

# WHAT DO WE REALLY MEAN BY 'WORD AND SPIRIT'?

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Our stated values in Ground Level are that 'we fulfil our mission through relationship, partnership, resourcing and Word and Spirit'. In this paper, we want to explore and unpack what our value of being Word and Spirit does and, just as important, doesn't mean. The purpose and aim of this paper is three-fold: to challenge us all honestly to assess if we are valuing Word and Spirit in both doctrine, and equally, in practice; to inspire and encourage us with the power and the possibilities in God as we pioneer local churches that value Word and Spirit; and, finally, to equip us with a biblical rationale for why we should value being Word and Spirit. To help achieve this we will ask three questions; What does it mean to value Word and Spirit? Why should we value being Word and Spirit? How can we continue and increasingly be a network of local churches that value being Word and Spirit?

### **1. What does it mean to value Word and Spirit?**

Perhaps the most difficult thing for us to do is to define and bring clarity on what valuing Word and Spirit actually means. Every church would claim to be Word and Spirit because on one level it is simply a statement of belief. It means that the church believes in the Bible and also in the work of the Holy Spirit. Every evangelical church would say this is true of them, and so the phrase Word and Spirit must mean something broader than this, or we should simply state we are evangelical<sup>1</sup>.

#### **- The Silent Divorce**

RT Kendall argues that, generally speaking, in the church today there has been a 'silent divorce' between Word and Spirit. Just as when there is, sadly, divorce in the natural, sometimes the children stay with their mum, and at other times, the children stay with the dad. In this 'silent divorce' you have those who are on the side of the Word, and those who are on the side of the Spirit. He explains the difference in these terms. Those on the 'Word' side argue: "We must passionately stand for the truth of the gospel, get people to swim in the Bible, and to have thought through personally what they believe and why. We must know our doctrine and know our theology. We need to get back to expository preaching and, until that happens, the honour of God's name will not be restored." What is wrong with that? Nothing, it is exactly right. But then take those on the 'Spirit' side who say: "We need to get back to the book of Acts, where there were signs and wonders, miracles, gifts of the Holy Spirit and where there was such power that by simply getting into Peter's shadow you were healed. When they had a prayer meeting the place was shaken, if you lied to the Holy Spirit, you were struck dead and, once we get back to this kind of power in the church, then the honour of God's name will be restored." What is wrong with this? Nothing it is exactly right. It is my experience and the premise of this paper that, generally speaking, you find many churches that are either 'Word' or 'Spirit'. It is a longing, and a deeply held value in Ground Level that we hold Word and Spirit together and never allow a 'silent divorce' to happen.

#### **- Is being Word and Spirit about balance like a ministry see saw?**

In reaction to this 'silent divorce' some people would argue valuing Word and Spirit is about bringing back the balance and getting away from an either/or approach to ministry. It means we have got the balance right. It means that, if we have a balanced ministry see saw, we have Word on one end, and the Spirit on the other. However, there

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelicalism arose out of the reformation. It is a trans-denominational blanket term which refers to those believers or churches that hold four basic assumptions:

1. The authority and sufficiency of Scripture as the source of doctrine.
2. The uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ on the cross (as opposed to via works, etc.).
3. The need for personal conversion.
4. The necessity, propriety and urgency of evangelism.

are two big issues with this understanding. The first issue with this is that virtually all Christians regard themselves as having the correct balance. You don't meet any church leader who says that they are insufficiently biblical or spirit led. So, for example, a cessationist, such as high-profile American pastor John MacArthur, would insist that his ministry was totally dependent upon the power and work of the Holy Spirit. And a Pentecostal, like Bill Johnson, would insist that his ministry was totally grounded in the Word of God. But I would guess that, for John MacArthur, Bill Johnson would be insufficiently biblical, and, for Bill Johnson, MacArthur would be insufficiently spiritual. So all across evangelicalism there are probably people who feel their balance is right and that they are truly Word and Spirit Christians. A second and more significant issue with this understanding that being Word and Spirit is about balance, is that it implies that there is a tension between Word and Spirit. The picture of a see saw suggests that you can be thoroughly spiritual and yet unbiblical on one hand, or thoroughly biblical and unspiritual on the other. For example, the problem with cessationism is not that it is too biblical, but that it is not biblical enough. And the problem with hyper 'word of faith' Pentecostalism is not that it is too spiritual, but that it is not spiritual enough. Word and Spirit are not opposites needing to be held in tension and balance. One cannot be truly spiritual without being truly biblical and vice versa. So valuing word and spirit is not about balance like a ministry see saw.

- **Valuing Word and Spirit is more like a ministry train track.**

Instead of being two opposing truths or convictions held in tension, they are held together as parallels. Instead of a see saw, they are a train track. They are two truths, or convictions, held so tightly and uncompromisingly together that they determine the direction and speed of our entire ministry. This brings clarity to what we mean and something by which we can begin honestly and courageously to assess if we are genuinely valuing Word and Spirit. It is not about one or the other; it is about both. It is not either/or but both.

- **A working definition of Word and Spirit**

So, having begun to explore what our value of being Word and Spirit means, here is a working definition which we will use for the rest of this paper: *"Valuing Word and Spirit means that the Bible is seen as having authority as the only source of doctrine and is taught with depth, clarity and cutting edge application leading to an encounter with God through the Spirit, and that the experience of God's Spirit is craved, His Presence enjoyed and His gifts exercised."*

## **2. Why do we value Word and Spirit?**

We value Word and Spirit because God values His Word and His Spirit. Throughout the New Testament, we see that God's people kept Word and Spirit in parallel and together. They taught and preached God's word, and they experienced the presence and power of God's Spirit. The gospel is good news that has to be taught and understood. As Terry Virgo argues, 'so fundamental was the spread of the word in the New Testament church, that Luke described the growth of the church in these terms, "the word of God kept on spreading" (Acts 6:7), "The word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied." (Acts 12:24) and "so the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." (Acts 19:20) Luke could have said that the churches multiplied, or the number of disciples grew, but on these occasions he spoke about the ever increasing impact of the word of God. The whole world has been lied to and it is the church's responsibility to bring the truth to it.' And alongside the preaching of God's word was an expectation for a manifestation of God's presence. Gordon Fee argues that 'the message of the gospel is truth accompanied by experienced reality....God verified its truthfulness by a display of His own power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.' There are so many texts in the New Testament that teach the inseparable unity of Word and Spirit. We will consider just four of them.

- **Galatians 3:1-5**

Paul is writing to Christians in Galatia. They have already trusted Jesus, and been born again by the Spirit. Paul says in v.2 'let me ask you this, did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?' This is a reference to a past event. It is their initial reception of the Spirit at the moment of salvation. But then in v.5 Paul refers to the on-going 'supply' of the Spirit in their daily lives for God. He writes, 'Does He who supplies the Spirit to you, and works miracles among you, do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith'. This is written in the present tense, and so Paul is saying that God loves to give more and more of His Spirit on an ongoing, daily basis. And part of what the Spirit does as He is given, is to move in power and work miracles and signs and wonders. This is wonderful and glorious and should be the prayer and longing of all of us to know and experience more of the Holy Spirit and His power.

But how did these Galatians receive and experience the Spirit? It was not through performance. In both v.2 and v.5 Paul rules out 'works of the law' as the reason why we experience God's Spirit. It was also not because Apostles were there. Most cessationists argue that miracles were almost exclusively done by the Apostles, and so, when they died, so did signs and wonders. However, there is nothing in the text to suggest that any of the Apostles were in Galatia when Paul wrote this. These miracles were experienced by ordinary and average Christians in Galatia.

In both v.2 and v.5, Paul says the Galatians received and experienced the Spirit 'by hearing with faith'. Their on-going experience of God's power was connected with what they heard. Paul is obviously referring here to the gospel, and the truth of the Word of God that they had been taught and had heard. But hearing is not enough, they had faith in what they heard. They actively trusted and obeyed, and placed all their confidence in God's word. This is what pleases God, and when He delights to respond by pouring out His Spirit. There is a clear and undeniable holy connection between actively believing God's word, and experiencing God's power. As Sam Storms puts it, 'good theology is the soil in which the supernatural takes root and blossoms in miracles'.

#### - Acts 14:3

In Acts 14, Luke tells us that, when Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Iconium, the Lord 'bore witness to the word of His Grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands'. They spoke and God moved. There is this intrinsic connection between communicating the gospel, and the supernatural power of the Spirit. The emphasis in Acts 14:1-3 is that the battleground was in the mind. They spoke and taught in the synagogue, and 'a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed' (v.1). But 'unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers' (v.2). Then, in v.3, we see that for a long time they spoke boldly the word of His Grace.

The phrase 'word of His Grace' is found only twice in the entire New Testament: here in Acts 14:3, and also in Acts 20:32, where Paul is saying goodbye to the Ephesians elders. Paul says only a few verses earlier in v.27 "' for I did not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God'". The context of Acts 20 suggests that the 'word of His Grace' includes the gospel but is broader than the message of how we can be saved. Paul taught comprehensively the breadth and depth of God's heart and will for their lives. Furthermore, in Acts 14 Paul, stayed a 'long time' implying there was time for him to teach the whole counsel of God in Iconium too. Thus, the phrase 'word of His Grace' includes, but is broader than, the gospel message on how someone can be saved. As God's word was taught, God authenticated His truth through signs and wonders. Again we see God's word and power intrinsically brought together.

#### - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul is writing into a culture that was obsessed with the beauty and power of human rhetoric and persuasive reasoning. In Acts 18, we see how the church in Corinth was planted. Paul 'reasoned in the synagogues' (v.4) and many believed and were baptised and 'he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them' (v.11). Teaching, defending, and applying the word of God was central to Paul's ministry in Corinth.

Then around three years later, he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, and brought a different emphasis concerning what happened. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, we have another biblical text that clearly brings the Word and Spirit together. In v.1, Paul refers to the fact that he proclaimed the testimony of God. This is what Acts 18 tells us, but he did not proclaim it in 'plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (v.4). This does not mean he was confusing or incoherent in his speech. In Acts 18, he reasoned and tried to persuade people with God's truth. But it means he did not come like one of their philosophers whose power was in their rhetoric, poetic language, and communication skills. In this sense, his words were not 'plausible', but, as Paul taught the word of God, there was a 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power'. The power did not lie in Paul, but in the Holy Spirit. There was a demonstration, which means evidence or proof, of His power. As Paul taught God's word, God authenticated His word through His power. It is not clear how God did this. It could mean through signs and wonders, or through the exercising of spiritual gifts, such as tongues. But it is clear, as Paul preached, and the Corinthians believed, there was a move of the manifest presence of God that was visible, recognisable, and pointed to what was happening.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:5**

Paul says in this verse that the gospel did not come to the Thessalonians 'in word only', but this does mean it came to them through words. Paul presented, taught and applied the gospel. He explained and preached in word, but not in word only. The gospel came to the Thessalonians also in power and in the Holy Spirit. Without doubt this means that the Spirit convicted them, and affirmed the truth of what Paul was saying. However, in the absence of any detail, it would be consistent with the rest of the New Testament to suggest this 'power' included miracles, signs and wonders, and possibly spiritual gifts. Then Paul makes the same point as he did in Galatians 3, that hearing by faith is the context in which God loves to move in power. The gospel came to them with 'full conviction'. They didn't just hear the word, but they also believed it with full conviction, there was faith in God's word, and therefore God's power was present. So, again, we see the link between Word and Spirit in the ministry of the New Testament church. To summarise, the word gives rise to faith which enables or facilitates the Spirit to move in power amongst us.

So, having asked what does it mean to value Word and Spirit, and why we should value Word and Spirit, lets now ask how can we outwork this value in our local churches and network?

### **3. How can we continue and become and more and more a network of local churches that value being Word and Spirit?**

A core value of any organisation, business, or church, is something which should be clearly seen, and intentionally pursued in every setting, context, and moment. It ceases to be a true core value if there are areas that ignore, reject, and don't intentionally pursue it. Thus, valuing Word and Spirit is far broader than simply being about preaching or sung worship; it should dominate and impact everything. Valuing Word and Spirit as per the above definition, means that, fundamentally, it forms a philosophy of ministry that is expressed and outworked in every area of church life. In all that we do, we are demonstrating that we 'hold the Bible in high esteem, teach it with depth, clarity, and cutting-edge application, and crave the experience of God's Spirit, enjoying His presence and exercising His gifts.' Let's now apply valuing Word and Spirit practically to six areas of church life.

#### **Area #1: Preaching**

What does it look like to value Word and Spirit in our preaching? I want to suggest that it means at least four things.

- **It means the Bible is the basis of our message.**

If the Bible is peripheral in a sermon, it is likely to be peripheral in the lives of the congregation. The preachers attitude to the Bible will be reflected in the listeners attitude to the Bible. If we ground our sermons in the biblical text week in and week out, then over a period of time, people will begin to grasp more fully the breadth and depth of the Bible. They will see how it fits together and become more and more confident in its wonderful story of salvation. If there is a lack of Biblical content in our sermons, then why are we surprised if our congregations don't know the Bible as well as we would like them too.

The structures of our sermons may be different, but the value is still the same. We want to teach and apply biblical truth. We each need to find the structure that feels most comfortable for us. So, for example, we may be expositional in our preaching, or thematic, but the approach should be the same. We want to teach the Bible and clearly apply it. The structure of a talk may be based around three points and based on argument and logic as a passage is walked through. Or the structure can be more of a narrative, and based around just one point, and also be more emotive and conversational. Regardless of the structure of our talks, the value remains the same. Thus, a great question to ask ourselves is "when was the last time, after we preached, someone came to us and said, "I have learnt something new from the Bible today? You really opened up that passage for me. I hadn't ever seen it in that way before."

- **It means we commit to teach the breadth and depth of the whole Bible.**

If we are wanting to build strong and mature local churches, then we need to have biblical preaching. It is only as we preach faithfully the whole counsel of God that we will bring to our people a solid Biblical world view. We long for our people to be strong in their faith, and not simply know what they believe, but also why they believe it. In a deeply suspicious and cynical society one of the greatest needs is for Christians to be able to articulate their faith, and also answer some of the key objections people may have. Valuing Word and Spirit is expressed in teaching the whole of the Bible and not just our favourite parts or personal hobby horses. A good exercise to consider is to look over the past two years and ask: "Is there a genuine depth and breadth to our preaching series, or are we just saying the same thing in a multitude of different ways?"

- **It means our confidence in preaching is not ultimately in our personalities or communication skills but in the Holy Spirit.**

Our greatest need in preaching is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We need the courage that only He brings. We need the boldness and confidence that only He brings. We need to grasp the romance of preaching as God uses us to speak into people's lives and manifest His Presence. Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote: 'What is the chief end of preaching? I like to think it is this. It is to give men and women a sense of God and His presence.'

- **It means we grow a culture of expectation that the Holy Spirit moves in power whenever the Bible is taught and applied.**

There is a marked difference between a 'Word' church and a 'Spirit' church in terms of focus and expectation in the Sunday public gathering. For many in a 'Word' church, sung worship is the warm up for the real stuff of preaching, but there is no real expectation for the Holy Spirit to move. Equally, though, for many in 'Spirit' churches, the sermon can feel like an interruption to God moving. For some, the hunger and longing for God to move during the worship is not matched by a hunger and longing for God to move during the sermon. For some, the sign that God is really moving is when the preach is abandoned altogether. Valuing Word and Spirit in our preaching means that, as we teach and apply the Bible, we expect the Holy Spirit to move.

So, for example, as the Bible is communicated, we should expect that God will convict and save people. In Acts 2, we see the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the early church. They began declaring the glory of God in other human languages they had never learnt. It was a supernatural outpouring; it was miraculous and powerful. And, in the midst

of the outpouring of the Spirit, Peter stood up and preached and taught the Bible. He spoke and explained what was happening and unpacked for people God's heart and purposes for their lives. In this outpouring of the Holy Spirit Peter, preached. As Peter taught the Bible, God spoke powerfully into the heart of some of those listening. We read the glorious words in Acts 2:37, 'Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart....' There was power, supernatural transforming power in this sermon. It was as they heard that they were impacted by God. And we read in Acts 2:38,41, 'And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" .....so those who received his word were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.'

Also, as the Bible is communicated, we should expect faith to increase and lives to be transformed. So, for example, Paul writes to the church in Rome in Romans 10:17, 'So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ'. As the Bible is taught, faith is strengthened and grown. Then we see in Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 'And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers'. As they accepted and received the biblical teaching from Paul, they were transformed because God's word was at work in them.

As the Bible is communicated, we should expect God to pour out encouragement and hope. Through His word, God gives encouragement and hope to persevere and not give up. Later in his letter to the church in Rome, he writes in Romans 15:4, 'For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope'. As the Bible is taught, hope is given to persevere and have courage.

A final example is that, as the Bible is communicated, we should expect people to encounter God. As the Bible is taught, people should meet with Jesus, capture something of who He is, what He is like, and what His heart is towards them. In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul is writing to remind them of the truth of the gospel, and warning them against false teachers. He writes in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, 'Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. Paul is saying, that they proclaimed not themselves, but Jesus, and as they proclaimed this truth about Jesus Christ as Lord, God 'shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. As we preached the truth, the glory of God broke into your hearts'. He is saying: that through their Bible communication to the Corinthians, they met with Jesus in their hearts. He spoke to them, He drew near to them, He revealed Himself to them.

## **Area #2: Sung Worship**

We see in Romans 12, and other places, that worship involves the whole of our lives. It is to do with our thoughts, words, actions, ambitions, hopes, and dreams. With all that we are, in word and deed, we are created to declare the beauty and glory of God – and this is what the Bible calls worship. However, part of what it means to worship God is singing. So how do we value word and Spirit in sung worship?

- **It means we highly value sung worship.**

God is passionate about sung worship. As you read the psalms, you see again and again His heart for singing out words to melodies. For example, we read in Psalm 96:1-2, 'Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.' Then in Psalm 47:6, 'Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!' The Bible contains over four hundred references to singing, and fifty direct commands to sing. The longest book of the Bible, the Psalms, is a book of songs. And in the New Testament we're commanded not once, but twice, to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to one another when we meet (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Why does God want us to sing? One reason is that God himself sings. In Zephaniah 3:17 God exalts over his people "with loud singing." We see in Matthew 26:30 that, on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus sang hymns with his disciples. We worship a triune God who sings, and He wants us to be like him. Deeply valuing word and Spirit is shown in highly valuing sung worship. We should give plenty of space for it throughout the life of our churches.

- **It means knowing and applying the biblical truth that sung worship is about both head and heart.**

In John 4, Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan women by the well, and He says, in v.21-24, "'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth'". God is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth? As we shall consider later, it means that true worship is empowered by the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus is here also talking about the human spirit, not just the Holy Spirit. True worship is something that takes place mainly in the heart – the location is not a mountain top or a physical temple, it is in the human spirit. True worship is also in truth – it is in response to biblical truth about who God is.

Worship begins in the mind – it is in truth. It starts with biblically accurate truths about God. However, true worship never stops with simply an intellectual belief concerning who God is. Good theology must stir our feelings and set our hearts on fire for Him. Worship, at its core, is an affair of the heart. Jesus said to some of the religious leaders of his day, in Matthew 15:7-9, "'You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"' You can say and sing all the right things and never truly worship God! What makes worship real and genuine? Jesus says it is the engagement of the heart! Worship is about both our thoughts, and our affections.

Thus, we need to be thinking about how the songs we sing help people to worship in 'spirit and truth'? Do the songs we sing point people to the magnificence of God? A worship leader should be just as much a theologian as a preacher. Singing is a gift from God to teach truth. The educational and convicting power in music and song cannot be denied. Matt Redman put it this way: 'Worship songs can't just be rooted in culture - they won't be deep enough. They have to be rooted in scripture'. Valuing Word and Spirit means we ask "What do the songs we choose teach people about God? Are we helping people see the glory, beauty, worth and majesty of God?" A.W. Tozer once said challengingly: 'Many Christians today worship a God that they barely know'. Valuing Word and Spirit in sung worship means we are intentional and committed to singing truth over one another as we sing.

But alongside this we need to be asking, do the songs we sing enable people to express a heartfelt response to the magnificence of God? Worship is our response to the God we know and love. It is a means by which we pour out our love to Him, express our trust in Him, and cling to Him in song. It is a gift through which we express our confidence in Him regardless of the battles we are facing. Worship enables us to declare our surrender to Him afresh, and give Him

all of who we are. Worship is a way in which we respond to the magnificence and majesty of God. As Lamar Boschman once said, 'When I worship, I would rather my heart be without words than my words be without heart.'

- **It means expecting and being open to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit during sung worship.**

True worship is characterized by the presence and power of the Spirit. There is a very clear and direct relationship between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and sung worship. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:18-21, he says, 'And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.'

Worship is the result of being filled with the Spirit. We are commanded to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. This is not optional, nor a suggestion, but the verb 'filled' is an imperative in the Greek. The verb 'be filled' is also in the present continuous tense, which means this should be an ongoing experience, and not a one-off filling. For Paul, sung worship flows from being filled with the Spirit. Valuing Word and Spirit in our sung worship means we never lose sight of our desperate need for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is more important than the sound, the lighting, and quality of musicianship. Biblical worship is all about God, but it is also only achieved through Him.

Spirit filled worship is corporate. The verb, 'be filled', is also plural in the Greek. Paul's vision is for the Holy Spirit to do something wonderfully corporate as we gather in worship. The need for God's people is to be so collectively full of God's presence so that their worship is transformed, their relationships are transformed, and their lives are totally transformed. In v.19 Paul says, 'addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs'. Worship has a corporate dynamic. Paul writes, 'as you are filled with Spirit and begin to worship remember you are addressing one another'. The first focus after being filled with the Spirit is not inward and on yourself, but it is outward and how you can reach out and encourage others. Worship is not about being performed at; it is about a group of people participating together and singing over one another. How desperately we need to see the congregation are the worship team and not the band or the singers. In the New Testament we see this wonderful corporate joy of a gathered group of broken people adoring Jesus, worshipping Jesus, and singing out to Jesus together. If we are going to hold Spirit and Word intrinsically together in sung worship, then this will result in a total dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and a more corporate perspective on worship than perhaps we have had before.

Spirit filled worship should be creative, planned, and unpredictable. Paul uses three different words to describe the variety and creativity of sung worship. They can't be referring to the same thing because, if he was, then what was the point of employing three different words. Sung worship is to include 'psalms'. This refers to the singing of traditional psalms in the OT, but also the word 'psalms' literally meant 'to pluck' or 'to strike or twitch the fingers on a string', and thus could refer possibly to singing with instrumental accompaniment. Worship involves being led with a whole spectrum of musical instruments! Sung worship is also to involve 'hymns'. Hymns are worship songs written by human beings that focus on God or Christ. Perhaps the most explicit examples would be the so-called 'Christ Hymns' in Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20, and 1 Timothy 3:16. So, sung worship involved singing the psalms with musical instruments, and also prewritten worship songs. In one way, we could argue, the early church loved the old and traditional psalms, and then the contemporary hymns. Sung worship is also to involve 'spiritual songs'. 'Spiritual songs' are most likely unrehearsed and improvised - perhaps short melodies or choruses declaring the beauty of Jesus. They aren't prepared in advance, but are prompted by the Spirit and, thus, are uniquely and especially appropriate to the occasion or the emphasis of the moment. These are probably songs that we sing under the immediate prompting and infilling of the Holy Spirit! Paul probably has in mind spontaneous songs that break out unexpectedly in the midst of our worship.

So valuing word and spirit in sung worship means that there is nothing less spiritual in something prepared and organized. The early church, it seems, still sang 'hymns' that were pre-written. There was a degree of preparation with decisions being made beforehand. However, we also must make sure we are never constrained by a service order. They sang hymns but they also experienced 'spiritual songs'. Are we open to the Holy Spirit speaking in the midst of a preplanned order and taking us somewhere else? When was the last time your church sung a spontaneous spiritual song?

### **Area #3: Spiritual Gifts**

How deeply a church values Word and Spirit will be shown in their attitude and openness towards spiritual gifts. To help us explore this, let's look at Paul's first letter to his church in Corinth. Here was a church that was exploding with the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, and, in chapters 12-14, Paul gives clear teaching on how a local church should exercise these gifts. There is so much we could look at, but we are going to consider five principles that we see in these chapters that teach us how to exercise spiritual gifts in a way that values both Word and Spirit.

- **It means that we teach and lay a biblical foundation for the openness to, and the exercising of, spiritual gifts.**

Paul writes 'now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed' (12:1). God wants His people to grasp His heart and His ways for how we handle and exercise His gifts. He does not want us to 'uninformed', or confused, or ignorant of what these gifts are, and how He wants us to exercise them, both individually and corporately. This is written to a local church, not to a group of leaders. It is clear that this biblical foundation is something for every Christian, not for the few. It is for every Christian regardless of which gift they personally exercise. Our value of word and spirit is expressed in clearly teaching what the Bible says about spiritual gifts, and also practically following the protocol set out in how they should be used.

- **It means that we cultivate a biblical culture of security and love.**

We should encourage everyone that God has given them his gifts for them to use, and that they are all on the team. Spiritual gifts are not just for special Christians, or church leaders. So, for example, in 12:7, Paul says that to 'each one' has been given the manifestation of the Spirit. According to Romans 12:6, if you have grace, you have a gift. Then think about what Peter said in his sermon in Acts 2. Referring to the prophecy of Joel he said that gifts, such as prophecy and tongues, would be given to 'all mankind', including 'your sons and your daughters', 'young men', 'old men', as well as 'bondslaves, both men and women' (Acts 2:17-18). Paul emphasizes this again with the picture of a body, and by arguing that there is no part that is unimportant or dispensable. Valuing Word and Spirit means we create a culture of security and love so that everyone feels safe to step out and use the gifts that God has given them.

1 Corinthians 13 also smashed the widely held assumption that someone with a more 'spectacular' gift was more spiritual and more godly than everyone else. Paul writes, '...and if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing'. (13:2) Valuing Word and Spirit means that we never elevate gifting above character. It means that we value love more than gift. Love is what determines how spiritual someone is, not the power of their gifting. This is a point that many will agree with, but sadly many will act as if it is not true. It appears that, in many contexts, if someone has the gift of prophecy they are treated as royalty. But if someone has the gift of mercy, or hospitality, or administration, they can be treated as inferior. Sadly, we believe that if someone's gift is spectacular and sensational, they are more favoured, more mature, and more spiritual than everyone else. Valuing Word and Spirit means we cultivate a culture of security and love.

- **It means we champion a wholehearted pursuit of spiritual gifts.**

Paul writes in 14:1, 'pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy'. This is not a suggestion, but a command. The verb translated 'earnestly desire' (ESV) means to have a strong affection for, to ardently yearn, to zealously long for. The verb is in the plural in the Greek, showing that this is something for every single person in the church to do, and not just a special select few. The whole of 1 Corinthians 14 is Paul encouraging the church to pursue the gift of prophecy. In addition to this command in v.1, he states in v.5 that he wants them all 'to prophesy'. Then in v.12, he commands them to pursue 'manifestations of the Spirit' that build up the local church, which obviously includes prophecy. Then, at the end of the chapter, in v.39, he repeats this command to 'earnestly desire to prophesy'. This is not an option. Paul does not give us a choice. The reality is this: If you are not earnestly desiring to prophecy, if you are not praying for opportunity and occasion to speak prophetically into the lives of the church' and of other believers, then you are disobeying God! The pursuit of the gift of prophecy is a command, and not an option.

It is possible to be open to the Spirit in theory, but not in practice. Valuing and Word and Spirit means practically that we create space in our gatherings for spiritual gifts to be exercised. We expect the dance of Spirit as we gather, and intentionally give space for this. Terry Virgo says challengingly that many churches have swapped being charismatic for simply being contemporary. The music and gatherings are informal and contemporary in feel, but there is no space, or expectation, or pursuit of the manifest presence of God. If we deeply value Word and Spirit, there will be a culture of expectation and pursuing Him in all that we do. It means we champion a wholehearted pursuit of spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

- **It means that we follow God's protocol in exercising the gift of prophecy.**

Clearly, God wants strong and mature leadership in His church. In 1 Corinthians 14, He sets out how we are to respond, and how we teach everyone to respond, when a prophetic word is given. However, before looking at this protocol, it is important to see that the New Testament teaches that those who prophesy are accountable to the church leaders. Always, people who prophesy, should submit to church leadership teams. The New Testament is clear that 'elders' lead local churches, not 'prophets'. Prophets can be part of a leadership team, of course, but church leadership is the responsibility of elders and not prophets. 1 Peter 5:5 and Hebrews 13:17, state that we are to be 'subject to elders', rather than 'subject to prophets'. We see in Acts that Paul went from city to city to appoint elders, not prophets. As Sam Storms puts it, 'Whereas it's good that some elders/pastors are prophetically gifted, that alone does not qualify them for office. Elders are to be able to teach (1 Tim.3:3), not necessarily able to prophesy.' This means that, at times, church leaders will need courageously to correct a word that has been given or hold accountable someone that is abusing their prophetic gift. Prophecy should never to be used to establish doctrines or practices that lack explicit biblical support. Neither should we expect new ethical principles to be established through the prophetic ministry. What is right and what is wrong has been finally and forever settled in the written Word of God. So, for example, we should be wary of those who claim it is God's will not to drink alcohol, or listen to a kind of music, or anything not explicitly advocated, or prohibited in Scripture. Church leaders should also respond when prophecy is used to disclose negative, or excessively critical, information in public. Its purpose is to encourage and build up and not to humiliate or embarrass. We need wisdom to balance what Paul speaks about in 14:24-25, and the purpose of prophecy being to build up and edify.

The way the Bible tells us to respond to prophetic words is not blindly to accept them, but to follow a clear protocol or process. In v.29 Paul writes 'let the others weigh what is said'. What does Paul mean by the word 'weigh'? It is something that every individual Christian hearing the word should do. This is who he is referring to when he says 'others'. I don't think Paul means here weighing whether a word is of the Holy Spirit or the devil, but whether what has been shared is compatible with what the Spirit has already said in the Bible. This is the job of every Christian.

Valuing Word and Spirit means we teach and equip people to do this, so that they see that it as their responsibility to do it.

Paul unpacks further what this weighing looks like in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. He says: 'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil'. Quenching the Spirit and despising prophecy is blindly to accept every word. The way we don't quench or despise is to examine and test. Paul gives three steps in the protocol concerning how we should respond to prophetic words. Firstly, he says, examine everything. This, in the context of the letter, confirmed what Paul had taught them, and, for us today, it is to examine a word against the Bible. Also, we should examine every word by its tendency to edify and encourage as Paul said every prophetic word should do (1 Corinthians 14:3). We examine by applying the test of love, as Paul says love trumps all things in 1 Corinthians 13. Is this word communicated in, or motivated by, love? We also examine words given by sharing with people that we know who have skill and experience in evaluating prophetic words. Finally, there is the test of personal experience. We should weigh a word in our hearts, and discern personally what God is saying. So the first step in weighing a word is examining everything.

The second step in God's protocol is to 'hold fast to the good'. Once you have determined that the word is 'good', hold fast to it. If you are at peace that it is biblical, and meets all the criteria, hold fast to it. Hold fast to it means believing it, obeying it, and preserving it. And finally, 'abstain from every form of evil'. Paul says, any word that doesn't conform to the Bible, build up, and encourage, totally reject and avoid.

Valuing word and spirit means we follow God's protocol in how we respond to a prophetic word. It means, we never deny people the space to weigh and test a word that is given. So, for example, it is incredibly unwise for anyone to say, 'thus sayeth the Lord...' before sharing a word as this puts a weight on the word that can make people feel unable to weigh and test it as the Bible commands us.

- **It means we clearly explain and follow God's protocol in exercising the gift of tongues and interpretation in a public worship gathering.**

Paul is very clear on how the gift of tongues should be used in a public, corporate gathering of the church. In 14:27 he writes: 'If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret'. Paul states, there are four parts to this process or protocol.

First, 'let there be only two or at most three'. It is not clear if this means two or three in total, or whether it means two or three before stopping to let someone interpret, after which there may be more.

Second, 'each in turn'. It seems that the church in Corinth had become a place where everyone prayed in tongues at the same time, and it was so loud and chaotic that no interpretation was ever given space to be received and heard. Third, 'let someone interpret'. This would either be the person speaking in a tongue, or someone who had the gift of interpretation who was known to the congregation. In fact, he says, that if you aren't assured of interpretation in advance, don't ever start talking in the first place. (v.28). As we gather we need to always give space when someone prays over the congregation in tongues for someone to interpret the tongue. We must never rush on or fail to respond by leaving space for this.

## **Concluding Words**

In this paper we have sought to bring clarity on what it means to value deeply Word and Spirit. We have wanted to bring a biblical defense for why we have this value in Ground Level. Finally, we have applied the practical outworking

of this value in three areas of church life: preaching, sung worship, and spiritual gifts. To finish, let us be inspired and encouraged in our passion for Word and Spirit by a prophetic word attributed to Smith Wigglesworth in 1947 of a coming revival.

It is claimed, he prophesied, 'During the next few decades there will be two distinct moves of the Holy Spirit across the church in Great Britain. The first move will affect every church that is open to receive it and will be characterized by a restoration of the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The second move of the Holy Spirit will result in people leaving historic churches and planting new churches. In the duration of each of these moves, the people who are involved will say 'This is the great revival'. But the Lord says 'No, neither is this the great revival but both are steps towards it. When the new church phase is on the wane, there will be evidenced in the churches something that has not been seen before: a coming together of those with an emphasis on the Word and those with an emphasis on the Spirit. When the Word and the Spirit come together, there will be the biggest movement of the Holy Spirit that the nation, and indeed the world, has ever seen. It will mark the beginning of a revival that will eclipse anything that has been witnessed within these shores, even the Wesleyan and the Welsh revivals of former years. The outpouring of God's Spirit will flow over from the UK to the mainland of Europe, and from there will begin a missionary move to the ends of the earth.'

It is clear that the emergence of new churches has happened, and we await this second wave of word and Spirit. Come Lord Jesus, do it in our life time we pray.

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