

Where's God?

by Richard Fowler

Have you ever played *Where's Wally?* Just think of the hours spent looking for the iconic red-and-white-jumpered man wearing Harry Potter-like glasses. I remember having competitions with my brothers to see who could find him first...if only I could have scanned quicker!

Now you can! Look no further (literally) because an AI robot has been created to find Waldo in seconds! This robot with an arm and hand uses artificial intelligence to scan all the faces on a page to pinpoint that face with rounded glasses and a hat.¹

When I heard this on the radio, it got me thinking. Finding God—or this higher force—can be a bit like *Where's Wally?*

Where is God amongst the smorgasbord of spiritual choices, in this pick 'n' mix, spiritual-supermarket society? Is there even an answer, or will we always be searching and never finding this spiritual Waldo?

Let's be real: it's hard to search and scan for God with so much choice out there. Do we even have the time to look at all the gods? I must admit, the Marvel films have got me liking the Norse god, Thor. Who doesn't like a dude with a hammer that no one else can pick up? But what about the Greek and Roman Olympian deities like Zeus, Ares, and Eris, the god of strife who liked creating mayhem amongst humans? Wonder Woman is not

bad either! Or maybe we can find God in the Pantheon, a Roman temple dedicated to all the pagan gods.

But what if, amongst all the options, we were to miss out one god, and this god happens to be the "right" God? Indeed, will we ever know the right, real, and true God, if there is one?

This is not a modern problem. About 2000 years ago, many Greeks in Athens also tried to cover every base in their search for who God is. In case they missed out a god in their search and worship, they created a place in Athens dedicated "to the unknown god". At this same time, came a famous seeker of God called Paul to this ancient equivalent of TED talks. It was a place called the Hill of Ares (or Mars): a place to look at the smorgasbord of gods, a place to hear of something new spiritually.

So Paul decided to bring something new. Seeing these people were playing the spiritual *Where's God?* game, he decided to share his life hack. He took to the hill and said:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth...[he] did this so that [we] would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.²

He shared a unique idea. This unique God was not a distant, far away force or being that is hard to find. Actually, he is close to us. But how?

This is where Paul's life hack comes in. He explains this God of creation did something very different. Different from all other gods. He did not remain distant, elusive, or hide like our friend Waldo. This God took up residence with us on earth! Paul then explains why.

God wanted to get up close and personal, so he became human himself! No more distance, no more separation. A real God that we can relate to. This was new! This is still new amongst the many ideas about God today. His name? Emmanuel—a transliteration from Hebrew which means "God with us". Also known as Jesus.

But maybe a roll of the eyes is met with the reading of this name. "I already know of this god", you might say. But have you heard what makes him different?

Jesus, amongst other gods, is unique because instead of being a distant God, he decided to meet us where we are. Here on earth. Which means, he found us! He played the game in reverse: *Where's You?* He played the finder because we find it difficult to find him.

So, no artificial intelligence needed! If you're looking, remember, God is not far from you. Reach out.

Notes

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/wheres-wally-waldo-video-robot-ai-artificial-intelligence-arm-redpepper-rasberrypi-a8487596.html>

² Acts 17:24, 27. (NIV)