

**Job 23:1-9,16-17**

**Where are you, God?**

Despite the unhelpful accusations of his friends that he must be a sinner to have suffered so much, Job continues to protest his innocence. He wishes that he could find God, who he believes would listen to him as he argues his case. Job is in deep darkness, though still alive.



**Bible notes**



This is a bleak passage with little obvious hope. There may well be some hearing the text who are in a similarly bleak place. The text needs to be handled with particular care, with hope offered from other sources, or by reading the rest of God's response. The Hebrews text could be helpful here (Hebrews 4:15 especially), as could the Gospel. The verses from Job come after the third round of speeches from Job's 'friends' and immediately after Eliphaz's indictment of Job (one commentator describes Eliphaz as the 'kindest of the three friends'). But even for Eliphaz, Job is plainly marked out as a sinner. So, he concludes that Job should turn back to God (i.e. repent) and accept God's instruction. If he does, Eliphaz believes God will restore Job's prosperity. For Eliphaz, piety and prosperity are inextricably linked. He cannot comprehend Job's greater piety, which holds on to both his innocence and to the God whose actions are incomprehensible. Convinced that he has done nothing wrong, Job longs for the opportunity to present his case directly before God. Alongside this we have Job's sense of despair as God proves to be elusive. Alongside Job's physical suffering there is now clear evidence of mental anguish too in the form of fear (v.16) and severe depression (v.17).

**First impressions**

- Have you ever felt abandoned by God?
- What helped you through this time?
- What words of encouragement/consolation would you give to the person in the picture?
- Have you ever noticed God's love in a 'hopeless place'?



**LISTEN**



Listen to 'All That I Know' by Bridge Music.

**REFLECT**

Do we need to go and look for God, or is he everywhere, with us? Within Ignatian spirituality, we encounter the practice of finding God in all things. Reflect on how God can be found in unexpected places. Look at information from the Ignatian Spirituality movement on the internet. How does it feel to ask not, 'Where are you, God?' but 'How can I recognise that you are here with me, God?'

**A sending out prayer**

On each day of the week,  
we look for God, and find him:  
in our friends, in our family,  
in the people we pass by,  
in our quiet times, in laughter,  
in the natural world;  
for he is everywhere,  
and look inside for he is there! Amen.

**WALK**

Go for a walk and look for signs of God. Can you see signs of his creativity, care, intervention, blessing or kindness? As you reflect on ways that you or your community may be suffering or struggling, acknowledge God's presence around you and with you.

**CREATE**

Using modelling clay, or by drawing, create a finger labyrinth that leads from any start point to the centre, where God is represented. Search for examples online to help you get started. These labyrinths can help us to focus on God, as we draw near to the centre, in quiet prayer.