

Awe of God in Everyday Life

Week 5



We noted how people are created with a need for Awe.

We've also noted that it is the absence of awe that gives rise to our sinful behavior.

We can cultivate our Awe of God by noticing evidence of God's awesomeness on display all around us. In the Bible God has revealed himself to us through written words which record His interaction with humanity over many generations. God's character as described in these words and interactions also testify to the awesomeness of God's character.

Today I also want to talk about practical tips cultivating more Awe of God in our lives.

Practices that Nurture Our Awe of God:

Read the Bible (Trust in its testimony):

Look for God's Presence:

Fear and Trembling:

What would be an inappropriate fear of God?

Give Gratitude (Remember):

A major problem of ours is our lack appreciation. Somehow we have become desensitized to God's generosity. We can observe this often in children right? They come to expect the generosity of their parents as something they deserve rather than something which communicates kindness, love and generosity.

Gratitude is sort of part two to seeing evidence of God at work. Once we notice it we should express appreciation. This can work even in the reverse though. When we take time to reflect on all that we can be grateful for we end up noticing things that we had taken for granted. Things we overlooked we are now reminded of. We not only see things we forgot but we can see them in quantity. That is we see just how many amazing things God did for us today. Use gratitude to create awe of God.

What is one thing that happened this week for which you are thankful to God?

Slow Down (Reflect):

This is actually my number one piece of advice. Without taking time to slow down we end up not doing the rest of these practices. You will not find the same amount of Awe in a 90 second daily devotional as you will in a heartfelt examination of God's Word. Slow down. Our culture is pushing us to do more and more as a means of getting more out of life.

I think the evidence is that for the most part we are exchanging quantity for quality. So basically we are building our lives into the Dollar Store.

I lack discipline so I often can't use my iPhone for Bible reading. I get notifications and reminders and just end up being enticed away from focused time thinking about God's truth.

I'm not sure if it is ADD or the human condition, but I also find I need quiet. Some simple background noise like a stream or the birds chirping is okay but too much other stuff going on around me affects my ability to go deeper with God.

Luke 5:16

[16] But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (ESV)

Luke 10:40–42

[40] But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." [41] But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, [42] but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." (ESV)

Psalms 37:7

[7] Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices! (ESV)

What does it look like for you to slow down?

When you think about moments where you experienced Awe, how would you describe your pace?

Ask (Pray):

As we learned about two weeks ago our sin problem is directly related to our awe problem. So we shouldn't be surprised that our desire for and supply of Awe of God will need to come from God himself. This is why we must pray.

God wants to give good gifts to His kids. There is literally no better gift that God could give us than himself. So I have a pretty good feeling that if you ask God to increase your Awe of Him that He is down with that.

Jesus says ask anything in his name and it will be done. This is not a magic phrase we put at the end of our prayers so God is obligated to supply our wish list. It means that when we pray in alignment with what God values He is pleased to give it to us. Based on what I read throughout scripture I would say praying for increased Awe of God is definitely aligned with what God is wanting.

So teach me... **How should I pray if I want to have increased Awe of God?**

Let's pray for one another in this way.

How Our Awe of God Can Be Used in Everyday Life:

Church

"People move from church to church as if the churches in their community are nothing more than ecclesiastical department stores. They're shopping for just the right preacher, women's ministry, youth ministry, or worship style. These Christians' relationship to the church mirrors my relationship to Macy's. If I go to Macy's looking for a certain color and style shirt and they don't have it, I feel no guilt whatsoever in leaving Macy's and going to look for it at Bloomingdale's. I move from store to store until I find what I want because my commitment is not to a particular store but to myself and the satisfaction of my desire for that shirt."

Colossians 3:2

[2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (ESV)

Colossians 3:2 goes right to the heart of the matter, which happens to be the heart. It addresses what has captured the awe capacity of your heart.

Remember, your heart always functions in the awe of something. The thoughts, desires, motivations, purposes, and choices of your heart are all shaped by whatever your heart is in awe of.

This passage simplifies this to two possible options.

- Either your heart lives in a fundamental, life-shaping awe of the horizontal, physical, created world (“things that are on the earth”),
- or your heart lives in a foundational vertical awe of God, his work, his grace, and his kingdom.

If your heart has been captured by the glories of the physical world’s people, places, experiences, and things, that’s where you will invest the majority of your physical, emotional, and spiritual energies.

Yet if your heart is being progressively captured by the awe of God, his work, his grace, and his kingdom (“things that are above”), you will see your church not just as a place you attend but as a community that you belong to and you will live with a ministry lifestyle in the place where God has put you.

When awe of God has captured your heart, ministry will fill your schedule. You won’t need the church to schedule ministry for you; you will approach work, marriage, parenting, extended family, friendships, and community with a ministry mentality.

Awe of God will free you from thinking of your life as belonging to you and of ministry as temporarily offering pieces of your life to God that you will quickly take back as an episode of ministry ends.

Awe means that you will look at everything in your life through the lens of God’s existence and glory, and you will surrender all your life to his purpose, humbly recognizing that, when you do this, you are not offering what is yours to him but returning what he already owns back to him for his use.

Colossians continues...

Colossians 3:12–17

^[12] Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ^[13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ^[14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ^[15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ^[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your

hearts to God. ^[17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)

1. Take your local-church relationships seriously (vv. 12–14).

These verses list several character qualities—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness—and God expects every believer to commit to nurturing these qualities in all their relationships.

They form the bedrock of this ministry lifestyle, and they immediately confront us with the fact that God owns our relationships—we do not—and that he has a higher purpose for them than we do.

We tend to view our relationships as little more than containers for our personal happiness.

- You will turn moments of ministry into moments of frustration, seeing another person’s sin or need as an interruption or hassle rather than an opportunity for grace.
- You will settle for quick situational solutions that don’t really bring God’s grace to the heart of the matter.
- You will strike back or walk away, but you won’t be a tool in God’s hands.

God intends these character qualities to transform the relationships of your daily life, changing them from containers for your happiness to workrooms for the transforming grace of the Redeemer.

2. Rest in the peace of the gospel (v. 15).

Why does Paul call for the “peace of Christ” to rule in our hearts?

We must first have the peace of Christ if you and I are ever going to experience lasting peace in the community around us.

Why peace of Christ?

- a. Because this rest for the heart only comes when you are getting your identity and personal security from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Because you rest in his forgiveness, you don’t need to fear being exposed since nothing could be known about you that hasn’t already been covered by his sacrificial work.
- c. Because you rest in his acceptance, you are freed from riding the roller coaster of people’s responses to you.

- d. Because you rest in his indwelling power, you are not afraid of the difficulties and challenges of personal ministry.

You see, the gospel frees you from focusing so much on yourself that you have little time to minister to others.

- 3. Be a committed student of God's Word (v. 16).

Ministry opportunities will tend to devolve into human advice giving. Because we don't know God's Word well, we will dip into our own experience and tell people what we think they should do, ignoring God's call to them, his grace in them, and his wisdom for them.

- 4. Look for ministry opportunities (v. 16).

Paul says you need the Word of God dwelling in you richly so that you are ready to "teach" and "admonish." Think about these two words.

They tend to be ministry terms that we apply only to formally trained, full-time, paid ministry staff. Yet Paul is saying here that these two words capture God's call to every believer. For the church to be the church—not just a place where you can find ministry but where the people are a ministering community—every believer must accept his or her role in the life of every other believer.

What does this mean? What does this look like?

To teach means that I am always committed and ready when God gives me the opportunity to help others see life from God's perspective.

And to admonish means that I am always committed and ready when God gives me the opportunity to help others see themselves in the mirror of God's Word.

No church will ever be able to afford enough staff to cover all the teaching and admonishing moments that God will give his church in any given week.

- 5. Recognize that your life no longer belongs to you (v. 17).

Here again is a reminder to do everything in God's name. We have no separate, private lives that belong to us. God owns us, and he owns every one of our relationships. A lifestyle of ministry begins with a surrender to the ownership of the Lord over all we are and all we have.

Parenting

If you had to capture on a piece of paper what God's job description of the family is, what would you write? What has God called parents to be and to do?

What goals should you have for your children? When you're at the end of a week as a parent and you say, "That was a good week," what makes you say that?

The Big Picture

Here's what every parent needs to understand: your child doesn't just have a behavior problem; he or she has a heart problem. The Bible teaches that all the words and behavior of a child are controlled, shaped, and directed by what's in that child's heart (see Luke 6:43–45, good fruit bad fruit). And the core dysfunction of the heart of every child doesn't first have to do with law; it has to do with awe.

Every child is born with a heart controlled more by awe of self than by awe of God. Let me say it this way: every child comes into the world embracing two very seductive but equally seductive lies.

First is the lie of autonomy.

Autonomy says, "I am an independent human being, and I have a right to live my life the way I want to live it." Those early battles that you have with your child about what to eat, what to wear, and when to go to sleep are not just about those issues. Your child is pushing back because your child does not want to be ruled. She sees herself in the center of her universe. He has appointed himself as a little self-sovereign.

Although they have no understanding of a healthy human diet, what is appropriate to wear when, and the amount of sleep a healthy child requires, they will fight you because they do not want to be told what to do.

The second lie is the lie of self-sufficiency.

This lie says, "I have everything I need inside myself to be what I am supposed to be and to do what I am supposed to do." Although young children have almost no understanding of the world around them, they will resist help because they want to hold onto the delusion that they do not need wisdom, instruction, or correction.

They Need More Than Rules

So, parents, it simply doesn't work to have a law system as the model for your parenting. Now maybe you're thinking, "But don't my children need rules and enforcement in their lives? Don't they need constant authority?" Of course they do, but these things are not enough.

If all your children needed was a tight system of law to be what they're supposed to be and to do what they're supposed to do, Jesus would never have had to come and live a perfect life, shed his precious blood, and rise again from the grave. The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that this kind of parenting simply is not enough.

Do your children need the law? Yes, they do! God employs the law to help your children see how spiritually needy they are. The law tells your children how God wants them to live, but the law can never, ever deliver them from the sin and self-worship that have captured their hearts.

So our parenting must target the central heart issue of our children. We know that as long as their hearts are ruled by awe of self, they will push against our authority, they will go their own way, and they will practically ignore the God who created and sustains them. This means that our parenting must be guided by a great big awe agenda. We need to do everything we can to put the glory of God and his grace before our children so that the awe of God would rule over their hearts.

Show Them God's Presence:

God has created his world in such a way that it would reveal him. Every glorious created thing points to a God of far greater glory.

So, parents, it's not unnatural to talk about God every day to your children; it's positively unnatural not to. God made hot, and God made cold. God made water that freezes on one end and boils on the other (wow!). God made the delicacy of a lily, the inexhaustible wings of a hummingbird, the lumbering gait of an elephant, the multicolored stripes of a rainbow, the terror of a storm, the processes of the earth to supply us food to eat, the splash of stars at night, and a myriad of other things to see, hear, touch, and taste every day.

You just can't get up in the morning without bumping into God. Every day it's God here, God there, God over there and there and there.

Now, parents, you need to understand something further. You are parenting children who have a perverse ability to look at the world around them and not see God.

Psalm 145

- So when you go to the petting zoo with your little girl, talk about the God who made each distinct characteristic of every single animal.
- When you bake bread, talk about how the rising of dough is just one of millions of physical, chemical processes that came out of the mind of God.
- When your child smells a fragrant flower, talk about how God created these smells and then gave us the organs in our body to take them in and enjoy them.

- When you're hiking with your son through the woods, talk about the One who created these huge organisms with arms that reach toward the heavens.
- When your child is sick, talk about the One who created all the delicate, interdependent systems of the body that must work in complete harmony for us to be well.
- When your daughter is complaining about the rainy weather, talk about what an impossible job it would be to control the world's weather, yet God does it every day.
- Have your young son make faces in the mirror, and talk about how God designed all those little muscles in the face that allow us to communicate so much without saying a word. I could give page after page of illustration after illustration.

We live in the middle of an awesome, never-ending glory display, and it is our job—and should be our joy—to point our children to this glory again and again day after day.

In parenting it is very hard to give away what you don't have. In many of our homes, it's not just our children who are blind to the awesome display of God's presence, power, and glory everywhere around us; we are also blind to it. So perhaps we should start with asking God not to open our children's eyes, but first to open ours, so that we can help them to see. It is impossible to point someone to something that you don't see.

Your children haven't been given to you as indentured servants to make your life easier. They have not been given to build your identity or prop up your reputation. They are not to be viewed as potential trophies on the mantel of your success.

The only kind of authority you have is representative or ambassadorial authority.

As parents we are either displaying God's character to our kids or not. Every attitude. Every word can be a reflection of God's goodness or it can be something less. What we say matters but what we do matters just as much if not more.

Work

Work and the Limits of Time

It is more than a priorities problem.

Three inescapable dimensions of our calling. You are called to relationships, you are called to work, and you are called to God. Each of these is a significant expression of how God calls every one of us to live.

Yet you have a limited amount of time to devote to these domains, so if one activity expands over a longer span of time, it can only expand because you have contracted the duration of another activity.

Almost no one says, "Work is a greater priority to me than family, so I am going to put family lower on my list." Rather, the demands of work gradually begin to gobble up more and more of my time, and as they do, because I don't have limitless time, I am left with less time for my family.

Few believers would say that work is more important than their relationships with God and his people, but their life of work expands to the point where they have little time left to do anything but casually attend the church to which they once committed themselves.

It is impossible for one area of my calling to expand without it causing other areas of equally important calling to contract. So it's important to ask not what your priorities are but if your world of work has expanded to the point that it has caused a harmful contraction of your time with your family and your pursuit of God?

Work and Identity

Listing your priorities doesn't get at causality.

The question we need to ask and answer is, why are so many of us closet workaholics? Why are so many of us so driven when it comes to our careers? Why are so many of us working to the detriment of family and church? Why do so many successful Christians carry around with them marital and parental guilt?

Why is it so hard for us to keep work in its proper, God-designed place?

I don't think that the workaholics among us have first a priorities or a schedule problem; I think that they have an awe problem, which results in a relationally and spiritually detrimental schedule problem. Only awe of God is capable of keeping work in its rightful place.

So awe amnesia will leave you with an identity vacuum that you will fill with something in your life. If you forget who God is (i.e., you misdirect your awe), you will not know who you are as his child (i.e., you will lose your identity), and you will look horizontally for what you have already been given vertically.

Because work is such a huge and significant dimension of our lives, it becomes very tempting for us to look for our identity there. And when you look to work for your identity, you will find it very hard to resist its challenges, demands, and promises of reward.

The Horizontal Identities of Work

1. Identity in achievement/success: "I am what I have accomplished"
2. Identity in power/control: "I am in control; therefore, I am"
3. Identity in affluence/possessions: "I am the size of the pile of stuff I have accumulated"

What the Awe of God Teaches You about Your Work

When you require yourself to gaze upon and consider God's awesome glory, it will teach you things that will help you put your work in its proper place.

1. The gifts that you employ in your work come from and belong to God.

Awe of God teaches you that work is the regular place where God calls you to be a good steward of the gifts, opportunities, and abilities he has given you. Since God has given you these gifts, you need to exercise them in submission to his will and for the sake of his glory.

2. The time that you invest in work belongs to the Lord.

I must recognize that God, in his awesome glory, is the only being in the universe who exists in timelessness. He has created me to live in and for a certain time and place. I must do all he has called me to do within the limits of the time he has given me.

3. You are called to live for something bigger than yourself.

The choices and investment I make in my world of work must always submit to the reality that I have been called to the building of a kingdom that is not my own. Success is not about how well I've been able to build my own little kingdom but about the degree to which I've done all I've done in the service of a greater King.

4. Success is not about accruing power but about resting in God's power.

Success is about recognizing God's control and using my gifts for his purpose, accepting the power that comes my way as a stewardship from him. God grants me this power and calls me to use it in a way that is consistent with values that he makes clear in his Word.

5. God is too wise and loving ever to call you to one area of responsibility that will necessitate you being irresponsible in another.

If it seems impossible for me to balance my life of work with doing what God calls me to do in my family and church life, I am in the situation not because

God's calls are unmanageable but because I am seeking to get things out of work that I should not. And when I do that, I will work too much and too long, and other places in my life will suffer.

6. By grace, God welcomes you to rest in the knowledge that you will find everything you need in him.

Yes, you are committed to work because God calls you to labor, but as you work, you can rest in his covenantal commitment to meet every one of your needs.