

-- 40 DAY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL --

GOD IS...ALL AROUND US



Inspired by

"IMAGES OF GOD"

INTRODUCTION

This Lenten Devotional was inspired and based on the children's book, "Images of God for Young Children" by Marie-Helene Delval and illustrated by Barbara Nascimbeni. The book is described as: "It is impossible to know what God looks like. But the Bible describes many other ways that God is revealed to us. God is joy and wisdom. God is light, and bread, and breath. We have seen God's face in Jesus Christ. This book uses simple language to help young children discover these images of God in their world."

Though the book is written for young children, I read it and realized how good of a reminder these images are for all ages, especially during Lent, a time focused on our relationship with God. A great way to connect with God is to start seeing God more in all that is around us. It is an important reminder that God is not an old man sitting in the clouds, but is part of all creation and works in and among us to bring about good and righteousness in the world.

~Pastor Kelsey

THE DEVOTIONAL

The Devotional goes through the 40 days of Lent. You may not know that the 40 day count between Ash Wednesday and Easter does not include Sundays, as those are thought of as "mini-Easters" focused on the upcoming joy of the resurrection instead of the somber reverence taken on through the rest of Lent. This Devotional follows that tradition and gives a daily devotional for Monday through Saturday.

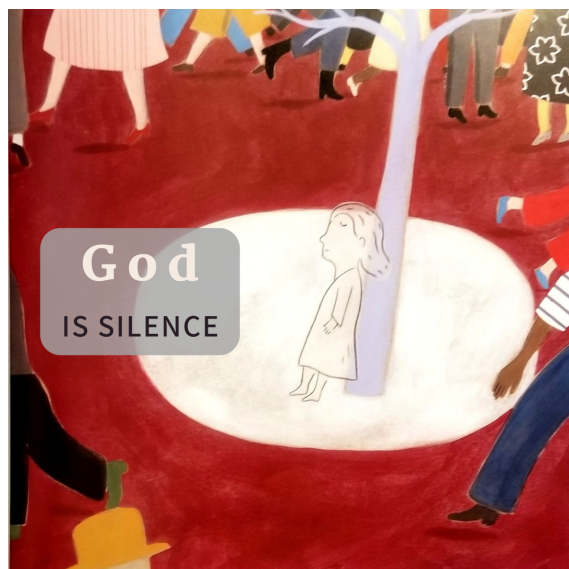
Each day includes the text and paired illustration for each of the 40 images of God shared in the book, a Psalm that connects to the theme, a short reflection written by Pastor Kelsey, and a prayer from the #PictureLent series that is based on the Psalms this year. You can learn more about that Lent series at pictureadvent.weebly.com.

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DAY 5: GOD IS SILENCE

FEB. 22



Being quiet is necessary
To understand the cries
Of love and of anger,
The millions of questions and
complaints,
The secrets and prayers,
That rise up from the earth.

PSALM 65:1-5

- 1 God of Zion, to you even silence is praise.
Promises made to you are kept—
- 2 you listen to prayer—
and all living things come to you.
- 3 When wrongdoings become too much for
me,
you forgive our sins.
- 4 How happy is the one you choose to bring
close,
the one who lives in your courtyards!
We are filled full by the goodness of your
house,
by the holiness of your temple.

REFLECTION:

God is the word, but God is equally in the silence. For some, God is found best in the silence. In the moments with quiet being all around them and inside them, they can listen for what God is speaking to them. God also gives us God's silence as we pray and share our lives with God. God does not only speak to us but listens to us, in our praise and frustration, in our adoration and our anger, in our prayers and in our grumbles. Sometimes we can find silence for ourselves with God's help. When we take time to connect with God, God can bring quiet to the noise and busyness of our daily lives.

PRAYER:

God, be our refuge today. As we face challenges, remind us of your presence. Teach us to sit in silence, knowing we are not alone but with you. Amen.⁵

⁵ Written by Amelia Richardson Dress

DAY 6: GOD IS SECRET

FEB. 23



PSALM 69:16-18

16 Answer me, Lord, for your faithful love is good!

Turn to me in your great compassion!

17 Don't hide your face from me, your servant,

because I'm in deep trouble.

Answer me quickly!

18 Come close to me!

Redeem me!

Save me because of my enemies!

It would be wonderful to know
Everything about God--

To discover where he is and what
he looks like.

We want to know everything
immediately!

But God remains secret for now.

God has his own time.

But that doesn't matter,

Because we have our whole lives

To come closer to this great secret.

REFLECTION:

Like Psalm 69 expresses so well, often enough God can feel unreachable or unknowable. Since God is bigger than human form, we don't get to see, talk to, touch, or get to know God in the ways we are used to with our community. Since God is so much wiser and above all worldly things, we cannot know all about God until we are fully in God's presence in Heaven. Though that means there is much about God that remains secret to us during our life, it also means there is always more to discover about God and God's work in the world. Let us discover and learn with joy.

PRAYER:

Dear God, we are not very good at waiting. Sometimes we wait in excitement, and you sustain us. Sometimes we wait in fear, and you comfort us. Thank you for being with us in the waiting. Amen.⁶

⁶ Written by Erika Stiner & her children: Blaine, & Elise

DAY 7: GOD IS OUR TEARS

FEB. 24



God

IS OUR TEARS

PSALM 40:1-3, 16-17

- 1 I put all my hope in the Lord.
He leaned down to me;
he listened to my cry for help.
- 2 He lifted me out of the pit of death,
out of the mud and filth,
and set my feet on solid rock.
He steadied my legs.
- 3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise for our God.
Many people will learn of this and be amazed;
they will trust the Lord.
- 16 But let all who seek you
celebrate and rejoice in you.
Let those who love your salvation always say,
"The Lord is great!"
- 17 But me? I'm weak and needy.
Let my Lord think of me.
You are my help and my rescuer.
My God, don't wait any longer!

PSALM 56:8

- 8 You yourself have kept track of my misery.
Put my tears into your bottle—
aren't they on your scroll already?

If he weren't,
How would he
Understand our tears?
How would he cry when we cry?
But God has promised that one
day he will wipe away all the tears
from every eye,
And sadness will no longer exist.

REFLECTION:

God is our tears. This one is perhaps the most abstract of the bunch. God is the salty drops of water leaving our eyeballs? Perhaps our tears are not literally God, but when tears leave our eyes, we can remember that God is there. Tears come in moments of strong emotion, and often the moments we may need or want God to be there the most. God comforts us when we have tears of sadness or hurt, hears our grumbling when we have tears of anger or frustration. God celebrates with us when we have tears of joy. Often enough those tears come because of the ways we love and care about people and happenings in the world. Those are the moments that we get to experience a piece of God's care for the world which is our promise that when we are together with God, we will not have sadness and heartbreak anymore.

PRAYER:

God, I affirm that you can hold all my tears, sorrow, or anger. Even in the darkest places, your face radiates light, the Holy Spirit is a beam of hope in our world. Jesus Christ, walk closely with me this day, guiding my footsteps, bringing me closer to You. Amen.⁷

⁷ Written by Amy Sigmon

DAY 8: GOD IS JOY

FEB. 25



PSALM 16:5-11

- 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- 6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in
pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- 7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- 8 I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be
moved.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- 10 For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- 11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

All that God created comes from this
joy.

The thousands of beautiful sights on
the earth,

The millions of living creatures,

The great whirl of stars in the
heavens--

These are an echo of his laughter.

And when our hearts celebrate,
We share in God's laughter and joy.

REFLECTION:

Our God of Love, Light, and Breath, brings Joy. Bigger and deeper than happiness, joy is a gladness and fullness in our souls. Joy helps us to find hope for the future. Helps us remain optimistic in times of hardship. Like the illustration in the book, Joy can even be found in the midst of darkness. We experience joy through love, play, imagination, and the little things that bring us pleasure or comfort like sitting under a tree on a beautiful summer day. God who creates, makes new, and works for good, will always bring us back to ways to experience joy.

PRAYER:

God, you fill me with peace, with light and with joy. Your tender care is present when all else feels hard. I can trust in you sticking right by my side. Amen.⁸

⁸ Rev. Joanna Cummings

DAY 9: GOD IS A SPRING

FEB. 26



God
IS A SPRING

PSALM 42:1-5

1 Just like a deer that craves streams of water,
my whole being craves you, God.

2 My whole being thirsts for God, for the living
God.

When will I come and see God's face?

3 My tears have been my food both day and
night,

as people constantly questioned me,
"Where's your God now?"

4 But I remember these things as I bare my
soul:

how I made my way to the mighty one's
abode, to God's own house,

with joyous shouts and thanksgiving
songs—

a huge crowd celebrating the festival!

5 Why, I ask myself, are you so depressed?

Why are you so upset inside?

Hope in God!

Because I will again give him thanks,
my saving presence and my God.

No one can live without water.
As our bodies are thirsty for water,
Our souls are thirsty for love--
And for beauty and for goodness,
For justice and for truth.

God is all of these and more.
He is the source of all these things,
And he invites us to drink from this
spring.

REFLECTION:

God is a spring, is pure and fresh water that bubbles up amidst the rocks and dirt of the earth. God is the source of life, of all that brings love, beauty, goodness, justice, hope and joy. God is our spring, our source of life even in the most desert parts of our lives. The spring of God always flows and is always available for us to come and partake in. When we rely on God, when we trust God to guide us, God's life-bringing spring can pour into our lives.

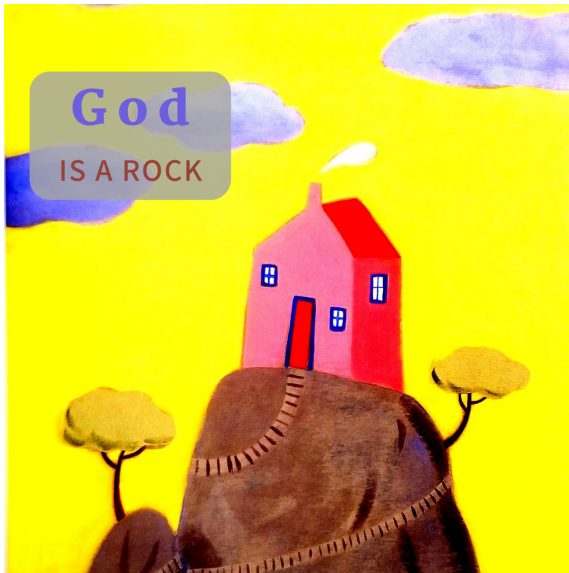
PRAYER:

Lord you are my God! You have given me so much, even more than I can understand. So many times I get stuck trying to give back to you, and give back to you what I think you want. Please help me to just accept the bounty you give, and to open the ears of my heart to your voice. I feel your love, and because of that, I will declare your love to all that I can. Lord, I give all to you, because you have given to me first. Amen.⁹

⁹ Written by Rev. Matthew Chapman

DAY 10: GOD IS A ROCK

FEB. 27



PSALM 18:1-2, 31-32, 46

- 1 I love you, O Lord, my strength.
2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
 my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
 my shield, and the horn of my salvation,
 my stronghold.
- 31 Now really, who is divine except the Lord?
 And who is a rock but our God?
32 Only God! The God who equips me with strength
 and makes my way perfect,
- 46 The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock,
 and exalted be the God of my salvation.

Rocks are hard. They are solid.
They support anything
That is built on them--
A house, a strong castle.
You can stay standing on a rock
Without ever fearing that you will
sink down.

REFLECTION:

God wants to be our rock and our foundation. No matter how chaotic or messy our lives are or how unstable and unsure we feel, God will always be steady and strong. We can rely on God to ground us and shelter us when the world feels shaky around us. God will protect and sustain us through whatever storms life brings us. Even during the easy times, God is still our rock and foundation from which we grow and build ourselves up. Like the Psalm says, God also shares God's strength with us, equipping us to continue on our path.

PRAYER:

God of awe and wonder,
Help us to put our trust in you. As we journey through this time of Lent, allow us to be filled with your mercy and grace. We pray that as we trust in you, our lives are transformed for your glory. Amen.¹⁰

¹⁰ Written by Grace Okerson