



God's  
eye view on

PRESENCE

Matt Rawlins<sup>PhD</sup>



**A little book that's yours to give away.**

Art (pg 42, 54, 60, 66) is from a friend and good artist, HT. It is put in to give you a moment to slow down and reflect.

Deep appreciation to Scott Tompkins for editing help and wisdom.

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CS Lewis by Peter Voth

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# The Presence



That sounds like some kind  
of an evil thriller.

*Actually, it's the opposite of that.*

*But let me begin in a simple way.*

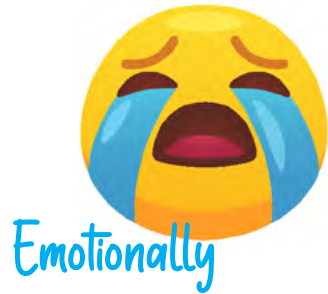
Hi, My name is Matt  
and I am Presence -  
Challenged.



I bet you have no idea  
what that means?



I have a hard time being fully present to life



If I'm honest, I would have to admit that I am a coward at heart.

But... I'm changing that.



A black and white illustration. On the left, a large, dark spider with long, thin legs is positioned on a dark, flat horizon line. Its legs are spread out, and it appears to be looking towards the right. On the right side of the horizon, a small, dark silhouette of a person stands, looking back at the spider. The background is a light, cloudy sky. The overall mood is one of confrontation or a challenge.

*If you find a little bit of fear of showing up in you...*

**WELCOME to the HUMAN RACE!**

I got a Ph.D. to try and figure it out.  
Also, to cover up my insecurity.



**You do know you are  
not supposed to admit that?**



I have a part of me that says,  
“I have to show up.  
That’s the only way I will know if I am alive.”



I looked around to see  
if others are struggling with this.

Everyone is preoccupied  
with social media.



What's the big deal?

Every one is focused on a simple objective:  
How can I make my presence known?



We long for engagement  
and connection.  
To be “seen,” and valued.

As a Lover of God.  
How do I frame  
this desire and work  
with it in a healthy  
life-giving way?



**LET'S START WITH HIM**

# GOD IS LOVE



Love makes space for,  
and welcomes you  
into their “presence”

God summons me to be fully present to life.



To be honest,  
it has been a  
major struggle  
in my life.

How do I show up?

I want to but I'm terrified of it.

I've heard of people like:



Augustine



Bonhoeffer



Francis of Assisi



Mother Teresa

They changed the world by being present.  
I get it that God wants them to show up..

But ME?



Does that make sense to you?

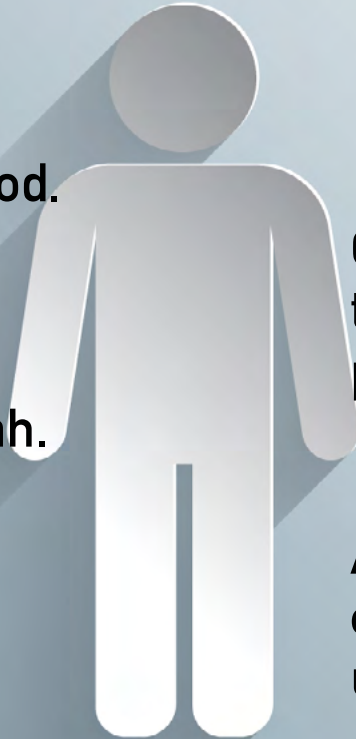
Is this just my own insecurity?

Or do others struggle as much as I do??

# What about those in the Bible who have gone before me?

Adam and Eve hide  
from the presence of God.

Moses doesn't want to  
show up to face Pharoah.



Cain turns violent rather  
than face his brother's  
presence.

Aaron makes a golden  
calf so that he can show  
up before the people

Elijah flees for his life  
and hides in a cave.

David kills Uriah to  
protect himself because  
he showed up with  
Bathsheba.



Israel refuses to show up  
in the promised land  
because there are giants  
in there.

*These are hero's of the faith, right?*

And the list goes on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and...

**OUCH!!**

There is a long history of 'failure in how we show up.'

Exactly, why the bother?

A person stands with their back to the camera on a dark, gravelly path that leads towards a horizon. The sky is a deep blue with wispy clouds, and the sun is setting, creating a bright orange and yellow glow along the horizon. The person is wearing a dark jacket and jeans. In the distance, some lights from a town or city are visible on the right side of the horizon.

God understands

He wants us to show up  
more than we want to show up.



He saw we lost the plot and all we can do is:

Hide

Play the victim

Blame others

Lash out in violence

Or, be seduced in our false comforts.

He found a shocking way to show us  how important showing up is to Him.

# HE Emptied Himself of power

and came to live among

us.





Jesus

Humility on display:  
Fully God,  
Fully Human  
and  
Fully Present.



Let's look at how Jesus is  
present in the midst of an  
uncertain world that has  
lots of pain and fear,

*Is that even possible?*





## He didn't define Himself by His culture.

Culture is like the clothes we wear  
that make us "normal" to others.  
It allows us to fit in and belong.

Jesus knew the culture of His day  
and celebrated it, but put the kingdom  
of God first when they clashed.

Each culture has certain things that you do or don't do.

### In Singapore

- ✓ You don't wear your shoes in the house.
- ✓ You think of the group before self.
- ✓ You don't tip.
- ✓ Stand on the left side of the escalator.
- ✓ Don't create religious tension.
- ✓ Treat your elders with respect.



Don't forget:  
No chewing gum.

Many of the above are small things that show you are a part of the culture.



Jewish culture of His day had much harsher rules than these.  
And Jesus clashed with them when they didn't represent the presence of God.

# He washed His disciples' feet.

Dusty, dirty, stinking feet.

No one with any 'presence' stoops that low.

Unless your presence  
is not defined  
by status in society.



# He talks with a Samaritan woman.

Race, gender, marital status  
didn't define who He was  
present to or made room for.

The lowest of the low.

Is someone searching?  
Jesus is fully present to  
them in their search.





So far His presence is not defined by:


Cultural norms

Role or status

A social outcast



CRAZY

The image features several blurred figures of people walking across a white surface, which is reflected below them. The figures are positioned on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a sense of movement and a busy environment. The central text is overlaid on this background.

He is fully present  
in that He values,  
is engaged with and  
deeply cares for  
the people around Him.

But is not defined by them.

# He let a prostitute wash His feet with her hair.

Can you imagine  
a leader of a church  
letting this happen today?

*Not a chance.  
They are too holy.*

In spite of what people will say,  
He makes space for her  
to be present with Him  
in her own unique way.

How can you have no anxiety  
and be fully present with all  
that swirling around you?

He didn't compete with others.

Second place  
is worthless.  
It is given  
to the first loser.

Competition says I have  
something to prove,  
something to justify  
(my existence).

I want others to know  
I am powerful and  
I am better than them.





The scribes would challenge Jesus.

“Whose authority do you have?”

“I bet you can’t do a miracle here and now!”

He had nothing to prove but everything to reveal to those who wanted to see.

He gave up how others viewed or defined Him (His reputation), as His only desire was to be fully present with the Father.

# He didn't allow His nature to define Him.

Society says my presence is defined by my body.

How I look matters!

Isaiah 53:2

tells of Jesus' appearance:

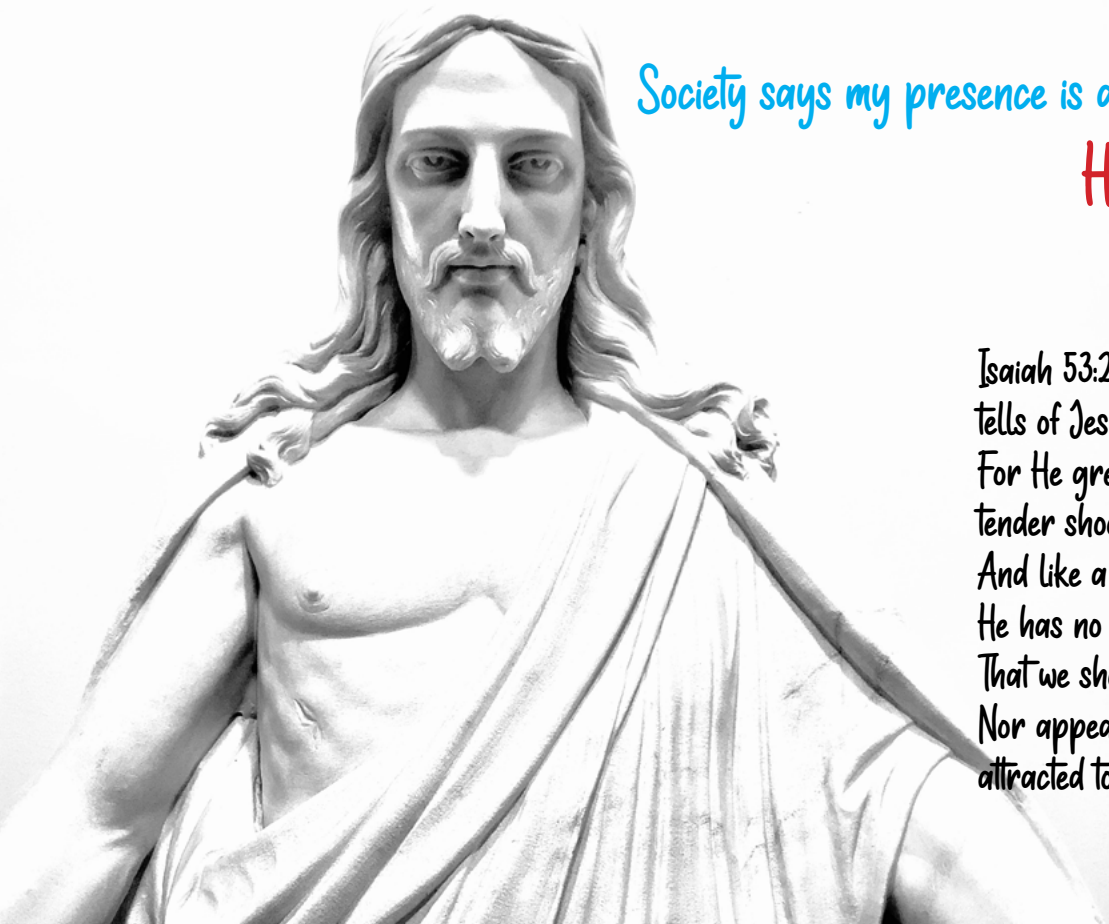
For He grew up before Him like a  
tender shoot.

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no stately form or majesty

That we should look upon Him.

Nor appearance that we should be  
attracted to Him.



**Keeping it simple.**

Jesus could choose whatever body He wanted to show up in.  
He chooses one that is bland, boring, plain and simple.



Awe Come on.

Does the man have no vanity?

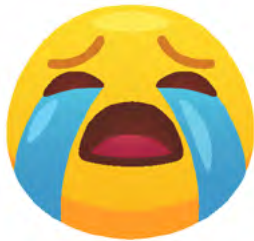
NOPE

You could walk right past Him  
and nothing about His appearance  
would appeal to you.

But they felt His presence and  
knew He was different.



# He wasn't afraid to show His feelings.



He weeps in public.



He is angry at those who abuse the grace of God.

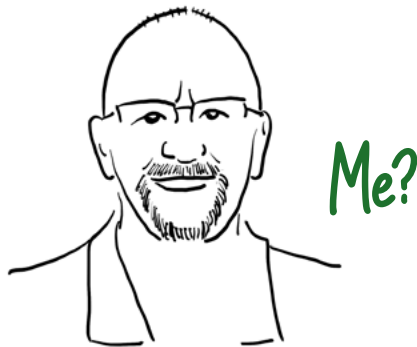


He is moved with compassion for the poor and hurting.

He is fully present with His whole mind, body, soul, and strength.  
His presence was expressed through it all



How can a 'man' do that?



It took me 40 years to be able to cry  
with people who are hurting,  
and I still have a reserve when I do it.

I prefer not to show emotions, which  
means I prefer not to be fully present.

Let's not get  
too personal.

That little revelation hurts, but I  
realize being present requires being  
vulnerable with my emotions.

He didn't react when others rejected Him.

*Judas, what a scumbag.*

We all have encountered  
someone like him.

A friend, family member  
or co-worker who:

- ✓ Steals from you.
- ✓ Criticizes you behind your back.
- ✓ Sells you out for money or power.
- ✓ Kisses you and then stabs you in the heart.

Jesus is present with Judas the whole time.  
He creates space for him and treats him with  
underserved kindness.

Kick him out Jesus and make him pay.

When Judas goes to the dark side, Jesus  
doesn't react, get angry or even put Him down.  
He painfully tells him to do what he needs  
to do and then gets on with His calling.



A reflective break.

How protected is  
your presence?



My friend HT is an artist  
and I include some of his  
work to give us a break.



# He wasn't hurt when others didn't serve Him.

If anyone, at anytime,  
anywhere in the world  
should have been  
served, it was Jesus.

He showed up with  
a desire to serve,  
honour and respect people.  
That attitude protected  
Him from being destroyed  
in His interactions with us.

*Jesus should have shouted at them,  
"Don't you know who I am?"*



Don't get Him wrong, He is not a doormat, a passive, measly wimp of a human being who belittles Himself in the name of some strange definition of humility.

**NOPE, not at all**

He was present to people and  
His presence was not defined by  
how they reacted or gave back to Him.



Add to this Self-Pity OR maybe I should say, the lack of it

To the women wailing for Him as He is beaten and on the way to the cross, He says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Surely a little self-pity  
would have fit right

**NOPE**

He will have no part in any self-pity in His presence.



It's crazy

He sets the bar so high  
for being fully present.

I didn't say this was going to be a pleasant journey, did I?

I surely am not saying I can do this.

I am just looking for someone with the goods who can show me THE WAY.

Shall we labour on?



He chose love over power.

His presence  
was not defined  
by the power  
He had.

*Is there no lust for power or fear  
of weakness in Him?*

*Yes, He was tempted to call on the angels to save Him  
but resisted it because He choose love over power.*

He goes further and defines  
Himself as a servant.

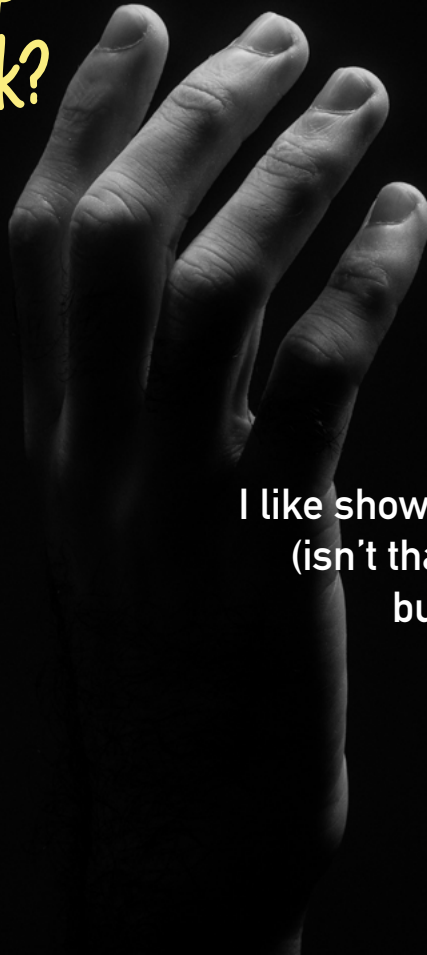
A completely powerless role  
no one wants.



*I have no experience with this type of presence.  
I crave for power and fear weakness.  
This battle rages in me for how to be present (with power).*



Who dares show up  
when they are weak?



I like showing up when I have power  
(isn't that the purpose of power?),  
but this takes being present  
to a whole new level.

He did not strive to “prove” who He was.

He is the only unbroken, whole,  
perfect human being in the  
history of our broken world.

YET

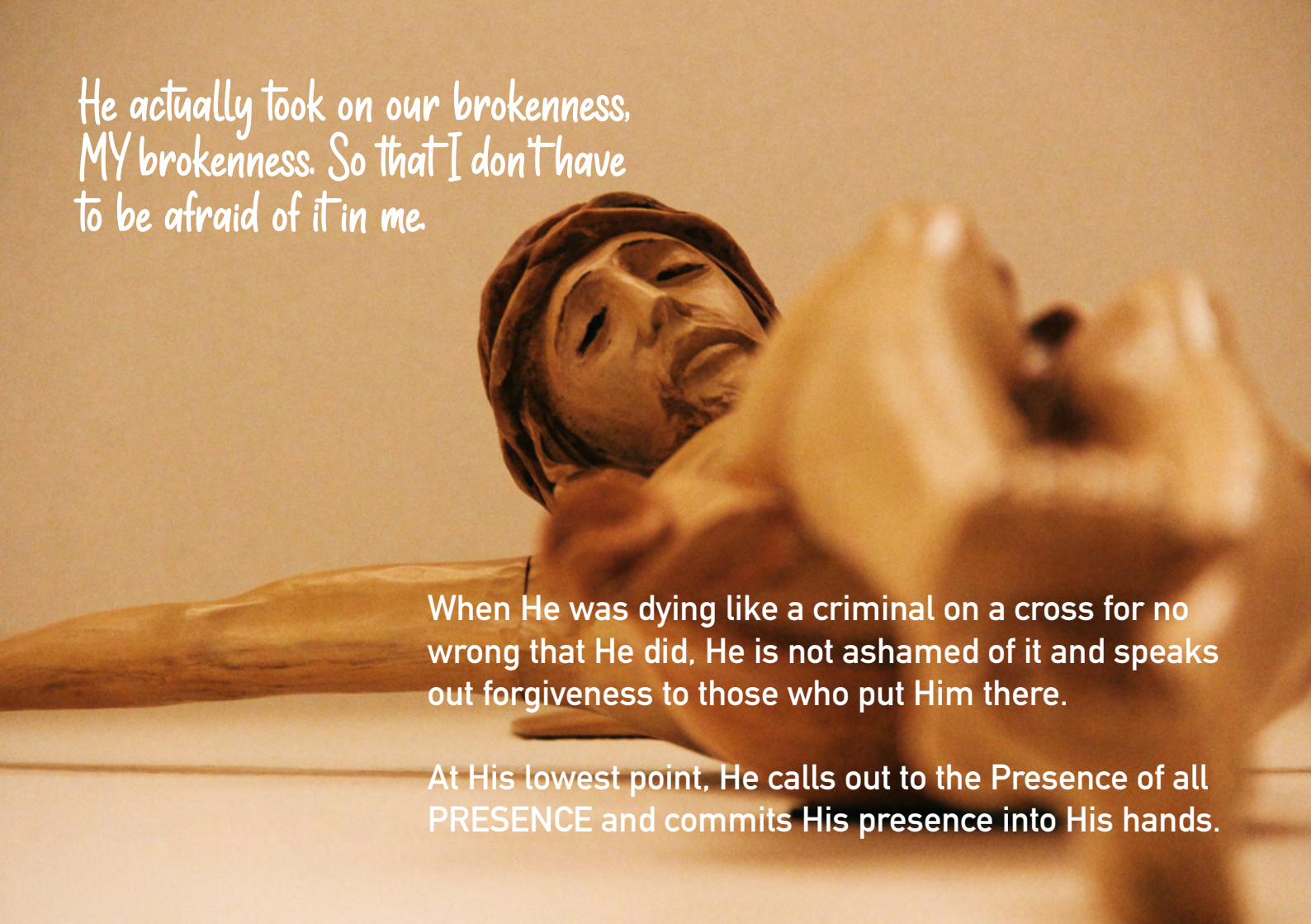
He didn't clothe Himself  
with arrogance, acting like  
He was better than us or  
putting us down.

If I am better than you,  
I want you to know it.





He actually took on our brokenness,  
MY brokenness. So that I don't have  
to be afraid of it in me.



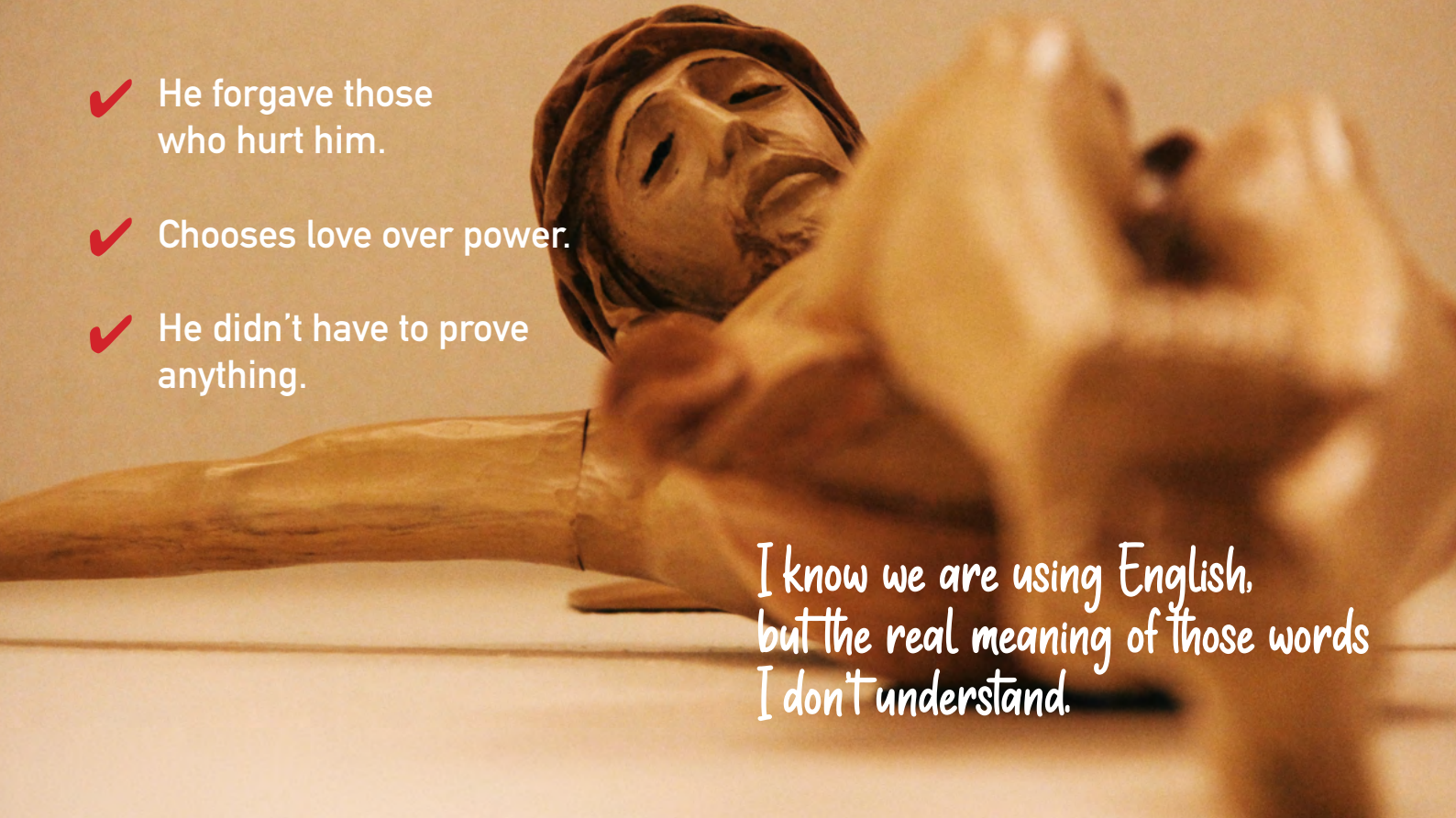
When He was dying like a criminal on a cross for no  
wrong that He did, He is not ashamed of it and speaks  
out forgiveness to those who put Him there.

At His lowest point, He calls out to the Presence of all  
PRESENCE and commits His presence into His hands.

## SUMMARY

- ✓ He forgave those who hurt him.
- ✓ Chooses love over power.
- ✓ He didn't have to prove anything.

I know we are using English,  
but the real meaning of those words  
I don't understand.





## REFLECTION

I find myself drawn to this  
strange "light" that I see in Him.

At the same time I am not a silly moth and  
I know the flame of it will kill me.

What do I do with this  
strange desire in me?

Do you find that strange desire in you?

Take a breath and relax  
for a moment.

What is stirring in you?



What would it mean for God to be fully present in your life?



# He didn't define His presence by His possessions.

He who possesses all things,  
gave up those possessions  
and was fully present while  
owning nothing.

He was as poor as any  
person who walks the  
earth today. Yet, He was  
more present than the  
richest person alive.

*Awe come on. If you got it flaunt it.  
What's the use of having stuff if others can't see you with it.*



Oh, Also...

Job, titles, role or education.

He gave up being God,  
so none of these had any appeal to Him.



I like being defined by education.  
(Because I have a Ph.D.)  
I am embarrassed to admit it, but my  
heart is codependent on that piece of paper.

He sought out people who were not perfect.



His circle of friends consisted of fishermen, a tax collector,  
a nationalist and more.

Even a strange prophet  
has space in His heart.  
(John the Baptist)

*The prophet looks like a street person!  
He was wearing an animal skin and  
had bugs in his beard.*

He spent three years in a close relationship with these flawed disciples.

They all flee for their lives when the Jews grabbed Him.  
They want nothing to do with His presence if it cost them something.



They are **COWARDS** at heart.  
I identify with them.

When He rises from the dead, He seeks out their presence.



It seems the only thing that will keep Him from coming to us  
and making space for us is our own belief that  
this type of PRESENCE could not exist.

Whats the difference between a genie  
in a bottle and Jesus at work in us?



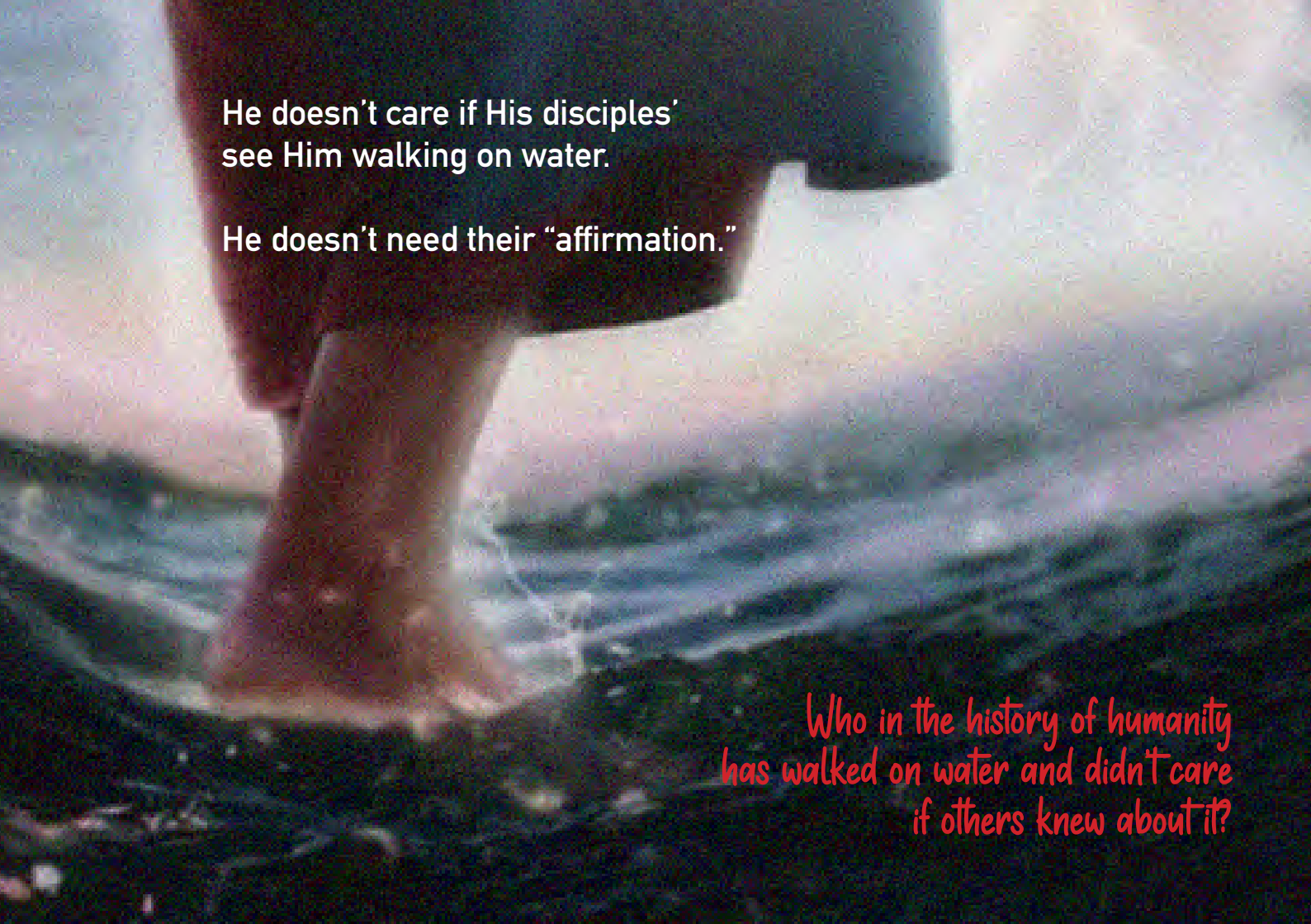
Jesus doesn't do Magic,  
it is a relationship.



He didn't define Himself by what others thought.

Seeing them straining at the oars,  
for the wind was against them,  
at about the fourth watch of the night  
He came to them, walking on the sea;  
and  
He intended to pass by them.  
Mark 6:48

NO WAY!



He doesn't care if His disciples'  
see Him walking on water.

He doesn't need their "affirmation."

Who in the history of humanity  
has walked on water and didn't care  
if others knew about it?

To make a big SHOW of His power  
would just prompt them to wonder,  
is Jesus even human?



*I don't want Him to be human.  
I want to make Him different -  
so I don't feel the crushing weight of my own inadequacy.*



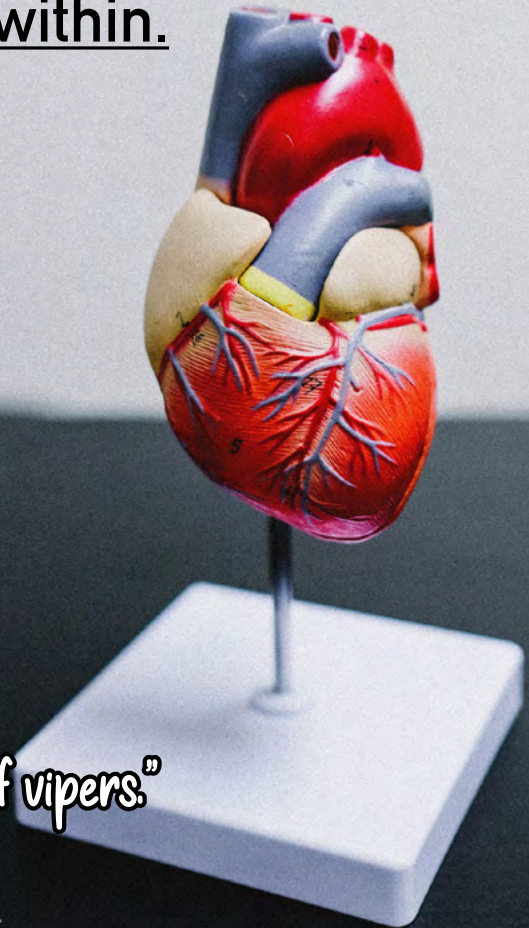
# He knew being present begins within.

He was always working to help those around Him to be present.

He always started within and wanted them to work from the heart.

He called out those who used the name of God but only focused on the outside...

*"Whitewashed tombs, serpents and a brood of vipers."  
Now that I understand.*



# OUCH!!

**AGAIN**

His strongest words are reserved for those who have the appearance of being present in God but are only interested in looking good to the presence of those around them.

If I am honest, that was the basis of my 'goodness' for a good portion of my life. I looked good on the outside without dealing with issues on the inside.



What if you saw this man  
knocking at your door?

This is what our religious defences  
look like to God.



His words were as clear as  
the heart they came from.

He was the first human being to speak His  
whole life from the heart.

Every word rooted in the values of His life  
in the presence of God dwelling in Him.

There was no deceit in His words,  
so they knew exactly what He thought  
and felt about life and His presence in it.

---

His words were in perfect and complete alignment with His presence in every situation.

---

I am beginning to understand  
why they wanted to kill Him.  
He exposes you and you feel so inadequate.



# His reverence was for God alone.

Isaiah 11:3

And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,

And He will not judge by what  
His eyes see,

Nor make a decision by what  
His ears hear;

*He loved people.  
He valued people.  
But He didn't let them define His presence.*



John 2:24

But Jesus, on His part, was  
not entrusting Himself to  
them, for He knew all men,

*He is among us, loves us and  
values us and yet, doesn't trust us?*

**WHAT?!?!?**





## SUMMARY

He was more impressed with  
what God thought  
than what people thought.



He worked with people  
who didn't have their act together.



He always spoke from the heart.

## Philippians 2:5- (MSG)

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what.

Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human!

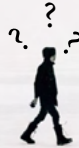
Having become human, he stayed human.

It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges.

Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life...

Okay, let's cut to the chase.

I don't understand how  
you can be fully present  
in pain, injustice,  
and suffering?



That is the one I don't get...  
**at ALL**  
I am angry, worn out and  
I don't know what to do.



## The CROSS

As if the above challenges are not enough.  
He takes being present to a whole new level.

*He Emptied Himself*

*He took on all our fears*





He took on all our brokenness.

He took on all our pain and suffering.

Everything that keeps us from being present.  
He took it on Himself.

He who knew no sin,  
took it on Himself and became it,  
so that we don't have to fear it anymore.

Why?



No one does that  
and I mean NO one.



He didn't come to judge us.

He came to show us how far  
we have drifted away from His purpose for us.

His purpose was to LOVE US and in that love  
we could be fully present to all of life.

The terrifying truth is that we were made  
to live as Jesus did among us.

Nothing short of that will make us happy.





But I Can't Do it...



**Welcome to the  
Human Race.**

*You are not alone. None of us can.*

**YET**

Because of Jesus  
we may now stand in the  
presence of God.

Whole

Forgiven

Fully Present

Nothing between us



As I learn to stand in the presence of God,  
I have a strange courage to be present  
to those around me.

There are even times  
I am able to be fully present to life.



Here is how to move forward.

First ask forgiveness  
for how messed up you are.

Second ask Jesus for His life  
to learn how to be present in your life.

Receive in Faith all you need from the Holy Spirit.

Thank Him in advance for your ability  
to do the supernatural.







C. S. Lewis said it this way:

Of his great humility He chose to be incarnate in a man of delicate sensibilities who wept at the grave of Lazarus and sweated blood in Gethsemane...

(Otherwise)

We should also have missed the all-important help of knowing that He has faced all that the weakest of us face, has shared not only the strength of our nature but every weakness of it except sin.



Please come and check it out and hang out with us.

Online Marketplace training: [www.matthewrawlins.com](http://www.matthewrawlins.com) (It's on Thinkific)

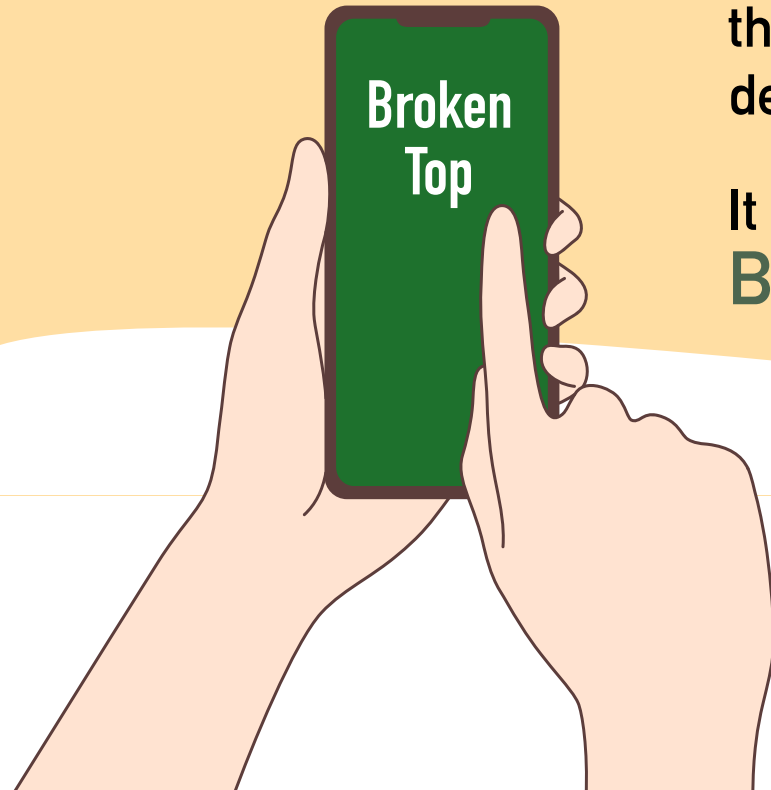
Ministry: [www.brokentopleadership.com](http://www.brokentopleadership.com)

Marketplace work: [www.thegreenbench.com](http://www.thegreenbench.com)

email: [mrawlins@mac.com](mailto:mrawlins@mac.com)

Devotions for  
your mobile phone.  
It has daily devotions  
that will help you go  
deeper with God.

It is called:  
**Broken Top**



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## Other books I wrote to help Christians deepen their relationship with God.

### **Rediscovering Reverence**

The path to intimacy

### **The Question**

Is God good to all?

### **The Namer**

How do I find my true identity?

### **Emails from Hell**

Evil schemes to undermine a leader

### **Walked Naked into the Land of Uncertainty**

5 keys for leadership into the unknown

### **Guardian**

A journey to the heart

### **Humility**

### **Emails from Heaven**

An angels advice to his young apprentice.

### **The Long Sacred Journey:**

#### **Volume One**

Reflections along the way

**These are some I wrote to help leaders in the business world.**

**Finding the Pain in your @ss-umptions**

A leadership tale

**The Green Bench**

A dialogue about leadership and change

**The Green Bench II**

More dialogue about leadership and communication

**There's an Elephant in the Room**

Discover the single most powerful tool for growth

**The Lottery**

A question can change a life.

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How do you prepare yourself for the unknown?

**Effective Leadership**

In uncertain times

**Courageous Leadership**

In uncertain times

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