Be Thou My Vision…

Reflection by Elia King, Estes Park, CO

“When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.” —Matthew 17:8

My wife is a runner. She has run three full marathons and two half marathons. Not long after we were married, she convinced me that it would be “fun” to join her in training for her next big race. So I went out and bought all of the gear that I thought I’d need to be a successful runner. After all, I wanted to prove that I was a force to be reckoned with on the course.

But during run after run, she showed incredible patience with me as I found one way or another to demonstrate that I was completely incapable as a runner. I struggled to find a comfortable pace. My sides ached. My lungs burned. My legs itched. I was too hot. I was too cold. I was thirsty. I drank too much water. My joints ached. The common theme for me (usually accompanied by much whining) was that I struggled to keep going when things got difficult.

Then during one run, Dena shared a secret with me. She said that many successful runners, at least when they’re starting out, will pick a point in the distance and zero in on that point. Keeping their eyes on a specific goal not only gives them something to focus on, but it also helps to minimize other distractions while they run.

I followed her advice and before I knew it, I was finishing my first half-marathon in Dallas.
have since run another half in San Antonio, and have gone into semi-retirement, only running for fun or if being chased by a bear.

My relatively short running career reminds me of how we view our faith journey sometimes. And if I’m really honest, sometimes it’s easy to get frustrated with the whole exercise. We disagree with the way our friends interpret the Bible. We feel disappointed or let down by leadership. We’re hurt by people who are supposed to represent God. We start to feel too busy. We start to suspect one another of secret agendas. We tire of the tension between “grace” and “truth,” or the debate between faith and science. It’s no wonder that so many people are frustrated to the point of abandoning their faith communities altogether.

But then I remember Dena’s advice, and it reminds me of a song we sing with our church family in Boulder on a regular basis. The words might be familiar to you as well:

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

The words to this hymn are so familiar to some of us that we could sing them in our sleep. But to really live them out might be life-changing — it could even change the world! But with so many things clamoring for our attention, it’s really tough sometimes to imagine what it might be like to follow Jesus with that kind of singular vision.

Maybe that kind of faith is a lot like being a great runner. It requires patience, practice, and dedication to keeping our eyes fixed only on Jesus.

Recalibrate

1. What are the things that make you want to give up on your faith journey?  
2. Where do you find strength to keep going?  
3. What is one area of your life where you feel like you need to trust Jesus more?

Feel free to send thoughts or comments to Elia King.
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