

Introduction

All of you know the term **“The Seven Wonders of the World.”** There are various lists of the **“Seven Wonders”** including one CNN compiled. It includes the Grand Canyon, the Barrier Reef, the Harbor of Rio de Janeiro, Mount Everest, Aurora, and the Paricutin Volcano.

But in my view, listing the Seven Wonders of the World is misleading and woefully inadequate. It’s certainly something children wouldn’t do. This power point slide explains why I say that. Notice the wide-eyed child and proposition printed beside him: **“There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million.”** That’s exactly right. There aren’t Seven Wonders of the World. There are Seven Million – countless wonders in other words, and that’s what I’m going to preach about today.

Wonder

I’d like to begin by defining the subjective experience we call **“wonder.”** The best way to do that is to observe small children because a sense of wonder pervades everything they do. They’re enthralled by the world around them. They routinely gasp, overwhelmed by the sublime offerings of life. To them, each day is filled with exquisite delights. Look at this child’s facial expression. It reflects what she’s feeling. It’s enchantment, astonishment, or awe. That’s wonder.

And we need it. The great G.K. Chesterton taught just that. He asserted we have a psychological need for the extraordinary in our day-to-day lives. He pointed to the adventure, poetry, imagination, and picturesque living that humans desire and identified its source. It’s our need for **“the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure.”** We need to be in touch with reality, in other words, but at the same time, enchanted by it. It transforms our persons and lives when we are. As Chesterton explained it, wonder indicates magic (transcendence), magic indicates meaning, meaning

implies purpose, and purpose leads to humility, gratitude, and joy. I'd say it this way. Wonder is a primary source of the goodness and joy Jesus has for us if we're disciples or friends of His.

Again, children flesh out what I mean. Did you ever think about it? Why don't they want to go to sleep? It's amazing how thirsty they get and how weak their bladders become at bed time. It's because they're afraid they might miss something. Their minds and hearts are too excited and their lives too full to sleep. Wonder, you see, has filled their lives with goodness and joy – so much so that they don't want to miss a single minute of the day.

It's true then. Wonder is a primary source of the goodness and joy Jesus intends for disciples and friends of His. Children have it and you and I, as teenagers and adults, can too.

The Loss of Wonder

Sadly though, most of us don't. One of the best gifts God gave us when our life began was a sense of wonder. But that sense in most of us is long gone. Let me ask you a question. How many times during this past week did you feel enchantment, astonishment, or awe? If you're a typical teenager or adult, the answer is probably **"None."**

I conversed with a person who told me about seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time several months ago and her reaction to it. **"It was awe-inspiring,"** she said, **"An unforgettable experience."** I then asked her, **"How many times have you felt awe-inspired since then?"** Puzzled that I did, she replied, **"None, why?"**

Her reply shows that most of us have lost the sense of wonder we possessed as children. The everyday offerings of life aren't enough to enchant, astonish, or awe us anymore. And there's the inevitable slide into emptiness because they aren't. H.L. Mencken wrote, **"The problem with life is not that it's a tragedy, but that it is a bore."** He was right and the loss of wonder is a primary reason it is. The measure of our boredom increases as the measure of our wonder decreases.

A Trinitarian Universe

None of us want that I'm sure. We want a life overflowing with goodness and joy instead, and we can have it – if we recapture the wonder we lost. Let's examine Genesis 1:26-31 and how we do that.

Look at the plural pronouns God uses to designate Himself in verse 26, "**us**" and "**our**." This is what theologians call "**the plural of fullness**." It indicates intensity and multiplicity of attributes. It conveys that God is majestic or as the psalmists say it, "**awesome**." This fullness is unfolded as tri-unity in the plural pronouns "**we**" and "**our**" in John 14:17, 23. It's one of God's most glorious attributes. He's Trinitarian, that is, one being with three persons.

Notice what this awesome Trinitarian God did in Genesis 1. He created the universe and everything in it. That includes humans about whom verses 26-27 give us a remarkable insight. God made them "**in His image**" and "**according to His likeness**," which are synonymous phrases. While He's infinite and humans are finite, they're nonetheless reflections of His nature. They possess certain attributes that are like certain attributes of His. They have a sense of humor, for instance, because He in His own perfect and infinite way does.

But it isn't just humans that are reflections of God. Everything else in the universe is too. Romans 1:20 teaches that. Paul writes that God's "**attributes**" are "**clearly seen**" through "**what has been made**." What His creation is like, apart from its fallenness, conveys something of what He is like. Every facet of the universe – whether it's an animate or inanimate object or an equation, formula, or natural law – is a product of God's mind, heart, and power, and thus, an expression of His nature.

Do you realize what that means? The universe is as it is because God is as He is. Why do puppies play? It's because God is utterly joyful. Why does $e=mc^2$? It's because God is utterly powerful. Why does ice float? It's because God is utterly wise. Humans and everything else are as they are, apart from their fallenness, because God is as He is. Or to say it another way, it's a Trinitarian Universe.

The Seven Million Wonders of the World

That is a profound insight, the implication of which is life altering. I'm going to give you a list of things. I'll then ask you a question. What do they all have in common? Here's the list: apples, memories, books, chicken coops, talking, walking, and Kool-Aid dissolving in water. What do all those have in common? They're wonders of the world.

They are that because it's a Trinitarian universe. Remember what I said. Everything that exists or that is so, apart from its fallenness, is an expression of God's nature. Consequently, nothing in our universe and world is ordinary. Everything is extraordinary. Nothing is natural. Everything is supernatural. Simply put, everything is a wonder.

G.K Chesterton understood that as well as anyone has. He stated in his book *Orthodoxy* that the only words that ever satisfied him in describing nature are the ones used in fairy books like "**charm**," "**spell**," and "**enchantment**." He was absolutely right about that. Nature is magical by which he meant transcendent or supernatural.

Suppose a frog turns into a handsome prince. We'd think that was magical. Why? There's a complete disconnect between a frog and a prince. There's nothing about the frog that would suggest it could become a prince. Only something magical could make it so.

With that in mind, look at what I have in this hand, a seed, and in this hand, an apple. As you can plainly see, there's a disconnect between the seed and the apple. There's nothing about the seed that would suggest it could become an apple. Only something magical, transcendent, could make it so. That something is the so-called natural processes of germination and photosynthesis. I say "**so-called**" because there's nothing natural about them. They came from the mind, heart, and power of God who sustains them, which makes them as magical as any process that would turn a frog into a handsome prince. I say that to say this. This apple is a wonder of the world.

And so is everything else. There aren't Seven Wonders of the World. There are Seven Million, countless wonders in other words.

What that means as a practical matter is this. Wonders of the world are all around us all the time as we move through our days.

Recapture the Wonder

And we're able to recapture the wonder we've lost because they are. We recapture it by engaging those wonders in the right way. There are two ways to engage them.

One is superficially. We perceive them with our senses and that's about it. We see, hear, smell, taste, or touch them, giving little or even no thought to them as we do. All we experience and know of them is what's on the surface. Some of you know the adult version of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, for instance: **"Twinkle, twinkle, little star. Now I know just what you are – an incandescent ball of gas condensing to a solid mass."** That's one way of engaging the wonders of the world around us, superficially.

Abraham Heschel wrote about **"indifference to the sublime wonder of living."** Superficiality trivializes the sublime. It reduces the extraordinary to the ordinary, the supernatural to the natural. The result is a stifling indifference to the wonders of the world around us.

There's a second way we can engage the wonders around us and it's the right way, deeply. We don't just perceive them. We **"consider"** them. That's the word Jesus used in Matthew 6:26,28. **"Consider"** the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. To consider is a two-step process. First, we descend into the details of things by examining, analyzing, and reasoning. We learn the particulars of their nature. Second, we relate those particulars to God. We identify what about Him they reflect or express.

I consider supermarkets, for instance. I descend into their details: the incredible quantity, the astonishing variety, and the remarkable quality of the food, and the striking creativity and colors of the packaging. It's all so appealing. Then there are all the processes and activities that occurred and all the people they involved to create the

food and get it on to the shelves. Having descended into those details, I relate them to God. They reflect His goodness and the creativity and order of His prodigious mind. That's how we consider things.

And we recapture the sense of wonder we've lost when we do. I speak from experience. Several years ago, a Russian visitor to the U.S. said about our supermarkets that she was "**astounded**" by them. And you know what? So am I. I mean that. I feel astonishment, awe, every time I walk into a supermarket. Why? It's because I consider it.

But it isn't just supermarkets. I consider showers, cars, Jelly Belly jelly beans, books, conversations, electricity, ants, and candles. I descend into the details of those and countless other things and relate them to God.

And I've recaptured the sense of wonder I lost because I do. I have a pervasive experience of day-to-day goodness and joy. My wife Jill and my grandson Malachi frequently tease me about using the word "**phenomenal**" all the time. But I can't help it. That's what things are to me. If you asked me, "**How many times were you awe-inspired this past week,**" I'd say, "**Many,**" and it'd be true. I've recaptured the wonder I lost and so can you. In the context of your discipleship to Jesus, consider things!

Conclusion

I close with an observation. We sometimes tell our children and grandchildren to "**grow up**" and rightly so. But when it comes to wonder, we should tell them, "**Don't grow up.**" They shouldn't grow up in that regard and neither should we. Consider the Seven Million Wonders of the World, and you won't.



