

The background is an abstract watercolor wash in warm tones of peach, pink, and light brown. It features delicate, irregular patterns and is accented with fine, shimmering lines of gold leaf, particularly visible in the upper left and lower right areas.

glimpsing grace

40 days of inspiration
in scripture
and prayer

Jo Acharya

with contributions from Dan Acharya

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Welcome

Hello! Whoever you are, and whatever prompted you to pick up this book, I hope you find something in it that blesses you in your friendship with God.

This collection of devotionals touches on many themes. Most are short pieces I've written for social media over the last three years, and they're drawn from my own friendship with God: Bible passages that grab my attention, questions I've been pondering, things I'm learning as I go. Each devotional is paired with suggestions of ways to respond in thought, Bible study, prayer, creative activity or practical action.

There's no unifying theme, but you'll see there are a few threads that run through the book, ideas I come back to again and again. I'm a creative person with a busy mind and a body limited by chronic illness, and like all Jesus-followers I'm navigating the pain of this broken world alongside its many joys and blessings, finding hope in God's faithfulness and the promise of eternity. The wonder of his grace and the challenge of trusting him in the hard things are two themes that continually resonate with me on my own path.



The biggest thing I've felt God speaking to me about these last few years is rest. I'm bad at rest. I'm bad at slowing down and just letting myself 'be'. But more and more I feel that's the central thing God is calling me to do: simply keep coming back to him in quiet surrender and allow him to work in my heart.

So in this book I've also included some prayer exercises that are designed to lead you into rest and contemplation of God's presence with you. Many of these are based on ancient spiritual practices used by Christians throughout history. They might be unfamiliar to you, but I encourage you to try them out and enjoy exploring different ways of spending time with God.

Finally, as with my first book *Refresh*, I asked my husband Dan to contribute some of his beautiful photography, which is featured through the book. This time he's written two lovely reflections as well.

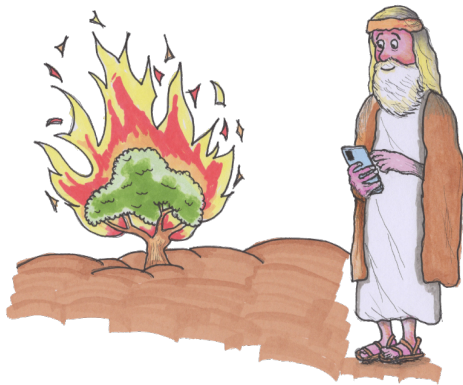
Feel free to dip in and out, pick a page that catches your eye or just dive right in at the beginning! Enjoy the journey.

Wilderness Moments

Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

Exodus 3:3-4

I've had this cartoon image in my mind for a while. I'm not an artist, so my friend Jan kindly drew it for me. Here's the scene from Exodus chapter 3, with the bush in ferocious flame. And here's Moses, but he hasn't noticed the bush... He's too busy looking at his phone.



Life is so distracting, isn't it? And God doesn't usually speak to us in such dramatic ways as a burning bush. It's even easier to miss his still, small voice. So often my mind is too busy, too crowded to notice the Lord's presence with me.

Sometimes we need to 'prepare the way for the Lord' (Mark 1:3), not only by setting aside intentional time to meet with him, but also by leaving a bit of 'wilderness' in our days. Our lives are punctuated by natural pauses, when we make and eat meals, do chores, go for walks, drive to appointments, even visit the toilet! If I'm honest my habit is to fill most of these breaks with stimulation, entertainment, noise. Perhaps you do

this too...

But what if we chose instead to leave some of these moments empty and open? What if we chose to create the possibility of holy ground?

Today I'm going to try that. I'm going to embrace the natural pauses in my day and resist the urge to fill them with YouTube videos and Facebook scrolling. I'm going to leave God a little bit of wilderness and see where it leads.



As you begin this book, why not take 15 minutes to rest with God. Find a quiet place to sit or head out for a walk. Thank God for being with you, and then... just wait.

Don't overthink this time or try to force it. If your mind wanders, notice where it wanders to. Is it a distraction, or is God calling your attention to something?

Pay attention to any words or images that come to mind. Sometimes I find myself remembering a Bible verse or a lyric from a song. Things like this may be whispers from God - or they may just be random. Do as Moses did and explore further. Write down and pray about anything you feel God may be saying.

If God doesn't seem to speak, that's okay too. Companionship doesn't always involve conversation. Keep your heart open and know that he's still with you as you continue your day.



Dust and Glory

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

Do you know where the word 'humble' comes from? Its root is an old Latin word that means 'of the earth'. The word 'human' comes from the same root.

Isn't that great? For me that immediately conjures the picture of God gathering a handful of dry dust and moulding Adam in his own image. Science tells us this too: strange as it may seem, we are made of the same basic stuff as the very ground we walk on. We are of the earth.

Being humble is about remembering our origins. It's acknowledging that we didn't make ourselves and don't own ourselves (Psalm 100:3). It's embracing the reality that we were created from dust and blessed with life by the one who sustains all things through his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

So to be human is to be a mound of muddy earth, scooped into the hand of the creator, transformed into a living, breathing, dancing, thinking person. And somehow - remarkably - it is to be saturated with his very likeness, invited into his family and tasked with reflecting his light into the world.

Real humility is not forever lying face down in the dust convinced of our unworthiness. It's gratefully allowing God to scoop us up and transform us into something wonderful and new, something both of the earth and infused with heaven. A humble human being, bearing the glorious image of God.

Investigating the history of familiar words can dig up deeper layers of meaning.

Look up the definitions and etymology (origin) of these words from the Bible, and let what you find inspire a prayer today.

- **Ruach** (Hebrew) or **Pneuma** (Greek) - usually translated as **Spirit**, as in Genesis 1:2
- **Logos** (Greek) - translated as **Word** in John 1:1
- **Hesed** (Hebrew) - often translated as **lovingkindness, mercy, or unfailing love**, as in Psalm 36:7

Tip: Use the lexicon tool at biblehub.com to see Bible verses in their original language and click any word to find out more about its meaning and uses.





Wonder

Spend a few minutes looking at this picture. Imagine standing where the camera is, looking down on this valley. Feel the heat of the sun, and perhaps a warm breeze.

- What do you think is behind you? Where have you come from and where are you going?
- Does the landscape spark any memories, hopes or questions?
- Are your eyes drawn to the lush green trees, or the parched land? Which do you relate to most right now?
- Where is God in this picture and where are you? Does he feel close or distant, down in the open fields or beyond the hills?
- Do you want to stay up above this scene or clamber down into it?

Now turn your thoughts into a conversation with your heavenly Father.

This exercise is based on the practice of Visio Divina, a way of 'praying with the eyes', where we open our hearts to God by meditating on a piece of art.