

Why I Am Still
SURPRISED
by the
POWER
of the
SPIRIT

Discovering How God
Speaks and Heals Today

JACK DEERE



ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Why I Am Still Surprised by the Spirit
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For Leesa—

For a half of a century,
Leesa and I have walked side by side
as brother and sister in Christ,
as friends and lovers,
as father and mother.

*She is still as radiant as the dawn,
as beautiful as the full moon,
as pure as the sun,
as awesome as an army with banners.*

—*Based on Song of Solomon 6:10 NASB*



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one

FROM PROFESSOR TO HEALER

They had seen water turned into wine. A boy at the abyss of death rescued by a word sent from afar. A paralytic who hadn't walked for thirty-eight years picked up his mat and walked away. Five thousand men fed from a boy's sack lunch. A storm threatening to take them under until he walked over the water and got into the boat. The eyes of a man born blind opened. A body dead and rotting in a tomb resurrected by the power buried in a single command—"Come out!" For three and a half years, it seemed there was nothing he couldn't do. He even taught this to his little band of followers when he told them, "With God all things are possible." Then on April 3, AD 33, the cross shredded their faith.¹

The followers of Jesus lost their confidence in him to do what he said he would do.

1. For the date of the crucifixion, see Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 65–93.

Why I Am Still Surprised by the Power of the Spirit

The people of God have always been slow to believe him.

They still are, it seems.

I was slow to come to him. So he came to me. He found me in the dark on December 18, 1965, and he slipped into my heart through the crack of an open wound. I believed in him that night.

I am old now. I have walked and stumbled with Jesus for more than fifty years. The main thing I have learned in our journey together is to keep the main thing the main thing.

The only person who never needed any help chose twelve helpers.

Why?

He chose them for the pleasure it gave him to love them and to teach them to love what he loved.

This then is the main thing: loving God, loving others, and teaching others to love what Jesus loves.

Discipleship is not about passing on some skills. That's a mentoring relationship. Discipleship is not an accountability relationship. People stress accountability when they don't know how to relate.

Discipleship is loving someone, enjoying a person with whom we have a special chemistry, and teaching them to love the things that Jesus loves. Discipling someone is not an obligation; it is a pleasure.

Why did Jesus heal the sick? For the same reason he taught us to pray for our daily bread: we need to be well. Jesus loved to heal. Jesus loved to pray. He taught his disciples to heal and to pray. This is all so simple, unless you have the misfortune of being a theologian and living in the Western world.

After I had believed in Jesus, I led people to Jesus and taught them to love what I loved. I loved doing evangelism, praying,

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reading the Bible, studying the Bible, memorizing the Bible, reading Christian authors (especially C. S. Lewis), and making disciples. I did this because Scott Manley, a Young Life leader, eight years older than me, loved me and taught me to do these things. I became a Young Life leader like Scott.

I prayed for the sick, but not effectively. Not because I was against praying for the sick, but because I had so little practice in doing so. Almost everyone in my young world was healthy. No one becomes good at anything without a lot of practice. Then I went to seminary, where I learned that the most important thing is knowing the Bible. Our motto was not to love God, love people, and teach people to love what Jesus loved; it was to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). How can you preach the Word if you don’t know the Word? I’m sure any faculty member would have said that loving God is the most important thing, but the thing I heard emphasized was studying the Bible. Eventually, I learned to equate studying the Bible with “spending time with God.” And from there it was just a step to equate studying the Bible with “loving God,” for we spend time with those we love.

As a seminary student, I learned early on that God no longer loves healing. Not all professors would say that God does not heal today. Some would say, “I believe in healing. I just don’t believe in healers.” We students were not quick enough to test this assertion by analogy with the other gifts. For example, no one would say, “I believe in teaching. I just don’t believe in teachers.”

I can’t remember a professor telling a story of someone healed by prayer. But I did hear professors say that contemporary faith healers were fakes. One professor quoted a story written in *McCall’s Magazine* about a woman allegedly healed in a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting. The woman got out of a wheelchair

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and touched her toes onstage in front of thousands. She told the audience that it had been forever since she had been able to do that. The audience cheered. The next day, back at home, the article alleged the woman was bedridden because of injuries she had sustained on Kuhlman's stage. She died three months later. When the article was read to us, we all got the message: faith healers are fakes.

Our professors told us that God healed and did miracles in the New Testament period to show that the apostles were trustworthy teachers of doctrine. We have their doctrine now in the completed Bible, so there is no longer a need for miracles. And they maintained that subsequent history has no miracles like those in the New Testament, only alleged miracles in fringe groups with impure theology.

At seminary, the one supernatural arena we were allowed to believe in was the demonic. One missions professor told the story of witnessing a demonic ritual from a secure hiding place. He watched a man killed—stone-cold dead—and then brought back to life by the witch doctor. None of us questioned that demons were raising the dead in our lifetime. After all, demons were on every page of the Gospels. Where'd they all go anyway? Presumably they went to Africa and China, and probably Haiti as well, places where people were ignorant, poor, and superstitious.

So I came of age in a theological culture where God had hung up his guns, but the demons still blazed away.

When I turned seventeen, I didn't know a single verse of Scripture. At twenty-seven, I became a professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Semitic Languages. If I had wanted to conceal my pride in this achievement, I would have said that the Old Testament department was going through a crisis, and that

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technically I was not a “professor” but only a lowly “instructor” whom seminary etiquette required students to address as “prof.” But the truth is that I knew I was exceptional in Greek, Hebrew, and theology. My professors told me so—many times.

Becoming a young professor in the seminary was probably the worst thing that could have happened to my spiritual life. Much later I would learn, “For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar” (Psalm 138:6 ESV).

I served a Savior who healed, who taught his followers to heal, and whose followers taught their followers to heal. But I didn’t teach my students to heal. I taught my students that faith healers were fakes. I ridiculed Kathryn Kuhlman for having heart problems. Then I ridiculed her for dying.

Then I changed.

I didn’t have a crisis of faith like the apostles. One day, I just asked the Lord a simple question. “Lord, why did you heal all those people?”

This book is the story of how he answered that question and the story of how he turned me into a healer. Not a good healer. Nothing like Jesus or Paul. Just a broken person with a healing gift. So far, most people I pray for don’t get healed. But I’ve been in the room when blind eyes have opened, crooked bones have straightened, deaf ears have opened, a wheelchair has been emptied, and maybe even someone has come back from the dead.

Someone asked me, “Why do you keep praying for people to be healed when so many people you pray for don’t get healed?” The short answer is because some do get healed. The majority of people I tell my story to don’t respond with faith in Jesus, but some do. I’m still holding out for the day when I will become a better evangelist and a better healer.

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In the meantime, I have learned some valuable lessons about healing that I want to pass on before I finish my race. I began to pray for the sick when I learned from Scripture that Jesus loved healing and wanted his church to have a healing ministry. I learned how to help people when God doesn't heal, and although healing is not predictable, I know some of the things that hinder healing and some of the things that promote healing. I know how to tell when a person is demonized, what brings a person under demonic power, and how to set them free, if they want to be free. I know how God gives spiritual gifts, how to help people find their spiritual gift, and why it's important for us to walk in our spiritual gift. I know what it means to be filled with the Spirit and why this ministry of the Spirit is so misunderstood in the church today. I have a greater understanding of the theology and practice of the Spirit's ministry than I did a quarter of century ago when I wrote this book. So I thought it would be helpful to rewrite it.

two

THE POWER OF A CREDIBLE WITNESS

I had an unusually rough beginning before I came to faith, but God surprised me in my seventeenth year and gave this godless, fatherless boy a new life and spiritual fathers to look after me. Twenty years later, in the fall of 1985, I was a seminary professor who could do research in multiple languages and a pastor who could hold the attention of a sophisticated congregation. I was married to a beautiful woman who loved God. We had three mesmerizing children. I was thirty-six years old, and my life was on cruise control. I thought I would finish my life on earth teaching at the seminary and pastoring the church, having written a few good critical commentaries on books of the Bible along the way.

Then my phone rang in the afternoon of a cold, bleak winter day. It was one of my heroes—a man I never thought I would meet—Dr. John White, a former professor of psychiatry and the bestselling author of numerous books on the Christian life.

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We had asked him to do a conference at our church in the spring of 1986. Initially, he turned us down.

Until that phone call, I had never met an intelligent and biblically literate person who believed that God was still healing people and still giving all the spiritual gifts.

He said, "Hello, Jack, this is John White. I want to thank you for inviting me to speak at your spring Bible conference. I think I may be able to work it in. What would you like me to speak on?"

His publisher had told us that if Dr. White accepted our invitation, he would only speak on the subject that he was currently researching.

I replied, "Oh, I don't know. How about something you are writing or researching now?"

"Well, I'm working on a book on the kingdom of God. How does that sound?"

"That's wonderful! We love the kingdom of God around here. We would like four lectures for the weekend. How would you like to divide them up?"

"When I think of the kingdom of God," he replied, "I think of Christ's authority. If you want me to give four lectures, I think they would go something like this. The first one would be Christ's authority over temptation."

"Right," I said.

"The second one would be Christ's authority over sin."

"Good."

"The third one would be Christ's authority over demons."

Hmm, I thought to myself, demons? There certainly were a lot of them in the first century. And I am sure that if demons are still around, Christ must have authority over them. This is going to be an interesting lecture, even if it won't have much practical relevance.

The Power of a Credible Witness

I said, “Well . . . sure . . . okay.”

“The fourth lecture would be Christ’s authority over disease.”

“Disease!” I exclaimed. Certainly I had misheard him.

“You didn’t say *disease*, did you?”

“Yes, I did.”

“You are not talking about *healing*, are you?” I almost spit out the word *healing*.

“Well, yes, I am.”

I could not believe my ears. Until just a moment ago, I was sure Dr. White was a sane person, a biblically literate person, and an intelligent person, and now he was talking about healing.

He’s a psychiatrist, I reasoned. *Perhaps he’s just using “healing” to refer to some kind of new psychotherapy.* I asked, “You’re not talking about *physical* healing, are you?”

“Well, I wouldn’t limit it to physical healing,” he calmly replied, “but I would certainly include physical healing.”

“You’re kidding! Surely you know that God’s not healing anymore and that all the miraculous gifts of the Spirit passed away when the last of the apostles died. Surely you know that, don’t you?”

Dr. White didn’t reply.

I thought, *Well, perhaps he is a little weak in this area. After all, he is not a theologian; he’s only a psychiatrist.* I took his silence to mean he was waiting for me to prove from the Bible that these things didn’t exist anymore.

I said to him, “We know that the gift of healing has passed away because when we look at the healing ministry of the apostles, we see that they healed instantaneously, completely, irreversibly, and that everyone they prayed for was healed. We don’t see this kind of healing going on today in any movements

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or groups that claim to have healing powers. Instead, what we see in these groups are gradual healings, partial healings, healings that sometimes reverse themselves—and many people who don't get healed at all. We know, therefore, that the kind of healing that is happening today is not the same kind of healing that took place in the Bible.”

“Do you think every instance where the apostles prayed for someone is recorded in Scripture?” Dr. White asked.

“Of course not,” I said. “We only have a small fraction of their ministry recorded in the pages of the New Testament.”

“Then might there not be a case where they prayed for someone, and they didn't get well, and it is simply not recorded in the Scriptures?”

I had to concede that he was right because the Bible doesn't record every instance of the apostles praying for people. There might have been times when they prayed for people and they didn't get healed.

Dr. White had just caught me in an interpretive error. I had used an argument from silence. That was something I taught my students not to do. When the subject of the gifts of the Spirit came up, for example, a student might say, “You don't have to speak in tongues to be spiritual because Christ never spoke in tongues.” I would ask, “How do you know Christ never spoke in tongues?” The student would reply, “Because the Scriptures never tell us he spoke in tongues.” I would correct that student, reminding him that you cannot use what the Scriptures *don't say* as proof of your view. For example, the Bible does not tell us that Peter had children, but we're not justified in concluding from the Bible's silence on this point that Peter was childless. That is what is meant by an argument from silence.

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Yet I had just used an argument from silence with Dr. White, and I was embarrassed. I was still sure I was right. I had four more biblical arguments lined up and ready to go, but I thought I should be more careful this time. I didn't want to get caught in another mistake.

My next argument was going to be that at the end of Paul's life, he couldn't heal Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25–27), Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), or Timothy's frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23). I thought this proved that the gift of healing had left the apostle Paul, or that it was in the process of leaving. But now I thought, *What would I say to this argument if I were taking Dr. White's position? I would just say that these three incidents prove that not everyone the apostles prayed for were healed!* My second proof was no proof at all!

As I examined the next three arguments I was about to use, I found something wrong with each one of them. In most theological debates, I had taken my opponent's side and examined all of my arguments from my adversary's perspective to find loopholes or weak points. But my belief that miraculous gifts had ceased had never seriously been challenged before. I had never needed to examine these arguments that closely because everyone in my circle accepted them as true.

I was still sure I was right, but I was exasperated to find something wrong with each of my arguments. I blurted out to Dr. White, "Well, have you ever seen anyone healed?"

"Oh, yes," he replied in that calm, courteous British voice. He wouldn't argue with me. He had nothing to sell me. In fact, I was the one who was trying to get him to speak at our church.

I said, "Tell me the most recent spectacular healing you've seen."

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“I’m not sure what you mean by *spectacular*, Jack, but I will tell you two recent healings that have impressed me.”

He then told me about a young child in Malaysia who was covered from head to toe in eczema. The eczema was raw in some places and oozing. The child was in such discomfort that he had kept his parents up for the previous thirty-six hours. The child was behaving so wildly that they had to catch him in order to pray for him.

As soon as Dr. White and his wife, Lorrie, laid their hands on the child, he fell asleep. Within twenty minutes or so of their prayer, the oozing stopped and the redness began to fade. By the next morning, the child’s skin had returned to normal and was completely healed. Dr. White told me a second spectacular story of bone actually changing under his hands while he prayed for someone with a deformity.

After I heard these things, I thought, *There are only two options. Either Dr. White is telling me the truth, or he is lying to me.*

What did he have to gain by lying to me? He wasn’t asking to come to my church; I was asking him to come. Furthermore, everything about his manner reflected the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. I was convinced he was telling me the truth. I was convinced God had healed the two people he talked about. But I was also still convinced God was not giving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit any longer and that there must be another explanation for the healings.

So I said, “Well, Dr. White, I believe what you are telling me is the truth, and I would like you to come to my church and give those four lectures, even the one on healing.”

“There is one more thing we need to discuss, Jack. If I come to your church, I wouldn’t just want to talk about healing, I would want to pray for the sick.”

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“Pray for the sick! You mean in the church?” I was flabbergasted. “Couldn’t we just take a couple of board members and go downtown to one of those missions that care for the homeless and find some lame or blind person and pray for them there?” I was sure that if we prayed for some sick people in front of the church, they wouldn’t get healed, and it would destroy everyone’s faith.

“Well, we can work out the details when I come,” he replied, “but I wouldn’t want to just talk about healing without being able to pray for sick people.” He said this gently, but I knew that if we would not let him pray for the sick in our church, he wouldn’t come.

“Well, Dr. White, I want you to come and give those four lectures, and you can even pray for sick people, but it’s not only up to me. The other board members have to agree to this before we can make this invitation official. I don’t know how they are going to respond to this suggestion.”

“No problem, Jack. I understand your fears. If the board decides to withdraw the invitation, I won’t be offended. I will just take that as the Lord’s will, and we will meet another time.”

We said good-bye, and I went immediately from that conversation into an elders meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting I announced to the elders and other pastors that I had some good news and some bad news. “The good news is that we have Dr. John White for our spring Bible conference.” Everyone was happy at that news.

“What’s the bad news?” they asked.

“The bad news is that he wants to give a lecture on healing and pray for the sick in our church.”

“You’re kidding!”

“That’s what I said to him.”

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For the next two hours we talked back and forth about the advisability of Dr. White doing this conference in our church. At the end of our discussion, as each of us gave our final opinions, one of the men said, “This conference could split our church.”

My last word on the subject was, “I think we ought to have the conference, even though it could split our church. Look at it this way. We started this church with a handful of people. If our church splits, we could start another church with a handful of people if we needed to.” We decided unanimously to invite Dr. White and hold the conference in April, even though we thought the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased.

The conversation with Dr. White had shaken me on two levels. First, he was a credible witness that miracles were happening in response to prayer. Second, that conversation had shown me some errors in my biblical arguments.

Praying for healing miracles didn’t sound so stupid anymore.

From January to April, I studied every healing story in the New Testament, as well as every reference to the gifts of the Spirit. This time, I studied with an open mind. I asked the same question of every healing story: “God, why did you do it?” I knew the answer to that question would reveal whether the healing gifts came with a shelf life of sixty years, or whether they were acts of empowered love meant to shepherd the church into the last days. I also knew I could tell no one that I had acquired an open mind regarding the healing gifts because in my community that would have been a sure sign I was losing my mind.

By the time our conference took place in April, I was convinced God still healed and that healing ought to be a significant part of the church’s ministry. I had also begun to believe that

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God could speak apart from the Scriptures, though never in contradiction to the Scriptures.

My thinking had not changed because I had *seen* a miracle or *heard* God speak to me in some sort of supernatural way. I had no dreams, visions, trances, or anything I could identify as supernatural beyond my conversion experience. This shift in my thinking was the result of a patient, exhaustive, intense study of the healings and miracles recorded in the Scriptures.

Although my newfound belief transgressed the seminary party line, I was still relatively safe, for my belief in healing was only theoretical. I had not yet prayed for anyone to be healed.

three

A DEMON COMES TO CHURCH

He was short, balding, thin, and wore glasses. John White looked like a frail grandfather. He was sixty-two when I met him, but he could have passed for seventy. Like every British person I'd ever met, he was articulate and courteous. He'd been a missionary in Bolivia and was fluent in Spanish. He introduced himself as "John," not "Dr. White."

His first three lectures raised no eyebrows. Then came the healing lecture on Saturday afternoon. I could have given that lecture at my seminary without raising an eyebrow, but John had brought someone to help him pray for people. "Bud" was the kind of flamboyant, narcissistic braggart whose specialty was bringing a dark shadow over any ministry. It turned out that John was new to the healing ministry and thought Bud, whom he had just met, would supply the healing power he lacked. John believed Bud's self-aggrandizing stories of his healing exploits. I was even newer to the healing ministry and working hard to be open-minded.

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I made the mistake that is common to people who reverse their position in a controversy and who want to love what they once hated. I accepted what I should have opposed. Only after he left did I discover that Bud had damaged and fleeced people in our church. Bud was the perfect example of the kind of person the apostle Paul had warned the church against, a religious person “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:5).

After the fourth lecture, Dr. White led a tense question and answer time. The tension was due to Bud’s antics during the conference. Our people wondered why we would have given someone like Bud access to our church.

There were approximately three hundred people in the audience that day. After thirty minutes of questions, John said, “We promised to pray for people today, so if you want prayer for physical or spiritual needs, come down to the front and we will pray for you.”

I thought, *We? Who’s this “we”?* None of us leaders had ever prayed for the sick in front of the church. I thought a few brave souls might come down to the front of the sanctuary. I didn’t think God would heal anyone. It didn’t seem right to let John suffer this humiliation alone. I said to an elder next to me, “Come on. Let’s go help him.” We walked down to the front and stood beside John White.

Almost one-third of the people in the room rushed down to the front of the church. My sport coat blew open in the breeze.

Most of the people lined up in front of John White. Eight people lined up in front of the elder and me. I looked over at John. He had his hand on the shoulder of a woman who was crying. So I put my hand on the shoulder of the woman in front

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of me. I nodded at the elder. Then he put his hand on her other shoulder. We had her covered. We prayed. Nothing happened. We repeated this scene eight times. Then our line was empty. The people we prayed for now stood in John's line. I thought, *I'd better go stand beside John and learn how to do this.*

I stood beside John and could not believe what I was seeing. People I knew well, who seemed so in control of their lives, were on their knees weeping, falling apart. One wealthy woman who always looked like someone in the pages of a Neiman Marcus catalog said, "I don't feel loved by anyone except my husband." I thought, *Why haven't you ever told me that? I'm your pastor. Our kids play together. We vacation together.*

A strong man fell on his knees and wailed. "I'm eaten up by jealousy. All of my friends are more successful than me." I thought, *I see you all the time. Why didn't you ever tell me you were hurting?*

An unseen hand had reached down and pulled the cork out of all the bottled-up pain in our church. At first, I was perplexed and repulsed. This seemed like emotionalism. But emotionalism means that someone has whipped up our emotions through some form of manipulation. In this case, we had just heard a very unemotional lecture on healing, followed by a tense question and answer session during which John White never lost his temper or gave an unkind reply. And after that session, he had given a simple invitation, with no promised healing and with no music or emotional pleas, to anyone who wanted prayer.

Had I been a better student of revival history at the time, I would have understood that this very thing had happened on numerous occasions during periods of revival when the Holy Spirit had fallen on a church or a city. The honesty and courage it took for people to confess their sins and their pain was actually

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an indication of the Spirit's presence among us that day. But I wasn't sure I wanted this kind of thing in my church.

Then an articulate woman who had suffered from long-term depression asked Dr. White to pray for her. She said to him, "I finally figured out the root of my depression. I lust after the approval of man."

"Okay, let's pray for you then," he said to the woman. She hung her head in shame. Like a gentle father, John White put his hand under her chin and lifted her head. "Look up," he said, "you don't have to do that anymore. You are a child of the King."

I was mesmerized by this. I thought, *That's a nice touch. I have to remember that line—"Look up, you are a child of the King."* Maybe my prayers would have been more powerful if I had a pocketful of lines like that. I was brand-new to the healing ministry and did not understand that God's power is released through his friends' faith in his Son, not through the eloquence of their prayers.

Then he put his hand on her shoulder and said, "Lord, I bring your servant into your presence now in the name of Jesus Christ. She doesn't feel the affection that Jesus has for her. Let her feel in her heart how much you love her and like her."

When I heard Dr. White say this, a light went on inside me. I thought, *Of course that is why she has lusted after the approval of others. If she really felt loved by God, the approval of others wouldn't be nearly so important to her.*

Then Dr. White prayed, "And, Lord, if there be any darkness here manipulating her pain, I pray that you would make it leave now."

When he said those words, her head bobbed up and down, and she wailed. She could not stop her head or the wailing. I had never seen anything like that before. Almost everyone in the

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auditorium was shocked by what was happening. I had never seen a demon before, but I was convinced I was looking at the work of a demon at that very minute.

“In the name of Jesus, I command you to be at peace now,” Dr. White said. And when he said that, everything stopped. He would not allow her to be humiliated by an evil spirit before all those people. Later we prayed for the woman in private, and she seemed to improve.

Why did I think an evil spirit was at work? Because this woman would never act like that in public. She had no charismatic background. There was no possibility for any of this to be learned behavior. Later she told me that a force had “come up” and gripped her, and that she was powerless to stop it. Only the name of the Lord Jesus brought it under control.

As I watched her torment, I thought of all of the wasted years she had spent in Christian counseling without having any significant improvement. Even though she prayed and read her Bible, she had not shown improvement. There had been a demonic power behind much of her depression and fear.

Tears ran down my cheeks as I thought of all the years of professional and pastoral counseling she had endured. You don’t “counsel” demons out of people. Demons only come out by the power of the blood of Christ. Until John White came along, none of her pastors or counselors had had the discernment to realize what the root cause of her afflictions was.

At that very moment, for the first time that I can be certain, the Lord spoke to me. I heard these words, not audibly, but they formed in my brain as clearly as any audible words I’d ever heard. His voice said, “You’re a deceiver and a manipulator, and you’re just playing at church.”

A Demon Comes to Church

Those words sound harsh, but I didn't hear a condemnation. I heard an invitation offered in love. I said, "Yes, Lord." That's all, just "Yes, Lord."

I did not know my agreement with that voice had given the Lord permission to take away everything that had fueled my self-esteem for the last twenty years.

four

JOHN WIMBER

Before Dr. White left, he told me to meet John Wimber. I had never heard of Wimber, though I had danced to his music in high school. He had helped to write and perform “Little Latin Lupe Lu” with the Righteous Brothers before they were called the Righteous Brothers.

Wimber’s road to Jesus had run through drugs and rock and roll. John White told me that Wimber was the most gifted healer he had ever seen, the most down-to-earth, the most practical, the most averse to all forms of hype. He kept no entourage to protect him from the people, and he took no offerings at the meetings where he prayed for the sick. Dr. White said that Wimber would stay for hours after church services to pray for the sick. “Jack, Wimber can teach you more about healing and hearing God’s voice than anyone I know,” said White.

Two weeks after our conference with White, John Wimber came to Fort Worth to speak at Lake Country Baptist Church. I planned to hear him on Thursday night. At noon that Thursday, on my way to the seminary library, I heard a group of

John Wimber

students mention Wimber's name. I hung back, but still within earshot.

“One of our graduates was in a Wimber meeting in Sydney, Australia,” said a student. “He told me that Wimber yelled, ‘Come, Holy Spirit,’ and that people fell down on the floor, vomited, and barked like dogs. And Wimber said, ‘There, that’s the Holy Spirit.’” The student swore that this was God’s honest truth. *Uh-oh, I thought, what have I gotten myself into? I don’t want to fall down on the floor, vomit, and bark like a dog. I used to do that before I became a Christian.*

That night, I took ten people from my church with me. We arrived late and sat in the back row, next to the door. People had already begun to worship. Some of them raised their hands, but nothing strange was going on yet. After thirty minutes of singing, the pastor introduced John Wimber. Wimber spoke on the kingdom of God.

Twenty minutes into his message, I found myself agreeing with him and enjoying his humor and his honesty about his flaws. He finished his lecture and announced it was “clinic time.”

I thought, *Clinic time? Oh, this is where it gets weird.*

Wimber prayed, “Come, Holy Spirit,” and then went silent for two minutes. “I think the Lord will heal back pain,” he said. Many people came down to the front of the church to be prayed for by teams of church members.

After a few minutes he said, “There is a woman here who has severe back pain, but you haven’t come forward yet. Come forward. I think the Lord will heal you.” But no woman came forward.

I thought, *Poor John Wimber. He was doing so well when he was just talking about the kingdom. If he hadn’t tried this clinic stuff,*

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this meeting would have been a success tonight. I felt embarrassed for him and also disappointed.

Wimber did not share my embarrassment or my disappointment. He announced a second fact about this woman. He said, “You went to the doctor several days ago. You have had this pain for years. Please come forward.”

Still no woman got up and came forward.

Wimber was quiet for a moment. Then with a grandfatherly smile he said, “Your name is Margaret. Now, Margaret, you get up and come down here right now.” About halfway down the center section, next to the aisle, Margaret got up and began to walk sheepishly toward the front.

I thought this was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. This was like those Old Testament prophets who could see what was going on in the bedroom of the enemy commanders. The room was filled with awe and conviction.

But before Margaret made it down to the front of the church, a wave of skepticism and disgust came over me. I said to myself, *This is too good to be true. What if he paid her to do this? What if she's Margaret on Thursday night here in Fort Worth, Texas, and then on Saturday night in some other city she is Mabel, walking down to the front of the church carrying an envelope with two malignant tumors she coughed up?*

Then the church member sitting next to me, whom I had known for fifteen years, shouted, “That’s Margaret, my sister-in-law!”

Mike Pinkston’s sister-in-law, Margaret Pinkston, went down to the front of the church that evening after being called out by John Wimber. Someone prayed for her, and she was healed of a condition she had had for years.

John Wimber

Leesa and I were the first ones in line to talk to John Wimber after the meeting was over. John answered our questions and gave us on-the-spot instruction as we watched him and others pray for people that evening.

Praying for the sick became a permanent part of my life. A couple of months after I had met John White and John Wimber, a woman in our church named Ruth Gay asked me to pray for her. She had an aneurysm—a swelling in a blood vessel so that the walls of the blood vessel become stretched and thin. The danger is that the walls of the blood vessel may burst and kill the person.

On Monday night, Leesa, another woman, and I went to Ruth's house. Ruth was divorced, lived by herself, and had been estranged from the rest of her family. We laid our hands on her head and for only a few minutes quietly asked the Lord to take away her aneurysm. And then we left. That Wednesday, she went into the hospital for a second angiogram. On Thursday, they planned to operate to repair the aneurysm.

On Wednesday morning, after the second angiogram, Ruth called. Her voice was so weak I could barely hear her. She said, "Jack, I have been healed!"

"What?"

"I have been healed!"

"You're kidding!"

"No, it's true. The aneurysm is gone."

"What did your doctor say?"

"He said I have been healed. A nurse just came in this morning and told me it was a miracle."

"Did you ask your doctor how he could explain this?"

"He can't explain it. He told me that aneurysms never go

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away. They have to be corrected by surgery. He said he had never seen this before and had no explanation for it.”

This was the first medically documented healing that happened in our church.

During the remainder of 1986 and 1987, John Wimber and I became close friends. Leesa and I went to several Vineyard conferences during that time. There were more than three thousand people at a conference at John’s Anaheim church in the summer of 1987. After the plenary session, the prayer team was praying for a hundred or more people at the front of the auditorium. Wimber stood on the stage and said, “There is a woman here who has cancer, and you have not come forward. Please come down to the front so we can pray for you.” No response. “You flew in on Tuesday. You came here to be prayed for. Let us pray for you.” No response. “You’re sitting in the back, and you’re wearing a pink dress.” A woman wearing a pink dress got up from the back row and walked up to the prayer team.

Afterward, I said to John, “That was amazing. That must have gone off like a foghorn in your mind.”

“No, Jack. It was just the opposite. It was so faint I almost missed it. I was ready to walk off the stage, and I had the slightest impression that we were supposed to pray for a woman with cancer.”

“What about the flying in on Tuesday?”

“When no woman came forward, I thought I should wait a moment longer. ‘Tuesday’ just floated through my mind. A lot of people come in a couple of days before the conference to enjoy Southern California. I thought that’s what ‘Tuesday’ meant.”

“Pink dress sitting in the back?”

“Well, when she didn’t come forward, I saw pink floating over the back of the auditorium for a couple of seconds.”

John Wimber

“John, you called out a woman in front of three thousand people because of those flimsy impressions?”

“Jack, that’s the way God speaks to me when I’m praying for people. I’ve had better luck adjusting to his way of speaking than trying to get him to adjust to my way of hearing.”

In those early conferences, every time I was around John, he taught me something new about hearing God’s voice and about the healing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In 1988, we left Texas and joined the staff of the Anaheim Vineyard. John gave me a priceless education in the power of the Holy Spirit. He took me around the world with him, put me on a stage in front of thousands, and introduced me to leaders of different denominations and movements. He taught me to love the whole church.

five

MODERN MIRACLES

When I was a cessationist, I never saw God heal anyone because I never prayed for healing.¹ How can you pray regularly for something that you believe God no longer does or that he does rarely? When someone told me they believed in healing and miracles, I shot back, “Oh, you’ve seen blind eyes and deaf ears opened? You’ve seen someone walk on water or someone multiply food with prayer?” Cessationists always go to the biggest miracles, especially to the nature miracles, to prove that God is not doing these things anymore. All this proves is that people who don’t believe in miracles and don’t pray for miracles are the people who don’t see miracles. They are confirming what James wrote almost two thousand years ago: “You do not have because you do not ask God” (James 4:2).

When I was a student at seminary, there were some students a few years ahead of me who specialized in apologetics,

1. *Cessationist* is the theological term for someone who believes that God stopped giving the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit after the death of the New Testament apostles.

Modern Miracles

defending the existence of God and the reliability of the Christian Scriptures. Agnostic university professors who mocked God made the mistake of debating these students in front of their classes. Ken Boa was one of those apologists only a couple of years ahead of me, but I never got to know his story until recently.

In the summer of 1978, he was on a three-week tour of Israel. One afternoon, Ken went for a swim in the water that Jesus had walked on during a storm, where Jesus saved his disciples from drowning. When Jesus got into the boat, it was instantly on the shore (John 6:16–21). Ken swam out to a raft about a tenth of a mile from the shore on the Sea of Galilee. Then he turned around and headed back.

On my way back, a storm came out of nowhere. The winds began to move the sea, and like water on a shaking saucer, it was instantaneously tumultuous. I found myself embroiled in the violent movements of the water and couldn't make any progress back to shore. It was difficult just to stay afloat. I kept trying to make progress in the right direction, but the wind and the waves kept pushing me back . . .

This lasted for what seemed a really long time, and my energy was spent . . . I wasn't going to make it. I knew I was on the verge of drowning, and my life flashed before my eyes, like in a movie . . . I became aware of something bigger than the storm . . . God told me that my work for him on earth was not complete.

And then I was at the shore. I have no idea how I got there. There was no way I had the strength to swim that distance against those waves. I was just at the edge of the water. But there were rocks on the shore, and they

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were extremely slippery. I was unable to get a purchase on the rocks so that I could get out of the water. And then it happened again. Suddenly I found myself laid out on a grassy area above the rocks. I have no idea how I got above the rocks. I couldn't have pulled myself out of the water, and there was no one around who could've helped me.²

While Ken was drowning, he heard the voice of God and was supernaturally transported over the water and the rocks. This happened to one of our graduates held in high esteem by our faculty. It happened two years after I had become a professor at a seminary where I was telling students that God no longer did these kinds of miracles.

The story just before Jesus walked on water showed him feeding the five thousand from a boy's sack lunch (John 6:5–15). I told my Sunday crowd that this showed that no matter how insignificant we or our gifts were, if we put ourselves and our gifts in the hands of Jesus, he could do great things. I believed in the original miracle, but I never thought Jesus would repeat it. What purpose would that serve?

Heidi was a pretty blonde teenager raised in an affluent beach community in Southern California and destined for a country club life. On March 13, 1976, sixteen-year-old Heidi gave her heart to Jesus, and he gave her his heart for the downtrodden faltering on the fringes. From the moment of meeting Jesus, all Heidi wanted to do was to be a missionary to the poorest of the poor. She married Rolland Baker, who had the same vision for his life. By 1996, Heidi had exhausted herself caring for orphans

2. Ken Boa, *Rewriting Your Broken Story: The Power of an Eternal Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 28.



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in Mozambique. Two months of antibiotics could not stop various infections. She had dysentery and pneumonia. She flew back to the United States and checked into a hospital. Before she came back to Mozambique, she went to the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church, which was in the midst of a revival. She had the following vision while she was in Toronto:

One night I was groaning in intercession for the children of Mozambique. There were thousands coming toward me, and I was crying, “No, Lord. There are too many!” Then I had a dramatic, clear vision of Jesus. I was with Him, and thousands and thousands of children surrounded us. I saw His shining face and His intense, burning eyes of love. I also saw His body. It was bruised and broken, and His side was pierced. He said, “Look into My eyes. You give them something to eat.” Then He took a piece of his broken body and handed it to me. It became bread in my hands, and I began to give it to the children. It multiplied in my hands. Then again the Lord said, “Look into My eyes. You give them something to drink.” He gave me a cup of blood and water, which flowed from His side. I knew it was a cup of bitterness and joy. I drank it and then began to give it to the children to drink. The cup did not go dry. By this point I was crying uncontrollably. I was completely undone by His fiery eyes of love. I realized what it had cost Him to provide such spiritual and physical food for us all. The Lord spoke to my heart and said, “There will always be enough, because I died.”³

3. Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough: God's Miraculous Provision among the Poorest Children on Earth* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 2003), 49–50.



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Heidi's vision was a practical application of Jesus' teaching after he fed the five thousand when he said, "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink" (John 6:55).

Heidi came back to Mozambique healed and refreshed, expecting miracles to break out in the orphanage of 350 street orphans they had rescued from the most horrendous conditions imaginable. Instead, all hell broke out. The government gave them forty-eight hours to vacate their orphanage. A contract was put out on Heidi's life. The only place they had to go was their small office flat in the city of Maputo. Here's what happened when the Bakers went to Maputo:

We were inundated by our very most needy children, the youngest street orphans with absolutely no relatives or friends to whom they could go. They had walked barefoot fifteen miles into the city and streamed into our flat. They told us they had been beaten with large sticks for singing. They said they would go where we go because they were going to worship the Lord. When I told them we had no place for them, their simple reply was, "But, Mama, you said there would always be enough!"

What could I say? They kept piling in, maybe a hundred of them. We stuffed bunk beds in our dilapidated little garage full of grease and cobwebs. Loaned army cots were all over our yard and driveway. Urine ran in our hallway. We hosed the kids down to try to wash them. All our doors and windows were full of faces!

We didn't know how to cope. We had nowhere near the food or the cooking and sanitation facilities we needed. Boxes, clothes, and suitcases were piled high everywhere.

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Everyone was totally exhausted; everything was in complete chaos. And more children kept gravitating to our gate. We ran out of strength, crying as we watched our sea of faces gather. I wondered seriously, even after Toronto, “Does God really care? What is He like anyway?” I never thought He would leave us in a situation like this.

Our daughter, Crystalyn, began to cry because she was so hungry. I thought I was going to snap . . . A precious woman from the U.S. embassy came over with food. “I brought you chili and rice for your family!” she announced sweetly, with just enough for the four of us. We hadn’t eaten in days. I opened a door and showed her all our children. “I have a big family” . . . My friend got serious. “There’s not enough! I need to go home and cook some more!” But I just asked her to pray over the food. Now she was upset. “Don’t do this!” she begged. But she prayed, quickly. I got out the plastic plates we used for street outreaches, and also a small pot of cornmeal I had. We began serving, and right from the start I gave everyone a full bowl. I was dazed and overwhelmed. I barely understood at the time what a wonderful thing was happening. But all our children ate, the staff ate, my friend ate, and even our family of four ate. Everyone had enough.

Since then we have never said no to an orphaned, abandoned, or dying child. Now we feed and take care of more than one thousand children. They eat and drink all they want of the Lord’s goodness. Because he died, there is always enough.⁴

4. Baker, *Always Enough*, 51–52.

Why I Am Still Surprised by the Power of the Spirit

I've shared a conference stage with Heidi Baker. Leesa and I talked with her offstage for several nights in a row. We were staggered to hear some of the things she and her family have suffered for Jesus, things that have not been put in print. In the New Testament, the ones given the greatest miracles are also the ones given the greatest suffering. I've not seen the quantity and quality of miracles that Rolland and Heidi Baker have seen. But I have never been close enough to Jesus to groan in intercession for the orphans of Mozambique. Maybe that's why I've never seen the miracle of multiplying food. I've never needed it.⁵

When I was a cessationist, I never heard stories of God multiplying food or pulling drowning swimmers out of the water and depositing them on a grassy beach, even though that last one happened in my own backyard. I wouldn't have even known where to look for these stories. Now, thanks to a brilliant New Testament professor, these kinds of credible stories are accessible in a single work. Craig S. Keener is the F. M. and Ada Thompson professor of biblical studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. He wrote *Miracles*, a two-volume, 1,172-page work cataloging credible reports of miracles from around the world for the last twenty centuries.⁶ The bibliography is 165 pages of fine print.

For the last thirty years, I have read extensively in the literature of healing and miracles from all over the world and from the present all the way back to the first century AD. Then I read

5. Today, Heidi and Rolland watch God provide miraculously every day for more than ten thousand children. Through their network (Iris Global) of more than ten thousand churches, Bible schools, primary schools, and remote outreaches, countless numbers of orphans and poor people are coming to Jesus and being supernaturally cared for.

6. Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

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both volumes of Dr. Keener's work and was astounded by the number of miracle claims he cites and the sagacity he employs to sift each eyewitness report.

He traces the modern Western skepticism regarding miracles to David Hume, the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment philosopher and historian. And then he notes:

In contrast to the environment assumed by Hume, today hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed miracles. Moreover, eyewitnesses claim what they believe are miracles even in the West, and this has been the case through most of history, even when Hume framed his argument within the theological framework of academic circles often reticent to acknowledge miraculous claims. Some of these eyewitness claims involve even the healing of blindness, the raising of the dead, and nature miracles.⁷

For more than thirty years, I have traveled around the world praying for the sick, but until I read Keener's two volumes, I never knew that *today hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed miracles*. These volumes demonstrate that the majority of the church all over the world believes that God is still performing miracles today.

7. Keener, *Miracles*, 209–10.

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THE REAL REASON CHRISTIANS DO NOT BELIEVE IN MIRACLES

Jesus healed and did miracles—a lot of them. He sent the Twelve out to preach the kingdom and to illustrate the preaching of the kingdom with miracles. Then he sent the seventy-two out to preach the kingdom and to illustrate the preaching of the kingdom with miracles. Then the church of Jesus was birthed in the fire of prophecy. The Holy Spirit promised that we Christians would prophesy and that God would show signs and wonders on earth (Acts 2:17–21). This was exactly what the church prayed for:

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

The Real Reason Christians Do Not Believe in Miracles

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:29–31

And God answered that prayer beyond anything the first Christians could have imagined. There is a supernatural event or a supernatural revelation or the report of such in every chapter of Acts, even in Acts 17 where Paul is talking to the intellectuals in Athens, for though most were hostile, some were converted by the Spirit of God on that day.¹ God gave the gifts of the Spirit to ordinary Christians so they could prophesy, heal, and do miracles. And he empowered the elders in the local church to have a healing ministry. The last book of the New Testament prophesies that this present age will end in a catastrophic outpouring of evil that will be answered by a greater outpouring of God's miracles and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one can become a cessationist by reading the New Testament. The Bible teaches that gifts like miracles and prophecy will be here until Jesus comes back to set up the kingdom where his will is done on earth as it is in heaven (1 Corinthians 13:8–12). Theologians developed the doctrine of cessationism to justify the absence of New Testament miracles in their ministries. They taught their followers that God had withdrawn the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, and the culture of cessationism was born. I will explain later where this happened in history and who the major players were.

For now, I only want to emphasize one thing. There is one basic reason why otherwise Bible-believing Christians do not

1. Conversion is one of the most supernatural works of God (2 Corinthians 4:6).

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believe in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit today. It is this: *they have not seen them.*

MY CESSATIONIST CULTURE

When I was in the cessationist family, all my friends were cessationists, and we never prayed together for a healing or a miracle. Why pray for something you know God is not doing? So we never saw a miracle or a healing. We assumed our experience was normative for the whole church because we believed our knowledge of the Bible and our theology were superior to those of the rest of the church. We did not investigate contemporary reports of God healing someone through prayer, nor did we research historical reports of miracles.

After I had begun to believe in healing and miracles, and while I was still a seminary professor, I tried to get one of my colleagues to investigate a miracle that had taken place through the ministry of a seminary professor from Fuller Seminary. The seminary professor who had been used to do the miracle was a conservative evangelical, was the author of many books, was held in high esteem across the body of Christ, and had begun to believe in the spiritual gifts.

He prayed for the eyes and ears of a little boy, and the boy was healed. The family physician called it a miracle. I called the boy's father (they lived in California) in order to verify the miracle. The father said it was true and that he had medical documentation. The boy was the grandson of the chairman of the department of missions of Fuller Seminary.

When I told the story to my friend, the cessationist professor, I urged him to call and investigate. He did not even want the

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phone number. When I questioned his reluctance to investigate, he told me that he did not doubt that the miracle had occurred, but he doubted that God had done it. He never investigated the healing that a physician had called an astounding miracle.

The facts of the case were:

1. A seminary professor, who held historic orthodox theology,
2. asked God in Jesus' name
3. to do a miracle on a little child
4. from a Christian family,
5. and the miracle was performed immediately.

Even with these facts, which my friend would not dispute, it was easier for him to believe that Satan had done the miracle rather than Jesus. Thirty years ago, the cessationist, fundamentalist mind-set usually precluded any sincere investigation.

When I was a cessationist, I not only did not investigate contemporary reports of miracles, but I also did not research reports of miracles in the history of the church. The historical research had already been done by the great Princeton scholar Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield in his *Counterfeit Miracles*.² Warfield allowed for some miracles done in the second century by those on whom the apostles had laid their hands. But after those disciples died off, he maintained that there was no credible example of a miracle done through the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. So there was no need for further historical research.

2. B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1972). Chapter 11 is devoted to Warfield's polemic against miracles; see www.biblestudytools.com/classics/warfield-counterfeit-miracles.

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I was insulated intellectually, emotionally, and socially against miracles.

The recent cessationist literature I have read also lacks rigorous investigation into contemporary claims of miracles and lacks research into the many historical claims of miracles in the past twenty centuries.

Current cessationist writers do appeal to history because they can't make their case against miracles using only the Bible. They don't research history. They point to a few fringe groups with bad practices or bad theology and maintain that these are the only kind of people who have believed in contemporary miracles since the death of the apostles. It often goes unnoticed that this appeal to history, either past or present, is actually an argument from *experience*, or better, an argument from the *lack of experience*. It is common for charismatics to be accused of building their theology on experience. However, all cessationists ultimately build their theology of the miraculous gifts on their lack of experience, not on Scripture.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD FREQUENTLY LOSE THE BLESSINGS OF GOD

For the sake of argument, assume there have been no miracles since the death of the last apostle. That would not prove that God is not willing to do miracles and heal today. We would have to know why there were no miracles. It could be because God had withdrawn the gift of miracles and the gift of healing, or it could be due to unbelief that led the church to disobey God's command to pursue the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:1).

The Real Reason Christians Do Not Believe in Miracles

Throughout history the people of God have found it easy to throw away his blessings.

After Joshua and his elders died, “another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).

Sometime after the death of Moses, either the entire Pentateuch or the book of Deuteronomy was lost. It wasn’t discovered again until around 622 BC during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8). Think of that—the people of God lost their Scriptures.

For all practical purposes, this occurred a second time in church history when people could no longer read the original Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, or their Latin translation of the Bible. It wasn’t until the time of the Reformation that the Scriptures became accessible to people again in their own language. God did not withdraw the Scriptures from the people; the church neglected Scripture until they lost it.

One of the most important teachings ever given to the church is the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ. Shortly after the death of the apostles, however, the writings of some of the apostolic fathers show that the doctrine of justification by faith was already being perverted.³ Eventually this doctrine was lost and not widely recovered until the Reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Should we explain this absence by assuming that for approximately fifteen hundred years, God had withdrawn the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit or justification by faith was no longer important to him?

3. *The Shepherd of Hermas* was written in the early second century and was one of the most popular books of early Christianity. The author wrote that a Christian could be forgiven for only one sin after baptism (see fourth mandate, chapter 3).

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How could the church lose something that was intended to be permanent? The church seems to have no difficulty at all in misplacing the Holy Scriptures and foundational doctrines. The people of God have always been slow to believe him and careless with his gifts.

If the gifts were lost in history, the most important question is not *whether* they were lost, but *why* they were lost. It could be due to a divinely planned obsolescence. On the other hand, it is possible that God never intended that these gifts should cease, but rather it is *the church* that has neglected and then rejected the gifts.⁴

Ultimately it is only Scripture, not historical research, that will settle this question.

There is ample evidence throughout church history for the use of the gifts in the church. After studying the historical documentation for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, D. A. Carson, a highly respected New Testament scholar, concluded, “There is enough evidence that some form of ‘charismatic’ gifts continued sporadically across the centuries of church history that it is futile to insist on doctrinaire grounds that every report is spurious or the fruit of demonic activity or psychological aberration.”⁵

I wrote the bulk of this chapter twenty-five years ago. Even then, there was significant historical evidence to show that

4. At the time of the first edition of this book (1993), two widely read scholarly studies of New Testament prophecy—David Hill (*New Testament Prophecy* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1979], 191) and David Aune (*Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 338)—concluded that it was the bureaucratic leadership of the church that abandoned the gift of prophecy rather than God withdrawing the gift.

5. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 166.

The Real Reason Christians Do Not Believe in Miracles

miracles in the church had never ceased.⁶ Today (2019), that evidence is overwhelming.⁷

For the last thirty years, I have seen healings everywhere I go in the world, in all kinds of settings. In August 1996, I preached the Sunday morning worship service at St. Andrews, an Anglican church in the little town of Collumpton in Devon, England. The vicar, David, is a friend of mine. The service was more formal than what I was used to, with prayers from a prayer book and special times when everyone kneeled. The church building is a historical monument dating back to the fifteenth century. The inside of the church is decorated with hand-carved woodwork. It is one of the most beautiful churches I've ever seen. The vicar escorted me to a spiral staircase leading up to the pulpit, which perched like a crow's nest above the people. I paused at the foot of the staircase.

"How long should I speak, David?"

"As long you want."

"No, really. How long do you speak?"

"Fifteen to seventeen minutes."

6. For example, see Ronald Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984); Cecil M. Robeck Jr., "Origen's Treatment of the Charismata in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10," in *Charismatic Experiences in History*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 111–25; Donald Bridge, *Signs and Wonders Today* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1985), 174ff.; Paul Thigpen, "Did the Power of the Spirit Ever Leave the Church?" *Charisma* 18, no. 2 (1992): 20–29; Morton T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 129–99; James Edwin Davison, "Spiritual Gifts in the Roman Church: 1 Clement, Hermas, and Justin Martyr" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1981); Cecil Robeck Jr., "The Role and Function of Prophetic Gifts for the Church at Carthage, AD 202–258" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985). This was some of the most accessible historical research I could recommend to readers in 1993.

7. See Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). The whole body of historical evidence supporting miracles throughout church history generally goes unmentioned in modern cessationist literature.

Why I Am Still Surprised by the Power of the Spirit

“Okay, that’s what I will do.”

I didn’t enjoy speaking from the crow’s nest. I looked down on my hearers while I talked about the love of Jesus.

After the service, my kids, who were sixteen, eighteen, and twenty, said, “Dad, let’s get out of here and go to London and have some fun tonight?”

“Sounds good to me. I’ll ask David to let me out of the evening service.”

But when I told David of our plan, he said, “No, Jack. You have to speak tonight. We’ve advertised a healing service all over the little towns of Devon. We promised the people that a healing evangelist from America would be speaking tonight. It will be standing room only. Half the people coming tonight will be unbelievers who only go to church for funerals and weddings. You have to be here, and you have to speak on healing.”

“David, are you serious? Half the people coming to a healing meeting tonight will be unbelievers?”

“I guarantee it, Jack.”

“Okay. I’ll do it.”

Speaking about healing to unbelievers who never go to church could be fun. No one has ever told them that God no longer heals. You have to go to church to hear that God is no longer healing.

That night the church was packed. Dressed in casual clothes, I stood on the stage and told healing stories for forty minutes. At the conclusion, I said, “If you have something you want the Lord to heal, let’s pray silently for a few minutes and ask him to heal those things.”

I asked the Lord to give me impressions of what he would heal that night. I waited silently with my eyes closed, tuning

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out distractions. A picture of a knee came into my mind. I kept my eyes closed, looking at the knee and trying to figure out if it was a right knee or a left knee, a man's knee or a woman's knee. I couldn't tell. With my eyes still closed, I said, "I think the Lord will heal knees tonight."

What I meant to say next was, "Just lift up your spirits to the Lord, and we will pray for knees." What came out of my mouth was, "Just lift up your knees to the Lord, and we will pray for knees." I kept my eyes closed because the vision of the knee would not go away. For the next few minutes, I asked the Lord to heal specific knee problems, never opening my eyes. Then I had some other impressions, and we prayed for those things as well.

I prayed the closing prayer and told people that a number of us would stay to continue praying for people. People did not want to leave. Little groups huddled around the sanctuary, praying for one another. Some said they could feel the presence of the Lord the whole evening.

I stood halfway down the center aisle and put my hand over a blind man's eyes to pray for him. A man behind me shouted, "That was the most amazing thing I've ever seen." I turned and saw him holding up his right knee, pumping it up and down.

"What happened?" I asked.

"When I came in tonight, I could not bend my knee. Now look at it. It's healed," he said.

"Who prayed for you?" I asked.

"No one. When you said, 'Lift up your knees to the Lord,' I just lifted it up, and it was instantly healed."

"I did not say, 'Lift up your knees to the Lord.'"

The blind man said, "Oh yes you did."

Then I heard a scream from the front of the sanctuary.

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I saw a woman about four feet away from an empty wheelchair. She turned and walked back to her wheelchair and sat down.

Her name was Ann Roberts. A friend had persuaded Ann to go to the service. She didn't want to go and didn't expect anything to happen. She sat in the back row. I didn't see her before or after the service until I heard the scream. At the end of the service, a voice inside her head said, "Go down to the front of the sanctuary."

Two older men who had never seen a healing prayed for her to walk. Ann heard the voice a second time. It said, "You can get up if you want to."

She said to the men praying for her, "I want to get up." Both of the men said, "No! Don't do that!" Even though they were praying for Ann to get up, they expected she would crash if she tried to walk.

Ann said, "I think God is telling me to get up." The men said, "Okay." And they prepared to catch her. Instead, she took her first steps in eight years.

The next day, Ann was walking around her village with a walker. The local newspaper wanted to do a story on her.

I went back to Collumpton in the late fall for a driven pheasant hunt. On Sunday morning, I spoke at St. Andrews again. Ann stood up before the church and told the story of her healing. Her legs had filled out. You would never have known she had been paralyzed.

As of this writing (March 2019), Ann is still healed and still with us.

None of us had a lot of faith that night—not the reluctant preacher, not the men praying for Ann—but the power of the Lord was present to heal.