

“[Feinberg] succeeds in keeping the reader engaged, entertained, and edified . . . [She] raises questions that linger in the mind after the book is closed.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Margaret Feinberg is a modern-day David. With eyes on the heavens, His Word in hand, and all her heart turned towards His, she tells the wonders of His love in ways you’ve never known. Who in the world doesn’t need joy like this?

ANN VOSKAMP

Author of One Thousand Gifts

“Feinberg turns exegesis into an art, delivering findings that invite the audience to touch, taste, smell, and see God’s handiwork throughout the Scriptures and in their own lives.”

ED STETZER

President, LifeWay Research

We dangerously underestimate the power of wonder . . . Margaret recenters wonder at the heart of our relationship with God, with seismic results. This book shook my soul awake and made it impossible for me to continue following a God of my own design.

Her work is captivating, staggeringly honest and refreshingly deep, stirring my mind, heart, sense, and soul to consider God in ways that are reshaping me.

NANCY ORTBERG

Author of Looking for God

Wonderstruck invites you to open your eyes to the delights, joys, and gifts of God all around. You can't read this book and remain the same—it will change you so you see yourself, others, God, and the world around you in a more beautiful, life-giving way.

BOB GOFF

Author of *Love Does*

Wonderstruck is a game-changing book. Feinberg's brilliant writing captures you as she points to the God who has captured her.

JUD WILHITE

Senior pastor of Central Christian Church, Las Vegas, Nevada

This generation longs to encounter Good News in fresh, modern, and engaging ways. Margaret Feinberg stands at the forefront of communicating the timeless truths of Jesus with vibrant language, imagery, and expression. Those who read *Wonderstruck* will never be the same. Highly recommended.

GABE LYONS

Founder of Q; author of *The Next Christians*

Wonderstruck, like all of Margaret's writing, is rooted in historical, global, and biblical perspectives, and reads like a song with storied verses and a beautiful chorus: Pay attention, pay attention; it matters; pay attention. I can't wait to share this book with friends.

SARA GROVES

Singer and songwriter

Margaret Feinberg does a superb job of helping us hear God. Through her felicitous prose and engaging storytelling, I not only got a feeling for her unique journey with God, but I also received fresh glimpses into my own.

MARK GALLI

Senior managing editor, *Christianity Today*

Maybe the reason the Christian faith in America is so anemic and lifeless is because we have settled for lifeless religion and stuffy ritual instead of a thriving, close, alive, passionate relationship to the living God. Margaret's latest book is like standing under Niagara Falls spiritually. You won't be able to put it down.

RAY JOHNSTON

Senior pastor of Bayside Church

WONDERSTRUCK

WONDERSTRUCK

AWAKEN TO THE NEARNESS
of GOD

MARGARET
FEINBERG



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.000:
CAPTURED BY THE
NIGHT SKY



BRIGHT-EYED IN THE EARLY HOURS of a frigid January morning several years ago, I heard a familiar voice whisper, “It’s time to go to sleep.” Though I knew such words were spoken in wisdom and love, I refused to allow the allure of slumberland to steal me from the wonder.

The announcement of a promotion for my husband, Leif, had required a move, and we had spent every waking hour boxing up all we owned and saying good-bye to loved ones. We weren’t moving far: ninety-two miles to be exact. But in south-east Alaska, where the only way to travel between islands is by air, boat, or long frigid swim, miles multiply in people’s hearts.

Rumors circled of the inefficiency and unreliability of the ferry system connecting the regional ports, but remained the only practical option for the move. Pulling our overloaded vehicles into the belly of the ship, we had exhaled a sigh of relief and then scrambled to the observatory deck to secure a window seat where we could watch the last of the brief day’s blissful sun melt into the horizon.

The route we had selected wasn't the most direct but permitted us to leave Sitka one day and wake up in our new hometown of Juneau the next. Staring out the window, I couldn't remember the last time I'd slouched in a chair with nowhere to go and nothing to do. The ship held me captive, and I submitted to the monotony. Then fatigue drained the remaining amps of my energy reserves. I took one last glance at Leif and mustered a slanted smile before nodding off to sleep.

Hunger soon woke me. Following the dim lighting down the passageway, I navigated through rows of sleeping strangers and their bags to make my way to the commissary. After a quick bite to eat, I returned to my seat. Before nestling in, I admired the faint moonlight backlighting the mountainous coast. Then something compelled me to look up, and a scene unfolded that I suspect caused at least one angel to gasp: the expanse of the sky transformed from inky blackness into an infinite canvas on which brushstrokes of apricot, sapphire, and emerald painted themselves into the night sky. Like an oil painting in progress, the colors refused to stand still. The hues danced as if listening to jazz. Iridescent shades sharpened then faded with wild fervor.

This wasn't the first time I had been mesmerized by the northern lights. When traveling to Alaska years before, the promise of such celestial beauty had ignited my imagination. I met Leif (pronounced *lay-f*) on one of my first visits to the great state. Before our friendship turned romantic, we'd sit at the end of the road in Sitka—away from the town's lights—hoping for a glimpse

of the midnight delights. One evening I noticed a brushstroke of lime green in the sky growing brighter with each passing moment. I rubbed my eyes as if I'd seen a mirage then looked again. The color appeared to flap in the wind like a loose sail.

“That’s the northern lights,” Leif assured me.

The beauty of the aurora borealis enchanted me. Since that evening, I had spent countless hours peering through the window of our home and returning to the desolate place where the road ends to catch one more glimpse of the beauty that quickened my soul. Even on the most extravagant evenings, the northern lights had lasted only an hour or two then faded, but on this evening the curtain to the performance never closed. The sky exhaled more hues than I imagined possible, and I found myself caught up in the wonder.¹

That’s when I heard Leif whisper, “It’s time to go to sleep.”

“Look!” I protested.

Leif craned his neck, staring into the starry night. Arms locked, we squished against the window to watch nature’s fireworks.

“It’s two thirty in the morning,” Leif whispered. “We should sleep.”

“Go ahead. I’ll nod off soon.”

Leif knew me all too well: I had no intention of ever closing my eyes. Aware of the privilege of watching God’s creation unfold its glorious mysteries, I didn’t want to miss a millisecond. Wonderstruck by my Creator, this moment of spiritual awakening

stirred in me a longing to experience more of God. If these lights were so beautiful, how much more stunning must their Maker be? What kind of God paints the sky in such effulgent hues? For some, the northern lights are a tourist attraction, but for me, they are a portal to the very heart of God. My lips remained motionless, but my soul sang as I witnessed this revival in the night sky.

The hours passed. I offered up a silent prayer to lay hold of the wonder of God, to find myself once again awed by another facet of his nature, another glimpse of his presence in our world.

Even though I lived in Alaska for five years and witnessed the northern lights more than a hundred times, none compared to that night. I still savor the encounter and live in hopeful anticipation of another. Though we now live at a lower latitude on the outskirts of a major city notorious for its light pollution, on many nights, you'll still find me scouting the sky in hope of catching another glimpse of the wonder.

It occurred to me that this is the posture we're supposed to take in our spiritual journeys. God delights for us to cup our hands in prayer and scrunch our faces against the vault of heaven in holy expectation that he will meet us in beautiful, mysterious ways. The Creator desires to captivate us not just with his handiwork but with himself—displaying facets of his character, igniting us with his fiery love, awakening us to the intensity of his holiness.

Often such incidents occur when we least anticipate, leaving us wonderstruck much like my encounter with the northern

lights. But the insistent invitation of the Spirit is to stay alert! Eyes wide open. Hands pressed against the glass. We never know when or how God, like the aurora borealis, will appear. But we can live each day trusting that the God who met us in the past will once again greet us with arms wide open in the future.²

God extends endless invitations to encounter him, yet too often we sleep straight through. Unconscious of the life God wants for us, we slumber in the presence of the sacred and snore in the company of the divine. We remain asleep while God roosts in our midst. Inactive and inert, we become spiritual sleepyheads who clamor for the snooze button rather than climb out of bed. In our dormant states, we miss the opportunities to experience his many gifts and to know the Giver more fully.

The wonder of God is that moment of spiritual awakening that makes us curious to know God more.

Alaska doesn't have a monopoly on such moments, and neither does the night sky. They are all around us—not just in the sanctuary and sacraments. God stoops beside our beds as we offer our evening prayers; he nestles on the couch as we open our homes to strangers, neighbors, friends; he waits in our laughter and tears, our thank yous and I love yous.

What are the wonders of God in your own life that you fail to marvel or even sleep straight through? How often do you pass by God's presence and handiwork unaware?

Despite the breathtaking moments of God that I've experienced, all too often I find myself like so many of the other

passengers on the ferry, deep in sleep, missing the moment. I succumb to exhaustion rather than remain alert to the wondrous displays that reveal more of God. In those moments, the burning bushes in my life are reduced to smoldering distractions, and the still, small voice becomes something I absentmindedly shush.

I recently began noticing this in my life in increasing measure. I no longer waited on God with hopeful expectation. Icy religion replaced the delightful warmth of being a child of God. Though I expressed gratitude at the appropriate moments, in the depths of my spirit, I wasn't appreciative. Words of praise may have lingered on my lips during worship, but when the song ended, so did any trace of enthusiasm.

The sense of holy awe was replaced by unholy indifference. Hope diminished to a manageable emotion. Love became a fleeting expression in short supply.

Yet God met me there.

God's infinite nature knows neither beginning nor end; our Creator is like a vast ocean, fathomless and without bounds, an ever-rising tide without abatement, yet in my spiritual journey in the months after our move, I stood ankle deep, baptized only in the shallows of his presence. I sensed the Spirit beckoning me to plunge into the cool, shadowy depths marked by indescribable beauty, those unforgettable moments of life that draw us closer to God. Allured by the Spirit, I lunged forward.

And I prayed for wonder.

Sometimes the simplest petitions prove to be the most critical. If I had known what I was asking or how God would answer, I don't know if I would have had the courage to make the request.

I have a hunch that I'm not the only one who has misplaced the marvel of a life lived with God. Faith invites us into an enchanting journey—one marked by mysteries of divine beauty, holy courage, irrepressible hope, unending love. But in my life, any sense of the splendor of God had faded. I knew I needed a fresh encounter with God to awaken me from my sleep, to disturb me from my slumber.

And so I prayed for wonder.

Palms extended, wide-eyed with expectation, I waited for an answer. And God did not disappoint. For me, a prayer for wonder asks the Lord to expand my capacity to see and savor the divine gifts all around. I still relish the striking and curious ways God answered. The means God employed to alert me to the beauty awaiting in the most mundane moments of life. The process God used to transform my hollowness to hallowedness.

Through the months and years that followed, Bible passages that had become stale and flat came alive much like a pop-up book revealing hidden beauty and unexpected surprises.

Often when God answers a prayer for wonder, the tone and tenacity with which we live our lives changes. Holiness beckons. Divine expectation flourishes. Hope returns. Love abounds. In response, we awaken, toss back the covers, climb out of bed, and

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drink in the fullness of life God intended for us. We live alert to the wonders all around us and within us that expand our desire to know God more.

My hope is that through the following pages you will rediscover, or possibly discover for the first time, the wonder of God stirring in your own heart. Apart from this wonder, passion for God and his Word fades. But with a renewed sense of wonder, even the cold embers of an extinguished faith can be fanned back into flame.

Will you pray for wonder? Right now, ask God to awaken your ability to see and savor his sweet presence and recognize his divine handiwork.

And as you pray, may you be wonderstruck. With each page, may you discover another facet of God's character, feel the soft pinch of his presence, and step back in astonishment of the One who holds everything together. Along the way, I trust you'll experience God.

When you lay hold of him, may you never let go.

Blessings,
Margaret