

Are Charismatic Churches Keeping a Short Leash on the Holy Spirit?

I just returned from the Empowered21 Asia Congress in Jakarta, Indonesia. Forty-nine nations were represented, 8,500 people registered, and 14,000 attended as the evening meetings were open to several thousand locals each night. It was historic that 600 leaders from Mainland China attended—the largest delegation to ever attend a Christian congress beyond the borders of China.

A major goal of the Empowered21 movement is to re-waken the church to our desperate need for Holy Spirit empowerment—to reap the harvest and bring kingdom transformation.

In Jakarta I was moved by the hunger and passion for God. The worship was unbridled. Creative expressions in drama, dance and music abounded. The 11,200-seat conference/worship center was tasteful and a tribute to excellence—fit for the kingdom. Asian expressions of faith may actually be more cutting edge than most of what we see in the West.

The sessions were planned, but clearly not scripted. Room was given for Spirit-directed spontaneity. In several sessions attendees were challenged to come and be prayed for—whether for a more Spirit-filled life, healing or freedom from demonic oppression. In the various tracks during the day more practical and interactive instruction was offered.

The eight tracks revolved around the following themes:

- Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Empowered Leadership for Today
- Empowered for Missions
- Empowered Transformation
- Empowering New Generations

- Empowered Foundations of the Holy Spirit
- Empowered to Pray
- Empowered Worship

If there was ever a time we needed the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, it's now. One crisis after another is shaking the globe. Human methods are failing miserably in the face of the immensity and complexity of the problems.

Holy Spirit intervention is what the world needs now.

In recent decades the western church, including "Pentecostal/Charismatic" versions, has kept a short leash on the Holy Spirit. The result? Virtually zero growth and little societal transformation. On the other hand, in the two-thirds world, where the Holy Spirit has been allowed to operate unhindered, there has been exceptional growth and sizable impact beyond church walls.

A coincidence?

The apostle Paul had very little confidence in his human ability. So aware of his weakness He depended on supernatural Holy Spirit power. He said to the Corinthians: "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:3-5)

Sadly, just when our postmodernist Western society is celebrating the supernatural, most of our churches in the west are still stuck in an outmoded modernism. We explain and make truth accessible intellectually; but in the process we have cut out the heart of personal experience and transcendence.

Intentions are usually good. We want seekers to become finders. But we forget that what our generation is really seeking is not only truth, but truth that will set them free.

The Holy Spirit not only blows where He wills, but where He is welcomed. In Jakarta He was invited as an honored guest—and He came.

A distinctive characteristic of Empowered21 is the goal to pass the torch of Holy Spirit empowerment to the next generations—a missing dimension in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles during the past few decades. But at Empowered21 Asia we saw a high number of young people. They came ready to experience their own Pentecost and many left filled and overflowing.

For me, the Empowered 21 Asia Congress was a burst of new oxygen in my lungs.

May the 21st Century be the Century of the Holy Spirit—not only in Asia, but around the globe.

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