

*Lincoln Cathedral*

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After a day of nervously navigating a foreign country, I finally led my friends to the site I had been hoping to see for days. Striking out for another city on our own in a foreign country was a little daunting, but we made it - the towering spires of the Lincoln Cathedral were standing over me.

I love cathedrals. The idea of a wealthy, corruptible church makes me uncomfortable when I read about it in history books, but seeing the cathedrals the old church built always gives me a sense of peace and awe. I had read that the Lincoln Cathedral was arguably the best Gothic cathedral in Europe, and I was amazed to see it in person.

I dropped back and took time to wander through the nave while my friends moved on. Before I had been in a cathedral, I associated "Gothic" with menacing architecture that bears down on you, striking the fear of God into you. Yet the high columns and stained glass windows curving up didn't make me feel like the church was pressing down on me. Rather, it was pulling me up; my whole body felt lighter as I walked through the prayer rooms, transepts, and halls of Biblical scenes. Prayer came easily to me.

The cathedral was built to demonstrate the glory of God to the worshipers, and I certainly thought I felt that glory when I first wandered in. I could have spent hours marveling at the architecture; I was alone with my thoughts and God. I wish I could have spent the night.

However, when I began to think deeply about the grand beauty and God's glory, something didn't fit.

Humans built the Lincoln Cathedral. Human architects designed it and human artists decorated it - if anything, the cathedral demonstrates their glory. What I thought was the power of God around me was the power of human creativity. This thought didn't unsettle me, though. If this is a cathedral built by humans, then how amazing must a cathedral built by God be! I tried imagining one, but it didn't take long to realize how I'd begin to answer that question.

To me, the whole universe is the cathedral God built. I feel God's presence the most when I learn something incredible about the universe. Nothing excites me more than learning about the fantastical worlds of general relativity and quantum mechanics, worlds I can hardly believe are ours. I've always wondered why God made the universe so complex; science seems to discover new layers of reality in each generation. My best guess is that God wants us to learn and master it all. I intend to accept His offer.

How amazing must a cathedral built by God be? I want to spend my life answering this question and teaching what I learn to others. I want to be a physics professor. I want to discover and teach about the cathedral in which I live.

The Lincoln Cathedral reminded me why I love God and physics.