

“Star Gazing”

Psalm 8

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When I was a boy, one of my favorite things to do was play outside until dark and then fall on the grass and look at the stars. Many summer nights my brothers and I searched for the big and little dippers and other constellations. Since we lived on a farm outside of town, there were no street lights to obscure our vision or compete with the glow from the moon and stars. The only artificial light came from a low wattage yellow bulb on the front porch. It was no match for the heavenly canopy.

Sometimes, the mysteries of the universe were contemplated while lying flat on my back on a clover infested lawn. How big is the world? Who made it? Why was the world created? Why am I here? How long will I be here? Those were some of the questions the man in the moon heard me voice.

Did you have a similar experience? Did you ever gaze at the moon and stars and ask questions?

I believe David did. I think Psalm 8 is the result of his star gazing. The sun is never mentioned in this chapter, which makes us believe that the splendor of darkness inspired David to write this Psalm.

On this particular night, David asked God a two-part question. “What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?” Psalm 8:4. **Why do you think David asked these questions?**

I think he was overwhelmed with a sense of God’s presence in his life. He knew that God knew him. Beyond that, he knew that God cared about him and had enough confidence in him to make him a steward and give him important responsibilities.

This was mind boggling. At times, it made no sense to David. Why? He tells us in the text. His concepts of God and man made God’s involvement in his life baffling.

How did David begin and end this Psalm? “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” Continuing, David wrote, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?” Psalm 8:3-4.

Surely you sense David’s amazement over God’s awareness of him, concern for him and confidence in his ability to take care of His world. To put it simply, David was overwhelmed that the God that created the heavens would give constant attention to merely one person.

One evening at the White House, Franklin D. Roosevelt and one of his close friends, Bernard Baruch, talked late into the night. At last, President Roosevelt suggested they go out into the Rose Garden and look at the stars before going to bed. They went out and looked up for several minutes. Then the President said, “All right, I think we feel small enough now to go to sleep.”

I think David was overcome with the same sense of awe and wonder as he sat on a grassy hillside gazing at the moon and stars. Studying the heavens, he had to be impressed with the size and age of the universe along with its orderly purpose. He realized that the heavenly bodies that Israel’s neighbors’ worshiped were created by

Israel's God. This led to a question, though. Why would a God of such immense power and ability be aware of one man's existence and needs? David struggled to answer this question, so he directed it toward heaven.

I think David asked this question not only because of who God was but also because of who man was. There were many things that David did not know that night as he thought about the mysteries of life, but one thing he did know was what man was like. He knew that man was physically and morally weak and frail and in contrast to the moon and stars lived such a short amount of time. Why would God care for a portion of His creation that required so much attention and was constantly breaking his heart? Why would God entrust the management of His beautiful world to feeble mortals?

What was the answer? Surprisingly, David doesn't give it to us. We must figure it out ourselves lying on our backs gazing at the stars on a beautiful summer evening.

I'll tell you what I think, though. I guess you could call this my "grass roots theology." I believe that God cares about us because this is who God is. He is not merely the source of life or the explanation for the origin of the universe, but the ever-living One that sustains it. As Dr. John Claypool says, "The Holy One became the Generous One who became the Merciful One." Knowing and loving us is what it means to be God.

Can you explain why you love your children and grandchildren? Can you explain why you are constantly looking for what is missing in their lives so you can provide it? Can you explain why you hurt when they hurt? Can you explain why you get excited when they call or come to see you? Can you explain why you would lay down your life for theirs if necessary?

No, I don't think you can explain these things, but you know they are true, don't you? And because you know these to be true, you know the answer to David's question. God cares for us because we are His children.

David's questions must not be the only ones asked today, though. Our awareness of God's goodness and faithfulness must lead to other questions. What has been my response to God's love for me and confidence in me? Do I love Him in return? Have I sought His will in shaping my life? Have I taken care of His world and made it better? Do I call Him Lord? Do I praise His name as David did?

You may not be lying in a field of clover, but go ahead and think about these questions. Their answers can change your life forever.