

QUESTION: What exactly is a "Charismatic"? I think they're more or less like drama freaks. Can you give me a proper description?

ANSWER: The word "charismatic" literally means "of grace" (the Greek work "charis" means grace) and would be applied to the spiritual gifts mentioned in I Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14, as they are gifts of grace. However, the term "charismatic" began to be used in the 1960s to describe churches or groups of believers that put a lot of EMPHASIS on spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues. Today, in Christian circles, you will find churches divided into two main groups: Charismatic (also called "pentecostal" or "full gospel") and fundamental (also called "evangelical"). The different denominational names usually fall into either category, and both groups believe in the same basic "orthodox" beliefs of the Bible, and we agree on such things as salvation (how a person becomes saved), the deity of Christ, the second coming of Christ, the Trinity, and so forth. We disagree on many "side issues" that are not vital to our salvation or our walk with Christ, but many Christians are uncomfortable with these so-called side issues, and it has caused a lot of division over the years in Christian circles. When we get to heaven, it will all be straightened out, and we will know who was "right" and who was "wrong" on these non-essential doctrines. We should love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and not fight and argue over these things. If someone is comfortable in a charismatic church, and if they are growing in the Lord, leave them alone. However, there are many churches that would be described as "charismatic" that are dangerous, and full of false doctrine and error, and we must be discerning and careful in making judgments. The following are some common characteristics of a "charismatic" church, including warnings as to how these doctrines can be taken to extreme, and from there lead to false doctrine and even heresy. Please, I repeat, we must be very wise and discerning, as not all "charismatic" churches are full of error and false teaching, but some are. Even some "fundamental" churches have error and "traditions of men" that get in the way of true teaching from the word of God, so we must be careful in choosing a church, or making judgments about someone else's church, no matter what name is on the sign out in front, or what denomination they claim to be.

1.) Charismatic churches believe in speaking in tongues as the major sign or "proof" of having received the Holy Spirit, or the baptism in the Spirit, or being Spirit-filled. They usually do NOT believe that tongues is just one of the gifts of the Spirit, but put too much emphasis on a person speaking in tongues. Some churches would even say you are not saved, or you are a lesser, "second-class Christian" unless you speak in tongues. This is an unbalanced view of the spiritual gifts mentioned in I Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, and they also ignore the Apostle Paul's warnings in these same chapters about the use of tongues and prophecy in the church congregation.

The Bible teaching on speaking in tongues - Paul gives us the rules or limitations, so to speak, for the use of the gift of tongues in I Corinthians 12, 13 and 14. Read these three chapters carefully. I Corinthians 12:7 and I Corinthians 14:12 say that ALL spiritual gifts are for the purpose of "**the common good**" of the church, and for the "**edification of the church,**" and they are not to be used for selfish purposes or to give glory to man. Speaking in tongues and prophecy are to be done in an orderly manner. When in the church assembly, there must be an interpreter, and only two or three at a time may speak (I Cor. 14:23-30), and ALL spiritual gifts must be **exercised in love**, otherwise it is of no value.

- **I Corinthians 14:33 & 40** "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." "Let all things be done decently and in order."
- **I Corinthians 13:1-3** "Though **I speak with the tongues** of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have **the gift of prophecy**, and understand all mysteries and **all knowledge**, and

though I have **all faith**, so that I could remove mountains, but have not LOVE, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned (as a martyr), but have not love, it profits me nothing."

2.) Charismatic churches believe in something they call "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a second act of grace - an experience you must have at some point after accepting Christ as your Savior. They do this by taking the account of the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, which is meant to be a HISTORICAL book of the Bible, not a DOCTRINAL book, and saying that this experience must happen to all of us nowadays. The Day of Pentecost was the beginning of The Church Age, and the first time that the Holy Spirit came to live in believers in Jesus Christ. After Pentecost, that original day of the Holy Spirit coming to earth to dwell in His church, we no longer need flaming fire, rushing wind, and speaking in tongues to become a Christian (Acts 2:1-21). The charismatics take other Scriptures out of context to "prove" that we all MUST speak in tongues and have this experience of "the baptism in the Holy Spirit".

The Bible teaching on receiving the Holy Spirit - God's word says you receive the Holy Spirit the moment you accept Jesus as your Savior. According to I John 4:13-15, **"whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God" has the Spirit of God dwelling in them.** Romans 10:9-10 tells us that "if you CONFESS with your mouth the Lord Jesus and BELIEVE in your HEART that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be SAVED." Ephesians 1:12-13 says that first, you HEARD the WORD of TRUTH, then you TRUSTED in CHRIST (put your faith in Him, received Him as Savior), then AS SOON as you BELIEVED, you were SEALED with the Holy Spirit.

But what about verses in the Bible that say to "ask God for the Holy Spirit" or to "wait for the Holy Spirit"? People get in trouble and come up with all sorts of wrong doctrines because they do not **take scripture in its context!** All of the verses that say to "ask for the Spirit" or "wait for the Spirit" are Jesus talking to His disciples BEFORE Pentecost! The Day of Pentecost was when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in ALL BELIEVERS, and now it happens automatically when a person is saved. We don't have to wait, and we don't have to ask for the Holy Spirit to come to live in us. The Holy Spirit is actually the One who gives us life and causes us to be born again (in John 3:6 Jesus calls it being "born of the Spirit").

- **Luke 11:13** "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"
- **Acts 1:4** "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now (speaking of Pentecost)."
- **John 14:16-17** "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth (Holy Spirit), whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for **He dwells with you, and will be IN YOU.**"

You see, all these verses above are Jesus speaking to His disciples BEFORE the Day of Pentecost. We do NOT need to wait to receive the Holy Spirit, because we are living on the other side of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit has been freely given to us the moment we are saved.

- **Romans 8:9** "But **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit**, if indeed the **Spirit of God dwells in you**. Now if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he is **not His.**"

Spirit of Christ is another name for the Holy Spirit, along with "Spirit of God," "Spirit of Truth," "Spirit of the Lord" and "Helper." When it says, "if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he is **not His**" it means there is no such thing as a Christian who does not have the

Holy Spirit living (dwelling) inside of him. **You CANNOT BE a Christian, you CANNOT BE SAVED, and NOT have the Holy Spirit IN YOU.** However, there are various stages of **BEING FILLED with the Spirit**, or **CONTROLLED BY** the Spirit, and that is dependent on HOW MUCH OF YOU has been **yielded and surrendered to the Holy Spirit**. When you are TRULY SURRENDERED to the Holy Spirit, and are **ALLOWING Him to be in CONTROL of your life**, you will have **the EVIDENCE of the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** (Galatians 5:22-23).

3.) Charismatic churches believe that speaking in tongues is proof that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, and they use the term "Spirit-filled" to describe one another, and to distinguish themselves from other Christians who do not speak in tongues, and are therefore (to them) not a true Christian, or somehow lesser or unenlightened. This causes much pride and fleshly behavior, such as boasting, and the attitude of "I'm a better Christian than you are, because I'm spirit-filled."

- **Ephesians 5:17-18** "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be FILLED with the SPIRIT."

The Bible teaching on "Filled with the Spirit" - Paul contrasts BEING DRUNK with BEING FILLED with the Spirit. INSTEAD of being drunk, which is to be "UNDER THE INFLUENCE" of alcohol, we are to be "UNDER THE INFLUENCE" of, or CONTROLLED by, the **Holy Spirit**. In other scriptures, it is also called "walking in the Spirit", "letting the word of Christ dwell in you", and "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." This is NOT a ONE-TIME experience, but a continuous YIELDING of ourselves to the Holy Spirit's control in our lives. The literal translation of the Greek is "keep being filled" with the Spirit. Instead of "speaking in tongues" being the evidence of someone being filled with the Spirit, the word of God tells us the FRUIT of the Spirit in our lives is the evidence that we are Spirit-filled.

- **Ephesians 5:8-9** "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. WALK as children of LIGHT, (for the FRUIT of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)."
- **Galatians 5:22-23** "But the FRUIT of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness (kindness), faithfulness, meekness (humility), self-control."
- **John 15:8** "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much FRUIT; so you will [prove to] be My disciples."

4.) Most Charismatic churches believe that a person can lose their salvation - I don't know why that is, but it seems to be their tradition that they believe that a person can turn their back on Christ and become unsaved, or sin one too many times (how many is that?) and lose their salvation. They seem to think this type of teaching will keep their people from falling back into sin. Not only is it unscriptural, but it doesn't work! Charismatic churches don't have any fewer backsliders than non-charismatic churches. In fact, if a new Christian is properly taught what the Bible says about their eternal security, they are less likely to remain in sin if they temporarily backslide.

The Bible teaching on assurance of salvation - a person who has truly believed in Jesus as their Savior, and has been born again, cannot become "unsaved" and "unborn," and they WOULD not walk away from Christ. The problem we have in the churches is with people who APPEAR to be Christians, but have never truly given their lives to Jesus Christ, and when THEY "turn and walk away" from Christ, or go into heresy and false teaching, it is confusing and causes some to believe they "lost their salvation." Jesus says in Matthew 13:24-50 that evil men and false prophets will infiltrate God's kingdom, and **they will look like God's people on the outside**, but they will be false. In Matt. 7:21-23 MANY will say to Him at the judgment that they did many things in His name, but Jesus will say **"I NEVER KNEW YOU!"** Please notice, Jesus says "I NEVER knew you," not, "I USED to know you, but you lost your salvation."

- **John 10:28-29** "My Sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them **ETERNAL life**, and **they shall never perish**; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **NO ONE** is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."
- **I John 5:13** "These things have I written unto **YOU that believe** on the name of the Son of God; **that YOU may KNOW that YOU have eternal life**, and that YOU may continue to believe on the name of the Son of God."

There is SO MUCH Scripture on this subject that we can't possibly go into it in this short paper. For an in-depth study on these subjects see "Q&A on Unforgiveable Sin, etc.", "Salvation by Faith Alone, or by Our Works?" and "How Many Times is Too Many? (Or Can You Lose Your Salvation?" available from "Love Lifted Me Recovery."

5.) Most Charismatic churches put too much emphasis on gifts of prophecy, and so-called signs and wonders - There is too much room for the devil to come in with counterfeit tongues and prophecies, and false signs and wonders. There is too much room for "the flesh" to manufacture religious fervor, fake tongues, and make false "prophecies" in peoples' lives just because of pride or because they are busybodies. There is SO MUCH Scripture and warnings against these things, that we can't possibly go into it in this short paper. For an in-depth study of these issues see "Prophecy and Visions According to the Word of God," and "Control Freaks, Manipulators, Busybodies & Gossips" available from "Love Lifted Me Recovery."

6.) Most Charismatic churches seem to equate raising the hands, LOUD music and praising God, whoopin' and hollerin' and even dancing around in the church as true worship of God. Jesus said in John 4:23-24 that "the Father is seeking those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth." We must be **born of the Spirit, and believe the TRUTH** of God's word, and that is what makes our worship of Him acceptable, not how LOUD it is. Any drunk can come into a church service and be loud and boisterous! A good rock 'n' roll band playing so-called worship music can get people swaying and dancing around in the flesh! These are NOT signs of true worship of God! Again, the devil sends his people into churches like this all the time, and if the Christians are judging a person's spirituality by how loud and boisterous they are in the worship service, they can pass themselves off as "Spirit-filled Christians". People can speak in false tongues by demonic power, and do false miracles and signs by demonic power. It is very dangerous to use these outward signs by which to judge a person's spirituality. An example of the comment about any drunk being able to praise God LOUDLY happened in our church a few months ago. A homeless man had been coming to church for a few weeks, and had been behaving very well, and not acting strange in any way. One Sunday, he came, and he was loudly saying "Amen!" and "Praise God!" and "Hallelujah!" and so forth, all during the first part of the worship service. Tom and a few other men from the church took him outside to ask him to quiet down, and found that he was quite drunk. He even admitted it, and broke down crying, and later came back into church, humbled and repentant. You see, his LOUDNESS in praising God did not come from being under the influence of the HOLY Spirit, but from other spirits (in this case alcohol). Much more dangerous situations have happened in churches from people coming in who are demon-possessed, and they can mimic the gifts of the Spirit in order to deceive. Matthew 10:16, "Be ye therefore **wise** as serpents, and harmless as doves."