

WHERE IS GOD?

His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him— though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. - Acts 17:27-28



Activity: Look at the paper titled “Where am I in God?” Spend some time considering which person you are and why you are there. Then return to read the following:

One day, while zooming down the stairs of The National Gallery in London to see a collection of Gauguin paintings on loan, I was stopped in my tracks by a famous painting. I had never cared to see this painting because I had seen prints of it in art books and on dorm room walls; and, frankly, I wasn’t impressed. But, here, in its original splendor, on the landing of a stairway, I was transfixed.

The painting was Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers*. I could not believe how beautiful it was, how vibrant the colors were, the background looked like real gold, and the flowers almost seemed to dance on the canvas. I could feel the warmth from the colors in this painting. I was humbled and captivated by this painting. The description informed me that Van Gogh intended this painting for his guest bedroom where Gauguin stayed for some time.

I later recounted this encounter as a secular-religious experience until a friend informed me there is no such thing as a secular-religious experience. She made the point that I had encountered the divine in the mundane. I have another friend who told me nothing is mundane, everything belongs to God. Just like God to be everywhere and reveal himself to us in countless unique ways!

Brain Storm:

Has this ever happened to you? Think for a minute, have you ever encountered God in the mundane? Do you have a story you tell over and over because it was such an unusual occurrence? Can you see God’s fingerprints in that event? Was He trying to tell you something or just make Himself known? Invite God to bring various instances to mind. Jot down any thoughts that come without judging them, like a brain storm session.

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Activity: Looking for God in the mundane

1. Can you think of a famous work of art that you like? Latch on to the first image you can see clearly in your mind.
2. Do you happen to know the name of the artist and the work? If not, just describe the image briefly in your mind.
3. As you look at this painting in your mind's eye, what strikes you about it? What do you notice? Does anything stand out?
4. Now pray and ask God what truth this painting reveals about God, our world, or the people in it. This may take a moment of reflection and listening and really looking at one aspect of the painting in particular that fascinates you. Write down what comes to mind.
5. Take a moment to thank God for visiting you through this painting.

When my friend told me I had encountered the divine in the mundane, I was sad that I didn't know it at the time. I was concerned that maybe I had missed a golden opportunity. Fortunately, God is not limited by time and space; so, I prayed and asked God, "Why did that painting strike me? What would you like to reveal to me through that painting?"

It came to me that when we encounter God, we know it on some level whether we have words for it or not. And, God is more vivid and captivating than any cheap image the media might try to give us of him. In life, don't settle for the cheap imitations of God the world will offer, such as an old guy in a robe smiting people. There is a world of difference to be found in the real thing. Finally, God is warmth and light and something tells me he has the most inviting guest bedrooms ever.

You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.

You go before me and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!

If I go up to heaven, you are there if I go down to the grave, you are there.

If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

- Psalm 139:4-10