



5. Spirit Within, Breaking Out

His Presence is all around me

In May 2019, I conducted a workshop called *Are We There Yet*, where I encouraged the participants to imagine LifeLine Church in the future. How would you want to be known? The answers included – be relevant to the community, be a place where people belong. But one participant later remarked, “no one said they wanted us to be known for the presence of God”. This really stuck with me. I believe we are called to be ‘people of His presence’ but what does that actually mean?

When I started exploring what His presence means I realised I was really asking “What do we get from being in His presence”. As if the presence of God was reduced to a function. I had wanted to know the formula to conger up His presence and then use it as a tool. I then turned my focus to the joy of being in His presence. Want to be ‘in’ rather than get something ‘from’?

I began to become more aware of His presence. In normal, everyday life. We forget that He is with us. He is reading this article. He is listening to our conversations. He is with us...

HE IS HERE WITH US!

The one who slung the stars into the sky. The stars which humanity have gazed at since the beginning of time. The stars that have littered our songs, children’s nursery rhymes and poetry for millenia. He hung them there. That same ‘he’ is in this room now. That same ‘he’ has come close to us. That same ‘he’ cares for us. That same ‘he’ hung on a cross for you.

He is here now...

The reality is that God is already here, all the time. So perhaps God wants us to live in the good of this and to help bring shape to Him amongst us and reveal that He is already here.

There is always the danger we go through the motion of just singing songs during our times of worship. These lyrics by [Jesus Culture](#) (You Won’t Relent) caught my attention

*“Don’t want to talk about you like you are not in the room
I want to look right at you*

I want to sing right to you”

Rachel Turner (author of *Parenting for Faith*) liked to buckle the empty seat next to her when she was in the car to help her imagine that Jesus was really with her, and she would chat away to him as she drove.

In the comedy drama film *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*, Nick was there the whole time, but the rain revealed his outline. It enables Alice to look right into his eyes.



I want to look Jesus right in the eyes. What's the 'rain' that reveals the invisible? Perhaps our loving praise helps us become more aware of His presence? Our good friend **Terry King** said, **"worship makes one sensitive to the spiritual realm"**. **What causes me to 'awe' Him?** As I meditate on these things, I often become more aware of His presence.

His presence is in me

I have known the verses about God's spirit being inside us, but this was a very nebulous concept until something landed in Jan 2020. I was talking with a leader about this verse:

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke 24:36

We were trying to imagine what it might be like *if* God presented Himself in a secular work meeting. It suddenly occurred that God *had* presented Himself in that exact moment because the leader was in that meeting and God was in her. I realised I had never really appreciated what this meant before. This caused me to look at a bunch of verses in a new light.

God incarnates Himself in me

God in Jesus is the model of Christ in us

John 14:9

*Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. **Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.***

Just as God was incarnated in Jesus, Jesus is incarnated in us

John 14:18-20

¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

We should view the indwelling of the Spirit in us today as Mary experienced God placing His life (Jesus) inside her.

Luke 1:35

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child [the life in you] shall be called the Son of God.

Christ is in you

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

John 15:4, 14

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Col 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

2 Timothy 1:14

Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

Romans 8:9

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Rom 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

I love the way indwelling of the Spirit is described in the story of Gideon.

Judges 6:34

Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.



Lowell F. Johnson argues this verse literally means; the Spirit of God clothed Himself with Gideon. It describes a man putting on his clothes, or a warrior putting on a suit of armour. It's like putting on a glove. It could be paraphrased: "The Spirit of the Lord put Gideon on like a glove."

I have often thought of the Spirit as *my* accessory. That little boost to help me in my life. But this image flips the scenario to me being *His* accessory. This is a different balance of power in the partnership.

I also think of Aircraft Carriers. These mobile runways allow aeroplanes to strike at targets which are made accessible because of the location of the Carrier. The Spirit can 'strike' someone in my workplace or family because I'm already located there.



When my son, William, was very young I would be carrying him in my arms whilst doing jobs in the house. One time I was wiping the kitchen table when I heard a big crash. I turned to find one of the spice jars had fallen from the rack next to me. I was confused because I didn't think I had knocked it. Then I realised that the child in my arms was reaching out to touch things I didn't know were within range.

This is what the Holy Spirit is doing. He is reaching out from within me to touch things I wasn't even aware were there. The Spirit has a mind of His own. I can work with Him or against Him.

Working in Partnership with the Spirit

The bible is clear that the Spirit doesn't 'body-snatch'. He doesn't take control of us against our will. Instead, He leads us, we have to choose to keep in step.

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Gal 5:25*

God drops His spirit into us, which compels a response to come out of us (a little like the illustration of dropping mentos into a coke bottle). We find we have a deep desire to live according to His will. However, we still must make the choice to sacrifice our own will (when it's in conflict with His). We must collaborate with the Spirit.

God knew it wouldn't be enough to just give us instructions on how to live or an example of how to live (i.e., Jesus). He knew that both would be crushing. We couldn't live up to the standard.

The Spirit within enables me to meet the grade

Jesus didn't live His life to be an example that we are to try hard to emulate. Instead, he sent the Spirit to enable us to live like Jesus. He didn't just give us a signpost to point the way, but He comes as a guide to walk the journey with us. God's chosen way to show what He is like in this world (to fill the earth with His glory) is to do it through us.

Think of a drummer: If I was given instructions of which drum/cymbal to hit at what time I would make a complete mess of it. But what if my instructor was wearing my clothes with me and drummed through me? He could do things I couldn't. Of course, as mentioned above, the Spirit doesn't body-snatch. I can choose to resist (or grieve) the Spirit. In this illustration, if I hold my arms back, the instructor can't reach the drum because our arms are in the same sleeve. But when I have a glimpse of Him, I see His love for me, I delight in Him and wouldn't want to resist.



**I couldn't meet God's standard, but Jesus met them for me.
I can't live my life according to His will, but the Spirit is enabling me to.**

The Spirit is up to the same old tricks!

Right from the beginning of time, the Spirit was involved in creation (Gen 1:2). He participated in the formation of a reality which glorified God (i.e., put God's attributes on display). The Spirit has never stopped bringing order to chaos.

Two thousand years ago the Spirit enabled Jesus to stand up in a boat and calm a storm. Two thousand years later the same Spirit enabled a lady in our church to stand up and bring calm in a foster carer's home where there was a different type of storm.

When I meet a colleague at the water cooler, I can expect the same Spirit which was in Jesus when He spoke and transformed the life of the woman at the well, to be present and able to breakout from within me and touch my colleague's life to the same extent.

We are filled with the same Spirit! He is up to the same tricks! I'm not just a symbol of Him, I am *actually* carrying Him. He is wearing me like a glove.

What does this actually mean?

I will, at times, come to the end of myself. I have run out of energy or patience. But then I find a 'second wind', a new lease of life, to go further. This is the Spirit within me, breaking out. Or perhaps I have a conversation, or I see someone, and they stay in my mind afterwards. I find new thoughts forming for this person, often accompanied with a growing love. This is the Spirit, up to the same old tricks. Other times I find I have a courage or resilience to things that I usually wouldn't have the stomach for. This is the Spirit, wearing me like a glove.

Our friend Bernard Sanders told us this little story - A few weeks after Jesus ascended back into heaven, Satan is in hell with a throbbing headache. He summons a chief demon and demands to know what this ridiculously loud noise is, coming from above them. The demon goes to inspect. When he returns, he says "you know the Son of Man, the one who crushed your head? He's just gone and multiplied Himself!".

It was the day of Pentecost. The same Spirit that was in Jesus has taken up residence in all of Jesus' followers.