

MISSIONARIES OF HIS PRESENCE

12 JULY 2026

SUMMARY

This message explores the concept of Christian spirituality and identity, specifically focusing on discovering and naming the spirituality that emerges from faithful living. Bruce Downes reflects on how authentic spirituality is not invented but discovered through responding to God's grace over time. Drawing from the example of religious orders throughout church history, he proposes that the community's spirituality can be defined as being "Missionaries of His presence." This identity emphasizes that Christians are the body of Christ in the world, carrying His presence wherever they go. The message challenges believers to understand that their primary mission is not doing more for God, but allowing God to do more within them, so that Christ becomes visible through their ordinary lives. The spirituality calls for deep communion with God first, from which mission naturally flows, transforming everyday activities into sacred encounters where others can experience God's presence.

KEY POINTS

- Every enduring religious order or movement discovers language that captures its deepest identity, which is lived first and then named
- Spirituality is the particular way a person or community comes to know God, follows Christ, lives the gospel, and understands their mission
- The core identity proposed is "missionaries of His presence" - people who carry Christ's presence wherever they go
- Christians are the body of Christ, meaning wherever they are, Christ is present through them
- The mission is to bring people into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus, not merely to religious activities
- An IMPACTER is someone who has been impacted by God and then impacts others
- Holiness is not reserved for those who leave ordinary life but is discovered within homes, workplaces, and everyday circumstances
- Being a missionary of His presence means first allowing God to work within us before we can effectively witness to others
- The spirituality emphasizes presence over words - people encounter God through our presence, not just our teachings
- In modern culture, for many people, their first encounter with God will be through ordinary Christians living their daily lives

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Galatians 2:20 - "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"
- 1 Corinthians 12:27 - "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it"
- Colossians (reference to Jesus as the head of the church)

STORIES:

- Bruce Downes' experience with Catholic Guy ministry events where people would make dramatic life changes (selling homes, resigning jobs, reconciling relationships) after encountering God's presence
- Meeting with someone uncertain about their faith, where Bruce Downes realized the person would experience God simply through his presence, ending with prayer that left the person saying "wow"
- Conversation with three men who, after spending an hour together, remarked to each other about sensing the power and presence during their conversation
- Example of arriving in New York and discussing with his driver the difference between rule-keeping Christianity and relationship-based Christianity
- References to biblical figures: Abraham becoming father of a great nation after God called him, Moses encountering the burning bush before leading Israel, apostles being called to be with Jesus before being sent out, Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus
- Mary's response to the angel Gabriel as an example of surrendering to God's presence
- Examples of ordinary missionaries of His presence: a mother teaching children to pray, a husband loving his wife faithfully, a teacher recognizing student dignity, a business owner acting with integrity, a retiree praying and serving in their parish

MISSIONARIES OF HIS PRESENCE

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

ICEBREAKER

When have you felt God's presence most powerfully in your life? What were the circumstances?

KEY THEMES FROM THE MESSAGE

1. Our Core Identity: Missionaries of His Presence

Every authentic Christian spirituality emerges from how we encounter God and live out the Gospel. Our spirituality isn't invented—it's discovered as we respond to God's grace.

2. We Are the Body of Christ

Wherever we are, Christ is present. We don't just represent Jesus; we carry His actual presence into every situation, relationship, and place we go.

3. Mission Flows from Communion

We don't do more for God first; we allow God to do more within us first. Our effectiveness comes from our surrender to His presence, not from our activity.

4. Holiness in Ordinary Life

Being a missionary of His presence isn't reserved for priests, nuns, or ministry leaders. It's lived out in homes, workplaces, schools—everywhere we are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1: Understanding Our Spirituality

1. The message mentioned that religious orders live their spirituality before they name it. What patterns or themes have you noticed in your own spiritual journey? How would you describe your personal way of encountering God?
2. Bruce Downes defines spirituality as "the particular way a person or community comes to know God, follows Christ, lives the gospel, and understands their mission." How does this definition differ from what you previously thought spirituality meant?
3. Why do you think it's important to be able to name and describe our spirituality? How might this help us live more intentionally?

Section 2: Being the Body of Christ

4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:27 together: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." What does it mean practically that Christ has "no other body" through which to work in the world?
5. The message stated: "The first encounter many people will have of God is you." How does this reality change the way you think about your daily interactions—at work, at home, in your community?
6. Share an example: When have you sensed God's presence through another person? What was it about them that made Christ visible to you?

Section 3: Missionaries of His Presence

7. The message emphasized that we are "missionaries of His presence"—not primarily missionaries who talk about Jesus, but people who carry His presence. What's the difference between these two approaches? Why does the distinction matter?
8. Bruce Downes said our mission isn't to:
 - Simply encourage people
 - Get people more active in church
 - Make people more religious
 - Get people involved in ministry

Instead, our mission is to bring people into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus. How does this focus change your understanding of evangelization or outreach?

9. Consider the youth camp example from the message. Bruce Downes said the sole purpose isn't games, adventure, or being friendly—it's so people encounter Jesus. Do you agree with this singular focus? Why or why not? How can we maintain this focus while still doing practical activities?

Section 4: Communion Before Mission

10. The message taught: "The spirituality of missionaries of His presence is not primarily about doing more for God. It's first allowing God to do more within us." How does this challenge our culture's emphasis on productivity and activity?
11. What practices help you remain in God's presence? (Examples from the message: daily prayer time, reading Scripture, attending Mass/worship, listening for God's voice)
12. Bruce Downes mentioned Mary's surrender: "Let it be done unto me according to your will." What areas of your life is God inviting you to surrender more fully to His presence?

Section 5: Practical Living

13. The message gave examples of missionaries of His presence:
 - A mother who patiently loves her children and teaches them to pray
 - A husband who loves his wife faithfully and sacrificially

- A teacher who recognizes the dignity of every student
- A business owner who acts with justice and integrity
- A retiree who quietly prays for others and serves

Which of these resonates with your current life situation? How can you more intentionally be a missionary of His presence in your specific context?

14. Bruce Downes challenged us to put "I'm a missionary of His presence" as our phone screensaver or on our car mirror. What practical reminder would help you remember your identity throughout the day?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few minutes of silence for each person to reflect on these questions privately:

- Where do I most need to experience God's presence in my life right now?
- What is one specific way I can carry His presence more intentionally this week?
- What is God asking me to surrender so I can live more fully in communion with Him?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Daily Presence Prayer Each morning, before starting your day, pray: "Lord, I am a missionary of Your presence today. May I carry You everywhere I go. Help me to be fully present to You and to make You present to others."

Option 2: Intentional Encounter Identify one person in your life who needs to encounter God's presence. Instead of trying to say the right words, simply commit to being fully present with them—listening deeply, showing compassion, and allowing Christ in you to minister to them.

Option 3: Surrender Practice Set aside 15-20 minutes each day for prayer focused on surrender. Use Mary's words: "Let it be done unto me according to Your will." Ask God what He wants to do in you before asking what He wants you to do for Him.

Option 4: Presence Awareness Throughout your day, pause three times (perhaps at morning, noon, and evening) and remind yourself: "Christ lives in me. I am not alone. His presence is with me right now." Notice how this awareness changes your perspective and actions.

CLOSING PRAYER

"Father, thank You that we are IMPACTERS, missionaries of Your presence. We are not alone—Christ lives in us. Help us to first come into deep communion with You, to know that Your presence surrounds us and that we carry You everywhere we go. May Your presence consume our hearts, our lives, and our every action. We make this prayer in Jesus' name, through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen."