

Find What God Has Called You to Be

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Earlier this month, my wife and I visited Yellowstone and Grand Tetons National Parks. To the start the trip there are 54 miles of mostly cornfield to the Ohio-Indiana border. Then there are 162 miles of Indiana cornfield, followed by 222 miles of Illinois cornfields. That gets us to the Mississippi River, but there are still 299 miles of Iowa cornfields just to get to Nebraska, which has another 472 miles of cornfields to cross. Finally, after more than 1200 miles of mostly cornfields we get to Wyoming, only to discover that there is about 300 miles of wilderness to cross before finally arriving at our destination. 1500 miles of cornfields and wilderness. What a vacation!

So why drive three days through cornfields and along busy interstate highways? To reach one of the most beautiful and unusual places on earth. To walk up Cascade Canyon and view the mighty Teton Mountains. To see a geyser erupt 200 feet into the air. To camp where elk mill around your tent at night. To swim in a cold mountain stream that is warmed by Boiling River.

The long trip was worthwhile because of the destination at the end. The trouble many people have in life is that while they may have lofty goals, they become discouraged by the long trip and give up too soon. They really want to get out of debt and be financially independent, but the road of turning off cable TV, forgoing the latest electronic games, eating out less, and making other sacrifices seems too costly. They want to earn a degree, but studying gets pushed out by all the things they would rather do. They realize they are out of shape and ruining their health, but being a coach potato and eating delicious desserts is just too comfortable to pass up. A stable home and marriage seems like a noble goal until they realize it will require them to give up some of their own interests and focus on their spouse. In short, the 1500 miles of cornfields and wilderness seems like too high a price to pay for something so far away.

Jesus encourages us to focus not only on what is at hand, but even more importantly on what will be. We are not only to prepare for eternity, but also for the present life. God has high goals for each one of us. However, we will never reach those goals unless we are willing to make sacrifices, work hard, and persevere in difficult times.

One of our favorite activities at Yellowstone was to view the geysers. Most tourists head straight for Old Faithful because it is the most reliable geyser in the park, erupting in just over an hour, plus or minus a few minutes. Then they rush off to try to see the rest of the park. The problem is that by rushing to see everything they usually miss what is truly spectacular. The best geysers only go off a few times each day. They cannot be predicted in less than a four-hour window. The only way to be sure of seeing them is to sit for a while. Many people take one look, see only an empty hole, and hurry on. What they do not realize is that if they would just wait an hour or so they would likely see an eruption that makes Old Faithful look small. It is worth the wait.

Life is like that. People rush along, trying to get their kids into every activity, running after every fad, and trying to accumulate the newest gadget. In an effort to live in the nicest house, some people never have time to enjoy it. Families are torn apart, debt piles up, and in the end no one is impressed. Concerning our efforts to keep pace with our neighbors, the writer of Ecclesiastes in the Bible wrote, *"And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind."*

God has planned good things for each one of us. My trip to Yellowstone reminded me that two obstacles to reaching his plan are lack of discipline and a busy schedule that forces out what really matters. That is why attending a church is so important. Through prayer, meditation, biblical application and mutual encouragement we can find strength to become what God has called us to be.