

Awe

About ten or fifteen years ago, while attending my former church, we learned that a man in our congregation was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Peter was his name. I was told at the time how fatal this cancer could be. We were obviously concerned and began to pray for this godly man. In fact, many in the congregation were praying for Peter's healing – and all the more because he was an industrious, reasonable, and kind believer.

The surgeons were bravely going to operate to do what they could. Just prior to the surgery, they ordered one last set of images to guide them. The films revealed that the tumor had not only stabilized, and not merely shrunk, but had disappeared completely. Imagine the doctor's response. Repeated tests confirmed his recovery. The next time I heard from Peter was on Sunday, during community prayer in worship, he stood to proclaim, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

In a sense, I was an eyewitness to a miracle. The very first believers that made up the early church were eyewitnesses as well. God was at work, and he left them in awe. While the Lord does not always choose to heal in the same dramatic way that he did with Peter, he is always at work in obvious and not so obvious ways. This is the testimony of the early church – that God loves us, and is constantly active in our lives working his wonders if we will just have eyes to see.

Monday – Eyewitnesses!

1. Read Acts 2:43 and then read Acts 2. What wonders and signs has Luke already described in the Book of Acts?
2. What did the 3,000 new converts eyewitness personally? Now imagine what works of God they heard about from the Apostles and other believers. What were some of those?
3. Not everyone who witnessed these events saw them the same way. Read Acts 2:13. What caused some people to believe and some to continue in disbelief even though they have all witnessed the same work of God?

Tuesday – Remembering

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced... 1 Chron. 16:11-12

1. In our push to move forward in our walk with God, sometimes we abandon too quickly our past encounters with God and his workings in our lives. Today, as you begin, take a few moments and write down some of the ways you have seen God work in your life in the past.
2. Read Acts 1:1. The "former book" the author refers to is the gospel of Luke. Why did Luke write the Gospel of Luke and Acts (see Luke 1:1-4)?

Putting it into Practice - Luke's purpose in writing was to record the works of Christ and his church so that people would remember what God had done. What are you doing to remember your encounters with Christ and his workings in your life?

Wednesday – Tinkering with Holy Text

Editor's Note - My professor of early 20th Century British literature offered an approach to literary appreciation that may help us with this passage. When facing a passage that is distinctively worded, his advice is to consider how the passage would be different if we substituted several alternative wordings in the context. Doing so, helps us appreciate the distinctiveness of the original wording by comparison making its meaning and "texture" stand out in more apprehensible relief.

1. Read Acts 2:43. What are the key words of this verse? Underline them or write them down.
2. How would this passage be different if *only a few* of the believers had a sense of awe?
3. How would this passage be different if *none* of the outsiders felt awe? (John Stott, in his book, *The Message of Acts*, writes that when "everyone was filled with a sense of awe," that this experience seems to have included the community of believers as well as bystanders in the wider Jerusalem community).

Making it Personal – Luke indicates that the sense of awe was inclusive and strong. What purposes might God have for developing a sense of awe in your life this summer?

Thursday – Seeking the Miraculous

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." Matthew 12:38

1. In Matthew 12, we find Jesus teaching and healing a man with a withered hand. Read verses 9-14. As you skim through the events that followed, note the reaction of the Pharisees. How did the Pharisees respond?
2. How does the reaction of the Pharisees in Matthew 12 compare with the response of the people in Acts 2?
3. Why do you suppose the Pharisees did not appreciate the healing that occurred before their very eyes?

Digging Deeper - What does Jesus seem to think about those who search for a miracle or sign? (See Matthew 12:38ff.)

Developing a sense of awe and wonder has little to do with miracles and signs. It has more to do with seeing God at work in the ordinary daily life. How can you develop a sense of wonder and awe in your own life today?

Friday – Change is in the Air

"Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles." Acts 2:43

1. Read Acts 2:37-47. Imagine that you are a member of the early church. Suddenly, your church grows by 3,000. What changes might that have brought to your everyday life?
2. Imagine the Lord adding 3,000 believers to the churches in Davis. What adjustments might his activity require of you?

Making it Personal - How might welcoming a sense of awe help us be prepared for changes that the Lord brings into our lives?

For the Weekend: Unmistakably, the awe of the new Body of believers was a community event. Consider in prayer how to cultivate relationships in your home group or church acquaintances that recognize and are receptive to God's work in our midst.