

Sense Of Wonder

Keeping our Sense of Wonder

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A popular song from the year 2000 by Lee Ann Womack titled, "I Hope You Dance" held at least three number one rankings on the national charts in its time. Maybe you have heard of it. Like a parent speaking to a child, it is directed to someone younger than the singer, with its lyrics being used as a teaching vehicle for not wasting one's life, for living life to the fullest; the key being to dance instead of sitting out when the listener gets a chance to act, to participate.

In an article by Rick Moore, one of the writers of the song, Tia Sellers, recounted what led to the theme of the song, and to verse 3, "I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean." Here is the quote from the article, "But the whole thing started when I was at a beach by myself and I was standing at the ocean feeling so tiny and inconsequential."

For those of us who attended Feast sites on the eastern seaboard, what was one popular thing you witnessed each morning? Was it not the flocking of people to the beach to see the sunrise? This event occurs every day in our lives. The sun rises and the sun sets. It is a very common thing.

Yet people, especially those near the coast, flock to the sandy and salty environment in the wee hours of the morning to take the view in. Why is that? I think the answer lies in the first verse of the song, "I Hope You Dance." It goes, "I hope you never lose your sense of wonder."

Today we will consider this sense of wonder, our risk of losing it, and what we can do to keep it. Wonder is defined as an occurrence or object that so strongly engages our attention with its greatness, rarity, and properties, our mind is struck with astonishment.

From the Bible, one of the words found for wonder is *Strong's* #6382, *pele*. It was often related to the signs and wonders that God did for Israel in Egypt.

These were miracles, miraculous events that were definitely an astonishment to the sight of those who were witnessing them.

Asaph in Psalm 77 notes this miraculous work of God. So please turn with me to Psalm 77. We are going to read verses 11 through 14, and I am going to read it out of the New Living Translation.

Psalm 77:11-14 (NLT) But then I recall all you have done, O Lord; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works. O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you? You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations.

This feeling of a sense of wonder seems to be a quality from our youth, specifically that of the toddler stage when we are experiencing everything in our lives for the first time. For those of us who have children, we get a chance to see this daily. We see it in the loud expression of excitement in a plane flying above, or as a diesel engine train, as my nephew Maddox exclaimed once. Or what about the emphatic wee-ooo! when some emergency vehicle goes by. All these expressions of excitement stem from the sense of wonder that children naturally have.

According to the verse from "I Hope You Dance," it is something that we can lose. However, we lose it by growing up and experiencing life. We have seen a plane flying over thousands of times. Thus, it does not have the same effect on us that it does a toddler.

When was the last time that you were affected by something you have seen so much that your mind was struck with astonishment? Was it that sunrise in Myrtle Beach if you attended that Feast site? It definitely fits the definition from earlier with its wonderful properties that paint the morning sky.

What about in hearing the messages that were taught during the Feast? Those also may have filled your mind with wonder.

That environment, it definitely fostered a sense of wonder and amazement. But now we are back. Most of us do not live near a beach setting. We are not assembling each day with our brethren.

Our environment has changed. In fact, at least in my experience, we come back to a world that hits you like a brick wall. We come back to stresses of our job, to problems that seem to have been waiting just for us to return. And to an environment where Satan and our human nature are ready to pounce on us. Is it any wonder at the end of God's annual holy days that we go right into the world's pagan holidays?

This environment can wear on us. The sense of wonder that we may have held at the Feast dulls. So how do we keep from losing it?

In his article "Keep Your Sense of Wonder," Rick Hansen provides some ideas. He mentions remembering the look in the eyes of his children after they were born. He remembers the early stages of their life when everything was new to them and how little things would bring amazement and excitement. He notes, just like the environment of a toddler bringing excitement to them, we too have opportunities all around us for amazement and wonder.

His key point from his first section is to try and see the world as if you were seeing it, witnessing it, experiencing it for the first time, like that of a child or through the eyes of a child. Rick goes on to say that we should try to approach life from a "don't know" perspective. See, when we see something, our minds automatically slot things that we see into certain categories and boxes that we have created for those things.

Rick states, "It's our mind's way of survival," but he says there is plenty of opportunities for wonder out there if we approach it with a different perspective. Take that plane we have seen flying above thousands of times. A lot has to go right to keep 90,000 to 100,000 pounds (or over that) of material flying and staying in the sky.

I, unfortunately, am not the one to explain that to you, so you will have to go look it up for yourselves. But I will say that I have been in an aerospace

facility many times over the past three years. I have seen about 40 to 50 machines put in place, each costing north of \$1 million each, or so I am told. All were brought to make, to the best of my knowledge, a part this big.

Now, they produce a lot of these parts. But to think about the planning, the manpower, the sheer scope of that project, and not just in the machines and all the work that goes into it, to make a product that big. That is mind boggling. I hope you get the point from that example.

There is so much out there we do not know, so much that we can learn and be amazed by. We just have to look from a different perspective or a different lens. For us in God's Family, we should especially be able to see with a different lens. For us, we have been granted, as Christ tells His disciples in Matthew 13, to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven. It is a present reality for us to this day.

And Psalm 77, which we read earlier, it actually gives the steps to get back and keep our sense of wonder. It is the steps that Asaph took after his lament, so we are going to break that down.

First, he states that he will remember God's wonderful works. Then he says that they are constantly in his thoughts. From that he equates all of God's ways to holiness, and he determines there is no one mightier. He proclaims that God is the God of great wonders. And he states from that, He is a God who is actively demonstrating His power.

Since Asaph started off by remembering what God has done, the wonders He has done, *remembering* is our first step. Israel was commanded numerous times to remember—numerous times. We have been given this entire Book (that you may have sitting in your laps) as evidence of God's wonder.

Remembering is an active work that we must do because we tend to forget. Not only should we remember the wondrous works that are in the Book, but what about the works that God has performed in our lives? Hindsight is 20/20, they say. So we should be able to look back and see those wonderful acts of God in our lives.

Remembering leads us to the next step: *Keeping these wonders of God constantly in our thoughts as we go about our lives.* We meditate on them as the psalmists did. We evaluate them and think on them in our study of His Word. From this we come to the conclusion, God is holy and He is mighty. We begin to understand He is sovereign over His creation. And we see that He is indeed a God of wonders.

The New King James Version translates the first half of verse 14 as, "You are the God who does wonders." So in verses 11 through 14, we clearly see this progression from remembering past acts to exclaiming the current active works. Following these steps, we get to a point that we see these workings happening now. These wonders are being done all around us.

One thing Rick Hansen mentioned in his article, that I had not thought about before in relation to wonders, is the wonders we see in people. Here is a quote from his article:

Consider people you know, how they keep going when they are tired, breathe through the pain, get up yet again and walk a crying baby, settle down in the middle of an argument and admit fault and move on. That a mother can embrace the young man who murdered her son is more amazing than any exploding supernova. And just as others are amazing to you, you are also amazing to them.

The wonders God is working out are not just physical, like His upholding His creation, its masterful design, or even in healing. His wonderful works are also in the making of His Family and His development of godly character.

It is amazing that someone can endure a difficult trial and not give up. It is amazing that someone can overcome a sin. It is amazing that someone can come to the point of forgiveness of another. It is amazing that someone who has been weak with a lack of self-control, that they can say no and overcome. It is amazing that so many people from different backgrounds and world views can be united in a common belief and be able to work together towards an extraordinary goal.

The question that looms over this subject is simple, and it is one that many in this room and even those listening in may have heard many times. *Do we see God?* Do we see for us in His work, do we see in the simple day to day rhythm of our lives the miracles He is working out in us and in others?

Rick Hansen, he put a pin on this idea in what I will call his key remark from the article. He states, "If we are not amazed, we're not paying attention." Are we paying attention?

Regaining and keeping our sense of wonder brings benefits to our lives. The obvious benefit is in increased happiness and an overall enjoyment of our life. We will also begin to treat others better.

Within the psalm of Asaph, we see the benefit of helping to get through a trial. We also gain a benefit of our overall awareness and connection with God. And finally, we benefit by having reverence for Him. We begin to trust Him more. We appreciate Him more. And we begin to obey Him more.

I hope it is clear. The risk of losing our sense of wonder is an ever-present danger in our lives, and we have to make a concerted effort to keep it. Try looking through the eyes of a child. Try the "don't know" perspective.

Follow the steps of Asaph. Be amazed by paying attention. We serve a God of wonders. May you never lose your sense of wonder.