



# Supernatural Connection

**M**y father believes he has seen an angel; some of my children have visions and God speaks to me. The Bible is full of events in which people—ordinary people—encountered God as He momentarily lifted the veil that separates the seen from the unseen world. I believe these supernatural experiences happen, and I desire to have more of them. However, many risks are associated with experiencing the supernatural.

One risk is the human desire to attain power and recognition by busying our lives and taking credit for “getting ahead.” When we read the apostle Paul’s story, it seems that the supernatural world was more obvious to him. Perhaps it was. On the other hand maybe Paul, for the most part, lived a “mundane,” day-to-day life in which work, laughter, tears, fatigue, courage and fear came and went. He sold tents in the marketplace after making them himself and traveled on foot and by sea,

sometimes facing storms and robbers.

After reading several of his letters, we realize that Paul, like us, missed old friends and looked forward to visiting with them in their homes. Ordinary days formed a backdrop that allowed the amazing supernatural events of his life to be more easily recognized. Scripture illustrates that the extra-ordinary

was identified and praise was given to God rather than the person.

Another risk of experiencing the supernatural is our desire to do so in order for our faith to seem rooted and robust. In some ways, these experiences appear to be a “shortcut” to faith. On the contrary, the apostle James tells us to welcome hardship because it builds perseverance, which shapes our faith (James 1:2–4). Supernatural experiences alone do not build faith.

Faith is strengthened by believing, in the midst of grit and grime, that there is a world more grand and glorious—a world that transcends death—a world to be desired above all else. The writer to the Hebrews speaks of heroes of faith as people who, in the midst of suffering and disappointment, longed for this other world, this other city whose builder and maker is God. Daily living for eternity with our Father builds faith.

Additionally a desire for direct contact with the supernatural may be linked to—and even feed—pride or the

longing to be famous for our faith. And who is more famous for faith than a person who seems to have an aura of power?

Paul described a thorn in the flesh that was given to him as a counterbalance to his amazing contact with the unseen world (2 Cor. 12:7). Few, if any, of the prophets experienced what Paul did—a vision so great that he was not allowed to write about it. The thorn in the flesh warned that while there were reasons he received the vision, one of them was *not* that he might be famous.

So how should we relate to the supernatural today? We need to recognize that a manifestation of the supernatural—the Bible—is constantly accessible to us. To read the Word of God is to interact with our Lord, for these are His very words, and the Holy Spirit is applying them to our lives as we read.

In the Bible we also have a way to judge any experience we may have with the supernatural. The Bible provides direction for our faith and everyday living. It teaches us how to seek, know and live His will. We must recognize that no supernatural experience will add anything that can rise above, outweigh or outshine the Word of God.

Still God may give us supernatural experiences, and they prove significant in life. They are valuable and should be received gladly. Paul treasured the times that Jesus appeared to him. He obeyed the summons to Macedonia, which he received from God in a dream (Acts 16:9–10). He also submitted his will when the Lord refused to remove the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

God graciously allows us to experience the supernatural. Should we expect these experiences? Yes—they may serve to build Christ’s Kingdom as God gives us urgent, specific information, encouragement or direction. God may want to teach us how to discern these experiences or simply to bring us strength and a cause for rejoicing. He may even want to send us a taste of the world to come. If He allows us such blessings, we should rejoice; it will strengthen us and the Church. Praise be to God.

Franklin Pyles  
President, C&MA in Canada

*We need to recognize that a manifestation of the supernatural—the Bible—is constantly accessible to us.*