

Our neighbors, Brian and Jennifer, had a little baby boy back in July, and Joan and I have become their go-to people when they need a babysitter at the last moment, which we really enjoy. His name is Charlie and he is a happy, little guy, very content, only cries when he's wet himself. But I do that, so I can't fault him. I'm hoping he does something for the first time when he's with us, so I can tease Brian about it. I keep whispering *Phil* in his ear in hopes that will be the first word he speaks.

He's a great, little guy, but since he's not my child I'm not as worried about messing him up. When it's your own child, you're always anxious and worried. But when it's someone else's child, you relax a little bit. It's kind of like driving a rental car. I'm careful with him, but if he gets a scratch or two on him, I'm not going to lose sleep over it. No, that's not true. I really love Baby Charlie and am starting to take a proprietary interest in him. I've been studying him. Joan and I walk over to his house just about evening after supper to play with him.

He still can't roll over, but several weeks ago he began raising his head to look around. Kind of like a turtle. Poked up his head and began scouting the territory.

It takes awhile for babies to do that, about 20 weeks, because our heads, when we're born, are so big and heavy, about a third of our mass, that our neck muscles can't support our heads. In fact, our heads are so big, we're born prematurely, so we can exit our mothers safely. It takes about 20 weeks for our necks to become strong enough to lift our heads. A chimpanzee can lift its head after two weeks, but it takes us 20 weeks, all because our heads are so big. Our heads are bigger, because our brains are bigger, about three times the brain mass of any other animal our size. Now I know a lot of us really love animals, and I know our dogs are smart, but their brains are the equivalent of a pocket calculator, while our brains are supercomputers, with over 1 million gigabytes of memory.<sup>1</sup>

So Baby Charlie can now lift his brain-heavy, not-so-little head, and see the world. And what will he see? He will see a universe so vast as to be incomprehensible. Indeed, a universe so vast that some scientists speak of parallel universes or multiverses, universes beyond our universe. In fact, a universe or multiverse so vast and complicated our old language and concepts about creation no longer work, and we're having to invent new words and concepts and metaphors to describe all that might be.

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<sup>1</sup> This information was gleaned from the English writer, Jonnie Hughes, in his new book, *On the Origin of Tepees: The Evolution of Ideas (And Ourselves)*. It is a fascinating book, and one I recommend you read.

Notice, Friends, that when the Psalmist wrote of the heavens, he would often refer to them in the plural—heavens. And I don't want to read too much into that, but perhaps it did indicate an appreciation for the enormity of creation.

We've been thinking, these past several weeks, about spiritual awareness, about what it means to be spiritually aware and alive. I've been thinking about those people whose spirituality seems especially healthy and positive, wondering to myself, "What quality do the spiritually aware and alive have in common?"

It isn't that they necessarily know more than other people. It's not that they have everything figured out and always know the right thing to do or say. It's that they have, no matter their age, a deep appreciation for potential, and the capacity to imagine the once unthinkable.

Remember in school when we learned about great scientists, inventors, and explorers? What were we taught about them? We were taught that everyone else thought they were crazy, even dangerous. We learned that popular sentiment was almost always against them.

Galileo was found guilty of heresy and sentenced to house arrest for suggesting the universe was far more complex than the Bible suggested and that the Earth wasn't its center.

Even after Kitty Hawk, the Wright Brothers were denounced as frauds. The Dayton newspaper refused to send a reporter to see them fly and published a stern warning against the “crazies” who’d written the newspaper claiming to have seen a flying machine. The magazine *Scientific American* referred to the flying brothers as The Lying Brothers.

The scientist Barbara McClintock theorized, during the 1940s-50s that genes are responsible for turning physical characteristics on or off, a process known as transposition. For 32 years she was ridiculed by many in the scientific community who thought she was crazy. They only quit mocking her when she won the 1983 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine.

The appreciation for potential. The capacity to imagine the once unthinkable. Every great teacher, thinker, inventor, scientist, explorer, *and spiritual giant* share those qualities. The appreciation for potential. The capacity to imagine the once unthinkable. Can you imagine the laughter, the ridicule, the collective and cynical “Yeah, right.” that first greeted these teachings?

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

“God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, sends rain to the just and the unjust.”

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Can you appreciate the potential of someone or something? Do you have the capacity to imagine the unthinkable?

The story of Jesus is a story of grace. But that is not all it is. It is also a story of potential—God’s potential, Jesus’s potential, and our potential.

It’s kind of like when you have a baby. You can do one of two things. You can look at that small child and think of all the things it can’t do. Can’t raise its head. Can’t feed itself. Can’t stand. Can’t walk. Can’t talk. Can’t, can’t, can’t, until it becomes a habit and you look at other people, or at yourself, and automatically think *can’t*.

Or you can look at that child and see the potential. Oh, he’s going to be a runner. Look at those strong legs. She’s going to be a singer. Listen to her voice. He’s so smart. Look at his eyes, he doesn’t miss a beat.

We walk through the backyard, cross the driveway, knock on the back door, then step inside to see baby Charlie. Gosh, he’s adorable. Such a handsome little guy. And that brain of his is a marvel. 16,800 GHz of processing power, which means he can process 16,800 billion cycles per second. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, friends.

Do you appreciate your potential, and not just your potential, but the potential of others? Do you have the capacity to imagine what others might think unthinkable?