

# LIFE'S RUNNING WATER

First Person Essay

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## Life's Running Water

It's a calm, meandering river that runs through the heart of a wilderness that could make even a hermit feel secluded. A breeze that carries the scent of the honeysuckle blooming in the nearby fields breaks the rather stagnant air and rejuvenates the dancing leaves as they skip over the water. A fish with an uncanny jumping ability leaps high above the oxygen-filled water and snatches one of the many multi-colored dragonflies traveling over the water. This place of comfort, where you can hear the earth breathe, is where I like to spend my summer afternoons. It's a place where your imagination can wander, and you can find yourself in the most unexpected ways.

As long as I can remember, I have loved the outdoors. I love to fish, hunt, hike, bike, walk, and just watch. As my love for the outdoors has matured, my favorite place to pass time has quickly become the river. Time and time again, I remember events that I will never lose down on the river. Although countless experiences in the wilderness have had an impact on my life, I would like to magnify one experience- a day on the river that I will forever remember and be affected by.

While the cool water gently ran through my legs, as though I was being held captive by something within the realm of nature, I ever-so-carefully went back to three o'clock and up towards eleven. I learned this technique for fly fishing from my dad when I was just a little boy. As the fly touched the water, a fish immediately and violently attacked the lure. I looked around as I reeled in my catch, and I realized what was happening all around me. Nature was at work in full bloom- in beauty and reality. There wasn't a cloud in the sky; the fish were biting; the flowers speckled the countryside in

various shades of brilliant colors, and a doe and fawn drank from the river upstream.

Then, as I glanced around at nature's wonders, I heard a scream.

A bald eagle soared down into the water and snatched a fish just a couple hundred feet away. Quickly, it was joined by two not-so-friendly red tail hawks that began terrorizing the bird for an easy meal. Just as the bird looked as though it would have to give up, it dropped the fish and went after the two pestering hawks with both claws. The two hawks quickly retreated with screams of defeat as the eagle quickly gathered its aggression and gracefully returned to the fallen fish on the hillside. With a quick burst, the eagle set forth down the river to his nest on a sun bathed cliff side.

This sighting, along with all the others, began to materialize in my mind. As I stood there alone in the stream, I observed the pure beauty of the earth. God gave me the privilege of taking in this scene, but it would not have mattered if anyone was there to see it or not; God is so awesome that he can't help but express beauty. The following hour proved to be a changing moment in my life. It had a spiritual effect that has significantly affected my relationship with God. I realized that the power of a God that can afford to create beauty when it might never be observed by the human eye is more pure and sincere than any other thing in the world. I was already a Christian at the time, but I had never experienced God in such a real way as I did in those moments. To this day I can still remember that picturesque scene of beauty, and to cap it off, the symbol of a "nation under God" warding off the powers of those who try to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

It's amazing that a symbolic bird can be of such power in one's mind, but as that eagle flew high and above the other powers that it faced, I could only think of how

blessed we are to live in a nation like ours today. It is a place where we can realize the beauty of God and write a paper about it. It's where we don't have to be afraid of our beliefs and can give credit to the proper Authority. Not only did God create beauty in the world, but He also created justice to those who serve. He created a way to soar above the rest and to conquer the powers that want to rob us of what we are worth. He gave us a second chance to turn from our evil ways and desires and seek a life that can be as beautiful as the world in which we live.

The thoughts and ideas that came to my mind in those moments of awe are unexplainable in words or actions. To be there was the only way to encounter His presence. In fact, I almost even forgot about the fish that struggled at the end of my line to free itself. The fish hung, suspended in the air by my line, turning, twisting and wiggling, trying to remove itself from the oppression it was currently under. Even such a scene of anguish and suffering could not taint that surreal moment. In fact, that very detail highlighted the splendor of life. The fish didn't recognize the beauty that was all around it. It was too concerned with its health, well-being and treatment and not with the beauty where it was living.

As humans do we sometimes struggle for our own gains, our own health, and our own prosperity, and not realize the beauty we live in? Do we "hook" ourselves on ways of this world which captivate our lives and rule our thought process? Do we take for granted the most merciful thing we have- beauty in our darkness? I have realized that the beauty was not only present in the moment, but in my life- in every situation. The only way it can be hidden is through my own selfish desires.

To this day, I can still recall that event as one of the most life-shaping moments of my life. It was a time away from the music, away from the pastors, away from the church, in the real world, where I experienced God in a way that was almost tangible. That moment still molds who I am and what I will be. I learned that God's beauty is too amazing to not take advantage of. Why not let it change everything?

The day grew on and nature kept ticking, as precise as a grandfather clock, with a loud ring every once in a while. The long grass of the field swayed as dusk approached and the animals of nighttime began their evening decent. I could hear the howl of coyotes on the mountainside, just getting ready to start their nighttime serenade. In the darkness I crept with slow trudging movements towards my car. My day was over... but not before He had changed everything.