

Discovering God in Unexpected Places

✖ As I read the Bible, I've become increasingly aware that the Bible was written in an agrarian context, but I live in a modern suburban world. When the Scriptures talk about themes of shepherding and farming and harvest, I understand them with my head but not necessarily my heart. So I decided to do something about it.

I traveled to Oregon to spend time with a shepherdess and her flock, Nebraska to visit a farmer and his nephew, southern Colorado to peek inside a beehive, and California to learn about viticulture. Along the way, I opened the scriptures, asking each person how they read various scriptures, not as theologians, but in light of what they did every day. Their answers illuminated passages of the Bible in a whole new way and deepened my relationship with God.

During my time with the shepherd, I watched firsthand as a flock followed its leader with complete trust. A farmer reminded me of God's faithfulness and timing and the truth that everything has its season. A beekeeper gave me a close-up look at the intricate details of God's creation, while a vintner revealed the meaning of fruitfulness in a way I had never grasped before.

During conversations in warm living rooms and fresh harvested fields, I had the scriptures opened to me in new and wonderful ways. How does a shepherd understand the twenty-third Psalm? How does a farmer understand the principles of sowing and reaping? How does a beekeeper interpret the meaning of a land overflowing with honey? How does a Napa Valley vintner read John 15?

The journey became the basis for Scouting the Divine: My

Search for God in Wine, Wool, and Wild Honey book and it's corresponding 6-week DVD study as I share spiritual gems I discovered in familiar and unfamiliar stories and parables.

One of the most meaningful spiritual lessons about God as shepherd actually came from watching some geese in an old red barn while spending time with a shepherdess in Oregon. Three geese were constantly walking around.

"What are they looking for?" I asked Lynne, the shepherdess.

"They're looking for their eggs," she said.

"Where are they?" I asked.

"I threw them in the creek," she said.

My eyes bugged in disbelief. I couldn't help blurting out- "Why?" Her actions seemed cold and cruel-a far cry from the woman I had come to know who tenderly loved on her sheep.

"Because they were infertile," she said. "They never would have hatched. I need to get these geese back to their regular life. For three months they've been sitting on infertile eggs. The only way to get them to the life they're supposed to be living is to take away their dead eggs."

Though it sounded harsh at first, asking Lynne why, revealed her shepherd-like heart. Her answer helped me understand her action as one of compassion and wisdom not mean hearted vindictiveness. I couldn't help but wonder how often I have sat on dreams that were never going to come to fruition.

As I thought back to the numerous times where God has faithfully yet painfully reminded me, "It's time to get back to the life I have given you." I recognize that this lesson isn't one that I can learn just once and move on. Like many of the nuggets of wisdom and insight that I found on my journey of scouting the divine, I will need to process, apply, refine, process and reapply the truth of what living my life under the

guidance of the Good Shepherd really means. But every step of the way, God is faithful. He is true. And He is worthy to be trusted.

Adapted from Scouting the Divine: My Search for God in Wine, Wool, & Wild Honey (Zondervan). The six-week DVD study releases in January from Lifeway. Become a friend of Margaret Feinberg () on Facebook or follow her on Twitter: @mafeinberg. To purchase Scouting the Divine, click here.

