

## Aware of the Stars

### Introduction

Did anyone see what was outside? What's outside is absolutely breath taking. Can Anyone guess what it is?

I'll give it in the form of a riddle. It's larger than the largest sea, but still can hid behind a tree.

I went to Arizona over winter break, and it was an amazing experiences. On my first night, I remember looking up and being absolutely amazed by the stars. I felt like I hadn't ever seen stars so clearly before. These are just a few of the many pictures I took.

I told my friend about a week into my trip about how beautiful the stars seem to shine in Arizona. And he, also being from North Carolina, told me, "Dude, the stars are just as bright in North Carolina as here."

I thought he was just being a fanboy of Carolina, but when I got back, I looked up, and low and behold, the stars were gorgeous. I couldn't believe it, I've lived here for two and a half years and yet haven't once noticed how beautiful the stars were.

Now, me going to Arizona obviously wasn't what caused North Carolina to get more beautiful stars. The stars were always there, what needed to change was my... **awareness**

Better put:

The stars were *always there*

I just needed to be *made aware*

### There can be beauty

When I realized how unaware I was of the beauty that laid above me I immediately started thinking of a billion analogies you can make to life with it. The most obvious one was "don't be so tunnel visioned that you neglect to see the beauty around you". Another valid one was even when you're going through the muck there are beautiful stars around you.

But the analogy I liked the most to this experience is how unaware we are of the beauty we can have in our lives.

### Don't accept an ugly life

I remember I was in a meeting for a ministry, and one of the members ended with a prayer in which he prayed that God would allow us to execute our plan stress-free. When he finished the prayer I chimed

in quick saying, "Yea hopefully we do well, but I highly doubt what you say about us doing it all stress free is even possible."

To me, it was inconceivable that I could live a life where everything I did did not put stress on my heart. After living with that reality for so long it just became a matter of fact, any burden you take on necessarily has to add a component of stress that makes your life a little bit more miserable.

Then everyone in the meeting was like, "WHAT Josh." In essence, they told me: "Have you looked up to notice the stars?" That it is possible.

And that was the reality I was living in. Even when they tried convincing me that it was possible for me to live a life where I didn't have to constantly feel burdened I couldn't imagine it.

Why do we just accept lives without peace?

Just because you look up and are in a situation devoid of peace, doesn't mean it has to stay like that.

### **Phillippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)**

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This expresses the ideal state to be in. It mentions that there are things that typically make us anxious and that we should recognize them. He goes forward from that and says for us to leave them up to God. What that means is that the peace spoken about in the second verse, verse 7, is attainable through some kind of process!

Peace is attainable where you are.

The problem is that we often want to attain peace on our own merits. We want to have peace and live our lives the way we selfishly want to.

We don't want to follow God's way at peace, but follow our own selfish ways.

- Rather than forgiving a person that wronged us, we harbor hatred.
- Rather than assuming the best about others we gossip
- Rather than looking to serve others, we try to fulfill our own interests.

This book right here (the bible) has been around for over two thousand years. Whether you believe in the spiritual claims of Christianity or not, you have to admit that it's brought people peace for over two thousand years.

Why not instead of trying to forge our own way, we look to see how God and the bible tells us we can receive peace.

And it starts simply, **Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)**

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

It starts with taking Christ on and learning from Him. Choosing to stop doing it our way. We'll be shocked to realize peace is not that far away.

### Create mini album with coolest star photos for vespers

#### Sequence

- Did you see what was outside? It was absolutely breath taking
- We don't realize how much we truly are capable of doing

#### Introduction

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## **You can do more than you're aware of**

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But the analogy I liked the most to this experience is...

Wait, can anyone guess what the analogy is that I liked the most. Actually I'd love to hear the guesses, this may give me inspiration for more devotionals in the future.

Well, the analogy I liked the most was how unaware we are of the beauty we can attain in our lives.

## **Don't accept an ugly life**

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This expresses the ideal state to be in. It mentions that there are things that make us anxious but that we should recognize them and then leave them up to God. That also means that the peace spoken about in the second verse, verse 7, is attainable!

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## How Do You Attain this Peace?

It's a journey! It took me going to Phoenix to realize I could see beauty in the sky. In the same way, our paths toward peace aren't straight forward.

Since that meeting I mentioned, I've made vast strides towards living a more peaceable life. I'd love to talk about that more one day.

I believe that when we start by making intentional steps towards peace we can progressively get closer towards living a lifestyle some of us may never have thought possible.

For me, I had to internalize a few things in order to get past the things blocking me from experiencing peace, this included:

1. Realizing my thoughts weren't always indicative of reality
2. Making intentional steps toward prioritizing my time for things that matter most to me
3. Learning to trust God in my victories and failures

It was when I acknowledged the things in my life that were holding me back from peace that I was able to start making strides towards living peacefully. And for me that was a daily practice of repeating the things I know of in the bible as true that countered the negative thoughts I had that drained peace from my life.

So for me, it was mostly mental

### 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NKJV)

5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

I had to get my mental right before I was able to experience the beauty in life that God wanted me to experience.

For some of you it may be external. You may have to learn how to forgive people, or you may have to learn setting boundaries with others, before you can experience the beauty in life God wants you to

But in all circumstances, I believe if we seek out God, learn about Him, try to follow the ways laid out in the bible that we'll be on the path towards peace.

This book right here (the bible) has been giving people peace for over two thousand years. People have been able to go through jail, torture, humiliation, poverty, and all kind of strife. I'm sure it can help you through your life as well.

So to summarize, and make it clear.

- We have to first recognize that we can attain peace
- Secondly recognize what's holding us back from it
- Lastly Remember it's a daily battle

### **Closing**

Where you are now may not be very beautiful, but you'll be surprised when you look up after a journey with God how beautiful and peaceful it can be.