

## Does Your Church Handle Snakes?

QUESTION: I've seen videos and heard people say Pentecostal Churches handle snakes?

TWO WORD ANSWER: **ABSOLUTELY NOT!**

Churches like that are in a tiny minority of Pentecostal Churches.

Snake handling is based on a misinterpretation of Mark 16:17-18

*17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*

*18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

Mark 16:17-18 KJV

A good example of this scripture being fulfilled is in Acts 28:3-7

*3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.*

*4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.*

*5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.*

*6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.*

*7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.*

Acts 28:3-7 KJV

The fact of the matter is that Paul innocently was bitten by a snake, and the power of the Spirit protected him by letting him suffer no ill effects.

This is a far cry from intentionally handling poisonous snakes to test ones "faith"!

The practice of handling snakes for the purpose of "proving" one's faith (or proving God's protection) is a violation of God's command not to put Him to the test:

*"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'"* (Matthew 4:7; cf. Deuteronomy 6:16).

Trying to force God's hand by requiring that He perform an obvious miracle is more than foolish; it is sinful.

To test God's presence and power by purposely placing oneself in an unsafe situation is expressly forbidden in Scripture.

Daniel did not seek out the lions, but when he found himself surrounded by them, through no fault of his own, he found God was there.

Likewise, we trust God in dangerous situations, but we never purposely seek out danger.

So in the longer form this is the answer, we do not handle snakes.