

Holy Ghost Smackdown!

When a pushy preacher shoved me to the floor, I got a sore neck—and an education

We see obvious evidence of the Holy Spirit's work whenever sinners are converted, backsliders repent, bodies are healed or self-centered believers are broken by God. I love it when the Lord shows up in church gatherings. But I *don't* appreciate it when people fabricate spiritual manifestations to prove God is using them.

A few years ago a popular charismatic preacher spoke at a meeting I attended at a church in Orlando, Fla. After his message he asked all ordained ministers to run to the platform so he could lay hands on them. Immediately this man's beefy bodyguards began grabbing people, dragging them onto the stage and holding them in place until the evangelist could pray for everyone.

I felt queasy about this spectacle. It resembled a charismatic version of World Wrestling Entertainment: Lots of smacking noises, falling bodies and cheers from the excited crowd. (We Christians seem to love a good show, even if it is staged!)

I cringed as I watched the bizarre theatrics. But before I could move to the side of the auditorium, one of the evangelist's 220-pound goons strong-armed me onto the platform. When I looked up, the preacher was heading toward me with his arms flailing. I tried to duck, but when he got close enough he shouted "In the name of Jesus!" and slapped me across the face. I tumbled to the floor.

My face and neck were stinging with pain. I had not been slain in the Spirit, as some observers assumed. I had been assaulted. This man used his own strength to make people think

he had imparted a special anointing to me. All he did was give me a headache.

I made up my mind at that point I would never push people during prayer, not even gently, or do anything to manipulate the Holy Spirit's power. I want the real thing. I don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit by pretending.

So why do some Christians insist on pushing people when they pray for them? Some do it out of ignorance or because they've seen famous evangelists doing it. Others push to force spiritual results. They think if enough bodies end up on the floor, God showed up.

I know there are times when people can be so overcome by the Holy Spirit's presence that they become weak in the knees. King David trembled in God's presence, and the priests in Solomon's day could not stand in the temple because of the heaviness of God's glory (see 1 Kings 8:10-11). But there is no biblical precedent for forcing people to fall.

In Exodus 30:22-29, God gave Moses the recipe for the holy anointing oil that was to be used in the tabernacle. God warned him about cheapening the oil, mixing foreign substances into it or diluting it. The Holy Spirit is *holy*! People in the Bible who tampered with the holy recipe (such as Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, who offered "strange fire" on the altar in Lev. 10:1-2) suffered serious consequences. We should never be flippant about God's power.

Today I fear we have blended the anointing with strange ingredients. Some preachers dangle God's promises over people's heads and offer elusive promises of prosperity "if people will call this number now and give a donation." Others fake certain body movements to make people think they are super-charged by God.

Still others mix exotic anointing oils ("on sale now for only \$!") or they hawk "anointed" candles, suggesting that certain

scents can trigger the Spirit's power. That's witchcraft.

Please search your heart. Have you lied to the Holy Ghost by faking the anointing? Have you pushed people to the floor when you pray for them, rather than trusting the Lord to do His work? Have you become addicted to sensational experiences, always craving a sign yet never satisfied with Jesus alone?

How sad that a movement that began in the Spirit has wandered so far from the holiness of God. He sees through our charade. Let's repent of our childishness, throw out the fake oils, stop making false claims, and quit abusing and manipulating people so we will look spiritual.

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