

## **Ep 94 Growing our Awe-wareness**

### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

virtue, experience, awe, inspiring

#### **Dominic Kaiser 00:06**

Welcome to The Contemplative Life. Three pastors, friends and spiritual companions help us explore spirituality through a contemplative lens.

I'm Christina Roberts.

I'm Chris Roberts.

I'm Kristina Kaiser. We're glad you joined us.

#### **Kristina Kaiser**

Hello, it's great to be with you. Today we're taking some time to talk about awe and specifically, to talk about our ability to experience more awareness of awe which, believe it or not, isn't necessarily as easy as it might seem. People who study awe have come to notice, that awe is experienced on a continuum, which is, we could have a mild experience of awe, just something beautiful that we noticed, all the way to feeling completely overwhelmed by something which is also known as awe. So it might be easy to recognize the most amazing moments in our lives but what about our everyday lives? Is it possible to experience this in an increasing way? Can we experience more? And so as we open up the conversation today, I'm eager to hear your thoughts about awe. What is important in your life? What does it look like? How does it show up for you? What do you guys think?

#### **Christina Roberts 01:28**

I was struck by five categories of awe written by Summer Allen. And when I first came across this list, I was surprised. So let me just note the five categories. The first one is a threat. Next is beauty, ability, virtue, and the supernatural. And I think when first coming across the word, awe I think of the beauty and virtue and those sorts of things. But it's Oh, wow, threat is on the list. And there's something about that horror, that terror that you know, in the Bible, when an angel comes, there's this mixture of this awe of frightening terror, and there's the supernatural presence in the space with me. So I think just even that list from Summer Allen expands my awareness and view of what actually includes and contains, yes, the beauty, but also just such a wide variety of different experiences that lead us into awe.

#### **Chris Roberts 02:18**

Yeah, I love that list that you're mentioning, Christina. One that stands out to me is ability. And I remember, as a kid, I was so excited about being able to do something new. And I noticed that in my own children. I have a child who's playing guitar right now. And we're both guitar players and so this chord progression is able to be played. *Dad, did you see that?* And it's just so delightful to experience that. And I'm finding myself, in what ways is ability showing up as awe in my own life? And particularly when you get older, right? You can do less, right, particularly in the physical. I can't run as fast as I used to, I can't do some of the things that I used to do. But how do I allow the ability to speak to me in the area of awe?

**Kristina Kaiser 03:10**

These are great because there are so many different ways to experience awe. And we don't think of it. I think you're right, it tends to sit in that, *Oh, the beautiful rainbow*. Which I do love me a good rainbow. There's the impressed with ourselves like I am in awe. And then you're impressed with another- look when you can do that. So amazing. Wow. So we have the people that we look up to and then we have I think, I don't know what is terrifying but there are people in our lives like that too. Even if it's not an angel from the Bible, who we just think of when that person comes in the room, I can't talk. I get so tongue tied everything about me. Yes, we do experience a shocking number of ways, which I love. A weird one I have reflected on for myself is learning. So when I was younger, my aunt used to call me a bookworm. So you're such a nerd. And she's five years older than me. So it's like having a big sister as opposed to an aunt. But then I feel like I went into singing and that notion of being a bookworm and a nerd, it wasn't important. If I was reading, it was specifically for school. But then I went back to school recently and the amount of pleasure that I get from opening a book and learning is ridiculous. We have this guiding value about being a lifelong learner and that curiosity and that wonder that comes. So I think of this as sort of a throwback. I don't know that my children would know this song, but *The things that make you go hmm. Things that make you go hmm*. That's kind of what it does. It makes you wonder, it surprises you. And then it makes me want to dig farther and I want to know more. I want to experience more. So that's one for me.

**Christina Roberts 04:54**

And even building off the ability I was reminded of Gardner's Multiple Theories of Intelligence. He identified that there's not just one type of intelligence. So there's mathematical and spatial and kinesthetic, etc intrapersonal. And so I think when we think about that, like someone that can speak multiple languages, I was just recently with someone from Ghana, who I think is fluent in seven languages. And I'm in awe of his ability to communicate with so many different people, linguistically. And so I think even considering the different intelligences, and when someone's in their zone, and

they're shining in that particular area, it's beautiful to watch that and it is awe inspiring. And again, I don't think that would have been my first go when introduced to the topic today.

**Chris Roberts** 05:32

Maybe I can lift up a question list of five categories of Awe, where virtue comes into play? I have a curiosity about that. Maybe you two can speak to this.

**Kristina Kaiser** 05:43

Yeah, that's a good one. I think what immediately starts to come to mind, and there may well be more but virtue again, in another human. When someone is inspiring me towards something, it's their virtue coming out. But I am in awe of how they are living it out. And it inspires me to want to do the same. So that one comes to mind. But I'm sure there's more.

**Christina Roberts** 06:07

I would agree with that. I think we've witnessed in times of war, I think whenever I'm reading stories about Ukrainians that are helping out other Ukrainians or people during the pandemic, that were creatively going out of their way to reach out to neighbors, and to make sure that their employees stayed employed and things like that. Those are virtues that are coming out that inspire me. And I was listening to Craig Culver from Culver's restaurant. They had an interview with him. And he was saying how, during the pandemic, when it first shut down, the immediate thought was, *are we going to be able to make it?* And he said, there was something in me that wanted to make sure our people could work. And they actually grew. And I think they opened like 10 new franchise locations during the pandemic, because they were determined to offer the virtue of hospitality regardless of the circumstances. And so they hunkered down on their drive thru abilities, and really did that. And it was inspiring me to see businesses like his contribution and providing jobs for people in hospitality. And so that's how I would land with the awe inspiring virtue.

**Chris Roberts** 07:02

Yeah, thank you for naming that. I think one of the stories that comes to mind is, whenever I visited Germany, I think we flew into Germany, and we met a lady who was just so generous. I couldn't believe her generosity towards us. And it was inspiring, and then she told the story behind her generosity. And she was saying, when she was a kid, she can remember World War Two, that they were going without food. And so she remembers seeing the American pilots fly over their town and parachute food down. And so this experience of receiving these drops, these parachute drops of food went well into her latter years. And she wanted to bless us with hospitality and generosity,

because of that experience as a kid. So thank you for giving a little bit of definition to virtue, I really appreciate that.

**Kristina Kaiser** 08:09

And it's so fascinating, because I think, before we started the podcast, I might have said, Oh, what helps me experience this? I probably would have gone straight to nature, things like this, right? But in point of fact, what we're doing right now is storytelling, right? This experience of sharing a story inspires awe, all of a sudden, like goosebumps as you're sharing a story. So even finding that opportunity to hear a story to get outside of my day to day experience.

**Christina Roberts** 08:42

And I think even going with a threat, there's nothing like a good plot twist where you're engaged in this intense story. And then all of a sudden, there's a plot twist, and you're like, how did they do that? How did they pull that off? And so that and that intensity, and the music's intense, and it just goes where you didn't expect it to go? And again, I think that also inspires that awe that we're naming today.

**Kristina Kaiser** 09:00

Yeah, I think that's good. I am not a fan of when that music scares me. Oh, my goodness. And I was like, Dominic, why'd you make me do this? But I do think going back to Chris, almost like your original comments of getting away from my busy schedule, I think I can be very hunkered into just the life stuff. And so if there is a blocker, to experience this in my life and really enjoy it, even just a simple meal is enough. I'm really good. But if I'm too hyper focused, of course, like we don't always notice that we're eating our meal if we're too hyper focused, or we don't look up and look even just outside the window. I've been sharing this a lot, but it just surprised me so much. I can't stop talking about it. But I looked up at just the right time. And this leaf let go, it didn't blow off the tree that the wind wasn't blowing it just let go. And I've read about this notion and stories, but I don't think I had specifically witnessed an unprompted, unaided, let go. And of course, we do a lot of let go work in our contemplative circles. And I just thought, oh my gosh, this is amazing. And I shared it. Now people are sending me songs of people that are singing about leaves, letting go, now it's everywhere in my life, but it must teach me something.

**Chris Roberts** 10:25

I don't know that I would have said it that way. But I think of someone who's wanting to get traction or momentum and something getting in the way of that. I don't know that I could visually lift up a blocker. But I think not allowing yourself enough time would be something that would keep me from experiencing or getting into driveness or not taking

the time to go for a walk. One of the things that I've really experienced is whenever I intentionally step outside, in the early hours, at dawn, where there's a little bit of Twilight, it's a little bit dark, and it's a little bit light. And I also step outside at dusk, where the same thing is happening. And I think intentionality if you're not being intentional, that could also be a blocker. And so for me, just providing opportunities for myself where I know this is a key time for me to experience the divine or whatever it is that you want to say, stepping outside in the middle of a snow or stepping outside in the middle of a rain. It's really being intentional about your life, and things that you want to experience and providing a spaciousness to that.

**Christina Roberts 11:45**

As I consider awe as it relates to contemplative spirituality, the idea of being present really matters in this circumstance. And I think, again, in life, there is 50/50. 50% is going well, and life is good. And the other 50% that's hard. And oftentimes, when there's a hard thing happening, if I stop for a moment, and I'm present to that, and I can acknowledge that, quite often what follows is actually the upside of that, or the part of that actually could inspire. So my computer is old and needs to be updated. And I'm therefore late to a meeting. And so that can be frustrating. And I can name that. And then on the flip side, isn't it amazing that we have technology where I can zoom across the country to somebody else? And yes, it might take an extra 15 minutes. But wow, that's really amazing. And had it not been for that delay in the zoom, I probably wouldn't have taken the moment to appreciate the technology in that moment. But that's sort of the downside of it actually releasing on me. And so I think that idea of really being present to what is, to me, seems to be a gateway into awe.

**Kristina Kaiser 12:46**

You're so good at finding that. Lightness in the midst of the dark is a huge thing. That's a really big deal. Yeah, I think similarly, I think in our family, we have developed this. I feel like it started just over a year ago where we would do highs and lows at mealtime. And one of our kids really caught on to it. And so they will often prompt it now but one that I have been thinking about trying, which I got like I read this somewhere. And I just thought this was brilliant. But conversation starters. What do you wonder about or something that surprised me or astonished me today? I'm not sure if the word astonished will fly with a range of ages that we have. But something along these lines like what made you curious today? What did you wonder about and what were you surprised by? And just see what comes out. I'm eager to give that a shot.

Thank you so much for engaging in this conversation. We're in the middle of our awe gratitude series at the time of this coming out. So if you want more engagement with

this, do check out some of our social media or maybe even our newsletter for ways to maybe increase your own awareness and see where it can go.

**Kristina Kaiser** 14:07

And now is the point in our podcast where we take a moment to talk about what we are into. So tell me what are you into today?

**Christina Roberts** 14:15

I am into outdoor yoga. So this past month I've had two different opportunities to do yoga outside with a group of people and there's just something about being underneath the trees and the wind on your face and hearing the birds and perhaps a bug or a frog next to you doing that is just lovely. So I am very much into moving my body with a yoga mat and others outside of nature.

**Chris Roberts** 14:39

Speaking of awe, I have been into scaring my kids. I find unique places to hide and pop out to scare my kids. And the other day we had a foreign exchange student that's living with us and they wanted to show her our wonderful woods and our lake. And you could hear them coming a mile away as I'm walking in the woods. And so it just so happens that the direction that they're coming from is blocked by a tree, a pretty big tree, and I get behind that tree. And I wait for them to come. And I jumped out. And every one of them put their hand over their heart because their heart was racing so fast. It was awesome.

**Kristina Kaiser** 15:29

Oh, my goodness. So each one of them has lost like several seconds from their life. So funny. Let's see, I think I am similar to Christina. It's different but similar. I ended up stumbling upon this thing called the teeny tiny sabbatical project, which is this 14 day, 10 minute experience you can have. And I can actually put a link to it in the show notes if you're interested. But they walk you through two minute segments that include things like movement and making a plan for your day, and even getting started on your plan for the day. And so I found it a nice variation to that moment to be still and reflect and I actually got to talk to the two ladies that created it. And they were like, Yeah, we just found that sometimes, there were these transitions in our lives, and we knew they were coming, but we were always behind and we felt disoriented. So we created it really for ourselves and if it happened to help anybody else so much the better. So I'll put that in the show notes.

Thank you so much for being with us. We will look forward to being with you again soon.

**Dominic Kaiser 16:37**

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