

The Word and Power Church Reading Report
Brooke Witterman

In the book, *The Word and Power Church*, written by Doug Banister's primary assertion is that we need an emphasis on both God's "Word" and the Holy Spirit's "Power" in our churches. If we just have one and not the other, we are missing out on what God intended for believers to have a full and abundant life. Banister has a regular rhythm, despite the busyness of his life, of spending each Thursday alone, engaging in both prayer and fasting. The location where he does this sits at the confluence of two rivers. On one particular day, Banister, had the thought that God was saying to him that this was a picture of what He intended the church to be. His presupposition is that when the "Word" churches and the "Power" churches come together, like the two rivers, they will be a mighty force that cannot be stopped.

This book began to explain the theological background of how these two types of churches were both founded on the same foundational beliefs. He explained where the split began to take place and just how ugly it got between the evangelicals and charismatics. In Chapter 5, Banister mentioned that there are 5 main building blocks of the evangelical church. He said, "These five building blocks—expository preaching, the authority of Scripture, the mystery of the kingdom, spiritual growth as a process, and spiritual renewal through small groups—are the legacy of the evangelical church."¹ In the next chapter he talked about the legacy of the charismatics and says their five main building blocks are an emphasis on prayer, a hopeful affirmation that the kingdom is here in part, a belief that God speaks today, an emphasis on participatory worship, and a belief that the Spirit's charismatic gifts can be best experienced in the context of relationships.²

For me, this book was a complete gift to be able to read at this exact time in my own life and in the life of our church community. I attend the Gospel Tabernacle Alliance Church and our community has gone from a "Word" church for many years to a church that about 10 years ago began to experience revival. We began to see God move in "Power" in ways I had never seen before. In fact, these were ways that I had been taught were dead and did not happen since the apostle's deaths and after the final canon of Scripture was completed.

Prayer came alive, we believed for and began to see healings, God began to speak prophetically, demons were

¹ Doug Banister, *The Word and Power Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1999), i books 124

² Banister, *The Word and Power Church*, i books 167-168

cast out and so much more. For my husband and I, we had to either call those in our movement liars or believe that what was happening was true and seek for ourselves. We chose to dig deep and ask God to show us what he was doing in our midst. God confirmed this renewal in Michael and me as He spoke that our decision to stay was for us and for generations to come.

As I reflect on our movement, I can see that when God began to move in power there was a tearing down of all that had been comfortable and traditional. I have thought of this process it reminded me of a pendulum. I think we swung from a “Word Church” to more of a “Power Church.” Now, through the Spirit, it has stirred up in us a reminder that we need to bring the two together, and in the merging, God’s church will be unstoppable. Our church has been raised back up in this new season to be an entirely new community built on apostolic leadership coupled with prophetic voices. The evangelists have been bringing in the lost and the pastors have been shepherding the flock. It has been such an incredible time but I have a strong sense that it’s now time for our teachers to rise up and bring back a stronger emphasis on the “Word”. We know the Bible is the main way that God speaks to his children every day. We need our people grounded in the Word. Many need to realize that you cannot go from one spiritual high to another, always looking for God to show up in the miraculous. We need the discipline to be instilled again or taught for the first time of digging deep into Scripture, learning the discipline of studying Scripture for ourselves, and moving deeper into the 5 areas of emphasis of the evangelical church.

Banister’s book gave language and background to what I have found to work best in the merging of “Word” and “Power.” I can see that too much emphasis on “Word” or “Power” alone leaves a person or church both incomplete and anemic. For me, as I have seen the “Word” and “Power” join, I have never seen anything look more like the Gospels nor have I seen the power of the Gospel change lives in such a radical way. Banister’s book was just a confirmation that we are right where God wants us to be as a family and a church community. Banister ends with this: “Whenever two rivers flow into one, there is turbulence. Merging the mighty waters of the evangelical and charismatic traditions is not easy, but it can be done.”³

³ Banister, *The Word and Power Church*, i books 168

Bibliography

Bannister, Doug. *The Word and Power Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Books, 1999.

With integrity, I have read this book (circle one):

Thoroughly and Entirely__100__% (so thankful I had to read and have asked our key leaders and many in my life to read as well)

Quickly but Completely____%

Thoroughly but NOT Entirely____%
Quickly and NOT Completely____%

Not at all

Signed: _____ Brooke Witterman _____