from my books, podcasts or resources.

The cost of this book covers Amazon's fees. All other income goes to the charity, Soup from Heaven (SfH), which works with the poor near Cape Town, South Africa.

If you would like to make a further donation to SfH, here are the details:

Sort code: 30 99 93.

Account number: 42450060.

Thank you!

Index

Chapter 1.	Testing Supernatural Power.....	1
Chapter 2.	Testing Supernatural Practices	13
Chapter 3.	Testing Spiritual Manifestations.....	21
Chapter 4.	Receiving Power From Graves	35
Chapter 5.	Return Trips To Heaven.....	40
Chapter 6.	Two-Way Journaling.....	46
Chapter 7.	Fire Tunnels.....	53
Chapter 8.	Laying of Hands	59

Introduction

I am shocked by the compromises that churches have made with the new age, eastern religions and the occult over the past 10 to 15 years.

Practices that were rightly avoided are now enthusiastically embraced and vigorously defended, even though scripture forbids them.

Jesus warned that the elect—that's me and you—could be deceived by signs and wonders in the end times. Well, it's happening, probably in a church near you.

So, now is not the time to stray from God's word, add to it, water it down or make it 'culturally relevant'.

I fear that the yeast of sin is so deeply embedded in our churches that it will take a revival to remove it.

Historically, revivals highlight the church's compromises on biblical truths. So, if you are hungry for a revival, be careful what you pray for!

I yearn to see the sin-convicting, body-healing, demon-bashing, bondage-breaking, captive-freeing power of God impact my life and yours.

But I have written this book to help us avoid the wrong sources in our hunger for miracles. My starting points are

that the bible is a complete and reliable plumb line, and that the Holy Spirit and the word of God never disagree.

I am not criticising anyone, any church or any organisation.

I'm just encouraging people to test everything, including this book, against scripture.

Cleland Thom

Chichester

April 2019

Chapter 1

TESTING SUPERNATURAL POWER

Spring Harvest is the last place you would expect a massive demonic manifestation. But that's what happened.

It was just like Mark 1:24, when Jesus taught in a synagogue and an evil spirit shouted out.

Demons were not on the order of service in the synagogue, or at Spring Harvest.

There, the awesome intercessor, Alec Buchanan, came to the microphone and said: 'It is finished.'

All hell broke loose. Literally. Demonic screams filled the marquee, which was packed with around 5,000 people. Appropriately, it was Good Friday.

John Noble, former chair of the Charismatic Leaders Conference, was there on that windy day back in 1982.

I recently chatted to him on Facebook about it. He recalled how his wife Christine ran up to the disturbed man and said: ‘What is your name?’

‘I am Beelzebub!’ the demon shouted.

Christine replied: ‘Don’t be so stupid, you’re not nearly important enough to be Beelzebub. Get out!’ And the demon left, just like the one in the synagogue.

John recalled that many people needed prayer and counselling before they felt able to make the journey home.

Personally, I was amazed to see the power of God at work.

Many Christians get scared when the bible comes to life. Some prefer a form of godliness that denies the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:5).

In truth, they have nothing to fear. But they are right to be cautious.

Jesus warned that believers could be deceived in the end times (Matthew 24:24). And many people believe that means now.

So, now is not the time to experiment with bible truths, dilute them, deviate from them or add to them.

Satan appears as an angel of light, and counterfeits must be good to be believed. That’s why forgers don’t produce £9 notes.

All supernatural practices must be tested against scripture.

So, how do you do that?

You may find these tips useful:

1. Check your own heart

Deception starts in our hearts. That's why some people are more vulnerable to it than others.

They may have sin, attitudes or hurts that cause them to oppose the Holy Spirit on the one hand, or lead them into wrong teaching on the other.

Acts 2:5ff says that *God-fearing believers* questioned the Holy Spirit's activities at Pentecost. Some mocked them.

So, if you are a God-fearing believer, take care. You may be a step away from rejecting the Spirit's latest work. God's people have doubted or questioned every significant move of God and every revival since Pentecost.

I have to guard against my inner Pharisee, which tends to reject things I'm not familiar with. I must remind myself that if I walk away from the supernatural, I walk away from the very nature of God.

However, this does not mean we should gullibly accept all supernatural activity.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

Our society is riddled with deceptive new age philosophies and practices. Getting involved in them can make us vulnerable to enemy deception and worse.

Ecclesiastes 10:8 says: ‘Whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.’

God loves us so much that he places walls of protection around us.

But some people like to push the boundaries and flirt with practices that the bible describes as ‘detestable’. We need to ask where that fascination comes from.

It’s easy to compromise when there are so many delectable but deceptive practices on the devil’s menu.

If you break through God’s protective wall, you give the enemy the opportunity to bite you.

The book of Jude explains how God’s protection works. Verse 21 sets out *our* responsibility: ‘Keep yourselves in God’s love.’

Then verse 24 explains that *God’s* role is: ‘to keep you from stumbling.’

Our safety is not just God’s responsibility. We must play our parts.

2. Don't make the exception the rule

Some Christians have more supernatural experiences than Jesus did.

Their spiritual lives are a cascade of self-centred dreams, revelations and angelic encounters. And to me, that's unreal.

They end up swapping roles with God—they become 'super' and he becomes 'natural'. Unusual spiritual experiences should be the exception, not the rule.

Paul only had a vision of the third heaven once. Peter only went into a trance once. The 'drunken' behaviour at Pentecost only happened once.

You should not expect any different. If you do, you should question whether your relationship with God is truly based on his word and is balanced by wisdom and discernment.

3. Don't seek experiences

If you just seek experiences, that's what you'll get. It's tempting to put them ahead of a relationship with Jesus. Relationships take time to develop and there are no short cuts.

In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus warned about people who prophesied, cast out demons and did wonders in his name, and said: ‘I will declare to them, “I never knew you.”’

The word *knew* is a Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse. Do I know Jesus that intimately? Am I one with him in spirit?

Do I seek the gifts or the giver? The revival or the redeemer? Miracles or the Messiah?

If we seek Jesus, then he will join us in a relationship that is based on deep friendship, as well as experiences.

4. Test the fruit

If a supernatural experience doesn’t lead to you knowing Jesus better, then you should ask yourself: ‘What was the point?’

Peter behaved like a drunk because of the Spirit’s power at Pentecost—and then changed from being a Jesus denier to a bold evangelist.

Paul was smitten by God on the Damascus Road in Acts 9—and then changed from a being religious zealot with the blood of Christians on his hands to a miracle-working apostle with the blood of Jesus imprinted on his heart.

Isaiah saw the Lord in his majesty and glory in Isaiah 6:1—and then accepted God’s call as a prophet.

If you believe the Holy Spirit made you laugh, scream, fall over, or roll on the floor, then ask yourself: 'What happened to me afterwards?'

If the answer is 'Nothing', you may need to reevaluate the experience. The God of the bible does not provide strange or supernatural experiences for the sake of it.

Some people claim that their self-indulgent spiritual behaviour is 'daddy God playing with his children'. But this rather fanciful justification is based on a flawed understanding of the Aramaic word *abba*.

This word is *not* the equivalent of our term 'daddy' or 'papa'. It merely refers to *one's own father and* was used by Jewish people of all ages. Jesus used it because it was the only Aramaic word available.

In the Journal of Theological Studies, James Barr explains: 'It is fair to say that *abba* in Jesus' time belonged to a familiar or colloquial register of language, as distinct from more formal and ceremonious language.

'It was not a childish expression comparable with 'Daddy'. It was a more solemn, responsible, adult address to a father.'

Yes, God is our loving Father, and we are his children.

He wants to build a deep, intimate relationship with us, based on our love and obedience. He wants to share his tender heart with his sons and daughters.

But biblically, he is not a childish, westernised ‘daddy’. To say so is to create him in our own image.

And he certainly does not expect us to behave like kids, unless we *are* kids!

In fact, Paul says the opposite in 1 Cor 13:11: ‘When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.’

So, if you have displayed childish or unusual behaviour that did not produce spiritual fruit in your life, you may need to revisit it, using the bible as your plumb line.

The devil loves mocking God’s people, because he hates us. And I have seen Christians humiliate themselves in revival meetings while the devil laughed at them.

All true manifestations of the Holy Spirit have a divine purpose. So, ask yourself: ‘Did your experiences draw you closer to Jesus, make you hungry for his word and eager to pray more?’

‘Did they give you greater peace and freedom, bring the fear or love of God upon you, or lead you to victory over sin?’

‘Did they make you more zealous, bolder or more fruitful?’

If not, then treat them with caution, and ask a more experienced Christian for advice.

5. Know people who pray for you

When Jesus warned about false prophets in Matthew 7: 15-20 he said we would *know* them by their fruit.

This time, scripture uses a different word for *know*. It means: 'To know thoroughly, accurately and well.'

I'm cautious about letting anybody pray for me unless I *know* them.

The word of God is the true test of a person's ministry, not their characters.

Good men and women are capable of being deceived, and Satan will readily use them because they are more convincing.

A kind, engaging leader does not necessarily teach the truth or minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, he or she may be more susceptible to enemy attack. Zechariah 13:7 says the enemy will strike the shepherd first.

And if the apostle Peter can get it wrong—and Galatians 2:11 shows that he clearly did—then anyone can, including me, and you.

6. Test experiences against God's word

God's supernatural activities will never look 'normal' to westerners—including some Christians. We live in a secular culture.

But if we stray from ministering as Jesus did in scripture, we will be exposed to criticism from other believers and the world.

We will also be weakened against the enemy. Our authority comes from the bible and we cannot effectively use it as the sword of the Spirit in spiritual warfare if we have compromised on its truth.

People sometimes justify strange supernatural activities by saying they are based on biblical principles. But principles and truths are not necessarily the same.

Most sects, cults and false religions can show you their 'biblical principles'. But they are not Christians.

The new age movement believes in the blood of Christ, the fall of man and the second coming of Christ. But these terms mean entirely different things to them.

So, we need to study God's word, ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth and receive teaching from recognised bible teachers in order to remain 'on message'.

7. Let the Holy Spirit take the initiative

True supernatural activity is always initiated by God. This is what distinguishes it from the occult.

In seances and other occult activities, people call up spirits. But in churches, the Holy Spirit visits us.

In 1 Kings 18, the prophets of Baal tried all kinds of weird and wonderful methods, including self-harm, to activate fire from heaven on Mount Carmel.

But Elijah simply prayed, and the fire of the LORD fell. That's how God's supernatural works. *He* activates it by responding to our prayers and faith.

I once attended a prophetic workshop where the leader showed me a stone and asked: 'What is God saying through this?'

I replied: 'Nothing.'

My answer was based on 2 Peter 1:21, which says: 'For no prophecy was ever produced by *the will of man*, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'

This guy presumed the Holy Spirit would speak on his say-so.

But presumption is not faith and he risked testing God—something the Lord forbids in Deuteronomy 6:16.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

People who produce prophecy or other supernatural activity from their own wills give ground to demonic spirits of divination.

So, to conclude this chapter ... let's be hungry for revival, and cry out to God for miracles, signs and wonders. And don't let fear or hardness of heart stop you from experiencing more of the Holy Spirit.

But use the tests above to keep you straying from the truth.

Chapter 2

TESTING SUPERNATURAL PRACTICES

Hebrews 13:8: says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. So, I wonder why people minister in ways that don't resemble what he did.

He doesn't change, and neither do his methods. They don't need improving or modernising.

I believe falsehood creeps in when people don't see miracles the way Jesus did them. So, rather than persevere and seek God for his power, they try something else instead.

Churches often turn to alternative supernatural activities when the Holy Spirit's power fades.

During the late 1990s, many churches initiated a proliferation of candles, flags and other symbols, plus a frenzy of noise and strange human activity in desperate attempts to fill the gap left by the Holy Spirit.

Tragically, he had long since departed.

And, if we add to the bible's copious accounts of the Holy Spirit's activities, we risk getting into extra-biblical revelation. And scripture is clear about this.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the dangers of deception and told them in 1 Corinthians 4:6: 'Do not go beyond what is written.'

And in 2 Corinthians 11:4 he said it was possible to 'receive a different spirit from the Spirit they received.' Every leader needs to keep that verse in mind.

The bible tells us to test everything, primarily against God's word. So, if you can't find a supernatural experience in scripture, then question it, even if it's part of your testimony.

Let's look at three supernatural practices that need to be treated with caution.

1. Deliverance

I was on a ministry team at a big Christian conference and a commotion broke out. I saw several men pinning a poor woman to the ground.

One of them told me she was demonised and behaving aggressively.

I shouted at them to get off and invited the tearful and traumatised lady to sit down.

After she had regained her composure, it took a few minutes for the Holy Spirit to gently release her from the enemy's grip.

I was disgusted with what I saw that night. But tragically, this kind of ministry is not uncommon. It gives Christian ministry a bad name.

This was not an isolated example. Some excesses have made the press and national TV.

Deliverance will rarely attract positive media coverage, but we don't need to go looking for problems.

Jesus demonstrated that deliverance was simple. He ordered evil spirits to leave, and they did, sometimes after a brief conversation.

Then he gave his disciples the authority to do the same. And they did. End of. They only hit a problem once, in Matthew 17:19. And they were the blockage, not the person receiving deliverance.

So, why have we made deliverance complicated?

The people whom Jesus delivered were quickly freed, transformed and left with peace.

So, question any ministry that doesn't produce similar results.

Remember, too that physical manifestations are not proof of deliverance. Jesus told spirits to keep quiet. When I pray for people, I do the same.

But some ministers use manifestations as a form of discernment, and even encourage them, to make themselves look powerful.

The test is not the nature of the manifestation, but how free you are afterwards.

2. Inner healing

The term 'inner healing' is not used in scripture. Jesus never mentioned it, but said he came to bind up the broken hearted and set captives free.

He certainly didn't use some of the strange techniques that you see today.

Now, I have prayed for hundreds of people and asked God to heal their souls and their spirits. And he does. Jesus wants to bring wholeness to people from the inside out.

But inner healing strays from Jesus' methods. Some of it is weird.

Some ministers take people back into their pasts. But, there's no scriptural basis for this. It's more akin to hypnotism or the occult practice of past life regression.

Some inner healing just props up people's fallen natures, rather than encourage them to put on Christ's new nature. Our old natures are beyond repair and need crucifying, not counselling.

Inner healing can also dig around in people's pasts and unearth things that are best left alone. It's wiser to encourage people to leave their pasts at the cross and then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any lingering problems.

Some practices never seem to reach a conclusion. People say inner healing is like peeling an onion, one layer at a time. But—layers of what? Introspection, usually.

And there are usually a few layers left at £40 a session.

Jesus did not peel off layers. He dealt with root issues—usually sin. Many Christians spend hours counselling people who are not saved, or who are not prepared to bring fruits of repentance.

Inner healing can also encourage people to see themselves as victims, not victors, and this can cause more problems than the issues themselves.

If anyone offers you inner healing, ask them what it involves and for bible references to support what they do.

Then check the scriptures. See how Jesus dealt with people who had similar problems.

3. Enlightenment and cleansing

Some Christians have been seduced by beliefs and practices that come from eastern philosophies, paganism or the occult.

Don't kid yourself that they are biblical. They aren't.

Some teaching encourages you to take your faith to the 'next level'. This can be based on Buddhism, where you strive for higher levels of enlightenment.

However, Jesus only mentioned one level, and that was downwards—humbling yourself by becoming everyone's servant.

The blood of Jesus takes us straight to God's throne, which is the highest level of all. It doesn't take any effort on our part. Anything that requires effort on our part is religion—atonement through attainment.

Some Christians claim to cleanse themselves from negative emotions and experiences by heaving and vomiting. But this is a Buddhist transcendental practice and is not found in scripture.

It teaches that when someone experiences a higher level of consciousness or truth, they transcend their problems, die to their old life and vomit up all the evil that is within them.

Vomiting is also part of Buddhist ayahuasca ceremonies.

In the New Testament, people only vomited when demons were expelled. And this had nothing to do with emotional cleansing.

Now, we *do* have a responsibility to cleanse ourselves.

2 Corinthians 7:1 says: ‘Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.’ But this verse omits the word ‘soul’.

Only God can bring salvation to our souls—our minds, emotions and wills. And he just needs our cooperation, not our convulsions. Psalm 23 says that our Lord restores our souls and he does not lead us besides still waters to be sick.

God cleanses us through:

- Repentance and forgiveness.
- The washing of the water of the word.
- Having faith in the blood of Jesus.
- Prayer.
- The washing of rebirth.
- Renewal by the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

We are called to crucify our fallen natures, not puke them out.

Satan loves to deceive, and he is good at it. So, test all supernatural beliefs and practices against scripture.

Ask yourself: 'Did Jesus do it that way?'

Acts 17:11 says that people at Berea ... *'received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.'*

If we follow this example, we are more likely to remain safe from deception.

Chapter 3

TESTING SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

When the Spirit touches us powerfully, all hell can break loose. Literally. And heaven. And our emotions. This is completely biblical.

Each physical reaction is either caused by the Holy Spirit, a demon, or us.

So, we need to be discerning and test everything. This is biblical, too.

It's not surprising that we physically react when the Holy Spirit touches us. He is the most powerful person on the planet. It would be strange if we *didn't* react when his power collides with our humanity.

Jesus provoked strange reactions from people throughout his ministry, and the apostles did the same in the book of Acts.

In Acts 8:4ff, Philip went to Samaria and ... *'with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed, or lame were healed.'*

Shrieks are nothing new. But they aren't always demonic.

In Matthew 15, a Canaanite woman asked Jesus to help her demon possessed daughter.

It says she cried out, and the Greek words mean she uttered urgent screams or shrieks or used 'inarticulate shouts that express deep emotion'.

Our souls are quite capable of shrieking or producing other odd behaviour when the Holy Spirit touches a deep wound, a bad conscience, or a trauma. We need discernment.

I have been in meetings where people have howled in pain from a wounded spirit, while some undiscerning deliverance enthusiast tried to cast out a demon.

I knew one man who often shook his head violently in meetings.

Someone told him he was 'prophetically' demonstrating God's disapproval of the nation's sin. But there was no peace in his behaviour.

God showed me that he was acting out the way he shook his head as a child when his stepfather came into his room at night to abuse him. God set him free.

Another head-shaker had a stubborn spirit. Her actions showed an unteachable attitude.

Perhaps you were told: ‘Oh, that’s the Holy Spirit’ when you reacted strangely as someone prayed for you.

That manifestation may have been *triggered* by the Holy Spirit but could have emanated from the devil or from you.

Ask someone with the gift of discernment to help you if you’re unsure and use the bible as your plumb line.

Toronto Manifestations

The Toronto revival was one of the greatest moves of the Holy Spirit in history. It is still producing fruit across the world.

I went to many meetings when it started, and the power and presence of God are still difficult to put into words.

I had several life changing encounters with the Holy Spirit, and many others did, too. Long-term pastoral and personal issues were resolved in moments.

The Toronto revival changed my life and is still changing it.

Sadly, YouTube contains many videos that make damning allegations about the revival. Those who make them will

have to answer to God for the way they judge, criticise and slander other Christians. Their behaviour is godless.

Some say that Toronto is the devil's revival.

So, let's get this clear. The devil is getting hundreds of thousands of people saved, healed and delivered. Really?

The devil is raising millions for mission, bringing hope to the poor and changing people's lives across the world. Really?

The devil is planting churches, doing miracles, making disciples and furthering God's kingdom. Really?

Hmmm. Those who claim Satan has initiated a Christian revival are taking 'being a fool for Christ' to alarming levels.

They are also blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

However, the devil *has* been involved in every revival since Pentecost. He always is always there when God moves.

He was present in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world.

And he showed up at Jesus' birth in the form of astrologers from the east. The enemy was happy to worship the baby in order to kill the Son. And the astrologers' visit caused infanticide on a Satanic scale.

The devil plants counterfeit gifts and seeds of deception in every revival.

In the Toronto revival, I believe he exploited people's lack of discernment and bible knowledge.

In the UK, the outpouring hit generations of people who had grown up in newer churches that unashamedly diminished the word of God.

Many significant leaders in the 1970s and 1980s labelled bible study as religious. They mocked people who had quiet times or who brought bibles to church.

Some of them publicly questioned the authority of God's word.

As a result, many church leaders and their members did not have the biblical understanding to test spiritual manifestations.

Instead, they attributed all strange behaviour to the Holy Spirit. And sometimes, they still do, even when people manifest demons, emotional wounds or soulish behaviour.

It's happened before. The Welsh revival stopped when its leader, Evan Roberts, withdrew after criticism about manifestations.

He went to live with the Christian author, Jesse Penn-Lewis and her husband.

Mrs Penn-Lewis wrote in her book, *War on the saints*: 'As is tragically the case in many powerful works of God, some believers became carried away with emotionalism.'

‘Others seemed to be influenced by evil supernatural forces that tried to disrupt this genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

‘In the face of criticism that he was taking glory for himself, and that the revival was full of emotional excesses, the earnest and devout Roberts withdrew ...’

Tragic.

In the same way, some people’s Toronto manifestations were exhibitionism. Other people wanted to be recognised or show how ‘spiritual’ they were.

Others performed to please their leaders or friends. Others manifested demons.

I prayed for people who thought they had been slain in the Spirit. In fact, they had a spirit of death or a spirit of passivity.

Many people roared during the Toronto blessing, and were told it was the Holy Spirit.

But many were manifesting demons, often of sexual uncleanness, which are the loudest. Where do you see the Holy Spirit making disturbing roaring sounds in scripture?

Other people behaved like animals. They barked, snorted, neighed and growled. Again, many of these were demonic manifestations. Where do you see the Holy Spirit barking or making monkey noises in scripture?

Testing Spiritual Manifestations

In the bible, a donkey spoke like a human, not the other way around (see Numbers 22:28).

And Nebuchadnezzar became like an animal and then like a bird because of God's curse, not because of the Holy Spirit (see Daniel 4:33).

In some revival meetings, I saw people jumping, rolling on the floor, shadow boxing or running on the spot. But many of these weird and uncontrolled manifestations either emerged from people's souls or were demonic.

And habitual twitches, grimaces and blowing do not align with the character and the nature of the Holy Spirit in the bible. Jesus blew on his disciples once. He didn't make a religion of it.

It is beyond reason to attribute these types of behaviour to the Holy Spirit, and I believe he has grieved and wept over it.

His fruits are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. But these divine qualities were missing in many manifestations associated with the Toronto revival. They still are.

Unfortunately, teachers and seers who tried to bring wisdom into the mixture were labelled as critical or 'old wine skins'. So, many strange practices became embedded in church life.

They were even regarded as ‘evidence’ of being filled with the Spirit. So, yet again, the enemy successfully infiltrated a sovereign work of God.

Now, people *do* react when the Holy Spirit touches them.

In the bible, we occasionally read about people falling, standing, bowing, dancing, trembling, shaking, being struck dumb and blind, or losing their strength when God touched them powerfully.

I stress the word occasionally.

John Wesley referred to people weeping, wailing and fainting during the revival that he led. But this was usually when they were convicted of sin.

In the UK, some national church leaders called the Toronto outpouring ‘times of refreshing’. They based the name on Acts 3:20: “Times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ...”

But they ignored the previous verse: ‘*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out*, that times of refreshing may come ...’

Some said that the Toronto revival was about refreshment and daddy-fun, not sin and repentance. So, they led people into error by misrepresenting Acts 3:19 and 20.

Some didn't always explain that the Holy Spirit's job was also to convict the world of sin, God's righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

And they failed to teach that 'daddy' was not an accurate description of Father God, or that 'fun' was not a fruit of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the word never contradict each other. It's impossible.

The Holy Spirit will lead us into truth, and he will only express himself in ways that are in the bible. If we don't follow the bible's guidelines, we are saying: 'Anything goes.' And where do we draw the line? What if someone jumps out a window or takes off their clothes?

The supernatural world is deceptive and dangerous without the word of God.

Apart from the bible, there are two other ways to test strange behaviour.

First, look for self-control.

Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and he will never make you lose control by laughing, jumping, falling over or anything else.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:32: 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.'

So, no one can say: 'But I just *had* to prophesy, laugh, roar or speak in tongues, I couldn't stop.'

We can all use self-control if we want to.

The only exception is when God manifests his sovereign presence. This is different to a move of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah and Ezekiel both had terrifying encounters with the Lord. Isaiah was 'undone', and Ezekiel sat in deep distress for seven days.

I had encounters like that after I first got saved. I was left breathless, speechless and unable to move for ... who knows how long? They were shocking displays of God's love and sovereign power that changed me for ever.

But they were different from moves of the Holy Spirit.

The second test is to follow Jesus' example.

He had the Holy Spirit without limit, but there is no record of him twitching, contorting his body, staggering uncontrollably or laughing hysterically for long periods.

Jesus was not weird. Isaiah 42 describes him as an ordinary guy: 'He will not quarrel or cry out. No one will hear his voice in the streets.'

His neighbours confirmed this in Matthew 13:55, when they said: 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Isn't this the carpenter's son?'

They saw he had changed, because he was wise and did miracles, not because he behaved weirdly. I'm sure his neighbours would have said so if that had been the case.

The apostles in the book of Acts were not weird, either.

They saw more of the Holy Spirit's power than many of us will ever see. But there's no record of them behaving strangely under the power of the Spirit after Pentecost.

Their 'drunken' behaviour at Pentecost was an exception. If it had happened again, it would have been recorded in the book of Acts or in the epistles.

There is no mention of Peter doing anything strange when he delivered his second sermon, shortly after Pentecost. No 'drunken' behaviour.

And after that, he was apparently in control of himself when he moved in the power of the Spirit. People were healed by his shadow, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit, not because he did anything strange.

The same applied when the Holy Spirit moved through the other 11 apostles. They saw people healed and delivered, filled with the Spirit and get saved. But they didn't grimace, blow or contort to get a result.

I question why people still manifest the same twitches and contortions that they did ten or 20 years ago. This is as religious as the reciting Creed every week in an Anglican church without meaning it.

Habitual manifestations are unlikely to be the Holy Spirit.

It's easy to make a memorial of a supernatural experience, like Peter did it at the Transfiguration. He wanted to preserve the experience in three shelters.

But Jesus quickly moved him down the mountain and into a new Holy Spirit experience—a difficult deliverance.

Now, you may occasionally have a dramatic or unusual physical experience when the Holy Spirit fills you. But if you can't pull back from it, then test it.

How? See if it's in the bible. Get advice from seers and discerners. And ask: did it draw you closer to Jesus? Did it give you greater peace, freedom or victory over sin? Did it make you bolder or more fruitful?

Also, ask your leaders for bible references to support what happened to you.

I stress bible references. Testimonies are important, but they must align with the word of God, too. They are not reliable on their own. Telling someone: 'Oh yeah, that happened to me,' may just perpetuate a myth or an untruth.

Now, you may still take the view that the Holy Spirit brings strange manifestations. But be warned: you may be adding to scripture.

The bible forbids this in Deuteronomy 4:2 which says: 'Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it.'

This warning is repeated in Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:6 and at the end of the book of Revelation.

And you can see why. Many cults and other religions started because people changed the bible. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists are good examples.

If you stray from the truth of God's word, you will unbuckle the girdle of truth and expose yourself to enemy attack.

You will also blunt the sword of the Spirit. You can't wield God's word like Jesus did against Satan in the wilderness if you have compromised on it or added to it.

Blunt swords don't harm the devil.

The only way that some weird manifestations can be squared safely with scripture is by recognising they are produced by demons or the human soul. You cannot justify them as the work or the character of the Holy Spirit.

I would like to make two other points to bring clarity about spiritual manifestations.

First, Mark 16: 20 says that the Lord worked with the disciples, confirming the word with *signs following*.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

This is important. The word comes first, and supernatural signs follow. If you seek signs without the word, you risk going off track.

Second, you can be deceived and still have a successful ministry.

Romans 11:29 says that God's gifts and callings are never withdrawn. So, don't assume that a leader or someone with a powerful ministry gets everything right.

That applies to me, you and every other Christian.

Chapter 4

RECEIVING POWER FROM GRAVES

Necromancy is banned by God but has found its way into some churches.

It's an ancient form of magic that seeks to connect people with the dead by various means.

The bible explicitly forbids it. God says it's detestable in Deuteronomy 18:10-14. It can cause you spiritual or emotional problems and even bring a curse on you.

Now, I once visited Jerusalem and had a moving encounter with God in the Garden Tomb, in Jerusalem.

But that encounter came from heaven, not from the tomb. The tomb is a historical site and nothing else.

I will treasure that encounter for the rest of my life. But I only met God there because of the blood of Jesus, not because I sat in a tomb in Jerusalem.

To believe otherwise reverts to Old Testament religion, where God's presence rested on places, objects and special individuals.

God's life and power do not exist among the dead.

Now, there's a practice around today called grave sucking. It involves visiting the grave of a powerful Christian, to receive their anointing.

Some Christians see it as a shortcut to obtaining God's supernatural power. Some even lay on the graves.

But this is repackaged necromancy. The New Testament says that spiritual power comes from the Holy Spirit, not an object like a grave.

Jesus told his disciples in Luke 24:29 to stay in the city until they were clothed with power from *on high*—not from his tomb.

And in Acts 1:7, he added: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.'

And that's what happened. Acts 2:1 says a violent wind came *from heaven*.

After that, people were usually filled with the Holy Spirit when other believers laid hands on them or prayed for them.

Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians 12:4 that the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to people and determines who gets them. No graveyard in sight.

The New Testament never mentions people receiving the Holy Spirit because they visited places like a temple or a grave, or any other ‘sacred site’.

Necromancy has found its way into church life because of a flawed understanding of a story in 2 Kings 13:21. This verse says: ‘Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders.

‘So, they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.’

Some people say that this incident proves there is power in dead people’s graves. But the spirits and souls of dead people don’t remain in their bones.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 says that when someone dies, the dust—their bodies—returns to the ground, and their spirit returns to God.

So, what happened to the man who touched Elisha’s corpse? It’s simple. God raised him from the dead. But he didn’t receive Elisha’s power or inherit his prophetic ministry. Scripture would have said if there was a new Elijah or Elisha in town.

The bible only says that the incident took place, but not why. It was a one-off, and we should not use it to justify necromancy. God's word never contradicts itself.

We should not base doctrine on an experience, or on scripture's silence. Supernatural experiences should conform to God's word, not the other way around.

There's no problem visiting a Christian's grave to thank God for their lives, and to pray for inspiration.

But remember, these saints were just clay pots that contained the Holy Spirit's treasure, the same as us. There was nothing special about them, other than their passionate devotion to Jesus. And this can't be passed on.

The Holy Spirit's power and anointing does not reside in people's graves, their corpses or their possessions.

Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches, Hindus and some Muslims revere dead people's graves, their possessions, their homes or their statues.

But for a Christian, this can lead to idolatry, which is another practice that God forbids.

If you have indulged in necromancy, you should confess it to Jesus as a sin.

And remember, in God's eyes, it's sinful even if you did it innocently. Leviticus 4 and 5 make it clear that people need cleansing from unintentional sin.

Why?

If I fall into a dirty ditch unintentionally, I still need cleaning up afterwards. And similarly, if I break God's commands unintentionally, I still need cleansing.

So, tell him that you now recognise your sin, and say sorry. Then turn your back on it and promise never to do it again.

Renounce necromancy and destroy any objects that you believe hold special power.

Then receive Jesus' forgiveness and cleansing.

If the experience left you feeling depressed or fearful, or has disturbed your sleep or caused bad dreams, ask a mature Christian to pray with you.

Chapter 5

RETURN TRIPS TO HEAVEN

I sometimes hear stories about people who say they die, go to heaven and come back again. I am on safe biblical ground by saying: They don't.

Some years back, I watched two well-known Christian speakers hotly debating an issue on TV.

Then one of them said, 'Well, I have been to heaven and God told me what the truth is.'

That's one way of settling an argument! But I had serious doubts about the man's claim.

In some circles, a trip to heaven, or a chat with an angel in your bedroom are spiritual trump cards. But these experiences produce 'super saints' who walk in a higher revelation than the rest of us.

They are a throwback to the Old Testament, where the Holy Spirit only rested on a few chosen individuals.

The New Testament teaches that we are *all* kings and priests (Revelation 1:6).

And Hebrews 10 says we can *all* enter the most holy place by faith in the blood of Jesus. We don't need to die to get an audience with God.

The prophet Joel foretold that the Holy Spirit would be poured on *all* flesh. And Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would lead *us* into all truth.

So, we don't need people to go to heaven to receive a special revelation. God has said all he's going to say in the bible.

These 'return trips to heaven' need testing against scripture, no matter who has had them. I can't find any biblical basis for them.

Moses could not have made it any clearer in Deuteronomy 30: 11. He said: 'Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.

'It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it ...!'

John 3:13 says: 'No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.'

And this verse echoes Proverbs 30:4: 'Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his hands?

‘Who has bound up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is the name of his Son—surely you know?’

The implication is clear—only God and his Son, Jesus, have done the return trip.

Hebrew 9:27 says that people are destined to die *once*, and then face judgment.

And Ecclesiastes 12:7 backs this up by saying that when we die, our spirits return to God and our bodies rot into dust.

These scriptures make it impossible for anyone to credibly claim that they went to heaven and returned.

There are eight individuals in the bible—other than Jesus—who were raised from the dead. And none of them described where they went or what they saw.

It’s like they made a pact of silence. But that was impossible. They did not know one another, and their experiences took place centuries apart.

But silence ruled. Lazarus didn’t write a book about life beyond the grave, and the widow of Nain’s son didn’t relate how he had supper with God and returned with a special message to the Jews.

Now, some people in scripture *appear* to have gone to heaven.

In 2 Corinthian 12, Paul describes how he was caught up to the third heaven.

But he also says he's referring to *visions* and revelations from the Lord. So, it seems his experience of heaven was a vision.

He adds that he heard 'inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.'

Note that word no one! This contrasts with many 'return trippers', who write books, appear on TV and speak at conferences – and do very nicely out of it.

They freely describe what 'no one is permitted to tell' and never explain why that word 'no one' doesn't apply to them.

In Ezekiel 8:3, the prophet describes how the Spirit lifted him up between earth and heaven and carried him in visions of God.

Again, note the word *visions*. And he saw things *between* earth and heaven, not in heaven itself.

Three other biblical figures—Isaiah, Micaiah and Stephen—saw things in heaven, but the bible doesn't say they went there.

I can see the moon as I write, but I haven't been there. And Isaiah and Micaiah don't say what they saw.

They didn't come back with tales of sitting on God's lap, running around gold streets, or meeting people who have died. They just describe God's glory.

John was the only person in scripture who may have been taken to heaven.

Revelation 4 says he heard a voice saying: 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.'

Then he describes: 'At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.'

So, does John's isolated experience justify an industry of heaven-and-back trippers? No. It was an exception.

We must also question why people's descriptions of heaven are different from John's—and often, different to each other's.

To conclude, the bible suggests that people may have had a vision of heaven. But only John went there.

So, you may need to test your own experiences—and other people's—against scripture. It's the only true yardstick.

If you compromise, then you are placing experience above truth and there is no way of testing it.

Some people experience 'heaven' because they have a background of drugs, the new age or the occult.

Return Trips To Heaven

If their pasts aren't correctly dealt with, their visions may come from a wrong spirit. Discernment is essential.

The best way to get to heaven is to believe in Jesus. Then you will go there when you die.

And you won't want to come back.

Chapter 6

TWO-WAY JOURNALING

You are probably wondering why journaling warrants a chapter in this book. Well, please hear me out.

There's nothing wrong with keeping a prayer diary, or a record of what God says and does. I use two.

Moses wrote down what God said, and so did the prophets.

But try Googling 'psychic journaling', and 'new age journaling'. The results may surprise you.

Journaling has been used by occultists for decades, long before Christians latched on to it.

Now, in Deuteronomy 18, God instructs his people: 'Do not learn to *imitate* the detestable ways of the nations there.'

Then he lists several occult practices that existed in Canaan.

He was clear—his people should never imitate occult practices.

In fact, Deuteronomy 12:30 warns that even *enquiring* about other gods can ensnare us. And verse 31 adds: ‘You must not worship the LORD your God in *their way*, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates.’

So, we should never try to make Christianity relevant by *imitating* occult and new age terms in order to make Christianity ‘relevant’.

Sadly, this is happening in churches, and especially among younger Christians. They use terms like channelling, activation and doing ‘readings’.

And then there is journaling.

If you imitate occult and new age terms, it’s difficult to avoid imitating their practices and compromising on God’s word.

It puzzles me why Christians, and indeed whole churches, even feel the need to use occult and new age terms.

God says the practices they represent are detestable. He commands us to abstain from them, not to copy them or rebrand them.

We need to be clear: there are two types of supernatural power: God’s and the devil’s. And it’s not a matter of choosing which one you prefer, like picking your favourite chocolate.

One is light, the other is darkness. One is right, the other is wrong. One brings a blessing, the other brings a curse.

Many new age practices are dangerous and an abomination to God.

Now, to repeat, there's nothing wrong with keeping a diary or a journal. The potential danger comes with two-way journaling.

This is where you write down your thoughts, and then write down what you believe God is saying back. Be warned. This practice is identical to inspirational writing, where new age believers write down a message from a spirit or guide.

There is little, if any convincing biblical justification for two-way journaling. The bible says that God speaks to his people in many ways, and this is not one of them.

Two-way journaling is commonly used by spiritists to contact evil spirits. I used to do it myself when I was involved in spiritism.

We called it automatic writing. An evil spirit took control of my hand and wrote things down. It was like a séance using a pen instead of a glass.

I have examined a lot of Christian teaching on two-way journaling.

Some of it wisely advises people to weigh 'replies' against God's word and explains how to discern different 'voices'.

But other teaching assumes that everything you write is from God. It doesn't explain that journaling opens your mind to thoughts from yourself, the enemy and from God.

And it fails to stress that God primarily speaks through the bible.

I have read many journals and found it difficult to separate God's voice from the person's imagination and other spiritual sources.

It's like trying to take yeast out of some bread. And younger Christians may not have the biblical knowledge to discern it, or to separate truth from error.

So, they get confused and may be deceived.

Two-way journallers also hear so much that they become desensitised to the true, living and active word of God. So, when he says something important, they miss it amid the background noise.

Journallers should realise that God has already said everything that he wants to say in the bible. Everything else—prophecy, dreams, visions, and journals—must conform to scripture and never go beyond it.

People find two-way journaling appealing because they are familiar with instant messaging. They message God and expect him to message them back.

Or they treat him as a divine Amazon Alexa, where you get instant spoken answers to every question.

But Adam and Eve tried that in the Garden of Eden. Satan offered them instant knowledge...no waiting, no seeking. And that didn't end too well.

God doesn't usually answer prayers instantly. Sometimes, he remains silent. And there are more than 30 occasions in the bible when he hid his face.

Jesus had perfect communion with his Father, but he still spent all night praying about which disciples to choose. He didn't find that 12 names just dropped into his inbox.

Hearing God is a discovery. Proverbs 2:1-5 tells us to search for his word like hidden treasure.

Jesus referred to it as a seed. Seeds take time to grow and sometimes die because our hearts aren't right.

Psalms 119:130 talks about God's word being *unfolded*. Jesus did this on the road to Emmaus—he opened the disciples' minds so they could understand the scriptures.

Hearing is often a process, because God gives revelation from the tree of life, not information from the tree of knowledge.

Father sometimes makes us wait for answers, to test our hearts, or because we are not ready to hear what he says. Delays bring patience and maturity.

Journaling doesn't always cover these principles. And it doesn't always explain that God may not respond if we have unconfessed sin in our lives.

We only have access to Father by confessing our sin. We can't bypass the cross and still expect to talk to him. His love is unconditional, but conversation with him is not. Two-way journaling often misses this point.

Unforgiveness will also block communication with God.

And Psalm 66:18 says that the Lord will not hear us if we cherish iniquity in our hearts.

So, if you're planning to go out and get drunk or sleep with your partner, then don't expect God to say anything other than: 'Don't.'

And we can't claim: 'Daddy God won't treat me like that'. As I said earlier, God the Father in scripture disciplines his children. He's not a divine Father Christmas.

So, to conclude—keep a journal. Write down your thoughts, your prayers, prophecies you have received, and things that God has said.

But make sure you are right with him and let *him* decide when and how he wants to speak. It's more exciting.

He is most likely to respond through the scriptures, so make sure you read them.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

Or he may use pictures, dreams, other people, teaching, circumstances, signs, or possibly an angel. If he speaks to you in another way, ask an experienced Christian for advice.

If you want to learn more about talking with our Lord, I wholeheartedly recommend *Hearing God's Voice* by Hanneke van Dam.

It's the best book I have found on this subject.

Chapter 7

FIRE TUNNELS

Fire tunnels have been around for around 25 years and are sometimes used in church meetings.

People stand in two parallel lines, facing each other. That's the tunnel.

Then others walk through, and people lay hands on them, pray, prophesy and give encouragement.

Some people display unusual physical reactions in fire tunnels, and these have caused controversy.

So, we should test fire tunnels, as scripture says.

Let me tell you a story.

I once visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem while several Bar Mitzvah ceremonies were in progress.

Wow! What incredible scenes of joy and celebration.

Families and friends danced and sang round these 13-year-old boys, praying and shouting scriptures and blessings to them.

They lifted the boys high in the air on chairs as others cheered, played music, and shouted encouragements.

Later, I thought: 'If these people had been standing in two lines rather than a circle, it would have been a fire tunnel.'

And that's the point: some Christians are outraged because people receive prayer, prophecy and the laying of hands from people standing in two lines, rather sitting in rows, or standing in front of the stage.

This takes us into Pharisee territory, where we judge by outward appearances.

Who cares if people stand in two lines, sit down, or kneel at an altar rail? God is looking for inward reality, not outward conformity.

It's not as if people are offered drugs and alcohol in fire tunnels ... though to listen to some critics, they may as well be.

I often find that critics of fire tunnels are lukewarm themselves. They lack God's fire, and don't want others to have it either.

I first went through a fire tunnel in 1998 and I loved it.

It was upbuilding, seeing my friends praying for me, and shouting encouragements, bible verses and short prophecies.

Their hearts were for me and for God, even if they *were* standing in two lines.

Now, critics express three main concerns about fire tunnels.

First, that they are not mentioned in the bible.

Well, neither are church buildings, Sunday schools, youth groups, praying to the Virgin Mary or reciting the Creed.

Every church is ‘unbiblical’. And God’s OK with that, provided we don’t sin. The bible gives us guidelines for church activities, not tramlines.

Churches are messy and imperfect, because people like me and you go to them.

It’s easy to reject something we don’t like, rush into scripture to build a case against it, and then say it’s of the devil. God hates that. It’s arrogant and causes hurt and division.

We should take the planks out of our own eyes and stop criticising those who do things differently to us.

New Testament churches were affected by sin, deception and division. But the apostle Paul helped them, rather than judge them or abandon them.

Second, critics say that fire in the bible just represents judgment. But that's not true.

In the Old Testament, God used fire to destroy *and* to bless.

Amos 7:4 describes the Sovereign Lord calling for judgment by fire.

But conversely, God declares in Zechariah 2: 4-5: 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls ... I myself will be a wall of fire around it.'

Fire also represents other things in scripture.

For Moses, it was a *revelation* at the burning bush.

For the children of Israel, it brought *light* in the desert.

For Moses and Elijah, God *spoke* through fire.

God used fire to *prove his Lordship* to the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

And Psalm 104:4 says God makes his servants into flaming fires. That's what happened at Pentecost and can happen in fire tunnels.

So, if fire means God blessing me, speaking to me, proving his Lordship, giving me light and setting me on fire—then bring it on, Lord.

And if I have to walk between two lines of people to get it, then yes, count me in!

Third, people question some of the strange behaviour that sometimes occurs in fire tunnels.

They may be right and must be free to discuss their concerns with their leaders. New Testament leadership involves gentle persuasion, not exclusion.

I explained in Chapter Three that the Holy Spirit may prompt physical manifestations in fire tunnels or anywhere else.

They were a big part of Jesus' supernatural ministry, and Christianity is just dead religion without them. Some people prefer that, and if they want to settle for powerless rituals, they are free to do so.

But people with the gift of discernment should ideally weigh what's happening in fire tunnels and offer to pray for people when they emerge.

For example, one guy was powerfully touched by the Spirit in a fire tunnel and started writhing on the floor.

Some people stood around praising God. But the Holy Spirit showed me he was reacting to an unhealed birth trauma. And God released him when I briefly prayed for him.

I could tell you many other stories like this.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

If you are unsure about anything that happens in a fire tunnel, then test it, but not with your mind made up.

Examine people's manifestations in the bible. What caused them—the Holy Spirit, their own souls, or a demon?

If you are unsure, ask your leader to help you search the scriptures. You may need to search them together.

Chapter 8

LAYING OF HANDS

Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 5:22) not to lay hands on people hastily when he appointed leaders.

And he added: 'Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.'

He was saying that if you lay hands on someone who is impure, you may pick up bad influences.

The warning is there for a reason.

Laying of hands is not symbolic. It builds a connection between the people involved and allows an impartation to take place.

This is why I usually ask people's permission before laying hands on them.

Laying of hands was used in the Old Testament (Leviticus 24:14) to lay a curse on someone, which shows the spiritual power behind it.

The bible says we should only lay hands to:

- Baptise someone in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6).
- Heal the sick (Mark 16-18).
- Appoint someone for a role, duty or task (Numbers 27:18-20 and 8:10; Acts 6:6 and 13: 2-3).
- Release a spiritual gift (1 Timothy 4:14).
- Bless someone (Genesis 48:14; Matthew 19:13-15).

There is *no* scriptural basis for laying hands to impart:

Your Spiritual Legacy

Your legacy will survive you, but you can't control it, impart it, or decide who gets it.

King David's legacy survived him ... battles and psalms, victories and vices, the lot. The same goes for us.

God's Favour and Goodness

God promises favour to those children who obey him. But he decides who is obedient, not us.

Your Anointing, Gift or Ministry

Anointings, spiritual gifts, ministries and ‘mantles’ come from God. We can't pass them on or decide who gets them.

Some people believe that Elijah gave Elisha a double portion of his power or ministry. But you can't give away what you don't have.

If I only possess £10, I can't give you £20, especially if the tenner belongs to my dad.

Elisha's double portion just represented the inheritance a father gives to his oldest son (see Deuteronomy 21:17). And, it worked! Elisha did 28 miracles compared to Elijah's 14.

But the power did not come from Elijah's spirit. This returned to God when he died (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

And it didn't come from Elijah's mantle. This was just a symbolic garment made of animal skin, worn by prophets and kings.

The power came from God. It always does. It doesn't come from us, or from our hands. We are the tap, not the water supply.

Some people collapse under the power of the Spirit when people lay hands on them. But some ministers give him a hand—literally—by pushing people over.

To my shame, I've done it myself, with mixed results. One man was so fat, my best efforts left him unmoved.

But one woman was so frail, I nearly hurled her across the room.

I've been on the receiving end of a 'pusher', too. A preacher from New Zealand shoved me so hard, I nearly knocked myself out on the concrete floor.

Now, Holy Spirit 'drop-downs' are found throughout the bible. But he causes them, not us.

Daniel 10:9 says: 'As I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.'

Note the word *fell*. Not pushed.

Then a verse later, he says: 'And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.'

Note the word *touched*. Not pushed.

It happened to King Saul, too. We are told that ... 'the Spirit of God came even on him ... he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night.'

Even God's keenest 'pushers' might draw the line at ripping people's clothes off!

The disciples 'fell on their faces and were terrified' when they heard God speak in Matthew 17:5.

Laying of Hands

Note the word *fell*. Not pushed.

And some tough Roman soldiers ‘drew back and fell to the ground’ when Jesus identified himself as ‘I AM’ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I don’t think anyone would have been daft enough to push one of Caesar’s finest, although Peter did get useful with his sword.

The Spirit is capable of flattening people without our help. And if he doesn’t, that’s his choice.

So, why do people push?

Personally, I did it to reassure myself and others that the Spirit was working powerfully through me.

It was pride. ‘Hey guys, look! Everyone I touch falls down.’

But if we are clothed with God’s power, we won’t need to push anyone.

So, if someone tries to give you a shove, tell them to push off.

Epilogue

This book may make you question things you have seen or experienced.

If so, seek answers in the bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth. Get other Christians to help you.

The bible is the only reliable plumb line. Not this book. Not the gift of discernment. Not amazing testimonies. Not powerful experiences. Not forceful leaders. Not the latest spiritual craze.

If you find that some spiritual experiences are unbiblical, then you may need to take a decision.

You can either redefine your experiences, change your thinking and take greater care in future.

Or you can accept that experiences are more reliable than the truth of God's word.

This is a dangerous path. But Father God loves you so much, he gives you the freedom to choose.

QUESTIONABLE SUPERNATURAL

Our caring Father God forbids many supernatural practices because he wants to keep us safe.

And yet countless churches have compromised with new age beliefs, eastern philosophies and the occult.

This isn't surprising. Jesus warned that Christians could be deceived by signs and wonders in the end times.

The Welsh revival ended when the leader, Evan Roberts withdrew because of 'emotional excesses and evil supernatural forces.'

Are we making the same mistakes?

This book will help you avoid tapping into the wrong sources of supernatural power.

About the Author



Cleland Thom has been bringing God's insights to the church for more than 40 years. He was trustee of a charity that brought God's healing and deliverance to thousands of damaged lives and has spoken at many churches, festivals and conferences.

He served on the Evangelical Alliance's Coalition on Occult Issues and has written five Christian books.

He is a columnist for Cross Rhythms and part of the Yapton Free Church family in West Sussex.

