

the distinguishing marks of the Spirit in wild times: Jonathan Edwards

→ I was 17 – on a Christmas break trip with a group of friends who had all shared the previous summer together serving at a Christian camp in Washington state – Camp Firwood. We were in Arizona for 9 days to visit the family of a dear friend who'd died in an accident that summer – and during our visit, we joined their youth and young adults for a short mission trip in a border town in Mexico.

One afternoon, after one of our friends had shared the gospel on a street corner in an impromptu street ministry, people came forward to respond to the gospel – and to receive prayer. And so a friend and I stepped up to pray with people. One woman poured out her heart in Spanish and then we went to pray for her – but as we prayed – with our hands on her shoulders – she was overcome with a sense of God's nearness – so much so that the strength drained from her body and she collapse to the ground.

Her sister assumed she was having a heartache, but our leader assured her that God was doing something – and she didn't need to be afraid... When the woman came to – she lay there with deep peace – and thanked us for ushering her into the presence of God through prayer.

I had no grid for this.

→ Not long after, back in Canada, some Christian friends and I decided to start attending a Friday night worship service at a local charismatic church. There was something about the wholehearted passion of the worship that drew me. But also, there were things I

couldn't make sense of – things that seemed odd and even concerning at times.

Week after week, I'd watch a crowd of very broken and hurting young people (many of them living on the streets) crowd the front of the room, be prayed for during worship, and then experience all sorts of things – a flood of spiritual passion (some crying, some shaking) for a couple of hours – till they'd slip out at the end of the night – praising God to return again the next Friday night for more of the same...

I had no grid for this.

→ One more story: yesterday, over lunch, someone in our congregation shared a story from years ago – he'd been in his 20's – a thoughtful young Christian man – studying at Regent College. And one night he sat in the back of a charismatic conference somewhere in Vancouver – he was very skeptical, yet also curious. The speaker began, sharing that God had impressed upon him that he was to impart a window of heaven to the people – and then he began to walk around the room and simply touch people, saying "Receive Jesus"... to each person he passed.

He approached my thoughtful, skeptical friend and touched him lightly and said, "Receive Jesus" – and in that moment, my friend's strength drained from his body, he collapsed to the ground and experienced the most overwhelming experience of God's love and joy... He couldn't get off the ground for a while, but when he did get up, all he wanted to do was worship... his heart and mind were aflame with the beauty and loveliness of God.

What are we to make of these kinds of stories and experiences?

**And more importantly, how are we to discern the true work of the Spirit in the midst of unusual experiences?
How are we to know if it really is God's Spirit at work?**

As I mentioned last Sunday, for the vast majority of this summer, we've been talking together about the person, passions and work of the Holy Spirit – with a particular emphasis on the **everyday, ordinary** experience of the Spirit:

how the Spirit leads us to Jesus,

how the Spirit ministers to us in the Name of Jesus,

how the Spirit brings for the life of Jesus in us...

how the Spirit – the Personal Presence of God – makes His home in us and in our life as a church...

how the Spirit turns our hearts to desire God's will and ways, and empowers us to pursue His ways...

how the Spirit inspires us to pray, leads us in prayer, and prays for us in our weakness...

how the Spirit speaks through scripture and opens us up to receive God's revelation...

Too often we have associated the presence and power of the Holy Spirit **only** with wild, unusual and dramatic experiences – **so much so** that we've often struggled to recognize the presence and work of the Spirit *in our everyday lives*. As though the Spirit is only at hand and at work when wild things are happening.

But – as we've affirmed week after week in this series – the reality is that **the whole of the Christian life** is experienced and lived **by the Spirit**. We would not know Christ; we would not trust Christ; we would not live with hope in Christ and the gospel – if not for the Holy Spirit's gracious, active presence and ministry.

And I'll be honest, this has been my primary prayer and aim in this series – to help us grasp and celebrate, to trust and cooperate more with the Spirit's presence and ministry in our **everyday** lives.

But this morning, I want to venture away from the everyday into the terrain of **the less ordinary** – the **uncommon** – the **wilder** experiences that do happen at times in the midst renewal and revival. Experiences that are often equated with the work of the Spirit.

And specifically, I want to explore how we are to **discern** the true work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of unusual phenomenon or experiences.

And I know I'm delving into matters that can be quite **confusing** and **divisive** – but this is exactly why we need to talk about this.

What are we to think when we see or hear a story of someone shaking in worship, or falling when prayed for, or crying out or maybe laughing uncontrollably in the midst of a service, or a time of prayer? How are we to know if God is really at work in this?

What are we to think when we hear stories of this?

Because we do.

I know it's not something that is common among **us** – it may be in some churches in Victoria – but here and there, many of us have heard these stories, or witnessed this, or maybe experienced something of this ourselves – first hand.

As I mentioned last Sunday, I remember a season in the church I was a part of through University and grad school – a baptist church – where some of these things would happen in our church (not often, but here and there) on a Sunday or on a weekend retreat – and it was confusing. *Though not for everyone.*

Some were **over the moon** about it - couldn't get enough of it - were convinced it was the sign of the Spirit's presence and reign - and wanted more of it - for everyone.

And at the same time, there were others that felt **just the opposite** - who were eager to shut it down, pray it out, and make sure it never happened again. Because it was obviously the Enemy.

And then there was the rest of us who were simply confused. Not sure what to think of it all. Convinced that God could do things we didn't understand, but not sure if this is something God was doing...

And I was a young elder at the time - responsible with others for what went on in the name of Jesus among us...

I'm sure many of us have stories we could tell - things we've witnessed, experienced ourselves, or even been the vehicle of.

Some of us come from churches where these sorts of experiences were **strongly denounced**, and others of us from communities where these experiences were **highly celebrated**. Where you couldn't be a leader if you didn't experience the Spirit in these ways.

I know my church back in those years was made up of people from all sides of the spectrum.

But one thing we knew we all agreed on: **We all wanted whatever God wanted for us. We all longed for the real presence and work of God's Spirit in our lives and church.**

And I think that's true of us.

We all come from different places - and yet **we are here because we want what God wants for us...** And, to that end, we long for the **real** presence and work of God's Spirit in our lives and church...

Yet, even within Lambrick's own history, there have been seasons of **strong feelings** and **contentious convictions** among us regarding these kinds of experiences – in a way that has, at times, **divided** and hurt us...

And, in addressing this, I know I will disappoint some of you. Because I'm not going to give a blanket **yes** or **no** regarding these experiences – nor am I going to explore specific phenomena or answer every question we might have (I can't do that!).

But what I will do – what I want to do it is offer **a framework** – to help us develop a **grid** for **discerning the authentic work of the Spirit** – a framework that I've found helpful.

And this framework isn't something I've developed, but something that comes to us from the wisdom of a man named **Jonathan Edwards**, who was a pastor in the New England states, in and around the **1730's**.

Which might seem odd – but there's wisdom in this – because these sorts of experiences aren't **a new thing** – they aren't **a modern phenomenon** – they aren't just something that emerged with the rise of the Vineyard, or the Toronto Blessing, or Bethel, or some other recent charismatic or pentecostal movement.

They have been evident in **many seasons** of the history of the church. Which means that **others, long before us**, have been forced to grapple with these experiences and how to discern the authentic work of the Spirit...

Over the years, as I've studied the history of Christianity, I've been struck with how **prideful** and **downright stupid** it is for us to disregard the wisdom of those who have gone before us – to start from scratch – *as though God's wisdom has not been available till we showed up on the scene.*

As many have said, history invites us to **stand on the shoulders of giants** (those who've gone before us) that we might peer over the confusion of the present *to discover the wisdom of God from the past.*

So, this morning, we are going to stand on the shoulders of a giant named **Jonathan Edwards** and seek to learn from God's wisdom in him.

And let me acknowledge – right now – that I'm very aware that this is not our normal style of Sunday morning teaching. I'm not preaching in any traditional sense. I'd describe this as more of a graduate level seminar on Edwards, the Great Awakening and Edwards' great work "The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit".

But I'm doing this because I think it's needed. *Amidsts helping us discern the Spirit in the extraordinary, I think it will actually point us toward the ordinary – toward the **core** passions of the Spirit for all of us, all the time...*

All in about 45 minutes (an impossible task!)

So, with that: let's pray.

Let me start by briefly introducing Jonathan Edwards.

- Born in 1703 (died in 1758) raised in Calvinist Congregationalism, Jonathan Edwards grew to be one of the most influential American Evangelical pastors and theologians of his century. He was a Puritan of the Reformed tradition (popularized these days largely through the influence of John Piper).
- Edwards' grandfather had been a pastor for 60 years in Northampton, Connecticut – and Edwards' first pastoral ministry began as first his assistant – until he took over as lead minister.

- He is famous for having preached the widely publicized sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God".
- Significant for our purposes, during his ministry, Edwards witnessed, pastored and participated in two significant revivals, the first occurring in 1734-36 (the Connecticut Valley revival), and the second occurring in 1740-43 (the Great Awakening).

First, the Connecticut Valley revival

- **1734** - The first wave of revival began as the Spirit of God caused a number of surprising conversions in a town nearby Edwards' community of Northampton.
 - As Edwards himself accounted, "*And then it was, in the latter part of December, that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work among us...*" – and what ensued were **many sudden and dramatic conversions**, and the testimony of these only serving to awaken many others.
 - Literally the whole town was spiritually awakened - not a family was unaffected – and there was a general atmosphere of spiritual hunger and witness. It is said that people were so caught up in spiritual things that they had to discipline themselves to attend to the basics of daily life.
 - There was **much evidence** of the Spirit's work - widespread joy, love, fear of God, loving relationships, authentic emotions, powerful times of worship, much testimony to God's work and goodness, hunger for the word of God. At one point, Edwards states that "*the town seemed to be full of the presence of God.*" (p.14)
 - Visitors and inquirers who came through town were impacted, convicted, or converted... And as they left, the Spirit's work followed

them and spread across the countryside - all over Connecticut and the Jersey's.

- Within the span of 6 months, 300 people in the county of Northampton (equal parts men and women) came to living faith in Jesus (2-3 a day – about 30 a week) - some young, old, rich, poor, wise, unwise - from all classes. And this was not just crowds of professing Christians renewed, but formerly unbelieving people now alive in faith.

- And **let it be said**: prior to all this, Edwards was very clear that the atmosphere in the region was just the opposite. In the preface to **his account, it is said,**

"There has been a great and just complaint for many years among the ministers and churches in [this region], that the work of conversion goes on very slowly, that the Spirit of God in his saving influences is much withdrawn... and there are few that receive the report of the gospel, with any eminent success upon their hearts."

- This revival was truly **surprising** and **extraordinary**...

Then a few years later came, what historians call, the Great Awakening.

In the spring and fall of **1740**, sparked by the itinerant ministry of George Whitefield, religious interest was aroused in Northampton once again – and particularly **among the youth and children**.

Edwards wrote of a particularly powerful night (in May 1741), when many young people and children gathered after the service.

He writes:

Many... appeared to be overcome with a sense of the greatness and glory of divine things, and with admiration, love, joy, and

praise, and compassion to others that looked upon themselves as in a state of nature; and many others at the same time were overcome with distress about their sinful and miserable estate and condition; so that the whole room was full of nothing but outcries, faintings, and the like.

This powerful move of God, although with its own ebb and flow, lasted until the fall of 1742. In the end it is thought that this revival served to accomplish the conversion of **30-40,000** people.

As Guy Chevreau, a contemporary author, **states,**

"Theirs was the fire of God that spread, not only over most of New England, but to Britain and beyond. So much so that even secular historians speak of 'The Great Awakening'."

Amidst the many conversions, one of the characteristics of these revivals (and others of its era - particularly in England and Scotland) was ***unusual phenomena***.

Throughout the revivals of Edwards' day - but especially the Great Awakening, there are many accounts, not only of fresh conversions and renewed convictions, but also of ***unusual phenomena***.

Edwards wrote of people experiencing powerful effects upon their bodies, tears, trembling, groaning, loud outcries, agonies of the body, the failing of bodily strength (falling or fainting), distress, convulsions, joy, trance-like states that could last for hours (sometimes even days), and visions. On many occasions these are described as being uncontrollable or unrestrainable.

They often would occur after a service (during an after-meeting or in the subsequent hours), and sometimes even occurred during religious meetings.

For many, it was ***in the midst of*** these unusual experiences that they were inwardly encountering and being affected by God.

So, how did people respond to this in Edwards’ day – and what was Edwards’ own response?

Well, just like today, there were people on all sides of the debate. There were those who thought it was **all** either uncontrolled emotionalism or the work of the devil. And there were those who believed it **all** to be the work of God.

And yet, as **Jonathan Edwards** pastored through these seasons of revival, as he prayed and pastored people, he saw reason to be both **encouraged** and **concerned** – by both what was being experienced **and** how it was being assessed – and so he began to seek to articulate a biblical criteria for *assessing the phenomenon* and *discerning the authentic work of the Spirit*.

Let it be said, for Edwards, Scripture was to be the only reliable standard for discerning the true work of the Spirit – and so he turned to **1 John 4** as his primary text.

I’ll just read v.1 now for our purposes... **1 John 4:1**

(1) “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”

Ultimately, as we will explore now in detail, **Edwards’ fundamental conviction** came to be that the evidence of **the**

authentic work of the Spirit is not found in the phenomena themselves, but in the fruit of these experiences – the lasting impact on those affected.

His simple question (that he passes on to us) is not "What did you experience?", but "How have you been impacted or changed by what you experienced?"

I've always appreciated how John Wimber, founding pastor of the Vineyard movement, once distilled this.

He was speaking at Holy Trinity Brompton, London (there church that gave rise to the Alpha program), in a talk on Jonathan Edwards' and the Revivals of the 18th century, and he summed up Edwards' conviction this way... He said,

"I don't care of you fall over. I don't care if you fall over and roll across the floor. I don't care if you fall over and roll down the street to Hyde Park and back.

What I care about is if you are more like Jesus when you get back up!"

Now I'll be honest, I'm sure many of us would be quite thrown if someone fell over and rolled across the floor during worship. And not just thrown, but **concerned**.

*But moreso I think we can agree with Wimber's concluding statement that, ultimately, what matters most – is not whether or not we fall down or roll or anything, but **that we are becoming more like Jesus...***

That is the passion and sign of the Spirit...

And so, with this conviction, Edwards developed and proposed his **criteria for discernment.**

Which involved **two parts**: first, he proposed **9 negative signs** (or non-conclusive signs), and second, he proposed **5 positive signs** (or sure signs).

For the sake of our making sense of Edwards' thoughts, I will deal with his **positive signs** first.

- So, to begin, he offers five **positive signs**, which, for Edwards, clearly distinguish the authentic work of the Spirit. And so, drawing on the insights of **1 John 4**, Edwards' distilled five fruit or signs of the Spirit of God's work.

For Edwards, these **positive signs** "*are the sure, distinguishing, scriptural evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit, by which we may proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see among a people, without danger of being misled*".

First, we can know that it is in fact the Holy Spirit at work if the result is a **greater esteem for the person of Jesus Christ**, as "*the Son of God and the Savior of men*".

This, according to Edwards, is clear evidence of the work of the Spirit – as John outlines in his letter.

1 John 4:2-3 - "*This is how we can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God...*"

And v.15 - "*If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.*"

Clearly, as 1 John 4 affirms, this is something the devil would not do!

Second, we know that the Spirit of God is at work where the result is that **the work of Satan being thwarted** (sin, temptation, the lure of idolatry, deception being broken). This is clear evidence of the work of the Spirit. (v.4,5 & 2:15f)

1 John 4:4-5 – *"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them."*

1 John 2:15f – *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."*

Where the interests of Satan are thwarted – to quote the well-known song, *where the fallen things of this world become strangely dim – strangely dull* – the Spirit of God is evidently at work.

This is clearly something the devil would not do!

Third, we know that it is the Spirit of God that is at work where the result is that the individual is led to **a greater regard for Scripture** "and established them more in their truth and divinity" is clear evidence to be the work of God's Spirit.

1 John 4:6 – *"We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood."*

Again, this is clearly something the devil would not do!

As Edwards wrote, "Every text is a dart to torment the old serpent. Therefore he is engaged against the Bible, and hates every word of it."

Fourth, a work that results in **a greater understanding of sound doctrinal truth** (since the Spirit is the Spirit of truth) is clear evidence of the work of the Spirit.

The text we just read (**4:6**) affirms this – referring to the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" – but also **John 8:44**, where Jesus explains that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. The truth is not in him...

Again, this is clearly something the devil would not – and could not do!

Fifth, (lastly) a work that leads to **an increased love for God and others** is clear evidence of the work of the Spirit of God.

1 John 4:7 – "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

v.12-13 – "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us his Spirit."

Let me read directly from Edwards' own words – p.116.

As Edwards states again and again, **the devil simply would not work in any of these ways.**

These positive signs are **sure** evidence of the work of the Spirit of God, whatever the **means** of the work may be.

With this, Edwards proposes 9 negative signs.

- By speaking of "**negative signs**", Edwards is referring not to bad signs, but **non-conclusive signs** – signs that give **no conclusive evidence** as to whether a work is, or is not of the Spirit.

Let me explain it this way.

Imagine I were driving downtown late on a Saturday night and I saw you walking into a **doggy bar**.

Edwards would call this **a negative sign** – or a **non-conclusive sign** – because my simple observation of this fact would give me no understanding of the nature of your visit to this dodgy bar.

It is possible that you could be going to this bar to nurture a secret addiction. For which I should be concerned.

But **another option** could be that you are neighbors with the owner – and over the last few years, you've been building a wonderful friendship with your neighbor, you've been praying for this friendship to grow – and just the other day, he asked you if you'd ever want to come down and see this place that he owns. He knows it's dodgy, but it's his place – and to honor him, you are swinging by for a visit.

Or lastly, you could have been driving by, on route somewhere else, and you simply and desperately needed to use a bathroom – and the only parking spot you could find was in front of this dodgy bar – so you ran in...

My seeing you enter the bar is really a "**negative sign**" (in Edwards' usage) – "**non-conclusive evidence**" that in itself tells me nothing about the nature of this event.

Such an act could be influence by the Spirit, or by an evil spirit, or simple bodily necessity!

Does that make sense? According to Edwards, negative signs don't tell us anything. Yet, we need to name them so as to help us stop making judgments based upon them.

- And to be fair to Edwards, I need to say that it was particularly because there were **many** who were outright dismissing **the whole** of what was happening as the work of the devil and base emotionalism – **despite the many undeniable signs of the Spirit's work** – Edwards distilled these **non-conclusive** or **negative** signs... As a call for critical thinking to calm the initial gut reactions that often guide our assessments in these situations.
- And I wish we could linger on each of this, but because of the limits of our time, I will need to move quickly through them...

So, **first**, Edwards argued **that a work is carried out in an unusual, novel or extraordinary manner is no conclusive evidence.**

Edwards says, "What we have been used to, or what the church of God has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge... We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself."

Just as God has worked in new and surprising ways in the past, could he not do likewise again?

Consider the loud wind and tongues of fire in Acts 2:13! Most would have considered this wildly unusual and secondary to what God is really after, but to deny the Spirit's hand in Acts 2 – Pentecost – would be to deny one of the most significant moments in the history of the Spirit's work in the world!

that a work is carried out in an unusual, novel or extraordinary manner is no conclusive evidence.

Secondly, "a work is not to **be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men**: such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under is not to be judged of one way or other by such effects on the body; and the reason is because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule".

As we've already said, Edwards' conviction was that **the phenomena themselves are not an indication of the source**.

Edward argued that if it is true that "no one can see God and live", would it not be make perfect sense for an individual to be powerfully affected by just a glimpse of God's love or holiness, or the reality of judgment? To Edwards, it seemed only rational that such a revelation might overcome one's bodily strength.

Consider **Matt 14:26** – "When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they were terrified... and cried out with fear."

Or the many occurrences in Scripture of people encountering angels - or God Himself – and collapsing to the ground... Or consider Paul being struck mute upon his converting encounter with Jesus...

a work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men...

Thirdly, that people are **greatly moved, stirred, or loudly** excited about something is **no evidence** that a work is of God or not.

- The book of Acts is full of stories of wild excitement – some incited against God and what he was doing, and other times excitement stirred by God (rf. Acts 2)

Fourthly, that those effected by this work purport to have **experienced powerful impressions** on their imagination, visions, trances, or revelations of heaven, is **no evidence** (either way).

- Edwards' writes: "I dare appeal to any man, of the greatest powers of mind, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on God, or Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations?"
- Rf. John's conversion and the angel at Alpha

Fifthly, that a work is spread **through the means of example** (in other words: someone observes another greatly affected and then is themselves greatly affected) – this itself is **no evidence** (either way)...

- As Edwards' explains – "For we know that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world."
- Rarely does God's work happen spontaneously – rather God usually uses the touch of another, the example of another, the words of another to inspire or effect us...

Sixthly, that the **subjects of a work are sinful** men and women is **no evidence**. Isn't the very purpose of God's work to make holy those who were formerly unholy?

- Edwards' tells the story of the dramatic conversion of one of the most notorious "company-keepers" in the whole town.
- Just because Peter later turned, for a season, from associating with the Gentiles, should not lead one to conclude that his experience at Pentecost was not of God.

Now, **the last three** negative or non-conclusive signs are directed at those who would make judgements on the work **as a whole** – our tendency to wash the whole with what we see in isolated situations...

Edwards' **seventh** negative sign is that **where some signs of** human foolishness or demonic activity are evident, this does not prove that **the entirety of the work** is not of God.

- The presence of Judas in the 12 didn't nullify God's presence and work in the 12.

Similarly (**eighth**), if **some** subjects **later fall away into sin**, is no evidence that a work **in general** is not of God.

- As Edwards' states, "that there are some counterfeits, is no argument that nothing is true [or that all is false]: such things are always expected in a time of reformation."
- "The Devil's sowing tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on."

Lastly (**ninth**), it is no evidence that a work **is the result of passionate preaching, with ministers emphasizing the** terrors of God's judgement.

- Considering the nature of judgment for the sinner, it is only appropriate for a preacher to speak boldly and with great passion.

With these 9 negative signs – Edwards' sought to clarify those things which often make us dismiss a particular work as not of God, but which in and of themselves, are actually **non-conclusive signs**.

Which leads us to a number of conclusions:

1. As Edwards' positive and negative signs seek to clarify: The phenomena themselves are **not** sufficient indicators of the nature of

a work/experience. [Remember again my analogy of seeing you walking into a dodgy bar late on a Saturday night.]

As Edwards puts it:

It is not the **degree** of religious affections but the **nature** of them that is chiefly to be looked at. *Some* have had great raptures of joy... have been extraordinarily *filled*... have had their bodies overcome, and... have manifested far less of a temper of Christians in their conduct since then some others that have been still and have had no great outward show. But then again, there are *many others* that have had extraordinary joys and emotions of mind, with frequent great effects upon their bodies, that behave themselves, as humble, amiable, eminent Christians.

2. The two necessities for discerning a work are an understanding of **the rules and the facts**.
 - The **rules** are those positive evidences as provided by scripture (1 John 4), and the **facts** are the subsequent life of the subject of a work.
 - And in regard to determining the facts, Edwards was not so much interested in the personal (verbal) testimony of fruit, as in the actual **manifestation of fruit in the life of the** individual.
 - ***For Edwards, the lasting fruit of a transformed life is ultimately the only true evidence of God's work.***

3. **We need to embrace the counsel of 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22** as our aim and commitment – ***to not quench the Spirit, to test everything, and hold onto what is good.***
 - Where there is positive evidence of the true work of the Spirit of God, we should be careful to condemn, denounce or dismiss the **means** of God's work.

- Not that we should categorically embrace certain experiences as always being from God, but simply that, in the present, we thank God for working however He chooses.

4. **We must affirm the variety of ways that the Spirit works** in our lives and that of others.

- Clearly the goal of the Spirit's work is not to shake us or make us cry or rob us of bodily strength – but to lead us to Jesus, to minister to us on behalf of Jesus, and to bring forth the life of Jesus in us.

- Whenever I reconnect with **my friend Marc**, I am always reminded of this reality...

At least back in our college years and the years just following, Marc's journey with Christ was full of wild experiences – at least compared to my journey. He definitely had a lot more outwardly noticeable, dramatic, experiential journey with God.

Whereas I, on the other hand, had a much more quiet, less dramatic journey – less charismatic – just a persistent pursuit and experience of Jesus.

- And yet, whenever we reconnect, we discover again and celebrate that, through different means, the same Spirit is working in us toward the same end – leading us to know, trust and love Jesus and be formed in his image...
- And always, I walk away celebrating the mystery of the Spirit's ways – thankful that God is intimately at work in us all according to His own purposes and plans...

5. Lastly, we must be passionate about that which the Spirit is passionate!

This is why I've described our summer study as being about "the person, **passions** and work of the Holy Spirit".

- In the face of all the mystery of the Spirit's work and ways, it is **particularly important** that we continually remind ourselves and one another what the Spirit is most **passionately** seeking –

and keep this at the forefront of our pursuit and discernment of what goes on around us and in us...

- This is what enables us to discern the true work of the Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit.