

Awesome!

The word “awesome” is used in conversation 72 times per million words spoken. According to the “Lego Movie”, everything is awesome! Unfortunately, like so many other words in the English language whose meaning have been corrupted, such as “cool”, “wicked”, “gross”, “sick”, “rank”, “sucks” etc (mainly thanks to American teenagers), the word “awesome” has now come to mean: very impressive, excellent, exciting, remarkable.

The oldest meaning of "awesome" is "something which inspires awe", and it can also be defined as “causing awe or terror; inspiring wonder or excitement”. However, I would not be in the least bit surprised if this meaning is only conveyed 1 of the 72 times in conversation!

We sing “our God is an awesome God ...” but what should we actually mean by that? I am not denying that God is very impressive, excellent, remarkable and exciting but He is deeper than that, and we need to understand this when approaching Him in praise and prayer. Just as the meaning of “awesome” has been somewhat watered down, has our view of **God, the Almighty** become **God, the all-matey?**

When God spoke to Moses about Israel, he was instructed to say “Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other.” (Deut 4 vv 32 – 35)

Psalm 66 says “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.” (vv 3 – 4)

Isaiah tells us that God’s awesome deeds make mountains tremble! (Isa 64 v 3)

Psalm 2 v 11: Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

Deuteronomy 28 vv 58 – 61: If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the Lord will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed.

One of the most celebrated of God’s awesome deeds throughout the Old Testament is the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Pharaoh who came into power after the time of Joseph (Jacob/Israel’s son) had no sympathy or love for the children of Israel, and decided to take action against their growing influence and numbers. He called his council together, and they advised him to enslave these people and oppress them before they grew too powerful. Pharaoh limited the personal freedom of the Hebrews, put heavy taxes on them, and recruited their men into forced labour troops under the supervision of harsh taskmasters. God saw what was happening to His people and through Moses, they were freed.

Similarly, **the** most celebrated of God's awesome deeds in the New Testament is Jesus' resurrection. The prince of the powers of the air [Satan] had so much influence in the world that the few God-fearing people who were left had been oppressed and everyone else had become slaves to sin. God in human form [Jesus] took all that sin upon Himself and died so that He could go down into hell and defeat Satan, proving it by coming back to life with the promise of freedom for all God's people.

God is not shallow, wishy-washy or soft. He created the world, destroyed nations, appointed kings, and sent His only son to the earth to die. He commands and deserves every bit of awe that we have inside us; not because we are terrified by what He could do but because of everything He has already done.

This kind of awe is not inspired by a distant, tyrannical stranger brandishing a big stick, but by someone who wants a true relationship with us.

Romans 8 vv 14-16: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

God wants to be our "Daddy". This can be hard to get your head around if you have never known a "daddy" or you did not have a good relationship with the one that you did have. I prefer to liken God as Abba to my Grandad because that helps me to understand. He always had time for me, he grabbed my arm before we crossed the road (even when I was in my 20s!) to make sure I was safe, he gave me money if I needed it but not just because I wanted it, he gave good hugs and sloppy kisses. I knew with no uncertainty that my Grandad loved me. And I had a respect for him that my own Dad lost very early on in my life.

1 John 4 vv 18: There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

As my Grandad got older, and particularly when he developed Alzheimer's disease, he'd forget what I'd recently told him, call me by the wrong name and look surprised to see me when I visited! It's hard to imagine how God can remember everybody's name, let alone what is going on in every aspect of our lives. God doesn't suffer from human conditions, and He cares so much; He knows every little detail, not just our names. Everything.

The Message translation puts it like this: Don't be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life—body and soul—in his hands. What's the price of a pet canary? Some loose change, right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head! So don't be intimidated by all this bully talk. You're worth more than a million canaries. (Matt 10 vv 28-31)

So, when we come before God in worship or prayer, we should do so knowing we are in the presence of the most remarkable but most loving being there is. We should feel comfortable enough to wear our slippers ... but they must be our **best** slippers!

This awesome, beautiful, wonderful God is at the same time, like a tender Dad; someone we can sit down and talk with, laugh with, cry with. Someone who we can worship. (Berni Dymet)