

The Wonder

We recently had the privilege of keeping one of our grandchildren for a few days beyond Christmas. My schedule fortunately kept me home for a few days to spend with him. This grandson is now (as he proudly asserts) 5 ½ years old. You cannot dare leave the ½ off if it applies to you when you are five. I knew the day would come when our grandchildren would be old enough to appreciate some of the toys their parents played with that we have guarded and kept in the attic for these many years. So after our children had vacated the premises for Christmas, I went to the attic and retrieved the collection of Fischer Price Toys. We had two farms, one airport, one zoo, a train, and a portion of the fire truck with the people and animals to match. Once we set them up across the floor, our grandson, Aidan quickly fell to his knees and configured them around him in a semi-circle and with the beaming face that only a child could make, cried out. "It's a wonderland!" Then his grandmother and I began to beam (as only grandparents can). We had no deadline to keep, we weren't going anywhere, and he was welcome to stay in his wonderland as long as he wished. The toys are still out because in a few days we have the promised visit of three more grandchildren. So let the games begin and continue! I cannot wait to see the light of Miles', Henry's and, if she is old enough to appreciate it, Jane's eyes when they see the wonder of old toys found and displayed across our wooden family room floor.

I was a little boy when Disneyland, Walt Disney's dream was completed and kids from around the country visited for the first time his "wonderland." I was living on the complete opposite side of the country, in the suburbs of Washington D.C. On my father's salary, we were not going to Disneyland, but I was not restricted from dreaming. I watched The Mickey Mouse Club faithfully. I made mental note of everything about Disneyland. Oh how I longed to go!

Having an older brother kept me from being the master of my own world if he was around. In other words, in the "pecking order" of things, there were few people I could effectively give orders to without insurrection. There was however, at the foot of the hill a little boy named Eddie, just younger than I, who was more than willing to take orders from myself, a runaway Peter Pan "wannabe." One day I came to Eddie, another Disney fan and said "Hey Eddie, since we are not going to Disneyland, what do you say we build our own Disneyland right here?! Gullible Eddie lit up! His eyes widened and he whooped. I encouraged him to keep his strength that we would need to build Disney. So we got up very early the next day and began.

Between little Eddie's house and mine was the huge sandlot; the future home of the First Baptist Church of District Heights where the beginning building in which we met was not taking up the entire acreage. It was kind of neat having a Catholic boy help a Baptist preacher's kid construct "Disney East" on Baptist soil. Perhaps having a name like "Pope" may have helped. Anyway, Eddie and I with care and the spirit of adventure built a Frontierland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland, and the area we worked hardest on-Fantasyland. Eddie and I saved Fantasyland for last. We sculpted through the sand the attractions and the paths to get to them. Although it may have looked like a maze through the dirt to anyone else, to Eddie and me it was Disneyland! In our childish minds we were there! After we finished Fantasyland, the sun was beginning to set and we knew our moms were soon going to be pulling us away from our creation. We also knew that rain or bullies like my brother may come and desecrate our "holy land," so I said, "Eddie, it's time." "Time for what?" he asked. I said "Time to complete our Disneyland adventure!" Then I said, "Come on, get some dirt, and grab some rocks too; they will be our rockets!" I said, "Eddie, we have got to have the fireworks!" You see, Mickey Mouse showed us on the Club how that every evening at Disneyland, they closed the day with fireworks. Well, it was evening and we had just built Disney East, so it was time to celebrate. We were really tired after building this fantasy in one day! But when Eddie and I began to collect our

virtual fireworks, the adrenaline kicked in, our endorphins kicked in and were good to go for one last hurrah! We whooped, we hollered and we threw our dirt into the air! And as we were having the time of our lives in our land full of wonder, I launched a celebratory rocket as high into the air as an eight-year-old boy could possibly throw. It went straight up and came straight down on Eddie's head. Eddie dropped his "fireworks" grabbed his head and went crying to his mother. I apologized as he ran away. His head was not as hurt as much as his pride, but it ended our wonder. Nothing like a rock in your fireworks to take the magic out of Disney. Yet for one brief shining moment we had Disneyland, we had our wonder!

On November 26, 1922, Howard Carter, Lord Carnarvon, his daughter, Evelyn, and an architect, A.R. Callender, stood in front of the sealed door of Tutankhamen's tomb. Carter, the archaeologist leading the excavation, made the famous "tiny breach in the top left hand corner" of the doorway, and was able to peer in by the light of a candle and see that many of the gold and ebony treasures were still in place. He did not yet know at that point whether it was "a tomb or merely a cache," but he did see a promising sealed doorway between two sentinel statues. First, Carter made a small hole in the door and then he inserted a candle. In answer to Carnarvon's anxious question, "Can you see anything?" Carter famously replied, "Yes, wonderful things." Recalling the moment, Carter wrote: "For the moment, time as a factor in human life has lost its meaning. Three thousand, four thousand years maybe, have passed since human feet last trod on the floor on which you stand, and yet... you feel as if it might have been but yesterday." Yet as wonderful as this discovery was, it was no more permanent than a room full of Fisher Price toys or Disneyland. Jesus said, "...*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15).

When Peter and John were going into the Temple there was a lame man outside. Through the authority of Jesus, Peter took him by the hand and commanded him to walk. Not only did he walk, but also he leaped and praised God with joy! At this point the Bible says, "*And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him*" (Acts 3:10). The child-like wonder of a grandchild surrounded by old toys or a couple of boys who had just built Disney East understands to a degree. In our wonder as children, we use the element of make-believe. As we hum the sound of our imagined cars, swoosh the sound of our imagined jets or boom the sounds of our imagined rockets, we simulate what we can only imagine.

It has been speculated that on the night Christ was born that a man who is lame dreams that he can walk, a blind man dreams that he can see and a deaf man thinks of what it's like to hear. When Christ began His ministry the reality of wonder moved beyond speculation. For those who were sick, lame and infirm, the wonder of it all was the healing touch of Jesus. The wonder was not founded upon fantasy; this is real. The greatest wonder is salvation by grace that gives us a new birth! When the great old evangelist, Gypsy Smith was asked when he was in his eighties, what was the secret of his youthful, buoyant, excited life, he simply replied, "I've never lost the wonder." Have you lost the wonder of just knowing, loving and living for Jesus? "...*And his name shall be called Wonderful...*" (Isaiah 9:6).

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word/body>](http://christchurchbaptist.org/Pastors%20Word/The%20Wonder.htm)