

Date	July 18, 2010
Series	God's Empowering Presence
Title	God's Empowering Presence is Discernable
Big Idea	If you think you got it, but you're not sure, then you don't.
Text	Acts 8:14-18, emphasis on what Simon SAW in verse 18
Speaker	Roger Valci

**Introduction:**

*As many of you probably has discerned by now, I am a faithful member of the mac cult. Yes, it is a cult. Mac users are fanatical about Apple products and they free up a portion of their mental hard drive and emotional pleasure on having the latest products and predicting the next turn Apple makes.*

*Any true disciple of this cult makes there way to MacWorld they yearly trade show of mac products. In the past 20 years, I probably have been a dozen or more times attending both the one in San Francisco and in Boston. On one such pilgrimage, with a group of folks who shared this obsession, one person named Bob stumbled into our setting. While waiting for the yearly keynote address, Bob heard us speculating on what we believed we would be hearing and seeing. Trying to find a way into our conversation, Bob asked the question, **"Who is Steve Jobs?" "Are you serious?" "How can you be at MacWorld in a keynote event and not know who is about to walk on the stage?"** I remember one guy saying back to him, **"If you think you're a mac addict, and don't know who Steve Jobs is, you aren't one."** Besides knowing who Steve Jobs is, **WHAT** would be **the SIGNS, the INDICATORS, the ATTRIBUTES** that shows the world that a person is a loyal member of the mac cult?*

**Top Ten signs or indicators of a Mac Addict...**

1. *Someone who has mentally tried a way to get the latest iPhone.*
2. *Takes their family Christmas picture with their iPad.*
3. *When they can't attend the keynote address, they watch it online.*
4. *Had a spiritual euphoric moment when Apple stock exceeded Microsoft.*
5. *Every time they walk in the mall, they have to stop by the mac store.*
6. *Monitors discussions and rumors about Apple through blogs and podcasts*
7. *They are for anything that is NOT Windows*
8. *Retiring an old mac feels a lot like putting the family dog down.*
9. *Is grieved that MacWorld is essentially dead without Apple.*
10. *Wishes they would have bought Apple stock when it was \$12.00/share. It is now at \$256.00/share*

Well, if these are **the SIGNS, the INDICATORS, the ATTRIBUTES** that shows the world that a person is a loyal member of the mac cult. What would be **the signs, the indicators, and the attributes that describe those empowered by the Spirit?** I believe our text before us begs this question. Open up to Acts 8 with me.

**Text:**

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria **had received the word of God (some form of salvation)**, they sent them Peter and John,

Acts 8:15 who came down and prayed for them, **that they might receive the Holy Spirit.**

Acts 8:16 **For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (referring to water baptism).**

Acts 8:17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and **they were receiving the Holy Spirit.**

Acts 8:18 Now when Simon **SAW** that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands,

When Peter and John went down to Samaria, they discovered a group of believers who had **"accepted the word of God"** (Acts 8:14) and were **"water baptized"** (Acts 8:12) – essentially saved. Discerning that **there was something missing in them**, they prayed that these young followers of Christ **"might receive the Holy Spirit"** (Acts 8:15). Why? **"because the**

**Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them**" (Acts 8:16). Meaning it is possible to have the "infilling" of the Spirit for salvation, but not have the "unleashing" of the power of the Spirit. When they prayed, the Holy Spirit came upon them in such a demonstrative way that one of them, named Simon, "**SAW** that the Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18).

Similarly, on the day of Pentecost, Luke writes:

Acts 2:33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out **WHAT YOU NOW SEE AND HEAR**.

When the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer in an empowerment manner, His mark is **clear** and **unmistakable**. It is something that can be **recognized** by the person to whom it happens and by others who look on at the person. His touch is both **transformational** and **discernable**. That is what we see in the text above. Simon **SAW** the marks of the Holy Spirit in those He touched. When God's empowering presence falls upon a person, something happens to them that lets them know, and lets the world know, that something truly significant has actually occurred in their lives. "If you think you have God's empowering presence, but are not sure, you don't."

### **Preview:**

This morning, I want us to examine both Old and New Testaments and discern together **what exactly are the marks of one who has been touched by God's empowering presence**. Now I must prepare you that we are trying to capture HOW the Spirit of God works. **I caution us to NOT look for absolute formulas or algorithms. We cannot control God and tell Him what to do. We can simply for trends or patterns of the Spirit** that characterize

**empowerment.** Now this list is **NOT** exhaustive. It is simply my humble attempt to capture what happens **TO PEOPLE** and **THROUGH PEOPLE** when God's empowering presence comes upon them. To do this I have chosen to use **A TOP TEN FORMAT.**

#### Core Four:

1. God's empowering presence is **ALWAYS** for The Call.
2. God's empowering presence is for **EVERYONE.**
3. God's empowering presences is **SEPARTE** or **DISTINCT** from salvation.
4. God's empowering presence is **DISCERNABLE.** Typically, it comes with some vocal demonstration.

Whereas, **SALVATION** tends to be **internal, private** and **very personal**, **EMPOWERMENT** is **external, public** and **social.**

**ONE** is for **heaven**, the **OTHER** is for **earth.**

**ONE** is **faith** and the **OTHER** is for **works.**

**ONE** is **to make US more like Christ** and the **OTHER** is **to make OTHERS more like Christ.**

**ONE** **gets ME to heaven** and the **OTHER** **gets OTHERS to heaven.**

#### Defining "NORMAL" Christianity:

Essentially, we are trying to define here **"NORMAL"** Christianity. You realize that **NORMAL** is a very biased word. What I am finding is that what people call "normal" is really a definition of their "comfort" level (2x). Think about it. **What is normal food, music, dress, and hair styles?**

The great problem with the church today is that we gauge **NORMAL** at the church's lowest moment rather than it highest moment. When we do this, our standards are so off we **don't even know how to discern correct priorities in the church.** *In our city today, only 4% are attending church. As a movement we live at the cusp of extinction in our land and I believe a*

*significant contributor to this downward spiral is **the satisfaction with a form of church that MINIMIZES OR BLOCKS the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst.***

The heroes of the New Testament church were **NOT** charismatic leaders like Peter and Paul, but **THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE. God touches us in transformative manners so that we may touch a broken and dying world.** It is this fundamental formula we must recapture today if we are to survive as a church and bring healing to our land.

And so we must look at the **only inspired (not perfect) model** we have to gauge of what Jesus wants His church to look and feel like, the New Testament church, especially the book of Acts. Acts is the barometer of spirituality for the entire NT. It's the backdrop to most of the letters of the NT. **This is "normal" Christianity and we must look for it here.** To provide a holistic Biblical approach, we will also look in the OT for individual encounters with God's empowering presence.

**Warning:** *This list is meant to encourage you to pursue God's empowering presence. The enemy will talk to you and say:*

***"He is saying that you are not spiritual enough."***

***"That there is something wrong with me."***

***"That I am a second class Christian."***

*I am **NOT** saying that. What I am saying is that people in the Scriptures people first seek first **salvation** and then **empowerment**. So lets look at this **Top Ten list** with fresh eyes, **first** as Biblical scholars and **secondary**, as those who seek to live the Christian life as God designed it. Let's see **what are the signs of God's empowering presence.** Starting with #1.*

**Top Ten signs or indicators of a person empowered by God's presence...****1. Prophecy**

Undoubtedly, the number one Biblical sign of empowerment is **prophecy**. When the Holy Spirit empowers a person in the Bible, often times, their mouth is filled with the glory and grandeur of God. **Prophecy is simply Spirit-inspired speech that does not add to Scripture, but APPLIES Scripture to a particular setting.** Words that come not from human origin, but from God to His people.

**Numbers 11. Joel 2. Acts 2. Numbers 11. Moses** longs for a day when ALL people will flow fully with God's empowering presence through prophecy. **Joel 2. Joel** prophesied it would call in the last days on people regardless of **gender, social status** or **ethnicity. Acts 2.** On the day of Pentecost, **Peter** says this eagerly awaited day is here.

*Acts 2:17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*

*Acts 2:18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*

*Acts 19:6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (added by Peter)*

**2. Tongues**

*Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Besides the day of Pentecost, tongues is an empowerment sign on the: Samaritan Pentecost – Acts 8, Paul – Acts 9, Cornelius – Acts 10, Gentiles – Acts 19).*

Any argument to say this gift **ceased** is **problematic**. Every credible scholar that reads **1 Cor 13** believes "**the perfect**" is the **second coming of Christ**. **Mark 16** shows that **tongues was prominent well into the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century**. **1 Corinthians 13** says that there are two forms of tongues: **human and angelic**. The Assemblies of God calls this the **initial physical evidence** of God's empowering presence. We will focus specifically on this gift later this month. For now I want you to know that from in the New Testament, **tongues is the prominent sign of empowerment** and thus is welcome in Christ's church. **1 Cor. 14:19** show public/private use of tongues.

*Some have told me, that pastor, tongues is ok just as long as we don't do it in the church. Let them do it at home. To which, I replied, what if I said your gift of mercy is great and from God, but just keep it home.*

### 3. **Freedom**

*2Cor. 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom**.*

When God's empowering presence touches a person, **the glory of God comes upon them. Martin Lloyd-Jones says the difference between God's empowering presence and a revival is simply the number of people involved.** Read any of these encounters in the Old or New Testament when God's empowering presence falls on a person and **there is a liberation of the soul, an spiritual high, the touch of heaven to earth.** In a word...**Freedom.**

**Freedom FROM** overly caring about what others think.

**Freedom FROM** the stuff in this world.

**Freedom TO** celebrate God's beauty in you.

**Freedom TO** pursue God's will with joy rather than religious ritual.

**Freedom... Freedom...Freedom.**

***I believe in my Spirit that this series is much more about Freedom than tongues.** God wants to bring Freedom to VCC. (Rick Leytem story)*

### 4. **Boldness to speak**

People with God's empowering presence take greater risks for God's name and work. They have **boldness** to fulfill The Call.

*Acts 4:13 **When they (the Sanhedrin) SAW the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.***

*Acts 4:29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and **enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.***

*Acts 4:30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*

*Acts 4:31 ¶ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.***

*Acts 4:33 **With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.***

*Eph. 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. **Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.***

Valley Christian, there is a “mute” spirit on many of us that prohibits us from simply sharing the Gospel. Most of us are terrified to share. Heaven’s answer to this dilemma – God’s empowering presence.

5. **Engagement in the cosmic clash** - they discern and they respond to demonic influences in our world.

Acts 13:9 Then Saul (on Cyprus), who was also called Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit**, looked straight at Elymas and said,

Acts 13:10 **“You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”**

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against **flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2Cor. 10:3 For though we live in the world, **we do not wage war as the world does.**

2Cor. 10:4 **The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.**

**Much of Jesus’ ministry was combating demonic forces.** They show up throughout the Bible to **harass, devour and destroy** God’s work in our lives. The Bible speak of **grand authority for the believer**, but many of us are NOT sure **what that is or what relevance it has to our lives.** God’s **empowering presence awakens a level of discernment on the invisible world and places the desire to push back on anything the enemy comes against us with.**

6. **Creative Worship** - their worship is creative and free.

Eph. 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.**

Eph. 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

Eph. 5:20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is pressure here to **CONFORM** or to **PERFORM.** **CONFORM** cares more about my **perceived opinion of my neighbor than the glory of God.** It is to only act in accordance to what everyone else is doing. **PERFORM** is **to care about me** than the glory of God. (Clapping story).

7. **Generosity** -they are more apt to give of what limited resources they have.

*Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, **but they shared everything they had.***

*Acts 4:34 **There were no needy persons among them.** For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales*

*Acts 4:35 and put it at the apostles' feet, **and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.***

*The understanding that resources granted me **are God's to share not mine to hoard.***

8. **Miracles** - they begin to operate in the miraculous. They pursue Healing.

*Acts 5:12 The apostles performed **many miraculous signs and wonders** among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.*

*Gal. 3:5 **Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you** because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?*

*In the first two chapters Paul has already dealt with how people believe and are justified by faith.*

*Rom. 15:17 Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

*Rom. 15:18 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done —*

*Rom. 15:19 **by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.** So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.*

*John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement and former band member of the Righteous Brothers, used to ask: Where's the stuff? I gave up drugs and Rock N Roll for Jesus and I don't get to see the stuff meaning miracles. Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. **He will do even greater things than these,** because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). **God's empowering presence brings with it the desire to do the acts of Jesus. To take risks of prayer for someone in need.***

9. **Pray God inspired prayers**

*Rom. 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, **but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.***

*Rom. 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

*God's empowering presence changes our prayers. We want to pray God's needs, not just ours. We look for His hand. We listen better to how He speaks. We give the Spirit permission to pray*

through us God's will and heart whether that be in our own language or one granted us by the Spirit.

**10. We are changed into a different person.**

*1Sam. 10:6* The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and **you will be changed into a different person.**

**Spiritual senses are heightened. Motivations for faith change.** We are much more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. *1Th. 5:19* Do not put out the Spirit's fire; (or quench the Spirit).

*Psa. 51:11* Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

*Eph. 4:30* And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

**Conclusion:**

The NT writers always write in terms of what the church **SHOULD BE**. We should be examining ourselves in light of this and testing ourselves with questions – **Are we like that?**

There is **a norm or pattern** for the Christian church. **The NT writers all write with that presupposition.** The NT church was blessed with a great outpouring of the Spirit and therefore it seems likely to me that most its members of the early church experienced God's empowering presence or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It seems reasonable to me to believe the majority of people in every church lived in this dimension. So when the apostles came to write their letters, they did so **from the presumption that this was actively operating in the lives of the church.**

Some may say, **"Well that is true for them then, but not for me now."** This is problematic for several reasons. **What else are you reading out from the text?** With this logic, perhaps we should read out: **communion, water baptism and Sunday worship.** More importantly, we elevate our experience, or lack of, to a place that determines the reading of the

text. We justify to ourselves why we don't need to change. **In my mind, there is no plausible indicator that seems to indicate that the mission of church as established by Jesus would continue without the primary means to fulfill that mission, that being the baptism of the Spirit.**

**"Perhaps I already am empowered by God's empowering presence and I didn't know it."** Not possible. **When a person is baptized in the Spirit, there is no difficulty in knowing about it. No one in the Bible had to persuade or presume that this was true for them. No something transformative happened to them. Something that was discernable, even measurable.** We see this with **the 70 elders, the judges, the monarchy, the prophets, and in the early church.** Take every indication in the NT as described by the book of Acts: **The day of Pentecost, the prayer meeting, the Samaritan expansion, Paul, Cornelius and the Gentile expansion.** Each time God's empowering presence came in a way that was **tangible, transformation and discernable.**

If Peter, John or Paul came to VCC, I believe they may ask us the same question that was asked to the Samaritans and the Gentile church in Ephesus. **"Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2).** Some here may answer like them, **"No, we have not even hear that there is a Holy Spirit"** (in the manner you are describing).

I ask that you set your course of your life down this path that changes everything about the way a person walks before Christ. Let's pray.



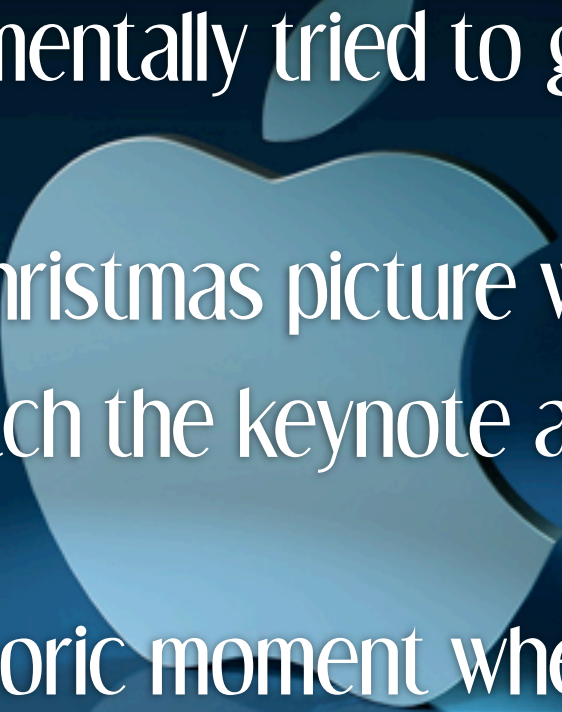
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ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING

# Top Ten

of a Mac addict

# signs

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6. Monitors discussions and rumors about Apple through blogs and podcasts.
  7. They are for anything that is NOT Windows.
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ACTS 8:18

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ACTS 2:33

God's empowering presence

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# God's Empowering Presence is..

Always for  
The Call

1.

For  
Everyone

2.

Separate &  
Distinct From  
Salvation

3.

Discernible

4.

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



WHAT IS  
“NORMAL”  
CHRISTIANITY?



God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING

# Top Ten signs

of God's empowering presence

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1. **Prophecy**  
(Num. 11, Joel 2, Acts 2)
2. **Tongues**  
(Acts 2:4; 8:18; 10:44-46; 19:1-7)
3. **Freedom**  
(2 Cor. 3:17)
4. **Boldness to share the Gospel**  
(Acts 4:13, 29-33 & Eph. 6:20)



# Top Ten signs

of God's empowering presence

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## 5. Engagement in the cosmic clash

(Acts 13:6-12; Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:3-4)

## 6. Creative worship

(Eph 5:18-20)

## 7. Generosity

(Acts 4:32, 34-35)

## 8. Miracles & Healings

(Acts 5:12, Gal. 3:5; Rom. 15:17-19)



# Top Ten signs

of God's empowering presence

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9. Pray God inspired prayers

(Rom. 8:26-27)

10. We are changed into a different person

(1 Sam. 10:6, Psa. 51:11; Eph. 4:30; 1Thes. 5:19)

*The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and **you will be changed into a different person.** (1 Sam. 10:6)*





God's  
empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING