Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Third Wave
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-57

This is a somewhat difficult task that falls to me this evening to discuss with you in the series on Charismatic chaos, some of the matters with regard to a movement known as the Third Wave. I cannot by any means, consider all of the issues, nor can I speak of all those who represent that movement, but I do wanna give you some perspective so that you can be alert and aware in regard to what is happening. Of all of the elements of the Charismatic movement that are contemporary to us today, this one is getting the most press. Of all the questions that are asked to me by people who write and call with regard to issues facing us in the Charismatic movement, this is the most commonly discussed one. The main figure in what is know as the Third Wave is a man by the name of John Wimber who is pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim. He is the major figure in this movement that has come to be known as the Third Wave of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes called the Signs and Wonders Movement. And this latest Charismatic tide seems to have swept across the globe in the last decade. It is literally everywhere in the English speaking parts of the world. The term the Third Wave was coined by C. Peter Wagner who is a missions professor at Fuller Seminary and the author of several books on church growth. He is really the leading proponent of the Third Wave philosophy and methodology. According to Wagner, he said, "The first wave was the Pentecostal movement, the second wave was the Charismatic movement, and now the third wave is joining them." By that he means, an inundating wave of the power of the Holy Spirit manifesting itself in visible ways. And while acknowledging the Third Wave's spiritual ancestry, that it is the third of those three, Wagner nonetheless rejects the label Charismatic and Pentecostal. In fact, most of the people in the Third Wave don't wanna be identified in that way. Wagner says, "The Third Wave is a new moving of the Holy Spirit among Evangelicals who, for one reason or another, have chosen not to identify with either the Pentecostals or the Charismatics. Its roots go back a little further, but I see it as mainly a movement beginning in the 1980's and gathering momentum through the closing years of the 20thCentury. I see the Third Wave as distinct from, but at the same time, very similar to the first and second waves. They have to be similar because it is the same Spirit of God who is doing the work. The major variation comes in the understanding of the meaning of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the role of tongues and authenticating this. I myself, for example, would rather not have people call me a Charismatic. I do not consider myself a Charismatic. I am simply an Evangelical Congregationalist who is open to the Holy Spirit working through me and my church in any way He chooses." He refuses the label Charismatic not primarily because of any doctrinal distinction, but primarily because of the stigma attached to the name. It's important for me to mention that to you because if you talk to someone in the Third Wave, they might endeavor to distance themselves from classic Pentecostalism or more contemporary Charismaticism, but the fact is that they're basically the

Third Wave by their own admission of the very same kind of theology.

It is accurate then to see the Third Wave as a part of the whole Charismatic movement as we know it. While it is true that many who identify with the Third Wave will avoid using the term Charismatic and they'll even avoid using Charismatic jargon when writing or speaking about spirit baptism or other issues, basically the theology is the same. The terminology may change, the theology is for all intense and purposes, identical.

Most Third Wave teaching and preaching that I've listened to, that I've read echoes standard Charismatic theology, and therefore, in evaluating the Third Wave, we would assume that it is safe to say that the other issues that we've been discussing, that we find un-Biblical in the Charismatic movement are generally true of this movement as well, although there may be some individuals in the movement who would vary from that.

So at its very core, it is an element of the Charismatic movement. At its core, is an obsession with sensational experiences, a preoccupation with the Charismata, that is tongues, healings, prophecies, words of knowledge, visions and ecstatic experiences, and that is, of course, where we find the indisputable link between the Third Wave and the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements. In all three movements, there is a major absorption with these supernatural, sensational kind of power encounters or power displays as they like to call them. They deemphasize what you and I would know as the traditional means of spiritual growth, prayer, Bible study, the teaching of the Word and the fellowship of other believers. They don't intend to do that and they wouldn't do that in statement or even in print, but because of the very surpassing emphasis on the sensational experiences, those matters tend to get pushed significantly, if not all together, into the background. Pentecostals, Charismatics and Third Wavers all will affirm that any Christian who is not experiencing some supernatural events, some supernatural giftedness, some kinds of healings, some kinds of prophecies, words of knowledge or manifestations of the Spirit of God, invisible, tangible ways, is really stuck at a low level of spiritual progress, is denying the full power of God and denying himself the blessing of God.

Now, while those in the Third Wave would like to distance themselves from the first and second wave because of its excesses, the truth of the matter is the Third Wave has not manages to avoid any of the excesses that are characteristic of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. In fact, there are some in the Charismatic movement who wanna distance themselves from the Third Wavers because they feel that they go to excesses that even those Charismatics wouldn't go to. A visit, for example, to the Vineyard would reveal to you all the commotion of many people speaking in tongues at the same time. It would reveal to you intense kind of emotional experiences going on where people were falling on the floor and laying in prone positions for as long as an hour, some people with their limbs extended. It would reveal to you people giving multiple prophecies, some of them rather bizarre and some of them with poor grammar, and yet, claiming they come from the Lord. There would be likely

an experience in which they would clear the floor of chairs and they would be dancing around in a completely liberated fashion in any form that they would choose to do that with people, again, perhaps falling over, climbing on chairs, dancing on the top of chairs and doing all of the things that once were associated with we used to call holy rollers. In fact, pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa told one researcher, "John Wimber has absorbed every aberrant teaching developed by the Pentecostals into his teaching." Now, all I want you to understand is that the Third Wave people very often wanna see themselves as mainline Evangelical. They wanna distance themselves from the Pentecostal Charismatic excesses, and yet, it seems to be true that the excesses that occurred in both the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are very characteristic of the Third Wave as well.

What makes them a bit different is that they can line up some teachers and leaders that appear to have more academic credentials than has been true in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movement. That may mean that in the future there will be some correctives that'll come to some of those excesses which as of yet has not taken place. But despite all of their claims to the contrary, Third Wave apologists have had astonishing success in selling their movement as a non Charismatic phenomena. Unsuspecting churches, and I think unsuspecting denominations have opened their doors and their pulpit to Third Wave teachers. I think because of their academic credentials and because they claim not to be in the line of the Charismatics, but in fact, they are.

If you look very closely at the Third Wave, you will see in it a very same kind of things you see typically in a Charismatic movement. And so I wanna do a little bit closer inspection and as I said, we can't by any means exhaust this in the next half hour or so as we examine it, but I'll try to put you in touch with some of the issues that need to be addressed in a much more comprehensive way than I'll be able to do tonight, but I hope I can give you enough information to set you in the right direction.

I wanna just consider maybe four of the promises that the Third Wave makes that need to be inspected rather carefully. The first promise they make is that they are experiencing supernatural signs and wonders and that these signs and wonders come at a rather proliferated rate. That is to say, they're not abnormal, they're not uncommon, they're not few and far between, but rather, they are normal, common and very often come in a flurry. They believe that fantastic signs and wonders demonstrate the genuineness of their movement, the fact that we cannot turn our back on it because supernatural things are happening all the time. Miraculous phenomena at the very heart of the Third Wave, credo and experience, Third Wave people are persuaded they're having miracles, they're having visions, they're speaking in tongues, giving prophecies, predicting the future, reading people's minds. That is, they can stand up in a meeting and tell you your home address, your mother's maiden name and all of those kinds of things that we have always associated with people like the Amazing Kreskin and others who purvey a certain kind of magic, a certain kind of con art or whatever you wanna call it. But they're into these very same kind of things. In fact, it's interesting to me that one of their leaders said that the key to his really buying into and believing this whole thing was when one of their prophets stood up and told him, and told the whole audience his mother's maiden name and the

true first name of his father who was only known by a nickname. And so, they believe that these kinds of things are happening. That there are healings, that there are resurrections from the dead, and they frankly view Christianity without those things as impotent, adulterated by the western materialistic mindset. And unless we can escape the western materialistic mindset and catapult ourselves into the third world paradigm and begin to think in terms of mystical phenomena, we're gonna be locked in to a very shallow kind of Christianity.

Signs and wonders also would be the key, they believe, to Third Wave evangelism. Third Wavers say that unbelievers must experience the miraculous in order to be brought the full faith. Merely preaching the Gospel message, they believe, will never reach the world for Christ. One of their leaders has said that, "We cannot evangelize the world with the simple Gospel apart from signs and wonders." This, in spite of the fact that Paul in Romans 1 says that, "The simple Gospel is the power of God and salvation to everyone who believes." But merely preaching the Gospel, they believed, isn't gonna do it. It'll never reach the world for Christ. Most people will not believe without seeing miracles, they say, and those who do will be inadequately converted and therefore, stunted in their spiritual growth. John Wimber himself cites Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel as a classic example of power and counter, where the power of God vanquishes the power of evil.

Similar signs and wonders say Third Wave gurus are the chief means we will be using to spread the Gospel. And so what they're doing is traveling all over the world, endeavoring to teach the church how to do signs and wonders. And you will hear them openly confess, even the leaders at the highest level, and those that are kind of developing into their next generation of leaders, that they are learning how to do miracles. They're learning how to heal the sick, raise the dead, read minds, tell people their addresses and phone numbers and their names of their parents. They're learning to do that. They're learning to call out healings, they're learning to read behind somebody's face and see the sin that is in them. They're learning to do that because that's very essential if they're gonna convince the world that the message is from God.

Modern miracle workers have yet to call down fire from Heaven as did Elijah, but they may be working on that as well. Third Wave aficionados tell of some fantastic signs and wonders. Wimber, for example, reported an incident where a woman's toe which had been cut off supposedly grew back. He described another woman in Australia whose cleft palate closed up miraculously three days after God gave him a word of knowledge that she would be healed. Wagner recanted a report from Argentine faith healer who's in the movement by the name of Carlos Anacondia, who said two particular manifestations of the Holy Spirit came to impress unbelievers more than anything else in his crusades. A falling in the power of the Spirit and filling teeth on a fairly regular basis, decayed teeth are filled and new teeth grow where there were none before. Interestingly enough, according to Anacondia, most unbelievers' teeth are filled and very few believers get their teeth filled. Now, I don't know why he said that or even why that's supposedly true, but I have another question. Why does God fill teeth instead of just give them new teeth as long as He's gonna do it?

But, nonetheless, whether you're talking about these people, whether you're talking about Wagner or Wimber, they are convinced that these miracles are happening. They're at least trying to convince us they're happening. Both of them are convinced, for example, at least from what they say, that many dead people are being raised from the dead, many of them, not just some, not just a few, but many. And it is really difficult to resist a conclusion that either these are utter fabrications that have just grown with the telling or that these people are so caught in the wish that these things come to pass that they've convinced themselves that in fact they do. In the two cases that I mentioned to you from John Wimber, he maintains that medical doctors witnessed the events, yet he offers no documentation. And you have to ask the question somewhere along the line why don't they publish proof that these events really took place. It would seem to me that if people are being raised from the dead at a fairly regular clip through the year, some of these people could show up somewhere and there could be some evidence, particularly if they had been in the grave for several days like Lazarus because somebody would have been there to see them put in the ground. And we wonder why they don't publish the proof of these things, phenomena such as digit and limb replacement, the healing of birth defects, supernatural dentistry and raising the dead. It seems to me it would be rather easy to document. It would certainly help bring about the kind of worldwide response the Third Wave people say they're hoping to have.

To borrow from one of them, you can only imagine if they could take four quadriplegics and instantly heal them of their quadriplegia, four who were well known by many and had been known for years to be in that condition, and they could step out of the wheelchair and be absolutely, 100% whole, it wouldn't seem too difficult a thing to present the evidence for that and it would seem to me to be quite a powerful statement. But a pattern has begun to emerge from the Third Wave literature, and that is this. The truly spectacular miracles always seem to involve nameless people. Real peoples' miracles tend to be mundane and hard to prove, _____ involving back pain, inner healings, migraine relief, emotional deliverance, ringing in the ears, maybe some internal problem that is stated but not verified. And the only time you ever get a detailed step by step, carefully laid out description of a healing situation is an occasion when the healing doesn't happen. You hear rather oblique references to the healing that did happen and the rather detailed descriptions of the ones that don't. A prime example is Wagner's account of his friend Tom Brewster, a paraplegic who believed in healing. Brewster was so hopeful that God would heal him that he even distributed a declaration of expectation to his friends, an expression of his faith that he would one day walk. That faith never wavered, Wagner says, though it had been almost 30 years since a diving accident left him confined to a wheelchair. But the miracle never came. Brewster died after unsuccessful bladder surgery. It's difficult to read that account without noting how markedly it contrast with the many supposed miracles that these Third Wave people recount. The most dramatic miracles come with only sketchy details and almost nearly are always unanimous. Rarely do they ever involve people who are known personally to those who report the miracles. You understand that. They're not firsthand, and whenever you hear the story told about the firsthand, it seems to have a sad ending. Perhaps the

most significant man in the life of John Wimber was a British Anglican who died of cancer much to the great dismay and concern and sorrow of John.

A group of five medical doctors, Christians attended a recent conference the Third Wave had. These men were hoping to establish the truth of the claims that miraculous healings were taking place. One of them, Dr. Phillip Seldon, reported, and I quote, "The fact that John Wimber knew we were present and observing, they have served to tone down the claims which we understand were made at previous conferences. Mr. Wimber himself referred to bad backs and indicated that people could expect pain relief, but no change which could be documented by a doctor. He admitted he had never seen a degenerated vertebrae restored to normal shape, and as I suspected, most of the conditions which were prayed over were in the psychosomatic trivial or medically difficult to document categories, problems with left great toe, nervous disorder, breathing problems, barrenness, unequal leg lengths, etc., bad backs and neck." The doctor concluded and I quote, "At this stage, we are unaware of any organic healings which could be proven."

Now, what explanation is given for people who are not healed because we know that many people must go there who have real problems, right? I mean, if you hear that miracles are being done and you're looking for that to happen in your life, you're gonna go. And people do not get healed obviously. The reasons given are some people don't have faith in God for healing. Another reason, personal unconfessed sin creates a barrier to God's healing power. Another one they say is persistent and widespread disunity sin and unbelief in bodies of believers and families inhibits healing in individual members of the body. In other words, they will say, "Well, you don't have enough faith to be healed. Your lack of faith is hindering God." Or they will say, "You have unconfessed sin in your life and you put a barrier between you and God." Or they will say, "You're going to a church that doesn't believe in healing so you're not gonna get healed as long as you're in that environment." Or they will say, "Because of incomplete or incorrect diagnosis of what is causing your problem, you do not know how to pray correctly, and if you don't know what your problem is, you can't pray correctly to get it fixed, it won't get fixed or it might not." And some people, they say further don't get healed because they assume God always heals instantly and when they don't get instantly healed, they stop praying, so they don't get healed.

Oddly enough, John Wimber himself said, and I quote, "I never blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing doesn't come." That's a contradictory statement. Evidently, he's still trying to piece together the theology of this. He struggles because he said also, and I quote, "I have a continually and expanding group of disgruntled people who have come for healing and don't get it."

Now the reality is with the Third Wave with all of its emphasis on signs and wonders, it has produced nothing really verifiable that qualifies in the New Testament sense as an authentic sign or wonder, at least nothing that they have made available. Jesus' miracles must after all be the standard by which we make an evaluation, right? No one before Jesus or since has performed as many signs and

wonders as He did during His earthly ministry. His miracles were strikingly different from those produced by the modern signs and wonders movement. None involved psychosomatic infirmities. All were visible and verifiable. They were in short, true signs and wonders.

We learned some other things about the miracles from our Lord's ministry, chiefly that miracles do not necessarily produce faith in an unbelieving heart. Say that again, they do not necessarily produce faith in an unbelieving heart. I don't wanna say that there aren't times when God can use or has used the miraculous to produce or assist in producing faith. Faith is a gift from God, but it is possible that a miracle has been a component in God bringing about that faith. But that is not necessarily what happens. And that certainly cannot be guaranteed to happen. In fact, in the Gospel of John, Jesus did many signs and many wonders. In fact, He proliferated that entire nation of Palestine with signs and wonders. And the people were able to see them and even to participate in them, such as in the feeding of the great multitude.

The net effect of all of that tremendous, tremendous miracle working enterprise could be summed up in the words of John 12:37, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." There is no guarantee that because there are miracles, there will be saving faith. It is true that as I said, God may use miracles to bring about faith. In Acts 9, you might wanna look at it for a moment, in Acts 9:32, Peter was traveling through all those parts, writes Luke, came down to the saints who lived at Lyda, found a certain man named Anneus who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed and Peter said to him, "Anneus, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed," and immediately he arose. And all who lived at Lyda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord. If you were to read into the next section in Joppa, there was a woman there named Tabitha or Dorcas. She died and Peter and was used to bring her back to life. And in verse 42 it says, "And it became known all over Joppa and many believed in the Lord." We don't wanna say categorically that there would never be a time when God wouldn't cause some miraculous act to be a component in the producing of faith, but that seems to be the minority effect. The majority seemed not to have such a response. In spite of all, Jesus' miracles raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, having authority over demons, the people rejected Him, the people crucified Him and at the time of His death, there were only about 120 followers gathered in the upper room, and that after several years of miraculous acts.

The Gospels contain numerous examples of people who witnessed Jesus' signs, who witnessed His wonders and yet remained in utter unbelief. He rebuked the cities where He performed most of His miracles, He rebuked Corazon, He rebuked Bethesda, He rebuked Capernaum because they didn't repent and because they had seen so many miracles, and He even says that they were worse off than Sodom and Gomorra because Sodom and Gomorra, as bad as it was, would have repented if it had seen as much as they had seen. John 2:23 tells us that many believed in His name because they saw the signs, yet the kind of belief was not a saving belief. Jesus didn't consider them true believers, according to verse 24. In John 6:2, a record says that a great multitude was following Him because

they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick, and yet in verse 66 when He began to teach them and He began to speak about the spiritual issues that confronted them, it says, "That many of the same crowd withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." So, there are times when whatever kind of believing they did was not believing unto salvation. In John 11, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, a monumental miracle, absolutely monumental. Even His enemies couldn't deny it, according to John 11:47, but far from believing in Jesus, that simply accelerated their desire to plot His death. Things weren't really much different than that in the book of Acts in the early church. In Acts 3, Peter and John healed a man who'd been lame from birth, and again, the Jewish religious leaders didn't deny the miracle had occurred, according to Acts 4:16. They couldn't deny it, but their response was far from saving faith. They ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus.

Go back into the Old Testament and you can examine the record of Old Testament signs and wonders. They didn't produce saving faith either. Pharaoh's heart was hardened despite the powerful signs and wonders God did through Moses. The entire generation of Israelites who witnesses those same miracles died in unbelief in the wilderness. It didn't seem to lead them to any great spiritual level of devotion. Despite all the miracles performed during the time of Elijah and Elisha and those times when God acted miraculously at other seasons. Both Israel and Judah failed to repent and were ultimately carried away into captivity. In fact, the very account that John Wimber sights as Biblical justification for power encounters, Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal as an example, the revival produced out of that amazing act by which God sent fire from Heaven and burned up stones and water. The amazing, amazing miracle produced a very short live response, and within a few days, Elijah was hiding for fear of his life, and Baal worship continued until God finally judged Israel.

Now, that is not to say that signs and wonders were not important when God used them. It is not to say that they never were used by God to be a part of the production of faith. But that was not the normal result. They often attracted people's attention so the Gospel message could be saved, and people hearing that message were saved, but miracles and signs and wonders in themselves did not produce saving faith. And so when they say they promise signs and wonders, it's questionable whether the signs and wonders are really legitimate and it's questionable the signs and wonders are necessary for producing saving faith since that is not their purpose in the Scripture generally.

Secondly, they make the promise of powerful evangelism, power evangelism. What they're really doing, and this follows the first point, is being powerful in terms of turning people to God. My conviction on this however, is that what they say is powerful evangelism lacks very often the very necessary element of evangelism which is a clear proclamation of Gospel truth, the saving message gets badly corrupted and sometimes even omitted. Third Wave books and Third Wave testimonies are filled with anecdotes about people who supposedly became Christians on the basis of some miracle they saw, some supernatural wonder they saw with little or no mention of the Gospel having

been proclaimed to them. In fact, in the book *Power of Evangelism*which was John Wimber's main book and sort of set this thing in motion, it's the main textbook on evangelism, there is no reference in that whole book to the cross of Christ or the doctrine of the atonement. I understand now that some are endeavoring to instruction in that matter so that he can understand that and that there is a revision of that book coming out which will delineate a clearer doctrine of the atonement and the true Gospel, but up until now, it hasn't seemed to be necessary for the expansion and explosion of the movement.

Soteriology or the doctrine of salvation, and accurate Gospel message can hardly be considered as a major thrust of this movement. And all the fuss about the signs and wonders, the content of the Gospel seems to have been given second place. One report goes like this, a serious consideration by observers in one of the seminars was that there was no Gospel in the so called evangelistic meeting. A cross of Jesus was not simple, the atonement was not explained and mankind's need in the provision of redemption not even cursorily treated. Believing himself to be following the example of Jesus and the apostles, John Wimber called out for those who needed to be healed, bad backs, gotta mention short legs, neck pain and a whole host of diseases. People were asked to stand and team members dispatched to pray for them, while on the stage John demanded that the Spirit come and after a few minutes of silence, several screams were heard and people sobbing. A little later, it was declared that people had been healed and God had given a token as a sign to those who did not believe. In short, they were asked to base their decision on what they had seen or rather the interpretation of what they had seen and the sacrifice for sin through Christ didn't even get a mention. I left wondering what faith people would have been converted to that night. It didn't seem to resemble New Testament Christianity. I realize that may be but the observation of one individual, but it seems as though in reading the material, this is a somewhat common thread that Peter Wagner says that he marvels that Argentine evangelist Omar Cabrerra has people saved and healed before he starts preaching. It's a question to me how can you get saved before you hear the message, but not a question that seems to bother some of them.

Most of the Third Wavers believe that miracles are more effective than the Gospel message preached. That preaching is limited, and I shared some of that with you a few weeks ago. That somehow preaching is a very poor way to get people to come to Christ, the least of all ways desirable. Wagner further writes, "Christianity began with 120 in the upper room. Within three centuries, it had become the predominant religion of the Roman Empire. What brought this about? The answer is deceptively simple. While Christianity was being to unbelievers in both word and deed, it was the deed that far exceeded the Word in evangelistic effectiveness." That's a remarkable statement. That the deed is more powerful than the Word seems to me to fly in the face of Hebrews 4 which says that the Word is sharper than any two edged sword and is able to pierce to depths that nothing else can pierce. The Anglican Michael Harper says, "Miracles help, people believe." The question is believe what? Is the Gospel being clearly, carefully delineated? In fact, it has been said that those of us who don't do signs and wonders and perform miracles are doing what they call

programmatic evangelism instead of power evangelism. It is insipid, it is powerless, vapid kind of evangelism. What is needed is power evangelism, supernatural encounters. Those are the things that bring people to Christ.

Two fallacies at least lurk in that kind of thinking. Both render it utterly ineffective in winning people to genuine faith in Christ. First, when modern miracles become the basis for an evangelistic invitation, the real message of the Gospel somehow becomes incidental. And you would have to be in a meeting where you would see the swept away attitude of people who are so deeply lost in an emotional experience, and this may not always be the case, but often the case, that a clear message might not come through. There is often a mystical, ethereal Jesus who replaces the historical, Biblical one. And the focus of faith becomes faith in the miraculous instead of faith in the Savior Himself. Those who put their trust in modern miracles are not saved by that faith no matter how earnestly they may believe they are. You're only saved by putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

And secondly, power evangelism seems to me to be an un-Biblical concept. Faith comes from hearing, doesn't it? And hearing the Word of Christ, it is the Gospel, not signs and wonders that is the power of God and the salvation. And do you not remember what Luke 16:31 says? "If they did not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though someone rises," what? "From the dead." Despite the many signs and wonders that Jesus performed, Jesus didn't practice that kind of power evangelism. In fact, He repeatedly rebuked those who demanded signs. Matthew 12, Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 11, Luke 23, John 4, He rebuked the sign seekers. The emphasis of Jesus' ministry was not miracles, but preaching. He often preached without doing signs, without doing wonders. And then in Mark 1:29-34, we read that Jesus did many miraculous healings in Galilee. Verse 37 tells us that Peter and the others found Him the next morning and excitedly said, "Everybody's looking for you. They wanna see more of this. They wanna see more signs and more wonders." And Jesus said this, Mark 1:38, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby in order that I may preach there, for that is what I came out for." He came to preach, therein lies the power. Preaching the Word was more important than the signs and wonders. I believe the Third Wave is advocating a different approach is out of balance with the Bible in that regard.

Well, there's more to say, just briefly let me share two thoughts with you. They also promise a Biblical orientation, but I'm very much afraid of the fact, and by their own admission, that they have many errors in their theology. And as I spoke to several of them this week, I asked the question if God is giving signs and wonders, is it to authenticate His message? Which the answer has to be yes, then would you explain to me why the people who claim to be doing the signs and wonders are the ones who have and errant theology? Why would God be authenticating error? It would seem to me that if God was going to give somebody the ability to do signs and wonders thus to draw people to His message, He would give such a gift and ability to one who was most capable of articulating accurately the proper message. And by their own admission, they realize that there are many theological inaccuracies, Biblical inaccuracies in the movement, and that poses the unanswerable

query as to why in the world God would want to be using miracles to authenticate those who as of yet, don't even have their theology straightened out.

John Wimber will be the first to admit that they're still accumulating a theology. He made the statement that we're drawing together our experiences so we can frame up a theology. And it seems odd to think that God would be vindicating such, and authenticating such.

Furthermore, they're committed to the fact that the Bible is not enough, that there must be further communication from God. One of their leaders says, "That to believe that the Scripture is the end of God's revelation is a demonic doctrine," a demonic doctrine. Quoting from him, "In order to fulfill God's highest purposes for our lives, we must be able to hear His voice, both in the written Word and the Word freshly spoken from Heaven. Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's Word, so he has launched various attacks against us in this area." Ultimately, this doctrine, that is believing that the Scripture is the end of revelation is demonic, even though Christian theologians have been used to perfect it. So, Christian theologians who have perfected the idea that the Scripture is the end of God's revelation have perfected a demonic doctrine because God is still speaking and there is a great thirst for new revelation that I believe composes upon the movement a low view of Scripture's sufficiency.

Well, let me just give you a final note. There's much more to say about that. You can read it in my book when it gets here in a few months. There's just one other thing to note and so much more that I would like to say. They claim also an evangelical heritage. They claim also an evangelical heritage. If you listen to them, you would believe that they are in the mainstream of evangelicalism, that they are committed to a traditional Biblical theology, and yet, that's not true. Statements of faith and creeds are just not a part of that movement. John Wimber's Vineyard is typical. I'm quoting from one writer, "Another disturbing aspect of the Vineyard's ministry is their lack of any written statement of faith. Because Vineyard members come from a variety of denominational backgrounds, the leadership has avoided setting strong doctrinal standards. This de-emphasis of doctrine is also consistent with a leadership whose backgrounds theologically include association with the Quakers who typically express the inner experience of God and minimized the need for doctrinal expressions of one's understanding of God." That's from the Christian Research Institute.

There's no way that they can connect up with historic, traditional, evangelical, orthodox theology because they don't codify doctrine, they don't develop creeds and theological statements, so how do they know where they stand? And yet, in spite of that, they wanna position their movement in the mainstream of historic, evangelicalism. They wanna emphasize conservative even fundamentalist roots, but that does not bear out under examination. The movement is broadly ecumenical, syncretic. There is an evangelical veneer, but the wide embracing of all kinds of experiences. Now, it's possible this could change. There may be some winds of change. There may be some doctrinal direction and structure coming, but at the present time, this is true. To reinforce that may I say, Wimber is as

comfortable with Roman Catholic dogma as he is with evangelicalism. He himself defends the Catholic claims of healing through relics. He advocates a reunification of Protestants and Catholics. A former associate says, "During a Vineyard pastor's conference, he went so far as to apologize to the Catholic Church on behalf of all Protestants." In a seminar on church planting, he said, "The Pope, who by the way, is very responsive to the Charismatic movement and is himself a born again Evangelical, is preaching the Gospel as clear as anyone in the world today." Now you can see that there is some confusion. In their book on power evangelism, he gives a catalog of individuals and movements. When he wants to seek to establish signs and wonders, he reaches back and he identifies himself with a whole list of people, Hilarion, a Fourth Century hermit, Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, Francis of Assisi, the Wall Densons who opposed the Pope and were persecuted by the Dominicans. Vincent Farrar who himself was a Dominican, Martin Luther Ignacious of Lyola, John Wesley and the Jansen, the Catholic sect. It's a hodgepodge of all kinds of things. In a booklet published by the Vineyard, he adds, "The Shakers," they were a cult that demanded celibacy and thus, went out of existence for obvious reasons. He puts himself in line with Edward Irving, a discredited leader of the Irvingite sect in 19 Century England. He also identifies himself with the supposed miracles and healings worked by an apparition by the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. So, you can see the heritage is not at all evangelical, but quite confused. Even Wagner wants to link himself with contemporary positive possibility thinking, as well as with the fourth dimensional thinking of Korean pastor Paul Young Be Cho. It's a hodgepodge of many, many things.

All of this to say we need to be alert, we need to be aware, we need to test all these things by the Word of God. My only hope and prayer for these people is that someone may come to them, someone who can lead them to a proper understanding of the truth, pulling them away from this immense preoccupation and domination that comes to them from experiences. Experiences can be so deadly because they cannot always be certain that they come from God.

Well, much more to be said. I guess what I could say in conclusion is don't be swept away by the Third Wave. And remember this, the only true test of whether a person or movement is from God is not signs and wonders, but true test is teaching in conformity to this Book. And the highest expression of God's power in the world today is not some spectacular, unusual sign or wonder. The highest expression of God's power in the world today is the transformation of a soul from darkness to light, from death to life, and equally wondrous is the tranquil godliness of a Spirit controlled believer.

Let me just say this in closing. I don't believe for one moment that we have ministered here at Grace Church for 22 years without the Holy Spirit. And I don't believe for one moment that we have never known the power of God. I shared with these gentlemen with whom I spoke on Friday that we see the power of God again and again. We saw it tonight, didn't we, when we heard the testimonies week in and week out. I see it in the transformation of your life. I see it in the transformations of your marriage. For the last several weeks, I've been praying for a marriage in our church that was coming apart at the seams, really sad. Grieving, and I saw apart from anything that I did, apart from any intervention

by me, God put that marriage together in a glorious way. We've seen that again and again. I talked to a mother and a father who have prayed for a wayward son and God brought that son back to the point where that son embraced Christ and embraced his family in Christ. I don't for one moment search because I haven't ever known the power of God in this ministry. And I just affirm that, not for my own sake, not to bring credit to me, but so that no one would discredit what Christ has done here and what His Spirit has accomplished. Nothing that happens in the supernatural dimension happens because of me or you. It's out of our league, but I will not yield to any who would assume that what we have experienced here is a cheap version of the real power. Many of you have come to faith in Christ here. Many of you have grown in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and have been used of God in many ways in spiritual service to the benefit of your own spiritual growth and maturity because of the ministries here. Many have gone out of this place, conducted powerful ministries all over the world, and they go on even today. And I guess all of that to say, to be real honest with you, I'm not lookin' for anything because I've already in my life lived through Ephesians 3:20, "And I've seen God do exceedingly abundantly all I could astro think." And to be honest with you, my faith is strong enough to accept that this is the evidence of the power of God and I don't have to have more proof. Some people say they have the faith for all of that. I think they have doubt looking for proof very often, and I wanna affirm tonight my gratitude to God and to the Holy Spirit and to the Lord Jesus Christ and what they've accomplished in this place, and what they've accomplished through the teaching of the Word and faithful ministry that God has given to this church here and around the world. And I wanna give God all the glory for all of it and I wanna acknowledge along with you that He has done it, and we have never ministered for a moment feeling that He wasn't here. In the fullness of His power, accomplishing His work for His own glory, and He's done it in an orderly way, without chaos and without confusion and we praise Him for that.

Father, thank you for our time tonight to consider these things. Help us, Lord, to be able to evaluate everything by the Word. We know that in this movement, there are some who of course are our brothers and sisters who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we would pray for them, that Your Spirit might lead them to bring Biblical direction where they are able to this movement, to confront its errors and excesses. We pray, Lord, too, that no one would be led astray and led away from the simplicity that is in Christ, in to the chaos and confusion of emotional experience and find it to be a substitute for true regeneration. Father, we pray, too, that You might allow us with grace and love to speak to folks who perhaps are in these kinds of groups and to bring them the help that Your Word and Your Spirit would want them to have. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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