



GOD IN THE CLOUDS

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*He brings the clouds to punish people,
or to water his earth and show his love.*

Job 37:13

Elihu, one of Job's unhelpful friends is speaking here, blaming Job for his own suffering. Does God really punish people with clouds of darkness, as Elihu suggests here? Are they really the result of sin in our lives—sin for which we need to be punished? Of course not!! God gave Elihu and his friends quite a piece of his mind when his turn came to speak.

Elihu was right in saying how God shows his love through the clouds by watering the earth. He *always* loves us. Always, even though we may not recognize it at times.

Our suffering *is* comparable to heavy clouds, casting shadows over our lives. But God is not punishing us. Clouds are a part of life. They come and they go. Sometimes they are a gathered mass in the sky above us, making us wish they would go away.

Other times clouds are beautiful as they float across the sky, fluffy and lined with silver. Photographers will tell you how much clouds are needed in landscape work. Perfectly blue—or “bald”—skies are not nearly as attractive or interesting.

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I love Raven Lake, little known because it's tucked away in the Chilcotin region of British Columbia, an area unfamiliar to most people. The reason I like it so much is that we can park our motorhome close to shore with a wide, unobstructed view of what God does to the sky.

It's wonderful to see the clouds moving across, dark in the early hours, gradually brightening as the sun rises. Gathering together, then separating to let the sun shine through, making reflections on the surface of the lake. Whenever I've been here the lake has offered a treasury of photographic possibilities. The clouds are exciting to watch and capture with my camera.

I don't mind clouds like this at all. But when they loom inside my head, as they do in depression, my thoughts run more like Job's when he said:

*"If only I knew where to find [God];
if only I could go to his dwelling!" (Job 23:3)*

I believe God was with Job—in the clouds. When clouds darken our inner world, even then he is in them. God is in the midst of clouds where it's foggy. He is above them where the sun shines. He's even under them with us in the dark.

Though darkness might hide God from us, he *will* stay close. In fact, often the more troubled we are, the closer God is. We have a greater need for him then. And God knows our needs.

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