

How Do Physical Manifestations Fit into Your Theology?

Growing up in charismatic churches you see a lot. Going up to the altar for prayer, you might see people fall to the ground and jerk around or laugh hysterically. Watching and even experiencing some of these things may leave you wondering whether these are from the Holy Spirit or something else entirely.

Jeremiah Johnson posted to Facebook how to discern whether the physical manifestations are from God. He calls it the "Johnathan Edwards Test." Edwards was a prominent theologian in the 1700's. During the First Great Awakening, people were falling to the ground and manifesting. Edwards often warned of deception saying, "Satan will keep men secure as long as he can. But when he cannot do this he will endeavor to drive men to extremes so to dishonor."

In Johnson's post, he pointed to the five tests to run these experiences through:

1. Does it bring honor to the person of Jesus Christ?
2. Does it produce a greater hatred of sin and a greater love for righteousness?
3. Does it produce a greater regard for Scripture?
4. Does it lead people into the truth?
5. Does it produce a greater love for God and man?

Johnson says, "You have to sincerely wonder how much of the 'physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit' in the charismatic/Pentecostal movements would survive these tests? What about all our fire tunnels and impartation services? Is all the laughter, crying, shaking, and being 'slain in the Spirit' producing any of the five realities mentioned above?"