

# Spiritual Warfare and Power Encounter

1. Why are people attracted by miracles?
  - a. They can serve as a confirmation of the Gospel and the power of a living God
  - b. It almost seems that people have an inborn desire to see and partake of displays of supernatural powers.
  - c. Many seek the benefits that miracles offer (health, success, even power).
  
2. On the worldwide scene, the churches which are growing the most tend to be the churches that emphasize the power of God to miraculously manifest Himself (through tongues, healing, power over demons, etc.). Generally this is found in the Pentecostal churches.
  - a. Barrett estimates that the Christians in Pentecostal denominations worldwide has grown from 36,794,000 in 1970 to 58,999,900 in 1985. In 1980, he estimated that there were over 100,000,000 people affiliated with the general Pentecostal-charismatic movement. [Source: *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 838] Wagner estimates that this had risen to 247,000,000 by 1985! (Wagner, "Power Evangelism", p. 9; compare Pomerville, *The Third Force*, pp. 19-39)
  - b. In the West, movements which stress the work of the Spirit in healings, etc. but without the Pentecostal teachings on the baptism of the Spirit and tongues (e.g., Vineyard Fellowship) show that the many evangelicals are not satisfied with their experience of the power of Christ.
  - c. In Africa, the growth of various "mainline" Pentecostals during the years 1970 to 1985 were estimated as (Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Global Table 23):

Church "Family"	Pentecostal Growth	Total Growth
Catholics	44.9%	3.8%
Protestants	27.2%	3.4%
Anglicans	25.7%	3.2%

3. A suggested approach to miracles and church growth
  - a. First, understand that God is the God of miracles. To the one who created the universe, nothing is a "miracle", and there are no "natural" limitations that can be placed on His power. He has complete freedom to perform or to not perform any miracle. We do have spiritual principles that are given in the Bible concerning miracles, but we must let God be God and avoid trying to "force" Him to perform.

He is not under our control, even when we follow what we perceive to be "formulas of faith" as found in the Bible. Many have abused God in demanding that He perform to satisfy them.

- b. Second, God does not require emotional excitement to produce a miracle. He can produce one in any situation He chooses! Too often, people seek to generate what they refer to as an "atmosphere of faith", but which in reality is no more than an "atmosphere of emotional excitement". Emotional excitement is good and has its place in the worship of the church, but it is never required for the performance of a miracle of God.
- c. Third, we must recognize that while the *reports* of miracles are plentiful, the *documentation* and *substantiation* of these miracles is often very sparse. Desiring proof is not a sign of a weak faith, but of a desire to know the full truth.
- d. Fourth, it is VITAL that the church understand that the miracles *in and of themselves* are not proof that it is God who is at work.
  - i. Concerning this, Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church: The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. (2 Thes. 2:9-12).
  - ii. Colin Brown relates: In the New Testament there are reports of healings and exorcisms by the apostles and others. . . . But there are also signs and wonders of the false prophet and the false Christ (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22), and there are signs that are satanic and demonic (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13-14; 16:14; 19:20). In neither the Old nor the New Testament is the mere supernaturalness of the sign or wonder sufficient in itself to accredit the one who performs it. (Brown, *That You May Believe*, p. 169)
  - iii. In addition to what Brown points out, we should also remember that God gives us definite commands to test the spirits (1 John 4:1-3), and it will not grieve the Holy Spirit for us to do so. We cannot afford to ignore this possibility as the source of miracles.
- e. Fifth, there has been too much of a tendency to glorify and idolize the people who perform the miracles. God alone deserves the glory for any true miracle. Any

man who seeks his own glory should have his power source questioned! Brown relates (Brown, *That You May Believe*, p. 170): "It is characteristic of the magician and the false prophet to draw attention to himself. He seeks to promote himself. It is characteristic of Jesus' works that they point people to the Father."

4. Biblical examples of power encounter as part of God's work through His people:
  - a. Moses and Pharaoh's magicians (Exodus 7-11)
  - b. Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-40)
  - c. Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-19)
  - d. Jesus and evil spirits (Matt 8:28-34, 12:22-29, 17:14-21, etc.)
  - e. There are many such encounters found in Acts:
    - i. Peter and John with the lame beggar (3:1-4:22)
    - ii. Peter and Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
    - iii. The apostles as a group and the sick (5:12-16)
    - iv. Philip and the evil spirits in Samaria (8:6-8)
    - v. Peter and Simon the sorcerer (8:9-24)
    - vi. Peter with Aeneas (the paralytic; 9:32-35)
    - vii. Peter with Dorcas (the girl who died; 9:36-42)
    - viii. Peter and Herod (in Peter's escape from prison; 12:1-24)
    - ix. Paul and Elymas the sorcerer (13:6-12)
    - x. Paul and the unbelieving Jews in Pisidian Antioch (13:46-52)
    - xi. Paul and the unbelieving Jews in Iconium (14:1-7)
    - xii. Paul and the lame man in Lystra (14:8-18)
    - xiii. Paul (in Lystra) and the unbelieving Jews from Antioch and Iconium (13:19-20)
    - xiv. Paul and the demonized slave-girl in Philippi (16:16-21)
    - xv. Paul and the local officials in Philippi (the miraculous jail escape; 16:22-40)
    - xvi. Paul and illnesses (while in Ephesus; 19:11-12)
    - xvii. The seven sons of Sceva lose an encounter with a demonized man, which results in fear of the Lord and destruction of occultic materials (19:13-20)
    - xviii. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (20:7-12)
    - xix. Paul and the snake bite on Malta (28:1-6)
    - xx. Paul and the father of Publius (28:7-10)
5. It is helpful to chart out the sign phenomena seen in Acts and the corresponding results for each occurrence (the initial idea for this came from Wimber, Power Evangelism, pp. 116-7 and 181-2):

<i>Unspecified Signs and Wonders</i>	
Examples	Results
2:43: Many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles	2:43-47: Sense of awe; holding all in common; fellowshiping with unity and joy; daily adding to their number
4:29-30: Disciples prayed to speak with confidence that God would extend His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders would take place through Jesus' name	4:31: The place where they were was shaken, and they were all filled with the Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness
4:33: Apostles gave witness to Christ with great power	4:34-35: Abundant grace was on them all; not a needy person among them; they shared all, as each had need
5:12: At the hands of the Apostles many signs and wonders were taking place	5:14: They were in one accord; multitudes were constantly added to their number
6:8: Stephen was performing great wonders and signs among the people	6:9-15: The Jews became jealous. Unable to out-argue him, they trumped up false witness and brought him to trial
11:21: And the hand of the Lord was with them (??)	11:21: A large number who believed turned to the Lord
14:3: God granted signs and wonders by Saul's and Barnabas' hands	14:4-7: The city was divided; they eventually had to flee to other cities

<i>Judgments from God</i>	
Examples	Results
5:1-10: Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead at Peter's announcement for lying to the Lord	5:11: Great fear came upon the whole church, and on everyone who heard of this
12:21-23: An angel of the Lord killed Herod for not giving glory to God	12:23-24: Herod died, but the word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied
13:6-11: Elymas the magician, who opposed Paul's witness to Sergius Paulus, was struck blind	13:12: Sergius Paulus came to faith in Christ

<i>Speaking Sign Phenomena</i>	
Examples	Results
2:3-4: The 120 spoke in tongues (praising God in actual languages)	2:5-41: The people became open to hear Peter's sermon--eventually 3,000 were saved
10:44-46: Cornelius and his family spoke in tongues	10:47-48: They were accepted as genuine believers, and Peter ordered that they be baptized
11:27-28: Agabus prophesied that famine would come all over the world	11:29-30: Famine took place; the disciples all gave in proportion to their means for the relief of the Judean brothers
13:1: The Holy Spirit said (through prophecy??) to set apart Barnabas and Saul for mission	13:3-4: Paul and Barnabas were commissioned and sent out by the church at Antioch on the first missionary journey
15:32: Judas and Silas, prophets, came and gave a lengthy message at Antioch	15:32: The brothers were encouraged and strengthened
20:23: Holy Spirit testified to Paul that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem	20:22: The same Spirit "bound" him to go to Jerusalem, even though he did not know what would happen there
20:25; 29-31: Paul told the Ephesians that he knew that he would not see them again	20:37-38: The people wept, grieving that they would not see Paul again
21:4: The disciples urged Paul "through the Spirit" not to go to Jerusalem	21:5, 13: Paul went anyway--he was constrained by the Spirit to do so
21:11: Agabus prophesied about Paul's capture by the Jews and subsequent transfer into Gentiles' hands	21:13-14: The church begged Paul to reconsider, but he would not--he was going to Jerusalem (even if he died there)
27:9-10: On the way to Rome, Paul warned of disaster if the ship left at the time they were planning.	27:11: His word was ignored, and they set sail into disaster

Spiritual Warfare in Church Planting

<i>Visions</i>	
Examples	Results
7:55-56: At his trial, Stephen saw Jesus in His glory	7:57-60: He was stoned and died as a result
9:1-9: Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus road	9:3-19: Paul came to faith
9:10-16: Ananias had a vision in which the Lord told him to go and minister to Paul (who in turn had a vision preparing him for Ananias' visit, v. 12)	9:17-22: Ananias obeyed the Lord. Paul regained his sight, and was baptised. He then began to preach Jesus to the people, who were amazed.
10:9-20: Peter had a vision of God telling him to partake of unclean food. As Peter reflected on this, the Spirit came and told him to go with the men who have come to him from Cornelius.	10:19-48: Peter went to Cornelius' house and preached. As a result, they all came to faith in Christ, confirmed by the gift of the Spirit, which was evidenced through their speaking in tongues and exalting God.
16:9: A man from Macedonia appeared to Paul in a vision	16:10ff: Paul went to Europe rather than Asia to preach
18:9-10: The Lord told Paul not to fear in Corinth, and to go on speaking	18:11: Paul settled in Corinth for 18 months, teaching them the word of God
22:17-21: Paul related a vision in which he was told to leave Jerusalem after his conversion	9:30: Paul obeyed (the brothers sent him to Caesarea)
23:11: The Lord told Paul that he would speak of Him in Rome	28:30-31: Paul eventually ended up in Rome, preaching with all openness, unhindered

<i>Miracles</i>	
Examples	Results
8:39-40: Philip "snatched away" by the Spirit, and "found himself at Azotus"	8:40: He went from Azotus to Caesarea, preaching along the way
16:22-26: God brings an earthquake, releasing Paul and Silas from prison in the process	16:27-34: As a result, they had the opportunity to share with the jailer, who, together with his family, came to Christ

<i>Angelic Visitations</i>	
Examples	Results
1:9-11: Two angels came after Jesus' ascension, announcing that Jesus would return the way He had gone	1:12: The disciples returned to Jerusalem
5:19-20: An angel released the apostles from jail, and commanded them to preach to the people	5:21-42: They preached, and were brought to the Sanhedrin. After questioning, they were flogged and released, rejoicing that they were suffering for Christ. They kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
8:26: An angel told Philip to go to a desert road	8:27-38: The Ethiopian eunuch came to faith
10:1-6: An angel appeared in a vision to Cornelius and told him to send for a man named Peter	10:7-8: Cornelius obeyed the angel's command by sending for Peter
12:5-11: An angel rescued Peter from prison	12:16-19: There was "no small disturbance" among the soldiers over the escape; the brethren are amazed
27:23-24: An angel appeared to Paul, promising him deliverance from a shipwreck	27:44: As the angel had said, all the people were saved

<i>Healings and Demonic Expulsions</i>	
Examples	Results

Spiritual Warfare in Church Planting

3:7-8: Peter healed a lame man	3:9-4:4: The people were filled with wonder, and Peter preached. He was jailed as a result, but many people believed
5:15-16: The sick and those afflicted by demons were healed	5:17-18: The Jews were filled with jealousy, and arrested the apostles
8:6-7: Philip "performed signs", namely, he cast out demons and many who were paralyzed and crippled were healed	8:6, 8: Close attention was paid to his preaching; there was great joy in the city
9:17-19: Paul healed of blindness by Ananias	(Serves as a metaphor of Paul's former blindness and his new service to the Gentiles)
9:32-34: Peter healed Aeneas, who was paralyzed for eight years	9:35: All who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord
9:36-41: Peter raised Tabitha (Gk. Dorcas) from the dead	9:42: It became known all over Joppa, and many believed
14:8-10: Paul healed a lame man who had never walked	14:11-18: The people took Paul and Barnabas as gods, and were restrained from sacrificing to them only with difficulty
14:19-20: Paul raised from dead (?) after stoning	14:21: Paul is able to continue his ministry.
16:18: A slave girl with a spirit of divination was released from the demon by Paul	16:19-24: Paul and Silas were dragged before the authorities, beaten severely with rods, and imprisoned
19:11-12: God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, including apron and "sweat-rag" healings	19:13-20: Some Jewish exorcists tried duplication and failed. The rest feared and magnified Jesus' name, confessing sins and burning magic books.
20:7-10: Paul raised Eutychus from the dead	20:12: The people took him alive and were greatly comforted
28:3-6: On the island of Malta, Paul survived a snake bite	28:6: The people thought him a god
28:7-9: Still on Malta, Paul healed Publius' father and the rest of the people on the island who were sick	28:10: The people honored them with many marks of respect, and supplied provisions for their continuing journey

6. An examination of the "results" of signs and wonders in Acts seems to indicate four major categories of responses (see the charts above):
  - a. The church grew in terms of increase in witness and/or numbers (2:5-41; 3:7-4:4; 4:29-31; 5:11, 14; 8:6-8; 27-38, 39-40; 9:3-19, 32-35, 36-42; 10:19-48; 11:21; 12:23-4; 13:1-4; 6-12; 16:9-10ff, 27-34; 23:11 with 28:30-1);
  - b. The church grew in terms of quality (people deepening their faith, and their commitment to each other as the body of Christ, etc.; 2:43-7; 4:34-5; 5:14; 10:47-8; 11:27-30; 12:5-19; 15:32; 18:9-11; 19:11-20; 20"7-12; 21:4-13);
  - c. The church underwent persecution from the (often jealous) enemies of Christ, who responded to miracles and church growth with violent persecution (3:7-4:4; 5:17-18; 19-42; 6:8-15; 7:57-60; 14:3-7, 8-20; 16:18-24);
  - d. In two cases, pagans honored the miracles done by believers, but it is not noted whether they came to faith in Christ (14:8-18; 28:7-10)
  
7. The question of perspective
  - a. Our source of truth: a proposed biblical cosmology

Sphere of Operation	Characterization
<p>God's Throne; Holy Angels</p>	<p>This is a realm created by God (Neh. 9:6) where the angels present themselves to Him (Job 1:6 and 2:1). It probably includes the heaven of heavenlies (if it is separate from the heavens; Neh. 9:6). It may also include the "third heaven" (mentioned by Paul, 2 Cor. 12:2). It is from this realm that Satan is cast out, but we do not know when this occurs or whether Satan continues to have limited access after his expulsion (see Job 1:6, 2:1, Zech. 3:1, and Rev. 12:7-9). If he has not yet been cast out, it is still a realm of continuing conflict, as C. R. Schoonhoven contends: "The Bible depicts heaven under the wrath of God, the scene of cosmic warfare, and finally subject to dissolution prior to the creation of a new heaven" (Schoonhoven, "Heaven", ISBE Revised). On the other hand, if Satan has been cast out, as others maintain, then this is "a world of pure light" (Bietenhard, "<i>Ouranos</i>", NIDNTT). Finally, this realm is not eternal—it will be destroyed (with the exception of God's throne?; Isa. 51:6, Mark 13:31, Heb. 1:11-12, 2 Pet. 3:7) before the new heaven and new earth are created (Isa. 65:17 and Rev. 21:1).</p>
<p>Rebellious Angels</p>	<p>While terms are borrowed from Judaism, the whole framework is never fully developed doctrinally in the Bible. This realm may include what are called "the other two heavens" (though this designation is debatable; see Smith, <i>Heaven</i>, pp. 28-39). The first of these two heavens is the air, apparently the arena of Satan's counterfeit kingdom (Eph. 2:2). The second is the celestial sphere (home of planets and stars, Gen. 1:14-19; the "expanse of the sky", NIV). This realm may also include region(s) of confinement for demons, such as <i>Tartarus</i> (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6?), the <i>abyss</i> (Rev. 9:1-2), and <i>Hades</i> (Hebrew: <i>Sheol</i>), which literally means "the unseen", and refers to a shadow land of the dead (Bietenhard, "Hades", NIDNTT). The Jews of the intertestamental period thought of Hades as the land of all the dead. They were separated into two compartments, one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous (see Lee, "Hades", ISBE Revised). In the NT the picture of Hades is not fully expanded or systematically presented, and scholars debate whether it includes this partition. It is possible that, after the death and resurrection of Christ, Hades may be a region only for the <i>unrighteous</i> dead (Luke 16:19-31 and Rev. 20:13f usually being cited as proof texts). This is explained by noting that since the death and resurrection of Christ the righteous have gone to be with Him in Heaven immediately upon their death (Phil. 1:23; Wuest, WS, vol. 2, "Treasures", p. 45). All of these "regions", however, appear to be subsumed in <i>Gehenna</i> (Davids, "Dead, Abode of the", EDT) also referred to as the <i>lake of fire</i> (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15; Mounce, "Lake of Fire", EDT). Into this final, eternal prison for Satan and his demons (Matt. 25:41, 46) will be thrown Hades and death (and all the unrighteous dead; Rev. 20:14-15).</p>
<p>Human Beings</p>	<p>The physical world around us. Except for unusual circumstances (e.g., John's vision on Patmos which resulted in Revelation, Paul's vision mentioned in 2 Cor. 12), people are physically restricted to this realm until death.</p>

- b. The Western world over the last two centuries has adopted empirically-based scientific reasoning as the unquestioned way of understanding the physical world. Americans feel very comfortable dealing in probability concepts ("20% chance of rain tomorrow") and working with hypothetical situations ("if I were \_\_\_\_\_ I'd \_\_\_\_\_"), and have a "see-for-myself" attitude that is often unwilling to accept information without verifying it themselves. The empiricism, when combined with an underlying physical materialism, results in scepticism about an 'invisible' spirit world.
- c. No world view is completely static; there is evidence that the North American one is

undergoing transition toward a more realistic understanding of the "invisible" realm of the universe.

8. Issues related to **spiritual warfare** and communicating Christ

a. All people are made in God's image.

- i. This is the foundation of who we are as people, and permeates every aspect of our existence. It also drives us to find religious significance in life. If Wink is correct in stating that our images of God create us (Wink, 1992, 48), then this color is at the very core of who we are and provides the driving direction for world view.
- ii. Being in the image of Someone, we have a built in desire to link with the One whose image we bear. As a result of Adam and Eve's fall and their consequent expulsion from the Garden (Gen. 3:1-24), our direct link was sundered. However, we retained the image of God (Gen. 9:6), and our search for intimate re-connection with the Creator continues, though it is now distorted and is expressed as a deep concern with the powers that govern the world we inhabit (Jacobs, 1979, Conn, 1979; see also Wink, 1992, 3-10).
- iii. Without going into a full discussion on the image, the main point to be made here is that we are creatures who are given the freedom to choose (even the highest satanic priest can come to Christ). Additionally, being in God's image, we provoke jealousy in Satan.
- iv. Those without Christ, though sharing the image of God, are dead in their sins, and essentially powerless against Satan's overall control of their lives though they can choose to say no to individual sins
- v. Most importantly, being in God's image, we have a purpose for our existence, which is **to be connected to that which we image**. This is the essence of **glorifying** God: we connect ourselves to Him by ascribing to Him that which is rightfully His and honoring Him by joyfully and gratefully living according to the order that He established in His creative act.

b. Ultimately, all conversions are kingdom changes (as a result of kingdom conflicts; Col. 1:13). This must undergird our orientation to the whole study of communicating Christ in the intercultural setting!

c. Satan holds unbelievers in slavery:

John 12:40: "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither

see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn--and I would heal them."

2 Corinthians 3:14: But their **minds** were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

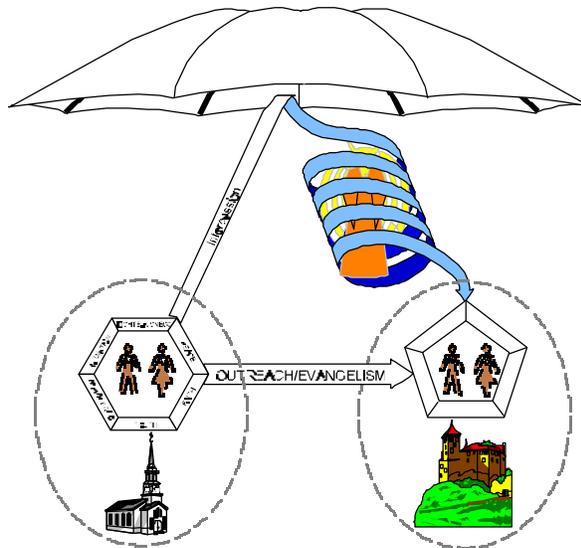
2 Corinthians 4:3-4: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.<sup>4</sup> The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Galatians 4:3: So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.

Ephesians 2:1-3: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

1 John 5:19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

- d. Evangelism involves the intersection of five sets of influences: God, Satan, the domination system of our cultures, the witness of the evangelist, and the personal desires and choices of the non-regenerate person who bears God's image):



- e. Keeping it in perspective:

- i. The sociological/anthropological dynamic is understanding the minds of those in cultures other than our own. We seek to understand them so as to communicate in terms that they can grasp.
  - ii. The theological dynamic is enabling the spiritual resources we have as Christians to be brought to bear on engaging in the kingdom conflict to which we are called.
  - iii. Undergirding all of this is prayer, the ultimate "key" to successful evangelism in any context!
9. As will be asked by those of us from the West, what is the "bottom line" in this area? Several suggestions may be noted:
- a. As we mention above, a thorough theological base has not yet been developed either here or in the two-thirds world context. I sense that this will require an international effort of people from diverse cultural perspectives wrestling through the biblical data in light of their cultural frameworks. This theological base must be developed, though it does not need to be done before we can effectively minister in this area.
  - b. In terms of mission/evangelism and church planting practice, we must note:
    - i. The western missionary must be equipped more adequately to deal with the spirit realm, including demonic confrontation.
    - ii. While some have been calling for direct confrontation against territorial spirits (e.g., Peter Wagner), others (who have significant experience in power encounter) are more cautious (e.g., Tom White), noting that such prayer is serious business and we must be sure the God is calling before we jump into the fray. This is an area of significant potential as well as significant concern.
    - iii. We must be discerning--not swinging so far in the "power encounter" direction that we turn every disagreement with an unbeliever into a power display. God is not subject to our whims, and will not respond when we try to put Him in a "power display box" to enhance our own work.
    - iv. At the same time, we must be willing to learn from our sisters and brothers in the Third World context and begin to step out more in faith to see God at work in the local context. Many raised in the Third World context are more sensitive to these issues than those of us from the West--we need to adopt a learner's attitude, and allow them to teach us.