

6 Really Bad Charismatic Doctrines We Should Retire

I will never apologize for being a charismatic Christian. I had a dramatic experience with the Holy Spirit many years ago, and nobody can talk me out of it. I love the Holy Spirit's abiding presence in my life and His supernatural gifts. I love to prophesy, speak in tongues, pray for the sick and see people changed by the Spirit's power.

At the same time, I'm aware that since the charismatic movement began in the 1960s, people have misused the gifts of the Spirit and twisted God's Word to promote strange doctrines or practices. Seeing these errors never caused me to question the authenticity of what the Holy Spirit had done in my life. But I knew I had to stay true to God's Word and reject any false teachings I encountered.

My simple rule is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22: "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil" (NASB). In other words: Eat the meat and spit out the bones.

As I have traveled throughout the body of Christ in recent years, I've experienced the good, the bad and the ugly. I love God's people, and I know there is a healthy remnant of Spirit-filled churches that are striving to stay grounded in biblical truth. But I also know we have reached a crossroads. We must clean up our act. We must jettison any weird doctrines we might have believed or practiced that are hindering our growth today.

Here are a few of the worst errors that have circulated in our movement in the past season. You may have others that need to be added to this list. I believe we are grieving the Holy Spirit if we continue to practice these things:

1. "Touch not My anointed." Chances are you've heard this weird doctrine based on 1 Chronicles 16:22. In an attempt to discourage any form of disagreement in the church, insecure leaders tell their members that if they ever question church authority, they are "touching the Lord's anointed" and in danger of God's judgment. Let's call this what it is: spiritual manipulation. It creates worse problems by ruling out healthy discussion and mutual respect. Church members end up being abused or controlled—or even blacklisted because they dare to ask a question.

2. Dual covenant. We charismatics love and respect Israel. Some of us even incorporate Jewish practices in our worship—such as wearing prayer shawls, blowing shofars or celebrating Hebraic feasts. These things can enrich our Christian experience—but some leaders go too far when they begin to teach that Jews don't need to believe in Jesus Christ to experience salvation. They imply that Jews have special access into heaven simply because of their ethnic heritage. This is a flagrant contradiction of everything the New Testament teaches.

3. Inaccessible leadership. In the 1980s, some charismatic ministries began to teach pastors and traveling ministers that in order to "protect the anointing," they must stay aloof from people. Ministers were warned to never make friends in their congregations. Preachers began the strange practice of skipping worship on Sunday mornings—and then appearing on the stage only when it was time for the sermon in order to make a dramatic entrance. Shame on these people for attempting to justify arrogance. Jesus loved people, and He made Himself available to them. So should we.

4. Armor-bearers. The same guys who developed item No. 3 started this strange fad. Preachers began the practice of surrounding themselves with an entourage: one person to carry the briefcase, another person to carry the Bible, another to carry the handkerchief. Some preachers hired bodyguards ... and

even food-tasters! The armor-bearers were promised special blessings if they served preachers who acted like slave-owners. Reminder: True leaders are servants, not egomaniacs.

5. The hundredfold return. Before his death in 2003, Kenneth Hagin Sr., the father of the faith movement, rebuked his own followers for taking prosperity teaching to a silly extreme. In his book *The Midas Touch*, he begged preachers to stop misusing Mark 10:28-30 to suggest that God promises a hundredfold return on every offering we give. Hagin wrote, "If the hundredfold return worked literally and mathematically for everyone who gave in an offering, we would have Christians walking around with not billions or trillions of dollars, but quadrillions of dollars!" Hagin taught that the hundredfold blessing refers to the rewards that come to those who leave all they have to serve God in ministry.

6. Money cometh. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for giving money publicly to be seen by others. Yet in the 1990s, some charismatics got the wild idea that God would release a magical blessing if we would drop wads of dollar bills at the preacher's feet while he was in the middle of his sermon. Leroy Thompson of Louisiana popularized this flamboyant practice with his infamous 1996 sermon, in which he encouraged people to shout in King James English, "Money! Cometh to me now!" Then the people would run to the front of the auditorium to pour cash into his coffers. The money came, for sure, and more cash-hungry preachers jumped on the bandwagon. Taking an offering became a form of exhibitionism, and Christians began viewing their offerings like lottery scratch-offs.

God requires holiness not just in our behavior but also in our doctrine. Let's discard these and any other foolish teachings that have brought confusion and dishonor to the body of Christ.

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