

## **"Blinded By The Light"**

*Dangerous Wonder, part 1, based on the book by Mike Yaconelli  
(NavPress: Colorado Springs, 2003)*

*Luke 9:27-36*

[53] Good morning. This is a good place to be today. We are here to experience God, to love on each other, and to revive our spirits so that we can be Christ's witnesses to the world. I am so glad to be your pastor, and I am honored that you are here to worship with us. Do me a favor. Just turn to your neighbor, and without saying a word, just smile at them. This is the community Christ has called us into. Right here, right now. Will you please pray with me?

Lord, if you have something to tell me this morning, I am ready to listen. Search me, know me, test me, and allow me to experience the fullness of your awesome presence. Guide us now as we discover you through your Word. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

*(Put on a bath towel and pretend to fly.)* Did you ever pretend to be a super hero? Maybe Superman or Wonder Woman? Did you absolutely believe, as a child, that you could fly?

If you are like me, you probably did, but you might be hard pressed to remember those days. Maybe you long for that feeling again, that sense of playfulness and wonder. The faith of a child.

In 2003, I met a pastor named Mike Yaconelli, founder of Youth Specialties, and an incredible speaker and author. He was an amazing man, full of energy and life. He wrote a book titled Dangerous Wonder about reclaiming child-like faith and a sense of adventure with Jesus. The book was borne out of a deep disquiet he had felt in his spirit. Even after 25 years of being a pastor and Christian speaker, he admitted he had difficulty hearing God's voice. Busy-ness had deadened his soul to the holiness and majesty of God.

Through a host of different experiences, Mike found a new way to live, reclaiming that fervor Jesus had given him. In fact, Mike liked to say, true Christianity was a roller-coaster ride. Say yes to Jesus, and the bar crashes down, locking you in, and as you go, you must hold on for dear life. Mike used to end

every speech with these words: "If I died right now, I hope I would have just enough air in my lungs to say, 'My God! What a ride!'" (D.W., p. 106)

Throughout this series, we will use Mike's book as a guide, asking ourselves how we can regain our sense of awe and wonder of God. My hope and prayer is God's Word will speak into our lives and help us learn to become child-like in our faith and expectations again.

[54] Let's talk about expectations for a moment. Have you ever been mountain climbing? I once climbed Mt. Katahdin in Maine. I climbed it because I expected a vigorous climb with a spectacular view. I expected to be amazed. And I was. The beauty was overwhelming. If you've ever stood on a mountain and taken in the view, I think you know what I mean. No one climbs a mountain expecting to be bored, do they?

How often have you been truly overwhelmed by God's presence and beauty? How often have you stood in awe of the Lord of Creation? Chances are, too seldom. We live in a culture that seduces us into boredom. Routine numbs our senses. We are fooled into expecting too little from God. Do we expect to be surprised on Sunday when we come to church? Do we expect to be awed, dumbstruck, or overcome? In short, do we truly expect to experience God?

[55] Mike tells a great story about this awe that should envelope us. Mike was there to witness the beautiful moment when his two-year old nephew experienced snow for the first time. (Mike's family was from southern California, which probably made this story more thrilling than it initially would seem to us in Michigan.) They were up in the mountains, and about two feet of fresh powder lay on the porch. The boy's parents set up the video camera, turned off the lights in the house, and turned on the porch lights and opened the door. His nephew became so overwhelmed that he simply fell into the snow. Mike writes, "[My nephew] had given up trying to understand the snow and had given in to experiencing the snow. It was a moment of holy wonder." (D.W., p.22)

Shouldn't our expectation of worship be like that little boy's experience? Shouldn't we stop trying to understand God and start simply experiencing God?

If you're starting to get a little nervous, you are in good company. It appears that Jesus' disciples had the same problem. And Jesus gave his disciples a grand experience of his glory that they never forgot.

[56] In Luke 9, we read that Jesus took his disciples on a mountain hike to show them something incredible. Notice that the disciples climbed a mountain in order to pray. Not to take in a mountain view. Not to see a miracle. Not to go toe-to-toe with the Pharisees. Not to see a life-and-death struggle with Satan. They went up to pray. It seems so simple. Almost benign.

Then a miracle happened. Remember this: Miracles are not always going to happen every time we pray, but miracles hardly ever happen without prayer.

As it often happens in the Bible, when one climbs a mountain, God shows up. Remember, Moses climbed Mt. Sinai, talked with God and received the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 19-20) Elijah had a mountain top experience, as well. (1 Kings 18-19) Certainly any Jew who heard this story would have immediately noted the parallels.

Just like the prophets, when we witness a miracle of God, we feel certain emotions. Fear. Wonder. Awe. Discomfort. When God shows up, it makes us fully awake, fully alive.

[57] After climbing the mountain with Jesus, the disciples were worn out. The scripture says they were falling asleep. It seems like every time the disciples prayed, someone falls asleep! Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane? Maybe this is why we pray with our children at bedtime! Peter, James and John were seduced into sleep. They nearly missed what happened next.

[58] Jesus changed, glowing, and his clothes turned dazzling white. Moses and Elijah suddenly showed up, representing the Law and the Prophets, the most important foundations of Jewish faith. This was an incredible moment, and frankly, a little awkward for the disciples.

Peter fumbled around, trying to make sense of this. He said (verse 33), “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” That was awkward, Peter. That’s like saying, “As long as you three are here, let me run to McDonald’s and grab everyone a milkshake. What flavor do you want?” It’s easy to laugh at Peter’s response, but what would any one of us have said? The transfiguration was so completely unexpected, everyone else was overwhelmed and delirious.

The shelter Peter referred to is the Hebrew word for tent: “tabernacle,” like the original shelter for the ark of the covenant, the one Moses built for

worshiping God. The tabernacle was the place the Israelites went to encounter God's presence. So why did Peter want to build these tents or tabernacles? Peter wanted to hold on to the moment, to the dream. Peter wanted to contain Jesus. Maybe Peter wasn't fully awake yet. In trying to preserve the moment, he wanted to put God in a box, literally.

[59] Have you ever wanted to put God in a box and just let God out during the times when you needed? (*Use a small box as an illustration. Open and shut the lid as you speak.*) Open the lid. "God, I need this thing...." OK. Close the lid. I don't want God to see what I'm doing right now. I've got to make sure the box is closed. It's silly, but that's what we do. We forget God is everywhere. We become spiritually asleep. And then we nearly miss what happens.

God shows up. God wakes us up. Jesus woke up his disciples. He blew their minds. Jesus became glowing white, so bright they couldn't look at him directly. Seriously, how scared were they? And just in case they really didn't get it, a huge cloud covered them, overshadowed them, and thunderous voice said, "This is my beloved son. Listen to him!"

Listen to Jesus. Do what he says. Why? Because Jesus is awesome!

[60] The disciples experienced a life-changing moment when Jesus revealed his full glory to them. They experienced dangerous wonder. What would our world look like if we lived in constant expectation that God would actually show up and knock our socks off? What if we lived in a state of wonder and awe? Would that change us? Would it change our church?

Of course it would. Living like that would change how we pray. How we sing. How we open our eyes to the world and its needs. How we rejoice in every circumstance, no matter how small. (Philippians 4:12-13)

[61] To experience dangerous wonder, we have to remember what it is like to be a child again. Christ said in Matthew 18:3 that we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without becoming like a child. A child wonders. A child asks questions. A child isn't afraid of what others think.

Mike Yaconelli once said, ask a group of kindergarteners, "Can you dance?" and all their hands will go up. Ask them, "Can you draw?" and they will shout, "Yes!" If he said, "Draw me a dog eating a jungle," they'd reply, "Great! How big do you want it?"

Ask those same questions to a group of high schoolers, college students, or even adults. For the same questions, two or three people might shyly raise their hands. Our culture has tamed us, taught us not to wonder, not be amazed, and not be bold. (From Youth Specialties Conference speech, 2003.)

[62] I don't want the church to live like that. I don't think you do either. We want to be surprised by God. We want to live without bounds, abandon our silly addiction to security. We want to be blinded by the light and get the spiritual vision God wants for us.

Friends, please don't try to put God in a box. You'll never find a box big enough, anyway. Instead, live with the expectation that God is going to show up in your life.

Start by asking Jesus to show you his love. Accept his forgiveness, the redemption won by his death on the cross, and ask him to fill and overwhelm your life. Jesus will show you a dangerous wonder, and your life will never be the same.

Let's pray.

### Memory verse

Psalm 104:1-2 “Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; He stretches out the heavens like a tent.”

### Reflection questions

1. Have you ever climbed a mountain? What was it like?
2. Describe a time in your life when you were completely overwhelmed with awe and wonder.
3. What does it mean to “try to put God in a box”? When have you done that?
4. In what ways does God interrupt our expectations and awaken our sense of wonder?
5. Spend some time around little children this week. How do they experience curiosity and wonder?