

Question:

Hey guys, would you be so kind in helping me help a friend in desperate need. He belongs to some Pentecostal sect and I think the main cause of his problem comes from the moment that he engages in tongue speaking. Before I fire out some answer to him to advise and guide him, please give me some insights on how you guys will answer his case. Here's his letter to me:

So are you a spirit filled tongue-talking believer? I'm not trying to demean and reject those that aren't, but these battles didn't rear up until shortly after I was filled. I know that praying in the Spirit has been a huge help to me from the beginning.

You know the battle I'm going through, but a little about me. My beliefs most closely line up with those of Kenneth E. Hagin Sr. My pastor is a graduate of RHEMA Bible Training college. I greatly appreciate and covet your prayers and the time you have taken to give me some advice. My wife, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are all born-again spirit-filled tongue-talking Christians. They have been of great help. I just wanted to get some good counsel outside of my immediate family. Have a great night!

~Friend

Me again! I'm at work so I didn't have much time to expound in my last e-mail. First tell me some about yourself and the missionary group you're a part of and some about your walk with the Lord. But I'm glad I got hold of you, it's sometimes good to just chit chat with other believers.

About what I'm going through, I've come to find there are 4 reasons why things happen. 1) The principle of reaping and sowing. 2) A blessing from God. 3) A test from God. 4) Or a simple attack of the devil. I grew up in a pentecostal/evangelical church setting. I could say I've been born again when I ask Jesus into my life during an "Acquire the Fire" event in 11th grade (about 6 years ago), but I really committed my life to God when I got married about 2 1/2 years ago. Since then I ran hard into the fullness and meat of God. I got filled with the spirit while praying in my truck Feb 21, 2009. Before this I had already experienced some great manifestations of the Holy Spirit. My pastor of 13 years operates himself in all 5 areas of the five fold ministry. Prophecy, teaching, preaching, etc. He prophesied the U.S. stock crash about 6 months before it happened, the bailout and lots of other national events. Basically he flows in the fullness of

the Holy Spirit, and so I've been underneath him for a good portion of my life. As goes the pastor so goes his people. Anyways that's a good insight on where I am at in my walk, and possibly why I am experiencing these attacks. I know that this last probably year and more specifically about the last 3 months have been insanely trying. Many times in deep depression, many many sleepless nights and crying out to God. I have a very deep love for God. I daily have a broken and contrite heart before the Lord and weep often. These feelings and thoughts of pride and rebellion are sickening to me, and all of this has driven me close to the edge of despair many times. The light of God's Word and talking with some of my church leaders has brought light to some of my struggles. I know now that I haven't committed the unpardonable sin, and having used the name and blood of Jesus against those thoughts, I have much victory over them. Basically I feel total victory over those last 3 battles I talked about, and I know that I will overcome this too. But I still need some word, help, encouragement from some fellow believers. I must admit that these attacks have put my walk almost to a halt. I have pretty much put all of my effort and energy into these battles. The leader I talked to said that she went through a battle in her life, and afterwards she said her walk with God went to the next level. Next level of faith, Godly favor, power in the Spirit. I'm not so much concerned about why this is happening, whether it is an attack or a test, and what will come of it. I am just seeking victory over all of this so I can move on in God.

Thanks again for listening and responding, it feels good just to get all of this off my chest.

It wouldn't be right to take from you without giving a little back. I much appreciate and respect your work for the Lord. My pastor just started a mailer this year called "The Dreamer Cometh", that goes out to about 10,000 churches. He is considered a pastor to pastors. You can view the mailer via PDF online, I think it will encourage you in your walk. We also have a T. V. ministry called "Faith in Action", if you have time and are interested check it out. I can't wait to hear back from you, have a great day!

~Friend

Can you give your opinion and how you would answer this kind of problem? Is he demon-possessed? How can I help him? Please help me help him, please include him in your daily prayers.

Thank you so much

God bless your ministry

Answer:

Let me first address the first thing that came to my mind as I read his letter. As a new “Christian,” he's having a very emotional early experience. This is not unusual. And it's not unusual for these people to get intensely involved in their religious community and to believe what more “experienced” people have to say.

Based on my own experience, however, I sense that he may be suffering from depression. I don't mean just feeling depressed once in a while, I mean a chemical imbalance (at least that's what we think it is) in the brain that colors everything he does and his overall approach to life. If he gets help for this now, he may be able to defeat it without resorting to pharmaceutical intervention.

People with depression tend to look at the big picture in great detail. They see how much effort is needed to accomplish the tasks of the day and they project that forward for the full amount of time they'll have to do those things (some times their entire life). They can easily get overwhelmed by a sense that there's no way they can cope with all of that.

The answer, of course, is to take each day by itself. One can then consider a completed day as a victory and be encouraged that with God's help they can face the next day. But that's very hard for someone who's depressed. While I'm not a great fan of pharmaceutical solutions, your friend might find some help in that which will allow him to get this thinking better in line.

I understand your concern about the excessive focus put on glossolalia in his faith tradition. Glossolalia can be experienced by people from many backgrounds, some of which are incompatible with a Christian world view. So while it can be a sign of the Holy Spirit, it is not proof positive that God's Spirit is involved.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if 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 John 4:1-3)

The Assembly of God denomination calls itself Pentecostal, as do most “tongue-speaking” groups. But the gift of tongues given to the apostles and other believers on that day was NOT glossolalia.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (Acts 2:5, 6)

Glossolalia cannot be understood by persons who speak different languages. it is merely ecstatic utterance that may be useful in the closet, but is meaningless for all but the speaker.

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God. (1 Corinthians 14:26-28)

I'm also wary about the idea of a “five-fold ministry.” In discussing the gifts of the Spirit the Bible does not have a specific, repeated list. Paul himself names at least nine in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians. (The idea of a “five-fold ministry” may come from Ephesians 4:11.) But then in Romans 12 Paul lists seven gifts.

There are a lot of people who believe that anything spiritual must be good, but that's just not the case. The same is true of the types of spiritual phenomena Friend writes about. It didn't take any particular prophetic insight to predict the stock market crash of 2008. Many educated people knew about the bubble in the housing market and understood that when that bubble burst a lot of money would be lost.

The one thing that Friend needs most is personal time with the Word of God. It is too easy to let someone else do the study for us and tell us what it says. But

we cannot be sure of our belief in Christ until we have read the Word through many times. If we do this with a sincere effort to put aside all previous ideas we can make room for the Spirit to interpret that word to us.

I am not denying the usefulness of teaching and preaching. But there are too many preachers with too many different interpretations out there for more than a very few of them to actually be right. You can't stand before God on judgment day and say, "I believed and did everything my pastor told me."

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Our only spiritual safety is in complete devotion to Jesus Christ. And the only way to learn about him and what he wants is to study the book that tells us about him, the Bible.

I would suggest that rather than taking on the topic of speaking in tongues directly, that you instead share with him your personal experience in Bible study and encourage him to read the Bible for what it actually says, rather than for what he's been raised from childhood to believe it says. I found my own personal journey of discovery to be very enlightening. While I am a member of the same denomination as I was before, I don't believe all the same things in the same way I did before.

I pray that God will grant you wisdom as you deal with Friend, and that your own personal devotional life will grant you the same blessings it has for me and could for him.

Elkanah