

The Dangerous Myth Surrounding Spiritual Gifts

There's a myth going around that the exercise of spiritual gifts—particularly the more noticeable ones, like healing or miracles or the vocal expressions—are the domain of long-time, experienced veterans in the faith. Pastors, evangelists and other important types may be used by the Holy Spirit in these ways, but not us ordinary folk in the pews.

Where does the Bible say this? Didn't the apostle Paul write to the Corinthian church, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7)? A little later, he added, "For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Cor. 14:31).

Meanwhile, the apostle Peter wrote, "As everyone has received a gift, even so serve one another with it, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10).

I listened not long ago to a sermon about spiritual gifts in which the speaker illustrated the "word of knowledge" by referring to Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. The Lord had blown her away by revealing that she had been married five times and was now living with No. 6.

I sat there thinking to myself, *Well, duh—this was the Son of God talking! I should hope so.*

In contrast, I researched a recent case out of Tampa, Florida, in which an immigrant named Ali had left Islam and come to Jesus as a result of asking a Christian pastor about two of his recent dreams. Soon thereafter, he received a spontaneous baptism in the Holy Spirit, which empowered him to start sharing his faith at the restaurant where he was a cook. One waitress, who was expecting a child and having troubling symptoms, said she feared she might lose this baby. Ali prayed

for her right there in the kitchen. In due time, the woman delivered a healthy child.

The restaurant boss, however, wanted Ali to tone down all this “religious stuff.” But the day soon came when she seemed worried about something. Ali said, “You seem different today. But God told me to tell you that the things that look so bad now will be cleared up in three days!”

“Look, Ali,” she said with a scowl, “I’m telling you again—keep your God to yourself! You’re getting out of hand with this.”

“I’m sorry,” Ali replied. “But I really did hear him say that, and he told me to tell you.”

“Well,” she snapped, “just fix the eggs and pancakes, will you?”

Three days later, however, she came back to apologize with tears in her eyes. “You would not have known, but there was a problem with the audit here—the numbers were off, and I couldn’t figure out why. I could have lost my job over this. But they found the error, and everything balanced out after all.”

Ali, the spiritual rookie, could only smile.

The work of the Spirit through a willing and open vessel is not as complicated as many have thought. It is entirely normal in the flow of Spirit-filled living. His gifts, after all, are gifts. We don’t earn them. We don’t pay for them. He simply hands them to us, like Christmas gifts, out of his own generosity and love.

Whether we have walked with the Lord for three decades or three months, it doesn’t matter. He wants to bless and enrich his people with his abundant touches of grace. {eo}

*The story of Ali is one of many in **Dean Merrill’s** new*

book Miracle Invasion: Amazing True Stories of the Holy Spirit's Gifts at Work Today, now being released from BroadStreet Publishing. Merrill is the author or co-author of more than 45 titles, some of which have won major awards in the Christian publishing industry and appeared on The New York Times best-seller lists.