

Reclaiming Wonder and Awe

Living with wonder and awe is something we may need to RECLAIM, because it seems like it is something we start with.

(Show Picture #1 of the happy baby)

Then we go through life, and that sense of awe and wonder gets sucked out, beat out, worn out, and hijacked from our lives.

(Show Pictures #2, #3, #4, #5, all of the cynical people).

Jesus taught, ***“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)***

He was not saying, be childish, but child-like. He was saying reclaim wonder and awe, for it's the doorway into experiencing God's amazing world (the Kingdom of God).

Check out this beautiful home in the suburbs of Chicago during the holidays, where family and friends have gathered. There are good laughs, funny memories, delicious food, wonderful conversations, perfect climate and a joy-filled atmosphere within the house.

(Picture #6, House Party).

But outside the house, it's dark, cold, and creepy.

(Picture #7, Cold Snow).

The warm house is a picture of the Kingdom of God, and the way in, is wonder and awe. When we lose our wonder and awe, we also lost our keys to the house.

When someone is a brand new believer, they are so excited and wide-eyed. They look like that first baby we saw. And tragically, as we have been in church for years, we develop this attitude, *“Been there, done that, seen it all, know it all, not impressed, not excited, not inspired...”*

We become dull, cynical, and skeptic, and think that this is spiritual maturity. I say this with compassion and respect, and am preaching to myself as much as anyone - it's actually a spiritual retardation.

It's not progress, we have digressed.
We have lost our keys to the Kingdom of God.

As we mature, we begin to understand the both/ands of life.
In our immaturity, we think it's either/or.

As we grow in consciousness, wisdom, and revelation- we begin to see that paradoxical truths, how there can be two sides of the same coin. A quarter is not just heads, but heads and tails.

So as we mature, we see that we can live with wonder and awe AND be discerning and shrewd.

In our more immature state, we think we have to be cynical is to be discerning. And we think to live with awe and wonder, is to be gullible. We think it is an either/or scenario.

(Show chart #1) immaturity)

Yet, as we mature, we see that it's about being as discerning and with awe and wonder.

(Show chart #2) maturity)

That what Jesus taught, to **“be wise as serpents AND innocent as a dove” (Matthew 10:16).**

We can be sparkly AND smart.

People may describe you as smart but do they also think you are a storm cloud? That's not maturity, but immaturity.

People may describe you as cautious but do they also think of you as child-like? That's immaturity as well.

We can be discerning people, and still be able to sing Louis Armstrong's song, "It's a Wonderful World!" And believe it. If the world is wonderful, we should live full of wonder.

We don't want to grow cynical, skeptical, jaded, and negative. **(Pic # 8, Eden and I.)**

We rather be attentive, lively, sparkly, aware, and inspired. **(Pic # 9, Eden and I, excited)**

We know we have lost our keys, and spiritually digressing, when we move from WONDERING to ANSWERING.

On the surface level it seems like you are now mature! You seem to have all the "answers". You now act like an expert. But, in reality, it just means we have become puffed up with pride and the only thing that has grown is our ego.

Jesus asked questions in the temple as a boy. He lived with awe and wonder. He didn't play expert, but approached the teachers with awe and wonder. He is our example and inspiration.

I think we have all met "Christians" who have the attitude of "I'm right, if you disagree, you are wrong, there will be absolutely no discussion!" We may call them fundamentalists, which can be broken up to people who dam the fun and the world sees them as mental.

Would you rather be an accomplished expert or a life-long learner?

Acting like an expert is an expression of the false self or ego. It's often a protective cover-up for deep insecurities.

This is the worst part about people who act like experts, these experts also position themselves as judges.

In theory, if you know everything there is to know, you are qualified to make perfect judgments. If you don't know all that there is to know, you cannot make flawless judgments, because you are still ignorant of all the variables.

It becomes tragic when people who don't know everything (which is all of us) believe that our judgments are flawless. I believe that's why Jesus taught us not to judge (Matthew 7:1) and Paul said don't judge anything before the time (1 Corinthians 4:5).

At that time Jesus declared, ***"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding (the experts) and revealed them to little children" (Matthew 11:25)***

God may have to pass-by the experts and move on to those who are the learners.

Nazareth missed their opportunity because of a cynical and negative attitude. The thought they were Jesus experts, so made judgments, those judgments were detrimental.

They were looking for ways to discount Jesus, and found it. He's just the carpenters son, they said.

You will always find a reason to discount someone, if you look hard enough.

They could have been thankful that Jesus of Nazareth had put their little shabby town on the map.

They weren't looking for reasons to be thankful. But when there is no thanksgiving, the void is filled with cynicism and negativity.

Jesus couldn't do much in Nazareth because of their cynicism, so he had to move on to another town. They expected very little from Jesus, and got very little from Him.

Tens of thousands of healings and miracles could have broken out, if they just had a different attitude. If they were a little more thankful. If they had wide-eyes versus rolling their eyes.

We find what we are looking for. When we become jaded, when a cynicism sets in, and a negativity overtakes our thinking- we will only find more reasons to be jaded, cynical, and negative.

We will find what we are looking for.

If you are always looking for fault with someone, you will find it. If you are always looking for a reason to be jaded, you will find it. Soon, that becomes your excuse, for sitting on the bench, while life and opportunities pass you by. Those who live with awe and wonder, participate in life. Those who live cynical and skeptical, live check-out.

Jesus invites people to **“Come and see” (John 1:46)**. You are going to see some amazing things, so get ready, be in anticipation, keep your eyes wide open. The attitude of a Jesus follower should be “I’m about to see something! I don’t want to miss it! I wonder what I’m going to see now, what am I going to see next?”

In college, I had a blog, and the title of the blog was, “God, show me something today?” I remember just waking up every day with expectation that God was going to show me something cool that day.

Followers of Jesus should be wide-eyed wonders.

We don’t want to close our eyes because we don’t want to miss a thing.

We don’t want to roll our eyes, because then we can’t see what’s in front of us.

- Mary knew wonder (Luke 1:29).

- The disciples knew wonder (Luke 24:41).

- The early church lived with a sense of wonder (Acts 2-3).

The miracles, led to a sense of wonder, and a sense of wonder, attracted more miracles. That’s how they got momentum.

The awe of man and the power of God is a very dynamic combination.
It can turn the world upside down.

Paul preached in Athens that **“God is not far from any of us. In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”(Acts 17:27)**

He’s all around, we just need to have eyes to see Him.

Paul said something similar in **“There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.” (Colossians 3:11).**

If we are rolling our eyes, we won’t be able to see Him, what He’s up to.

I had a friend who was telling me about a girl he was in love with. We all thought she was a cold person. He thought she was a mysterious person. I realized something. What one person thinks is cold and nasty, another person can see as mysterious and enchanting.

The difference was “love”.

I want to be in love with life.
I don’t want to see life with contempt.

I think that zest for life is what the Psalmist expressed, **“This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it!” (Psalm 118:24)**

I want to see life as a mystery I’m thrilled about unraveling.
I don’t want to just conclude that the universe is a cold and nasty place.

**How do we see the universe?
How do we see LIFE?**

“Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.” (Luke 11:24)

The eye is the light of the body, in other words, how we see determines how we will live, and the quality of our lives.

The sick body is a miserable existence.
A healthy body is one of great potential.
Potential and misery depend on how we see.

Do we live life rolling the eyes, or do we live wide-eyed?
Is there a dullness in our eyes, or is there a sparkle?
Do we see through the lens of boredom or the lens of wonder?

I've been there, done that, and bought the T-Shirt kind of attitude means we are now unsubscribing from greater personal growth. Just like the fable of the tortoise who beat the hare, who got complacent, the one who lives with awe and wonder will always outgrow the arrogant expert.

(Pic #10, Mary and Martha)

Mary at the feet of Jesus had awe and wonder. Martha was loaded with frustrations and negativity. As she is stressed, she is not present. Worrying about the future- will everyone be served. Bitter about the past- how could her sister not have helped her. Mary is present. Martha is not doing herself a favor, she's not taking care of her soul, she's not healing anyone relationally. Mary is connecting with Jesus, Mary is healing herself, refreshing Jesus, she's experiencing a transformation.

**Busyness happens in Martha.
Transformation happens in Mary.**

**Martha ain't feeling very grateful.
Mary is.**

She seizes the opportunity of a lifetime - and views it as such. Martha grows in complaints. Mary grows in wisdom. Martha's heart and mind is closed, Mary's is open, ready for a deposit.

**Martha has heart-hardening opinions.
Mary has heart-transforming experiences.**

I would rather have more God experiences than just opinions. Opinions can puff up. Divine experiences can help us grow up.

Sometimes, all of our opinions are keeping us from fresh encounters.

Picture Martha rolling her eyes.

Picture Mary, with her eyes welling up with tears of inspiration and joy.

Martha sees her way into misery.

Mary sees her way into inspiration and transformation.

Martha was certain that she was right in her actions and devotion. Mary wasn't about being right, but she was living with awe and wonder at the feet of Jesus. Sometimes we prize and emphasize being right, more than living with wonder and awe.

It is possible to take the Mary position with the Martha heart.

You can be at church rolling your eyes. You can be worshipping, and by cynical. You can be reading the Bible, and casting judgments on those who that particular passage convicts.

We can do the job of Martha with a Mary heart.

We can't be on our knees 24/7. We have to go to work and do what we need to do. But, we can do it with a Mary like heart of "awe and wonder". We can be "wide-eyed" and have a zest for life.