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Title: Three Essential Prayers: Wow

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Text: [Psalm 8](#) and [Genesis 1:27](#)

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You may have shopped for shoes and other items at a company called Zappos. The company mission statement is "to live and deliver wow."

Tony Heish, the recently retired CEO, says competitors can copy what we do, except for one thing. They cannot copy our culture." As you enter HQ for a tour

you are given a crown and have your picture taken on a throne. You may find the finance team having a soapbox car race. There is a counseling area where people meet with someone who counsels them on how to reach their own personal wow goals. The company has ten core values that they communicate over and over. You can get a temporary tattoo of one of their core values, have a cafeteria sing-off with one of the values. They have made a decision as a company to empower each employee to make decisions. They say that the intent of all of this WOW is "to do something beyond what is expected, something that has an emotional impact on the receiver."

This is the second week of a three-week series called Three Essential Prayers, inspired by a book of the same title by Anne Lamott. We all desire a deep and meaningful prayer life but it's not always the easiest thing to have. The words don't always come easily, and we aren't always sure that God is listening. Our first essential prayer was Help and today's essential prayer is that same word that Zappos uses to describe their culture, **Wow**.

What makes you say wow?

Wow can be used in several ways. Wow can be used by a child who is seeing an ocean for the first time. Wow can be used by a teenager who is receiving a new-to-them car as a Christmas present. Wow can be used by an adult when their favorite sports team wins a big game or when our favorite band releases a powerful new song. Wow can be used to describe a sunrise or a sunset that is surely the handiwork of God.

We also say wow in moments that are much different than these. When we see the World Trade Center crumble to the ground.

When a loved one's life is cut short.

When a friendship falls apart because your politics are on different sides of the aisle.

When we see an area that has been devastated by a storm.

When we see the continued rise of COVID-19 cases in our communities.

Wow is a short three-letter word that covers a LOT of ground. As a prayer, it can be used in any number of ways. When we don't know what to pray, Wow can be a good place to start.

The Psalmist uses it to describe the handiwork of God. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, the Psalms were collected as the Prayer-book of the Hebrew people and run the gamut from the most powerful words of praise to our deepest lament.

We might imagine the writer of Psalm 8 standing outside on a clear night looking up at a starry sky and then composing this:

"Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth!

You make your glory higher than heaven.

When I look up at your skies, at what your fingers made-

The moon and the stars that you set firmly in place-

what are human beings that you think about them;

what are human beings that you pay attention to them?

You've made them only slightly less than divine,

Crowning them with glory and grandeur." (Psalm 8:1, 2-5 CEB)

This is a prayer of Wow- imagine looking at the glory of God's creation and wondering how in the world that a single human life, that every human life can be not only noticed but valued enough to be created in the image of God. Each human is God's handiwork.

You are God's handiwork.

It echoes the first creation story in Genesis which reminds us that

"God created humanity in God's own image,

In the divine image God created them

male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:27 CEB)

God creates us.

God empowers us.

And we live our lives all within the framework of God's creation- the framework of God's love and grace- this is God's masterpiece.

It's why a prayer of Wow is a necessary prayer. Because often this good news renders us speechless, the significance of our lives and our roles in God's story indescribable.

Before so many started working from home, imagine you are working in an office and there are loud cheers three cubicles down from you. You realize that over lunch that your co-worker Shelia got engaged. Everyone is happy for Shelia and you walk over and say tell us about your new fiancé Simon. Shelia starts by saying "well, he's 5' 10", from Kentucky, drives a Toyota, he has a pet Turtle, and he doesn't really like Mayonnaise."

All of these things may be true, but that's not really what you are asking. And these are not the reasons that Shelia loves Simon and wants to marry him. Shelia cannot find the words at that moment that truly answer your question. The answer is so powerful that it is indescribable.

There are those moments in life where we have the same reaction. Experiences that are so powerful, that are such clear signs of God's presence and power that we can only say Wow. The Psalmist imagines these moments that take our breath away when the only prayer we can utter is Wow. When we are in the midst of difficult times, this prayer can be difficult to say. The moments that would lead us to say Wow seem hidden. Our vision for seeing God's handiwork around us and in our lives becomes limited. It's this prayer is so important.

Listen to Anne Lamott *"Gorgeous, amazing things come into our lives when we are paying attention: mangoes, grandnieces, Bach, ponds. This happens more often when we have as little expectation as possible. If you say, "Well, that's pretty much what I thought I'd see," you are in trouble. At that point, you have to ask yourself why you are even here. Astonishing material and revelation appear in our lives all the time. Let it be. Unto us, so much is given. We just have to be open for business."*

A couple of years ago, a good friend of mine drove his then eight-year-old son for his birthday to the Grand Canyon. Now driving to the Grand Canyon is very different than driving to the Tetons, whereas you get closer, you see even more clearly what it is you are going to visit. When you drive to the Grand Canyon, you don't see anything until you get there. They arrived in the parking lot on one of the rims right before sunrise. My friend said to his eight-year-old son, "Do you trust me?" Eight-year-old kid, "Of course, I trust you, dad. That's kind of a weird question." He held his son's hand, and he walked him right up to the edge of the rim. Mom was at home not knowing any of this was going on. He told his son to stay there and keep his eyes closed until he told him to open his eyes. Then he waited until the sun came up. Right at that moment when the streaks of light came across the top of

the Canyon, he said to his son, "Open your eyes." He said for the next 30 seconds, his son shook his head from side to side. His mouth just hung open. Then he looked up at his father with tears in his eyes, and he repeated over and over again, "I had no idea. I had no idea. Wow!"

If we pay attention, we see that God delivers beyond our expectations. God's vision is so much grander than ours and part of building the kingdom of God together is to have the vision that God has, to begin to see as God sees. To see all the moments in life that are indescribable, that make us utter the prayer Wow.

After all, unto us so much is given. The revelation appears in our lives all the time. We just have to be open for business. Let Us Pray.