

Does God's Presence Depend on Your Performance?

There are a myriad of "Christian" phrases that irk me. My top one is probably: "We just want to love on you." Anything with "love on" in the sentence just conjures up for me, images of a weird and slightly creepy game of "stacks on." (Clearly I attended church youth group in the '90s).

But the big one I'm really not coping with is "... and God showed up" or any variation of God "showing up."

The "love on" thing is harmless. God and the notion of Him showing up, is less so. Jesus gave a "heads up" to His disciples, confiding in them, comforting them of what was to come:

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:15-17, NIV).

God doesn't show up. He is. He just is, always present, "lives with you and will be in you," always close through The Holy Spirit, though not always overt. So why then do we think that we can just say a prayer and God appears, much like a genie from a rubbed lamp? For the record, I've tried the lamp/genie thing. Didn't work. Clearly I'm yet to find a magic lamp.

I'm learning what God has been showing me all along...

He is always there, since the veil was ripped in two, I can never be closer to Him than I am now, He waits for me to grasp hold of Him and choose to partner with Him. My "job" (and its a poor descriptive word, for it carries the connotation of

duty) is to invite Him into my thought process, my word process and my action process.

And yes, when we welcome Him, when we greet Him with a heart filled with expectation, amazing things happen! It seems as though He's "shown up." But the reality is that it is we who rocked up and finally decided to cast aside our ego, agenda, whatever it may be, and partner with Him.

Of course there are times in which He is silent with us, and I don't discount the pain and often sense of abandonment and despair that accompany these times of painful growth. Not every stage of our lives can be lived out in green pastures. To truly appreciate them, we must also often experience the shadow of death (Psalm 23).

But both these seasons are interconnected by the common thread of His presence, either overt or hidden. Not dependent on our perfectly worded prayers, pleas or praises, rubbing our genie lamps and asking Him to "show up."

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