

EXCERPT



## **Eyes to See** *Recognizing God's Common Grace in an Unsettled World*

December 14, 2021 | \$17, 168 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3165-4

When we encounter suffering or tragedy, we wonder: Where is God? If God exists, then why doesn't he show himself? Tim Muehlhoff unpacks the doctrine of common grace and offers examples from contemporary culture to uncover how God is present and working in ordinary, everyday places. Discover how God cares for our troubled world as he gives you eyes to see.

## Which Would You Pick?

If you could travel back to biblical times to witness God in action, What would you most want to see? Imagine the possibilities. You shield yourself from the spray as Pharaoh's chariots are consumed by raging waters. Trumpets blast as the seemingly impenetrable walls of Jericho fall with a deafening thud, shaking the ground beneath you. Your hair singed as fire comes down from heaven consuming the prophet Elijah's sacrifice as hundreds of Baal's prophets are silenced. Or perhaps you'd opt for watching Jesus heal the leper, raise Lazarus, or feed the five thousand.

How many would choose to watch early Christians collect food for the poor, help build sanitation systems for the city of Antioch, or provide life-saving assistance to Roman citizens during a plague in AD 165?

The goal of *Eyes to See* is to expand our view of what counts as an act of God, realizing that the ingenuity of designing a sanitation system and parting the sea are both divine. In no way am I discounting the dramatic acts of God that are the topic of movies or sermons. Nor am I suggesting that God doesn't act in miraculous ways today—reports from missionaries abroad record miracles too many to ignore, and many of us have answers to prayer that defy natural explanations. Rather, I'm attempting to bring attention to an oft-forgotten avenue of divine action called common grace, where God indiscriminately provides blessings to a rebellious world. If miraculous acts are God's highlight reel, then common grace is the ever-present but oft-ignored elevator music that plays in the background of our lives 24/7.

Our desire for the dramatic is understandable and perhaps stoked by some of our favorite worship songs. In the rousing song "Rattle!" we hear: "My God is able to save and deliver and heal and restore anything that he wants to." In another song, "Famous For," a person longs to have experiences on par with a lion's mouth being closed, standing in fire, and walking through the waters. The lyrics reference powerful moments such as Daniel being thrown in a den of lions but not being eaten (Dan 6); Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego surviving the king's furnace (Dan 3); and the parting of the Red Sea (Ex 14).

Putting these two songs together, we learn God can do anything he wants to—heal, deliver, restore—and he's done it in the past as evidenced by lions' mouths being closed. Why doesn't he heal or deliver more often? Serving as an interim teaching pastor at a church in Orange County, California, I had many people come up after a stirring sermon or worship set and ask in hushed tones, "Why doesn't God answer my prayers? We are desperate, and he doesn't seem to be doing anything!"

There is no doubt that the dramatic stories and miracles in the Bible, sermons, and worship songs are praiseworthy and faith-building, but shouldn't God be equally famous for less dramatic acts that improve our lives? As we shall see, God is praiseworthy for medical discoveries, technological advancement, and community building via common grace. When we begin to acknowledge God's common grace we'll soon see he longs to help with our problems, is active in dramatic answers to prayer, is in the aspirin we take for a blistering headache, and is in the church benevolence fund that helps in hard times.

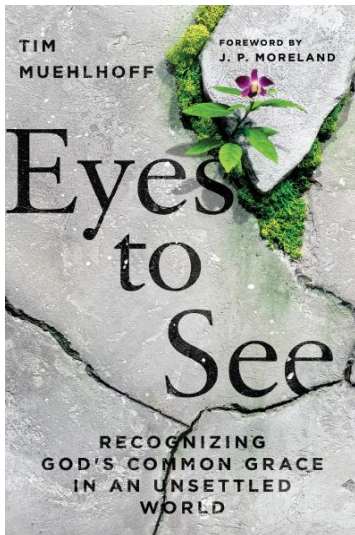


Tara Burns, print and online publicity  
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or [tburns@ivpress.com](mailto:tburns@ivpress.com)

Krista Clayton, author interviews  
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or [kclayton@ivpress.com](mailto:kclayton@ivpress.com)



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We can think of common grace as the generous blessings God pours out on the entire human race without discrimination or bias. The psalmist proclaims to a world in rebellion that the "LORD is good to all" and has "compassion on all he has made" (Ps 145:9 NIV).

What is the good we experience? Jesus offers one example when he states that God makes "his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45 ESV). Paul reiterates this point when he informs unbelievers at Lystra that God is the one who sends "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:17 ESV). After the fall, the earth didn't only produce thorns or thistles but also lush vineyards, crops, oceans teeming with a myriad of fish, and minerals buried in the ground.

The central feature of this type of grace is that all people experience it. Rebels and saints alike can count on regular seasons to plant and harvest crops, learn to build fires for cold nights, create language to communicate with others, discover medicines to fight off disease, formulate governments to help communities flourish, navigate long journeys by consulting the stars, learn the truths of mathematics for abstract thinking, and create art to imagine beauty and draw us up to higher ideals.

—Adapted from the introduction



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## **Tim Muehlhoff, Author of *Eyes to See***

*"It would be a shame—and profoundly unbiblical—if we saw God's actions only in dramatic events. Such a limited perspective leaves out an awareness of what God is doing in the more ordinary course of events. Muehlhoff solves this problem in a way that makes this book a must-read. We don't want to take the ordinary course of events as occasions to blindly see them as divine orchestrations 'through the eyes of faith.' No, we need to be given reasons for taking them in this way. We need tools and specific examples that help us develop steady convictions about this way of seeing. I can't think of a better book that addresses these issues than *Eyes to See*. Its release is for such a time as this."*

—J. P. Moreland, Distinguished Professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, from the foreword

**Tim Muehlhoff** (PhD, University of North Carolina) is a professor of communication at Biola University in La Mirada, California, and a speaker and research consultant for the Center for Marriage and Relationships. His books include *I Beg to Differ*, *Authentic Communication*, *The God Conversation*, and *Defending Your Marriage*.

Together with Richard Langer, he is the coauthor of *Winsome Conviction* and *Winsome Persuasion*, which received a *Christianity Today* 2018 Book Award in apologetics/evangelism. In addition to teaching and writing, Muehlhoff and Langer are codirectors of The Winsome Conviction Project, which seeks to introduce civility and compassion into our discussion of differences.

Muehlhoff and his wife, Noreen, are frequent speakers at FamilyLife Marriage Conferences.

Read more about Tim at his website, [TimMuehlhoff.com](http://TimMuehlhoff.com).

Follow him on Twitter: @DrMuehlhoff.



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