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What is the Toronto Blessing?



Question: "What is the Toronto Blessing?"

Answer: The Toronto Blessing is a supposed outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship Church, formerly the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church. On January 20, 1994, a Pentecostal pastor named Randy Clark spoke at the church and gave his testimony of how he would get [“drunk” in the Spirit](#) and laugh uncontrollably. In response to this testimony, the congregation erupted in pandemonium

with people laughing, growling, dancing, shaking, barking like dogs, and even being stuck in positions of paralysis. These experiences were attributed to the Holy Spirit entering people's bodies. The pastor of the church, John Arnott, referred to it as a big Holy Spirit party. The moniker "Toronto Blessing" was given, and the church was soon in the international spotlight.

When this "blessing" is held to the light of Scripture, however, it can scarcely be called such. Absolutely nowhere in Scripture can one find a precedent for what was happening at the Toronto Airport church. The nearest that Scripture comes to describing the paralysis and bizarre behavior prompted by the Toronto Blessing are its documented effects of demonic possession (see [Mark 9:18](#)).

The Toronto Airport church became known for its congregants' emotional outbursts and odd psychological displays. Pastor Arnott began focusing almost exclusively on "the party of the Holy Spirit." Experiences were being held in higher esteem than Scripture. This was even too much for the extremely charismatic [Vineyard Movement](#), which severed ties with their Toronto Airport church in 1995, prompting the name change to Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship.

A believer's focus needs to be Jesus Christ, the "author and perfecter of our faith" ([Hebrews 12:2](#)), not on oneself, one's experiences, or even the Holy Spirit. The Toronto Blessing focuses on the last, to the detriment of biblical faith. Believers can have fun, dance, sing, and even shout to the Lord. However, when a worship service becomes a free-for-all of fits, seizures, and uncontrolled outbursts—all attributed to the Holy Spirit—something is wrong. The church should be characterized by adherence to the Word of God ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)), rejoicing ([Philippians 4:4](#)), and "reasonableness . . . known to everyone" ([Philippians 4:5, ESV](#)).

Recommended Resource: [Counterfeit Revival by Hank Hanegraaff](#)

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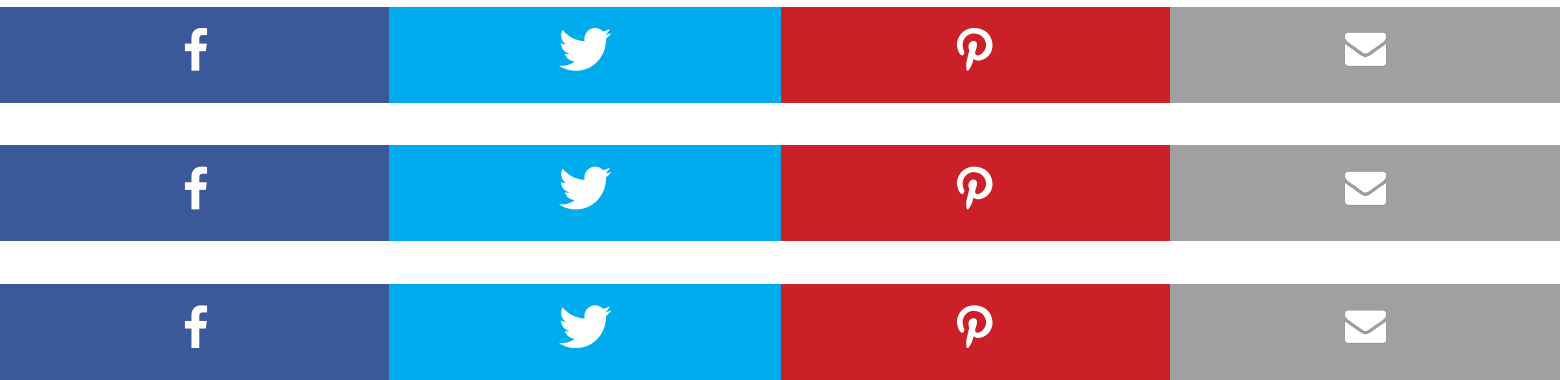
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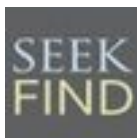
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