

John Wimber's First Healing Miracle Shows Why We Still Need the Holy Spirit

"I'm afraid sometimes the Holy Spirit stands at the back of our churches with his arms folded and can't really do anything because we've got it all figured out."

Author Dean Merrill says this quote from Agnes Sanford, who founded the inner healing movement, still applies today. He tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of *Greenelines* on the Charisma Podcast Network that the Holy Spirit must be saying, "Well, you people think you know what you're doing. Just go ahead and do your things, I guess, because it seems like you don't need Me anymore."

Merrill's new book, *50 Pentecostal and Charismatic Leaders Every Christian Should Know*, shares the stories of Spirit-filled leaders from as far back as Maria Woodworth Etter all the way up to Gateway Church's Robert Morris and beyond. Believers today have much to learn from these leaders about the Holy Spirit's power, Merrill says, pointing to a story from the early days of the late John Wimber's ministry.

"He's starting this little church in Anaheim, California," Merrill says. "He's preaching through the Gospel of Luke. And time and again in Luke, you get these healing stories, probably more than in any other Gospel."

The church was meeting in a gymnasium, and Merrill says Wimber gave an invitation for those in need of healing: "Come up on the platform. We'll pray for you."

"And the trouble is, nobody's getting healed. Just nobody. It is so discouraging," Merrill says.

Nine or ten months went by with no healings until one Monday morning, Wimber's phone rang. A man who had just started attending his church asked him to come over and pray for his wife.

"Pastor, I need your help. I just got a new job. This is my first day on the job. I have to go to work, and my wife is sick. ... she's got a terrible fever; she can't get out of bed. Who's going to take care of the kids? You've got to come over and pray for her."

Wimber reluctantly obliged, praying over the woman in what Merrill says he described as a "short, faithless prayer."

"And then I turned around, and I started explaining to the man, 'Well, you know, sometimes we don't know how these things work, and healing is sometimes ...' I had this speech down pat; I remember," Wimber said of his response after the prayer.

"'And the guy isn't looking at me,'" Wimber recalled. "He's looking over my shoulder, and there's this big smile on his face. And I turn around, and the woman is sitting up on the edge of the bed; she's looking great. And I go, 'Well, what happened here?'"

The woman told Wimber she felt fine and even offered to make him some breakfast, Merrill says.

"I went out to the car, drove a block away, and I'm shouting, 'We got one! We got one!'" Wimber said.

That began a healing ministry that went all through what became the Vineyard movement, Merrill says, sharing another quote from Wimber: "I'd rather lay hands on 100 people and have only 1 healed than to lay hands on nobody and have nobody healed."

✖ For more inspiring stories on the Pentecostal-charismatic movement from author Dean Merrill, listen to the entire

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