

## God is Awake

Do you ever feel like God is far away? You keep looking and looking but he's nowhere to be found? Our theology tells us that God is omnipresent - always everywhere - yet our experience doesn't always confirm that truth. If you've ever felt far from God... if you'll be honest enough to admit that sometimes you wish God would act faster, or more powerfully, or more visibly... you're not alone.

Not to switch the subject, but do you like almonds? Interestingly enough, our questions about God being far away, silent, or even absent, are connected in scripture with the almond tree. You see, the almond tree derives its Hebrew name from the verb meaning "to wake" or "to watch".

When God seems far away, often what we're asking is,  
"God, are you *even* awake? Aren't you watching? Don't you see  
what's happening here? Why won't you do something?"

In the stories of Scripture, the presence of almonds is no mere accident. The almonds didn't show up along people's journey just because they taste good, or because they contain the good kind of fat. Almonds showed up at very poignant times to remind people that God is awake and he is watching.

Here are some examples:

- In Jeremiah 1.11, the Lord shows Jeremiah an almond branch as a sign that he is watching and about to act. Which is huge considering what Jeremiah was getting ready to experience! Read all of Jeremiah 1 to find out more.
- You'll find recorded in Exodus 25.33-34 and 37.19-20 that golden, almond-blossom-shaped cups adorned the lampstand of the tabernacle to remind the worshippers of God's ever-watching presence.
- In Numbers 17.8, Aaron's staff spouted almond blossoms and nuts, which may have helped establish, legitimize, and remind people that God was leading his people through Aaron (and the priesthood), and also may have been an indicator that God was about to act.
- In Genesis 43.11, almond nuts were among the delicacies Jacob sent to Joseph in Egypt. This may well have pointed to the God who is awake and watching, strengthening him for the upcoming drought and famine. See the story in full context by reading Genesis 37-50.

Here are some questions for your personal reflection and small group discussion:

- What do you do when God seems far away?
- What kinds of things help you through those times?
- How close does God seem to you lately?
- Is there a prayer you'd like to write out?

Whenever you see almonds, may they remind you that God is here. He is awake. He is at work. Go ahead, buy a pack of almonds. Bring some to your next small group meeting. Give them to a friend who needs a reminder that God his here. He is awake. And He is watching.

*Jesus sent his spirit to live in us.  
God is here.  
May we walk in deep faith, more now than ever before.*