

The Cloud Has Moved

When the buzz of the charismatic movement was its loudest in 1975, the year Charisma magazine was first published, Christians were full of excitement about how they'd been touched by the Holy Spirit's joy and power. Our faith suddenly had been renewed. The Bible came alive to us, and we fell in love with Jesus all over again. It was a refreshing season.

In response, many of us left our traditional churches and started new ones. We traded our hymns for upbeat choruses. We raised our hands in praise and even dared to dance. We spoke in tongues, laid hands on the sick and witnessed in public. We learned how to activate our faith, how to give prophecies and how to bind the devil. We were moving on with God!

But in the early 1980s our movement became inwardly focused. We started jumping on bandwagons and chasing goosebumps. We began pursuing our blessings. We sought the Holy Spirit's touch so we could claim our anointing and our divine prosperity. Some evangelists even taught us to "write our own tickets with God" by demanding that He fulfill all our materialistic desires. What began as sincere Christian faith became infected with nauseating selfishness.

At that point, I believe the Lord withdrew His blessing and moved on. He wasn't abandoning us; He was inviting us to grow up. But many of us were too comfortable with 1980s-style charismania to bother with spiritual maturity.

So the Lord let us languish in the wilderness until we realized that His cloud had relocated. Then, in the 1990s, many of us realized that we desired His presence more than we craved stale manna.

As we enter this new millennium, I believe the Holy Spirit is taking us to three key destinations:

The place of brokenness. We charismatics have dished out enough hype. Let's quit pretending. Let's drop all the ecclesiastical titles and stop exalting men. People in the world see our arrogance, and it makes them gag.

The cloud of God's presence dwells with the humble. Let's ask Him to burn out the dross of self-promotion. He can pour out His power only through vessels that have been emptied.

The place of evangelism. The Holy Spirit intends to break out of the confines of our churches so He can take salvation to the streets. He desires to invade the media, the youth culture and every corner of our society in this next move of God. If we want to flow with His mission then we must open our hearts to the lost.

He didn't fill us with the Spirit so we could play with His power or use it simply for our own benefit. We're supposed to give it away!

The place of His manifest glory. What would happen in the year 2000 if we knelt before the throne, like Isaiah did, and asked Him to touch us with holy fire? What would the church look like if our fleshly religious agendas were fried to a crisp?

We don't know because we haven't yet seen God's glory break out in our generation. Are you willing to follow His cloud until we see genuine revival?

Let's resist the temptation to set up camp where it's comfortable.

I want to go where God is, even if I must leave behind the songs and sermons of yesterday.