

Recognizing His Presence

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. **—Ezekiel 2:1-2**

I think there is a sense in which we can define spirituality as the ability to close the time gap between the moment the Lord appears and our awareness that it is the Lord. Let me put it this way: Perhaps God spoke to you at a particular time or was present on a particular occasion. At the time, it didn't seem as if it was God who was doing the speaking or God who was present at all. What He was doing or what He said you underestimated, if not rejected. Only years later did it become clear to you that you had failed to recognize His presence.

Some of us may take less time to recognize God's presence—weeks or days; others may have it down to only minutes or seconds! So, when our initial feeling is to reject something, we find ourselves thinking instead, This may be the Lord.

Perhaps you can think of an experience when something came up that first you thought God simply wasn't in. Then later, like Jacob, you had to say, "The Lord was in this place. I didn't know it. I wasn't aware of it." (See Genesis 28:16.) Let's not think ourselves so spiritual that we are sure we couldn't possibly miss the Lord's presence. Our very biases may keep us from seeing the Lord when He appears.

Does God tell us what He's going to do? The answer would have to be—sometimes He does, sometimes He doesn't. But when the Lord does appear, we ought to be able to recognize Him. I would hate to think of the Lord appearing and my not knowing Him. I would love to think that the Holy Spirit within me would recognize the Holy Spirit within someone else; then, if

I am where God is at work, I could overrule my biases, my prejudices, and my instincts and see that this is God.

Excerpted from *When God Shows Up* (Renew Books, 1998).