**Awe and Wonder**

**Perhaps you too have been moved to stand still**

**and show yourself attentive to the wonderful works of God.**

***(Job 37:14)***

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

**Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.**

***(Psalm 139:14)***

**How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!  
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,   
and his dominion is from generation to generation.**

***(Daniel 4:3)***

And I will show wonders in heaven above,

and signs in the earth beneath.

*(Acts 2:19)*

**You’ve heard of the three ages of man: youth, middle age and “you’re looking wonderful!” *(Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman)***

**Awe to nourish the soul: Gazing at a beautiful landscape or listening to a majestic symphony may make people feel less rushed, more patient, and more compassionate toward others. Stanford University researchers have discovered that awe – as opposed to joy or other positive emotions – gives people the sense that time has slowed down. That feeling, in turn, has a major impact on “everyday decision making,” study author Melanie Rudd tells LiveScience.com. She and her colleagues showed one group of volunteers a video of awe-inspiring scenes, such as waterfalls and breaching whales, and another group a happy video featuring confetti and a parade. The researchers also had participants read or write about either an awesome experience or a blander one. When they quizzed the volunteers afterward, those who had watched, read about, or recalled an awesome moment were more likely to report feeling unhurried. They were also more apt to agree to donate their time to charity, and to prefer spending money on experiences, such as seeing a play, rather than on material goods. Researchers say the participants reported that the “small dose of awe” had given them “a momentary boost in life satisfaction.” *(The Week magazine, August 10, 2012)***

**The Barrier Reef is the greatest wonder of the world that I have seen in recent times - 1800 miles long stretching from New Guinea all the way down Australia. The further you move toward shore the deader the coral is. Coral polyps are living organisms. They know somehow that if they hang together, if they cluster together in a beautiful flowing group on the ocean side of the reef, where the predators and opportunities are, they will be winners. *(Denis Waitley)***

**Baseball, it has been said, is a game of inches. But even more, it is a game of innocence. It is a child holding tightly to his father’s hand as he is taken to his first big-league ball game. Some 20 years later the scene is repeated – the child, now a man, has his own hand clasped just as tightly by his son as they approach the ballpark together for the first time. The father, as his father before him, knows full well that baseball is as much business as sport. He also knows that the world is not just and that life is not fair. But, given the slightest encouragement, mind and heart keep to their separate orbits. As father and son pass through the turnstiles, walk side by side through the damp passageways under the stadium, and then suddenly emerge into the dazzling brightness – the vast green playing field laid out like a magic carpet before them – they share the excitement that today is something very special for both of them. The parent passes on the wonder and awe of his own youth to his children, and in so doing renews it within himself. *(Anthony J. Connor, in Baseball: For the Love of It)***

**A friend of mine, who had been in an auto accident, had to wear an elaborate metal neck brace that encircled her head. One day, while sitting in a doctor's waiting room, she noticed a young boy staring at her. To put him at ease, she explained that she had been in a car wreck. In wide-eyed wonder, he pointed to her neck brace and said, “Is that part of the car?” (Robin Morgan, in Reader's Digest)**

**In 1921, Elmer Cline of Taggart Baking Company in Indianapolis, Indiana, needed a name for the company’s new 1.5-pound loaf of bread. Inspiration struck when he saw a balloon race and felt a sense of wonder at the sky filled with colorful balloons – and Wonder Bread was born. *(American Profile) UJ-4ply-p.156***

**Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away. *(George Carlin)***

**In 1757, with the age of enlightenment, political revolution, and the promise of science in the air, Irish philosopher Edmond Burke transformed our understanding of awe. In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Burke detailed how we feel the sublime (awe) in hearing thunder, in viewing art, in hearing a symphony, in seeing repetitive patterns of light and dark, even in response to certain animals (the ox) rather than others (a cow). Odors, Burke observed, could not produce the feeling of the sublime. In these mundane and purely descriptive observations, Burke was advancing a radical claim fitting for his times: Awe is not restricted to experiences of the divine; it is an emotion of expanded thought and greatness of mind that is produced by literature, poetry, painting, viewing landscapes, and a variety of everyday perceptual experiences. *(Dacher Keltner, in Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, p. 254)***

**It’s like being in a kaleidoscope as you’re moving around on the carousal and seeing the lights and patterns. It’s sort of a magical world. *(Barbara Fahs Charles)***

**Why such emphasis on the wonder of the childlike mind? Because this inner child that we all continue to possess even after we grow up is the source of our creativity. Emmet Fox explains that the Wonder Child is “no less than God Himself. ‘The Mighty God,’ as Isaiah reminds us . . . always present with you, and always available, once you have understood and accepted the Spiritual Idea.” The Wonder Child in each of us, the beginner’s mind, is willing to tolerate the chaos of creativity that leads to the higher order that Charles Fillmore alludes to. The beginner’s mind is the mindset of the proverbial person who falls overboard and comes up with a fish in each pocket. (*Deborah G. Whitehouse, in Unity magazine)***

**Christmas has power to quicken our sense of wonder because it turns us into children. Children have a wonderful sense of wonder. *(James Dillet Freeman, in Unity magazine)***

**PLAYFUL GENIUS: The imagination of Sigeru Miyamoto has helped transform Nintendo into one of the world’s most successful companies. But the creator of the video adventure games Donkey Kong and Super Mario World owes his success to a firm understanding of a child’s sense of wonder. Miyamoto grew up outside Kyoto, Japan, where he spent much of his youth fishing in a nearby river and exploring creek beds and small canyons. One day, he discovered a cave. He returned several times before he found the courage to explore it. Then, lugging a homemade lantern, he progressed deeper and deeper until he came to a small hole that led to another cave. His heart pounding, he climbed through. “That state of mind, when a child enters a cave alone, must be realized in my games,” Miyamoto says. “Going in, he must discover a branch off to one side and decide whether to explore it or not. Sometimes he loses his way. But through perseverance, wit, luck and practice, he will improve. *(David Sheff, in Rolling Stone)***

**If you really want to work your way out of a pattern that has you down, consider a more thoughtful approach. Eastern philosophies and meditation practices offer a perspective on boredom that we as Westerners are only beginning to appreciate: they consider boredom a source of refreshment and enlightenment rather than an enemy. We find the world boring, they say, because we cling to the same roles, defense mechanisms, inner dialogues, habits, routines. Gradually we put wonder to death by holding on to our secure, orderly repertoires. We close off novelty and refreshment because the unknown and the strange are too threatening. *(Sam Keen, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Early in human history awe was reserved for feelings toward divine beings. Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus involved a blinding light, feelings of awe and terror, and a voice guiding him to abandon his persecution of the Christians. *(Dacher Keltner, in Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, p. 253)***

**Edmund Burke believed the two essential ingredients to the experience of awe are power and obscurity. On power, Burke write: “wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power we shall all along observe the sublime the concomitant of terror.” On obscurity, Burke argued that awe follows from the perception of objects that the mind has difficulty grasping. Obscure images in painting are more likely to produce sublime feelings (Monet) than those that are clearly rendered (Picasso). Despotic governments keep their leader obscure from the populace to enhance that leader’s capacity to evoke awe. *(Dacher Keltner, in Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, p. 254)***

**From wonder into wonder, existence opens. *(Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher)***

**The healthy eye is the eye of wonder. True wonder is the mind open to the divine in the everyday world, to the infinite in the finite. With the eye of wonder we see in ourselves and others, possibility and potential. It was wonder which allowed Anne Sullivan to see the potential in Helen Keller, which called Albert Schweitzer to a life of healing in Africa, which took Mother Teresa to the poor of Calcutta, which brought Jesus to Lazarus’s tomb, where he called out, “Lazarus, come forth.” With the eye of wonder we start seeing everything as if we have never seen it before. As the great Jewish thinker Martin Buber put it, everything and every person before us becomes a “Thou.” The flower, the pet, the boss, or the spouse becomes a “Thou” to us, instead of an object or an “It.” *(Philip White, in Unity magazine)***

**There are no wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million. *(Walt Streightiff, in Quote magazine)***

**If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength. *(Rachel Carson, in The Sense of Wonder)***

**I wonder what would happen in this great universe, if everyone, everyday, for one year through, would do just what God would do. And if this could only happen, and love would rule supreme, this world would be a paradise greater than any dream. *(Margaret Pierson)***

**Gratitude works wonders. Have you ever seen a really joyful person who was not filled with gratitude? Have you ever seen a miserable, self-centered person who was truly grateful? (Jack E. Addington)**

The happiness of the bee and the dolphin is to exist. For man it is to know that and to wonder at it. *(Jacques-Yves Cousteau)*

**The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder. *(Ralph W. Sockman, in Now to Live!)***

**Here’s an example of how much language can change. An English king once said that a building was “awful” and “artificial” – and he meant that as a compliment. The word “awful” once meant “awe-inspiring,” and the word “artificial” meant “full of art.” Now, those words have exactly the opposite meanings. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 238)***

**One of the wonders of life is just that – the wonder of life. *(Bill Copeland, in Sarasota, Florida, Herald-Tribune)***

**Life is not just awe-some, it’s awe-alot. Let’s experience that together. *(Mark Tucker)***

**Two of the “Seven Wonders of the World” were lighthouses. The first was built around 280 B.C. and was known as the “Colossus of Rhodes.” It was a statue of a man holding a beacon fire and stood over 100 feet high. The “Pharos” lighthouse was built at the port of Alexandria, in Egypt, shortly after the Colossus. It was nearly 400 feet high and stood for nearly 1600 years until it was destroyed by an earthquake in the mid-1300s. (Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)**

**When it’s over, I want to say: all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom taking the world into my arms. (Mary Oliver)**

**In 1711, when work on St. Paul’s Cathedral in London was completed and was shown to George I, the King is reported to have exclaimed to its architect, Christopher Wren, that the work was “aweful” and “artificial.” In the eighteenth century, “aweful” meant awe-inspiring, and “artificial” meant full of great art. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 17)**

**Miracles, you see, open our minds. They burst the limits of our closely defined little world. Miracles invite us to see with wide eyes. Miracles whisper to us: “Hope is always an option.” Don’t rule out grace. There are more possibilities here than you have yet dreamed. Stay awake and be aware. Behold the wonder of what is. *(Paul L. Holte, in Unity magazine)***

**The word mirror comes from the Latin mirari, meaning “to wonder at.” It’s also the root word for miracle and admire. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 30)***

**It is quite natural that vain people should like mirrors, for when a girl confesses that she is admiring her hair-do in a mirror, she is using two words that are based on the same Latin word miror which means “admire.” So confessedly, mirrors are made for self-admiration. Our word miracle belongs to the same Latin family, as a miracle is an object of admiration and wonder. *(Wilfred Funk, in Word Origins, p. 85)***

**The most likely moment for something incredible to happen to me was the moment I was most certain nothing ever would. *(Jane Pauley, in Skywriting)***

**John Muir’s experiences in the Sierras opened his mind to new scientific insights: He was the first to argue that Yosemite Valley was formed by glaciers, as opposed to earthquakes, the conventional wisdom of the day. Out of these experiences Muir published on the need to preserve the Sierras from the ravages of sheep and cows in the influential magazine Century. These well-placed essays led to a bill passed by Congress on September 30, 1890, designating Yosemite as a state park. Buoyed by this success, Muir founded the Sierra club in 1892 and served as its first president until his dying day. *(Dacher Keltner, in Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, p. 251)***

**The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way; the name that can be named is not the constant name. The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth; the named was the mother of the myriad creatures. *(Lao Tzu)***

**Nature is full of genius, full of divinity; so that not a snowflake escapes its fashioning hand. *(Henry David Thoreau)***

**Some of the most impressive nests are also among the smallest. A hummingbird nest is a wondrous creation of tiny plant fibers, mosses, and spiderwebs, so small that a 50-cent piece would completely cover it. It is as soft as felt but strong, with the spiderwebs making it pliable enough to stretch and expand as the rambunctious young hummers grow and exercise in it. Many hummingbirds will camouflage the outside with bits of lichen. At a distance such an object looks, for all the world, like a natural bump or knob on the branch, thereby deceiving potential predators in the mother bird’s absence. *(Kenn Kaufman, in Audubon magazine)***

**You know you’re old when you’ve lost all your marvels. *(Merry Browne)***

**Old age occurs the moment you realize there isn’t something wonderful about to happen just around the corner. In some people this occurs very soon; in others, not at all. *(D. E. Short, in Reader’s Digest)***

**He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed*. (Albert Einstein)***

**The PC: Miraculous but boring: Where’s the sense of wonder? asked David Fearon. The story of personal computers is one of “amazing semiconductor and materials science,” astonishing leaps in processing power, and clever engineering that makes e-mailing and Web surfing quick and easy. But if you try to engage someone in a conversation about computing power, you’ll soon notice they’re wearing a glazed expression. You won’t hear any admiration for “all this massive investment, all this science involving some of the world’s finest minds.” That’s because “computer technology is assimilated into everyday life with such speed and regularity, we don’t even notice that we should be amazed.” We think nothing of firing up a browser, searching the Web for “fun games,” and moments later playing “a game running in a Flash plug-in, running in a tab, running in a browser, running in a window, running on a multi-windowed operating system.” Yet just a few years ago, that now-routine scenario was inconceivable. That’s computing for you. “It’s a humdrum, everyday sort of miracle, but a miracle nonetheless.” *(The Week magazine, April 9, 2010)***

**Our dream of oneness cannot be fulfilled in the wonders of steel and brick and mortar. Until we recapture the wonder of the personhood of each individual human being, it remains easy for us to treat each other as impersonal objects to be manipulated or dispensed with. We pay a high cost when we overlook the spiritual identity of each other. *(Philip White, in Unity magazine)***

**Philosophy begins in wonder. And, at the end, when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains. There have been added, however, some grasp of the immensity of things, some purification of emotion by understanding.*****(Alfred North Whitehead)***

**That John Muir could stand in the Sierras and experience a sense of the sacred when surrounded by the pine, manzanita, granite, cascading water, and dark lakes of those mountains is a testimony to radical thinkers who fought pitched battles about the nature of the sublime (awe) and the beautiful. These thinkers liberated the experience of awe, wonder, and the sacred from the strictures of organized religion, which had laid claim to this powerful emotion, no doubt because of its transformative powers. *(Dacher Keltner, in Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life, p. 253)***

**In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary. *(Aaron Rose)***

**ALL YE NEED TO KNOW: I was visiting a neighbor, and her five-year-old daughter kept interrupting to ask her to come out and look at a flower, a butterfly, a crawling bug. I asked my neighbor if she wasn’t getting little annoyed. “Well,” she remarked with a smile, “I brought her into the world. At least I can let her show it to me.” *(Mrs. L. Binder, in Catholic Digest)***

**Some people always sigh in thanking God. (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)**

**The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience. (Emily Dickinson)**

**Another day in paradise. Will wonders never start? (J. C. Duffy, in The Fusco Brothers comic strip)**

**The world will never starve for wonders: but only for want of wonder. *(G. K. Chesterton, English author)***

**Two workmen watched with awe the performance of a huge steam shovel that took up tons of earth in one bite. Said one of them, “If it wasn’t for that blasted scoop, five hundred of us might be working with shovels.” “Yes,” was the reply of the other, “and if it wasn’t for shovels, a million of us might be working with spoons.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Nothing is wonderful when you get used to it. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know of wonder and humility. *(Rachel Carson)***

**He who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter. In winter the stars seem to have rekindled their fires, the moon achieves a fuller triumph, and the heavens wear a look of more exalted simplicity. Summer is more wooing and seductive, more versatile and human; it appeals to the affections and the sentiments, and fosters inquiry and the art impulse. Winter is of a more heroic cast, and addresses the intellect. One imposes larger tasks upon himself, and is less tolerant of his own weaknesses. *(John Burroughs)***

**There’s no use having a universe, a cosmology, if you don’t have witnesses. We are the witnesses to the miracle. We are put here by creation, by God. We’re here to be the audience to the magnificent. It’s our job to celebrate. *(Ray Bradbury)***

**In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life – no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, – my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. *(Ralph Waldo Emerson)***

**Wonder is the basis of worship. *(Thomas Carlyle)***

**“No temple made with hands can compare with “Yosemite,” John Muir wrote in an 1890 campaign for federal protection of the lands around the California valley. Though the valley itself was granted to California in 1864 for public use, it is threatened, Muir argued, by nearby ranching, logging and other human endeavors. On October 1, 1890, Congress made Yosemite the country’s third national park, preserving an additional 1,500 square miles of wilderness. Today some 3.5 million visitors seek out the park’s splendors each year. *(Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**I've seen you stalking the malls, walking the aisles, searching for that extra-special gift. Stashing away a few dollars a month to buy him some lizard-skin boots; staring at a thousand rings to find her the best diamond; staying up all night Christmas Eve, assembling the new bicycle. Why do you do it? So the eyes will pop, the jaw will drop. To hear those words of disbelief: "You did this for me?" And that is why God did it. Next time a sunrise steals your breath or a meadow of flowers leaves you speechless, remain that way. Say nothing, and listen as heaven whispers, "Do you like it? I did it just for you."**

***(Max Lucado, in The Great House of God)***

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