

DAY 36 | Awe And Wonder — The Emotions That Make You Small Enough To Be Healed

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” — Psalm 8:3–4 (KJV)

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might.” — Isaiah 40:26 (KJV)

Among the positive emotions available to human beings, awe and wonder occupy a unique neurological and spiritual category. They are not comfort emotions, they do not primarily make you feel good. They are perspective-altering emotions: they change the size of the self in relation to everything else, producing what researchers call a 'small self' experience that, paradoxically, is one of the most emotionally and spiritually healing states the human brain can inhabit.

Dacher Keltner's landmark research on awe at the University of California, Berkeley, found that experiences of awe produce a measurable reduction in pro-inflammatory cytokines the biological markers of chronic stress and immune dysregulation. A single 60-second experience of genuine awe produced more significant anti-inflammatory effects than laughter, contentment, or joy in the same study. Keltner also found that awe produces a 'shrinking of the self', a temporary suspension of the ego's preoccupations that creates space for new information, new perspectives, and new emotional possibilities to emerge.

Psalm 8 demonstrates this precisely. David begins with the overwhelming vastness of God's creation the heavens, the moon, the stars and the effect is not anxiety about smallness but wonder: 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' The self becomes appropriately small, and in that smallness, the love of a God who is mindful of such small creatures becomes the most astonishing, healing truth available. Awe makes room for grace by temporarily dissolving the self's defensive preoccupations.

Isaiah 40:26 prescribes awe as a practice: 'Lift up your eyes on high, and behold.' The instruction is deliberate and directional. Look up. Take in the scale of what God has created. Let the magnitude of it adjust your perspective on the magnitude of your problems. This is not dismissiveness toward your pain, it is the therapeutic use of scale. When the God who calls



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each star by name is also personally mindful of you, the narrative of your smallness and your suffering changes without either being denied.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

“Awe and wonder are among the most neurologically powerful positive emotions available to human beings. They produce measurable anti-inflammatory effects, reduce the brain's ruminative self-focus, and create the neurological space in which new thoughts, new connections, and new perspectives can form.” — Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess*

“Getting outside yourself experiencing something larger, more beautiful, and more significant than your current preoccupation is one of the most effective interventions for anxiety, depression, and negative ruminative thinking that neuroscience has identified. Awe is medicine.” — Dr. Daniel Amen, *You, Happier*

PRAYER POINTS

1. Father, I lift my eyes. I step outside my preoccupations for this moment and I look at what You have made the scale, the order, the beauty, the precision. Let awe do its work in me.
2. Lord, make me small enough to be healed. Dissolve the defensive ego that insists my problems are uniquely overwhelming, and replace it with the wonder of a person who has just glimpsed how big their God actually is.
3. Holy Spirit, restore my capacity for wonder the ability to be genuinely moved by the beauty and magnitude of God and His creation. Let this world stop being familiar and start being astonishing again.
4. I declare that the God who calls each star by name is personally mindful of me. That truth is more healing than any therapy. I receive it today as medicine, in Jesus Christ's name.

In the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

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— From the Desk of Chief Seer, Dr. Andre Thomas —



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