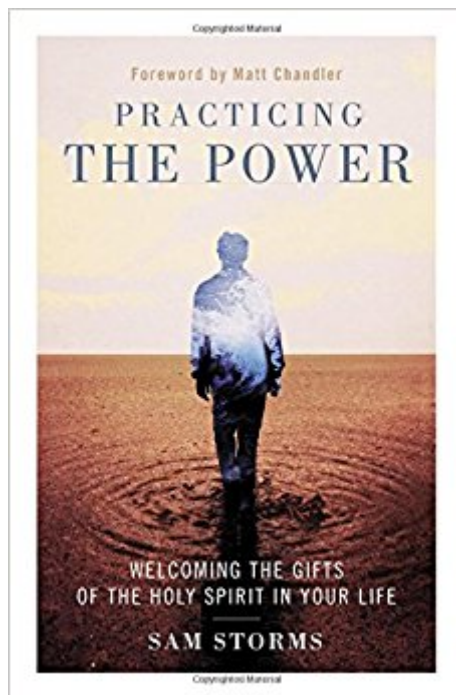




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Practicing The Power: Welcoming The Gifts Of The Holy Spirit In Your Life



Synopsis

The Bible teaches us that we are to be filled with God's Spirit and that God's presence and grace is manifested among his people as they serve, love, and minister to one another. Yet some of the gifts that God offers to his people aren't commonly seen in many churches today. Gifts of prophecy, healing, tongues, and other supernatural gifts of God seem to be absent, and many Christians are unsure how to cultivate an atmosphere where God's Spirit can work while remaining committed to the foundational truth of God's Word. How can Christians pursue and implement the miraculous gifts of the Spirit without falling into fanatical excess and splitting the church in the process? In *Practicing the Power*, pastor and author Sam Storms offers practical steps to understanding and exercising spiritual gifts in a way that remains grounded in the word and centered in the gospel. With examples drawn from his forty years of ministry as a pastor and teachers, Storms offers a guidebook that can help pastors, elders, and church members understand what changes are needed to see God move in supernatural power and to guard against excess and abuse of the spiritual gifts. If you long to see God's Spirit move in your church and life, and aren't sure why that isn't happening or where to begin, this book is for you.

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Customer Reviews

I am an elder in a church that engages with God in genuine worship, seeks maturity through dynamic preaching, loves compassionately in community, expresses mercy to the disenfranchised, and multiplies through intentional missionality. Thankful for God's many blessings, we long

for more of his grace, especially through an outpouring of the Spirit's gifts. But how can our church experience this renewing power? It seems Sam Storms wrote this book to guide our church in this quest. I think it is for your church too! -- Gregg R. Allison, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Sam has written an immensely practical book on the gifts of the Spirit that will help anyone who longs to experience the Holy Spirit's gifts and see those gifts meaningfully integrated into the life of their church. -- Jack Deere, former professor of Old Testament Exegesis at Dallas Seminary; pastor

Sam Storms has done it again. This book combines sound theology with inspiring personal examples, together with practical ways to express the compassion of Jesus to others by partnering with him in spiritual gifts. Sam successfully demystifies what it means to obey the apostle Paul's injunction to earnestly desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1). I highly recommend this book for anyone seeking to grow in this dimension of the grace of God, and especially pastors seeking to lead their flock into a deeper experience as empowered evangelicals who want all that Jesus provides for us. -- Mike Bickle, International House of Prayer of Kansas City

Sam Storms (PhD, University of Texas) is founder of Enjoying God Ministries, which provides biblical and theological resources to the body of Christ. He is also the senior pastor of Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City and a former professor. Storms travels both in the United States and abroad, speaking at churches and conferences. He is the author of over two-dozen books and a contributor to the Zondervan Counterpoints volume *Are the Miraculous Gifts for Today?* He blogs regularly at www.samstorms.com.

Now what? Many Christians today are theologically convinced of the ongoing work of the Spirit (continuationists), but who have not seen the practices of the Spirit in our churches, and who desperately want to see God glorified in healings and by verbal prophecy and experience firsthand the edification of the gift of tongues delivered and interpreted. It can be a daunting challenge to simply wait. So, what are we to do while we wait? Or should we stop waiting and start acting? Into these perplexing questions comes a tremendous book from Sam Storms, the Lead Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City. Numerous books have been written which give the necessary biblical and theological foundations for what Sam Storms calls Charismatic Calvinism (works by scholars like Wayne Grudem and D. A. Carson). And numerous books have been written which share encouraging stories and experiences from Charismatic Calvinists (works by scholars like Jack Deere and Storms). But not much has been written for the

Christian who is a convinced Charismatic Calvinist theologically, but a Cessationist functionally. Storms has written for “theologically sophisticated followers of Christ who are open to and hungry for the present tense voice of the Spirit while always subject to the functional and final authority of the written text of Scripture” (13). If you want to go deeper in pursuing the power of the Spirit, or if you are a pastor or church leader who wants to help others go deeper in pursuing the power of the Spirit, Storms’s book will help. He assumes, “The power of the miraculous charismata is still available for those who believe, pray for, and humbly pursue it” (15). But he nuances that assumption well. First, he realizes, “Bible-believing evangelicals will never be truly open to the pursuit of spiritual gifts unless they see them clearly taught in Scripture” (28). So pastors, we must teach, teach, teach. And he also realizes, “God is far more pleased with our obedience than he is with our success. . . . We please him not by always producing results but by always practicing obedience” (30-31). Which means, we are responsible to simply ask, seek, and knock; God is responsible to empower us and apportion gifts to us as he pleases. Again, Storms challenges us, “The reception of a spiritual gift is dependent on one’s prayer for it. Ask and you shall receive. Don’t ask, and you shouldn’t expect to receive” (43-44). Again, “There is little, if any, hope for the proper use of spiritual gifts apart from a focused and consistent commitment to praying” (45). But he is wise to also admit, “The Holy Spirit wants to be pursued but refuses to be pushed” and then to counsel readers, “If you find yourself lacking a specific spiritual gift, notwithstanding your persistent and passionate prayers that it might be granted to you, the time may come when you should pause and thank God for whatever gifts he has been pleased to bestow and move on in the ministry he has already granted you” (35). His advice is not only practical; it gets to the heart of our pursuit of God and his gifts. “If you are a leader or teacher thinking of teaching on prayer, I recommend making it your goal through the teaching to increase the level of expectancy in the hearts of your people when they pray for themselves or for others” (50). God accomplishes much through the heartfelt trust of those who cry out to him: “Otherwise humanly impossible feats, events that require supernatural and miraculous power, can occur when prayer is filled with faith” (54). One of the most significant connections this book made for me was the power of fasting for receiving spiritual gifts. Storms writes, “Fasting is the first cousin to prayer in the sense that together they are the ordained means by which God is pleased to give us what we

need. *As Jesus was standing on the brink of the most important public ministry the world had ever seen, he chose to fast!* (58). Our Savior himself modeled this practice: *“As Jesus was standing on the brink of the most important public ministry the world had ever seen, he chose to fast!”* (63). Perhaps we have not seen greater spiritual growth and power simply because we have not sought God with the intensity and commitment fasting represents. Storms also believes God still heals today *“and he gives practical advice for seeking such healing.”* (71). Again, he counsels, *“Begin with an attempt to get at the underlying root of sin or addiction in a person’s life, followed by a call to repentance and encouragement to make certain alterations in one’s habits of life and choices.”* (77). I also appreciate Storms’s willingness to go where other teachers might shrink back from out of discomfort; for instance, demon possession and deliverance. He writes, *“The foundation of biblical deliverance ministry is a clear understanding of Christian identity and the authority believers have in Christ.”* (152). The gospel changes everything *“even the dark, scary aspects of life.”* The only subject I wish Storms had spent more time on was advice for those pursuing the gift of speaking in tongues. There seems to be very little such practical, concrete advice for those who are committed to the word of God *“the very word that says, ‘I want you all to speak in tongues’ (1 Corinthians 14:5).”* Many seem to shy away from this particular gift, I believe, because it is so unusual and, quite frankly, because it embarrasses us. Please don’t misunderstand me: I don’t think Storms shied away from this issue *“and certainly not out of fear or embarrassment.”* He addresses his experience at length in his book *Convergence: Spiritual Journeys of a Charismatic Calvinist*. But I would love answers to simple questions such as: Should I just ask for this gift and simply wait for it to happen to me in silence *“or should I try speaking whatever syllables come to mind?”* What are some signs that I’m truly speaking in tongues and not simply speaking gibberish? Is it possible to think that I’m not speaking in tongues when I actually am? But, again, I thought this book was tremendous, so I conclude with two more quotes to stir you up to read it for yourself: *“Whether it is the fire that burns up and consumes the dross of sin in our lives or the fire of power and energy that fuels our efforts to labor for the glory of Christ and the good of his people, the Holy Spirit is a glorious gift, the consummate treasure whom we hold dear.”* (179). *“Pray yet again that God would increase your spiritual hunger pangs, that he would intensify your thirst for godly power, that he would never*

allow you to settle for the status quo (239-240).

As a relative newcomer to this understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit (read God in us, and all God is, within us) in and through the believer today, Sam Storms is a great resource for clear presentation of scriptural truth. So far, I have been trusting the Spirit to empower me to bloom where I am planted, in a church where this truth is denied, or pushed aside, or feared. Praise God for speakers of truth who will continue to write and preach and teach the truth. For me, Sam Storms, Robert Morris, Jim Cymbala, Steven Furtick, and Samuel Chadwick, as well as the Holy Spirit Himself in His written Word, have become indispensable in leading me forward into the veritable river of God's blessing, the promise of the Father, the gift of the Son, the Person of the Holy Spirit.

If you desire your church, small group or to personally grow in the use of spiritual gifts you must digest this book. It is Biblically based and practically useful.

This was a very well crafted book. Deals with a lot of difficult questions from both a biblical and practical way. Would recommend it to everyone who wants to faithfully obey biblical instructions to earnestly desire spiritual gifts.

He offers good exegesis concerning gifts, and ministry experience. The book is as practical as the title suggests. Some of the practices are not explicitly from Scripture, but the motivation is always the text. My favorite parts are where Storms offers biblical exegesis on passages from Paul concerning gifts.

I really appreciate the care and tenderness that Sam put into writing this book. Sometimes the debate about spiritual gifts can be talked about with a measure of condescension and Sam avoided that thoroughly. Excellent read, very helpful.

Didn't get through it all because I started reading other books but what I read of it was very good and edifying for my spiritual growth. If you want to learn how to get more spiritual gifts and how to use them this is the book for you!

great

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