

CRU PRESS

GREEN



CHAPTER EXTRACTS

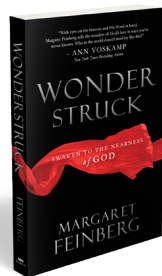
# WONDER STRUCK

BY MARGARET FEINBERG

## AWAKEN TO THE NEARNESS OF GOD

In *Wonderstruck*, Margaret invites you to unearth the extraordinary moments in every day life, recognize the presence of God in the midst of your routine, and discover peace in knowing you're wildly loved. Winsome yet compelling, whimsical yet profound, the stories from *Wonderstruck* will inspire you to fall in love anew with God.

*Wonderstruck* consists of eleven chapters full of practical steps, challenging questions, intimate stories, and Biblical insights culminating in a 30 Days of Wonder Challenge. This book and Bible study are for anyone who wants to live astounded by God and walk in the fullness of all He offers.



“[Feinberg] succeeds in keeping the reader engaged, entertained, and edified . . . [She] raises questions that linger in the mind after the book is closed.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Margaret Feinberg is a modern-day David. With eyes on the heavens, His Word in hand, and all her heart turned towards His, she tells the wonders of His love in ways you’ve never known. Who in the world doesn’t need joy like this?

ANN VOSKAMP

*Author of One Thousand Gifts*

“Feinberg turns exegesis into an art, delivering findings that invite the audience to touch, taste, smell, and see God’s handiwork throughout the Scriptures and in their own lives.”

ED STETZER

President, LifeWay Research

We dangerously underestimate the power of wonder . . . Margaret recenters wonder at the heart of our relationship with God, with seismic results. This book shook my soul awake and made it impossible for me to continue following a God of my own design.

Her work is captivating, staggeringly honest and refreshingly deep, stirring my mind, heart, sense, and soul to consider God in ways that are reshaping me.

NANCY ORTBERG

*Author of Looking for God*

*Wonderstruck* invites you to open your eyes to the delights, joys, and gifts of God all around. You can't read this book and remain the same—it will change you so you see yourself, others, God, and the world around you in a more beautiful, life-giving way.

BOB GOFF

Author of *Love Does*

*Wonderstruck* is a game-changing book. Feinberg's brilliant writing captures you as she points to the God who has captured her.

JUD WILHITE

Senior pastor of Central Christian Church, Las Vegas, Nevada

This generation longs to encounter Good News in fresh, modern, and engaging ways. Margaret Feinberg stands at the forefront of communicating the timeless truths of Jesus with vibrant language, imagery, and expression. Those who read *Wonderstruck* will never be the same. Highly recommended.

GABE LYONS

Founder of Q; author of *The Next Christians*

*Wonderstruck*, like all of Margaret's writing, is rooted in historical, global, and biblical perspectives, and reads like a song with storied verses and a beautiful chorus: Pay attention, pay attention; it matters; pay attention. I can't wait to share this book with friends.

SARA GROVES

Singer and songwriter

Margaret Feinberg does a superb job of helping us hear God. Through her felicitous prose and engaging storytelling, I not only got a feeling for her unique journey with God, but I also received fresh glimpses into my own.

MARK GALLI

Senior managing editor, *Christianity Today*

Maybe the reason the Christian faith in America is so anemic and lifeless is because we have settled for lifeless religion and stuffy ritual instead of a thriving, close, alive, passionate relationship to the living God. Margaret's latest book is like standing under Niagara Falls spiritually. You won't be able to put it down.

RAY JOHNSTON

Senior pastor of Bayside Church



WONDERSTRUCK



# WONDERSTRUCK

AWAKEN TO THE NEARNESS  
*of* GOD

MARGARET  
FEINBERG



WORTHY  
PUBLISHING



Copyright © 2012 by Margaret Feinberg, LLC

Published by Worthy Publishing, a division of Worthy Media, Inc., 134 Franklin Road, Suite 200, Brentwood, Tennessee 37027.

HELPING PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE HEART OF GOD

eBook available at [www.worthypublishing.com](http://www.worthypublishing.com)

Audio distributed through Oasis Audio; visit [www.oasisaudio.com](http://www.oasisaudio.com)

---

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012950268

---

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Other quotations are from the following sources: The King James Version of the Bible (KJV). The Holy Bible, New International Version, (NIV). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Some names and details in anecdotes shared in this volume have been changed to protect identities.

For foreign and subsidiary rights, contact Riggins International Rights Service, Inc., [www.rigginsrights.com](http://www.rigginsrights.com)

ISBN: 978-1-61795-088-9 (trade paper)

Published in association with [ChristopherFerebee.com](http://ChristopherFerebee.com), Attorney and Literary Agent

Cover Design: Mary Hooper/Milkglass Creative

Cover Image: iStock Photo

Interior Typesetting: Susan Browne Design

*Printed in the United States of America*

12 13 14 15 16 SBI 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>

.000: Captured by the Night Sky	1
.001: Hidden Among the Highlands   the wonder of divine expectation	9
.002: Shock and Awe   the wonder of God's presence	29
.003: Alpenglow Evenings   the wonder of creation	45
.004: A Sanctuary in Time   the wonder of rest	59
.005: Forgotten Longings   the wonder of prayer	75
.006: Treasure Hunting in Africa   the wonder of restoration	91
.007: The Magic in the Table   the wonder of friendship	109
.008: The Disappearing Silver Necklace   the wonder of forgiveness	125
.009: Miracle on the Runway   the wonder of gratitude	139
.010: The Legend of Cactus Jack   the wonder of abundant life	155

## BONUS TRACKS

Thirty Days of Wonder: A Challenge to Experience God More	173
Behind the Scenes	189
Soundtrack	197
Special Thanks	201
Connection	205



WONDERSTRUCK



.000:  
CAPTURED BY THE  
NIGHT SKY



BRIGHT-EYED IN THE EARLY HOURS of a frigid January morning several years ago, I heard a familiar voice whisper, “It’s time to go to sleep.” Though I knew such words were spoken in wisdom and love, I refused to allow the allure of slumberland to steal me from the wonder.

The announcement of a promotion for my husband, Leif, had required a move, and we had spent every waking hour boxing up all we owned and saying good-bye to loved ones. We weren’t moving far: ninety-two miles to be exact. But in south-east Alaska, where the only way to travel between islands is by air, boat, or long frigid swim, miles multiply in people’s hearts.

Rumors circled of the inefficiency and unreliability of the ferry system connecting the regional ports, but remained the only practical option for the move. Pulling our overloaded vehicles into the belly of the ship, we had exhaled a sigh of relief and then scrambled to the observatory deck to secure a window seat where we could watch the last of the brief day’s blissful sun melt into the horizon.

The route we had selected wasn't the most direct but permitted us to leave Sitka one day and wake up in our new hometown of Juneau the next. Staring out the window, I couldn't remember the last time I'd slouched in a chair with nowhere to go and nothing to do. The ship held me captive, and I submitted to the monotony. Then fatigue drained the remaining amps of my energy reserves. I took one last glance at Leif and mustered a slanted smile before nodding off to sleep.

Hunger soon woke me. Following the dim lighting down the passageway, I navigated through rows of sleeping strangers and their bags to make my way to the commissary. After a quick bite to eat, I returned to my seat. Before nestling in, I admired the faint moonlight backlighting the mountainous coast. Then something compelled me to look up, and a scene unfolded that I suspect caused at least one angel to gasp: the expanse of the sky transformed from inky blackness into an infinite canvas on which brushstrokes of apricot, sapphire, and emerald painted themselves into the night sky. Like an oil painting in progress, the colors refused to stand still. The hues danced as if listening to jazz. Iridescent shades sharpened then faded with wild fervor.

This wasn't the first time I had been mesmerized by the northern lights. When traveling to Alaska years before, the promise of such celestial beauty had ignited my imagination. I met Leif (pronounced *lay-f*) on one of my first visits to the great state. Before our friendship turned romantic, we'd sit at the end of the road in Sitka—away from the town's lights—hoping for a glimpse

of the midnight delights. One evening I noticed a brushstroke of lime green in the sky growing brighter with each passing moment. I rubbed my eyes as if I'd seen a mirage then looked again. The color appeared to flap in the wind like a loose sail.

“That’s the northern lights,” Leif assured me.

The beauty of the aurora borealis enchanted me. Since that evening, I had spent countless hours peering through the window of our home and returning to the desolate place where the road ends to catch one more glimpse of the beauty that quickened my soul. Even on the most extravagant evenings, the northern lights had lasted only an hour or two then faded, but on this evening the curtain to the performance never closed. The sky exhaled more hues than I imagined possible, and I found myself caught up in the wonder.<sup>1</sup>

That’s when I heard Leif whisper, “It’s time to go to sleep.”

“Look!” I protested.

Leif craned his neck, staring into the starry night. Arms locked, we squished against the window to watch nature’s fireworks.

“It’s two thirty in the morning,” Leif whispered. “We should sleep.”

“Go ahead. I’ll nod off soon.”

Leif knew me all too well: I had no intention of ever closing my eyes. Aware of the privilege of watching God’s creation unfold its glorious mysteries, I didn’t want to miss a millisecond. Wonderstruck by my Creator, this moment of spiritual awakening



stirred in me a longing to experience more of God. If these lights were so beautiful, how much more stunning must their Maker be? What kind of God paints the sky in such effulgent hues? For some, the northern lights are a tourist attraction, but for me, they are a portal to the very heart of God. My lips remained motionless, but my soul sang as I witnessed this revival in the night sky.

The hours passed. I offered up a silent prayer to lay hold of the wonder of God, to find myself once again awed by another facet of his nature, another glimpse of his presence in our world.

Even though I lived in Alaska for five years and witnessed the northern lights more than a hundred times, none compared to that night. I still savor the encounter and live in hopeful anticipation of another. Though we now live at a lower latitude on the outskirts of a major city notorious for its light pollution, on many nights, you'll still find me scouting the sky in hope of catching another glimpse of the wonder.

It occurred to me that this is the posture we're supposed to take in our spiritual journeys. God delights for us to cup our hands in prayer and scrunch our faces against the vault of heaven in holy expectation that he will meet us in beautiful, mysterious ways. The Creator desires to captivate us not just with his handiwork but with himself—displaying facets of his character, igniting us with his fiery love, awakening us to the intensity of his holiness.

Often such incidents occur when we least anticipate, leaving us wonderstruck much like my encounter with the northern

lights. But the insistent invitation of the Spirit is to stay alert! Eyes wide open. Hands pressed against the glass. We never know when or how God, like the aurora borealis, will appear. But we can live each day trusting that the God who met us in the past will once again greet us with arms wide open in the future.<sup>2</sup>

God extends endless invitations to encounter him, yet too often we sleep straight through. Unconscious of the life God wants for us, we slumber in the presence of the sacred and snore in the company of the divine. We remain asleep while God roosts in our midst. Inactive and inert, we become spiritual sleepyheads who clamor for the snooze button rather than climb out of bed. In our dormant states, we miss the opportunities to experience his many gifts and to know the Giver more fully.

The wonder of God is that moment of spiritual awakening that makes us curious to know God more.

Alaska doesn't have a monopoly on such moments, and neither does the night sky. They are all around us—not just in the sanctuary and sacraments. God stoops beside our beds as we offer our evening prayers; he nestles on the couch as we open our homes to strangers, neighbors, friends; he waits in our laughter and tears, our thank yous and I love yous.

What are the wonders of God in your own life that you fail to marvel or even sleep straight through? How often do you pass by God's presence and handiwork unaware?

Despite the breathtaking moments of God that I've experienced, all too often I find myself like so many of the other

passengers on the ferry, deep in sleep, missing the moment. I succumb to exhaustion rather than remain alert to the wondrous displays that reveal more of God. In those moments, the burning bushes in my life are reduced to smoldering distractions, and the still, small voice becomes something I absentmindedly shush.

I recently began noticing this in my life in increasing measure. I no longer waited on God with hopeful expectation. Icy religion replaced the delightful warmth of being a child of God. Though I expressed gratitude at the appropriate moments, in the depths of my spirit, I wasn't appreciative. Words of praise may have lingered on my lips during worship, but when the song ended, so did any trace of enthusiasm.

The sense of holy awe was replaced by unholy indifference. Hope diminished to a manageable emotion. Love became a fleeting expression in short supply.

Yet God met me there.

God's infinite nature knows neither beginning nor end; our Creator is like a vast ocean, fathomless and without bounds, an ever-rising tide without abatement, yet in my spiritual journey in the months after our move, I stood ankle deep, baptized only in the shallows of his presence. I sensed the Spirit beckoning me to plunge into the cool, shadowy depths marked by indescribable beauty, those unforgettable moments of life that draw us closer to God. Allured by the Spirit, I lunged forward.

And I prayed for wonder.

Sometimes the simplest petitions prove to be the most critical. If I had known what I was asking or how God would answer, I don't know if I would have had the courage to make the request.

I have a hunch that I'm not the only one who has misplaced the marvel of a life lived with God. Faith invites us into an enchanting journey—one marked by mysteries of divine beauty, holy courage, irrepressible hope, unending love. But in my life, any sense of the splendor of God had faded. I knew I needed a fresh encounter with God to awaken me from my sleep, to disturb me from my slumber.

And so I prayed for wonder.

Palms extended, wide-eyed with expectation, I waited for an answer. And God did not disappoint. For me, a prayer for wonder asks the Lord to expand my capacity to see and savor the divine gifts all around. I still relish the striking and curious ways God answered. The means God employed to alert me to the beauty awaiting in the most mundane moments of life. The process God used to transform my hollowness to hallowedness.

Through the months and years that followed, Bible passages that had become stale and flat came alive much like a pop-up book revealing hidden beauty and unexpected surprises.

Often when God answers a prayer for wonder, the tone and tenacity with which we live our lives changes. Holiness beckons. Divine expectation flourishes. Hope returns. Love abounds. In response, we awaken, toss back the covers, climb out of bed, and

## WONDERSTRUCK

drink in the fullness of life God intended for us. We live alert to the wonders all around us and within us that expand our desire to know God more.

My hope is that through the following pages you will rediscover, or possibly discover for the first time, the wonder of God stirring in your own heart. Apart from this wonder, passion for God and his Word fades. But with a renewed sense of wonder, even the cold embers of an extinguished faith can be fanned back into flame.

Will you pray for wonder? Right now, ask God to awaken your ability to see and savor his sweet presence and recognize his divine handiwork.

And as you pray, may you be wonderstruck. With each page, may you discover another facet of God's character, feel the soft pinch of his presence, and step back in astonishment of the One who holds everything together. Along the way, I trust you'll experience God.

When you lay hold of him, may you never let go.

Blessings,  
Margaret

.001:  
HIDDEN AMONG  
THE HIGHLANDS



The Wonder of Divine Expectation

INVIGORATED BY THE COOL, damp morning air and kind-hearted conversation, I followed the stony path up the side of the mountain, calculating the placement of each step. Looking up, I realized I had been transported somewhere otherworldly.

What began as a few pine trees transformed into an enchanted forest. Uneven from uncounted layers of fallen leaves, twigs, and trees, the ground was pacified by a thick tapestry of emerald and malachite mosses and grasses. Toadstools and wild mushrooms crouched in the shadows. Lichens defied gravity as they clung to the undersides of tree branches and then trailed onto the ground, providing woodsy wall-to-wall carpeting that created the thick silence.

Turning to my new acquaintance, Juliet, I suggested that if we weren't careful perhaps a mischievous gnome might pop out of the woods and steal our trail mix when we weren't looking.

She laughed before joining in the imaginative fun. By the time we passed the next kilometer marker, we had created an entire world of hobbits, elves, and mysterious creatures that moved so fast they were invisible to the naked eye. In our fanciful world, Tolkien-inspired hobbits battled elves over the ancient border of Bogle Glen, which boasted the sweetest, tallest grass in all the land and a hollow tree that led to a mysterious lower cavern. The evil creature Ewich, named after a sign we passed on the trail, developed an appetite for grilled elf and enlisted the help of the bridge trolls to capture hobbits. The only way the elves and hobbits could survive was by signing a truce and battling Ewich and the trolls together.

Without the steady ascent of the trail, which forced me to focus my limited energies on breathing and finding steady footholds on slippery rock, I would have dreamed about this imaginary world for hours, developing an entire universe of characters and conflicts, battles and beautiful moments.

The otherworldliness of the forest was only one of the many wonders that lined our eighty-kilometer journey of the Highland Way, a historic region of Scotland that boasts thick woods, rolling hills, sparse moorlands, and countless lochs, or lakes, spreading through the countryside.

Nearly a year before, Summit Leaders founder Joel Malm had contacted me about hosting a spiritual leadership expedition. The unique nonprofit provides people with an opportunity to step out of their normal routines and gain a fresh perspective on

life. Rather than attend a conference where they become part of the crowd, those who came on the expedition would have a different experience. We would host a smaller group, enjoy face-to-face conversation, and share the pains and joys of a long hike.

On our initial phone call, Joel supplied behind-the-scenes details of his recent adventure on the Inca Trail ascending Machu Picchu. The trip included rafting, paragliding, and camping. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the group gathered around the fire for a time of spiritual reflection.

While intrigued by the opportunity, I couldn't keep the reticence out of my voice as we chatted.

“What would your dream expedition look like?” he asked.

Having grown up in Colorado, I was well versed in sleeping in tents and river bathing, but my dream expedition would be, well, more posh. Each day's hike would be challenging but not to the point of exhaustion. We'd carry daypacks chock-full of water, sandwiches, and a blend of sweet-and-salty snacks. Someone else would take care of our luggage. At night we'd skip sleeping bags and nestle into a cozy bed and breakfast. The majority of meals would come from a menu, and most important, we'd enjoy lots of chocolate and other treats.

“Still there?”

“Yeah,” he said, drinking in all I had shared. “I'm not sure about the treats or chocolate, but I think the place you want to go is the Highlands of Scotland.”



I didn't know much about the Scottish Highlands and had never dreamed of leading a spiritual pilgrimage overseas, but as Joel described the expedition along the historic route, my imagination sparked at the possibility. Further details poured in over the following weeks. I found myself saying yes to Joel without any tangible idea of what I was saying yes to.

And then we were there, standing in the Edinburgh airport introducing ourselves to one another—seven women along with two men who served as our support team. Our task: hike eighty kilometers (fifty miles) of the Highland Way, which ended in Fort William at the foot of Great Britain's tallest mountain, Ben Nevis.

The drive to our first night's lodging, located near the trailhead, hinted at the diverse beauty we'd encounter. Stout forests. Quiet glens. Austere rock summits. Sapphire lakes too numerous to count. The inn where we stayed that night brought comfort to our hungry stomachs and travel-weary bodies. When Joel handed me the key to my room, I had no idea what to expect but was delighted to discover a small room, immaculate, with a single twin-sized bed and private bathroom.

I rested my luggage on the grey floor and tried to factor in the time change as I calculated how long until dinner. Forty-five minutes. Just enough time to prepare for the evening devotion that followed the meal. One last time I prayerfully considered what to share and reflected on the work God had been doing in my life.

Several years earlier I had been in a place in my spiritual journey where God seemed nonexistent. I was still carving out time to connect with God each day. Reading Scripture. Praying. Solitude. Though I emptied my bag of spiritual discipline tricks, nothing seemed to change. I arrived at church empty and left unsatisfied. I read from Psalms. Proverbs. Obadiah. The Gospels. Even Leviticus. Nothing connected. Worship was meh. Conversations felt flat.

*Where do I go, God? What do I do?* All I heard was crushing silence, the kind that's empty and full, quiet and deafening all at the same time.

Weeks rolled into months. Though discouraged, I refused to stop pursuing God. One morning, the thought struck me: maybe it's time to go back to the beginning.

Plodding through the first fifty chapters of the Bible, I began catching glimpses of the wonders of God I had never seen before—mysteries of creation, promises of redemption, the depths of God's love for humankind. Like the first drops of blue ink spilled into a carafe of water, the beauty infused my mind and heart.

Finishing Genesis, I felt compelled to return to the beginning. I read and reread, weaving in commentaries from the likes of Walter Brueggemann, Bruce Waltke, and Nahum Sarna. The more I explored Genesis, the more I felt I was on a morning hike, looking around to see a moss-carpeted forest, wholly present and fully captivated by the mystery and marvel of it all.

That morning became an eighteen-month-long, personal in-depth look at the book of the Bible whose name is drawn from the first word of Scripture, in Hebrew, *beresheet*, meaning “in the beginning.” Genesis, I discovered, is more than the story of our origins, where we began, the formation of our cosmos and humanity. The first book is also the story of various barriers that we keep running into, in our relationship with God, each other, and creation, as well as God’s loving decision to tear down those walls, redeem a mad world, and draw us closer to himself.



Strewn across the white comforter on the Scottish hotel bed, I breezed through the first few chapters of Genesis and sensed the sacred echo “It is good” with regard to my plan of sharing from these passages over the upcoming week.

Realizing I was a few minutes late for dinner, I rushed down to the restaurant where the group gathered around a series of small tables pushed up against each other. We were the only ones in the hotel’s dining hall, and when a perky young waitress appeared, she greeted us with unintelligible words that sounded like an encrypted form of English. One of the team members, Katie, interpreted: the chef was running late.

Throughout the evening I only understood every third word the waitress spoke and resorted to nodding and smiling through the other two. I managed to navigate the menu with help from

the team. The less adventurous among us, *ahem*, skipped the Scottish standards of haggis and blood sausage for more familiar fare like salad, steak, salmon, and a selection of potatoes cooked a hundred different ways.

Our bellies full, we searched for the quietest room we could find. One of the team members urged us into a vacant card room attached to the hotel lobby. Because the room held only a single brown leather couch and two red leather chairs, we pulled in extra seating from the lobby so we could gather around a narrow glass table.

After explaining my personal journey through Genesis, we took turns reading portions of the first chapter of the Bible. Then we discussed the theological facets the words reveal about our God—a God in whom all things are made and held together, a God who creates goodness and celebrates it at every turn, a God of profound order who triumphs over chaos, a God of boundless generosity and unfathomable power. As we examined the passage, I sensed the familiar scripture awaken something deep inside me.

I asked everyone to share personal hopes, dreams, and desires for the trip as a springboard for a time of prayer. I listened intently. In secret I hoped someone would give words to the thoughts somersaulting through my mind, but no one did.

Then my turn came. “My hope . . . my prayer,” I stammered.

I felt the iron weight of the pause as I grasped for the perfect way to express what I desired from God. I took a deep breath and plunged.

“This sounds strange,” I apologized, “but I’m praying for pixie dust.”

I might as well have vacuumed all the air out of the room. While a few stared uncomfortably at me, more than a dozen eyes darted back and forth in an almost unanimous expression: *what have we gotten ourselves into?*

I kept talking. “More than anything, what I long for is our God, the One who bedazzled the heavens and razzle-dazzled the earth, to meet us in such a way during our time in Scotland that we find ourselves awestruck by his goodness and generosity, his provision and presence. I’m praying for pixie dust. I want to leave here with a sense of wonderment as we encounter and experience things only God can do.”

One by one the members of the team exhaled, a welcome sign they were extending grace to me. A few even smiled.

Louie, a pastor whose short grey hair and mustache framed twinkling youthful eyes, broke the silence. “Margaret, I think what you’re asking for is something me and my boys pray for often. You’re asking for the favor of God. We pray for God’s favor both in good times and bad—that we’d sense the reality that we’re one of God’s children, one of God’s favorites, and wait expectantly for what God will do.”

With those words, Louie became one of my favorite members of the team. In closing our devotional time together, we prayed with boldness for pixie dust.

When I returned to my room that night, I tucked myself into bed. The European down comforter left me feeling warm, snug, and enveloped by a thousand feathers. God had reawakened a sense of divine expectation. Though God had been at work in my life in countless ways—revealing so many wonders—I realized that deep down inside I still backed away from living each day with holy anticipation.

Praying for pixie dust was an invitation for God to lavish our team with his loving-kindness, and for each of us to walk more upright, eyes attentive to what God might do next. You can't pray for pixie dust and maintain a dour demeanor or dreary disposition. The Mary Poppins of all prayers, asking for pixie dust is hard to do without a frolicsome smile on your face, a playful cheer in your spirit, a holy anticipation of how God may answer.

Now, praying for pixie dust is not magic whereby if you say the right words—"abracadabra," "suoicodilaipxecitsiligar-filacrepus,"<sup>1</sup> or "a la peanut butter sandwiches"<sup>2</sup>—something marvelous happens. That's wishful thinking. A prayer marked by faith is never about what happens on our terms or time lines, but God's. Faith-stained prayer brings us to a place of trust and hope. Praying for pixie dust is a childlike expression of trust and hope—trusting in both God's wisdom and winsomeness, finding hope in God's mercy and mirth.



I often think of Jesus surrounded by eager dads and moms, men and women the disciples dismiss as pushy parents. The Gospel of Mark, an account of the life of Jesus known for its brevity, pauses to highlight the important details of the scene.<sup>3</sup>

Surrounded by an informal congregation, Jesus teaches on the mystery of marriage, reminding listeners of their holy commitment, not just before humans but before God. The crowd responds en masse, but it's easy to miss. Moms and dads elbow their way to the front of the crowd, hoping Jesus will rest his hands on their children and pray for them. The parents respond to Jesus by placing the fruit of their marriages, their most valuable possessions, and their entire futures, in the hands of the Son of God.

The disciples don't recognize the preciousness of the parents' response and issue a sharp-tongued reprimand. Jesus is peeved. The Son of God calls the people to repentance, and they respond but not in the way the disciples anticipate. Jesus defends the children, and their parents too, when he tells the disciples to leave the children alone and let them come to him.

The Gospel of Mark records Jesus picking up kids. I imagine Jesus whispering the love of God in their ears. As he prays, some of the children probably tug on his beard; others poke at his cheeks. A few remain skeptical of the stranger and keep their eyes on Mommy at all times. Jesus gives the kids huge bear hugs and twirls the most rambunctious in the air before returning them to their parents. At least, that's how I imagine this scene

when I read, “And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them.”<sup>4</sup>

Against a backdrop of hugs and laughter, Jesus makes a startling declaration: The kingdom of God belongs to those who maintain childlike receptivity. Those who refuse to receive the kingdom of God like a child will miss it entirely.

I don't think the disciples intentionally discriminated against the little ones; they may have meant well in trying to protect Jesus from being overrun. After all, if Jesus swung one child in his arms, all the kids would want a turn.

Standing in stark contrast to the eagerness and exuberance of the children is the disciples' curt response. Modern management buzzwords can be used to describe their reasoning. They're leveraging Jesus' time, streamlining the day's activities, creating a win-win for the rabbi and the multitude, maintaining the ministry's best practices. But Jesus knows something far more valuable is at stake than spiritual productivity or return on investment.

With their heads down, eyes straining for the next step, the disciples lost sight of the wonderment that Jesus came for all of humanity: the bourgeoisie and the peasant, the grumpy and the ebullient, the grey-haired and the bedheads. Despite the miles and meals they shared, those closest to Jesus had lost their childlike receptivity, their ability to recognize that both God's response to us and our response to God is seldom what we anticipate.



The story stands as a potent reminder of the importance of humility and trust, as well as a personal wake-up call that all too often I'm far more like the disciples than the children. I fail to enter into God's kingdom. Distracted by efficiency and effectiveness, I lose out on what the children enjoyed that day—simply being with Jesus, delighting in his presence, and humbly asking him to pray for me.

Maybe the best place to rediscover the kingdom of God is bouncing on Jesus' knee.

For me, praying for pixie dust was an expression of childlike receptivity. More than anything, I wanted Jesus to catch me up in his arms and twirl me in the air.



The next morning, like a bottle rid of the cork, we began our hike bubbling with energy and overflowing with enthusiasm. After the first kilometer or two, each of us settled into a steady pace, discovering our individual cadence on the trail. We also discovered we weren't alone. The Scottish masterminds behind the Highland Way were not concerned with drawing clear lines between public and private property. We grew accustomed to walking through strangers' backyards. I even caught a pair of seven-year-old blue eyes peeking from behind a fence post. We managed to sneak in a wave and grin before the figure disappeared in the shadows.

The more entrepreneurial locals along the trail had turned their backyards into trading posts. Add a few makeshift bathrooms to a piece of property, and you've got a hiking destination, or what I prefer to call a "running destination" because I ran for all of them along the trail.

The first trading post we visited was an add-on building to the back of a brown wooden barn. A weathered picnic table embellished with fresh rain droplets provided a limited seating area. After using the "glory hallelujah," my new name for anything that resembled indoor plumbing, I scoured the limited inventory shelf-by-shelf for the perfect comfort food.

Next to the door rested a plywood storage shelf with a dozen cubbies. Each cubby displayed a basket of produce ranging from potatoes to cabbage, dark lettuce leaves to green beans. I grabbed a translucent orange carrot on a whim and circled back to the counter to pay the bored teenage salesclerk.

Brushing off a few grains of dirt, I bit through the carrot's skin to discover a mouthful of confectionery nutty crunchiness. Returning to the basket, I purchased the remaining stock and shared them with the team. None of us could remember when a common carrot had tasted so good. With each bite, we savored the sweetness of God's creation.

Midafternoon we passed by the moss-covered ruins of an abbey and an ancient cemetery. Soon after, our feet began to ache with the kind of soreness that whispers the next step will hurt even more. Our pace slowed, and other travelers began to

pass us. One of the team members struck up a conversation with a pair of sixty-somethings whose worn boots and tan lines suggested they'd been on the trail much longer. To raise awareness for an incurable disease, they were hiking from the tip of England to the tip of Scotland. They passed us on day fifty-three of their three-month journey and left us effortlessly in their dust. Invigorated, we forgot about our feet.

The sun flirted with us throughout the day, glancing from behind clouds like a child playing peekaboo. For more than two hours, the golden orb, which seldom makes an appearance in the United Kingdom, graced us with its presence. One of the ladies, Peggy, responded to the royal treatment by lying down on a soft patch of grass on the side of the road. I brushed the annoyance at the delay far, far away and took the spot next to her. One by one we lay next to Peggy, eyes closed, bodies melting into the land. I don't know how long we were there, embraced by the holy moment of rest, but my cheeks felt warm and my head tingly when we returned to our feet. We stepped back on the trail with a divine awareness we didn't have before—the discovery that when journeying with God some of the best parts of any pilgrimage are the detours.

Our fearless leader, Joel, had arrived in Scotland with a cough and bronchial ache that intensified with each passing day. I became overly conscious of what for him were unconscious actions: coughing, sniffing, rubbing his nose. Joel conceded to seeing a doctor but not until medical help was hard to find.

After persistent phone calls, he located a Scottish doctor who agreed to see him on short notice. Joel sat patiently in the waiting room before being ushered into a small office with dated equipment.

The doctor wore a typical white coat, stethoscope hanging like a horseshoe around his neck. For more than an hour after his quick exam, the doctor peppered Joel with questions that had nothing to do with his medical condition. The doctor wanted to know about the expedition, the team members, the peculiarities of the Highland Way. When Joel was dismissed, the doctor shoved a bottle of antibiotics into his hand then told the receptionist to charge Joel one pound for the visit, the equivalent of about \$1.65 at the time. God's provision surprised us all. The next day Joel began feeling better. I couldn't help but think the medicine and the bill were coated in pixie dust.

Our longest and most difficult hike of the journey was a thirty-eight-kilometer stretch between the Bridge of Orchy and Glen Coe. The day began with patchy skies and a few light showers that were soon replaced with ominous clouds and pouring rain. We found shelter in the King's House, one of Scotland's oldest licensed inns, which had some much-needed glory hallelujahs. The manager showed us favor by allowing us to bring in some of our own food to enjoy alongside the pub fare. Our quick stop became a two-hour Scottish smorgasbord of delicacies ranging from fresh-grilled venison burgers to the salt-and-vinegar chips we packed with us.

When we returned to the trail, we met the greatest challenge of the hike, Devil's Staircase, a steep, rocky climb compounded by rivulets, gusty wind, and pelting hail. Yet the treacherous miles and icy conditions were made easier by conversation, encouragement, and singing tunes that ranged from hymns to Queen.

At every turn we experienced all the ingredients of divine pixie dust: grace and kindness, generosity and favor. In the evenings we returned to Genesis, exploring the faithfulness and goodness of God.

By the time we returned to Edinburgh to fly home, I felt an inward glow. The days had been long. The mileage challenging. But something about the adventure cultivated life, not just a flicker or flash, but a beaming hope of life with a future. The wonder of divine expectation took up residence inside me.

On our final night together, Joel's plans to dine at a specific Italian restaurant were thwarted by our tight schedule. We found ourselves searching the streets of Edinburgh for a restaurant. The most enthusiastic foodies ran ahead from one outdoor menu display to the next, narrowing down the selection.

Juliet found a French restaurant tucked away on a quiet cobblestone street. We gathered cozily around a wooden table. The white linens gossiped of the tasty food to come. After placing our orders, we sat around like people who had known each other for years. We told stories and cracked jokes. Our voices bounced off the stone floor, joining the chorus of what had become a full restaurant.

“Look!” Joel said. His eyes were wide as he pointed toward pieces of framed art across the room. “Do you know what that says?”

We turned to what grabbed his attention. Above a row of photography featuring faces from around the world sat four larger pieces of framed art. Each featured French words scrawled in colored pencil, finger paint, and crayon, perhaps by children, on backgrounds of black, white, yellow, and blue. I squinted to read but, seeing it was French, stopped and looked to Joel for a translation.

Joel leaned forward to interpret the paintings:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and void . . .” He continued reading until our bodies were covered with goose pimples. The final painting read, “On the seventh day, God rested.”

We flew across the Atlantic, drove 605 miles, and hiked 50 more to arrive in a French restaurant in Scotland that greeted us with the seven days of creation in Genesis—the very passages we explored that week. As if that weren’t enough, the name of the restaurant was *Le Sept*, “The Seven.”

I felt as though we were living a fairy tale.

The server delivered the finest food any of us had eaten in a long time, and we celebrated. We delicatied in the lavish love of God. Our bellies satisfied, we exited the restaurant and searched for the nearest bus stop.

We stood next to the road, craning our necks for Bus 42.

Behind us stood a large library with giant oaken doors.

Next thing we knew, Joel was pointing again, this time toward large letters on the front of the building:

“Let there be light.”

We were wonderstruck. Our jaws dropped. Each word seemed to call us by name.

As if carving himself into the side of a building right before our eyes, God revealed himself again. Now he didn't appear out of nowhere. Rather, in this holy exclamation point of a moment, God came into focus in such a way that we could not deny he'd been with us the whole time.

God had been hiding in plain sight along the Highland Way. None of our encounters was chance; none of our experiences accidental. God not only heard the petition for pixie dust but answered in ways that stirred the wonder of divine expectation in all of our hearts.

The experience revealed I still lived with a lid on my prayer life. Petitioning for pixie dust removes any sense of “praying it safe.” Asking God to unleash his mercy and grace and goodness and love is like boldly looking into the eyes of God and saying, “Surprise me!” The wonder is that he does, if we have eyes to see. Whether in the shining eyes of a baby, a sunset that stops our conversation, or an eight-day trek culminating in holy goose bumps, God reveals his grandeur. And these revelations beckon us to go deeper with him.

Many of us say we want to experience God, but we don't

look for his majesty. We travel life's paths with our heads down, focused on the next step with our careers or families or retirement plans. But we don't *really* expect God to show up with divine wonder.

God invites us to look up, open our eyes to the wonder all around us, and seize every opportunity to encounter him. This isn't a passive expectation but an active one, the kind prompting us to elbow our way to Jesus, knowing he longs to meet us with a hearty embrace and sometimes even twirl us through the air.

How many of us are praying for pixie dust? How many of us expect Jesus to show up and display his presence and power? How many of us are living alert to God and his work in every area of our lives?

The wonder of divine expectation isn't in the way we ask but in the way God answers. While in Scotland, we didn't just pray for pixie dust, we lived fully awake for God's response. When we encountered those divine moments, we didn't dismiss them as coincidence but gave thanks for even the subtlest expressions of God's loving care.

We expected Jesus to show up—and he did! From organic carrots to one-pound medical bills to French artwork, God interacted with us, blessed us, and swung us in his arms. I believe this is the kind of life we're meant for—not just on the Highland Way but every day.

God is not merely at your fingertips but within your grasp. Live each day like a child digging through a treasure chest, rifling

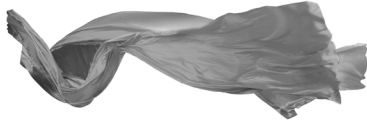


## WONDERSTRUCK

for the next discovery. Open your arms and your eyes to the God who stands in plain sight and works miracles in your midst. Look for him in your workdays and weekends, in your meeting-filled Mondays and your lazy Saturdays. Search for him in the snowy sunsets and Sabbaths, seasons of Lent and sitting at your table. Pray for—and expect—wonder. For when you search for God, you *will* discover him.

Live awake and aware because the wonder awaits.

.005:  
FORGOTTEN  
LONGINGS



The Wonder of Prayer

SOME ANGLICAN FRIENDS, wearing soot on their foreheads, introduced me to Lent more than a decade ago. Until then, my faith tradition was decidedly non-liturgical, and such attentiveness to the church calendar was new to me. From their descriptions, I imagined Lent as a formidable character who rode into town each year on the eve of Ash Wednesday and stayed until Easter morning. He spent every waking moment petitioning believers to prepare for Holy Week through a blend of prayer, repentance, giving, and self-denial. Though noble, Lent was dismissed with barely a glance. I treated him as if he were a stranger at a crowded dinner party.

But Lent continued pursuing me. A group of friends sang his praises. A pastor shared with enthusiasm the difference Lent made in his own life. Even a few of my favorite bloggers bragged about knowing him. Each time I encountered his name, I felt

like Lent was looking over my shoulder, smiling. I decided I needed to know him better.

Searching online, I studied Lent's vibrant heritage and background and read about his longtime connections with the Orthodox and Catholic churches as well as newfound friendships among Mennonites and Baptists. I discovered the roots of his name, which in Latin was *quadragesima*, meaning "fortieth" based on the forty days Jesus spent in the desert before his few brief years of earthly ministry. In the Middle Ages, he became known as Lent from a German root meaning "spring," or "long," reflective of the spring days growing in length.

The following Ash Wednesday, I knew we shared a common bond—a fiery passion for Jesus. I felt compelled to spend the next forty days studying the crucifixion and resurrection accounts in-depth. By the time Good Friday arrived, I didn't just take a fancy to Lent but also longed to know him better. My affections blossomed when I learned of Lent's passion for Christ as well as his ardor for justice as demonstrated in prayer (justice toward God), fasting (justice toward self), and almsgiving (justice toward neighbors). Charmed by his personality, I dove headfirst into the Gospels the following year for another forty days, ruminating on the life of Jesus. Lent transitioned from being a drifter passing through to a dear companion.

Forty days seemed like an expensive tithe of time when we first met, but soon our time together became as fleeting as watching tumbleweed blow across the plain on a windy day. I

found myself counting down the days until Lent's homecoming by considering the best way to spend almost seven weeks together. Reflecting on the various facets of Lent's character, I debated what to give up as an act of self-denial.

My friends placed a haphazard array on the altar of oblation. Some sacrificed technological tools such as Facebook, Twitter, or texting; others gave up temptations like sugar, chocolate, caffeine, soda, or fast food. Still others committed to shrinking their carbon footprint by riding their bike more and nudging the thermostat two degrees lower. A friend even gave up porn; though an awkward announcement, I applauded his efforts and hoped they continued long past Easter.

That year I felt an overwhelming sense that God asked me to give up something rather odd: prayer.

I resisted the impulse. *Why would God ask me to give up prayer? What scripture instructs us to pray less?* The Bible implores us to pray in every situation, to never stop praying. I batted down the ridiculous thought dozens of times, but the notion returned with ever increasing velocity. With Ash Wednesday a few days away, I began asking the Lord what he meant by the idea of giving up prayer for Lent. My sense was that God didn't want me to give up *all* prayer, but lengthy prayers.

Giving in to the peculiar sacred echo, I committed to offer God only three-word prayers until Easter. The spiritual practice proved more difficult than I imagined. I could no longer thank God for this morning, because that took five words. The concept

needed to be summed up in three. *Thanks, God, for this morning* became *Thanks for today*. The elementary shift in verbiage translated to a trim here, a rephrasing there, a switcheroo of words over there. Every word, every syllable, demanded mindfulness.

Most mornings I stumbled into lengthier prayers by mistake. I paused and rephrased. Then stumbled again. The painstaking process left me frustrated and edgy. Prayer times expanded, not because I felt close to God, but because crafting even a few comments took so much time.

I also recognized I'd slipped into something one of my favorite writers calls "magical religion"—those moments I convince myself I can control or conjure God through my words or actions. Though I never outwardly admitted to such practices, my new time with God exposed a deep-seated belief that if I just prayed long enough or was more articulate or heartfelt then God would answer.

While I felt free to express every need, ache, desire, and whim to God—which is essential to a true relationship—my petitions often sounded like a child's sugar-infused run-on sentences: *Dear God, thanks for this day and my husband and his parents and my parents and our one last living grandparent and our aunts and our uncles and our cousins and our second cousins and our friends and our long-distant friends and our superpup and . . .* I'd rattle on until I ran out of breath. I'd wandered across the invisible border between prayer and rambling and needed to find my way back.

I'd lost sight of God as a loving Father—whose favor I didn't need to earn, whose attention I didn't need to procure; God's eyes were already on me, his hands already extended to help.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of relearning to pray lessened with each passing week. Fumbling for words dwindled whenever I used a basic breathing rhythm. When I paused for a single breath between prayers, the words rolled silky smooth rather than crunchy and coarse. The arduousness of my morning prayers eased, but I struggled to carry this newfound practice into other areas of life. Whenever Leif and I shared a meal, I would start to offer a standard blessing for our food, and Leif would gently squeeze my hand and whisper, "Three-word prayers." Even at the dinner table, I couldn't escape the tension of being intentional.

With each passing day, the process of creating three-word prayers forced me to become more engaged and creative with God. I began offering handcrafted prayers. No longer generic and mass-produced, my prayers felt artisanal.

The word *artisan* technically refers to a craftsperson or skilled worker, but in recent years, artisans and their products have been heralded as representing a departure from the mass manufactured and a return to making things by hand in small batches using time-tested methods. Artisans value personal involvement in conceiving, designing, experimenting, and creating along the way. Artisanal goods are stained with good, old-fashioned hard work and sweat.

Artisans don't just focus on the end product but the process.

Such dedication makes the difference between spongy cheap sandwich bread and a thickset, gnawy, flavorful Italian loaf made with hand-ground flour. Instead of machine-fabricated waxy chocolate, an artisan chocolatier might hike through a remote plantation in the global south to find cocoa beans to ship home, roast, and grind into the chocolate needed for dark truffles.<sup>2</sup>

Even the simplest items take on artisanal flair when someone cares enough about the process of creating the product. The image of the artisan illustrates much of what was taking place in my prayer life: namely, moving away from rambling, mass-produced prayers that cost me next to nothing to a richer, handcrafted prayer life. Like the artisans, I knew prayer was more than just the end product—receiving an answer from God. But I needed to be more intentional about the process. Three-word prayers required me to reengage spiritual muscles that had long ago grown flabby. These unsophisticated prayers helped me clarify my dreams and disappointments before God. With only a few words, I became more aware of what Abraham Heschel calls “the pangs we ignore, the longings we forget.”<sup>3</sup>

These prayers ushered me into a renewed sense of openness before God. Honesty infused both my relationship with God and God’s relationship with me. As our relationship became more genuine, my dependence on God increased. Throughout Lent, three-word prayers felt like I was praying with one hand and foot tied behind my back. I hobbled forward, but every movement reminded me that I wasn’t getting far on my

own. I needed God. Each syllable reminded me of this truth. Stripped of presumption and arrogance, of mindlessness and meaninglessness, I found myself crossing the threshold of God's domain—choosing divine will over my will and handing back what I mistook as my own. My time with God became imbued with desire and delight.

When the laborious prayers became habitual, they began to shift again. One morning, while praying for some friends whose marriage was unraveling, my request simplified.

*Heal. Grace. Compassion. Reconcile. Restore.*

With each word, I paused to allow the fullness of the petition to fill my being as I made the request to God. As the word *heal* rolled off my tongue, God knew I was asking for more than an end to the conflict in the couple's relationship. I petitioned for the wounds to be cleansed, bandaged, and healed. Broken bones reset. Cells regenerated. A full recovery in a single word.

With my prayer life reduced to a few syllables, every expression felt more potent than ever. Then something even more unexpected began to happen: I found myself entering a rich silence with God—the kind experienced by the closest of friends who sit side by side on a well-worn couch, feet propped up, melting into the cushions. Time slowed. The longer I sat, the less I wanted to move. Eyes grew heavy, not because of tiredness, but because I felt rested, fully myself, without any need to do anything—except be myself—in the presence of one who I love and the one I knew loved me.



Throughout my Lenten experience, I rediscovered the inward stillness of God. For years the psalmist invited me to “be still, and know that I am God,” but I struggled with the continuous inner dialogue that noised up my life.<sup>4</sup> In this place with words nonexistent, I realized I’d been dwelling on the edge of mystery. Now I was with God in a whole new way. My soul was both nurturing and nurtured by the silence. In quelling myself, I sensed a resonance, a divine reverberation that I suspect is a facet of what the psalmist meant when he alluded to deep calling to deep.<sup>5</sup>



To my dismay, just as my communication with God opened again, Easter weekend approached. Watching Lent pack up felt bittersweet. The unexpected gift he brought to my prayer life made me feel melancholy about his departure, but I knew his farewell ushered in the celebration of the risen Christ.

I couldn’t help but reflect on the way I had approached the forty days before Easter. I’d approached the season by asking, “What will I give up for Lent?” as if Lent’s whole focus is asceticism. But Lent’s concern isn’t in removing something as much as receiving Someone. The passion of Lent is Christ. The annual sojourn calls for a more focused relationship with God.

Maybe instead of asking, *What are we giving up for Lent?* we need to ask, *Who and what are we trying to receive through Lent?*

As we accept this sacred solicitation with sincerity, God meets us open-armed with his goodness and grace. The transformative power of Christ awakens in our lives. The Lenten season invites us to set apart time during the beginning of each year to slough off the excess in our lives that we may live lighter and holier lives. For forty days, Lent gives us the opportunity to live in gentle receptivity of God.

After Easter, I prayed without the three-word discipline for the first time since Lent began. I waited until the house was empty and peered around the living room as if about to break a rule. I offered up a greeting. “Dear God,” I whispered, “I know it’s been awhile since we’ve spoken like this.”

I began slow. The words soon picked up pace—an uncultivated assortment of adoration and expiation, supplication and thanksgiving. Then I burst forth in prayer like a fire hydrant unplugged on a hot summer day. Conversation gushed forth from deep inside me like I was reconnecting with an old childhood friend. I felt like I was praying—*really* praying.

When I said my final amen, I had to catch my breath. I realized why God had asked me to give up prayer for Lent: I’d been spiritually slumbering, my prayer life reduced to nothing more than sleepwalking. The Lenten season exposed all the “nonversations” in my prayer life—those moments with God where, with a litany of words, I said nothing at all. Though I spoke to God, I was half-awake at best.

God used this discipline to awaken me to the wonder of

prayer. Deliberate, uninhibited, wholly present—I found my voice with God again. I never suspected I needed to lose my prayer life in order to find it again.

From foundation to rooftop, my prayer life was undergoing major renovations, and I turned to the Scripture for a better understanding of the work God was doing in my life. I focused on the prayers of Jesus and found myself taken aback by their brevity and intentionality. Jesus said so much with so little:

“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”<sup>6</sup>

“Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”<sup>7</sup>

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”<sup>8</sup>

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>9</sup>

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”<sup>10</sup>

I was awestruck that such simple phrases would move God to act.<sup>11</sup>

And I found comfort in knowing that I’m not the only Jesus follower who stumbles forward in prayer. The disciples search for steady footing and approach their Rabbi asking him how best to pray. Jesus encourages them to resist flashy, monotonous prayers whose only purpose is to try to win God’s favor, wear down God’s resolve, or appear spiritual to others. Jesus introduces prayer as the acknowledgment that God, our Abba Father,

already knows everything and waits for us to call on him. God sits enthroned, ready to listen, to help.

Jesus provides a specific prayer as a model. Rabbis of the day customarily gave their disciples prayers they could use habitually. Jesus' response to his disciples, known as the Lord's Prayer, is his most famous. The early church offered this prayer three times a day, following the ancient Jewish rhythm of prayer: morning, afternoon, and evening.

In the Lord's Prayer, I began to glimpse the wonder of prayer I experienced through Lent. The Son of God is asked how to pray, and he gives us fewer than five dozen words—an even shorter version appearing in the Gospel of Luke. Grocery lists run longer. The prayer can be spoken in a single breath, easily recited by children, jotted down in a few moments. Every. Word. Matters.

This brief prayer encompasses both the nearness of God in the present and the great hope of communion with God in the future. The Lord's Prayer is for today and also understood through the lens of eschatology, or end times. God's name is hallowed through the final destruction of his enemies and the salvation of his people. The imagery alludes to partaking of the bread at the messianic banquet and receiving forgiveness from God on judgment day. And we seek deliverance from the final judgment. The beauty of the Lord's Prayer is in its breadth and scope. Even if a googol of volumes are penned, they don't begin to scratch the surface of all Jesus communicated, the splendor displayed, the mysteries depicted.<sup>12</sup>

“Our *Abba* Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”<sup>13</sup>

Renowned for its symmetry and simplicity, Jesus’ prayer offers two sets of three petitions. The first three petitions focus on God—his divine nature, the coming of his kingdom, the fulfilling of his will. The second set of petitions shifts the attention toward us and includes humble requests for provision, forgiveness, protection. Though the prayer is personal in nature, the use of the word *our* reminds us that we are part of a vast kingdom, a community of believers who all need these things.

The prayer begins with God. Unlike any other rabbi of his time, Jesus calls his heavenly Father “Dad,” or “Papa,” or what is known in Aramaic as *Abba*. The name represents intimacy, affection, respect—invoking the image of a parent whose love cannot be measured, whose approval cannot be earned. We do not cry out to an unknown God; our petitions are not sent “To Whom It May Concern” but are addressed to a father who abounds in love.

Jesus' first petition is that God's name, which embodies his character, be hallowed or honored as holy. This isn't merely an acknowledgment of holiness but a call to holiness. More than a spiritual nod, the first words of the Lord's Prayer are a powerful petition:

*Peel back the curtain. Reveal your holiness. Transform us forever.*

The prayer reflects a renewed longing for God to make his name holy, not just in the heavens or in our world, but in our lives. Whenever we pray, *Hallowed be your name*, we're affirming the holiness of God, asking for a more intimate knowledge of God. Heads bow. Knees buckle. Calling on God's holiness exposes our impurity and displays his mercy.

The second and third petitions are simple but far from shallow. In asking that God's kingdom come, we're asking him to infiltrate every crevice of creation both now and in the future, in our hearts and in our world. God's kingdom is established in the now and the not yet, that which is near and that which is still far, far away. This robust prayer calls on God to extend his peace and justice and love and renewal everywhere for all time. Those who use this expansive prayer no longer walk with heads down, looking inward, because the prayer for God's kingdom challenges us to look all around for the abounding ways God answers.

The last set of petitions in the Lord's Prayer is brief but multifaceted as they remind us of our physical and spiritual dependence on God at all times. *Daily bread* draws on the imagery of the manna God provided the Israelites in the desert

and was important for the people of Jesus' time who were hired on a daily basis. The petition for each day's bread addresses one of the most basic human fears: scarcity. Left unchecked, our fear of deprivation distorts the way we see ourselves, others, and God. Jesus' request for daily bread combats this fear with the loving reminder that all things come from God—and he wants to give us more than crumbs.

We are also reminded that forgiving and being forgiven are intimately intertwined. A healthy relationship with God requires us to maintain healthy relationships with each other. To experience uninhibited daily fellowship with God, we must choose to forgive. If we harbor accusations in our hearts toward others, we're not in a place to accept forgiveness from God. We cease to be a conduit of God's mercy and grace. Any lack of absolution for others reveals we may have lost sight of all that God has forgiven us.

Jesus concludes with the request that God lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. God never entices us with evil, but he does allow us to be tested and refined in our faithfulness. Sin will try to seduce us, challenging our fidelity and integrity. Though the presence of temptation in our lives is inescapable, through God's grace, strength, and provision, we do not have to succumb to any taunts. We can live ready to flee temptations of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil, finding deliverance from them all.

Such a prayer must have been shocking to pagans who

thought they would be heard because of their many words.<sup>14</sup> Jesus suggests something stark and uncomplicated in approach yet unfathomable in breadth. In a handful of brief stanzas, Jesus awakens holy desires to draw us closer to God. Such a concise prayer is a powerful reminder that, at times, I need to say less in order to pray more.

How often have I rattled on with God and said nothing at all? Relying on clichés, throwaway phrases, and high language I'd never use in everyday conversation, I took prayer for granted and lost sight of the wondrous opportunity to draw close to God.

How much are you really saying to God when you pray? Where has “nonversation” replaced conversation in your prayers? What slight shifts in your own prayer life could reignite your relationship with God?

We all need to become more intentional about prayer, selective about our words, ready to meet our Abba Father in the syllables and the silence that emerge. The wonder of prayer is rediscovered in *who* we're speaking to. Prayer is a mystical event by which we get to talk to the Creator of all—the One who fashioned our world with a few words—knowing that God not only listens but answers.

The months following Easter were marked by the temptation to forget Lent's lessons and return to my old ways. Time coaxed me to pack away my resurrection reflections and newfound prayer life. But I resisted and continue resisting because I've rediscovered the wonder of prayer—more majestic than I



## WONDERSTRUCK

imagined. In those moments when I'm tempted to give in to my old ways, I recite the Lord's Prayer and return to the discipline of three-word prayers. Holding tight to these spiritual treasures, I now count down the days until Lent comes again.

## CONNECTION

Margaret Feinberg is a popular Bible teacher and speaker at churches and leading conferences such as Catalyst, Thrive, and Extraordinary Women. Her books and Bible studies have sold more than six hundred thousand copies and received critical acclaim and extensive national media coverage from CNN, the Associated Press, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and more.

*Christianity Today* recently listed her among “50 Women to Watch,” *Charisma* magazine named her one of the “30 Emerging Voices” who will help lead the church in the next decade, and *Christian Retailing* magazine included her in the “Forty Under Forty” who will shape Christian publishing. Margaret currently lives with her husband, Leif, and their superpup, Hershey, in Morrison, Colorado. She says one of her greatest joys is hearing from readers. So go ahead and drop her a note at:

**wonderstruck@margaretfeinberg.com**





IF THIS BOOK TOUCHED A CHORD IN YOUR LIFE,  
WILL YOU CONSIDER SHARING THE MESSAGE  
WITH OTHERS?

- Mention the book in a Facebook post, Twitter update, Pinterest pin, or blog post.
- Recommend this book to those in your small group, church, workplace, and classes. Invite a group of friends to do the Wonderstruck Bible study together.
- Head over to [facebook.com/margaretfainberg](https://www.facebook.com/margaretfainberg), “LIKE” the page, and post a comment as to what you enjoyed the most.
- Tweet “I recommend reading #livewonderstruck by @mafeinberg // @worthypub”
- Pick up a copy for someone you know who would be challenged and encouraged by this message.
- Write a review on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [bn.com](https://www.bn.com).

You can subscribe to Margaret’s newsletter at  
[www.margaretfainberg.com](http://www.margaretfainberg.com).

You can subscribe to Worthy Publishing’s newsletter at  
[www.worthypublishing.com](http://www.worthypublishing.com).



WORTHY PUBLISHING  
FACEBOOK PAGE



WORTHY PUBLISHING  
WEBSITE

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, YOU'LL LOVE THE FULL BIBLE STUDY!

# I STAND AMAZED IN THE PRESENCE

## WONDER STRUCK

AWAKEN TO THE NEARNESS  
of GOD

MARGARET  
FEINBERG



Do you ever feel like you're going through the motions of faith? Sometimes we do and say the right things, but our hearts are far from God. We lose our sense of awe. But God says, *"Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder"* (Isaiah 29:14). The answer isn't more faith, greater obedience, or extra spiritual disciplines. **God responds by giving us Himself.** Join Margaret Feinberg for this 7-session Bible study that will help you recognize the presence of God in the midst of your routine and discover joy in knowing you're wildly loved. *Wonderstruck* will remind you what it means to awaken to wonder—every day.

Member Book 005515743 \$12.95

Leader Kit 005515840 \$79.95

[lifeway.com/women](http://lifeway.com/women)

800.458.2772

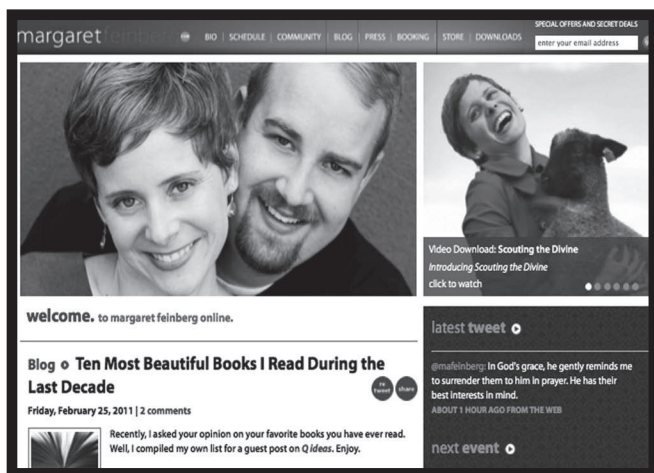
LifeWay Christian Stores

Pricing and availability subject  
to change without notice.

LifeWay | Women

# MargaretFeinberg.com

Great Resources for You, Your Book Club, and  
Your Small Group at [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com).



On the site, you'll find:

Margaret's Personal Blog  
Speaking Schedule  
Weekly Giveaways

E-Newsletter Sign-Up  
Video and Audio Clips  
Great Prices on Bible Studies



Become a fan on Facebook  
[facebook.com/margaretfeinberg](http://facebook.com/margaretfeinberg)



Follow on Twitter  
[@mafeinberg](https://twitter.com/mafeinberg)



Follow on Pinterest  
[pinterest.com/mafeinberg](http://pinterest.com/mafeinberg)



Follow on Instagram  
[@mafeinberg](https://www.instagram.com/mafeinberg)

To drop Margaret a line, ask a question, or say "Hello,"  
email [wonderstruck@margaretfeinberg.com](mailto:wonderstruck@margaretfeinberg.com).

# MargaretFeinberg.com

Great Resources for You, Your Book Club, and Your Small Group at [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com).



*Scouting the Divine* is a 6-week interactive DVD Bible study featuring 8-10 minute teaching segments that dive deep into the agrarian world of the Bible. Participants find the Bible coming alive as they learn about scripture through the eyes of a shepherd, a farmer, a beekeeper, and a vintner.



*The Sacred Echo: Hearing God's Voice in Every Area of Your Life* 6-session DVD Bible study features 15-20 minute segments designed to help participants develop a more vibrant prayer life and recognize the repetitive nature of God's voice in their lives.



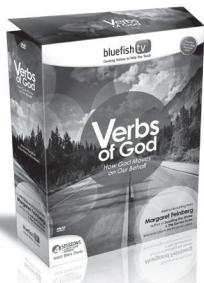
*The Organic God* 6-session DVD Bible study featuring 8-12 minute segments looks at the attributes of God. His generosity, wisdom, bigheartedness, beauty, and more. Encounter God like you've never experienced Him before.



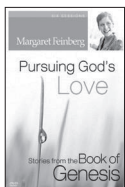
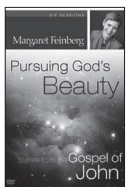
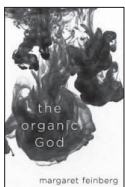
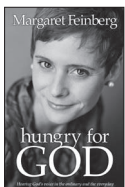
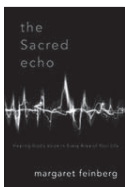
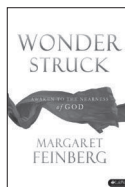
*Pursuing God's Love: Stories from the Book of Genesis* reminds us of the unflinching love of our Creator. Even when we question God's love, God pursues us. This 6-session DVD Bible study features 15-20 minute segments designed to take participants through the entire book of Genesis.



*Pursuing God's Beauty: Stories from the Gospel of John* offers portraits of salvation, redemption, and restoration. Filmed in an art studio, this 6-session DVD Bible study features 15-20 minute segments designed to take participants through the entire Gospel of John.



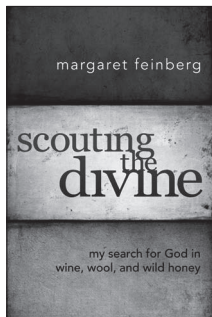
*Verbs of God: How God Moves on Our Behalf* 4-session DVD Bible study featuring 12-15 minute segments looks at verbs in Scripture to highlight that God is always active and engaged in our lives. Even when we can't see or feel Him, God is constantly on the move and working.



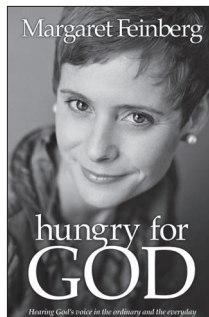
To receive a FREE DVD sampler of Margaret Feinberg's DVD Bible Studies, email your mailing address to [sampler@margaretfeinberg.com](mailto:sampler@margaretfeinberg.com). We'll get one to you.

# MargaretFeinberg.com

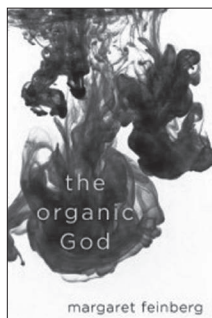
Great Resources for You, Your Book Club, and Your Small Group at [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com).



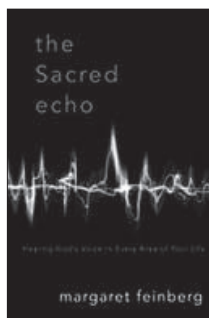
**Scouting the Divine:** Feinberg spends time with a shepherdess, walks the fields with a farmer, explores a vineyard with a vintner, and talks with a veteran beekeeper. Along the way, she discovers rich truths throughout the Bible.



**Hungry for God:** In your heart you feel the longing--an emptiness that can't be satisfied by anything this world can offer. Only God can fill the void. This book puts you in touch with your desire for intimacy with your Creator.



**The Organic God:** In our ever-changing world, simplicity is a craving. This book takes an unforgettable look at the attributes of God people don't frequently talk about as such as God's generosity, beauty, kindness, and bigheartedness.



**The Sacred Echo:** God often says the same thing through a sermon, Scripture, a chance conversation, or an unexpected encounter. When we begin looking for these sacred echoes, we are better able to recognize God's voice in our life.

Also available in audiobook, audio download, Kindle, Nook, eReader, and other eBook formats.

Visit [margaretfeinbergstore.com](http://margaretfeinbergstore.com) to purchase.

To receive a FREE DVD sampler of Margaret Feinberg's DVD Bible Studies, email your mailing address to

[sampler@margaretfeinberg.com](mailto:sampler@margaretfeinberg.com).

We'll get one to you.



