

Staff Work

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Mountain Top Vistas

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Mountain Top Vistas

Abstract

"I feel most alive and near to God after I've spent and given of myself."

Posting about the rewards that come from things that require time and energy from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/mountain-top-vistas/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Mountain Top Vistas

 [all in allthings.org/mountain-top-vistas/](https://allthings.org/mountain-top-vistas/)

Derek Buteyn

Last week, my wife and I set out on a four day backpacking trip in the mountains of Colorado. We are by no means outdoor experts, yet we do enjoy traveling and trying new things. After completing the loop and returning to the trailhead, we added our trip to the list of “hardest things we’ve ever done,” but also to the list of “most enjoyable things we’ve ever done.” Every turn in the trail presented an exciting new scene; the top of every mountain pass provided a view grander than the previous. Through the sore muscles, rainy weather, and low altitude breathing, we experienced creation and connected with God; we felt truly alive.

Reflecting on what made our vacation enjoyable, I realized that it was not simply the beauty of the Colorado backcountry; rather, the effort required and difficulty involved gave value and provided worth to our experience. My appreciation for the mountain top vistas was heightened by the energy I spent simply to get to the top.

I feel most alive and near to God after I’ve spent and given of myself— physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

It seems to go against the grain to engage in an activity that requires us to expend effort on our part. Pretty much all of our technology is geared towards making our lives simpler and more convenient. Why should I write a letter when I can text someone? Why bike to the grocery store when I can drive? How much easier is it to binge watch a season of *The Office* on Netflix than to train for a 5k?

And yet, while the former may fulfill our desire for instant gratification, the latter provides us a greater reward. *“A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”* (Eccl 2:24,25)

Perhaps we’re not the best at allowing our hearts to sing. I think it’s a fair assessment to say that we get completely caught up in the business of our day to day lives, and don’t take the opportunity to step back and simply revel in the abundance and beauty of the Creator. For myself, dedicating myself to something that requires time and energy and commitment draws me into deeper fellowship with the Father.

Physically, this simply can look like taking the time to prepare food well – gathering fresh ingredients, putting them together, and creating a delicious meal. It takes some work, but seeing the colors of the meal, tasting every different flavor, sharing that meal with family and friends – something so simple gives such enjoyment with some time and effort. The same is true in recreation. I feel completely alive as I finish a hard run or long bike ride, although through the process I am drained of my strength. I’ve had to learn to embrace these moments, to find the goodness of the Creator in them, and to allow my heart to sing.

Emotionally and spiritually, my relationships and communities make me feel alive – particularly through the struggle and difficulty. We know that relationships take work; no person enters a meaningful relationship and never experiences obstacles or bumps in the road. It’s possible that there is nothing more difficult and requires more energy than investing in an intimate relationship, but there also nothing more joy-filling and life-giving. I look back on the few years I’ve been married, and I can see how my wife and I couldn’t have experienced the same joy in our relationship without walking on narrow roads and through valleys together. In those times of reflection I see God’s hand at work, knowing that the Father himself shapes and grows us, and I feel completely alive, because I’m filled with His goodness. We continually struggle and

labor to climb towards Him, but our hearts sing through the process.

Whether the mountain I'm climbing is literal or metaphorical, I embrace the time and energy and inconvenience, because through the process I'm refreshed and renewed, and find life and joy in God.