

What Really Happens in Trances?

I've never fallen into a trance, but I know people who have—and it's totally biblical. We only see people falling into trances a few times in the Bible, but there is enough evidence from the Word of God and from modern expressions to back up this scriptural, supernatural experience.

Maria Woodworth-Etter, a powerful voice from the late 1800s and early 1900s who was moving in the supernatural before Azusa Street or the charismatic movement made its mark on church history, was known for trances.

Indeed, Woodworth-Etter was a Pentecostal forerunner. She saw great outpourings of God's Spirit in the Midwest before entering the West Coast to win souls for God. In Oakland, California, she bought an 8,000-seat tent in 1889 and packed it out with people hungry to watch God move. He didn't disappoint. Healings, signs, wonders and miracles were commonplace in Woodworth-Etter's meetings.

Of course, miracles always draw crowds and critics, and it was no different for this female pioneer. However, she didn't see the attacks from fellow healing evangelist John Alexander Dowie coming. Dowie, himself moving in miracles, at first praised Woodworth-Etter but soon accused her of propagating a great delusion because people were falling into trances left and right under her tent. He called it "trance evangelism."

Woodworth-Etter also drew attention from the media. The *Salem* report documents her falling into a trance on March 24, 1904, and she "had to be laid on the platform for over an hour." The *Indianapolis Star* also reported "Woodworth-Etter Goes into a Trance" in a 1904 edition. In 1913, The *Boston Globe* reported, "Took No Money for Healing; Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for

Cures.”

There are accounts of Woodworth-Etter falling into a trance at a St. Louis meeting and standing like a statue for three whole days as attendees of the World Fair looked on in amazement. It's not clear if the trance actually lasted that long, but she was known to fall into trances that left her frozen for hours at a time—and so did many others who attended her meetings.

“People fell into trances, experienced visions of heaven and hell, collapsed on the floor as if they'd been shot or had died,” reports Revival Library. “Thousands were healed of a wide variety of sicknesses and diseases and many believers, even ministers, received mighty baptisms of the Holy Spirit.” (Find out more about this in my new book, *The Seer Dimensions*).

Often, unbelievers who came in to disrupt the service were encountered by the power of God and themselves fell into a trance. Reporters ridiculed her, her husband lashed out at her in a public letter and she lost the support of well-known ministers in her day, but she continued preaching the gospel and people continued getting saved—and falling into trances. Woodworth-Etter pointed people to scriptural references of trances and believed it was the power of God.

Criticized in her day, she goes down in Pentecostal history as a pioneer, a forerunner who withstood strong persecution to steward the glory of God in her meetings. We need more like Woodworth-Etter in this hour.

In the *Weekly Evangel*, Robert J. Craig, an early Pentecostal leader and pastor of Glad Tidings Temple in San Francisco, honored her and encouraged ministers to study her life and ministry: “If the Pentecostal ministry would study her life and count on God, expecting the supernatural to be revealed in each meeting, what a mighty agency ours would be in the hands

of God.”

Amen. And think about it for a minute. What would happen if skeptics of the gospel entered a Holy Ghost meeting and fell into a trance and saw visions of hell? Maybe trance evangelism isn't such a bad idea. {eoa}

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