



"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best, and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-- to the glory and praise of God."
-- Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

"CHARISMANIA"

How Do I Know It's God?!

by Leslie L. McGee

THOSE CRAZY CHRISTIANS

Acts 26:24b (NASB):

Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad."

From Acts 2:13-39 (NIV):

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

*Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd...
"Listen carefully to what I say: These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below.'

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Mark 3:21-22 (NASB):

When [Jesus'] own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

It seems that he whom we follow as Christians, Jesus, and those whom we "follow as [they] follow Christ, (1 Cor 11:1)," Paul and the other Apostles, were all viewed as out of their minds by those as yet unable to perceive that it is actually the Holy Spirit at work.

So, it would be wise of us, who desire to follow Jesus in all ways, to consider that the behavior of the "crazies" in the Kingdom might actually be a result of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

UNFORGIVABLE

If we are not sure, but if we believe that there is a remote possibility that these brothers and sisters of ours in Christ-- whom we love, and do not wish to be a stumbling block to-- are actually experiencing (reacting to), and being led by, the prompting of the Holy Spirit inside them, then we should be very, very careful:

Jesus, in Luke 12:32-33 (NIV):

"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit."

If we are unsure, instead of asking, "what if it's not God?" we should ask ourselves, "what if it *is*?" For if it turns out that it truly *is* the Holy Spirit at work, we must be careful to not to say/think it is actually Satan at work. Jesus said it is unforgivable blasphemy against his Holy Spirit to call the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of a deceiving spirit:

Mark 3:29-30 (NIV):

"Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." [Jesus] said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

So I believe it is wise-- if we care about our eternal souls-- if, in our unsureness, we allow for even a 1% possibility that the Holy Spirit is Who is causing a Christian's "Charismatic" behavior, that we keep our mouths shut about it. And not touch it.

FOOLISH THINGS

1 Corinthians 1:22-25,27-30 (NIV):

"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

Crazy, foolish "nonsense" seems to be something God delights in using to accomplish His purposes. So, just because it looks/sounds like crazy, pointless nonsense on the surface is not reason enough to assume that God is not in it.

HOW TO TELL FOR SURE: TEST #1

But how can we determine for sure? Fortunately, it's very simple:

1 John 4:1-3a (NIV):

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God."

1 Corinthians 12:3b (NIV):

No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

HOW TO TELL FOR SURE: TEST #2

Further confirmation that something is of God comes by the eventual fruit of it. And what is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV):

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

If a person is growing in these fruits via experiences with the Holy Spirit-- strange though these experiences may often look to the observer-- then clearly, it is God.

Are these Christians becoming more in love with Jesus, more committed and able to follow him and his commandments-- most importantly the commandment to love God and their neighbors? (Matt 22:37-39) More freed from their sinful habits? What Godly fruit that is!

Some may say that the behavior when one is "manifesting" is "out of control" and therefore, cannot be the Holy Spirit. If it *is* a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, it is *not*, by definition, out of control, I agree. It is in the control of the Holy Spirit *and* the person. Even if it's intense. Like a roller coaster ride. It may "whip you about," you may react strongly-- with verbal outbursts or whathaveyou-- but the course is carefully planned and set ahead of time. It is controlled even though it is intense.

Sometimes God must do intense things to soften our stiff necks, achieve our repentance, and replace hatred with love; pride with humility, like when Saul was turned into Paul.

HOW TO TELL FOR SURE: TEST #3

Matthew 16:15-16 (NIV):

[Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

If we are still questioning whether something is "of God," we would do well to ask Him. For without the Holy Spirit's guidance, we are unable, by our own strength/intellect, to rightly discern the things of the Spirit.

Only with God's help can we know when something/someone is from God. Human understanding is insufficient. If merely searching Scripture-- trying to understand and apply it properly ourselves, using mindpower-- was enough, how did the Pharisees get so off-base?

1 Corinthians 12:8a,10b (NIV):

"To one there is given through the Spirit... distinguishing between spirits."

2 Peter 1:20-21 (RSV):

"First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

HOW TO TELL FOR SURE: TEST #4

It was not those who knew the Scripture "perfectly" who were able to recognize (by and large) that this radical, crazy, seeming-law-breaker Jesus was from God, but those who weren't so firmly attached to their own Scriptural interpretation, but were open minded enough to think, "well, this Jesus unconditionally loves me-- like no one ever has-- he has the power to heal me, to instruct me reliably about God and help me understand the Scriptures-- I feel so much closer to God-- he speaks truth and wisdom which changes my life and outlook and heart for the better, he feeds me, he gives me hope... And he is *good* to do this. And only God is good! So he must be from God!"

Mark 10:15-18 (NIV):

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And [Jesus] took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone."

3 John 1:11b (NIV):

"Anyone who does what is good is from God."

1 Timothy 4:4 (NIV):

"For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving."

When the Holy Spirit is at work in a person, it may not fit in with our religious mindsets, just as Jesus did not fit in with the mindset of those who were convinced of their own righteousness in following God's Law, in Palestine, 2000 years ago. But it is good, and therefore from God, if it accomplishes what Jesus came to accomplish:

Jesus, in Luke 4:18-19 (NIV):

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Does the person upon whom the Holy Spirit comes receive good news that frees him? Does he see more clearly? Is he less oppressed than before? Does the LORD's favor rest upon him more fully? Always, yes. The Holy Spirit never comes for no reason, and without accomplishing something holy in the one who receives Him.

So we can rest assured that the oft-strange outer manifestations of the Holy Spirit, which we can see on the surface, are not all that is going on. But God has a purpose in it, for the person's good. Amen!

THE UNWELCOME RIFF-RAFF

Mark 9:17-27 (NIV):

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

It is not uncommon, when the Holy Spirit comes strongly to a gathering of people, that He is not the only spirit manifesting itself. Evil spirits are troubled by that intensity of the holy presence of God and are forced out of their hiding places in the souls of people and come to the surface.

This can lead some to look at an obvious evil spirit manifestation on a person in the group, and throw the entire baby out with the bathwater, saying that it's all evil and deception. Or lead people to think that it's dangerous to venture at all into "supernatural things" because they might get an evil spirit! And so they refuse to open themselves up to the "supernatural of God," as well.

But the truth is that these evil spirits are not arriving-- coming *into* people-- but are surfacing, having already been there. And this can be a good thing, for when they show themselves, we know that we need to pray and invite the infinitely stronger *Holy Spirit* of Jesus to come and displace/replace the evil one. And so the evil spirits are fleeing! And the people are being freed!

**"WHOEVER TRUSTS IN THE LORD IS KEPT SAFE."
-PROVERBS 29:25B (NIV)**

Jesus, in Luke 11:9-13 (NIV):

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

We can be comforted that when Christians invite the "supernatural" of *God*, that He is faithful to come in *Himself* (God, the Holy Spirit), and not only *never* allow other, harmful spirits ("snakes" and "scorpions") to enter, but joyfully, the infinitely more powerful presence of Spirit of Holiness also drives away any evil spirits which might have been previously hanging around, harassing His beloved child.

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS FREEDOM

Jesus, in Luke 11:19-20 (NASB):

"If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NIV):

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Praise God for the Holy Spirit power to tread on the snakes and scorpions of the Enemy!

Jesus, in Luke 10:19 (NIV):

"I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."

Mark 16:14-20 (NIV):

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

