

THE HEAVENS



I am sitting at a retreat center on the edge of the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The reddish rock formations are incredible as they push upward out of the rocky green terrain, towering over my head and reaching up to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. When you spend most of your life in the Midwest, mountains capture your heart-awe much as the oceans do. I swear I have watched sunrises and sunsets where I am emotionally overwhelmed to the point of ecstasy – something I work hard to rationalize and suppress before I am seen by anyone else – yet the experience saturates my soul with a transcendent, timeless beauty.

One of the things for which I am grateful is that through all of my upbringing and much of my adult life my sense of wonder has remained intact. I say this because I have seen this beaten and squeezed out of so many people as they reflect upon and try to get their hands around the emptiness they feel inside. John Eldredge says this is a gift from God, and that I should be grateful to have not had my innocence and sense of wonder cut short. I feel I must agree with John because he is a kick-butt guy, and he might hit me upside the head with a kayak paddle if I don't buy in to this part of my masculinity. But isn't life without wonder a colorless companion? Doesn't the unknown eclipse the drab imaginations of mere rationalistic thinking?

Don't get me wrong, I have not thrown my intellect overboard. I have just made room for the supernatural. And in the unexpected I have watched my mind AND my soul cross new horizons.

Have you ever noticed that all movie aliens are, for the most part, bi-peds? If God did make other species and planets

(although creating in a number of different dimensions is probably adequate for Him) I wonder what these beings would look like? I suppose they would be bi-peds because God has hands, feet, eyes, and all that stuff (sarcasm here).

Now really – be honest with me. Don't you get just a little freaked out when you get one of those e-mails comparing the size of the earth with the sun, and the sun with other stars, and stars with the galaxy that is our neighborhood?! For crying out loud, the probe Voyager that was launched in 1977 is just reaching the end of OUR solar system. My God, how immense it must all be!

I have been watching the debate about the absolute separation between science and spirituality for five decades now, and I quite frankly think it is a crock (crock: a large container of crap). Why anyone would want to castrate the sense of wonder from the human race in order to explain our lack of accountability for our lives is all too understandable to me – but why would we want to obscure the Image so clearly stamped upon this massive outpouring of intelligent, caring design?

I tell you the truth – the stars take my breath away. We have a cabin in southern Iowa where we go to retreat, hold summer camp, and hunt in the fall – so I am pretty much there off and on throughout all four seasons. Some nights I will walk out onto the deck in the evening or the middle of the night and the spectacle will bring me to tears. First of all, I cry because I wake up two times every night to pee, but mostly because of the breath-taking sight as the heavens sing to my earth-bound soul. If I am so small and the heavens so immense – who am I – that such a Designer would take notice of me?!

Consider the chances for life on this planet are razor thin. Recent calculations indicate the probability of another life-giving planet within known space are almost non-existent. In just the last two decades Hubble observations from space have exponentially expanded our understanding of the

sheer immensity of what is “out there.” Added to this, recent science on how privileged our planet is to have a transparent atmosphere, allowing sustained life and giving us an ultimate “window” into our galaxy and the immense expanse beyond!

Even as I write, discontent among scientists with traditional theories on the origin of matter, evolution, and creationism splits the intellectual community. While there is censure and anger over what needs to be protected, many are simply unable to remain open to new science or to embrace reconsideration of dated theories education or religion have built upon since the 15th century. Intelligent Design is being revisited by those who are uncomfortable to embrace either Darwinian or Creation theories. And it appears the desire for open debate is being suppressed. Scientists are losing their jobs because they will not deny new science in favor of ideological sacred cows. All the while the average, educated American moves blindly in lock step with unproven but commonly taught “science.”

The heavens play a significant role in my process of Fusion with my Creator. Their unanswered questions of immensity and my subsequent smallness make me let down my guard and whisper “I am here” to the Designer. Even in my childhood, as I watched the northern lights dance upon the Wisconsin sky, I could hear the soft Voice of the Living God calling me – “David – I know who you are.” To deny this intrinsic design and beauty in the galaxies - let alone the Voice written upon my soul – is the single greatest tragedy of mankind.

I choose to leave my home hibernation several clear nights a year - away from city lights. I sit and listen to a Voice so ancient that the mountains and oceans of our world youthfully tremble over such majesty. The heavens are a gift to the earthbound, and a key to the Fusion that longs to overtake a human soul. And that is just new discoveries in the macro. What about the river of data pouring out of the micro, even down to the building blocks of life itself?

AMERICANA



Earthbound souls (there are billions of us) cry out for transcendent meaning. And yet it is commonplace to leave this earth totally uninformed of such radical truth from the scriptures:

“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.

And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist...’

- Paul, follower of Jesus, Acts 17

I carry the knowledge there is a Living God with me to my last day, and unashamedly make room for faith within my rationalistic psyche. There is simply too much evidence in what has been made to avoid an investigation of authentic faith.

Your heart for the immense things around you...

What are the things that take your breath away? How has immensity in science, philosophy, and theology captured your imagination? What connections do you cultivate with natural beauty?

Grade school began each day with the “pledge” to the American flag. The principal would announce over the loud speaker, and every person in the school would place our hands over our hearts and in unison we would stand and say, “I pledge allegiance, to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, One Nation, under God - with Liberty and Justice for all.” This used to give me goose-bumps all the way up my back. Together with my positive experiences in scouting, it never dawned on me that there were people who thought our country was less than great. This all changed for me in the early seventies.

When I was 19, the Vietnam war was in full swing and incredibly unpopular. I didn’t feel right about working around my low number in the draft lottery (like heading for Canada) so of all things I joined a military police National Guard unit. As my long hair hit the floor in a basic training processing center, I sincerely wondered what I had done. Over the next eight weeks I lost six inches from my waist and looked like a laundry sack tied in the middle. I can still remember eating my mess hall meals in the ten steps it took to get from the serving line to where we dumped our trays. My drill sergeant would stand and eat my dessert while I did sit-ups and push-ups. For the next six years I rubbed shoulders with sheriff’s deputies, police officers, and other guys in law enforcement (a real mind-blower for me).

My military experience helped me in several ways. In basic training I thought I was going to lose it. Never before had I been in a situation where someone had complete control over my life. Yet I survived. Getting to know these men made me realize just how hard it is to be in enforcement. I learned a great respect for the authority they wielded and why such