

When God Shows Up

✖ 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 even if God was present at all. You underestimated, if not rejected, what He did or what He said. Only years later did it become clear to you that you had failed to recognize His presence.

I remember many years ago, when Louise and I had moved away from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for only 18 months, we came back and found that Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church had been started. Before we went away, it had been a vacant lot with a big sign on it that read, "Future home of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church." That sign just stayed there month after month for a couple years. We wondered: *What is happening here? When will that church start?*

When we came back, the church had started, and it was the talk of the town. D. James Kennedy, who was the architect of what is now known as Evangelism Explosion, was using this evangelism method in Fort Lauderdale.

I have to say I was one of Kennedy's greatest critics. I thought that Evangelism Explosion (EE) was not of God. It took two to three

years for me to climb down and see that EE really was of God. But I couldn't see it at the time. I had theological biases; I had other instincts, and I went by them.

Perhaps you can think of a similar experience when something came up that at 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." 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.

Let's reflect on the possibility that God has appeared and we don't see Him, even though we may have been praying for Him to come. He answers our prayer but we can't believe it, either because our unbelief is too great or because our prejudices overrule our faith. Maybe the Lord appeared yesterday and we didn't realize it. Maybe He has answered prayer and we haven't recognized it.

Here are a few examples of failure to recognize the Lord's presence.

- *When we miss what God is doing in another person.* Eli misunderstood what was happening to Hannah (see 1 Sam. 1:12-13).

It is possible for someone who ministers to you in an official capacity not to recognize what God is doing in your life.

- *When we miss God's answer*

to our prayer and only later recognize His presence. Peter was in prison and the church was earnestly praying, but when he appeared at the door they didn't believe it (see Acts 12:13-17).

- *When we are dominated by fear even*

though God is all around us. Elisha's servant was terrified of the enemy chariots until he was able to see that the Lord's hosts were far greater (see 2 Kings 6:15-17). Perhaps you too are dominated by fear when the truth is that God is with you.

- *When we are disappointed by the word God gives us.*

Naaman, who suffered from leprosy, did not want to accept the word given by the prophet to wash in the Jordan seven times (see 2 Kings 5). It may be that God has given you a word and you don't like it. Accept what God has given you and who knows what will happen in the end (see Luke 16:10).

- *When we are*

blind to what God is doing strategically. Often when we see how things turn out, our immediate reaction is, "God can't be in this." God's Messiah—Isaiah's "root out of a dry ground"—ended up hanging on a cross. There was no hint at the time that this was God in Christ reconciling the world.

Looking

back at particular times in your life, you might say, "God was at work, and I

was not aware of it.” You may be going through a time of trial at this very moment. James says, “Consider it pure joy, my brethren, whenever you face trials of many kinds” (James 1:2, NIV). The trial you’re going through at this moment may be God’s hint that He’s there after all.

Adapted from *When God*

Shows Up by R.T. Kendall, copyright 2008, published by Charisma House. In this book, R.T. Kendall shares life-transforming principles he learned when He encountered God through the unexpected so that we can be prepared to recognize His presence when He shows up.

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