

DRAMA ON SPACE MOUNTAIN

EMBRACING
THE DARE
AND FACING YOUR FEARS.

In all my years immersed in the Disney culture, I've observed what could easily be over a million guests in the parks. I have seen the absolute best and admittedly worst displays of humanity. In it all, I have come to a startling conclusion. Regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, or political affiliation—I believe only two kinds of people exist in this world:

Those who like to ride Space Mountain—and those who don't.

Here's my case and point:

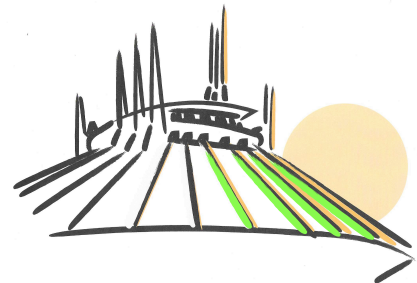
One day, while walking through Magic Kingdom, I noticed the wait time was unusually short for the queue to Space Mountain. You might be tempted to believe that as the leader of a church based in the heart of the Disney Parks, I ride the attractions all the time.

You would be wrong.

I rarely ride unless I am looking to connect with a specific Cast Member who is working in a specific attraction. On this particular day, I was at Magic Kingdom for a meeting. As I walked through Tomorrowland, the futuristic warbles of the atmospheric music filled the air. I noticed an unusually short queue at Space Mountain. The sign above the entrance indicated a 20-minute wait for the stand-by queue; a rare occasion indeed. I glanced at my watch and realized I happened to have some extra time before my meeting. Thinking it might be nice to get out of the Florida heat and enjoy a quick trip around the universe, I entered the queue.

Just inside the entrance, I passed a sign telling potential riders what to expect:

"Space Mountain is a thrilling, high-speed, turbulent rollercoaster-type ride in the dark that includes sharp turns, sudden drops, and stops. For safety, you should



be in good health and free from high blood pressure, heart, back, or neck problems, motion sickness, or other conditions that could be aggravated by this adventure.”

Right behind me came a husband and wife. They were perhaps 10 years older than me. She carried a bright blue “Disney Parks” bag of souvenirs in one hand. Her other hand tightly gripped her husband’s forearm. The husband definitely showed more excitement about riding Space Mountain than his wife did. She made it plainly known that she didn’t want to venture into an unknown escapade of twisting and turning through the darkness of space.

At first, all I could hear were low conversational tones from both of them. I heard the husband assure his wife she would have a good time. He attempted to alleviate her anxiety with promises such as, “It’s gonna be okay, baby. Trust me, you’re gonna love it.” She didn’t seem convinced.

As the queue reached the convergence point in which you pass the rocket-like ride vehicles preparing to launch, the woman’s fear intensified. The conversation between them grew more audible.

“I don’t think I’m gonna make it,” the woman said with great hesitation.

“Baby, do you trust me?” came the husband’s reply.

They went back and forth like this for the rest of the twenty-minute wait. I pretended to not notice their conversation. By the time we arrived at the loading zone, however, everyone else within earshot was quite aware of the growing stress between them.

The loading Cast Member asked how many were in my party. I held up one finger to let her know it was just me. As I boarded the front of the vehicle, I realized the couple had been given the two seats behind mine since the vehicle’s capacity is designed for three riders. Knowing how much commotion had already occurred in the queue, I thought to myself, albeit sarcastically:

“This will be fun.”

The wife gripped her bag tightly. She hesitated before she boarded. Her husband offered reassuring words before she stepped into the vehicle. She plopped down in the seat directly behind me, stowed her bag, and pulled the safety T-bar into position. Unconvinced of its design, I heard her tug the bar repeatedly to make sure it was doing

its job. A Cast Member checked our restraints, offered a friendly Disney wave, and we were off.

Our vehicle dipped ever so slightly and began to move up the long track where we would be dropped from our launch position. Blue lights pulsated past us as we entered the launch tunnel. The further up the track we traveled, the faster the blue lights flashed, staged to create the sensation of preparing to be shot into space. Music and techno sound effects charged the immersive atmosphere. But above it all—I heard this woman behind me half-praying. Maybe it was chanting. I honestly couldn't tell.

"Oooooohhhh, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Je-sus."

She drew a long breath.

"Oooooohhhh, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Je-sus."

She sucked in another deep breath.

"Oooooohhhh...."

This repeated all the way to the top.

Our vehicle leveled off, and I anticipated the drop—half because of the experience I knew was coming and half because I was honestly curious about what would happen with this woman.

I'm not sure if I can adequately describe what took place next.

As our vehicle plunged into the darkness, this woman released a bloodcurdling scream that rings in my ears to this day. But this was not all. The scream was only a prelude to what was to come. For the entire length of the ride, this woman dedicated and rededicated her life to God.

"Oh Lord, save me!" "AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"Jesus, help me!" "AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

"Oh God, I don't wanna die!"

"Jesus, have mercy!"

Finally, with the grace of God and a great brake system, we returned from our trip into space and came to an abrupt stop at the loading dock. I looked back to make sure the woman was still alive. She was, but she stared off—not saying anything for some reason. Her husband helped her out of the vehicle. He timidly said, “You see, that was fun.”

I found it odd how she didn’t respond. She gathered the bag and charged past her husband through the merchandise shop and into the sunlight. I trailed behind, somewhat surprised she had gone mute. As her husband caught up to her, she suddenly and, without warning, swung her bag of souvenirs and hit her husband across the back of his head.

I needed to get to my meeting, but I figured the next few minutes could be incredibly entertaining. I am embarrassed to admit I decided to watch to see what would happen.

What came next—I find disturbing to this day.

From the same mouth that only moments ago had confessed Jesus and called upon Him for mercy came a string of vulgarities that could melt letters off the Space Mountain sign.

“How dare you take me on that ----- ride!”

“Were you trying to ----- kill me?”

“You -----!”

People ducked behind benches, tables, and chairs. Parents grabbed their children and ran for cover.

Okay, the ducking and hiding didn’t happen, but the incident caught everyone’s attention. You could tell it disturbed more than just parents of small children. Her reaction was unbecoming and, to be honest—shocking.

The woman cursed her husband. She cursed Space Mountain. She cursed Disney. She may have even cursed Mickey Mouse. Such a colorful display of language would’ve even made Joe Pesci blush.

The rabid woman walked off with her husband toward Fantasyland. Those in the vicinity gave the couple a wide berth. I shook my head and headed in the direction of my meeting.

My observation of humanity was confirmed:

Some like to ride Space Mountain and others don't.

While the woman's behavior was inexcusable, the truth is—she proved a point. Each one of us approaches the unknown differently. Treading into the unfamiliar is not something many of us enjoy. We do our best to avoid it if at all possible. But when it comes to following Jesus, we must expect Him to take us beyond what is familiar and comfortable.

Every Bible hero that we celebrate today was an ordinary person who chose to say "yes" to God's dare to fulfill His purpose in their life and be fruitful for His glory. All of them were scared at some point and wanted to give up.

But they kept moving forward, and we celebrate them for doing so.

God has an invitation for you and it's going to require a lot from you.

You can go kicking and screaming (I'll tell you more about that in next week's story), or you can accept that God is going to take you on an adventure and strengthen your faith muscles.

Yes, it will be a roller coaster ride, but it will be an adventure that surpasses anything you could ever ask for or even imagine.

This is an excerpt from A Guide to a Life Beyond Imagination by Steven L. Barr, available on Amazon. (c) 2019

*This week we will be talking about "**embracing the dare.**" We will be posting talking points every day on FB and IG. You will also find a follow-up blog and video as well. We will post content around following Jesus wherever He leads for you to use in your CMC: 3•2•1, your CMC: God Conversations, or your particular Kingdom Expression. This content will also be available in French and Spanish.*

You can find this story, resources, and more at CastMemberChurch.com.

