

PRESENT PEACE

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Conflict evaporates in the presence of God just as ice melts in presence of intense heat. The ice does not “try” to melt; it melts because of the heat’s power. Likewise, conflict dissipates in the presence of God not because of human effort, but because of the intense power of God’s influence. Without God’s presence, the best thought-out strategies and principles of peacemaking become ineffective. But when the Holy Spirit is “manifest,” conflict flees.

But isn’t our omnipresent God *always* present in conflict situations? Indeed He is present, but His Spirit is not necessarily manifest. In *The Complete Wineskin*, Harold Eberle uses angels to explain the concept of manifest presence. An angel may be present in the room with you, but that angel will only become manifest if it becomes visible to you as an angel did to Peter (Acts 12:7).² Eberle goes on to explain that “when speaking of spiritual beings manifesting, we are describing how they come out of the spirit realm and make themselves known in the natural dimension.”³ The Bible reports many incidents of God manifesting Himself: as a dove (Mat. 3:16), wind (Acts 2:2), fire (Acts 2:3; Exo. 24:17, 40:38), a cloud (1 Kings 8:10), and light (Acts 9:3). During each manifestation people actually see, hear, or feel God’s presence in the physical realm.

Whenever God’s Spirit enters our world so tangibly, “supernatural molding power” accompanies it.⁴ God’s saturating presence enforces God’s will; we *know* that God’s will is unity. On the night before His execution, what did Jesus pray for? He prayed that believers would be “brought to complete unity” (John 17:23). Paul also recognized God’s peace priority and repeatedly urged believers to “be of one mind [and] live in peace” (2 Cor. 13:11). Jesus taught us how to invite His manifesting, uniting presence. “Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them” (Mat. 18:20). Jesus’ presence among believers gathered in His name brings agreement and unity (Mat. 18:18-19). Eberle explains that when believers gather together and “focus completely on Jesus, the presence of God is then manifested. . . , and God transforms the two Christians from fleshly carnal people into one heart and mind.”⁵ Eberle goes even further to assert that “it is impossible for any two Christians to disagree when they are in the manifesting presence of Jesus.”⁶

How then do we do successfully invite God’s manifesting presence into our midst? First of all, each person must welcome God’s Spirit in his or her own heart. Every individual involved must personally seek God’s presence; God responds not to hollow words but to truly open hearts. Secondly, each person must be free from sin’s control. James recognized the core cause of conflict: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do they not come from your desires that battle within you?” (James 4:1). We must be free from habitual, unrepentant sin before God’s Spirit can fill us fully. Finally, each person involved in the conflict must relinquish his or her own personal agenda. In order to “be of one mind,” Paul urges believers to “look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:2, 4). After each person has sincerely welcomed God’s presence, repented of callous sins, and let go of all personal agendas, the Lord’s manifesting presence will come. When it comes, conflict flees!

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² Harold R. Eberle, *The Complete Wineskin* (Yakima, WA: Worldcast Publishing, 1993)

³ Ibid. 95

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. 96

⁶ Ibid.