

How to evaluate spiritual gifts

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, 1Corinthians 14:1

Abuses abound today with spiritual gifts, just as they did with the Corinthians. It is legitimate to put a question mark over some manifestations that have been passed off as genuine. It is not legitimate to reject extraordinary spiritual gifts on that grounds. Doing that is fear-based theology. The fears are...

- Fear of falling into the extremism of some movements.
- Fear of losing control of oneself or allowing disorder in meetings.
- Fear of unbiblical teaching that may come through supposed spiritual manifestations.

These fears are dispelled when we apply biblical criteria for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit. Once these principles are rooted in our minds, we are free to *earnestly desire the spiritual gifts* and enjoy a new sense of security in evaluating spiritual manifestations. Following are four criteria for assessing the legitimacy of any supposed spiritual phenomena.

Who does it glorify?

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, ... He will glorify me. John 16:13-14

God gave the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. His mission is to bring attention to Christ, not to himself. If another person, doctrine or movement or even a “gift” itself is getting more glory than Christ, something is wrong. If Christ alone is glorified, then we can safely assume the manifestation is from God.

What does it produce?

Beware of false prophets...You will recognize them by their fruits. Matthew 7:15,16

Let all things be done for building up. 1Corinthians 14:26

The perfecting and sanctifying of his people is God's goal in the church. Does it lead to that? Or does it produce disorder? Does it result in a better understanding of sound doctrine? Or does it introduce doubtful and confusing questions? Is the teaching implied scripturally sound?

Does it follow biblical order?

But all things should be done decently and in order. 1Corinthians 14:40

Paul lays down rules to maintain order in the use of spiritual gifts. Are these rules respected?

Is it in submission to biblical authority?

...let the others weigh what is said. 1Corinthians 14:29

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Hebrews 13:17

Does the person manifesting a supposed spiritual gift show a willingness to submit to evaluation and correction? Or do they insinuate they are above evaluation on the grounds that their supposed *gift* came from the Holy Spirit? This latter attitude is spiritual pride and deserves rebuke.

Summary

Once biblical criteria are established, fear-based theology goes out the window. This frees us to be proactive in the pursuit of spiritual gifts as Scripture commands. We can evaluate any spiritual manifestation with a greater sense of confidence. This allows us to exalt Christ even more.