



May 22, 2023

## Where is God?

Where is God? I've come to realize that the answer to this question is critical to my relationship with our loving Father. For years my yearning to find God has been like playing Where's Waldo. It felt like God was hiding in plain sight but there were so many distractions and look alikes that I couldn't recognize him. I was looking in the wrong places. I attended church regularly and became active in Bible studies, prayer groups, conferences and retreats. I have a whole library of Christian books. I'm not saying these weren't beneficial but they didn't satisfy my longing for a real relationship with the living God. I was seeking God through more head knowledge rather than with my heart. I knew a lot about him but I didn't know God as a living being. I still saw him as far away - out there or up there somewhere. Reaching God was like chasing an elusive butterfly. Consequently after spending time in God's Word I would more or less leave God on the shelf with my Bible as I went about my day and my prayers felt more like throwing pennies in a wishing well than a conversation with someone who loved and cared about me.

However, I am now beginning to learn that if I take time to be still, God assures me that his presence is and has been right here all the time. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus who didn't recognize Jesus, I need my eyes opened to see that he's with me and wants me to depend on him in all that I do. I'm trusting that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is in me and around me like the air I breathe and the atmosphere we all live in- invisible but essential to my spiritual life and relationship with the Trinity. I want to be able to say with Paul "It is no longer I that lives but Christ who lives in me." Galatians 2:20

The more I remember to acknowledge this presence as I go about my day, the more I experience it. Thanks to Reverend Anne, practicing Centering Prayer (or Contemplative / Quiet Prayer as it is sometimes called) has become very helpful in learning to just be with God.

Henry Nouwen explains it this way:

“The practice of contemplative prayer is the discipline by which we begin to “see” the living God dwelling in our own hearts. Careful attentiveness to the One who makes a home in the privileged center of our being gradually leads to recognition. As we come to know and love the Father of our hearts we give ourselves over to this incredible Presence who takes possession of all our senses. By the discipline of prayer we are awakened and opened to God within, who enters into our heartbeat and our breathing, into our thoughts and emotions, our hearing, seeing, touching and tasting. It is by being awake to this God within that we also find the Presence in the world around us.”

The Bible promises that if we draw near to God, God will draw near to us, James 4:18. In fact our Father wants nothing more than for you and me to remain in him and he will remain in us, John 15:4. It boggles my mind to think that Jesus is as delighted when I just want to be with him and share my life with him as I am when our children and grandchildren want to talk to us and spend time with us. I could truly relate to Reverend Anne when she said that getting a phone call from her son on Mothers Day was the best gift of all. Now imagine how it delights God when we come into his presence with hearts full of love and trust to share all that is in our hearts and minds. Remembering that Jesus lives within me rather than out there somewhere makes it much easier to talk to him. I’m reminded of the Sunday school song “Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart Lord Jesus. Come in today. Come in to stay.”

So where is God? Acts 17:24,27-28 answers this question beautifully! “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man made temples....He himself gives life and breath to everything and he satisfies every need. 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 anyone of us. For in him we live and move and exist.”  
(New Living Translation)

~Written by Marilyn Whisner



8190 Lincoln Rd. Beulah, MI 49617  
231.882.4241  
[www.benziestandrews.com](http://www.benziestandrews.com)



Benzie St. Andrews | 8190 Lincoln Rd, Beulah, MI 49617

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