

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Learning to Operate in the Power of the Spirit

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the one believing unto Me, the works which I do also that one will do, even greater ones than these will s/he do, because I go to the Father. ...and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper (one like Me), in order that He might be with y'all unto the Age."

Jn. 14:12,16

" You shall receive (lit., 'take') power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses..."

Acts 1:8

"Therefore a long time they remained, speaking freely by the Lord, the One testifying to the message of His grace, giving signs and wonders to happen by means of their hands."

Acts 14:3

"...but 'truthing' in love, we might make all things grow up into Him, who is the head, Christ, out from whom all the Body, being jointly fitted together and being knitted together, by means of the connecting bonds of the supply, according to the in-working in measure of each single part, makes the growth of the Body unto an edification of itself in love." Eph. 4:15,16

**In the past few weeks, we have been led to pray for individuals, more earnestly and intensely. As a result, we have observed, or participated in, some unusual experiences.** As we have responded to what we felt were the "leadings of the Lord", a number of us have received, and expressed, what we perceived to be revelations from God. **It has been wonderful to see how the Holy Spirit has led us as a group, using many individuals, to address the needs of the person we were praying for.** As we have verbalized our individual bits of information, we have been amazed to see how God can lead us to address areas of need that we had no idea were even there. He has revealed to us word pictures, images, impressions, etc., that have been very specific, directing us in a particular course of action that has been different in each case. As we have followed this leading, we have seen God touch, liberate, and heal in ways that have been deep and significant. **People have experienced the hand of God in new ways that they had not previously known or understood.** For many of us, this has been very exciting. For some of us, this may be a bit confusing, or we may be wondering, "What is going on?" Allow me to attempt to put this in perspective.

First of all, **we should not be surprised at the "super-natural".** If by "natural" we mean what is physical, sensory, we know that there is an entire realm of angelic beings, both good and evil, that we do not normally see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. God Himself is not open to physical, scientific examination. Jesus said that He is spirit (Jn. 4:24). There is no "litmus test" for God, that I am aware of, yet we know that He exists. **Furthermore, we should not be surprised that God would desire to communicate with us.** The fundamental basis for our faith is that God exists, that He cares about us, and that He is willing to participate in our affairs. Not only has He done so in ancient history (the Bible is the record of His interactions with people), but it is clear from the Scriptures that He intends to foster personal relationships, even of an intimate nature, with His people (Psa. 25:1-14; Prov. 3:32; Jn. 14:16,17,21,26; I Cor. 2:10-13). Good grief, this was an Old Testament expectation, *how much more* for us, now that Jesus has opened the way into the Father's presence (Heb. 10:19-22)!! **Nor should we be surprised that God would want to work powerfully through us, ...even miraculously.** This was the model of ministry taught and exemplified by Jesus (e.g., Mk. 1:21-45; 6:7-13; Lk. 10:1-11,17-20). It was carried on through the apostles and other believers of the early church (Acts 2:43; 4:29,30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:1-13). Obviously, Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts indicates an ongoing expectation that these kinds of manifestations of the Spirit would *continue* to occur (I Cor. 12:4-11).

**Biblically, the gathering of God's people is to be both a learning laboratory, and a dispensing station of God's grace.** The ministry gifts described in Eph. 4:11 were given to help others to *discover, develop* and *deploy* their spiritual gifts so that, as everyone utilizes their God-energized abilities, the Body would build itself up in love and maturity. The message of vs. 15 is that this happens as we actively express truth toward one another, in word and deed. *This picture of what is supposed to happen when the people of God gather is diametrically opposed to the practice of most churches in history.* It is an "every-member participating" kind of dynamic, such as we read about in I Cor. 14:26f. **By feedback and interaction, we help one another discover how the Spirit works in our own individual lives.** We learn to identify the Spirit's leading, and to confidently step out in response to what He is doing inside of us. **By feedback and interaction, we uncover the hidden things in one another's lives,** exposing bondage, brokenness, or immaturity (in Acts 2:46, the word translated as "sincerity" really means "openness" or "easy accessibility" of heart, implying deep, personal sharing; cf. I Cor. 14:3,24,25) . We are generally encouraged and strengthened by the personal interest of God and others in helping us grow. The

ministry directed by the Holy Spirit is to the point, timely, and effective. ***By feedback and interaction, the healing, empowering grace of the Spirit is expressed and released through us to one another.*** In Eph. 4:16, our relationships are described as "joint(s) of supply". This image indicates that we receive something from one another, some kind of nourishment, support, or strength, as we interact "according to the inworking (energy) in measure of each part". If there is no time or opportunity to express this "inworking" toward one another, we miss out on that investment of grace, strength and ministry that God intended for us to receive. **Further, because our gifts differ, there may not be any other way to bring exactly what is needed, or at least what would be most effective, than through our interaction.** For example, you can cut a board with a hammer and chisel, but a saw is much more quick and effective. The right tool for the right job applies to spiritual things, as well.

**OK, so how do I learn to operate according to the power of the Holy Spirit?** Following are some suggestions to help us to "tune in" to what God is doing.

**(1.) We must be desirous, expectant and watchful for God to begin to reveal Himself to us.** If we do not wish to "go down this road", it most likely will not happen. God has been known to countermand our human objections and reluctance (e.g., Moses in Ex. 3,4; Jonah), but generally He will not force Himself upon those who do not want His input (e.g., Matt. 10:14).

**(2.) Be prayerful, and ask God to teach you.** He is quite capable of making you aware of what He is doing, though you may not recognize it at first. Ask Him to keep you from self-deception, as well.

**(3.) Pay attention to the experiences of others who seem to be in touch with God.** We must recognize that we are all individuals, so that the experiences *we* have of the operation of the Spirit in *our* lives will not be *exactly* like what other people experience. There are, however, often enough similarities that I might notice that what other people experience *is* happening to me, as well. **This is one of the strongest tools available to help us "tune in".** Again, without *interacting*, we will never know what others experience. Especially *watch for confirmation*, i.e., when someone has the same thing happen with them as did with you. *Pay attention to patterns, or puzzle pieces.* Remember, we only see in part. Often, God will only reveal one aspect to you, and it will not make sense. As you share it, however, someone else may understand, or they may have some more information, or the person receiving prayer may know what it is about. *Ask questions, like, "How did you know that?", or "What did that feel like?", or "How did you learn to do this? What do you watch for?"* In I Cor. 2:13, Paul points to this methodology as something he relied on. The last phrase of the verse literally reads "with spiritual ones judging together spiritual things." The word translated as "judging together" implies a *collaborative effort*, i.e., co-judging, co-discerning, comparing ideas and perceptions with one another, interpreting and explaining together.

**(4.) Weigh all things carefully against Biblical revelation and your personal discernment.** If something is definitely contradictory the Scriptures, then we can rule it out. God will *not* be inconsistent. If something seems inappropriate, or you are uncomfortable with it, be cautious. Your inner discernment may be warning you not to proceed. A more clear understanding may develop as you wait, or as you confer with others.

**(5.) Learn by experimentation.** We are told to "test all things, and hold fast to what is good" (I Thess. 5:21). I always assumed that was to be a theological test, but actually it is *an experience test*. The word for "test" is the Greek word *dokimazō*, which means to "test out by trial". The same word is used in Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10; and Phil. 1:10, which all refer to discerning the will of God. **By understanding that God has set things up so that we would learn by doing and experimenting, ...and that He expects that we probably will make mistakes in the process..., we can give ourselves permission to stretch out to try things, without so much fear of "doing it wrong".** It is very much like any other skill-development process in life, whether learning how to walk, how to drive a car, or operate a computer. Our first efforts are awkward, unsure, uncoordinated, and we make mistakes. As we keep at it, however, we will learn to be more effective and skilled at what we do.

**(6.) Respond to what you see the Father doing.** This was one of the principles that Jesus carefully followed (Jn. 5:19,20). Often when *you* notice that God is working in someone else's life, *you* are made aware of that because God intends for *you* to be involved in what He is initiating. It would be appropriate to come up and verbally acknowledge what you think you see, or notice, ...and ask if you can pray or help in some way.

**Currently we seem to be in a "season", a limited period of time, where God wants to equip us to learn to hear His voice and to serve one another in this way.** It is valuable to acknowledge that, pay attention, and be willing to step out and take some risks, if you think God is prompting you.