

# MYSTERY

holiness and unanswered questions





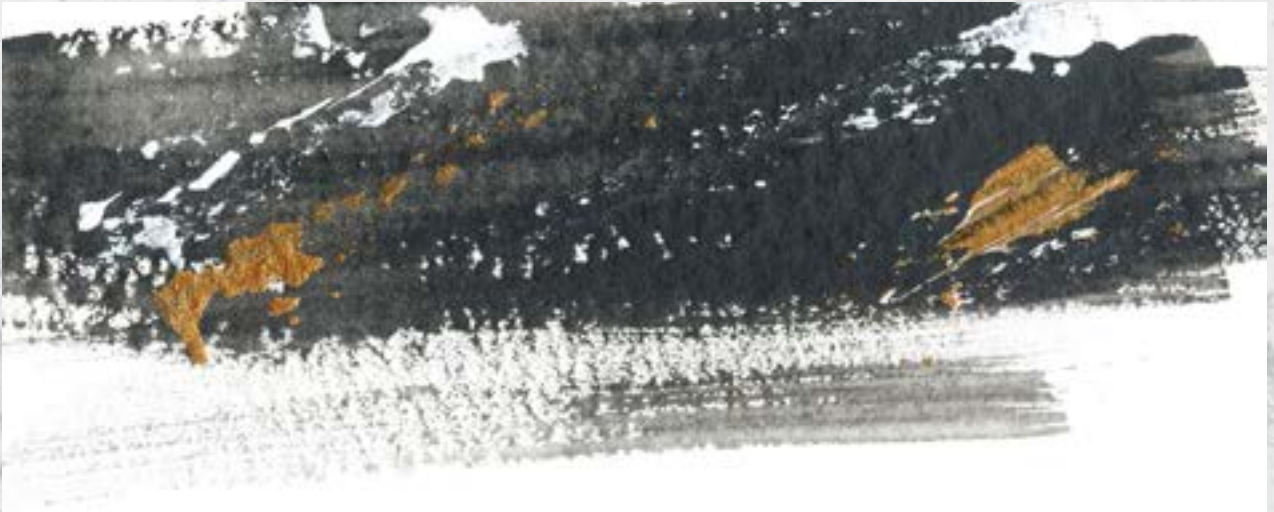
# Awe

There's so much that is unknown (and is unknowable) about God and faith, and that can create either a sense of wonder or a sense of frustration and dread. We tend to deal with the unexplained as problems that need to be solved. Being without answers feels unsafe. How can you trust a mystery?

Over and over again, the Bible tells us that God is set apart and above us. His ways and thoughts are 'higher' than our own, his presence dangerous to anyone who disparages it. This all-powerful and all-encompassing being calls us into a relationship, but the very nature of our existence keeps us from every fully understanding what he is.

The function of faith is not to reduce mystery to rational clarity, but to invite it into our daily lives. It remains a mystery, because it can't be anything else. To treat it as something that needs to be overcome is to miss the beauty of it. There will always be wonder, deeply felt questions that can't quite be put into words, because our God can't be reduced to the levels of our comprehension.

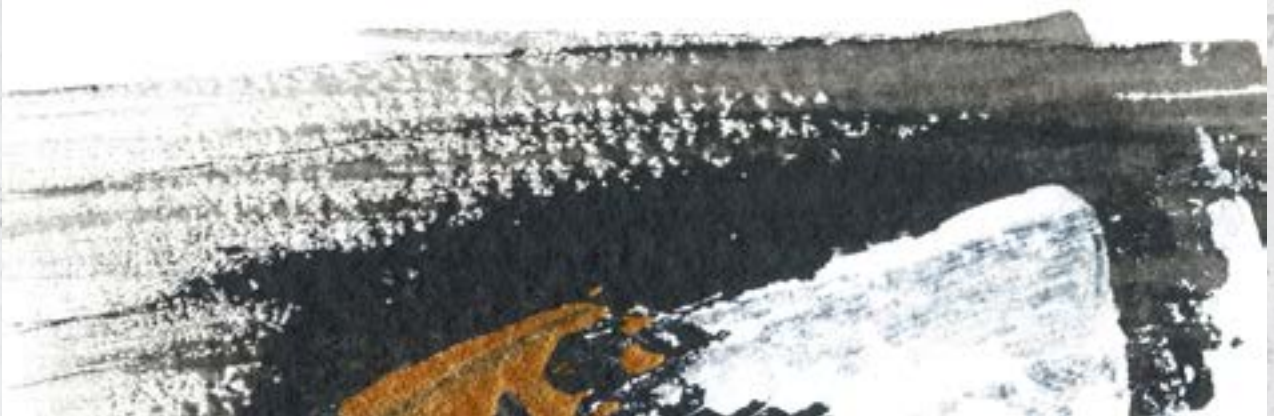
- *Read Revelation 4*
  - *What do verses like these tell you about the character of God?*
  - *Is there anything you like about this? Anything you dislike?*
  - *Is this a God you find approachable? Is that important?*
  - *Read Psalm 34:18 and Romans 8:12-17*
  - *Does this feel like the same God from the earlier passages? Why or why not?*
  - *Which of life's mysteries is the most exciting, awe-inspiring for you? Which is the most frustrating?*
  - *What parts of Christianity are the most difficult to believe?*
-

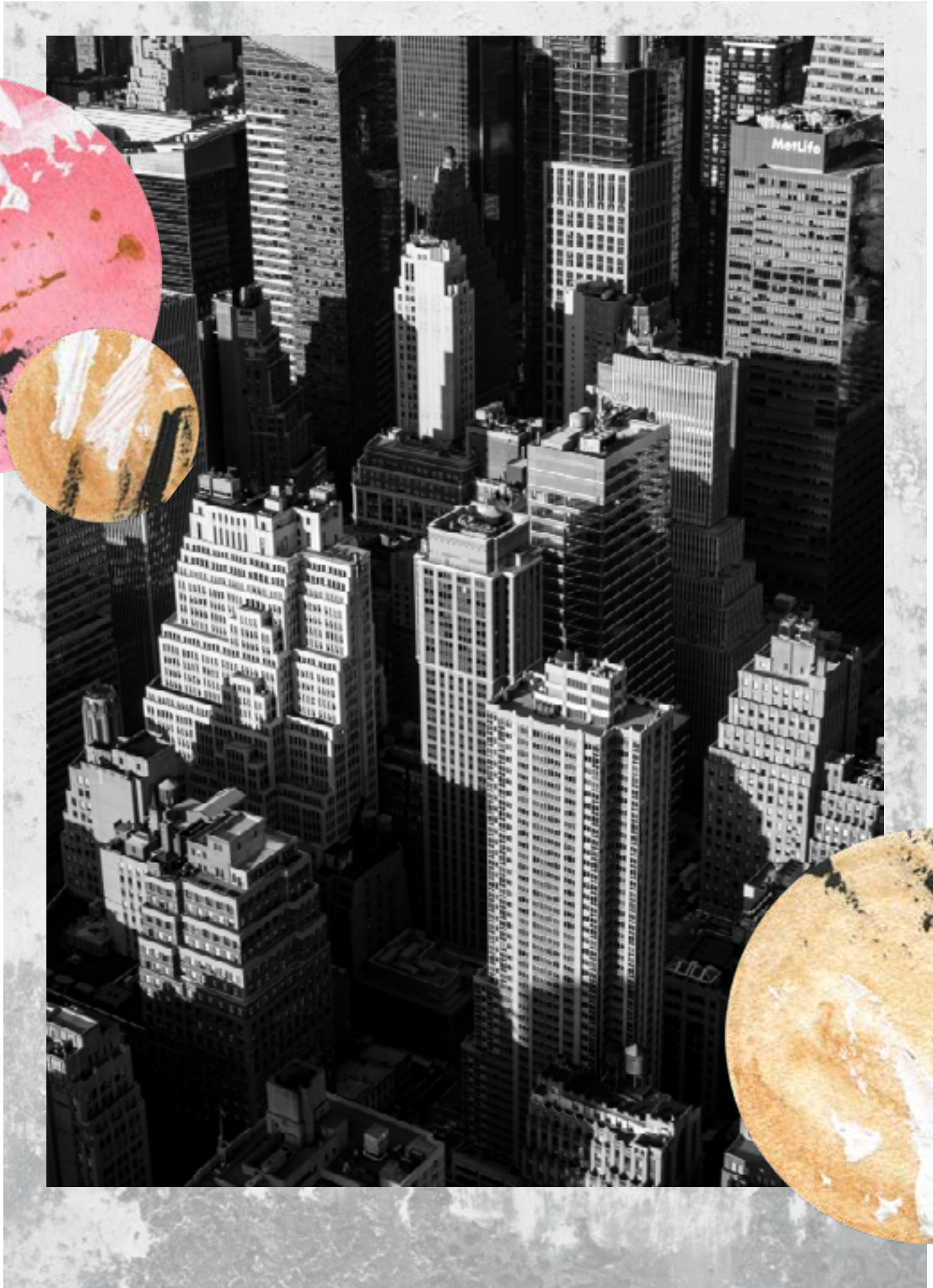


*“Secularism, materialism, and the intrusive presence of things have put out the light in our souls and turned us into a generation of zombies. We cover our deep ignorance with words, but we are ashamed to wonder. We are afraid to whisper, ‘mystery.’”*

---

A.W. TOZER





# Answers


Faith is often marketed as something that provides answers to the big questions in life. But in practice, it usually just prompts more questions and often we get what feels like silence instead of responses. And when crises hit, trite explanations ring hollow. We are left looking for reason in unreasonable situations.

The easy solution is to not think very deeply about anything. Insulating ourselves from challenging ideas and shying away from exploring the depths of our own questions keeps us in the shallows, but it also keeps us from being left answerless.

We aren't asked to ignore the questions. But God doesn't promise to tell us everything we want to know, or promise to answer us directly in a way we can't misunderstand. What he does promise, is to respond when people call to him, and to make previously unknown things known.

- *Read Philippians 2:12-13*
  - *What does it mean to work on our faith?*
  - *What does this imply about spiritual life?*
  - *Read Jeremiah 33:3*
  - *Do you think this is true?*
  - *Have you had an experience where God has answered one of your questions? One where God hasn't?*
  - *Remind yourself of the story of Job, and read Job 40 and 42:1-6*
  - *What was Job asking? How did God respond?*
  - *Does this reassure you? Frustrate you?*
  - *If you could have any question answered, what would you ask?*
  - *Are there any deep, unsettling questions about faith that you are avoiding diving into? Take some time to pray about it, being honest about your feelings and open to answers you may not expect.*
-





*“You are so young, so much before  
all beginning, and I would like to beg  
you, dear sir, as well as I can, to have  
patience with everything unresolved  
in your heart and to try to love the  
questions themselves as if they were  
locked rooms or books written in a  
very foreign language. Don’t search for  
the answers... The point is, to live with  
everything, live the questions now.”*

---

RAINER MARIA RILKE





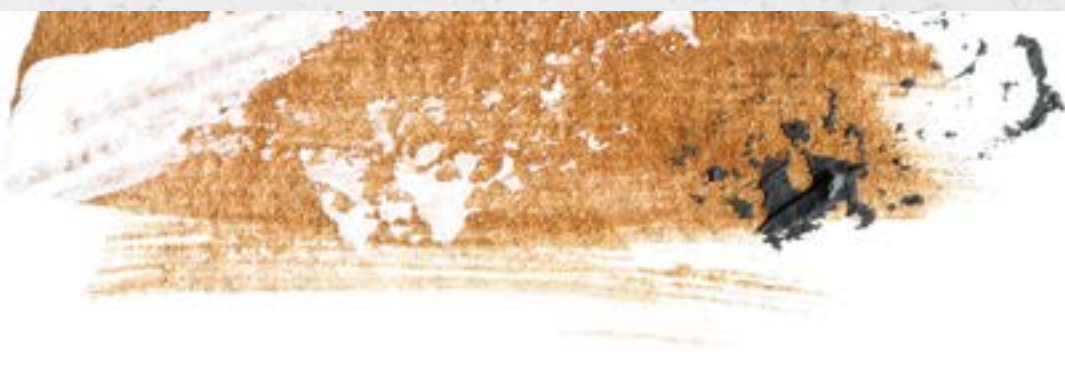
# Direction

Walking by faith can be more like being in the wilderness instead of a lush landscape we may hope for. And usually God calls us even further into the wild, away from what looks like the fruits of our labors.

This isn't something that only happens on the frontlines of 'ministry.' It isn't just for people who are outwardly attempting what the world would call courageous acts on behalf of their faith. This is every day. It may look like being sacrificially kind when you will never benefit from it, arriving at closed doors you expected to be open, or finding yourself in a crisis with no apparent solution.

Instead of the big picture, we get a few glimpses of the next few feet, expected to follow without any knowledge of what may be lurking just ahead. And choosing to trust and move forward is faith, at its most basic and also its deepest level.

- *Read Proverbs 16:1-3*
  - *Where have your plans been out of alignment with God's? When is this good? When is it frustrating?*
  - *Read Isaiah 30:19-21*
  - *What does this say about God's direction for our lives?*
  - *Have you ever felt paralyzed by indecision? How did you find the confidence to act?*
  - *Read Romans 8:28-30*
  - *Think about a previous time in your life when you didn't know where God was leading you. Can you see now with a better perspective what was going on?*
  - *Do you know where God is leading you right now? What direction or vision would be helpful to have? Take some time in prayer to ask for it.*
-



*No: a glimpse is not a vision. But to a man on a mountain road by night, a glimpse of the next three feet of road may matter more than a vision of the horizon.*

---

C.S. LEWIS





# Incarnate

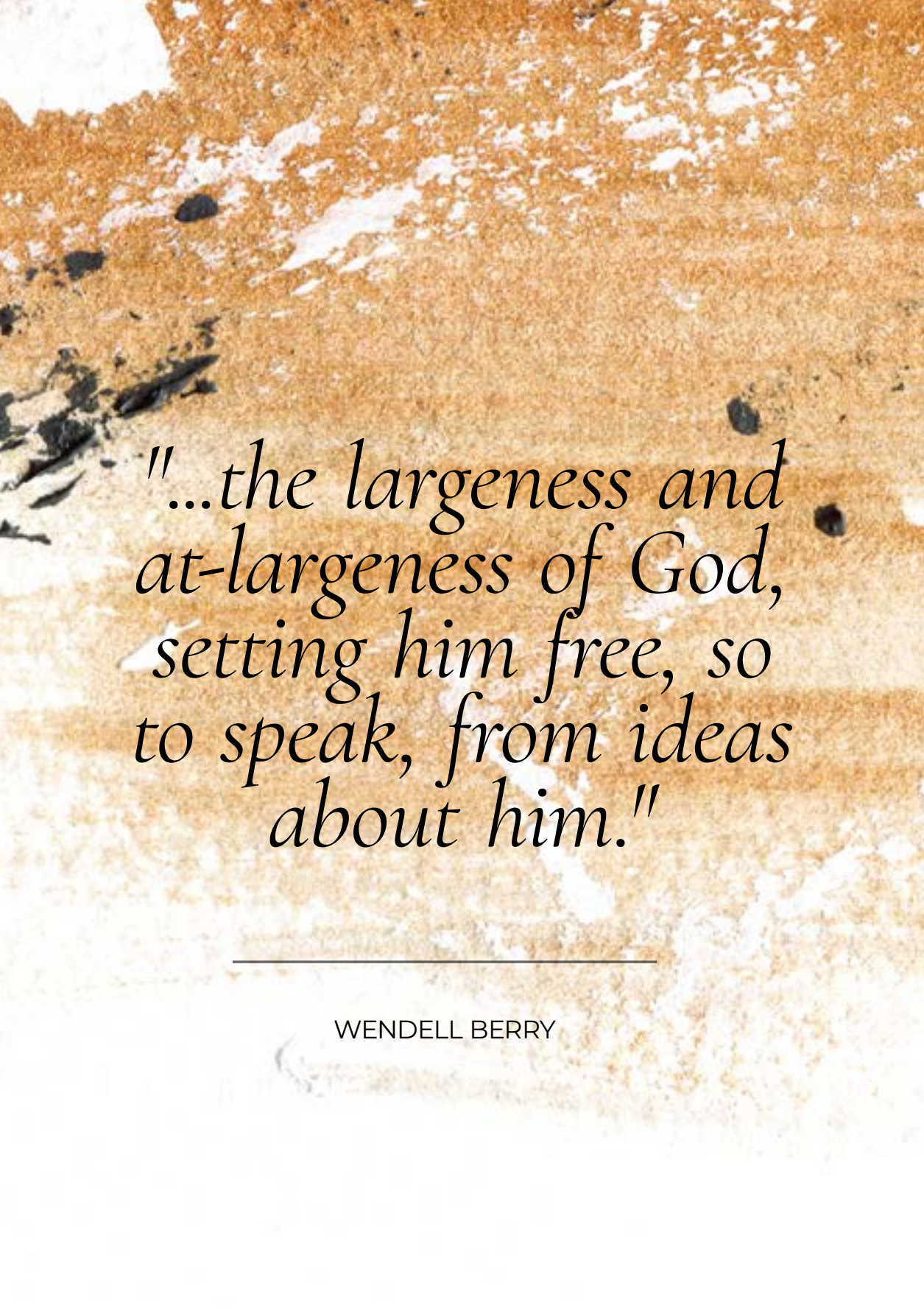
A mystery can be something to solve or questions to wonder, but when the word is used in the Bible it often refers to something that was hidden that has been revealed. From the beginning, God had set in motion a plan that would take sinners and turn them into co-inheritors. But it wasn't until Christ's life, crucifixion and resurrection that it was revealed.

Even Jesus himself was a mystery. He is fully God and fully man, a king who wore a crown of thorns. He wept at Lazarus' tomb before raising him from the dead. Jesus is the incarnation, holiness and deity made flesh.

This is the biggest mystery of our faith, and it is one that has been resolved. It is the mystery of grace, of a God who is holy and separate but also near and gentle. It is the mystery of a fallen world being given a way back to restoration. This mystery can guide you toward praise, it can spark your curiosity, or it can humble you. Usually it does all three.

- *Read Luke 9:28-36*
  - *What are your initial reactions to this story? What questions does it prompt?*
  - *How do you usually imagine Jesus?*
  - *Is it easier to think of him as God, or as a man?*
  - *What ideas about Jesus do you have that may be limiting to him?*
  - *Read Ephesians 1:3-14*
  - *What does this passage say about the will of God?*
  - *Aside from entrance into heaven, what has Jesus given to us?*
  - *Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58*
  - *What does this mean for your life now?*
  - *In what ways are you embracing the various mysteries of God? Where are you falling short? Spend time in prayer, thanking God for the wonder and awe he inspires, and asking him to reveal the answers to your other questions.*
-





*"...the largeness and  
at-largeness of God,  
setting him free, so  
to speak, from ideas  
about him."*

---

WENDELL BERRY

Unsettled Collective exists to create bold, and at times subversive, discipleship content that will encourage people in faith while also provoking them into action. We create artistic devotional material for individuals, groups, and teams that spark discussion and challenge our perception of what Christianity is, what a church should look like, and who is welcome at the table.

Learn more at [unsettledcollective.com](https://unsettledcollective.com)

