

The Divine Romancer

God loves to love us—and to surprise us with moments that let us see His love like never before ❌

In 2008, I relocated to Houston for a couple years to help serve in a local church ministry. I was stoked to get a Texas license plate because it had a space shuttle on it in the upper-right corner. I was a big, but secretive, fan of NASA. Because I am a major nerd about it I didn't talk about it much. I guess I was a little embarrassed.

While in Houston, I met the Virts family. And to my amazement, Terry (the father) was an astronaut with NASA. He and his family would come to my shows around the Houston area. It was truly an honor to know them. I eventually moved back to Nashville, Tenn., and had to turn in my cool license plate, but I kept in touch with the Virtses.

When Terry was chosen to pilot *Endeavor* for one of the final flights of the shuttle program, it was a huge honor. It would be his first time in space. You can imagine my excitement when I was invited to watch the February 2010 launch from Cape Canaveral, Fla., at the Kennedy Space Center. I'd always wanted to see a launch, but I never dreamed I would know someone onboard. It was awe-inspiring to witness *Endeavor* lighting up the night sky as it rocketed toward the heavens.

At the launch, I learned a lot about crew traditions. One is that everybody at NASA eats baked beans immediately after a successful launch! Another one—it's less unusual—is that the shuttle crew customarily wakes up with a song every morning. I didn't learn about this one until that evening as I was about to board a plane. Terry's wife, Stacey, texted me: "If you can get on the Internet, something really cool is about to happen."

To my surprise, the song selected for *Endeavor's* first morning in space was my own "Give Me Your Eyes." I heard it played as I watched live on NASA TV. Terry signed on, said hello to his family and then added, "What a great song by Brandon Heath as I look out at the ocean below and the beautiful earth." Oh yeah, I cried right there in the terminal. I can easily say it was the coolest day of my life.

That night over dinner, my friend Thad and I recounted the day. I was still absolutely buzzing from how cool it was that somehow my music and lifelong love of space had collided. Then Thad said something I'll never forget: "Isn't it just like God to *romance* you like that?" And I looked at him as a noodle slid from my mouth—"What do you mean?"

"Well, you say you never told anybody how much you loved space," he answered. "But God knew all along, so He made this happen for you." And it hit me. Of course He did! He loves me greater and more perfectly than anyone I've ever known.

John Eldredge's *The Journey of Desire* talks about how God pays attention to our dreams and desires. If there was ever evidence in my life that God pays attention and honors my deepest desires, it had just been revealed. God loves us so, and it's in a greater and more perfect way than we can fathom. It may sound funny, but now I think about that almost daily. In fact, this powerful revelation even inspired several songs on my new album, *Leaving Eden*, specifically "Your Love" and "As Long As I'm Here."

It's truly life-changing to know that God is paying attention. It makes me pay attention for those little moments when He wants me to get a better picture of His great love. His love is way more surprising and way more adventurous than I ever realized. How cool He was to use a rocket to space to show me.

Brandon Heath is a singer-songwriter and the Gospel Music Association's Male Vocalist of the Year for 2009-2010. His new album, *Leaving Eden*, released in January.