

# Valley Views



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Recently Jean and I made a trip to the Grand Canyon in Arizona along with some others of her family. It was truly a remarkable time. After traveling across country by train, we arrived at the Grand Canyon National Park on Friday around noon and left mid-afternoon on Sunday. We watched a sunset and a sunrise and traveled nearly the length of the park to observe the canyon from various locations. What was really amazing is how the view and experience of the canyon changed from each location, and yet, we only saw a tiny portion of the 277 miles.



On one of the buses that took us along the rim, we got to talk with the driver. I commented to him that I had heard that the average person spends a total of 20 minutes at the Grand Canyon. He said that depending upon the age group that he could reduce that down to less than five minutes. He said that he has watched people get out of their car, jump over a railing, take a few pictures and then hop back in their car and drive off, thinking they had seen the Grand Canyon.

I was completely dumfounded by that, but then I thought more about it and realized that it is not much different than anything else. You only get out of things what you put into them. The same is true for our spiritual lives. How do we approach our spiritual lives and our experience of the holy? Are we like those who take a few pictures at the Grand Canyon or do we spend days exploring, look at it from different vistas, visiting it again and again seeking to take in as much as we can?

To be sure the Grand Canyon is huge, magnificent, and awe inspiring. Could we not approach God the same way and let ourselves be wowed by a sense of God's presence? Sure, God is not visible like the canyon, but God wants to be known by you and me just the same and he has provided ways for that to happen, through spiritual practices that work to transform us.

Colossians 3 speaks to us about this process of transformation that occurs as we allow ourselves to seek and to take off the old self and put on the new. Verses 9&10 tell us this, "...since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." So, what you focus on and spend time with has an effect on you. God does too. He wants to have a transformative effect on you, because it is through it that you are made new and able to know him, enjoy him, and share him.

On the last day I was there, I picked a spot and I sat at the edge for over an hour and just looked out at the expanse before me. I just soaked it all in and there I had a conversation with God. I had a notebook in hand and wrote down what I wanted to say. It was a spiritual experience, one that we were made to have.

I say this because at our core we are spiritual beings, we were made for eternity. Author and Pastor Dallas Willard once remarked that we are unceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in God's great kingdom. He was so right. We were made for more and God is bigger than the box we put him in. How are you being renewed in knowledge in the image of your creator? The knowledge spoken of here is not textbook knowledge, not about what a verse means, it is experiential, it's about your experience of the holy and of the call upon your soul to respond.

So, are you being renewed? If you aren't, chances are that your spiritual life and the rest of you is stagnate, no new life flowing in, and no experience of the holy to give you life, joy, and love.

The good thing is you don't need to go to the Grand Canyon; you could just sit on your porch and take in nature around you and talk to God or ask God to speak to you through it. Or contemplate the love of God as you observe children playing. You could also pray through a psalm that speaks of the wonder of God's steadfast love and mercy, or that praises God for the great things he has done. There are endless ways to experience the wonder of who God is and each of them are like mountain or canyon vistas that allow a new look from a different perspective.

Take time to seek him, take time enjoy his presence.



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