

A Supernatural Lifestyle Doesn't Mean Chasing Gold Dust

Nothing silences a skeptic quicker than a bona fide miracle from God. I've known former atheists who became Christians by seeing God's supernatural power show up among everyday people. I'm not talking about minor "miracles" like finding a \$20 bill on the street, but instead limbs growing out, eyesight being restored, tumors disappearing and lame people walking. Like Thomas upon seeing a resurrected Christ's hands, these kinds of healings can cause even the most ardent doubter to confess Jesus as Lord (see John 20:28).

Likewise, countless Muslims around the world today are becoming believers after meeting Jesus in a dream, being healed by Him (without anyone praying or laying hands on them) or having other supernatural encounters with the Lord. It's exciting to see Joel 2:28-29 coming to pass in our day! And if you've read *Charisma* before, you've undoubtedly seen reports of how the Holy Spirit continues to move supernaturally, drawing people to Jesus with signs, wonders and miracles.

But the supernatural also attracts extremists. Not just those radical for Christ (something we should all want to be), but also those who jump from conference to conference seeking their next spiritual high from an angelic encounter, prophetic word or dream interpretation. If you've been to a healing conference, you know that when there's an atmosphere that invites the Holy Spirit to move freely, you draw those with a penchant for spiritual extremes (and immaturity).

That's fine. After all, Jesus handpicked a zealot to be among His 12 disciples, and I'm sure He attracted a fair share of weirdos wherever He went. The problem wasn't and isn't those

people, whom we should love as Jesus did; it's the belief they often hold that supernatural encounters are the end-all experiences. And sadly, this viewpoint still runs rampant within Spirit-filled churches and charismatic conferences as we elevate supernatural experiences over everything else.

Don't get me wrong: God calls each of us to a supernatural lifestyle. He desires for us to live out Jesus' promise that we would do even "greater works" than what He did (John 14:12). But so that we remain focused on Jesus and don't veer into unbiblical mysticism in our desire to see the Holy Spirit move through us, let's remember what walking in the supernatural *doesn't* do.

1) It doesn't supersede intimacy with Jesus. When it comes to living supernaturally, it's tempting to divorce the miraculous works of God with a relationship with Him. Yet Jesus' miracles were always a greater invitation for others to know Him. It's one thing to see the hand of God at work; it's another to, like Paul, consider everything—including signs, wonders and miracles—"a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8, NIV).

2) It doesn't replace the presence of God. God's manifest presence ushers in the miraculous. Too often we think it's the reverse and end up chasing the gold dust or gold tooth fillings more than we care about actually being in the presence of a holy God.

3) It doesn't elevate us in God's sight. The Holy Spirit doesn't use us to do the miraculous because we've done something special, carry a weighty title or have a super-spiritual lineage. He moves through us because of His own nature. Don't let spiritual pride disqualify you from walking humbly before God as a broken yet redeemed vessel He can use for *His* glory.

4) It doesn't trump love. Paul makes it clear that we can speak in tongues, be prophetically gifted, carry supernatural insight and have miraculous faith; but if we don't have love, it's for naught (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

5) It doesn't signify true discipleship. Just because you walk in the miraculous doesn't mean you're a true follower of Jesus. In fact, Christ disowned those who would claim to know Him by the demons cast out and wonders done in His name (Matt. 7:22). And in Matthew 24:24, He warned of "false messiahs and false prophets" who would deceive with "great signs and wonders."

6) It doesn't excuse us from the Great Commission. Why have the "power evangelism" messages from leaders such as Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborne and John Wimber resonated with so many? Maybe it's because they kept Jesus' last command at the forefront of their ministries. Rather than letting hype surrounding supernatural healings lead the way, they kept evangelizing and discipling the nations as the centerpiece.

As believers, we each have the gift of the Holy Spirit available to us. To avoid derailing our opportunity to walk with Him in a supernatural relationship, let's understand what this lifestyle does and doesn't entail.

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