

Sermon—August 21-22, 1999
Rich Nathan
Power Encounters in the Book of Acts
Acts 28

How to Embrace the Supernatural

1. How many Amish does it take to change a light bulb?

What's a light bulb?

2. How many Baptists does it take to change a light bulb?

Change? Who said anything about change?

3. How many Calvinists does it take to change a light bulb?

None: God has predestined when the light will be on. Calvinists do not change light bulbs. They simply read the instructions and pray that their light bulb will be the one that has been chosen to be changed.

4. How many Catholics does it take to change a light bulb?

None. They use candles.

5. How many Charismatics does it take to change a light bulb?

Ten: One to change the bulb and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

6. How many members of an established Bible-teaching church that is over 20 years old does it take to change a light bulb?

One to actually change the bulb, and nine to say how much they liked the old one.

7. How many Methodists does it take to change a light bulb?

This statement was issued: "We chose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey, you have

found that a light bulb works for you, that's fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb (or light source, or non-dark resource), and present it next month at our annual light-bulb Sunday service, in which we explore a number of light-bulb traditions, including incandescent, iridescent, three-way, long-life, and tinted—all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence."

8. How many Televangelists does it take to change a light bulb?

One. But for the message of light to continue, send in your donation today.

HOW MANY VINEYARD PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHT BULB?

We do not change light bulbs, but we will pray for the light bulb's healing in a loving, compassionate way and we will also compose an intimate contemporary worship song in which we authentically confess to God our lack of light and ask him to shine in our midst.

See it is all just a matter of perspective.

Well, it is wonderful to be back here after three weeks of being gone and not in the pulpit. This is the longest break – the three weeks we took off, Marlene and I and our family – it is the longest break that we have had in 24 years of our marriage. We were over in England. I did a conference there, a series of Bible teachings for a week for a few thousand Anglicans in the west of England. But most of the time we just had an opportunity to get refreshed and to read. So I am coming back feeling strong, feeling full, feeling alive again. It really was a good few weeks off.

Over the course of the last several months I have been doing a series from the book of Acts. Throughout the series we have been talking about embracing the supernatural aspects of Christianity. What is so apparent in the book of Acts is how thoroughly filled with signs and wonders and the miraculous the early church was. And how exciting it must have been to live in those days when people were testifying about getting healed and others were being delivered from demonic darkness and life long addictions. There was a daily stream of new converts into the church. People were hearing from God, getting prophetic words. Others were speaking in tongues. The book of Acts is vibrant and alive, filled with the presence of a supernatural God.

Why is church today so different? What keeps us from the experience of the supernatural that we read so much about in the Bible?

One of the fundamental issues that keep people from the experience of God in their life is the whole matter of worldview. I have taught on this periodically, but for so many of you, you are new here and you are not in touch with the language of worldview.

Back in the 1940's there were two researchers who did an interesting experiment regarding people's ability to perceive unexpected facts. Now the researchers presented their subjects with a series of playing cards. They asked the subjects to identify the cards. The problem was that the cards weren't normal. They were deliberately made unusual, anomalous. For example, they were shown cards with a red spade on them or a black heart. So when a subject was asked to look at a single card that was a normal card, they almost always responded correctly. But

when the subjects were shown the unusual card, they almost always saw normal playing cards. The unusual cards were fit into the categories of what must have been there based on their prior experience of playing cards. Only when the researchers increased the exposure time to the cards, only when they flipped through them more slowly, did the subjects hesitate and become aware that they were seeing something out of the ordinary. But even then, they struggled with how to identify them. It was only when they went from flipping the cards every 2 seconds to flipping them every 5-10 seconds that the subjects began to experience those, “Ah, ha...” moments and realize that they were looking at unusual cards. And after a few exposures they were able to rapidly identify the other unusual cards. What was fascinating was that some people were never able to do it. It didn’t matter how slow the researchers turned the cards, they were frozen. They couldn’t make the mental change necessary to identify a red spade or a black heart. Some people said, “I can’t even make the color out. I am not sure if it is a spade or a heart. I am not sure what spades look like anymore.”

There was a philosopher of science back in the 1960’s who wrote a very influential book. The guy’s name was Thomas Kuhn. He wrote a book titled “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.” Basically, what Kuhn said in his famous study of the progress of science was that science doesn’t just move ahead by the gradual accumulation of new discoveries – one little discovery built on another like a person might build a clay pot by putting a little more clay on, a little more and a little more.

He said that wasn’t the history of science, just moving ahead by incremental changes – one discovery on top of the other. He said what you see in the progress of

science is what he called a paradigm shift, a revolutionary change in the way that people think about the facts. By paradigm, Kuhn was talking about a way of looking at the world based on your assumptions and preconceptions.

See, scientists, like all of us, don't look at the world the way it is, they want to, but they don't. They may pretend to be totally objective and neutral observers of what they are examining, but they see the world through a lens – a lens of prior assumptions, a lens of their culture, a lens of their professors and what they have read in textbooks. And this lens causes them to see what they think should be there, whether it is there or not. The lens also causes them to not see what is there.

When we are talking about worldviews or paradigms, we are talking about the lens through which someone looks at life. Every one of us looks at life through a set of assumptions, a set of prejudices and expectations. Most of these assumptions and prejudices and expectations are unstated. We just drink them in with our mother's milk. Your mother, my mother, didn't sit us down and say, "Honey, we live in the Western world and here is how we Westerners living in a post-enlightenment time frame think about demons, angels, and healing. Here is how we think about cause and effect and the miraculous." The worldview that one has is a set of unstated assumptions about how life works – what you take to be simply a given.

Now, it is hard to see your own worldview. It is hard to see the glasses that are on your own head. It is easier to see others' glasses. It is easier to get in touch with the worldview of another group. Let me illustrate what I am talking about by worldview, by paradigms, by a set of given assumptions, because all of this applies

to the way people relate to God. Let me illustrate what I am talking about and bring this down to Earth.

There was a great illustration of paradigms of worldviews during the OJ Simpson trial. The poll takers during the trial were continually scratching their heads and saying, "We have these really odd poll results where the vast majority of Caucasian Americans believe that OJ Simpson is probably guilty and the vast majority of African Americans believed that OJ Simpson was probably set up as a result of a police conspiracy.

Now, how could two groups of people looking at the same facts come to such different conclusions? The answer is different worldviews, different paradigms, and different types of experiences with the criminal justice system and different sets of experiences with the police, which led these two different groups of people to widely different sets of assumptions about what must have happened. African Americans, who have experienced in their own personal lives unfair treatment and unresponsive and unjust criminal justice system, found it easy to believe that the LA Police Department, especially with its history of racism, may have rushed to a premature judgment concerning OJ and may have engaged in some kind of conspiracy. Their experience of life told them such things could absolutely happen and may have happened here.

Caucasian Americans, having been raised with a belief in a general objectivity of the criminal justice system, with great suspicions that conspiracies really take place, general confidence in the police, looked at the evidence and found it overwhelming in terms of OJ's guilt. Worldview.

How many of you are married? Any of you who are married knows something of the issue of worldview as you have disagreed with your spouse about what happened, what the facts are. You know that in certain cases your husband, your wife, is being deliberately stupid. They refuse to see and acknowledge what is obvious. It is possible they are being deliberately stupid, or it is possible that they have a different worldview. In this case, a different lens through which they look at the same set of facts.

Here is the bottom line, friends. When we are talking about embracing the supernatural, as we have been throughout this series in the book of Acts, we are talking about learning to pray for the sick, or power evangelism, or hearing from God, casting out the demonic or other things that we see in the book of Acts, when we are talking about embracing the supernatural, the key, the most significant issue, I believe, is one's worldview. More important than theology, which these days in most people's lives is on the periphery of their lives. It doesn't affect their core decisions. More powerful than people's theology is their worldview. I have seen people change their theology instantly, but worldviews, the unstated set of assumptions, the lens through which people look at life, their conditioned response to what must be there, that takes a lot of time to change. And when I talk with people who are frustrated because they don't seem to have the faith to believe God for a healing or they don't have the faith to hear the voice of God, one of the fundamental issues that I always want to explore with them is have you explored the need for a change in thought regarding your worldview.

I have called today's talk, "How to Embrace the Supernatural." Let's pray.

Looking at Acts 28:1-8

“Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood, and as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, ‘This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.’

But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall over dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a God. There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.”

Now we read here in v. 1, “Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta.”

Let me give you a bit of background to what is going on here in Acts 28. The writer of the book of Acts, Luke, writes a very personal, a very detailed eye-witness description of a journey that Paul and he took aboard a ship from ancient Israel to the island of Malta and then onto Rome. Apparently, Luke was keeping a daily log of the ship’s progress.

There was a classical scholar in the 1800's, a guy named James Smith, who was himself an experienced yachtsman. He wrote a book called *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*. James Smith, himself, had sailed regularly over the part of the Mediterranean that Luke details in Acts 27.

He discovered that Luke was accurate down to the most minor details of the wind direction and current strengths that would be present in that part of the Mediterranean in September. What would happen with this type of vessel if caught in these different kinds of currents. So accurate historically are the details in the book of Acts that William Ramsay, who is another classical history scholar, a scholar of the Greek and Roman worlds said that when he began to investigate the book of Acts, he came at it prejudiced, believing that it was probably full of myths.

He said [and his direct phrase] he came at the book of Acts with a mind “unfavorable” toward it. The more he investigated and checked out the details of Luke’s account, the more he found himself having dozens of reasons [direct quote] for “placing the author of Acts among the historians of the first rank.”

Here is the deal. We have got to come to a place of seeing what the archeologists and historians have seen for years – that when we are reading the Bible and, specifically, reading the book of Acts, we are not reading a book of cleverly devised myths. We are not reading a bunch of ancient fables like Aesop’s Fables with a religious twist on it.

Or something like the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad* that may have had a historical core but embellished by mythology over the Centuries. Neither, are we reading some professor of philosophy’s personal musings. Read the historians as I have done.

Read the archeologists as I have done. And you will come to a growing sense of conviction, if you struggle with how is it that we can know that the Bible is true, if you read the historians and the archeologists, you will come to a growing sense that what you are reading here in the pages of the New Testament is history.

So after the shipwreck, Paul and Luke wound up on an island called Malta, which interestingly means, “refuge.” It is an island of refuge. The text goes on to say “The islanders showed us unusual kindness.” Literally, in the Greek it says, “The barbarians there showed us unusual kindness.” Everyone who didn’t speak Greek in the ancient world was called “barbarians.” These people on Malta spoke a Phoenician dialect. The Greeks used to call everyone outside the Greek world barbarians because their languages sounded to them like the syllables bar-bar-bar. Different languages have different sounds.

So Italian has a lyrical, almost musical sound to it. And German has a really harsh, almost caustic sound with its hard “k’s” and hard “ch’s”. New York-style English is appealing to almost anyone the world over, because of its rounded tones, the almost sweet sound.

Well, to the Greeks, everyone else’s language sounded like the syllables bar-bar. But these barbarians were unusually kind. They built a fire and cared for 276 almost drowned people. But it says that Paul was helping out, not just standing back as a leader waiting to be served. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and put it on the fire. A viper driven out by the heat fastened itself on his hand. Apparently, hidden in the brushwood was a snake, a poisonous one, which we read, fastened itself on Paul’s hand. Luke was a physician and in the ancient world physicians were experts on

snakes. They had to be because many people were bitten by snakes. The population of places didn't kill all the poisonous snakes yet. And so Luke apparently wants us to understand that this particular snake was poisonous.

Let's get back to the issue of worldview. What would our worldview be of what happened to the apostle Paul? What would a Westerner using a Western worldview say about a person who was shipwrecked and narrowly escapes drowning, swimming ashore, who gathers wood, but gets bitten by a poisonous snake all in the same day?

Well, based on our assumptions of the way the world works, we might say what an unfortunate tragedy; what unusually bad luck. We in the West attribute almost all of life's events, whether good or bad, but particularly bad to chance, to happenstance, to luck, to what we call accidents, to an unfortunate coincidence of various forces with no rhythm or reason. Paul was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. That is how we explain tragedy.

But look at the very different worldview that the residents of Malta had. V. 4, "When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, 'This man must be a murderer, for though he escaped the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.'" The Maltese looked at the snake hanging from Paul's hand and they didn't draw the conclusion that he was unlucky, tragic or unfortunate in circumstance. They said instead that this was plainly the will of the gods. He obviously must have been a murderer, but the gods are going to make him pay for his evil deeds. Fate has caught up with him.

We have our view and their view, but what is the true view here? The true Biblical view, if you will, of tragedy is not that tragedy is simply the result of random accidents and unfortunate coincidences. The truth is not that tragedy is simply the result of autonomous men and women who are operating totally free from God's control doing whatever they want.

The true view is not that the gods are angry or that you are subject to some fate or fatalism. The true view is that behind every tragedy, every pain, every so-called accident, and every unexplained event – behind all of this is the overriding control of God. That is what Luke intends us to see.

There is a letter written by a woman named Sarah Edwards that I read before on a couple of occasions. She was married to, perhaps, the greatest theologian in American history, bar none – a man by the name of Jonathan Edwards. One of the most brilliant people that America has ever produced, many of you have never heard of him. He lived back in the 1700's. He was a pastor and a great writer. Sarah Edwards had a wonderful marriage with her husband, John. Along with being a brilliant theologian and pastor and writer, he was a great father and husband. Talk about something to shoot for as a Christian leader. Great ministry, but also a great family life.

Well, Jonathan was appointed to the presidency of Princeton University and about a week or two after he was appointed, Jonathan Edwards took a small pox vaccine, which in those days was not perfected. And this vaccine ended up giving him small pox, from which he rapidly declined and was dying.

On the eve of his death, he turned to his younger daughter, Lucy, and he said, "Dear Lucy, it seems to me to be the will of God that I must shortly leave you. Give my kindest love to my dear wife and tell her that the uncommon union which is so long subsisted between us has been of such a nature that I trust was spiritual and therefore will continue forever. And I hope she will be supported under so great a trial and submit cheerfully to the will of God. And as to my children, you are now likely to be left fatherless which I hope will be an inducement to you all to seek a Father who will never fail you."

Then he looked about and he said, "Now, where is Jesus of Nazareth, my true and never-failing friend?" He uttered a final sentence before he passed away, in which he called upon his daughter and a couple of friends who were standing around his bed. He said to them, "Trust in God and you need not ever fear."

When Sarah Edwards got the news that her husband, Jonathan, had died, she wrote a few brief lines to her daughter Esther that I love. They go this way:

"My dearest Esther, what shall I say? A Holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. Oh that we may kiss the rod and lay our hands on our mouths. The Lord has done it. He has made me adore his goodness that we had him so long, but my God lives and he has my heart. Oh what a legacy my husband and your father has left us. We are all given to God and there I am and there I love to be. Your affectionate mother, Sarah Edwards."

Let me ask you a personal question. How many of us believe we can die the way Jonathan Edwards died – with no sense of bitterness, or fear, or anxiety, but yielding himself to the will of God and trusting his wife and his soon to be fatherless children

to their one true Father in heaven. Even more, how many of you wives, how many of your husbands could possibly compose a letter like Sarah Edwards composed to her daughter a week after her beloved husband's death.

See it all comes down to worldview. What is happening to us and why is it happening? What is behind all these things? Why this tragedy? This hardship? This pain?

There is a great old hymn called "Praise to the Lord the Almighty." It goes this way,

Praise to the Lord who o'er all things so wondrously reignth

Shelters thee under his wings, yea so gently sustainth.

Hast thou not seen how thy desires have been

Granted in what he ordainth.

Luke clearly wants to communicate to us through the shipwreck, through the stupidity and sinfulness of the sailors who sailed with Paul, through the snake bite by the viper, the overriding control of God despite everything. That behind it all and above it all is God.

Friends, that is your worldview. Do you look at life and say, "This is the Lord? The Lord has done this. I may not know why. I may not understand, but I know that my God is good." How many of us who suffer from continual anxiety, how many of us who are racked by sleeplessness and worry, how many of us who lack peace and who struggle with bitterness over what life has handed us, how many of us would benefit from a true worldview of Almighty God sovereignly in control.

Praise to the Lord, the hymn writer says, in all things—car accidents, birth defects, premature deaths, earthquakes, unfair treatment by bosses and by ex-spouses – praise to the Lord who o’er all things so wondrously reignth. Is that your conviction and your belief? It is a biblical worldview.

And what about triumphs, not just tragedies. In v. 5 it says, “But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.” Here is a poisonous snake. It bites Paul and nothing happens. What would we conclude in the Western world based on our worldview and our assumptions, the lens through which we look at life? What would we conclude?

Well, we would conclude that this was a non-poisonous species. That it looked like the poisonous variety, but we must have been mistaken. Or that it was a poisonous snake, but it must have bitten something else like a pig and lost its venom and didn’t have an opportunity to recharge its fangs. Or it must have been an old snake that had seen better days and didn’t have a bite left. Or, perhaps, it wasn’t the snake’s fault, but something in Paul’s body chemistry, he is one of those one in a million people with an unusual immune system who we ought to study because of his genetic makeup.

What did the Maltese people think? V. 6, “The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall over dead.” They understood cause and effect. They knew that when you were bitten by a poisonous snake you were going to swell up. They probably had watched people do this with the same snakes. They swell up and die. “After waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a God.”

I love that verse. The islanders based on their worldview, their set of assumptions, and the lens through which they looked at life, thought that the gods came down. We heard about this in all of our ancient Greek myths. We have heard about Zeus and Hermes coming down to visit people. That is probably that religious thing – it makes sense to us.

Luke's understanding? Clearly Luke intends us to understand that Paul was supernaturally protected by the direct intervention of God. That what happened here was not the result of an old snake, or the non-poisonous variety, or Paul having a great immune system.

It is apparent that Luke and the Bible doesn't want us to attribute all of our success on our own brilliance, on our own strength, our own godliness, our own strategies. Again, from that old hymn, Praise to the Lord the Almighty:

Praise to the Lord who doth prosper they work and defend thee

Surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee

Ponder anew, what the Almighty can do

If with his love he befriends thee?

Why is it that some of you are prospering in your jobs and others prospering in your marriages or in new relationships? Why are some of you well and healthy and your children healthy? Why are some of you prospering in your relationship with God? In your ministries? Praise to the Lord who doth prosper they work and defend thee. The reason is because his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.

Personal question: Do you take time out daily to survey the various areas of your life that are prospering, that are going well, to respond back to God with gratitude?

While I was in England, I mentioned that I had the opportunity to do a conference in the West country where I was responsible for the Bible teachings each morning. One evening, I heard a marvelous speaker from England who visited Nigeria where there has been a massive revival of Christianity over the last 20 years attended with signs and wonders. And the speaker said that he was watching God touch people miraculously in this huge crowd. He asked God what was the difference between here and back home in England. Why am I seeing so many miracles and people getting healed and delivered when back home I see so little? I am the same person. I am praying the same prayers.

He said clear as a bell, he felt God say to him, "Because these people are grateful. Because they attribute to me the triumphs in their lives. The best that these people have was worse than the worst that I have. And the worst that they had was positively appalling and yet, in all things, they had learned to be thankful.

Tragedy and triumph, praise to the Lord the Almighty, King of Creation.

So what is our problem with the supernatural? Our problem is a worldview problem. The reigning assumptions that we have about life are hostile to our ability to receive healing or to hear from God or to prophesy or to deliver someone of a demon or to receive answers to prayer. What is our problem in embracing the supernatural? It is our worldview.

And what is our worldview, quickly?

We are, firstly, deists. Most people in the church today, especially in that conservative evangelical portion of the church, are deistic. Deists, going back to the 17th Century Enlightenment, believe that God created in such a way that precludes

him from getting involved in the day-to-day management of world events. God, for most people, is reduced to a first cause. He is the cosmic clockmaker. He wound up the world and then let it go and he doesn't intervene very much today. He's not involved in baby's births or marriage decisions or deaths of loved ones.

But if you read the Bible, God is constantly intervening, giving people guidance through prophecy, dreams, and pillars of fire and angelic visitations. He is upholding the world, sustaining all things, it says in the book of Hebrews 1:3, by his powerful word. That is what keeps things from flying apart – the powerful Word of God.

But we are primarily deists. We think God started things and then everything else that happened is the result of nature and chance and accidents and people's free will. We don't see the world the way the Bible writers did that in God we live and move and have our being. That we are walking through the beam of God of each day. In him we live and move and have our being it says in Acts 17.

We are not only deists, but many Christians are naturalists as a result of the Enlightenment. We have been taught to interpret the world naturalistically. That means that we believe that the natural universe, the universe of matter and energy, contains everything that is really real.

Now, Christians would say that they don't doubt the existence of angels or demons or God, but angels and demons and even God at times is less real than the chair you are sitting on or this podium. I remember talking with my father who is a naturalist by his worldview and assumptions. I was talking with him about God and about God being real. My father at one point in frustration with me and

exasperation pounded the table and said, “I will tell you what is real, Richie, a car is real.”

So for many of us when we hear about a healing, it has an unreal feel to it. As a result of prayer this person was healed? I don’t know. We might be too polite to suggest that the person is unbalanced. We might be too polite to suggest that the person may not be completely well yet. They ought to go in for a set of medical tests. But most of us are naturalists by virtue of the prejudices of our culture. We think that the invisible world is far less real than the visible.

The Bible doesn’t think so. The Bible says that the world and its lusts are passing away.

Then we are not only deists and naturalists, but we are also rationalists. The way that the world is to be approached accurately is only through our reason and intellect. Many Christians, especially of the conservative evangelical stripe, have a very low view and value of emotion and intuition. Who says that the only way that God could communicate with a person is through their intellect? Where does it say in the Bible that your intellect is the highest of your faculties? God communicates with the whole of us—body, soul and spirit. Who says emotion is a bad thing? The Bible doesn’t. The people in the Bible are so much better integrated than we are. They had no problem with joy or tears or feelings of compassion or pity or awe or overwhelming gratitude that reduces a person to lying at the feet of Jesus and being reduced to tears. God is shown to have emotions – infinitely perfect emotions of love and pity, anger and kindness.

Here is the deal, friends. For the many of us who struggle with being able to move forward, even a little in terms of our faith in prayer for the sick or our belief that indeed there is such a thing as spiritual warfare – that all the battles of life are not just flesh and blood, but that there are demonic powers arrayed against us. For the many of us who struggle with belief in the prophetic, in hearing God’s voice, the primary issue is worldview. We do not look at life through biblical lenses. We think we do, but we don’t. We are deistic. We are naturalistic. We are rationalistic.

So how do we change?

I have listed on your outlines some tips for changing your worldview. Firstly, you need to recognize that you do have a worldview. You know, all of us have a set of assumptions through which we look at life, the Bible and God. Before our vision can be corrected, we have to understand that we do look at life through a set of lenses that distorts things.

And then we can expose ourselves to worldviews that are different from ours. One of the wonderfully enlightening experiences for Christians is to participate in a short-term missions trip. There is nothing so life changing as investing in a short-term mission trip. You have been hearing about missions the last few weeks at church. But you become immediately aware of the fact that people don’t universally look at life the same way that we in America do. That people look at families differently than we do. They look at the relationship between men and women differently. Sexuality, possessions, hospitality, God, demons, healing—all of it differently than we would. Short-term missions or involvement with internationals

through the ministry of IFI that you have heard about is a great way to become aware of the fact that you have a worldview.

Third, test your worldview by the Word of God. We have lots of assumptions about how life works that are different than what the Bible suggests. I mentioned one big one today – the control of God over all of life. It is an assumption that is virtually gone from the Western mind and American mind. I meet very few Christians who operate from a regular base of God's sovereignty. We need to test our worldviews in the light of Scripture.

Do people in the Bible receive guidance other than by weighing the pros and cons? Does God speak in the Bible? Do healings occur in the Bible on a regular basis other than through the use of medicine?

And understand that the great theologians of the past and the people who started the churches that many of you came from, including this church, were not free from their cultural biases. Our great heroes were wrong in places. We have to constantly test worldviews by God's Word.

A fourth way to change our worldview is to particularly spend time in the gospels. There are a lot of folks who spend time their reading time either in the Psalms or in Paul's letters, especially, again, in conservative evangelical churches. Spend time reading the gospels and study Jesus' ministry. Soak yourself in the book of Acts.

Five – Find people whose ministry and style you want to imitate and get close to them. Whatever your background and tradition, you can find some bridge people who you can identify with. Join their groups and ask them on Sunday mornings if

you can go up and pray with them. Say, “I want to grow in some of these supernatural dimensions of the Christian life. I want to see God work.”

Six is particularly helpful if you can pair up with someone. Jesus sent people out two by two. There is this learning environment as two of you commit together to learn how to hear God’s voice, pray for the sick or cast out a demon. If you are married, maybe you can team up with your spouse. What a novel idea. You mean a marriage could actually be a ministry team?

Seventh, practice! Practice! Practice. Worldview is not simply changed by simply adjusting a few intellectual parts of our brains. Worldviews are much more stubborn than that. You haven’t changed a worldview because you are aware that you are a deist and have now decided to change your mind about that. Worldviews are very stubborn assumptions and are hard to change.

I have talked with lots of folks who say, “I feel like in terms of the supernatural, I take three steps forward and two steps back.” Worldviews and cultural conditioning is hard to change. So you need to lean in and practice, practice, practice.

Listen: it is the heart of God to do in our day what we read in the pages of scripture. The kingdom of God broke in, in the ministry of Christ. His kindness and His power goes beyond what most of us have experienced. Let’s together try to take off our American/Western lenses and put on a trust fully in Christ.

Sermon—August 21-22, 1999
Rich Nathan
Powerful Encounters in the Book of Acts
Acts 28:1-8

How To Embrace the Supernatural

- I. The Effect of Our Worldview
 - A. On Tragedies (Acts 28:1-4)
 - 1. Their View
 - 2. Our View
 - 3. The Biblical View
 - B. On Triumphs (Acts 28:5-6)
 - 1. Their View
 - 2. Our View
 - 3. The Biblical View
- II. The Reigning Worldviews
 - A. Deism
 - B. Naturalism
 - C. Rationalism
- III. The Way to Change Your Worldview
 - A. Recognize that You Have a Worldview
 - B. Expose Yourself to Different Worldviews
 - C. Test Your Worldview by the Bible
 - D. Spend Time in the Gospels
 - E. Find People Who are a Step Ahead

F. Pair Up with Someone

G. Practice! Practice! Practice!