

Bumping Life Off (Self) Center

Blame the bump on Copernicus.

Until Copernicus came along in 1543, we earthlings enjoyed center stage. Fathers could place an arm around their children, point to the night sky, and proclaim, "The universe revolves around us."

Ah, the hub of the planetary wheel, the navel of the heavenly body, the 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue of the cosmos. Ptolemy's second-century finding convinced us. Stick a pin in the center of the stellar map, and you've found the earth. Dead center.

And, what's more, dead still! Let the other planets vagabond through the skies. Not us. No sir. We stay put. As predictable as Christmas. No orbiting. No rotating. Some fickle planets revolve 180 degrees from one day to the next. Not ours. As budgetless as the Rock of Gibraltar. Let's hear loud applause for the earth, the anchor of the universe.

But then came Nicolaus. Nicolaus Copernicus with his maps, drawings, bony nose, Polish accent, and pestering questions. Oh, those questions he asked.

"Ahem, can anyone tell me what causes the seasons to change?"

"Why do some stars appear in the day and others at night?"

"Does anyone know exactly how far ships can sail before falling off the edge of the earth?"

"Trivialities!" people scoffed. "Who has time for such problems? Smile and wave, everyone. Heaven's homecoming queen has more pressing matters to which to attend."

But Copernicus persisted. He tapped our collective shoulders and cleared his throat. "Forgive my proclamation, but," and pointing a lone finger toward the sun, he announced, "behold the center of the solar system."

People denied the facts for over half a century. When like-minded Galileo came along, they imprisoned him. You'd have thought he had called the king a stepchild or the pope a Baptist.

People didn't take well to demotions back then. We still don't.

What Copernicus did for the earth, God does for our souls. Tapping the collective shoulder of humanity, he points to the Son--his Son--and says, "Behold the center of it all."

"God raised him [Christ] from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in

charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church" (Ephesians 1:20-22 MSG).

When God looks at the center of the universe, he doesn't look at you. When heaven's stagehands direct the spotlight toward the star of the show, I need no sunglasses. No light falls on me.

Lesser orbs, that's us. Appreciated. Valued. Loved dearly. But central? Essential? Pivotal? Nope. Sorry. Contrary to the Ptolemy within us, the world does not revolve around us. Our comfort is not God's priority. If it is, something's gone awry. If we are the marquee event, how do we explain flat-earth challenges like death, disease, slumping economies, or rumbling earthquakes? If God exists to please us, then shouldn't we always be pleased?

Could a Copernican shift be in order? Perhaps our place is not at the center of the universe. As John Piper writes, "God does not exist to make much of us. We exist to make much of him." It's not about you. It's not about me.

The moon models our role. What does the moon do? She generates no light. Contrary to the lyrics of the song, this harvest moon cannot shine on. Apart from the sun, the moon is nothing more than a pitch-black, pockmarked rock. But properly positioned, the moon beams. Let her do what she was made to do, and a clod of dirt becomes a source of inspiration, yea, verily, romance. The moon reflects the greater light.

And she's happy to do so! You never hear the moon complaining. She makes no waves about making waves. Let the cow jump over her or astronauts step on her; she never objects. Even though sunning is accepted while mooning is the butt of bad jokes, you won't hear ol' Cheeseface grumble. The moon is at peace in her place. And because she is, soft light touches a dark earth.

What would happen if we accepted our place as Son reflectors?

Such a shift comes so stubbornly, however. We've been demanding our way and stamping our feet since infancy. Aren't we all born with a default drive set on

selfishness? I want a spouse who makes me happy and coworkers who always ask my opinion. I want weather that suits me and traffic that helps me and a government that serves me. It is all about me. We relate to the advertisement that headlined, "For the man who thinks the world revolves around him." A prominent actress justified her appearance in a porn magazine by saying, "I wanted to express myself."

Self-promotion. Self-preservation. Selfcenteredness. It's all about me!

They all told us it was, didn't they? Weren't we urged to look out for number one? Find our place in the sun? Make a name for ourselves? We thought self-celebration would make us happy...

But what chaos this philosophy creates. What if a symphony followed such an approach? Can you imagine an orchestra with an "It's all about me" outlook? Each artist clamoring for self-expression. Tubas blasting nonstop. Percussionists pounding to get attention. The cellist shoving the flutist out of the center-stage chair. The trumpeter standing atop the conductor's stool tooting his horn. Sheet music disregarded. Conductor ignored. What do you have but an endless tune-up session!

Harmony? Hardly. Happiness? Are the musicians happy to be in the group? Not at all. Who enjoys contributing to a cacophony?

You don't. We don't. We were not made to live this way. But aren't we guilty of doing just that?

No wonder our homes are so noisy, businesses so stress filled, government so cutthroat, and harmony so rare. If you think it's all about you, and I think it's all about me, we have no hope for a melody. We've chased so many skinny rabbits that we've missed the fat one: the God-centered life.

What would happen if we took our places and played our parts? If we played the music the Maestro gave us to play? If we made his song our highest priority?

Would we see a change in families? We'd certainly hear a change. Less "Here is what I want!" More "What do you suppose God wants?"

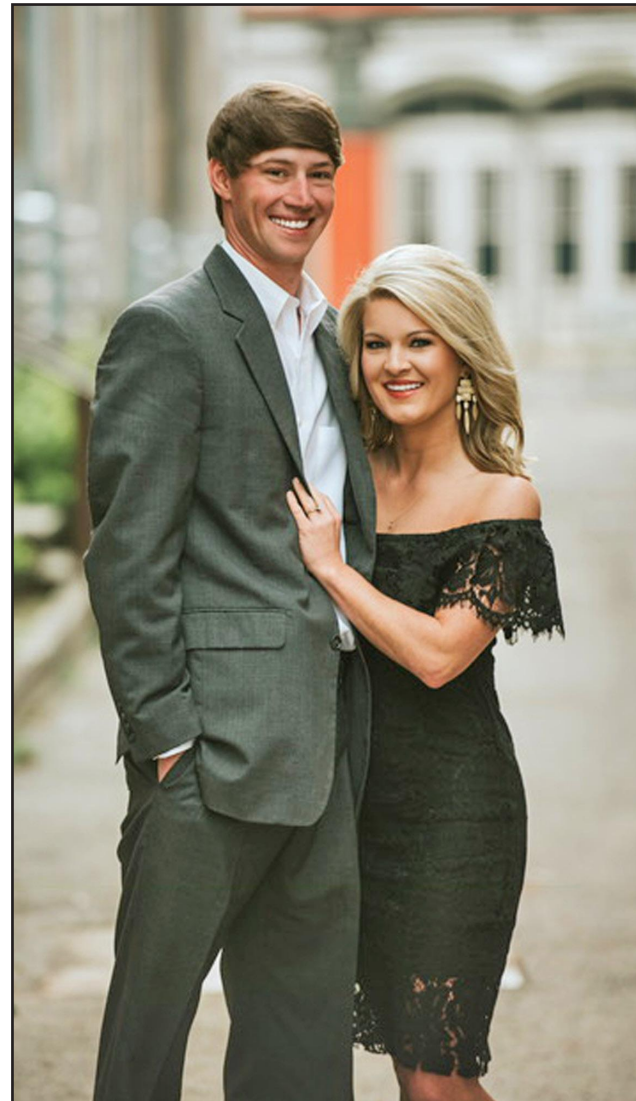
What if a businessman took that approach? Goals of money and name making, he'd shelve. God reflecting would dominate.

And your body? Ptolemaic thinking says, "It's mine; I'm going to enjoy it." God-centered thinking acknowledges, "It's God's; I have to respect it."

We'd see our suffering differently. "My pain proves God's absence" would be replaced with "My pain expands God's purpose."

Talk about a Copernican shift. Talk about a healthy shift. Life makes sense when

Hayes - Ables to exchange vows June 30 in Decatur



TERRY BROOKS ABLES AND JOY LYNN HAYES

Mr. and Mrs. George Hayes of Decatur are pleased to announce the engagement and upcoming marriage of their daughter, Joy Lynn Hayes to Terry Brooks Ables, son of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Ables of Pickens.

we accept our place. The gift of pleasures, the purpose of problems--all for him. The God-centered life works. And it rescues us from a life that doesn't.

But how do we make the shift? How can we be bumped off self-center? Attend a seminar, howl at the moon, read a Lucado book? None of these (though the author appreciates that last idea). We move from me-focus to God-focus by pondering him. Witnessing him. Following the counsel of the apostle Paul: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV).

Beholding him changes us. Couldn't we use a change? Let's give it a go. Who knows? We might just discover our place in the universe.

Read more from *It's Not About Me*. Listen to *UpWords* with Max Lucado at OnePlace.com.

UpWords, with Max Lucado is a popular daily Bible devotion. This Max Lucado devotional offers wisdom and insight for applying Biblical truths to the ups and downs of everyday life. Reading daily devotions provides strength and encouragement in your daily walk with Jesus Christ.

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ly Hayes and the late George T. Hayes, Sr., of Decatur.

The bridegroom-elect is the grandson of Pat Dodd and the late David Dodd of Sallis, and Geneva Ables and the late Mabry Ables of Lexington.

Miss Hayes is a 2007 graduate of Newton County High School and a 2009 honors graduate of East Central Community College. She attended Mississippi University for Women where she graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She then attended the University of Southern Mississippi and earned a master's degree in Speech Language Pathology. She is currently employed as a speech language pathologist for the Newton Municipal School District.

Mr. Ables is a 2007 graduate of Canton Academy. In 2012, he graduated from the Holmes Community Line-man program. He is currently employed with Entergy in Madison, Mississippi.

The couple will exchange vows in a ceremony on Saturday, June 30, 2018 at 6:00 in the evening at Clarke Venable Baptist Church in Decatur, Mississippi.

The reception will follow at the home of the bride's parents.

Please join us to

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the Retirement of
Richard O. Greene
42 years of dedicated service
and countless memories as the
Executive Director of the
Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System

A reception will be held in the
Attala County Library Meeting Room
by the
System Board of Trustees
of the
Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System
Thursday, June 28, 2018
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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