

Why people get stuck in PAST moves of God, and how to learn to move in what God is doing NOW!"

written by Randy Starkey | 05/30/2024

Have you, or your church, ever been accused of "hindering" the moving of the Holy Spirit, or "quenching" the Spirit, or "capping" the moving of the Spirit? If so, I have some liberating news for you, so read on!

The two most recent past moves of God

Two of the most recent past moves of God have been the Pentecostal movement of around 1900, and the Charismatic movement of around 1970. (There was also the "Latter Rain" healing movement in the 1940's that was smaller) I was not born during the Pentecostal movement, but I was actually saved during the Charismatic movement. Both of these moves of God emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in various ways.

The Church had become quite "dry" prior to these two moves, and really needed to be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit. We are told in Ephesians 5:18 to *"be filled with the Holy Spirit."* So people discovered the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, more freedom of expression in worship, a freedom and joy, and a fresh work of God's power for healing, deliverance and victory in life!

How we tend to "camp" and get "stuck" at moves of God

Unfortunately, Scripture teaches us that we have a tendency to "camp" at the last thing God did, and we can often get stuck there. We get familiar with how God is moving at that time, and we think God always does it that way. Whole denominations get started based on that kind of thinking. We get "stuck" in religious ruts. We start seeing all Scripture through the lens of our familiarity with the last move of God, and it keeps us from continually hearing and following what God is doing in the present. We get caught up in our emotions and our mind and our own preconceived ideas instead of following the Spirit. And the longer we go, the more those famous words begin to be fulfilled... "We've always done it this way!"

To show this from Scripture, we see in Acts 13:36 that God's purposes are by generation. *"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation..."* How God works and moves often changes from one generation to another! We must be careful not to allow what the Spirit does in one generation to harden into human religiosity so that we become deaf to what the Spirit is saying and doing NOW! Being LED by the Spirit is one of the most important principles in the New Testament! *"For*

all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:14. And the idea here of a son (in the original language) is not a young child or an immature son, but one who is full grown. Also in Galatians 5:25 we’re told “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Jesus warned of us this tendency to get stuck in the old and failing to move into new things in God! In Luke 5:39 Jesus tells us... *“And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’”*

My own experiencing of getting “stuck”

So to make this personal, as a pastor for 38 years, I was saved in 1973 during the Charismatic move of the Spirit. The Church at that time was very dry in general, and there were very few life-giving churches that were Spirit-empowered. So it was an exciting time to have the Holy Spirit being poured out, and very refreshing. The Church at large needed it! The recent movie “Jesus Revolution” documented some of the history of that time. Watching it in the movie theatre, I leaned over to some of my friends I was there with and said “That’s how it was! I was there!” Our own church also came into being during that time. Our focus for that moment was the power and outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Everything revolved around that!

However, what began to happen is exactly as Jesus predicted, after awhile (and it continues today), people began to “camp out” in the Charismatic move (and this happened to the Pentecostal movement also), and people (myself included!) started to get “stuck” in religious ruts. We tried to “perpetuate” the move of God!

How getting “stuck” leads to “excesses”

And when we get stuck, that also leads to various excesses because we really have nothing new from God (we’re not led by the Spirit and moving on with God), so we start coming up with new things on our own. Some Pentecostal preachers even developed preaching voices where “God” became “Gawd” and everything else an octave lower! Some of the excesses also are often not fully in line with Scripture! For instance, services began to be judged by how many “manifestations” (so called) of the Holy Spirit happened in that service. Services started including large prayer lines that were judged successful or not by how many people ended up “slain in the Spirit” on the floor! And more excesses have now followed in recent years.

We have the extreme faith movement where if you are not healed your confession must be wrong and/or you lack faith. Everybody is expected to be healed all the time. Explain that to Joni Eareckson Tada! (This is a whole area of theology I don’t have space to go into here, but is very important to understand lest you be guilty of bringing guilt, depression and condemnation on innocent believers!) We also have the extreme prosperity movement where God wants everyone rich. Then we also have the extreme deliverance group where you need to fast for days and then the deliverance takes hours and you need a special minister and every single demon has a name! (Show me all that in Scripture! That’s NOT the way

Jesus did it!). Then we have the extreme prophecy group where everyone is craving for a word from God. People often then live more off prophecy and words than doing the hard work of getting into God's Word for themselves! (There is legitimate prophecy for sure. Timothy was prophesied over by the elders at Ephesus mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:14). What happens in the extreme prophecy and deliverance groups is people, in Celebrate Recovery language, become co-dependent on receiving some prophecy or word or deliverance or laying on of hands "fix", such that they "have to have it" on a regular basis, and it's often only some "minister" who can pray for them so they can receive something. It can actually be like an addiction! The end result of this is it actually stunts and cripples their OWN true relationship with God! Often, this slides further into looking for and focusing on the latest supernatural thing, the latest popular speaker or TV evangelist, the latest end-time theory or teaching, instead of them being solidly GROUNDED IN THE WORD OF GOD and their RELATIONSHIP with Jesus!

All these extremes and excesses are signs of being "stuck" back in the Charismatic move. NOTE: there are CERTAINLY LEGITIMATE applications of things like prophecy, tongues, gifts of the Spirit, deliverance and healing and prayer for various needs, miracles and healings still happen today, but we don't "live" there or take them to religious extremes, "commanding" God what and how to do things (dangerous!). At the beginning of the Pentecostal and Charismatic moves the church was dry, and the work of the Holy Spirit was new, but now God wants us to move in His power in some NEW ways! For people "stuck" in the past, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit actually becomes their SOLE FOCUS, and they have forgotten that the Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, not the first!!

Learning to see God's "next" move...

As I was in the middle of the Charismatic movement in the late 90's, right when we were in the middle of what became known as the "joy" phenomena, (which also became an extreme), I began to sense from God an "unease", and I began to realize that many people and churches were becoming "stuck" in that last move of God, overly focused on Charismatic manifestations, including me, and that God was moving on with a fresh wind of the Spirit! Here's how it happened...

I was praying about all this one day and the Lord said to me... "Randy, you have the Spirit's power now, when are you going to start flowing in the power of the Holy Spirit for the main reason I gave it?" Well, that took me back! And actually, during all the Charismatic excess we had been involved in, our church had not grown, and had plateaued in those years. Why? Because we weren't reaching any new people and all the "manifestations" were actually keeping people away. Once I started listening to God about what He is doing NOW, and obeying that, our church started to grow! And we were doing it all in the power of the Holy Spirit! So let me explain...

Here is what the Lord continued to say to me... "My Church was dry, and needed the outpouring of my Spirit in the Charismatic movement that I sent, and you have the power now, so when are you going to start using it for what I've told you to in my Word?" Wow! I was beginning to see how God was moving DIFFERENTLY now! He took me straight to Acts 1:8 *"You will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my WITNESSES..."* There it was! The very FIRST reason Jesus gave for

the power of the Holy Spirit was EVANGELISM! Seeing people SAVED! Helping them to come to know JESUS! And here we were, stuck in Charismatic phenomena on repeat mode, sometimes treating them like toys, and actually driving people away from church with all our “manifestations” instead of seeing them saved! God had given us an infusion of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Charismatic renewal, our worship had become empowered, we learned all about the gifts of the Spirit, but God now had begun to show us what that power was really for! *I began to see His next move is here!* It’s all about reaching many, many people with the gospel IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT as we now get closer to Jesus’ return! Jesus is building His Church! (See Matthew 16) Our church began growing! We had guests and salvations each weekend! Even as we switched our focus in this direction in the Celebrate Recovery Ministry my wife and I were asked to lead on Friday nights, we’ve seen it grow to over 100 people each week! We recently graduated 113 from Step Studies and had 420 people at that graduation! (An interesting SIDE NOTE to that graduation event is we had a person praying VERY loudly at the end of the graduation and it was quite distracting and unnerving to others enjoying fellowship, and this person responded later that they just “knew” they were led by the Holy Spirit to do that! This is simply an example of Charismatic excess. Praying quieter would have been fine. 1 Cor. 14:32 says *“People who speak what God has revealed must control themselves.”* Or as Paul said in 1 Cor.14:40 *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* This shows up in some people’s insistence they are led by the Holy Spirit and they refuse to listen to leadership. See Hebrews 13:17) Also, some people will use the statement “the Holy Spirit made me do that”, but that is TOTALLY UNSCRIPTURAL!

When we start seeing God move in a new direction, we also start seeing new insights He shows us in the Scripture! For instance, many people and churches that are stuck in the Charismatic movement of the 70’s think that unless there is prophecy, tongues, and multiple gifts of the Spirit in their church services that God is not moving! *This is tunnel vision and religiosity!* When we received the power of the Holy Spirit in the Charismatic movement, it was fresh, the gifts were prevalent, and life-giving churches began to spring up and grow! But as time went on, one of the things that happened as churches were planted and revived is congregations grew and became larger! Then if someone prophesied on one side of the sanctuary or auditorium, nobody on the other side could hear them!! And if you were to follow 1 Corinthians 14:26 that says *“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up”* and your church service had 500 people in it, you’d be there a very long time if “each of us” had something to contribute!! So there’s a new insight here! Paul, in his instructions here in 1 Corinthians 14, was talking about churches meeting in HOMES! There were no church BUILDINGS in the early days of the church in the Book of Acts! The church everywhere normally met in homes. The gifts of the Spirit were more for smaller groups and house churches, NOT large gatherings! (And actually in the New Testament the gifts often were for OUTSIDE the church as we see in the ministry of Jesus!) Even on the Day of Pentecost, when 3,000 were saved, it was through Peter’s PREACHING that salvation happened, and not through the tongues of fire or the disciples speaking in tongues (people thought they were drunk!). The POWER came down, but the main WORK of God was the PREACHING that resulted in 3,000 souls being saved! Now that’s church growth! That’s God at work in a LARGE church gathering! For those who constantly want to have tongues going forward in the large gathering of the church, Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 14:23... *“So if the whole church comes together in*

the same place and all speak in tongues, and uninformed visitors or unbelievers come in, won't they say that you are crazy?" (Answer: "yes!") Perhaps this is the reason some churches are not growing! They are "stuck" in the past, and have turned the previous move of God into religiosity! I had to face this myself and be open to the NEW move that God was doing! The result was joy and growth!

So what should be our focus NOW in our large, weekend church gatherings? Well, if we follow the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, we will seek to build up the saints, but we will also have a MAJOR focus on getting people saved just like Peter did! 3000 were saved! (Especially in America where people interested in God usually come to a church service!) I started to see this more clearly when I faced the fact that I had been "stuck in a rut"!

An interesting side note here is that the gifts of the Spirit are really only addressed in detail in ONE place in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, and a large part of that is CORRECTIONAL! Also, LOVE, the very character of God, is placed ABOVE the gifts in 1 Corinthians 13, sandwiched right between chapters 12 and 14, and so we see that character is God's TOP emphasis, not gifts! Check out Matthew 7:22-23 also on those who boasted that they did miracles and cast out demons, but the Lord said were lawless! Go through all of Paul's letters for instance and see how the emphasis is on our CHARACTER and on our ACTIONS! (A Facebook post on miracles will get 100 likes, and one on character will get 10!!)

One more interesting side note: Those that focus primarily on manifestations and the gifts of the Spirit often think they are "*more spiritual*" than others. However, gifts are just that... GIFTS! They say NOTHING about us as a person. Whereas CHARACTER takes work! It takes dying to self and cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit within you! (See Galatians 5). This is why it's central in the New Testament.

When we live in the PAST of the Charismatic move, (or the Pentecostal move), we tend to constantly and only look for all sorts of "manifestations" of the Spirit, and we claim that others are "quenching the Spirit" or "not letting the Holy Spirit move", and that does two wrong things: It drives away newer people, and it makes regular believers "co-dependent" on some kind of "manifestation" of the Spirit.

God is moving now in a NEW way in the large weekend services of our churches to help us reach the lost before He returns! It's all still the power of the Holy Spirit, He's just moving now in a DIFFERENT way! We still pray for people, we still see healings, miracles and answers to prayer, people get filled with God's power, but we do all this "*decently and in order*". (1 Corinthians 14:40). Just as in Acts 2, moving on from the wind and the tongues, it was THE POWERFUL PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD that brought about God's harvest of 3,000 souls! This is God's move for the church to GROW, to see people discipled and souls saved! And it takes the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT to do it! A revival of repentance and salvation by the grace of God is coming! "*You will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my WITNESSES...*" Acts 1:8

Amen!

Appendix 1

Keys to discerning when God is beginning to move in a new way...

We must understand that God Himself does not do things the same way for all times, and that He will move in NEW ways at various times! We see this in Isaiah 43:19 *“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.”*

1. The old way seems to be getting a bit stale, like going through the motions.
2. You are sensing an uneasiness that the way you are going is not quite right.
3. You are beginning to long for a fresh breath of God.
4. God is beginning to show you new insights in Scripture that point to a new direction.
5. So go for it! Ask God to direct your steps as you step out in faith from the old and into the NEW, overcoming the tendency to stay with the old and familiar. (see Luke 5:39)

Appendix 2

Evangelistic meetings may at times exhibit more dynamic workings of the Holy Spirit (see Acts chapter 8 and the ministry of Philip the evangelist). However, that is not always the case, as Billy Graham’s evangelistic meetings saw thousands saved, without such workings. One of the dangers here is Ministers or Evangelists (and even Pastors can fall into this) try to “make” supernatural things happen, copying some pattern they see in Scripture or a past move of God. Acts 2 and Acts 8 are examples of God sovereignly moving, and you can’t “work that up”. However, supernatural working in evangelistic gospel meetings can happen anytime God so desires to move.