

When Jesus Draws Near

Amazing things happen when the power of Christ shows up.  Are you available to be His vessel for miracles?

For at least 20 years, a driving force within me has been the conviction that I owe people an encounter with God. I believe I owe them more than just a message filled with truth. Whatever I do for people must contain the opportunity for them to have a divine encounter. If I am full of the Holy Spirit, then I will be more likely to bring people into such an encounter.

In part, that is what the apostle Paul meant when he stated: “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4, NKJV). People don’t need to be convinced of our insights or ability to convey truth. People need God.

God cannot be properly or even accurately represented without power. Miracles are absolutely necessary for people to see Him clearly because encountering His power is encountering Him.

Our greatest treasure is God Himself. Our greatest privilege is to manifest Him. The people of God around the world are crying out for Him to show up in a more significant way. It’s a healthy cry.

Tragically, history is filled with those who prayed that prayer for years without ever seeing a true visitation of God. Many of the respected books on revival were written by people who never took part in one.

Is it that hard to get God to show up? Jesus was born in a manger—He’s not that picky. The absence of His manifested presence has been attributed to His sovereignty. I think it’s unfair to sweep unfulfilled promises under “God’s sovereignty” and blame God or His “mysterious ways” for any lack we

experience.

The only time the disciples couldn't bring deliverance, they weren't content with the absence of a miracle (see Matt. 17:14-21). They believed God's sovereign will was for a miracle. And so, they asked Jesus.

He demonstrated how and then told them why, and the tormented child was set free. The lack is always on our end of the equation, not the Father's. His covenant is complete and effective for all.

God will allow us to carry as much of Jesus' presence as we're willing to jealously guard. Has it ever crossed our minds how much is available to us now? I think it hasn't.

Moses, who was not even "born again"—because Jesus had not yet died for our sins—carried a measure of Jesus' presence that is unusual for today. That shouldn't be. Inferior covenants should not provide superior blessings. The blood of Jesus gives us access to a far greater glory than was ever experienced by Moses (see 2 Cor. 3:7-11).

Knowing God

Our greatest responsibility as Jesus' church on earth is both to know Him and to make Him known. Knowing Him will be unfulfilled unless we embrace four mandates from heaven, priorities that affect thoughts, prayers and pursuits. They are both fruits and gifts—results of being in right standing with God and attainments received only through obedience.

Love. Though faith is what's required to please God (see Heb. 11:6), it is love that remains the greatest of all virtues (see 1 Cor. 13). Love never fails. It is perfect, totally unselfish to the point of the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus loved the world so much that He gave. Faith that works through love. So they remain the two absolutes that are the evidence of being a true believer.

Purity. The tragedy of sinfulness in the church has caused a domino effect outside the church. Holiness is the absolute evidence of the gospel's effect on a life. Without it, our good intentions collapse under the weight of God's purposes. He shakes whatever has faulty foundations. And sin is the weakest foundation. The call to disciple nations requires holiness.

Power. It is impossible to represent God without power. He is not an idea, a philosophy or creed. He is all-powerful God. And we have been selected as agents of His power, to confront and destroy the works of darkness in the same way Jesus did. Jesus is the clearest revelation of God on the earth. The Father wants that representation multiplied through us.

Glory. This is the manifested presence of Jesus—what radiates from the Father (see Heb. 1:3). When His glory comes into a room, there is little else one can do but worship. We must long for these times, pursue them and treasure them as they are available to us in increasing measures. Why is the glory so important? It is the realm of God we were created to live in.

Making God Known

Making Jesus known to a world crying out for Him means allowing Him to be known and seen through each of us. Releasing Jesus' presence, and thus the kingdom of God itself, is done through at least five activities:

Laying on of hands. This is a biblical mandate and one of the basic doctrines of Christ (see Heb. 6:1-2). Because the kingdom is within us, it is released through the touch of faith. It is an intentional act for healing, blessing or impartation (see Mark 16:18; 1 Tim. 4:14). It is the principle of touch and release.

Proximity to anointing. This principle worked through the

apostle Peter when the sick were healed by being placed in a location where his shadow would fall on them as he walked by. Jesus' garment fits into this category as well. He didn't purposefully lay His hands on the woman with the issue of blood, for example, or the multitudes (see Mark 6:56), yet they were healed. Even His clothing became saturated with God's miracle power. Physical location as it pertains to the anointing is crucial in releasing the kingdom.

Acts of faith. These release the kingdom, as faith requires an activity. This is one of the easiest principles to prove in Scripture. Jesus was often brought into an impossibility because of someone else's faith. Matthew 8:10 records that Jesus was stunned by the incredible level of faith in a high-ranking Roman soldier who was not a Jew. His faith caught Jesus completely off guard. I love the idea of having faith that grabs God's attention, drawing Him into a situation.

Prophetic acts. These are unusual because the action is not related to the desired outcome, as it is with an act of faith. For example, Elisha heard the cries of the sons of the prophets when they lost a borrowed axe head (see 2 Kings 6). It fell into the water. Elisha had them throw a stick into the water, and the axe head floated to the surface. It was an act of obedience—there was no logical connection between the act and the recovery of the axe head, yet without it there would have been no recovery. Physical obedience brings spiritual release.

The declaration. Nothing happens in the kingdom without a declaration. When we say what the Father is saying, all of heaven is brought into the equation. When that declaration is a "testimony," we capture the momentum of the history of God's dealings with mankind. Then a creative prophetic power is released to establish the revelation of God on the earth. It is imperative that we "declare His works." We are to burn with the conviction that we carry the revelation of God's nature and presence for all people to see.

Psalms 78 contains some of the most startling promises and warnings in the Bible about why the record of God's activities among men is not to be hidden or forgotten.

Israel, by not keeping the testimony of what God had done for them, ended up in the ultimate sin of unbelief. "In spite of [what He had done for them], they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works" (Ps. 78:32).

Many of us can remember stories of God's interventions, if asked. But few of us keep them at the forefront of our thinking and conversation.

Yet when we hold what is valuable to God in our hearts, we are prepared to believe when Jesus steps onto the scene. The testimony plays that role.

History Is Speaking

On July 17, 1859, the great preacher Charles Spurgeon spoke a prophetic message titled, "The Story of God's Mighty Acts," to the church of his day. In it, he declared a prophetic truth that had the power to shape the church culture until there was a full restoration of all that had been lost of God's historic interventions among humanity. Here is his prophetic cry:

"When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is: 'Oh, that was a very long while ago.'

"Has God changed? Is he not an immutable God—the same yesterday, today and forever? Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time He can do at another?

"I think I may push it a little further and say: What He has done once is a prophecy of what He intends to do again. Whatever God has done is to be looked upon as a precedent.

"[Let us] with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy His

grace as in the days of old.”

History tells us the church then did little with this truth, except perhaps to applaud another great sermon. We in our generation are being presented with a similar opportunity.

It is obvious that amazing things happen when the power of Christ shows up. Will you be available to become His vessel for miracles? Let’s not miss our own opportunity to see a full restoration of God’s works among humanity until Jesus is accurately re-presented and His glory fills the earth.

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