

Beware of Hyperspiritual, Lone Ranger Christians

I'm unapologetically a charismatic Christian, and I believe all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to us today. It's tragic that so many churches in this country limit or even deny the validity of the Holy Spirit's power.

Yet in my years of ministry in the charismatic movement, I've learned that if the devil can't convince a church to reject the Holy Spirit's work, he will push people to the opposite extreme so that they misuse or abuse the gifts of the Spirit and drift into deception. Our critics call us "charismaniacs" when this happens—and too often we deserve the label.

In my recent travels I've noticed an upsurge in hyperspiritual "super prophets" who make wild claims and attract fans based on their fascinating revelations. These people claim to be on a higher plane than everyone else, but the fruit of their ministry is never good in the end. They may say they have secret biblical knowledge; they may claim to be in communication with angels; they may simply exude an attitude of spiritual superiority—and people are gullible enough to fall for it.

Nothing is more dangerous to genuine revival than a hyperspiritual charismaniac who flaunts his gifts while displaying a lack of character. These elitists are slick; they can get sincere Christians to say "Ooooh" and "Aahhh" when they minister. But in the end, they bring division in the church.

In the book of Jude, these renegade imposters are compared to comets because they aren't accountable to anyone in the church. False prophets, Jude said, are "wandering stars for whom the gloom of darkness has been kept forever" (see v. 13).

Here are seven indicators of a hyperspiritual person. Heed the

warning signals!

1. Their feet rarely touch the earth. Super spiritual people live in the ozone layer. They are not in touch with normal life. They may spend lots of time in prayer (or claim to), and they may even fast or impose severe discipline on themselves, but their relationships are dysfunctional. Remember: Jesus did not live His life like a guru, floating around while dispensing spooky wisdom. He lived in the real world and interacted in a practical way with people. So should we.

2. They place too much emphasis on spiritual manifestations. God speaks to us through His Spirit, and He can use dreams, visions or prophetic words. Yet His message always flows with love and brings peace. On the contrary, a spirit of weirdness usually follows hyperspiritual people who claim to receive constant revelations. Paul warned the Colossians about people like this when he said: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen" (Col. 2:18a, NASB).

3. They find it difficult to submit to authority. Hyper-spiritual people are usually full of pride and believe they are more gifted than pastors or other spiritual leaders. Therefore they find it impossible to receive instruction or correction from anyone. They have no mentors because they feel they are spiritually superior. They become renegades, and they separate themselves from the body of Christ.

4. They crave attention. A super-spiritual person often lacks affirmation and love. Their emotional deficit pushes them to seek attention from people, and they find it by impressing others. Some people who seek to serve as intercessors or counselors, or even as members of the worship team, may actually need inner healing before they can be effective in these roles. If you give these people a microphone before they are healed, you will regret it!

5. They develop a victim mentality. Most of the hyper-spiritual people I know believe they are constantly being attacked by the devil—as if they are his biggest threat. The slightest problem in life—from a traffic ticket to a hangnail—becomes evidence of a demonic conspiracy against them. We need to remind them they are not the center of the universe.

6. They become harsh and judgmental. Charismaniacs who don't find a receptive audience for their visions and prophecies sometimes become bitter and resentful—and they end up condemning everyone to hell for rejecting them. I am aware of situations in which angry Christians ended up splitting a church because they became convinced the pastor was evil or the whole congregation was in sin. People who are full of bitterness will become instruments of the devil. Deal with them before they hurt others!

7. They often end up in deception. Super spiritual people who reject correction or spiritual covering are headed toward disaster. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, started that cult after he declared that all Christian denominations were false churches. He cut himself off from the body of Christ and started the biggest heresy of the 19th century. People who become so focused on their spiritual superiority end up denying Jesus and justifying their own sinful behavior.

Church should be a healthy place. Don't let hyper-spiritual people take you or your congregation down the wrong road.
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