

I was in a college chemistry class when someone gave me a flask and told me to figure out what was in it. I took a big sniff... and thought I was going to die! It was ammonia, and I felt like my nasal passages had been cleaned out with a roto-rooter. I may not have learned complex chemical formulas in that class, but I learned to be very cautious when using my sense of smell to determine an unknown.

We all have a limited capacity to absorb God in our system. We are too much of this earth, too foreign to God to be able to accept Him readily. There is an incompatibility there, almost like the transplantation of an organ that the body, in its ignorance, tries to reject. Even a tiny "sniff" of God is too much for our system, for we cannot possibly understand His entire magnificence and glory.

For some reason this reminds me of the great Jack Nicholson line: "You can't handle the truth!" We simply can't handle the full measure of the Spirit on our own.

It is incredible to think that as mere humans we can have contact with God. He is the ultimate source of power, and we cannot connect directly to Him. We cannot handle on our own the jolt that we would get as a result. I have been shocked a few times in my limited experience as an amateur electrician, but fortunately I have never been struck directly by lightning. This would totally overload my system.

We know what happens to our electronic gizmos when the voltage is turned up too high: they get toasted! In the electronic world, there are ways that equipment can be protected against a power surge. One way is to use a light source and a detector to create a way to send the information from one point to the other without being electrically connected. This is called an opto-isolator and is essentially a buffer between two circuits.

We need some kind of buffer to allow us to communicate with God without frying our souls. God warned that man could not see His face and live (Exodus 33:20), but He let Moses about as close to Him as He did any man. It is a very interesting to see how God took special care to show Himself to Moses in this story. But the people of Israel were to stand back; they were not mature enough to get that close. They were not even supposed to touch the mountain where Moses went to meet God (Exodus 19:12) or they would be killed. And the people when the people saw the glory of God, they were glad to stay at a distance.

*When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

*Exodus 20:18-19*

We should also realize that we need help if we are to approach God. God provides us with buffer, or a mediator, to bridge the gap between ourselves and God without letting us get hurt. This buffer, of course, is Christ. He let go of some of His power, and "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." By becoming man He turned down the power level to one that we could comprehend, even touch, without being burned. And because of this we can accept a dose of His Spirit and His Grace to keep us close to Him forever.