

AWE # 1

The draw of AWE

Genesis 28¹⁰⁻¹⁷

We are designed for awe



(A calculated risk)

1st calculated risk I took was in **children's talk**:

- I had no guarantee that giant bubble would work – fall flat;
 - fail to illustrate awe;
 - seriously – confuse children's understanding of what awe is all about;
 - even more seriously misrepresent God & His word.

2nd calculated risk is launching into new **series not grounded** in 1 particular book of Bible;

- sequential expository preaching thru section of Bible keeps us grounded in text;
 - like going on hike – follow terrain ups & downs;
- ∃ risk in going for big picture – like a helicopter overview;
 - pick up a major theme spans whole Bible;
 - land on a few key texts here & there;
 - main aim is to get overall impression Bible as a whole leaves you with;
- risky in that we need to be ultra-careful that we reading Bible correctly;
- you need to be extra-vigilant being like christians Paul encountered in Berea on 2nd missionary journey:
 - noble-minded – examine scriptures to see if what Paul said was in accordance w all that God had said.

What is implied in term: “Calculated risk”? ⇒ implies ∃ **reason for risk**:

- one of reasons why I taking this risk is because:
 - I personally been challenged in my faith thru reading a book by **Paul Tripp**
- this book AWE: Why it matters for everything we think, say, do
- not following his structure;
- but wanted to share w you how theme of AWE has impacted me ⇒ impact you.

Series comes in **2 parts**:

- outline on series outline you have in your Bulletin – so you can see where we going;
- can pick up key texts in week before in Life group Bible studies
 - or just in your own personal devotions;
- feedback I get is people saying get so much more of it – if into in week;
- 4 weeks on the concept of awe;
- Christmas services on being in awe of incarnation
- pick up again for Easter services – being in awe of crucifixion / resurrection.

Today I want to start w idea:

AWE is anywhere & everywhere

Start w **1st occurrence** of word AWE in our Bibles:

Gen 28(17) – Jacob declared **How awesome is this place!**

Awesome places & Awesome positions

You've **probably been to places** where you could well say **How awesome is this place!**

- might be majestic mountain top;
- might be wonderful waterfall;
- might be captivating coastline;

You've probably been in positions where you say **How awesome is this place**;

- God created an awesome world for us to enjoy.

Jacob was in position where had **v good reason** for exclaiming **How awesome is this place!**

- let's see why in Gen 28 ...

1st thing to notice from **this text** is **unusual emphasis** on word **place**:

(11) **And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set.**

Taking one of the stones of the **place**,
he put it under his head and lay down in that **place** to sleep.

= 3x in 1 verse – emphasis on place;

- nothing particularly special about the place;
- rocks there – best thing there you can find for pillow;
- but we being set up to see something special happen in this place;

(12) **And he dreamed ... (come back to in moment – skip over for now)**

(16) **Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said,**

"Surely the LORD is in this **place**, and I did not know it."

(17) **And he was afraid and said,**

"How awesome is this **place!**

This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." [X]

- what made this place awesome for Jacob was :

- God was in this place;
- this place is house of God;
- this place is gate of heaven.

How do you think Jacob was feeling at this time?

(17) **Jacob was afraid** – when He said **How awesome is this place!**

⇒ gives us some insight into meaning of word awesome;

- closely connected w fear – fear of Lord;
- closely connected not just in terms of connection in text;
- also closely connected in meaning;
- word in Hebrew (yaw-ray) is translated:
 - fear / revere / reverence / dread / awe / to be awed.

Prov 1 - fear of Lord is beginning of wisdom;

- could saw awe of Lord is beginning of wisdom.

- ⇒ We beginning to **see how significant** is this word AWE;
- beginning of wisdom;
 - could use fear – fear can be bit ambiguous;
 - ∃ advantage in this word - AWE

(Awesome dreams & Awesome ideas)

What was it that put Jacob in position of being in awe of God?

- **dream** (12) there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.
And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!

- Why a ladder?
- Why angels ascending / descending?

What is God revealing to Jacob? – Why?

- He tells us:

(13) And behold, the LORD stood above it and said,

"I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.
The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.

(14) Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth,
and you shall spread abroad to the W & to the E & to the N & to the S,
and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

(15) Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,
and will bring you back to this land.

For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

- What would you say is essence of promise?

- ∃ promise of land - W/E/N/S;
- ∃ promise of offspring – many offspring;
- same promise as given 1st to grandfather Abraham;
- then to father Isaac;
- now to him;
- but ∃ something new added – never been said before to any forbears;
- 1st time ever:

I am with you – God will be with you;

- where have you heard that phrase before? – God w us – Emmanuel;
- Emanuel promise – surely this is heart / essence of promise.

What an AWEsome promise!

What an awesome idea that God is putting into His head / heart!

[X]

So why the ladder – why the angels ascending / descending?

- God revealing to Jacob ∃ v **close connectedness** between **earth / heaven**;
- ∃ constant movement between earth / heaven
- ∃ constant interaction between earth / heaven;

- God is going to be w Jacob all thru his life – constant interaction. / communion.

What an AWEsome dream!

No wonder Jacob exclaims:

"How awesome is this place!

This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

- he lives w God – God w him – camped at door / gate – for ever.

AWE is anywhere & everywhere;

- just as ∃ Awesome places / Awesome positions;
- ∃ also Awesome dreams / Awesome ideas;
- we designed to be in awe of grand ideas;
- we designed to be in awe of particular promises;
- we designed to be in awe w dreams for our future – in this life / life to come.

Awesome people & Awesome love

Move onto 2nd text: **Solomon says to his bride:**

Song of Solomon 6(4) You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem,
awesome as an army with banners.

What is this all about?

Whatever it is – it is v important – repeated again word for word:

(10) "Who is this who looks down like the dawn,
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,
awesome as an army with banners?" [X]

Song of Solomon is **love song** for Shulamite – **real / realistic** human love;

- intimacy / agony / ecstasy;
- written for us to relate to;
- **ch 4** is wedding – both besotted w each other – but not live happily every after;
- Bible is far too realistic / something far better for us than that;
- **ch 5** is conflict – Solomon is rebuffed in his advances towards her;
- Shulamite regrets rebuff – but too late – he gone;
- she goes looking / find him;
- our text in **ch 6** is his 1st words upon seeing her again:
- might have been feeling frustrated;
- but what does he say?
- says she is awesome!
- he is utterly overwhelmed;
- (5) Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me;
- her eyes reveal her repentance / her longing / her love;
- too much for him – utterly amazed at her;
- responds: describing her as being as beautiful as wedding day;
- adds: awesome as an army w banners;
- idea is mighty / majestic;
- imagine crowd gathered to welcome army
- returning from battle – victorious / triumphant;
- Solomon sees his bride as a winner;
- she is simply awesome! [X]

Is this not **what love is all about?** – being in AWE of someone;

- I think many of us would relate to this – if we ever fallen in love w someone;

Were we not in AWE of her / him?

Is not AWEsome the word you would use to encapsulate her / him?

Awesome love – awesome people – what life / love is all about;

- **awe is for everyone** – anywhere / everywhere.

Another way to express it is ...

Awesome experiences & Awesome encounters

A **connecting link** between 2 texts is **reconciliation**;

- relationship between Solomon / Shulamite strained by sin – single rebuff
⇒ reconciled;
- relationship between Jacob / God strained by ongoing / habitual / endemic deceit;
- Jacob is scoundrel / deceiver / liar / cheat;
- yet God pursues him – reveals Himself / His grace / His Emmanuel promise;
- this is Jacob's 1st real encounter w God in his life;
 - before this he had known of God;
 - learned of God from parents Isaac & Rebekah;
- but this is His turning point / conversion – reconciliation / redemption

Taking these **2 texts together**:

- we are designed to be in AWE especially of unexpected / undeserved
- especially of reconciliation / redemption.
- since this is God's world - AWE can be found anywhere / everywhere.

Now what I want us to do is **step back from texts**:

- look more at big picture of humanity;
- one thing I think we see is: ...

AWE is in the image of God

(Constitution)

It is part of the way we **designed** – created in image of God;

- created w capacity for awe;
- part of our constitution as creatures created in his image;
- Paul Tripp's favourite phrase is : seems we “humans are hardwired for awe”

Awe (acc to dictionary.com – quoted at top of series outline:

- Awe = “an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, fear, etc, produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful, or the like”
- see it in expression on this boy's face – awe at all those bubbles.

Paul Tripp: “**AWE is everyone's lifelong pursuit**”

- we live for awe;
- we long to be overwhelmed / blown away
by something beautiful / profound / incredible / amazing / exquisite;
- might be AWE at beautiful sunrises / sunsets we seen this week;
- might be AWE of being there at birth of a baby – newborn in mothers arms;
- might be AWE understanding how bubbles form – how all colours rainbow;
- might be AWE of nail-biting grandfinal – your team gets goal 1sec before siren

I call this: the **draw of AWE**;

- everyone longs for sense of awe;
- seems to be what high-points in life are intrinsically all about - make life worth living.

AWE is part of our constitution – also AWE is point of ...

Connection

What do I mean by that?

- I mean AWE is great way to connect w people – non-Christians / anyone / everyone;
- everyone can identify w this;
- everyone wants this;
- draw of AWE affects everyone / connects w everyone / compels everyone;
- as Christians we may have a higher / deeper idea / experience / encounter w God;
 - but AWE is not a Christian word;
 - AWE is everyone's word;
 - everyone wants to be in AWE;
 - everyone wants things to be awesome – one of best words in English language;
 - word everyone uses for what is ultimate;
 - even social media has recognised abbreviation AWES = Awesome;
 - the draw of AWE.

Another reason why I promoting AWE word – is to do with ...

Connotation

Or rather **avoidance** of **unhelpful** connotations;

- we could say much same truth by saying:
 - humans made in image of God are designed for worship;
 - everyone is inherently a worshipping creature;
 - we all worship something / someone ;
 - we all live our lives for something / for someone;
- OR we could say we are all inherently religious beings;
 - deep down everyone has religion / belief system / worldview;
- true - but word worship / religion tend to have unhelpful connotations;
- people object – refuse to be seen as worshipping anything;
 - hate v concept of religion / being religious;
 - but no-one objects to AWE;
 - everyone lives to be in AWE of something / someone;
 - the draw of AWE.

AWE is an indicator of who we are

Seeking

Where do we go **looking for AWE**?

What do I want to blow me away?

What would be your absolute dream job?

Where would you go for that dream holiday?

If you were given \$10,000 to spend on whatever you like,

- where would you spend it?

If you were to win a competition – what competition would that be?

What would be your dream prize?

Who are the heroes in your life – people you hold in AWE?

In what way would you like to be just like them?

What is more likely to fill you w sense of awe:

- a place or a person?
- an essay or an equation?
- an idea or an experience?
- an encounter or entering a place of solitude?

We all different – but where we look for AWE **indicates person we are**,

- shapes very person that we are becoming.

Finding

Less abstract – more actual;

Where have I actually found myself in awe?

- in a restaurant / or on crest of wave?
- in a clothes shop / or on a cliff top?
- in a movie theatre / or in operating theatre?
- in control of performance machine / or at kid's performance in school play?

Where we found ourselves in AWE is **revelation of who we are**.

But **far more important** than both seeking / finding is ...

Taking

Where does my experience of AWE **take me**?

- whether it was awesome scenery or awesome science:
Does it take me into presence of my God?
- whether it was a an awesome experience or awesome expense:
Does it have me bow before Him in adoration / praise?
- whether it was an awesome person or awesome privilege
Does it cause me to give thanks to Him who has blessed me so?
- whether it was an awesome encounter or awesome entertainment:
Does it humble me before my God?

We are designed for awe / hardwired for awe – Awe is anywhere / everywhere;

- but AWE is **designed to draw us** into presence of God;
- AWE is designed to remind us / remake us in image of God.
- every experience of AWE is reassurance God loves us / created us for Him.
- God uses draw of AWE to draw us to Him:
 - giver of every awesome experience over & over again;
- if our AWE stops short of God,
- if our AWE terminates in the thing rather than the thing-creator;
 - AWE is an indicator of what has become idol in our life;
 - one day it will burst like bubble – be no more – leave us bereft;
- let draw of AWE – draw you to AWE-giver.

(Conclusion)

(A reason for the risk)

I said this sermon series was a risk – **calculated risk**

- ∃ another reason for that risk;
- but I not ready to reveal that to you this early on in series.

What I do want to leave you with tho is ...

A word for our end

Our **WSC** begins w Q: What is [man's chief end](#)?

- Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever;
- I suggest to you : we can condense most of that down into 1 word – AWE;
 - to be in AWE of God is to glory God;
 - to be in AWE of God is to enjoy God;
- man's chief end is to live in awe of God.

Pray

Sing This is amazing grace ... leaves us breathless in awe & wonder

Lord's Supper: Awe