

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF TEAMS

What does God have to
do with it?



Change requires a number of things but at the top of the list are: commitment, courage, and clarity.

The question is how is commitment, courage and clarity created. Do we just talk ourselves into it or is there a spiritual reality that is fundamental to these characteristics? And if so how are they shaped?

This short video looks at six characteristics which build on the foundation of each other. These are awe, awakening, response, empowerment, community and mission.

These are the realities that must ground our work.

And for transparency, this presentation is based on a lecture from Dr. Martin Marty which was given when I was a student at VST in 1992.

SIX DIMENSIONS

- ▶ What the story of Moses can teach us
- ▶ Exodus 3:1-12

Moses at the Burning Bush

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3** Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4** When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5** Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6** He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And

Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

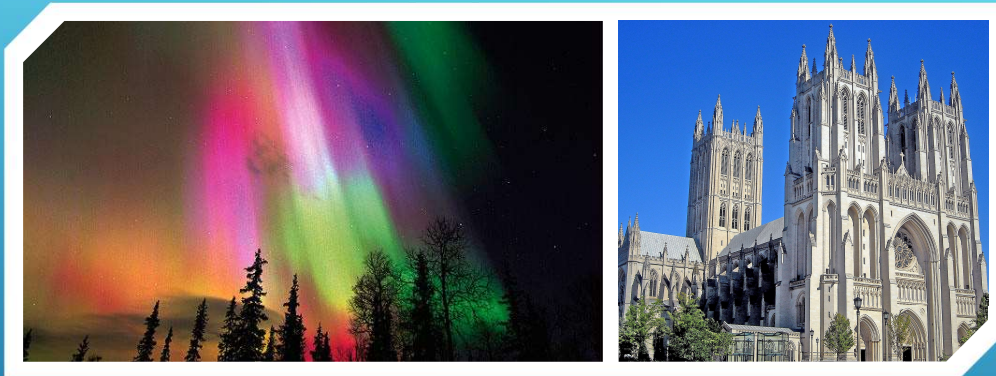


BEGINNING WITH AWE

The starting point for Moses is not some mission statement or vision statement. The root of Moses' commitment is found in a sense of awe.

Moses is not expecting anything new when he wakes up that morning. He is out tending the sheep. But then he sees a bush that is on fire, but it doesn't get consumed. And that grabs his attention. There is a sense of awe or wonder. And then he hears his name called: Moses, Moses, take off your sandals you are on holy ground. It is an awe filled moment.

Martin Marty quoted Robert Coles, the Harvard psychiatrist, who wrote: if you enter a sanctuary where people are at worship and you sense that they are sensing the presence of God it's going to be hard to keep you away. And if you don't sense that they're sensing the presence of God it's hard to get you back.



AWE COMES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Moments of awe can come to us in different ways and at different times. Our daughter lives in England and when we go to visit we often go to some of the great cathedrals. When you go in, there is this sense that this space is different. People speak in hushed tones if they speak at all. There is a kind of awesomeness to it.

Creation can sometimes be the catalyst. Psalm 8: 3-4

“When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?”

When I lived in Manitoba ... northern lights

But in the Scripture it is God’s grace that becomes the foundation of awe. God’s words to Israel:

Jeremiah 31:2-4

² Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

³ the LORD appeared to him^[a] from far away.^[b]

I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

The New Testament there is a sense of awe at the grace of God: Ephesians “so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

This is the starting point of any transformation in the church.



AWE GIVES US A NEW PERSPECTIVE

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Awe gives us a new perspective: If you have ever visited the Grand Canyon you see how huge it is and how small you are in comparison.

“Take off your sandals for you are on holy ground.” It ‘s not just sand anymore.

E.g. Isaiah **6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

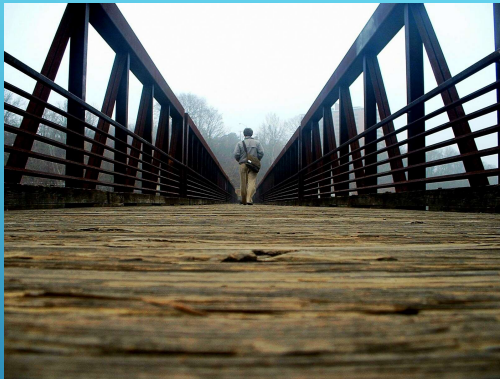
⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

Romans **8**

If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up

for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?...³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Leaving the old life behind

A NEW PERSPECTIVE LEADS TO AWAKENING

The new reality that comes through awe, leads to a new way of seeing the world. Sand is not just sand, it's holy ground.

The love of the waiting father in the story of the prodigal son, awakens a new perspective in the son of what it means to be loved by the Father.

Jesus connects repentance with the kingdom of God because it awakens us to leaving the old life behind for the new life.

Matthew 5

5 When Jesus^[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

- ▶ What is something you are committed to? How did you get there?

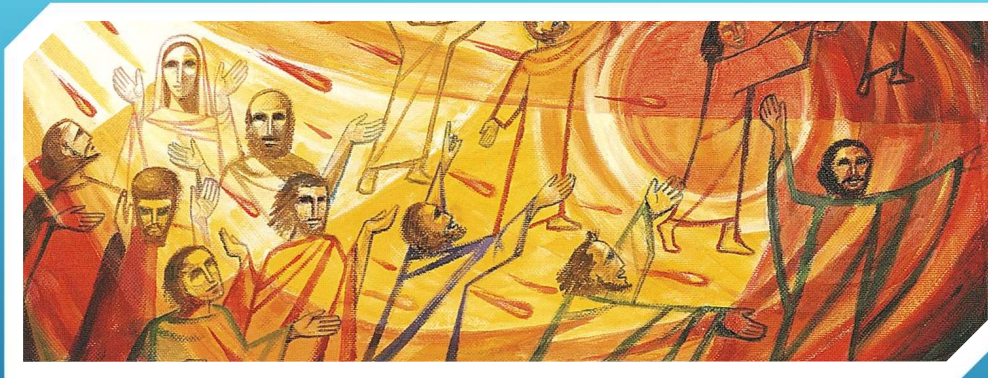
AWE THEN BECOMES A GATEWAY TO COMMITMENT

It could be some human hope or hurt. People see an injustice committed and there is a sense of awe that such injustice could be allowed to exist and they become committed to greater justice in the world.

It's hard to be committed to something that doesn't grab you. Paul never seemed to tire of God's grace. He marveled at it up to his death according to the letter to the Philippians: Philippians 3:7-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ,^[a] the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ^[b] and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

What is something you are committed to? How did you get there? I guarantee awe had something to do with it.



RESPONSE LEADS TO EMPOWERMENT

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Out of commitment comes empowerment.

“Don’t worry Jeremiah, I’ll give you the words.

Don’t worry Paul. You have been persecuting the church but now you have a new call to preach the gospel.

Moses I will use you lead my people out of Egypt and I will give you the power to do so.

This empowerment is not given as an object that we can control and use as we like. It is released through a relationship. God does not give Moses some power and then leaves. God stays with Moses. God remains the source of the power.

So Jesus says to the disciples, John 15 ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.



This empowerment is linked to community. God provides for Moses through people. He gets Aaron. He gets the elders. He gets the people of God.

Jesus leaves the disciples not as individuals with individual tasks, but as a community and it is the whole community that receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.



COMMUNITY LEADS TO MISSION

- ▶ Whatever that mission may be

And out of community comes mission. Go into all the world. Or lead my people out. Live a different kind of life than you have. Share the good news. Think on these things. Love one another.

We make a mistake when we link mission only to a need. It is true that it is often linked to a need, but is fueled through all these other elements: awe, awakening, commitment, empowerment, community. You cannot single mission out as if it lives on its own.



If we want to see change, the starting point is not the change but to recapture the sense of awe that is source and power behind that change.