

# STARGAZING ADVENTURE

## MOON & PLANETS TOO!

### EXPERIENCE

I planned a night of stargazing with my friend Craig and invited all the participants in my doctoral project. The night was AWESOME, in the truest sense of the word. On this particular September night, the skies were crystal clear. The Heavens were declaring the glory of God. Our adventure began with a beautiful view of the planet Venus as it followed the Sun over the horizon— seen on the left-hand side of the picture above. After the telescopes were set up by Craig and his friends from the astronomy club, we viewed Jupiter and Saturn. The pictures we took with our phones through the telescope eyepieces give a sense of what we saw (see below). They don't do justice to the real experience. We could see the bands around Jupiter and even caught site of the great red spot (a storm visible on Jupiter).

Jupiter with Orbiting Moons



Saturn





We also saw the moon later in the evening as it rose in the eastern horizon. Other highlights of the evening were seeing the ring nebula, the Andromeda galaxy, the Milky Way, as well as the double star in the handle of the Big Dipper. Some of the group also enjoyed seeing a fantastic shooting star. The whole evening was filled with exclamations of wonder and delight at seeing so many incredible sights in the night sky.

## CONTEMPLATION



My own contemplation on our stargazing adventure that night pertained to double stars. We learned that the middle star in the handle of the big dipper is a double star. What that means is when you look at the star in a telescope you see two stars, not one. To our naked eye from earth, it looks like there is just one star, but a closer look reveals two stars.

I think this situation is a lot like life. Believers can look like they have it all together. They can appear to have an undivided heart, but upon closer examination it may be the case that their hearts are divided. A believer's heart can quickly be pulled in differing directions. A heart may secretly love both God and money. Human hearts are idol factories and idolatry are always a present temptation. The Scriptures say "no one can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24). Human hearts need constant accountability and scrutiny to understand what their hearts are treasuring most. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 7:21). The Apostle John calls all Christians to "keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). This advice is wise and the double star in the Big Dipper will now forever be a reminder to me to check my heart and to ask God to guard me from idols.