EDITORIAL

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"That's amazing!" When did you last say this aloud? Or even to yourself? Our familiarity with everyday things can strip them of their wonder.

Having young children ensures that my sense of amazement remains on high alert. They are amazed by butterflies, snails, gadgets, birthday cakes, high bounce balls, slime, hovercraft, and the list goes on.

Amazing things are those that cause great surprise, those that induce a sense of awe and wonder. For me, several key conditions provoke a feeling of amazement. The first is the wonder of the natural world. I marvel at the beauty of God's creation, sometimes at its pure simplicity and other times at it majestic complexity.

Unexpected outcomes are a source of amazement. Magicians depend on this in order to wow their audience. I am amazed by stories of people who overcome tremendous odds. Immaculée Ilibagiza, in her book, *Left to tell*, describes how she not only survived the Rwanda genocide in 1994 by hiding in a bathroom for 91 days with seven other women, but how she later embraced the importance of forgiveness.

Lastly, a new way of thinking or a new explanation for some phenomena amazes me. Netz (2002), describing the writings as Archimedes, says, "Proof and amazement are related, because Archimedes amazes us by proving that something very surprising is in fact true" (p. 967).

What is our response to being amazed? Does it leave a lasting impression? Do I believe or behave differently because of the experience?

Rind (1992) found that a person is more likely to comply with a request if they have first felt amazed. Rind had an actor astound shoppers in a mall with his apparent calculating skills. When he did so, the actor was subsequently able to sell more than three times as many raffle tickets, compared with the amount he was able to sell when he made no impression.

Amazement may result in cognitive dissonance due to simultaneous but conflicting ideas being held. Science and Mathematics teachers use discrepant events to amaze students and to create cognitive conflict by challenging naïve but strongly held conceptions (Gonzalez-Espade et al., 2010).

In His time on earth, Jesus amazed people. According to the Gospel of Mark, people were amazed at Jesus' miracles (Mark 2:12, 20, 42; 7:37). Jesus also introduced new ways of thinking. The crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching (Mark 1:22, 1:27, 6:2, 11:18), as were the disciples (Mark 10:24), and even Jesus' enemies (Mark 12:17). Jesus taught of a God of unending love, of mercy and of grace.

In John 6, the crowds, many of whom had witnessed the feeding of the 5000, caught up with Jesus and asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?" (v. 30, NIV) Jesus replied, "But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe" (v. 36).

Jesus' purpose was not to simply amaze people with miracles and knowledge of Scripture but to lead them to change their attitudes, beliefs and actions in alignment with God's Kingdom. Many were amazed but did not alter their beliefs to accommodate Jesus as their Saviour.

Christian teachers have an opportunity to design 'moments of amazement' for their students. Some of these moments will result in deeper understanding; however, those 'moments of amazement' that unveil the wonder of God and draw students closer to Him are life changing and therefore, truly amazing. TEACH

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References

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[Principal, Shannon Quick with a student, Manning Adventist School. Photography: Linda Stuart]