

“This is unlike any book I have ever read. Seth is a great writer, and this work of poetic theology is as beautiful as it is faithful. It has impacted me to the extent that even walking in the park is a new experience—one of awe and wonder.”

ALISTAIR BEGG, Bible Teacher, *Truth for Life*

“With the heart of a poet and the hand of a novelist, Seth beautifully describes all that becomes too easily obscured when it comes to the mystery and majesty of nature. Prepare to be captivated anew by the profundity of God’s glory reflected through his magnificent creation. Enlighten and delight your mind!”

RONNIE MARTIN, Director of Leader Care & Renewal,
Harbor Network; Co-Author, *The Unhurried Pastor*

“Theology, nature, wonder and creativity are woven together into this beautifully written work of art. Infused with worship, Christ-centred and thoroughly biblical, this book inspires you to worship as you wander through creation, to see more than you’ve ever seen and to learn to respond, ‘Wow!’ This is undoubtedly one of the best Christian books I’ve read; I loved every word.”

LINDA ALLCOCK, Author, *Deeper Still*

“This beautiful book takes us on a journey of discovering, interpreting and ultimately responding to God’s marvellous communication in the natural world. Seth Lewis’s language is often enchanting, but his main goal is to invite each of us into relationship with the greatest wonder of all: creation’s author. This is winsome work—evocative, personal, well-informed and compelling. Writing at its best.”

SHARON JONES, Lecturer, Stranmillis University College,
and Belfast School of Theology

“In the busyness of life, we often sadly turn in on ourselves and forget to pause, observe the beauty of creation around us, and, most importantly, understand that the entire creation, even in a post-fall world, bears witness to the existence, glory and wonder of our glorious triune God. Seth Lewis’s book is a wonderful reminder to stop, look, reflect on what we often take for granted and rightly see that the heavens declare God’s glory if we will only listen. This is a wonderfully written book that reminds us that we cannot escape the God who has made us and that true enjoyment comes in knowing him, not only through what he has made but ultimately in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take up and read, and learn to enjoy the beauty of God’s creation and new creation in Christ. I highly recommend this book.”

STEPHEN J. WELLUM, Professor of Christian Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“I often feel closer to God when walking in a wood than sitting in church and have wondered whether I am a secret pagan! *The Language of Rivers and Stars* has put such fears to rest. Using the seven days of creation as his framework, Seth explores how we can read the book of nature, so that light and sun, sky and sea, the earth beneath our feet and the star-filled sky at night, the rhythms of the seasons and the wonderful profusion of plants, animals and our human selves that fill our planet all speak to us of the glories of God. This book is a delight from start to finish and has encouraged me to look more carefully, listen more quietly, wonder more deeply and care more lovingly for this beautiful world that points to its amazing Creator God.”

JAMES PAUL, Director, English branch of L’Abri
Fellowship; Author, *What on Earth Is Heaven?*

SETH LEWIS

THE
LANGUAGE
OF
RIVERS
AND
STARS

HOW NATURE SPEAKS OF
THE GLORIES OF GOD

The Good Book Company logo features a stylized, curved line above the text "thegoodbook" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. Below "thegoodbook" is the word "COMPANY" in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

thegoodbook
COMPANY

The Language of Rivers and Stars
How Nature Speaks of the Glories of God

© Seth Lewis, 2025

Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

Unless indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 2011 Biblica. Used by permission. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Emphasis added is the author's own.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Seth Lewis has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

Cover design by The Good Book Company.

ISBN: 9781802542967 | JOB-008068 | Printed in India

*To Jessica,
who makes the world bloom.*

Contents

Introduction: The Language of Creation	9
Part I: Everything Speaks	
1. The Sun-Disc	19
2. The Rosetta Stone	27
3. Glories and Groans	37
4. The Art of Interpretation	47
Part II: To Hear and Respond	
5. Let There Be Light	59
6. A Never-Ending Newsfeed	67
7. The Chaos Container	75
8. The Clay and the Potter	83
9. The Seeds of Life	91
10. The Rhythm of Time	99
11. Naming the Stars	107
12. The Mysteries of the Deep	115

13. The Freedom of the Skies	123
14. More Than Meets the Eye	131
15. The Image of God	139
16. The Rest of the Story	147
17. I Wonder as I Wander	155

INTRODUCTION

The Language of Creation

It was the middle of the night, in the middle of nowhere. There must have been clouds above us because, beyond our headlights, the darkness was complete. The only sound was the crunch of gravel under our tyres as we pulled into a wide spot beside a lake we could not yet see. I cut the engine off, and all was calm.

The only thing that disturbed the peace was my wife and I opening and closing doors, and preparing our kayak. With the help of our phone torches we found the lake and launched ourselves onto it. That's when the magic began.

This is what we had come for. We had heard many stories about Lough Hyne. And today was the day we'd finally got a babysitter, borrowed a kayak, stayed up and driven out. We did all of this for a sight we were not entirely sure we would even see, and if we did see it, we weren't entirely sure it would be as magical as we were led to believe.

But it was. As the kayak floated away from the launch ramp, we put our paddles into the still, dark water, and

the still, dark water immediately exploded with light. Every stroke created new fireworks in the water—a thousand glimmers for every touch, radiating out in sparkling ripples before fading away. I realise this sounds hard to believe. We could barely believe it ourselves. The sparks were not actually fireworks or some kind of man-made concoction; they were living organisms. The enchanted lake was filled with bioluminescent plankton—microscopic creatures too small to see with the naked eye, yet when they are disturbed, a chemical reaction within their tiny bodies creates a bright blue light. The lake really was alive with beauty.

We didn't go far. Why would we? Our eyes don't work well in the dark. The only reason we didn't run into a boulder was because at the last minute we noticed that the blackness was a shade blacker there. We paddled in circles, and we did it happily, splashing up a sea of starlight. I was so enthralled at what was happening under the surface that I didn't notice the sky clearing until Jessica said, "Look up!" Sure enough, there were millions—no—billions of stars above us, clusters and constellations so far beyond counting, and all of them sharing their light with two tiny people in a tiny boat on an enchanted lake in a hidden little corner of Ireland. We were surrounded. Speechless. Overwhelmed. Stars above, stars below. Magic. Awe. Wonder.

There are scientific explanations for what Jessica and I saw that night—for the plasma blazing in the sky and the plankton sparking in the water. Humans have researched these things. We have classified them and categorised them and published papers on how we can

predict and understand them. We have microscopes and telescopes. Even I, with only my introductory science classes that were so many years ago, know I'm looking at cells and gases; but my knowledge doesn't change anything—it's still magical.

The Language of Stars Is Not Latin

How does the world do this to us? How does it make our hearts beat faster and our eyes go wide and our minds freeze, transfixed with beauty? How do pinpricks of burning gas and glowing biology (and so many other natural realities) have such strange power over us? Is this really logical? Our long, impressive scientific names are not long or impressive enough to capture the long-term impression these spectacles make on us. The stars don't use our carefully chosen words. You'll never understand them with the language of science alone.

There is no survival value in gaping at the midnight sky. My wife and I lost half a night's sleep and almost hit a boulder on that lake. But we were gaping anyway, and loving it—just as every other human who ever lived on this planet has gaped at the world and loved its beauty. Our ancestors worshipped the stars as gods and believed the woods were teeming with faeries. I don't agree with them, but I understand why. The magic is real, with or without the faeries. It's real, with or without the formulas.

Scientific methods can be useful, in fairness. Our understanding of the world has made us comfortable, helping us harness nature and direct it. Many of us don't live in caves or huts or even cold stone castles anymore.

Now in the West we have insulated walls that shelter climate-controlled rooms with light switches and hot-water supplies and sockets that channel electricity into user-friendly labour-saving and entertainment devices. Inside these walls, the world works the way I want it to, and everything is made to the scale of me—the bed, the refrigerator, the couch, the doorway, the ceiling, and the screen that is smart enough to show me my interests before I tell it to (a bit scary, that). But being able to control my living environment almost completely hasn't completed my experience of living. We can sit inside and make ourselves the right temperature and make our food the right temperature and feed our brains with all of the accumulated knowledge and funny cat videos of human civilisation, and even with all of this at our literal fingertips, we are still restless and discontented. We have mastered the world, but we haven't figured out what to do with it yet. So we watch another cat video.

I've seen my share of funny videos, and I've laughed along and learned plenty of interesting things online, but I've never seen anything on a screen that made me feel as vitally alive as being on a glowing lake at midnight with my wife. This is not an anomaly—as I look back on the favourite memories that I've accumulated through my few decades of living, I find that hardly any of them have anything to do with screens and very few with couches, and a disproportionate number of them have occurred outdoors. Beaches. Forests. Picnics. Campgrounds. Mountains. Cliffs. Islands. Stars. Water. Fire. Why is the highlight reel of my life so dominated by memories in places that are not nearly as comfortable as

my couch? Why does sitting on a beach make me forget about the technology in my pocket that can speak to me in my own native tongue, answer my questions, show me directions, give me recommendations and carry out my commands? I'd rather listen to the waves. I like their language better.

Speaking with Mountains

I went up a mountain with some friends from church—the tallest mountain in Ireland in fact. Our legs hurt. The rough wind took our breath away. Stephen's hands went numb. Jonathan's shoes fell apart. A streaky drizzle soaked us all, and we loved it. Seriously, I loved it. I felt so alive, so aware. I felt all of my senses working and my muscles working and my mind working, and I couldn't keep myself from smiling as I walked through the rain and the pain—not in spite of the work and miserable conditions but because of them. Nothing on that mountain was my size. Not the clouds, not the boulders, not the mountain itself or the wild landscape stretching out from it as far as I could see. I couldn't flip a switch and control it. I couldn't close a window or draw a curtain or change the channel. I couldn't even yell, "Hey mountain" and get it to play some rainy-day mood music for me.

Not that I wanted to. Music couldn't have made my mood better, anyway. I didn't care about my soggy, heavy jeans. I didn't care that the guys said, "You're brave to wear jeans"—or that it was nice of them to substitute "brave" for "foolish". I didn't care that I felt unfit, panting and struggling to keep putting one foot

in front of the other. Out of shape or not, I was alive. I could climb a mountain. I could make it to the top, and back again. This was not a given—the boulders were wet, and the way was steep. Someone in a group in front of us slipped and landed head first on the rocks at the feet of a man who happened to be a doctor. I don't know if he felt lucky or unlucky about that, but I bet he did feel alive and thankful. That mountain was uncomfortable, unsafe and unforgettable. Even the difficulty and danger spoke to us.

How does the outdoors move us so deeply and have such power to make us feel more alive, more connected, more rested and content than any technology or device we've been able to invent—even though it is so often wild, unpredictable and threatening? Nature stirs us with sunsets, calms us with steady waves and terrifies us with power. We hear it. We feel it. We sense it communicating, and something inside of us responds naturally. Innately. Even if we don't understand the language. This conversation—between us and the world—happens whether we want it to or not.

The Speaking and the Speaker

We are unique this way. The animals may be more in tune with nature than we will ever be, but they don't appreciate it like we do. Some of them are instinctually guided by the light of the moon, but they don't write poetry about it. They don't try to read fortunes in the movements of constellations and planets or paint starry, starry nights in order to capture and share the emotions they experienced when they saw them in

person. Humanity alone is haunted by this powerful feeling that the world is speaking something deeply meaningful to us. And there's a reason why we feel this: it *is*.

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)*

Have you ever considered that the reason why we feel so connected in nature is because that's what nature is specifically designed to do? It is made to connect us to our Maker. It doesn't use words, but it still communicates. Powerfully. It declares, proclaims, reveals and speaks to the ends of the earth—because there isn't one tiny corner of this planet that isn't filled up and overflowing with God's creative wonders. And the wonder that we naturally feel in response to his wonders is not an accident of our genetics. It is not some kind of sentimentality that only holds us back from being as ruthlessly efficient as we could be in our quest to survive. Our wonder is the natural language of our created souls responding to the natural language of our created world.

Speaking requires a speaker: for communication to happen, there must be someone with a message to

communicate. If there is proclamation, declaration and revelation, there must be something to proclaim, something to declare—someone to reveal. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (v 1)—the language of creation is more than a lovely feeling. It is real language, with real meaning, direction and intention. It is telling us truth we really need to know. But how do we understand a language with no words? How do we listen to the one who is speaking to us through it?

Thankfully, the God who speaks to us through his world has also given us everything we need to interpret his meaning. In the following chapters, we will consider how we can hear our Creator’s voice in his creation; not only to understand clearly what he is saying to us, but also—vitaly—to respond. Then, in Part II, we will use the days of creation as a path to begin a journey of listening and responding to God’s voice in all his natural wonders—because everything God made is speaking to us, every day.