

Teaching and Leading in Pentecostalism

Dr. Steve Schell | February 2026

Q: What is the difference between teaching and leading in Pentecostalism and teaching and leading in Evangelicalism?

A: It's the difference between intellectually acknowledging that the spiritual world exists and actively participating in that world. It's moving from believing that miracles happened in the Bible to believing that God wants to do them today in my life and in my church. It's moving from affirming the gifts of the Holy Spirit to expecting them and making room for them in the weekly schedule and the way I minister to people.

In a sense, these two terms represent two different worldviews. One perspective says the supernatural gifts and ministries that we see in the New Testament were only meant for the early church, and they ceased when the New Testament was completed. The other perspective says the New Testament shows us what's possible. The supernatural gifts and ministries we see there were meant to be an essential part of the church in every age. And therefore, what we see in the book of Acts is how the church functioned before tradition, philosophy and politics sapped its strength.

Q: Why should I teach and lead the church I serve into Pentecostalism?

A: Because that was Jesus' plan. In John 14:12 He said, "He who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father." Basically, just as He had followed the Father's leadership in everything He did and said (Jn 5:19; 14:10), we would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus' leadership, and in that way, He would continue to perform His ministry through us.

Q: What must I do for this to happen?

1. I must become an active participant, not an onlooker. I must be willing to learn by trial an error how to function in the spiritual realm. Ministries like healing, deliverance and prophecy are prime targets for fraud and abuse. So, the church can go no deeper than I am personally willing to lead them.
2. I must commit to minister in the Spirit with absolute integrity, and that means I will only speak prophetically when God speaks, and I will stop when He stops. It means I will "test the spirits" (1Co 14:29). It means I will be careful not to force things to happen; I won't invent something that isn't there.
3. I must be willing to exercise pastoral oversight, discipline the unruly and correct false prophecy. The supernatural draws unstable people and those who are demonically

troubled, therefore I must be willing to kindly, but firmly, bring correction to protect the flock.

4. I must learn to be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. A person can actually "feel" the presence of God or, for that matter, the absence of the presence of God. And if that presence is missing, I must earnestly seek God to show me why.
5. I must guard my personal life from unhealthy influences. I can't lead a double life. The devil will aggressively try to tempt me to do things that produce shame so I will pull back from ministering in the Spirit. I must refuse to harbor bitterness or impure thoughts (I suggest regularly taking communion to lift condemnation and bring yourself back to grace).
6. I must provide opportunities in our weekly schedule for God to take the lead. How did we (Steve and Mary) do that? When we were church planting, we held a main service in a rented facility on Sunday morning and a Spirit-led training service on Sunday evening in our home. When we led a larger church with a building, we structured the main services so that worship was focused on leading people into the presence of the Holy Spirit. During worship, people were welcomed to come forward to receive prayer or take communion, and one of our pastors would be there at the front "listening to the Spirit" so he or she could lead the congregation as it transitioned from the intensity of worship to the next part of the service. If someone had a word during the service, they would come up to that pastor and tell him or her what they felt God was saying, and if it seemed to the pastor that the word was valid, the person would be asked to sit down nearby and wait until the pastor invited them to stand up and bring the word, and the pastor would hold the mic. We also held special services that allowed for more Spirit-led ministry, such as Holy Spirit services every month or two on Sunday evening where people could be given one-on-one help to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. There was also a healing and deliverance ministry every Wednesday evening (triage, praying in teams, trainees who simply watch for months before being allowed to minister). To train volunteers for these sorts of ministries, we had yearly training classes.

Q: Why does it matter that I teach and lead people into Pentecostalism?

A: Because the focus of the Lord's work in the world is the Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered believer. They are the "seeds" that the farmer took and cast into His field (Mt 13:24). Our job is to teach and lead them so that they can do what they see Jesus doing and speak what they hear Him saying. In that way we are fulfilling Paul's instruction to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). When men and women learn to do that, they are able to carry Jesus into the events of their everyday lives, and He is able to continue His ministry through them. We

only need to ask ourselves, "Well, what kind of things did Jesus do?" to realize that it will include healing, deliverance and various forms of prophetic guidance. Amazing things happen when people discover that God can actually use them.

In order for a church to develop in these things:

I must continually present a complete gospel which includes repentance, faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ and deliberately receiving the Holy Spirit.

I must provide regular opportunities for people to receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

I must contend for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the services I lead. It must become very important to me that people encounter God, not just sing well and hear a stirring message.

I must teach the whole Bible and let the miraculous dimension we find there define what's possible. I must not ignore passages that make people ask, "Pastor, why aren't those things happening in our church?"

Hindrances

It's uncomfortable to step into a service where everything isn't planned out in advance, where I'm counting on God to show up.

It's humbling to change our focus from leading well to following well. But that's exactly what Jesus models when He says, "I only do what I see the Father doing."

It's awkward to become interruptible, to remain open to the possibility that God will participate directly in our services. It clashes with the desire to plan everything down to the minute.

Questions

1. God can speak to His people in a variety of ways. Here are a few examples: Some people tend to hear or see words; some see meaningful pictures or experience a brief daydream in which they see themselves doing something; some feel the heart of God for a situation, whether that be grief, joy, alarm, His love for someone or a warning to flee; and some have a verse or example from Scripture come to mind. Can you think of a time that God spoke to you? What did He say? How did you respond? What happened?

2. Do you know a pastor who has made a place in their weekly schedule for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be expressed? Tell us how he or she does that.