

We Must Be a People Marked by the Presence of God

by Michael L. Brown

We must be a people marked by the presence of God, distinguished from the world, and prioritizing encountering God in our lives.

Duration: 31:30

Scripture: Exodus 33:12, Psalm 68:1, Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:48, Acts 1:4, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Gods Presence", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of experiencing the power of God rather than relying on human wisdom. He encourages the congregation to hunger for the power of the gospel and to come together with anticipation and expectation of encountering God. The speaker shares a personal experience of being stirred by a worship video and highlights the miracle of the gospel, which allows believers to experience God's presence in their everyday lives. He challenges the listeners to pay the personal price of denying themselves and seeking God's face, as well as making a corporate effort to encourage one another in pursuing God.

Transcript

Thank you, Father. Thank you, Father. Father, we desire You.

Our hearts hunger for You. These are not empty words. From our heart, we ask You to speak to us, and meet us, and visit us, and touch us, and change us, so we can go out of here and touch and change our world.

Help us, Lord, not to be hearers only, and so deceive ourselves, but help us to be doers of Your Word. May these words come now in the life and power of Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I want to read a few passages beginning in Exodus 33, that was actually quoted when Wade prayed over the communion bread. Exodus 33, we must be a people marked by the presence of God. We must be a people marked by the very real, tangible presence of God.

We are to be as different from the world as light is from darkness. A famous passage in Exodus 33, as Moses is interceding after the Israelites have worshipped an idol, as Moses is on the mountain meeting with God. Verse 12, Moses said to the Lord, You've been telling me to lead these people, but You've not

let me know whom You'll send with me.

You've said, I know You by name, and You've found favor with me. If You are pleased with me, teach me Your ways, so I may know You and continue to find favor with You. Remember that this nation is Your people.

The Lord replied, My presence will go with You, and I'll give You rest. And Moses said to Him, If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and with Your people unless You go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do the very thing You've asked because I'm pleased with you and I know You by name.

Then Moses said, Now show me Your glory. I'm sure over the years I've preached from this text many times, even in our midst. I want you to hear again the end of verse 16.

What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? You can read the Bible cover to cover, over and over and over, and you will not find something that resembles the beautiful, lovely, home and garden version of what we call Christianity. Within Scripture, the word religion is not a negative word. It's used a couple of times in James, the first chapter, speaking of godly living.

But what has been known through the centuries as the Christian religion that has operated so much based on human power and human effort and human wisdom, you can read the Scriptures cover to cover and you won't find that. What you'll find is that there is supposed to be a people of God marked by the presence of God in a living way and that presence, God being in the midst of the people of God, is what distinguishes us from all the other peoples of the earth. Because we are a people marked by His presence, we're a people marked by moral purity, by godly character, by sacrificial living, by walking in love, we are different in our conduct, in our attitude, in our lifestyle as well.

But if you just have the conduct and the lifestyle without the presence, you do not have the gospel. And you cannot produce the character and the lifestyle that God desires without the power and the life and the presence of the Spirit. The notion that there could be a gospel message that is not marked by power is completely unscriptural.

The notion that there could be, quote, a Christianity, this lovely world religion that is not dynamic and invaded by the living God and empowered by the living God, so that it is God in us and God working through us, that concept is found nowhere in Scripture. And you have to ask the question, if it's not found in the Bible, then where do we get it from? We got it from human tradition. We got it from trying to fill the void that was left by the absence of God's presence.

So much of what we do in so many of our services and so many of our churches is basically our best effort to make up for the lack of God's presence. Let's just go over to the New Testament. Out of scores of verses I could read, let me read just a few, beginning in Luke, the end of the 24th chapter.

The end of the book of Luke. We must be a people marked by the presence of God. There must be evidence that God is in our midst.

There must be something real. The form in which the manifestation of God's presence, the reality of God's presence can take, can be manifold. There can be hundreds of different ways that the presence of God is marked out in our midst.

But if it is not something clear, come on, there is a greater glory in the New Testament than in the Old. There is a greater glory under the New Covenant than under the Sinai Covenant. And yet, with the Sinai Covenant, there was a pillar of cloud over the tabernacle in the wilderness.

There was a pillar of fire over it. God answered in such tangible ways that at times Moses or the priest couldn't even enter the tabernacle or the temple, the minister, because God's presence filled it in such a thick way. That was the lesser glory.

Luke, the 24th chapter. As Jesus is giving His disciples the commission to go and be His witnesses. Verse 28, You are witnesses of these things.

I am going to send you what My Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. All your zeal won't do it. The fact that they had hands-on practical experience was not enough.

The fact that Jesus Himself, Yeshua, had opened the Scriptures to them so that they could understand the prophecies of the Tanakh, of the Hebrew Bible, and understand clearly how He had fulfilled what was written. They were taught by the Master Himself, but there was more. Stay in the city until you're endued with power from on high.

And then we go to Acts, the first chapter. Acts, the first chapter. Before Jesus ascends to heaven.

Again, more of the teaching that came from Luke 24. Now we have some more here. Verse 4 of Acts 1. This is Luke's narrative continuing.

On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command, Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised you, which you've heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you'll be baptized, you'll be immersed with the Holy Spirit. So when they met together, they asked Him, Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? And He said, You idiots, you jerks.

I'm finished with Israel. I'm through with Israel. I've got nothing to do with Israel.

You are the new Israel. I've cursed the old... Oh, sorry. I was just speaking what a lot of people think Jesus said.

Sorry. That's actually not what He said. He didn't rebuke them for their stupid question.

He said, It's not for you to know the times or dates the Father set by Himself. It's going to happen. It's just not what you need to concentrate on right now.

Back to the point of the message. But this is what you need to focus on. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you'll be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth.

And then you go on reading the book of Acts, and there are about 60 references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. You take the Holy Spirit and the power of God and the voice of God and the moving of God out of the book of Acts, you have nothing left. And yet somehow, in many church circles, even at times in our own midst, we thought we could get the job done through good hard work, through determination, through dedication, through having good concepts, through having good doctrine.

Well, you don't throw those things out. Those are all important. But without the power and the life of God, it's not the gospel.

Without the power and the life of God, it's not what Jesus died for. The whole reason that we proclaim Him as risen from the dead, it's not just to get excited over the thought, you know, Buddha's in the grave, Mohammed's in the grave, but Jesus is not in the grave. It's not just so we get excited about that.

Or come up with this new thing called Easter and have Easter bunnies and stuff like that. The absurdity of what happens in the name of the resurrection of Jesus is amazing. The reason we preach and proclaim He's risen, that means He's alive.

That means He's alive and He's doing the things He did before. That means He's alive and in His name His power is released. That means He's alive and He's looking to express His life through His people, through me and through you.

You know, sometimes we're looking for someone else to do it. We think this group has it or that group has it. And then you come to the revelation, we are that group.

You come to the revelation, God does not have some other backup plan. God does not have some plan where when the people of God fail, He presses a button and the angels take over or the superhumans come into play. You know, it's always somewhere else.

It's easy to believe for that. It's happening in Africa. It's happening in China.

It happened in the past. It'll happen in the future. Oh, I can tell you, man, God's going to use our kids.

Well, if He's not using us, why should He use our kids? Your kids are going to grow up just like you. We're the example that we set for our kids. Plus, they're not going to shed human skin and human frailty and human weakness.

They're going to have to deal with the same things we have to deal with. You know, sometimes I'd be overseas ministering and God would move and I'm thinking, man, this is a great trip. Next trip is going to be exceptional.

And I'd get there the next year and I'd say, man, this is a great trip. Next year is going to be exceptional. And it would hit me, wait, this is next year.

This is the thing I was waiting for. This is the thing I was expecting. And it's always tomorrow.

God wants to manifest His presence, His power through you and me. God wants to come with fire into our meetings. God wants to come with fire into our times of prayer.

God wants to come with fire into our witness. Oh, yeah, it costs everything because your life is laid on the altar. But it's worth more than everything.

So go to 1 Corinthians 2. 1 Corinthians 2. I have one point to this message. We are to be a people marked by the presence of God. And although it must happen ultimately in all of our lives individually, and there are no excuses, if you want to live for God, you can live for God.

If you want to walk in purity, you can walk in purity. If you want to walk in the life of the Spirit, you can. Oh, there will be challenges and difficulties and you will hit some walls and there will be times of discouragement.

But if you are determined to do the will of God, He will back you. And where do you think that determination comes from? It comes from heaven. It comes from God.

That's the reality of what Jesus has done. We insult the Son of God when we try to bring the message down to the level of the weakness of the hearers. The whole power of the gospel is that He lifts us.

The power of the gospel is that as we draw near to Him, He draws near to us and something supernatural happens. I want to declare that many of us are in more of a rut than we realize. Many of us have sold out for second or third or fourth best, more than we realize.

Many of us have gotten used to something that is so substandard that when the real comes, we reject it. 1 Corinthians 2. Paul writes, When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Messiah and Him crucified.

I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power. And then look at what he writes in the fourth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Verse 20. 1 Corinthians 4. 20. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

We're not going to see the answers until we are crying out with hunger, where's the power of the gospel? We're not going to see the breakthroughs until we recognize something's missing. So many churches are just trying to figure out how to bring in people. It's good to be sensitive to the needs of people but if you're sensitive to the needs of people, if you are a surgeon and someone is dying, they've got some tumor that's killing them and you are sensitive to their needs, what you're going to do is put them under and cut that thing out.

Not just tell them that they're looking nice today. So many churches, so many congregations are just trying to figure out ways to draw people. And you'll see signs.

This is not church as usual. Meaning what? This is not church as usual. Meaning we have a 45 minute service or our pastor preaches like an idiot every week.

Says stupid things in stupid ways to show he's just one of the people. Praise the Lord. It's not church as usual.

Other churches, no, no, it is church as usual. We need to go back to the old ways. We need to go back to the traditions.

Listen, how about church as biblical? I mean, let that be the goal. It's going to shake up all of us. Shake up fire deeply.

It's been a topic of conversation among our leadership team for some time now. It's been a topic of conversation with different people in fire communicating with me and others and asking questions.

Where's the presence of God when we gather? Where is God breaking through in our midst when we come together to worship Him and meet with Him? I know it's a frustration.

You'll never hear it spoken publicly. But it's a frustration for the worship team to start a worship service with the building three-quarters empty and then His people trickle in hardly engaged. How are we going to encounter God? What are our hearts set on? At the very least, and listen, God is God.

However He moves, whatever He does, however He does it, it's His business. And that's why I'm not giving specifics of it should look like this or be like this or feel like this. That's not the issue.

Let God be God. But at the very least, we should come with a sense of anticipation and hunger that I'm going to meet with God in the midst of the people of God. That's why we come together corporately.

First and foremost, it's not just to see each other. Fellowship, communion, that's part of life, that's part of family, that's part of the body. It should be lived out primarily in one another's homes and different times that we're getting together through the week.

But when we come together, it's not primarily just to see everybody. And it's not just to go through a ritual. Now we sing songs.

Now we hear a message. Now we give our money. It's to encounter God.

Where's the glory of God? Where's the breakthrough of God in our midst? Listen, if we were the only group in the world and we had the Word, we know enough of what we should expect and long for and hunger for and thirst for. That presence that distinguishes us. That presence in our personal lives that makes us different.

Yes, that's the miracle of the Gospel that you can be home raising kids and you can be out at your job working and you can be doing the mundane things that everybody has to do in this world and yet God's at work in you. Are we willing to pay the personal price not to earn a thing, but to say no to the flesh, to deny ourselves, to seek His face, that even in the midst of our worldly routine and activity, Jesus is first? Are we willing to make a corporate effort to encourage one another to go after God? In the coming weeks, we're going to give some practical ideas and suggestions and guidance as to ways that we can come with better focus and encounter God together. But let me speak to you on a personal level.

What's the main priority in your life right now? What's the number one priority? What is the number one most important thing in your life right now? What is your energy going towards? What is your heart going after? What do you long for and desire? Listen, if it was wartime, it is right now. War in Iraq, war in Afghanistan. Let's say you're a newly married woman and your husband is captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan and he's a prisoner of war and you have no way of contacting him.

No matter what you're doing, that would be the main thing on your mind. You could be having a birthday party for your one-year-old. You could be going to some night class for further education.

You could be having your friends over just to hang out. You could be visiting other family. But that thing would always be burning in you.

How's he doing? What's going on? You'd always have that constant pain. You'd be praying. What's the thing that drives you? Is it getting ahead in business? Is it getting comfortable in your life? Is it improving

your physical condition? What's the number one thing that your heart longs for? We cannot expect God to come and fill us when we're filled with everything else.

We cannot expect God to come and flood our lives when there's not much room. Well, God can do whatever He wants to. Correct, He chooses to not move where He's not welcome.

Oh, He may come and judge, but He's not going to force blessing. Because He can do whatever He wants, He's chosen not to force feed us. I'm telling you, if we'll say, God, I've got to break through.

I've got to break through. Every one of us has the time to set aside somewhere, somehow, to make a choice to say, God, I've got to break through. Every one of us has the ability in our hearts to be longing and hungering for God in the midst of a busy day.

Most all of us have the ability to set aside times at least for fasting in the midst of everything else and that fast is a constant cry, God, I've got to break through. What's the use of going through the motions? What's the use of having services and building a fellowship and having a body if we're not marked by God's presence? If we were the only people in the world, the only church, the congregation in the world, the Scriptures are enough to tell us we've got to break through. But it's part of our heritage as well.

It's part of what we're born out of, part of what we're marked for. We have designated things when we gather in our homes for home groups. God can just move in any way.

There's also a concentration on fellowship and building relationship and people just growing in different ways. And Wednesday night instead is a designated teaching time. Thursday night is a night where it's much more wide open.

Let's just see how the wind of the Spirit blows as we go after Him. And we know on Sunday mornings there are families, there are kids, there are practical needs, you've got children's workers. I understand that.

The goal is not to have eight-hour services, just to have a long service. But when we come in together, we should come with a sense of anticipation. We're going to meet with God.

The one time in the week when we're all in the same place together going after God with one heart. Who knows what He's going to do? Who knows how He's going to speak? Who knows how the Spirit's going to break out? Who knows which way the wind of the Spirit will go? Some of you have been saying we've been missing that, we've been longing for it. Yes, amen.

And thankfully it's not turned to criticism or negativity. It's turned to hunger. Let the hunger grow.

Let the hunger rise. A couple nights ago I was just watching a worship video I had come across online. My heart just started getting stirred.

I've been just seeking Him for breakthroughs in different ways, but my heart just got stirred in such a deep and overwhelming way. So I was in tears before God. I mean, He's opened neat doors.

We've got this TV show, this Jewish outreach show that potentially gets into 80 million homes in the States. You know, this radio show that's in the early stages of national syndication. Those are doors I know the Lord opened.

I was just saying, God, I don't want to be the host of some TV show or some radio personality. I've got to have Your fire. I've got to be a man gripped and consumed by God.

What else matters? What else matters? I'm going to close shortly. There's a story I remember hearing when I was teaching at Christ for the Nations on Long Island, a branch that was there in the 80s. A brother came in and he was talking about Catherine Coleman's ministry in Israel towards the end of her life.

He said that she had a meeting in Jerusalem. It was going to be like a stadium kind of meeting, the biggest venue that they had there. And she felt to have a translator would be disruptive, would get in the way of the moving of the Spirit.

So she didn't have a translator. Well, very few people spoke English, especially back then in the meeting. They had come, you know, beer-drinking Israelis just with an interest in the supernatural, unsaved.

A great audience, potentially, to hear the Gospel. But because there was no translator and the meeting completely fell through, people got up and left. It was a disappointment.

You had Christian organizers that had come together with real expectation. This is something that's going to happen. This is going to be amazing.

So they're totally blown away. Nothing happened. Jerusalem, failure.

So the next meeting was in another city, less prominent city. And according to the fellow who told the story, Pat Robertson spoke that day. It was many years ago.

According to the story, it was a long, boring message. But as the message was coming forth, this guy realized what was happening. Pat Robertson was just preaching the cross, the basics, the foundations, the blood of Jesus.

Let's just go back to basics here. Let's just go back to basics. Well, the meeting ends, message ends, and he calls up this little African couple.

You know, according to the story, you barely see them standing behind the pulpit. You know, little couple, to pray the closing benediction. And the wife's just standing there praying quietly.

The husband raises his hands and just begins to quote from the Psalms. Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered. The wife just praying next to him, hands raised.

Let God arise and His enemies be scattered. He just keeps praying this. Suddenly the power of God falls.

And people... And I talked to someone else years later that I met. I said, I heard the story went like this. He said, oh yeah, I was there.

It's exactly how it happened. People spontaneously start to get up from their seats to run forward to repent and get right with God. But they're unable to run because the power of God falls on them.

And they're just getting laid out as they're trying to get up. One after another, the power of God breaking through. And then suddenly someone starts screaming, I'm healed! You know, blind eyes start opening and healing start breaking out.

Let God arise and His enemies be scattered. Let God arise and His enemies be scattered. Here it is, the first Sunday of the new year as we are gathered together.

And I want to proclaim as loudly and clearly as I can that it is God's purpose that fire be a people marked by the presence of God. That fire be worthy of being called fire. That we literally get torched by God and become flames.

I would rather, hear me, I would rather preach the standard the way it's preached in the Word, and I barely even touched on that. I would rather preach the standard the way it's preached in the Word and leave some people frustrated than bring it down in such a bite-sized, nice little way that we all go home feeling great and doing nothing. It's alright sometimes to be a little frustrated.

How are you going to grow in anything without a little frustration? How are you going to break through in anything without sometimes just getting stirred and hitting the same wall a hundred times before it hits you that there's another way? Let the frustration turn into desperation. And let the hunger rise. It's uncomfortable.

If it was comfortable, we'd all enjoy not eating. Hunger is uncomfortable. But Jesus said, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they'll be filled.

Jesus said, if anyone's thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The promises in the Word are to the hungry and to the thirsty. How much room is there for God to break out in our lives? How much room is there for God to break out in our midst? How much room is there for God to dominate where we were planning on going and turn us in the direction He wants us to go? I want you to stand to your feet with me.

If we could have the worship team come back up, that would be great. In my book, *From Holy Laughter to Holy Fire*, in the new edition, *Time for Holy Fire*, there's a prayer that was prayed by John Fletcher, known to be one of the godliest men of Wesley's generation. His saintliness was legendary.

And listen to what Fletcher prayed. Lord, I stand in need of oil. Hear those words again.

Lord, I stand in need of oil. My lamp burns dimly. It is more like a smoking flax than a burning and shining light.

Oh, quench it not. Raise it to a flame. I want a power from on high.

I want penetrating, lasting unction of the Holy One. I want my vessel full of oil. I want a lamp of heavenly illumination and a fire of divine love burning day and night in my heart.

I want a full application of the blood which cleanseth from all sin and a strong faith in Thy sanctifying word. I do now believe that Thou canst and wilt thus baptize me with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Help me against my unbelief.

Confirm and increase my faith. Lord, I have need to be thus baptized by Thee and I am straightened till this baptism is accomplished. Let me read that opening prayer again.

Lord, I stand in need of oil. My lamp burns dimly. It is more like a smoking flax than a burning and shining light.

Oh, quench it not. Raise it to a flame. We're gonna come forward, everyone that wants, and we're just gonna cry out to God together to mark the beginning of this new year and to say, God, we've got to see more.

A grad emailed me a few days ago asking for fatherly advice. He showed me his journal entries for the last two days of 2008. He's just so frustrated and fed up with himself and feels he's never gonna have the courage to really do what he knows God wants him to do.

Just so frustrated. Sense of defeat because it seems hopeless. Just been thinking about it before writing him back.

But what I'm gonna tell him is this. Put all your effort on calling on Jesus to demonstrate His power in your life. Throw it on Him.

God, there's gotta be something different. Jesus, we're asking You to demonstrate the reality of Your resurrection. We're asking You to demonstrate the reality of the fact that You ascended to heaven and sent the Spirit.

We're asking You to do something that marks us so that we can bring people to know You. So why don't you just come up. If you don't want to, you don't have to.

But we're just gonna come. As soon as you come up, don't wait for anything. Just begin to cry out to God.

Just begin to cry out to God.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18126.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-l-brown/we-must-be-a-people-marked-by-the-presence-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net