

HIS

Nature

For great is your love, reaching
to the heavens; your faithfulness
reaches to the skies.

PSALM 57:10

TRUSTING LOVE

The many wonderful and sometimes bizarre organisms of this world give us a glimpse into the mind and heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, if we are willing to study them. He is the Creator of all things (Hebrews 1), and his glory is readily visible through the things he creates.

The acorn barnacle is one animal among many that proclaims God's character in a special way. It is a shrimplike creature that has the unusual habit of gluing its head to a rock, boat, or offshore piling along the seacoast. It then spends the rest of its life—upside down with its “feathered” legs sticking straight up—patiently waiting for the tide to bring it food and oxygen. There are more than 1,200 species of barnacles—and one quarter of the species live in the areas between high and low tide. Different barnacle species live together in tight quarters, yet each prefers to live a very precise distance from high or low tide levels. These shore-living barnacles are well suited to be out of the water for some period. Their bodies are



Acorn Barnacle

covered with plates—two of which slide across their apertures (mouths) to close them off when the tide goes out—for protection and to keep them moist.

Why would God put any of his creations at such a disadvantage? By permanently sealing its body to a shoreline (with the strongest natural adhesive known), the acorn barnacle has unknowingly placed itself in a position of trust few thinking humans would ever do.

Jesus works through the odd habits of the barnacle to uniquely demonstrate his *incredible faithfulness*. Using the

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gravity of the moon, almost one-quarter of a million miles away, the Lord God creates tides that bathe the waiting barnacles. If Christ Jesus were to nudge the moon ever so slightly from its present orbit around the earth, these tides would drastically change, and many shoreline animals would perish.

Christ is faithful to his creation because *it is in his nature to be faithful*. And his consistency does not depend on our faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13). If our Lord Jesus is willing to move an ocean for a lowly creature like the acorn barnacle, consider what he will do for those made in his image.

DIGGING DEEPER

For a hungry barnacle, the rim of a baleen whale's blowhole isn't a terrible place to be. The whale feeds by swimming through clouds of plankton—and the barnacle gets free table service at the same time. One full-grown humpback whale can be host to almost 1,000 pounds of barnacles. That may sound like a lot, but to an 80,000 pound whale, it's like the difference between summer and winter clothes to a human.

Each species of whale has its own different species of barnacles that live on its skin. Since barnacles begin their lives as larvae—tiny, shell-less swimmers—how do the larvae find their whale?

Biologists don't know how, exactly. It appears that when the right whale comes along, there is a chemical signal that encourages the larvae to hop on. Yet even when they find the proper whale, the larvae are not done looking. Like a home buyer, a barnacle knows that location makes all the difference. Barnacles prefer to be in a spot where the flow of water is constant, such as near the whale's head or fins. So instead of settling down on a whale wherever they land, the larvae use their front antennae to "walk" around the whale to find the best spot—a journey that may take days and days. It's no easy stroll for a tiny larva. If a larva were the size of a human, its whale walk would be at least twenty miles long.

Biologists think the barnacles help the whales in at least one way. Male humpbacks fight over females by ramming and slapping at each other during mating season. It has been suggested that a coating of sharp barnacles may be helpful—sort of like an aquatic version of brass knuckles for the combative males.

Customer service/subscription number: 1-800-998-0737.
Published by Jim Kraus, designed by Mary Pappas, edited by R.J. Destree. Copyright © 2011 HIS NATURE, issue 15.
His Nature is published monthly by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 351 Executive Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188, in partnership with the ministry of *His Creation*, www.hiscreation.com.
Printed in the USA. Subscription \$12 per month per 100 copies. Canada: \$14 per 100 per month. Cover photo © Greg Amptman/Dreamstime. All rights reserved.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *His Nature*, Subscription Services, P.O. Box 464, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

I CORINTHIANS 2:9