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I think God is like Emma, or any other 2-year-old, in that God likes to play.

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She's always been a pretty tranquil kid, intensely curious about life and open to letting it unfold in front of her. She's not easily irritated, and she seems to like people. In fact, I think she's got a lot of love inside her. When I walked in the door — or when my wife Cathy did or Emma's other grandparents or her aunts or uncles — this love in 2-year-old Emma would well up within her and fill her, and she wasn't sure what to do with these large feelings.

This welling-up of love is something that adults experience too, such as at the start of a romance, at a random moment in a long marriage or upon seeing a loved one after a long absence. But adults know what's happening, and we know the mix of pleasure and pain in such feelings — the excitement, the joy, the affection — and, even so, we may feel filled with emotions, as if to burst.

I think Emma felt these large feelings and just needed a moment to look away to collect herself. My sense is that something like that happens to God all the time. That God sees me or you or any other person and wells up with love for us.

In God's case, the hiding isn't to take time to figure out how to handle the feelings. In God's case, it is about protecting me or you or any other person from being overwhelmed, bowled over, drowned by this divine love. I'm thinking that if God's love for me were expressed in its fullness, I would be frozen in place, dumbstruck, unable to live my life.

I think God is also like Emma, or any other 2-year-old, in that God likes to play. God likes to play hide-and-seek with me, and, like Emma, even tips off what's going on by saying, "Hiding! Hiding!" to get my attention.

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I'm a big fan of the story of [Elijah](#) from the first book of Kings. Elijah is holed up in his mountain cave, and God tells him to go outside "for the Lord is about to pass by."

First comes a strong wind, but God isn't in the wind. Then, an earthquake, but God isn't in the earthquake. Then, a fire, but God isn't in the fire.

Instead, Elijah finds God in "a gentle whisper." That's according to some translations. Others say it was "a gentle blowing" or "a whispering of gentle air" or the one I've always liked, "a still small voice."

We tend to think of God as transcendent, omniscient, omnipotent — as larger and wider and deeper than the universe and everything in it. As bigger than big. Yet, with Elijah, God is a still small voice, a whisper of gentleness. Sounds, to me, like God is hiding.

God is doing this, I think, to protect Elijah from being overwhelmed by the great love that God has for him. But God is also doing something else.

God is playing hide-and-seek with Elijah. It's as if God is saying: Am I in this wind, Elijah? How about in this earthquake? In this storm? Can you find me?

Emma would have mercy on her grandfather, tipping me off that she was playing the game and inviting me to join her. "Hiding! Hiding!"

God, I think, is also inviting me to play, to be silly, to be goofy — to be such a fool that I endorse a faith that runs counter to our mainstream self-oriented, fear-infused culture.

And to live that faith. What a laugh! How silly can I get?

Yeah, I think that's what God's asking: How silly can I get?