

## *Wandering in Wonder*

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*“God has filled us with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all the craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs...for work in every skilled craft.” Exodus 35:31-33*

There is a dentist’s office near my house that I pass every now and then. I’ve been in there twice, and while they are mean and pushy about x-rays, the hygienists are good about making sure they have your favorite flavor of fluoride on hand. They have a reader board, and for the last couple of months, it said, “Wisdom begins in wonder.”

I have been living in a state of wonder for the past year. Perhaps not wonder in the sense Socrates meant when he said to the young philosopher Theaetetus, “For wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder”, although I have been wondering about purpose. Why am I here? What is the point? What do I do now? But those are big questions, and often I try not to wonder in that direction for fear of being lost.

The wonder of my life has been awe. My wonder does not express itself in complete thoughts. No *I wonder why the sky is blue* or *I wonder if God exists*. It’s more of a *wow*. It’s an exhale. It is the simple exhalation of too muchness. I feel unqualified for that thing we call *wisdom* because my wonder is not a series of *why* questions. It is mostly dumb admiration.

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This past year, I graduated from college with a degree in English, took a life-altering trip to Ireland and Scotland, sat at home trying to figure out a purpose, and found a job that offers stability and monotony. And I learned to pay attention. Or rather, started to learn. It's a process. I began to actually count my blessings. I wrote them down. There are literally one thousand moments of wonder and thanksgiving in the back of my journal. In the long months of uncertainty and confusion, paying attention – in the tradition of the nature poet, Mary Oliver – became a way to pray.

I am disciplining myself to be in a constant state of amazement and live in the most present sense. Foolishly, I thought, *This is it. All I have to do is pay attention and live in gratitude. I have found the secret to a happy life at the tender age of nineteen.* I have no doubt that these are good things. Very good things. But then there came the nagging sense that this can't be it. Lists of blessings are not the end. In the words of one of my favorite bands, "It is not enough to be dumbstruck. You must have the words in that head of yours."

This is where writing comes in. I have words, and it turns out I had forgotten something essential. In her poem "Sometimes," Mary Oliver says:

“Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.”

There are three steps, and the third is the Great Commission. *Go and tell.* It is not enough to sit, unmoving and unchanging, even if it is in the delirious

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presence of the Creator of the Universe. Sooner or later, we have to tell about it. I believe that we, as image bearers of the Alpha and Omega, are all given gifts to reflect and tell of his image. It could be through cooking a meal or holding a conversation or building a house. Or it could be writing.

But is it wise to write? I wonder that a lot. We are all writers and readers here, so the power of words is just a given. Nations are formed and religions are built on simple words. Words. We love them and they connect us. I have never doubted the power of words – spoken, written, overheard, seen, whispered – but I have doubted the wisdom of writing down these holders of meaning and truth.

Let me rephrase: I don't doubt that *other* people should write. I do not doubt that we should share ourselves with each other through books and blog posts. What I doubt is me. Should *I* write? How could that possibly be a good idea? How could sharing all of the crazy, boring, mindless things that go through my head be beneficial for anyone else?

The thing is, the Great Commission does not single out certain people. It is great and universal. We are given the Spirit of the very Creator. Therefore, we are commanded to create. We have to share the awe by whatever way we know how. We are called out of the slavery of self-doubt to build tabernacles, to write, to share.

It is not enough for me to be dumbstruck. I can't assume that other people are going to find all the words. I too am commanded to pay attention and tell about it. Wisdom may begin in wonder, but it doesn't end there. You have to

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follow it through. You have to wander into the deserts and consider all the big questions we'd rather not think about.

To pay attention is step one. To live a life of wonder is the second. And for me, step three – no matter how scary or insignificant it may seem – is to write.