

Wonder And Awe!

On Sunday we launched a new sermon series called “Eight EPIC Bible Passages.” Tonight we’ll talk about our first epic passage – Genesis 1.

1. Warm up question: Jeff began Sunday’s sermon by describing the impact of watching Apollo 8 orbit the moon on live TV on Christmas Eve 1968, as the astronauts read from Genesis 1. What’s one of the most impactful TV moments you’ve experienced?
2. Often conversations about Genesis 1 get sidetracked by the debate between Christians who believe God created in a literal week of time (“creationist”) and Christians who believe God created over eons of time through the evolutionary process (“theistic evolutionists”).
 - a. Which way to do you lean – and why?
 - b. As you see it, what’s at stake in this debate? Does it matter whether God created in a week or through eons of time?
 - c. Jeff said it ought to be possible for people with different perspectives on creation to worship, love, and serve together. He reminded us that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, not by our perspective on creation. How do you feel about the fact that LifeJourney welcomes both creationists and theistic evolutionists? Why is it so rare for churches to embrace people on both sides of the debate?
3. Read Genesis 1:1-13. Jeff suggested that the most important teaching point of Genesis 1 is something we can all agree on: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them.**
 - a. Do you agree with that point? What other practical thoughts or lessons do you think we can draw from what we read in Genesis 1?
 - b. Describe how you imagine the creation process unfolding? In your view, how did God interact with creation to bring all this about?
 - c. Read Psalm 8:3-9. When we focus on the wonder of all that is created and the gift of life that teems all around us, it fills us with awe. Late at night, Teddy Roosevelt used to gaze at the sky with friends, recite astronomical facts about the cosmos, then say, “I think we feel small enough now. Let’s go to bed.” When you gaze at the stars, what do you think or feel?
4. Einstein said, “The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. . . . To sense that behind anything that can be experienced is something that our minds cannot grasp, whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly; this is religiousness.” On top of that, a recent study showed that the emotion of awe has enormous positive physiological impact on us. Clearly, awe is a beneficial emotion.

- a. What kinds of things tend to cause you to feel awe?
 - b. What is the most awesome thing you've ever laid eyes on in all God's creation?
5. In "Joe vs. the Volcano," a character Patricia says, "Almost the whole world's asleep – everybody you know, everybody you see, everybody you talk to. [O]nly a few people are awake. And they live in a state of constant, total amazement." It's easy to get consumed by the grind of life and stop basking in the wonder all around us.
- a. How "awake" do you feel?
 - b. What are some practical ways to cultivate a spirit of awe?
6. Read Genesis 1:28. The Hebrew word for "dominion" connotes caregiving and nurturing, like you'd expect from a wonderful parent or loving king or queen. The implication is that we're in charge of creation and responsible for managing it with wisdom and love.
- a. Collectively, how do you think we're doing?
 - b. What worries you most about our planet?
 - c. Conversations about protecting our planet often breakdown into polarized political arguments. How do you think we can best spark collective progress?
 - d. Jeff suggested that, if we love God, we must love what God's loves, including the planet and all that is on it. He suggested the environmental care and protection is part of our personal discipleship. Do you agree or disagree – and why?
 - e. Here is a partial list of ways we can reduce our carbon footprint. Jeff challenged us to grab hold of at least one of these things that we're not yet practicing as an expression of our love for God. Which one most calls to you?

Energy efficient lightbulbs.

Unplug gadgets, turn off lights.

Choose a laptop over a desktop.

Buy local food where possible.

Plant a tree.

Recycle.

Avoid speeding or unnecessary acceleration.

Next time buy a hybrid or more fuel efficient vehicle.

Increase home insulation.

Adjust heat or air when not home.

Consider environmental issues when voting.

Other suggestions?