
Chapter 1

The Sky Is Not the Limit

Increasing Our Capacity to Believe

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

—Isaiah 55:8, 9

When I was a kid, one of my favorite things to do was to camp out under the stars with my cousins. I didn't want to sleep in a tent because I loved looking at the stars, and I still love looking at them today.

When I look up at the twinkling stars in the night sky, I can't help but be amazed at the expansive universe that stretches out far beyond the ability of the human eye to see. I know that I am not alone in wonder and awe, for I'm sure that countless generations throughout history have also looked up seeking to understand the vastness of the starry cosmos. Our solar system is just a pinpoint in the Milky Way Galaxy, which is a cosmic ocean dotted with an estimated four hundred billion

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stars. And the universe beyond sparkles with billions more galaxies!¹

Truly the heavens *do declare* the glory of God and the firmament *does show* His handiwork! To show the majesty of God, the prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of who God is in comparison with who we are: “ ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (Isaiah 55:9, NKJV).

But just how far are the heavens above the earth? Have you ever stopped to think about it? While God’s power cannot be measured by human standards, let’s pause here a moment. As we know, the basic unit of measurement in the universe is a light-year. To understand the significance of a light-year, let’s do some simple mathematical calculation.

Scientific research has shown that light travels at an amazing speed of 186,000 miles per second, which, according to NASA, is so fast that in the time it takes to snap your fingers, light can circle the earth over seven times.² That’s pretty fast, but we are just getting started!

In one minute, light travels a little over 11 million miles. If we multiply that by 1,440 (the number of minutes in 24 hours), we find that in one day light will travel a little over 16 billion miles. If we multiply this by 365 days, we find that in a year light travels a whopping 5.9 trillion miles. And that, dear friends, is just *one* light-year!

According to scientific calculations, the outer edge of the observable universe is estimated at forty-six to forty-seven billion light-years³ away—a distance so vast that we can’t even begin to comprehend it. But even the best human calculations don’t come close to accurately measuring God’s expansive universe, much less His immeasurably vast love. Inspiration tells us, “The mightiest intellects of earth cannot comprehend God. Men may be ever searching, ever learning, and still there is an infinity beyond.”⁴

When Abraham began his journey of faith, not knowing where he was going and questioning whether he would ever have a son, God took him outside his tent one night and asked him if he could number the stars. “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Genesis 15:5). Abraham could only shake his head in awe and wonder, just as we do today. And yet the Bible tells us that God not only knows the number of the stars, He also calls them all by name (Psalm 147:4).

While Abraham couldn't comprehend God's promise, he believed His Word. As a result, "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (Hebrews 11:12). Amazingly, God is still fulfilling His promise to Abraham today.

As we begin to understand the magnificent God we serve, we might echo the cry of King David: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4).

Hard as it is to comprehend, our God, who stretched out the heavens by His great power, is mindful of us. He is not only mindful, but He has also created us and commissioned us with a holy calling! We are to be co-laborers with Him. We are to be a light to the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind, and to set free those locked in darkness (Isaiah 42:5-7).

Nothing honors God quite as much as when we have faith for the completion of His work, faith that sees far beyond our own ability and grasps His infinite resources—for we are told that nothing is too hard for Him (Jeremiah 32:17). Inspiration assures us, "The power at God's command is limitless."⁵

Limitless? Do we comprehend what this means? When it comes to God, the sky is not the limit; the universe is not the limit. *There are no limits*—except for the limit of our faith! "We have too little faith. We limit the Holy One of Israel. We should be grateful that God condescends to use any of us as his instruments. For every earnest prayer put up in faith for anything, answers will be returned. They may not come just as we have expected; but they will come—not perhaps as we have desired, but at the very time when we most need them."⁶ If we truly realized how big our God is, we would have a lot more faith to move forward in His work. We would also have a lot more faith when we pray.

Let me share the testimony of a humble man named Golden. This ongoing modern-day miracle story has inspired and challenged me as no other.

The impossible becomes possible

Golden Lapani grew up as a practicing Muslim in Malawi, Africa.

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After becoming sick and being sent home to die, he was preparing for the end when he had three dreams. In each one he saw Jesus and was told distinctly, “If you want to be healed, become a Christian.”

So he began studying the Bible and not long after became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Not only was he healed, but the gospel changed his life! He began to preach enthusiastically about Christ wherever he went and many were converted. This wasn’t an easy task, for his former friends, feeling that he had apostatized, tried to kill him multiple times. But God always delivered him. Deciding to serve God full time, he left his career as a biology teacher and took up farming so he could dedicate more time to preaching.

Back in Malawi, working and preaching as a layperson, he brought at least eight thousand people to Christ, 50 percent of these coming from the Muslim background. In another area, he had similar blessings. Many considered the area to be impossible to evangelize, as there were only eighty Seventh-day Adventist Christians and there had been no new baptisms in quite some time. Undaunted, he began to pray and work.

After preaching the gospel for about five weeks, almost three thousand were baptized. In less than two months, miracle after miracle began to happen! In the last twenty-seven years, Golden has led many thousands to Christ.

In the powerful book *Christian Service*, Ellen White writes, “The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands, to be channels of light, our means of doing good will *never be exhausted*. We may draw upon His fulness, and receive of that *grace which has no limit*.”

“When we give ourselves wholly to God, and in our work follow His directions, He makes *Himself* responsible for its accomplishment.”⁷

What a faith-boosting promise—to know that when we are living in the will of God, we have access to resources that will *never be exhausted*, and to the grace *which has no limit!* But not only that, *He Himself* will be responsible to see His work accomplished. He doesn’t delegate here! Do we truly recognize the gifts we’ve been given for the accomplishment of God’s work today?

Golden is a living testimony to God's glorious grace, *which has no limit*. Those of us in the West may say, "Well, that's Africa! Doesn't the gospel work always spread like wildfire there no matter who is working?" Not necessarily! Some of these areas where Golden has worked are difficult regions where they haven't seen church growth in years. Furthermore, Golden doesn't rush people to the baptismal pool. He allows only those to be baptized who are grounded in the truth because he wants the conversions to be lasting.

According to him, the secret of his success is simple. It is Bible study, fasting, and much prayer! He often wakes up long before dawn to pray, and sometimes he prays for seven hours a day!

Think of all the programs, training materials, multimedia presentations, and other evangelistic resources we often feel are necessary to win souls to Christ. Yet we still fall short in accomplishing what one man accomplishes with only prayer, childlike faith, and trust in the Word! Training materials and resources are good; if we have them, we should use them. But we cannot trust in them for success. "The laws of Christ's kingdom are so simple, so compact, and yet so complete, that any man-made additions will create confusion. And the more simple our plans or work in God's service, the more we shall accomplish."⁸

God is not in the business of mastering methods. He wants to be the Master of men and women. When He has once captured the heart, the sky cannot limit what He will do through the life of even *one fully consecrated person*. "There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."⁹

We may not all be called to be preachers or evangelists, but *all of us are called* to share the good news of the gospel. God is waiting for His people to recognize their spiritual need and wake up to the possibilities so He can do something—something much greater than what happened at Pentecost, something much greater than what happened with our early Advent pioneers, and something much greater than what we see happening today. The Bible tells us, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

Are we ready? Are we praying? Are we really in earnest to receive the

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power of the Holy Spirit that will enable us to complete His work?

According to our capacity to believe

We are told in the book *The Desire of Ages*: “Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul *according to the capacity to receive*.”¹⁰ This is the secret to receiving the oil of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. It is given according to our capacity to *receive*. It is also given according to our capacity to *believe*! “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23).

We don’t understand the great God we serve because we have grown complacent and satisfied as Christians. We have grown content with superficial Bible study, superficial devotions, and superficial prayer. We’ve grown content with a superficial relationship with the King of kings. As a result, we are satisfied when we receive superficial answers and superficial blessings.

God wants to reveal Himself to us, He wants to do more, but He can’t, because we don’t believe Him for more! Ellen White laments, “Just so long as the church is satisfied with small things will it fail of receiving the great things of God.”¹¹ Instead of being content where we are spiritually, let’s start asking Him for *more* in prayer! Let’s start believing Him for *more* by faith! Let’s start searching *for Him more* in His Word! As we will discover in the Bible, *the sky is not the limit* to who our God is or what He can do.

So let’s move forward on this incredible journey of faith! Let’s start *daring to ask God for more!*