

American Minute with Bill Federer

The Space Race: Manned Space Flight & the Faith of Astronauts - "Jesus walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon"-Astronaut James Irwin, Apollo 15

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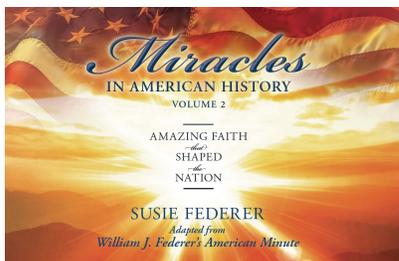
Robert Goddard, the father of **American rocketry**, is credited with developing the first **liquid fueled rockets**, with **gyroscope three-axis control** providing **steerable thrust**.



NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center is named for him ...

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After World War II, **Werner von Braun**, and 1,600 German scientists, surrendered to the United States in **Operation Paperclip**, stating:

"I myself, and everybody you see here, have decided to go West ... We knew that we had created a new means of warfare ... We felt that only by surrendering such a

weapon to **people who are guided by the Bible** could such an assurance to the world be best secured."

On October 4, 1957, **Soviets** launched **Sputnik 1**, the first man-made satellite.

Werner von Braun developed America's first space satellite, **Explorer 1**, launched on January 31, 1958.

The **Space Race** was on.

On April 12, 1961, Soviet cosmonaut **Yuri Gagarin** became the first person in space, completing one orbit of the Earth in 108 minutes, reaching an altitude of 91 miles.

Less than a month later, May 5, 1961, American **Alan Shepard** piloted the **Mercury Freedom 7** to become the second person in space.

His 15 minute flight reached an altitude of 101.2 nautical miles above the earth.

On February 20, 1962, Astronaut **John Glenn** piloted the **Mercury Friendship 7**.

"**Godspeed, John Glenn,**" radioed backup-pilot Scott Carpenter from the blockhouse as the rockets fired up.

Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth, circling 3 times in just under 5 hours, reaching an altitude of 162 nautical miles.

NASA's first **manned spaceflight** program was **Mercury**, 1958-1963.

Mercury Astronauts answered questions at a press conference in Washington, D.C., April 9, 1959:

Alan Shepard, Malcolm Carpenter, Leroy Cooper, Gus Grissom, Walter Schirra, Donald Slayton, and John

Glenn.

When questioned about his faith, **John Glenn** stated:

"I don't think any of us could really go on with something like this if we didn't have pretty good backing at home, really ...

My wife's attitude toward this has been the same as it has been all along through all my flying. If it is what I want to do, she is behind it, and the kids are too, a hundred percent."

Glenn added:

"I am a Presbyterian ... a **Protestant Presbyterian**, and I take **my religion** very seriously, as a matter of fact."

Glenn told of teaching **Sunday school classes**, being on **church boards**, and doing **church work** with his family:

"I was brought up believing that you are placed on Earth here more or less with sort of a 50-50 proposition, and this is what I still believe.

We are placed here with certain talents and capabilities. It is up to each of us to use those talents and capabilities as best you can.

If you do that, I think there is a Power greater than any of us that will place the opportunities in our way, and if we use our talents properly, we will be living the kind of life we should live."

Astronaut Virgil "Gus" Grissom stated:

"I consider myself religious. I am a **Protestant** and belong to the **Church of Christ**. I am not real active in church, as **Mr. Glenn** is ... but I consider myself a good

Christian still."

Astronaut Donald "Deke" Slayton stated:

"As far as my religious faith is concerned, I am a **Lutheran**, and I go to **church** periodically."

John Glenn, who had flown 147 combat missions in **World War II** and the **Korean War**, addressed Congress in 1962:

"I still get a lump in my throat when I see **the American flag passing by.**"

Later that year, **President Kennedy** stated at Rice University in Houston, September 12, 1962:

"Space is there and we're going to climb it, and the moon and planets are there and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there.

And, therefore, as we set sail we ask **God's blessing** on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

The **Mercury Program** was followed by the **Gemini Program**, 1961-1966, which had longer missions and developed techniques of orbital maneuvers, extra-vehicular activity, space rendezvous, docking and reentry.

This put America ahead in the **Space Race**.

Werner von Braun, father of modern space flight, developed the powerful **Saturn V rocket** capable of sending a spacecraft beyond Earth's orbit in **NASA's Apollo Program**.

An "astronaut" is defined as someone who has ascended **over 62 miles (100km) above the Earth's surface**.

As of 2021, over **570 individuals** are in that group.

Only **24 individuals** have **left Earth's orbit**, and only **12 have walked on the Moon**.

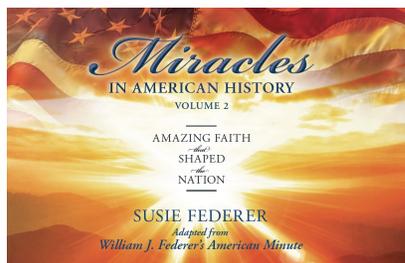
Apollo 1 ended tragically when a launchpad fire killed all three astronauts, Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee.

This resulted in other Apollo missions greatly improving safety.

The first mission to **leave Earth's orbit** and fly around the moon was **Apollo 8** in 1968.

The tiniest mistake would have sent them crashing into the moon's surface or plummeting off into endless space.

As they successfully went into lunar orbit, **astronaut William Anders** snapped the famous **Earthrise photo** that was printed in ***LIFE Magazine***.



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As **Apollo 8's** three man crew looked down on the earth from 250,000 miles away on **Christmas Eve, 1968**, **Commander Frank Borman** radioed back a message, quoting from the **Book of Genesis**:

"We are now approaching lunar sunrise. And for all the people back on Earth, the crew of **Apollo 8** has a message that we would like to send to you.

... In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness

was upon the face of the deep.

And the **Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters.

And **God** said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And **God** saw the light, that it was good: and **God** divided the light from the darkness.

And **God** called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And **God** said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And **God** made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

And **God** called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day ..."

Commander Borman continued:

"And **God** said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

And **God** called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and **God** saw that it was good."

Frank Borman ended by saying:

"And from the crew of **Apollo 8**, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and **God bless all of you** - all of you on the good Earth."

After returning to earth, a reporter told **Borman** that a **Soviet cosmonaut** returned from space and said **he did not see God**.

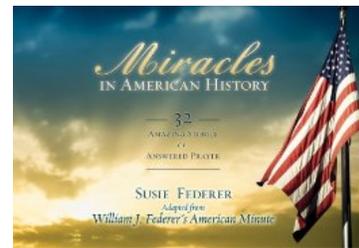
Borman replied:

"I did not see Him either, but **I saw His evidence.**"

Later **Frank Borman** described his voyage:

"I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us - that there was a **God**, that there was indeed a beginning."

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The first mission to **walk on the moon** was **Apollo 11**, which blasted off JULY 16, 1969, from Cape Kennedy.

President Richard Nixon stated in Proclamation 3919:

"Apollo 11 is on its way to the moon. It carries three brave astronauts; it also carries the hopes and prayers of hundreds of millions of people ...

That moment when man first sets foot on a body other than earth will stand through the centuries as one supreme in human experience ...

I call upon all of our people ... to **join in prayer** for the successful conclusion of **Apollo 11's** mission."

On July 20, 1969, **Astronauts Neil Armstrong** and **Buzz Aldrin**, landed their lunar module, the **Eagle**.

Buzz Aldrin read John 15:5 and partook of communion

before exiting the lunar module.

They spent a total of 21 hours and 37 minutes on the moon's surface before redocking with the command ship ***Columbia***.

President Richard Nixon spoke to the astronauts on the moon, July 20, 1969:

"This certainly has to be the most historic telephone call ever made from the White House ... The heavens have become a part of man's world ...

For one priceless moment in the whole history of man all the people on this earth are truly one ... one in **our prayers** that you will return safely to earth."

Armstrong took with him to the moon a diamond studded astronaut pin from the widows of the **Apollo 1** astronauts who died in the launch pad fire.

President Nixon greeted the astronauts on the *USS Hornet*, July 24, 1969:

"The millions who are seeing us on television now ... feel as I do, that ... our prayers have been answered ...

... I think it would be very appropriate if Chaplain Piirto, the Chaplain of this ship, were to offer a **prayer of thanksgiving.**"

Addressing a joint session of Congress, September 16, 1969, **Commander Neil Armstrong** stated:

"To those of you who have advocated looking high we owe our sincere gratitude, for you have granted us the opportunity to see some of the **grandest views of the Creator.**"

Apollo 12 Astronauts Charles "Pete" Conrad and **Alan Bean** walked on the moon for 31 hours.

Alan Bean later became an artist.

One of his paintings is of an astronaut **kneeling in prayer** on the moon, titled "**We Came in Peace for All Mankind.**"

Apollo 13 had an oxygen tank explode, irreparably damaging the craft, **President Nixon called the nation to pray.**

In sub-zero temperature, the crew pieced together an oxygen filter, jump-charged the command module batteries, and manually steered the ship to land in the ocean near a raging hurricane.

On the **Apollo 14** mission, February 6, 1971, **Astronauts Edgar Mitchell and Alan Shepard** left a tiny **microfilm copy of the King James Bible** aboard the lunar module **Antares** on the moon's Fra Mauro highlands.

On **Apollo 15's** mission, 1971, **Astronaut James Irwin** became the 8th person to walk on the moon. He spoke of leaving earth:

"As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine.

That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart.

Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate **the creation of God and the love of God.**"

Jim Irwin and **Dave Scott** were mentioned in **Alan Bean's** book:

"Jim Irwin was one of my favorite astronauts ... **Jim** was, unexpectedly, more religious than most of us realized.

I can remember when he and **Dave** were riding along on their rover near the end of their third EVA and **Dave** said, 'Oh, look at the mountains today, **Jim**. When they're all sunlit isn't that beautiful?' '

Jim answered, 'Really is, **Dave**. I'm reminded of a favorite **Biblical passage** from **Psalms**, 'I look unto the hills from whence cometh my help ...' But of course, we get quite a bit from Houston, too."

Bean continued:

"**Jim** would later say,

'I was aware on the Moon that thousands of people on Earth were **praying** for the success of our mission.

The hours I spent on the Moon were the most thrilling of my life. Not because I was there but because **I could feel the presence of God**. There were times I was filled with new challenges and help from **God** was immediate."

Alan Bean concluded:

"**Dave** and **Jim** journeyed into space as test pilot astronauts and most of us returned the same way. But **Jim** changed outwardly.

As he explained, 'I returned determined to share with others that **profound experience with God** on the Moon and lift man into his highest flight of life."

Later, **Astronaut James Irwin** became an evangelical minister.

Of his experience of walking on the moon, he stated:

"I felt the power of **God** as I'd never felt it before ...

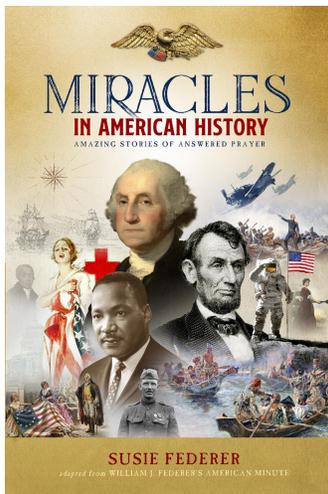
... Being on the moon had a profound spiritual impact upon my life. Before I entered space with the Apollo 15 mission in July of 1971, I was ... a silent **Christian**, but I feel the **Lord** sent me to the moon so I could return to the earth and **share His Son, Jesus Christ.**"

He added:

"Jesus walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon."

Apollo 16 Astronaut Charles Duke wrote (*Charles Duke: Moonwalker*, Rose Petal Press, 2nd edition, 2011, p. 256-261):

"I used to say I could live ten thousand years and never have an experience as thrilling as **walking on the moon**. But the excitement and satisfaction of that walk doesn't begin to compare with **my walk with Jesus, a walk that lasts forever.**"



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Astronaut Mike Mullane flew the Space Shuttle *Discovery*, 1984, then, after the *Challenger* disaster, he flew Space Shuttle *Atlantis*, 1988, 1990.

In his book, *Riding Rockets*, Mike Mullane wrote that the night before a launch, he was sleepless with apprehension.

He looked in the nightstand by his bed for a Bible, but

found none, stating:

"I didn't need a **Bible** to talk to **God**. I **prayed** for my family. I **prayed** for myself.

I **prayed** I wouldn't blow up and then I **prayed** harder that I wouldn't screw up."

In 1974, **John Glenn** was elected a U.S. Senator.

On October 28, 1998, **Astronaut John Glenn** flew aboard the Space Shuttle ***Discovery***.

At age 77, he was the oldest person to go into space - **36 years after he had been the first American to orbit the earth in 1962.**

John Glenn observed the heavens and the earth from his window and stated November 5, 1998:

"To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in **God** is to me impossible. It just **strengthens my faith.**

I wish there were words to describe what it's like."

John Glenn died December 8, 2016, at the age of 95.

The next day, the *Wall Street Journal* printed Tom Wolfe's article "**The Faith of John Glen.**"

In 2010, NASA's ***Constellation*** program was building new rockets and spaceships capable of returning astronauts to the moon, till President Obama suddenly canceled it.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden outlined new priorities in an interview with the Middle East News agency in Cairo, ***Al Jazeera***, June 30, 2010:

"When I became the NASA administrator... President Obama charged me ... perhaps foremost ... to find a way

to reach out to the Muslim world and engage much more with dominantly Muslim nations to help them feel good."

The Trump administration proceeded with plans for the **Orion program** to return manned space flights to the moon in 2024, and following that, to Mars.

Americans can remember with pride the tremendous achievements of brilliant scientific minds and courageous hearts of those who dared to go into the unknown, and the prayers of the country that bore them up.

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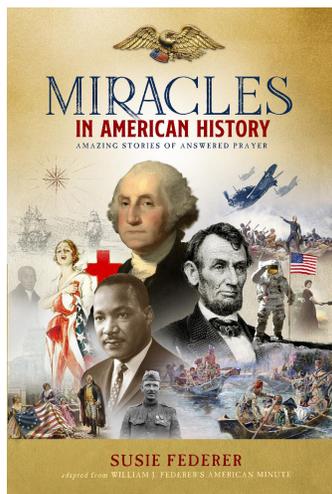
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