

## Introduction

Remember from last week that the spectrum of Restorationism ranges from healthy to pretty "flaky". Tonight we will watch a video that contains some of this spectrum, discuss the questions below, and then spend some time looking at what the Bible says about common Restorationist practices such as slaying, tongues, prophecy, etc. The goal is to establish BALANCE: positive categories, while avoiding excess.

**View video:** ABC News: "In the Name of God" (featuring John Wimber and Rodney Howard-Browne) and Time/CNN: Impact (featuring Benny Hinn).

Video viewing questions:

Note: The Vineyard movement is comprised of hundreds of churches which vary widely in practices and emphases.

1. Why do so many people in our culture find Restorationism attractive?
2. How were the ministries of these three men (Hinn, Wimber, and Howard-Browne) similar? How were they different?

Similarities:

All expect overt supernatural signs and wonders to be a normative part of Christian ministry. They all call things signs and wonders that fall outside the Bible's description of a sign and wonder. (Biblical signs and wonders are visible, instantaneous, and complete.)

Differences:

Wimber is distinguishable from the other two in that...

He has a more developed theology to justify his ministry practices.

His view of tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is theologically mainstream.

He also demonstrated the willingness to recognize and discipline excess (Kansas City Prophets, Toronto Blessing).

3. Should we critique people's spiritual experiences, especially when such experiences give them hope?

As we'll see tonight, we will need at times to be able to discern:

- the experience itself as from God or not; and other times,
- the pursuit of the experience or
- results or
- underlying theology (EG. "Triumphalism" - the expectation of participation in Christ's victory -- to the extent we forget that we are in a fallen world and that our role as Christians is to serve God and suffer for his cause -- is not biblical - note Paul's sarcasm on this subject in 1 Cor. 4:8-14).

4. The Bible doesn't specifically forbid things like slaying in the Spirit, "holy laughter," dramatic inner-healing, etc. So how do we justify criticizing ministries that emphasize these things?

### Specific Issues: Slaying in the Spirit

Definition

This is said to be an intense encounter with God through the agency of another Christian.

Phenomena

Falling back, fainting, uncontrollable laughter/ sobbing; animal noises; paroxysms.

Claimed Results

Inner healing; spiritual renewal; physical healing; demonic deliverance; "hearing" a call from God. The claim that this experience brings inner healing or spiritual renewal is suspicious at best. This isn't even described ever happening in the epistles, let alone prescribed and/or emphasized. How can it be considered important?

Scriptural Examples

There are none in the sense that these churches practice it. The scriptural examples of Christians fainting or being paralyzed pertain to direct encounters with God, angels, or the risen Christ -- *not* through human mediators (Daniel 8, 10, Matthew 17 [Peter, James, & John], Acts 9 [Paul], Rev. 1 [John]). If they were seeking God, it was for his guidance, not an experience.

And their response of falling down was fear of God, not being slain. Laying on of hands in scripture was for healing or sending out for ministry, but no phenomenon like this manifestation of slaying is narrated.

Meetings:

These meetings often contain suggestion, group pressure, manipulation, etc. (see below).

John Stott's reply to: "What do you make of the Toronto Blessing?"

**(John Stott)** "I never want to criticize anything which people claim has been a blessing to them in terms of a greater awareness of the reality of God, or a profounder joy, or an overwhelming love for God and for others, or a fresh zeal in evangelism. It's not for me to doubt any of these things. My major questions concern three areas. First, it is a self-consciously anti-intellectual movement. I listened on tape to the first person who brought the Toronto Blessing to Britain. This person said: "Don't analyze, don't ask questions. Simply receive." I think that is both foolish and dangerous. We must never forget that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Secondly, I cannot possibly come to terms with those animal noises, and it grieves me very much that-- as far as I know--no charismatic leaders have publicly disassociated themselves from them, as they should. The whole Bible tells us that we are different from the animal creation; it rebukes us when we behave like animals and calls us to be distinct. Nebuchadnezzar's animal behavior was under the judgment, not the blessing, of God. My third problem concerns all the falling. Even charismatic leaders have pointed this out, that on the few occasions in the Bible when people have fallen over, they have all fallen forward on their faces, and they have all done so *after* they have been granted a vision of the majesty, holiness, and glory of God. In the Toronto experience, however, people fall backwards without any previous vision of God. Those three things trouble me." (John Stott, "Basic Stott," by Roy McCloyghry of *Christianity Today*; Jan 8, 1996; p.32.)

Sometimes the experience may be from God and therefore good--it's just that they may be drawing invalid conclusions from their experience. But in principle at least, sometimes the experience itself (while real - they actually "feel" something) may be wrong in that it came from the wrong source. Stott's criticism about the Toronto Blessing barking--his point is that this DOESN'T come from God because it dehumanizes people.

### **Specific Issues: Tongues (What is the gift of tongues & how should it be practiced?)**

Observations about the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10,30; 13:1; 14:1-19).

- Definition: *self-edifying* (vs 4); non-cognitive (vs 2b,14); prayer aid (vs 2a)
- From 1 Cor. 14, we gather that it is a *real language* with vocabulary, syntax, etc. -- not repetition of a few syllables.
- Is a spiritual gift *given to some*, not all, Christians (1 Cor. 12:30) - not an experience all Christians should have at least once, or proof of being "Spirit-filled", etc.
- Its *primary usage is private* (vs 18,19), though it can be used in meetings if it is interpreted (vs 27). Evidently, the gift of interpretation was usually given to those who had the gift of tongues (vs 13).

Paul lays down several restrictions for tongues in a corporate setting so that edification of others remains the primary focus (vs 12,26b, and in context, 12:7,25,26). Paul was not advocating its corporate use, but rather regulating it (1 Cor. 14:20-40):

- Exercise care when non-Christians or new Christians are present (1 Cor. 14:16,23).
- Only a few (2 or 3) may speak in tongues (vs 27). I.E. - it should not be center-stage of corporate meetings.
- They must speak in an orderly way, taking turns. NOT all speaking together, interrupting one another (vs 27).
- All public tongues must be interpreted (vs 27b,28).

Paul tells them not to forbid it (v. 39) but certainly regulates it (above). In Xenos, a fair number of people speak in tongues. Most do this in private, and report that it helps them express themselves to God, refreshes them, and motivates them for ministry and sanctification. The proper corporate setting for tongues would be in a home group, study group, or prayer group-- following Paul's restrictions.

"Why aren't our home group meetings just like what Paul describes in 1 Cor. 14:26?"

- Paul does not prescribe this. He describes it as what was going on in Corinth--and then moves into heavily critiquing and regulating it so that it can be edifying.
- However, the principle of group participation is valid, and we should make room and extend freedom for this (sharing, group prayer, etc.), or we will be guilty of "quenching" the Holy Spirit.

**Specific Issues: Prophecy**

"What is prophecy and how should it be practiced?"

Definition:

Receiving and relaying God's message to his people.

It is primarily applying the written Word both individually and culturally (Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, pp. 214-217). We do have prophecy, and we exercise it often! We just don't make a big deal of it.

New Testament prophecy is similar to but not identical with Old Testament prophecy.

	Old Testament	New Testament
<b>Forth-telling (new doctrine)</b>	Yes	Yes, but stopped with the Apostles.
<b>Forth-telling (application)</b>	Yes	Yes (1 Cor. 14:3,31; Acts 15:32)
<b>Fore-telling</b>	Yes	Yes (Acts 11:28)
<b>Special knowledge</b>	Yes - Nathan with David	?? - Jn. 4:16

Examples

Preaching, extemporaneous sharing; Francis Schaeffer-like application of the Word to the church today; shared burdens; interpreted tongues (1 Cor. 14:5,6).

Perhaps all Christians can prophesy (Acts 2 - Joel; 1 Cor. 14:1) -- but some are especially gifted.

The content must be evaluated by other Christians (1 Cor. 14:29): predictions and special knowledge should be evaluated by accuracy and fidelity with apostolic doctrine (1 John 4:1-6 - the "we" in verse 6 are the Apostles).

"Words of knowledge" (1 Cor. 12:8) and prophecy

Restorationists' linkage of "words of knowledge" to prophecy is spurious. We don't even know what "words of knowledge" were because Paul doesn't define them -- it could just as easily refer to a teaching-type gift. 1 Cor. 14:25 can be interpreted in light of Heb. 4:12.

Third Wave churches often encourage "experimentation," not judging false predictions, and not exposing or reproving inaccurate predictions.

We also should not necessarily rely on these predictions for personal guidance (Paul in Acts 21 is a good example of applying other key principles to his decision making).

**Specific Issues: Physical Healing**

"What about physical healing? Should we expect healing when we pray for it?"

- *Sickness is a product of the fall to be completely eradicated only when Christ returns* (Rom. 8:18-23).

The world as we know it is abnormal, not the way God designed it. It has been changed by man's revolt against God. Therefore, we do not have to accept sickness as normal (as do Eastern religions and atheism); we can abhor it as abnormal and fight it without fighting God (see Jn. 11:33).

In the end, all Christians triumph over sickness and death by receiving new bodies. But in the meantime, all people ultimately succumb to sickness and death. In this age, all healings are temporary. The people that Jesus healed got sick again and died. The people he raised from the dead got sick again and died.

Therefore, to teach that sickness is normally/always retribution from God for specific sins is unbiblical. In most cases, it is simply a consequence of the Fall.

- *God can and sometimes does choose to heal people miraculously.*

Who are we to say that God cannot or will not heal in this way today? As an apostle, Paul was gifted to heal and sometimes was used spectacularly in this way (Acts 19:11,12). He also teaches that God has given "gifts of healings" to some members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:9,28). There is no scriptural evidence that God has withdrawn this gifting from the church. The cessationists' interpretation of 1 Cor. 13:8-12 is tortured.

Therefore, to think that God can't heal or to declare that God doesn't heal miraculously today is unbiblical. We should beware of the pervasive naturalism of our age which denies the possibility of the miraculous. Are we "Bible believing Christians" yet practicing naturalists? We should be willing to pray for healing, believing that God can heal.

- *God often chooses not to heal people for his own good reasons.*

The same Paul who was able to heal in Acts 19:11,12 was evidently unable to heal Trophimus and had to leave him in Miletus sick (2 Tim. 4:20). He may have been unable to heal Epaphroditus also (Phil. 2:27).

The position that miraculous healings were the norm in the New Testament church is erroneous. Paul's healings in Ephesus are called "extraordinary" by Luke (Acts 19:11).

Acts is a highly selective account of the church covering a vast geographical area, hundreds of thousands of people over a stretch of thirty years.

God's "no" to a requested healing is often connected to his concern for our sanctification.

Because God is sovereign and because we are fallen, it is sometimes best for God not to heal sickness. Paul knew that God refused to heal his "thorn in the flesh" (probably a chronic eye condition) in order to spare him from a more terrible problem - spiritual pride (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

God cares more about forming our character than he does preserving our comfort. God cares more about reaching others for eternity than making us comfortable in time. The truth is that suffering often exposes our self-sufficiency and makes us aware of our need for God when nothing else can get our attention.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that God knows best when we pray for healing, and to submit in advance to his will in this area. It is not a cop-out to say "If it is your will . . ." We should ask God to heal believing that he can, and also ask for the wisdom to see what he wants to do when he doesn't heal.

To teach that it is always God's will to heal is unbiblical and cruel. It is unbiblical because it binds God to something he has not promised in his word. It is cruel because it accuses those who are sick and not healed of not having enough faith, which puts them under even greater distress.

- *The Bible endorses medical attention to bring healing or relief from physical illness.*

The same Paul who healed spectacularly (Acts 19) has no problem whatever advising Timothy to "drink a little wine for your frequent ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23). Notice that he does not advise him to exercise more faith, or rebuke him for his sins and unbelief!! The same Paul who was healed miraculously in Acts 9:18 and Acts 14:19,20 had "Luke the beloved physician" as his traveling companion, possibly to care for his "thorn in the flesh!!" (Col. 4:14)

Therefore, there is no contradiction between praying for God to heal and using all the medicinal provisions available. Physical restoration that comes from medicinal treatment is no less "spiritual" than miraculous healing. The same God who heals miraculously made the chemicals of the physical life, including the ones which help heal or bring relief to sickness.

Therefore, the view that says using medicine is unspiritual is unbiblical and brings needless shame to Christ.

- *Biblical healings were almost always **visible to all, instantaneous, and complete.***

See Acts 3:2,7,8,16, John 5:1-9, and Mark 1:40-45 for examples. See Barbara Cumiskey as documented contemporary example (note there was no "healer" present though). In those rare cases when Jesus healed gradually or by using physical materials, this was to make a point to his audience. For example, in Jn. 9:1-12, Jesus forms a mudball and tells the blind man to walk to the well to wash his eyes. Both of these actions violated the Pharisee's Sabbath laws--which precipitated a confrontation between Jesus and them. In Mark 8:22-26, Jesus heals a blind man in two stages. The context of this healing is the training of the disciples, and the following context suggests that the man was a picture of the disciples' gradually growing understanding of who Jesus was and what his mission was.

God may indeed heal today like this at times (see Rodney Clapp, "Faith Healing: A Look At What's Happening" *Christianity Today*, Dec. 16, 1983, pp. 16,17), but Restorationists' healing claims do not fit this profile. (See "Power Evangelism" critique, pp. 8-12.) Most of their "healings" have to do with invisible maladies, gradual healings--areas in which the placebo effect is well-known. They also often reprove the request for documentation as unspiritual.

### **Memory Verses**

1 Cor. 14\*\* - explains the primary purpose of the gift of tongues and provides regulations for its use in Christian meetings