

A coastal landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, horizontal bands of pink, orange, and purple. In the foreground, a dark, silhouetted cliff rises on the left. The middle ground features a wide beach with several large, dark rocks scattered across it. The ocean is visible in the distance, with waves breaking against the shore. The overall mood is serene and natural.

# The Nature of Life™

*Inspirations From The Natural World*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRUCE W. HEINEMANN

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For all who lean into life with love, compassion and empathy; for those who endeavor to look for the best in others. Above all, for those who bravely seek the truth and strive to live their life as their highest self, for this is the greatest gift you have to give. I dedicate this to you.



“Of Nature itself upon the soul; the sunrise, the haze of autumn, the winter starlight seem interlocutors; the prevailing sense is that of an exposition in poetry; a high discourse, the voice of the speaker seems to breathe as much from the landscape as from his own breast; it is Nature communing with the seer.”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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I wish I could have met Emerson. An exceptionally enlightened soul, he, like no one else who has ever written about the relationship between beauty, nature, and the human spirit; the essence of his writings, as eloquent as they are profound, seem to inevitably find their way to that place where my artistic and spiritual sentiments dwell. To the viewer of nature, he elevates the encounter from simple detached observation; he opens our minds and hearts to the far greater possibilities of spiritual and revelatory experience.

Thus, what is nature but the purest expression of ourselves projected outward, made visible for all the world to see? Henry David Thoreau famously said: “Many men go fishing all their life without realizing it is not fish they are after?” So, what are we after? We seek the transcendent experience of being uninterruptedly connected to source, whatever one may consider that to be; God, Source, The All That Is, The Universe, The Quantum Field. For it is in this field that we may come to know ourselves, our higher relationship to all that exists, but most importantly we seek revelations and insights that reveal meaning and purpose in our life. And, it is in nature and its existential essence, that we may find it.

Perhaps best said by Pablo Picasso:

“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose is to give it away.”

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IMAGINATION INSPIRED

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And what is imagination but our innate ability to see and feel things not currently in physical form? It is a laboratory where, like a child at play, there are no rules, no limitations, no constraints to what we may create in our fertile mind; but perhaps best of all, its a place, where we never have to stop playing as we've been called into dinner.

Its a place, where, if an idea or thought arises within us, we know somehow, that its real, it does exist, for if it wasn't real, how could we even imagine it? And if we hold onto it, embrace it, and thereby give it life, we birth it into reality. Thus, it is with our imaginal thoughts that we form and create our very reality.

And so, our imagination, at last, simply reveals itself in what our lives become.

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“Humanity cannot forget its dreamers and artists; it cannot let their ideals fade and die; it lives in them; it knows them as the realities which it shall one day see and know.”

– *James Allen*



“Life is imagination in action.”

– *Abner Prior*



“Everything you can imagine is real.”  
– *Picasso*



“Imagination ... is more important than knowledge.  
Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”  
– *Einstein*



“The ancestor of every action is a thought.”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*



“Don’t chase an idea, sit quietly in your imagination, and let it find you;  
for creativity flows from imagination and emerges in the moments between thoughts.”

– *Abner Prior*



THROUGH LOVE

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And what is love, but the quivering threads that run through our hearts and souls that bind us, and all life together in oneness? We are conceived and come forth into this world through love's ecstasy. And yet, it is the eternal, unfathomable mystery, its nature and expressions are the legends of artists, poets, authors, composers.

But, in truth, we are all artists in the expression of love. With each day's brushstroke upon our life's canvas, we are led, and often challenged to seek and express the the qualities and aspects of love: joy, kindness, empathy, compassion, honesty, patience, forgiveness, commitment, and the gentle touch of self-love.

Above all, is it not love that makes life worth living?

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“The remedy for pain is happiness and happiness is contagious. So let us be like a sugared doughnut and scatter a dusting of sweetness wherever we go and with whomever we meet.”

– *Abner Prior*



“If you would lift me up, you must be on higher ground.”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*



“Those who wish to sing, always find a song.”

– *Swedish Proverb*



“Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.  
Kindness in giving creates love.”

– *Lao Tzu*



“A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow.”

– *William Shakespeare*



“Yes, there is a Nirvana: it is in leading your sheep to a green pasture,  
and in putting your child to sleep, and in writing the last line of your poem.”

– *Khalil Gibran*



“The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.”

– *Thich Nhat Hanh*



“The shortest distance between two people is a smile, for smiles are the universal language.  
And what are smiles but stars that shine so bright you can see them in the daylight?”

– *Abner Prior*



“A faithful friend is the medicine of life.”

– *Apocrypha*



“A laugh, to be joyous, must flow from a joyous heart, for without kindness, there can be no true joy.”

– *Thomas Carlyle*



“He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge which he, himself, must pass.”

– *Lord Herbert*



“The beauty you see in me is a reflection of you.”

– *Rumi*



“In the light of your love are all things possible.”

– *Abner Prior*



“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are endless.”

– *Mother Teresa*



“Each day is a new opportunity to make a difference, however small; every moment a place in time where your kindness matters. Let your loving presence be the reason someone smiles today.” – *Abner Prior*



“If you want to be more alive, love is the truest health.”

– *Rumi*



“Let not fear, but love, be the painter of our life.”

– *Abner Prior*



WITH GRATITUDE

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So, if it is love that makes life worth living, then surely gratitude must be its fairest blossom?

As such, from gratitude do all other virtues spring forth and manifest.

Gratitude, at its essence is a higher consciousness way of being in the world.

Being grateful for all we have, even if we lack things we may wish for, imbues us with a quiet,  
ever expanding power of greater manifestation

In being grateful for all our blessings, we open ourselves up to the free flow of more abundance.

For gratitude attracts and brings to us more of what we want. As such, gratitude is both  
prayerful thanks and a request.

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“The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don’t tell you what to see.”

– *Alexandra K. Trenfor*



“Love and Gratitude are the fairest blossoms which spring from the soul.”

– *Henry Ward Beecher*



“When life gives you a hundred reasons to cry, show life that you have a thousand reasons to smile.”

– *Author Unknown*



“But what is happiness except the simple harmony between a man and the life he leads.”

– *Albert Camus*



“When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.”

– *Rumi*



“Every man in his lifetime needs to thank his faults.”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*



“He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.”

– *Epictetus*



“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.”

– *Cicero*



IN BELIEF AND FAITH

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In the garden of life, it is not blind faith, but “knowing faith” . . . that the seed, planted in the soil, emerges forth into the light of day. And likewise, our desires, planted with the seed of our imagination, are always growing into their ultimate manifest form if we would simply feed them with the nourishment of our faith and belief.

Thus, it is the profound universal power of belief veiled in faith that transforms our imaginings and desires into manifest reality. Like the moon, we rarely see faith, yet it moves the tides of our life.

For it is doubt that makes the mountain that faith can move.

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““The cave you dare to enter holds the treasure you seek.”

– *Joseph Campbell*



“I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.”

– *Louisa May Alcott*



“When we can see opportunities where others only see difficulties and failure, we are nourished and grow.  
Let vision, imagination, and belief, be our trusted guide.”

– *Abner Prior*



“Nothing can prevent your picture from coming into concrete form except the same power which gave it birth.”

– *Genevieve Behrend*



“It does not take many words to tell the truth.”

– *Chief Joseph*



“Adversity introduces a man to himself.”

– *Albert Einstein*



“We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

– *Joseph Campbell*



“Fear and courage are brothers.”

– *Proverb*



“Persistence is like a river; it may ebb and flow, but it never stops.”

– *Abner Prior*



“Let us be like a bird for a moment, perched on a frail branch when she sings;  
Though she feels it bend, yet she sings her songs. Knowing that she has wings.”

– *Victor Hugo*



“You shall be free indeed when your days are not without a care, nor your nights without a want and a grief,  
but rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound.”

– *Kahlil Gibran*



# ON ENLIGHTENMENT

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Enlightenment represents a heightened state of conscious awareness as the recognition of our true self, and the nature of our world.

Enlightenment is a greater awareness of our connection to and place in the larger world, for it is our very nature. Like trees in a forest, flowers in the garden, or a lion cub daring to explore its surroundings further and further from its mother, all life is meant to expand, grow, and express the fullness of its essence.

As such, enlightenment is our driving life force,  
for life that is not growing is life that is dying.

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“Quiet the mind and the soul will speak.” – *Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati*



“The things you think about determine the quality of your mind.  
Your soul takes on the color of your thoughts.” – *Marcus Aurelius*



“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

– *Heraclitus*



“Only that day dawns to which we are awake.”

– *Henry David Thoreau*



“In healing, the wisdom we acquire becomes our medicine.”

– *Abner Prior*



“There is no way to happiness, happiness is the way.”

– *Thich Nhat Hanh*



“Your vision will become only when you look into your heart.  
Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.”

– *Carl Jung*



“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.”

– *Robert Louis Stevenson*



“He who lives in harmony with himself, lives in harmony with the universe.”

– *Marcus Aurelius*



“Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.”

– *Mark Twain*



“Knowledge is learning something new every day. Wisdom is letting go of something every day.”

– *Zen Proverb*



“The Master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.” – *Zen Buddhist Text*



“In the end, only three things matter: How much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you.” – *Buddha*



“There is one thing alone that stands the brunt of life throughout its course: A Quiet Conscience.”

– *Euripides*



“If you are depressed you are living in the past. If you are anxious you are living in the future.  
If you are at peace you are living in the present.” – *Lao Tzu*



“A problem cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness in which it was created.”

– *Albert Einstein*



“To see the invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common.”

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*



WHAT THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED PASSES BY

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The road less traveled represents the journey of living our life as our authentic self, a statement of who we really are. We often hear that the greatest regret of people at the end of their lives is that they didn't live their life as they wanted, but in a manner in which others around expected them to.

Having a clear vision for our life inevitably includes fear and doubt along the way to its fulfillment.

The road may be not always be visible, often shrouded in the fog of uncertainty.

But, it is in these moments that offer us the opportunity to find the courage to stay the course, for it is in moments of fear and doubt that we not only find our courage, but the essence of who we are.

It is on the road less traveled that we proclaim at its zenith, I am the very best me there is!

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“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice;  
it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

– *William Jennings Bryan*



“One day your life will pass before your eyes. Make sure its worth watching.”

– *Author Unknown*



“What is the road less traveled... but our own unique and authentic life journey?  
When we live our lives as our true selves, we are free and unencumbered.”

– *Abner Prior*



“May our courage to proclaim who we are speak like the voice of the river.”

– *Abner Prior*



“There are two days that are the most important in a person’s life;  
The day they are born and the day they figure out why.” – *Mark Twain*



“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover.” – *Mark Twain*



“No one ever became great by imitation.”  
– *Samuel Johnson*



“Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace.”

– *Amelia Earhart*



“Failure is simply success in progress... for the only mistakes in life are the lessons not learned.”

– *Albert Einstein*



“Truth is such a rare thing, it is delightful to tell it.”

– *Emily Dickinson*



“If your dreams aren’t strong enough, you may end up working for somebody else’s.”

– *Abner Prior*



“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music.”

– *Nietzsche*



“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

– *Mahatma Gandhi*



“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”

– *Oscar Wilde*



“Our lives seldom manifest beyond the reach of our dreams.”

– *Abner Prior*



“If you can see your path clearly in front of you, its probably somebody else’s.”

– *Joseph Campbell*

# About Bruce W. Heinemann

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Bruce W. Heinemann is a fine art photographer, writer, publisher, and multimedia artist. For over 30 years I have created corporate branded calendars and various print collateral pieces, and the creator and publisher of 8 books, including, *The Nature of Wisdom*, a coffee table book of my images and quotes, co-published with Barnes and Noble, that have found their way into countless hospitals, healthcare facilities, and thousands of homes and offices. In addition, for many years in the 1990's, I presented live concerts which included my solo classical/jazz trumpet solo performance with the projection of my images on stage to the theme of The Art of Nature. In 1992, he published his first book: *The Art of Nature: Reflections on the Grand Design*. In 1997, as a co-producer and cinematographer, he released a music video based on the book, and narrated by Emmy-winning actor, Tom Skerrett. It went on to win a Gold Award at the 1997 Houston International Film Fest. and was syndicated to over 147 PBS stations around the country for broadcast.



At the very dangerous age of 49, in 2001, I was diagnosed and had surgery for prostate cancer. That frightening and bewildering experience led me to put down my trumpet and embark upon a lifelong journey of healing and understanding the greater dimensions of human experience and the deeper meaning and possibilities our lives present.

After decades of employing the profound power of images, words, and music in the realm of marketing and branding for corporate clients and general audiences, this personal health challenge has led me to apply my multimedia talents in these art forms to tell the story of my own journey of healing and the inevitable expansion of higher awareness.

It is from this journey that my story was born. Please note that author, Abner Prior, who will be quoted throughout this site, is my pen name.

I have a story to tell, and you, too, have a story to tell. As such, its is my sincerest hope that in some way this project may not only inform and expand your awareness about your own life's journey and the pursuit of your own creative endeavors, but perhaps even in some small way inspire that journey as well.

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