

Zuko Explains – Word of Faith (WoF) Movement

Preamble: The author believes that God still speaks and acts today — including tongues, prophecy, healing, dreams and signs. Some of these have been personally experienced and medically confirmed. This article is not an attack on individuals but an examination of doctrines and practices in the Word of Faith (WoF) movement. It is not labelling every WoF church as a “cult” in the modern sense, but it does show how some expressions fit the historical meaning of the word and can drift towards unhealthy patterns. Not every congregation has all of these elements, but this handout looks at the “pure form” or “perfect storm” so that you can recognise dangers and carefully guard your walk with Jesus. One degree off can still leave you lost.

The Word of Faith movement teaches that believers can shape reality by positive confession, faith declarations and spiritual laws. It strongly emphasises guaranteed healing, guaranteed prosperity and modern “prophets”. Many followers genuinely love Jesus, but the system introduces serious departures from biblical Christianity — especially around Jesus Himself, the Holy Spirit, suffering and the nature of faith.

1. What Word of Faith Teaches

Common themes in WoF teaching:

- Positive confession — your spoken words create or cancel spiritual outcomes.
- Guaranteed healing — all sickness is from Satan; God always heals if you have enough faith.
- Guaranteed prosperity — poverty is a curse; financial success is a faith result.
- Faith laws — the universe operates by spiritual laws you must learn and apply.
- Sowing and reaping — financial giving guarantees multiplied financial blessing.
- “Little gods” ideas — humans share God’s creative authority with their words.
- Modern prophets — prophetic words treated as fresh revelation alongside Scripture.

The result is a very experiential, technique-driven spirituality where outcomes can feel dependent on your performance, rather than on God’s sovereignty and grace.

2. How WoF Diminishes Christ

In some WoF teaching, focus shifts from who Jesus is (fully God and fully man) to how He supposedly used “faith laws”.

- “Jesus emptied Himself of divinity” — taught as if He stopped being fully God during His ministry, rather than taking on human nature. Scripture: Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.
- “Jesus died spiritually (JDS)” — Jesus is said to have taken Satan’s nature in hell and to have been “born again” there. Scripture instead stresses His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross: John 10:17–18; John 19:30; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 10:10–14; Luke 23:46.

- Jesus as faith technician — Jesus becomes mainly a model of how to work faith principles, instead of the Lord who commands creation.

These ideas weaken the honour, deity and finished work of Christ.

3. The Holy Spirit in WoF Teaching

3a. How WoF Diminishes the Holy Spirit

Rather than treating the Holy Spirit as a sovereign divine Person, WoF language often makes Him sound like a force they can activate.

- The Spirit described as a power to activate, instead of a Person to obey.
- Human declarations portrayed as overriding God's timing or will ("speak it into existence").
- Prophetic words treated as a higher or equal authority to Scripture.

Biblically, the Spirit is fully God and directs believers (John 14:16–17; John 16:13–14; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 12:11). He leads; we follow.

3b. WoF and Tongues – A Two-Tier Christianity?

A common pattern is a felt split between:

- Tongue-speaking Christians — seen as powerful, Spirit-filled and victorious.
- Non-tongue speakers — seen as weaker, or as missing a vital experience.

Why this is unbiblical:

- Not all Christians speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:29–30).
- The Spirit gives gifts as He wills, not as we "activate" them (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- There is one body, not two classes (Ephesians 4:4–6; Romans 12:4–6).
- Maturity is measured by love, not tongues (1 Corinthians 13:1).
- All believers are called to "pray in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18), which must mean more than tongues because not all speak in tongues and sometimes tongues must be silent (1 Corinthians 14:27–28).

"Praying in the Spirit" is praying under His influence, aligned with Scripture and God's will, whether silently, aloud, in worship, intercession, lament, thanksgiving or tongues when appropriate. It is not a technique we work up.

3c. Baptism of the Holy Spirit – Salvation or Second Blessing?

In the New Testament, baptism in the Holy Spirit is tied to salvation itself. All believers are baptised by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). At Pentecost, Peter promised that those who repent and are baptised will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39).

The main evidence of the Spirit is transformed character (Galatians 5:22–23) and obedience to Jesus, not one particular gift. Tongues cannot be turned into a “second level” that divides Christians into first-class and second-class believers.

3d. Generational Curses & Possession

Some deliverance teaching claims Christians must break “generational curses” to be free from family sins, sickness or demons. Old Testament language about God visiting the sins of the fathers (Exodus 20:5; 34:7) is used to support this.

But Ezekiel 18:1–4, 19–20 makes clear that each person is responsible for their own sin. In Christ, believers are moved from darkness to light (Colossians 1:13), made new (2 Corinthians 5:17), forgiven (Colossians 2:13–14) and sealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14). No curse has legal authority over someone who belongs to Jesus.

Families can still pass on habits, trauma and patterns of sin, but these are discipleship and pastoral issues, not chains that need a ritual to break. The New Testament calls believers to repentance, renewing the mind (Romans 12:2), resisting the devil (James 4:7) and walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–25).

Jesus described Himself as the stronger one who overcomes the strong man and plunders his house (Luke 11:21–22). To suggest that demons and curses still own a believer is to weaken confidence in the finished work of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

Why “Deliverance” Sometimes Seems to Work: Sometimes people genuinely feel lighter, freer or more hopeful after a “deliverance” session. This does not automatically mean a demon was cast out. Often the change comes because someone has finally listened, prayed with them and helped them name their struggle out loud. The shift can come from courage — courage to face grief, trauma, fear, guilt or long-avoided decisions. Psychologists call this the placebo effect, but in pastoral care it is often the moment a person feels safe enough to be honest and to take the first step towards healing. God meets people in their honesty, not in theatrics. A compassionate environment can help someone grow even if the theology behind the “deliverance” was confused. We still have a good, good Father who wants the best for His children. In Jesus we can have life, and life in abundance.

4. WoF and Works-Righteousness

WoF seems to focus on faith, but often turns faith into a kind of work:

- Using the right “faith formulas”.
- Maintaining constant positive confession.
- Giving money to unlock blessing.
- Visualising and holding total certainty.

When healing or prosperity do not appear, blame is often placed on the believer:

- Not enough faith.
- Negative words.

- Hidden sin.
- Not enough sowing.
- Un-broken generational curses.

This turns the Christian life into a performance system rather than life under grace. The New Testament instead prepares us to expect trials and suffering (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12–13). God uses suffering to grow perseverance, character and hope (Romans 5:3–5; James 1:2–4; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10). Not every sickness is removed in this age, but God walks with His people and will one day remove all pain and death in the resurrection.

“By His Stripes You Were Healed” – What Does It Mean?

Two verses are often quoted to claim automatic physical healing for every believer: Isaiah 53:5 (“by His stripes we are healed”) and 1 Peter 2:24 (“by His wounds you were healed”).

In context, both passages focus on sin, transgression, iniquity and being restored to right standing with God. 1 Peter 2:24 clearly links the healing to “dying to sin and living to righteousness”. Peter is interpreting Isaiah and applying it to atonement, not promising that all disease will disappear in this life.

God is still able to heal physically, and sometimes does. But these two verses cannot honestly be used as a blanket promise that no believer will remain sick. They are primarily about the healing of our relationship with God through the Cross.

5. Why Christians Are Concerned

- Scripture can be sidelined by modern prophecy and “spiritual laws”.
- Suffering is often denied or blamed on the believer, despite strong New Testament teaching.
- Believers can carry crushing guilt when prayers are not answered as hoped.
- Leaders may gain high authority with little accountability.
- False hope can lead to deep disillusionment when promised healing or prosperity does not arrive.

The Bible calls us to trust God’s sovereignty, not to manipulate Him (Philippians 4:11–13; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

6. Control, Manipulation & Misuse of “Spirits”

Not every WoF or Charismatic congregation acts this way, but some drift into control, power imbalance and spiritual manipulation.

Common unhealthy patterns:

- Questioning leaders is discouraged and labelled as dishonour or rebellion.
- Leaders presented as spiritual gatekeepers to God’s power or blessing.
- Exclusivity — “we have the real revelation”.

- Fear-based loyalty — warned that leaving the group brings judgement or danger (“covering” language is often used here).
- Isolation from “negative” outsiders, including family.

Labels such as “spirit of religion” or “Jezebel spirit” are sometimes used to shut down honest questions. This can replace genuine discernment with spiritual name-calling.

The New Testament instead calls believers to test spirits (1 John 4:1), weigh prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:29), be noble Bereans who examine Scripture (Acts 17:11), and hold leaders accountable (1 Timothy 5:19–21). Healthy churches welcome questions and let Scripture correct them.

7. Pastoral Guidance – How to Help Someone in WoF

- Be gentle and patient — many are sincere and often hurting.
- Affirm their desire to see God move, but keep bringing them back to Scripture in context. Remind them of Paul’s warning: “Do not go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6).
- If they argue, “It works, so it must be right,” gently point to the biblical tests of prophets (Deuteronomy 18:21–22 and 13:1–5) and loyalty to the real Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Explain suffering biblically — hardship is not proof of unbelief; God often grows us through it.
- Show the security of God’s sovereignty instead of the anxiety of technique and performance.
- Encourage Self-Discovery Bible Study (SOS) — reading whole passages carefully, in context, and letting Scripture shape beliefs.

Above all, present Jesus as sufficient, sovereign, compassionate and fully God.