

ON THE PATHWAY OF LIFE

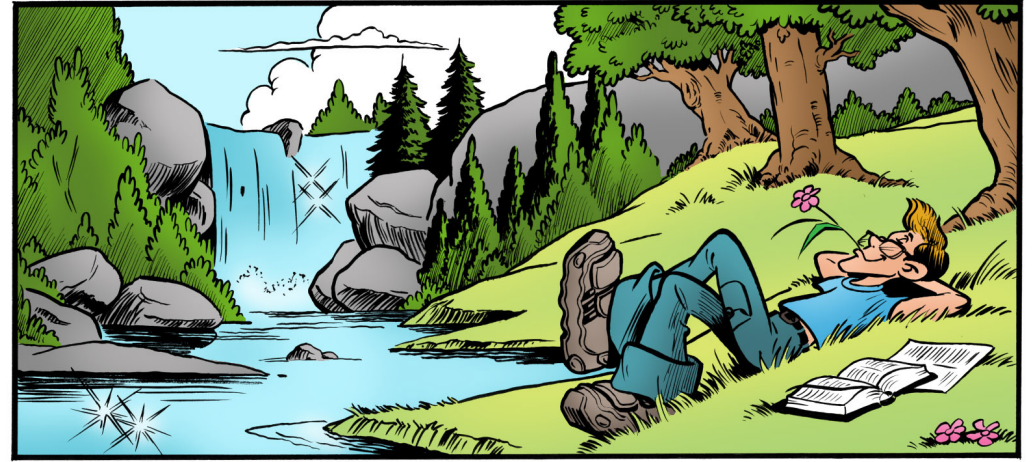
THE PATHWAY OF LIFE LEADS THROUGH MANY LANDS AND PLACES. IN SOME PLACES THE LAND IS FLAT, AND THE PATH IS EASY TO FOLLOW BECAUSE IT IS LONG AND STRAIGHT. SOMETIMES IT MIGHT EVEN SEEM SO EASY THAT IT'S A BIT BORING. THAT'S A TIME WHEN YOU HAVE TO RUN THE RACE OF LIFE WITH ENDURANCE, AND STICK WITH IT EVEN IF IT SEEMS TEDIOUS.

THEN THERE ARE OTHER TIMES WHEN THIS TRAIL LEADS OVER A MOUNTAIN THAT SEEMS TO HAVE RISEN UP OUT OF NOWHERE TO STAND IN YOUR WAY. YOU LOOK TO SEE IF YOU COULD MAKE A LONG DETOUR AND GO AROUND IT, BUT THAT IS NOT WHERE THE TRAIL LEADS. INSTEAD, THE TRAIL TAKES YOU RIGHT UP THAT MOUNTAIN, AND YOU CRINGE AS YOU LOOK AHEAD, THINKING, *IS THAT WHERE I HAVE TO GO?*



This path is getting boring.





IN THOSE TIMES, WHEN YOU ARE FACED WITH WHAT SEEM LIKE DAUNTING ENCOUNTERS IN YOUR LIFE, YOU MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO WONDER IF YOU ARE STILL ON THE RIGHT PATH. YOU CAN ALWAYS BE CERTAIN THAT JESUS IS THERE WITH YOU, NO MATTER WHAT CHALLENGE IS AHEAD. HE LEADS THE WAY, TELLING YOU THAT YOU CAN MAKE IT, THAT YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES, THAT YOU SIMPLY NEED TO KEEP PUTTING ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER UNTIL YOU REACH THE TOP.

BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'RE AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN. YOU CAN LOOK BACK DOWN OVER THE TRAIL YOU HAVE COME ALONG AND CAN BE PLEASED. YOU ACTUALLY MADE IT!

THE PATHWAY OF LIFE BETWEEN CHALLENGES OFTEN GOES ON EASILY FOR A WHILE; EVEN WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER SOME DIFFICULTY OR CHALLENGE, THAT TIME DOESN'T GO ON INDEFINITELY—THERE ARE LULLS WHEN THINGS SEEM TO BE GOING PRETTY GOOD. THAT'S LIKE THE EASIER PART OF GOING DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN PATH. JUST BECAUSE IT IS EASY AND YOU ARE GOING DOWN DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE NOT MAKING PROGRESS. YOU MAY BE GOING DOWN, BUT YOU ARE NOT GOING *BACK* DOWN, YOU ARE GOING *FORWARD* DOWN. THIS IS THE PART OF THE PATH THAT LEADS YOU FROM ONE MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE TO THE NEXT.

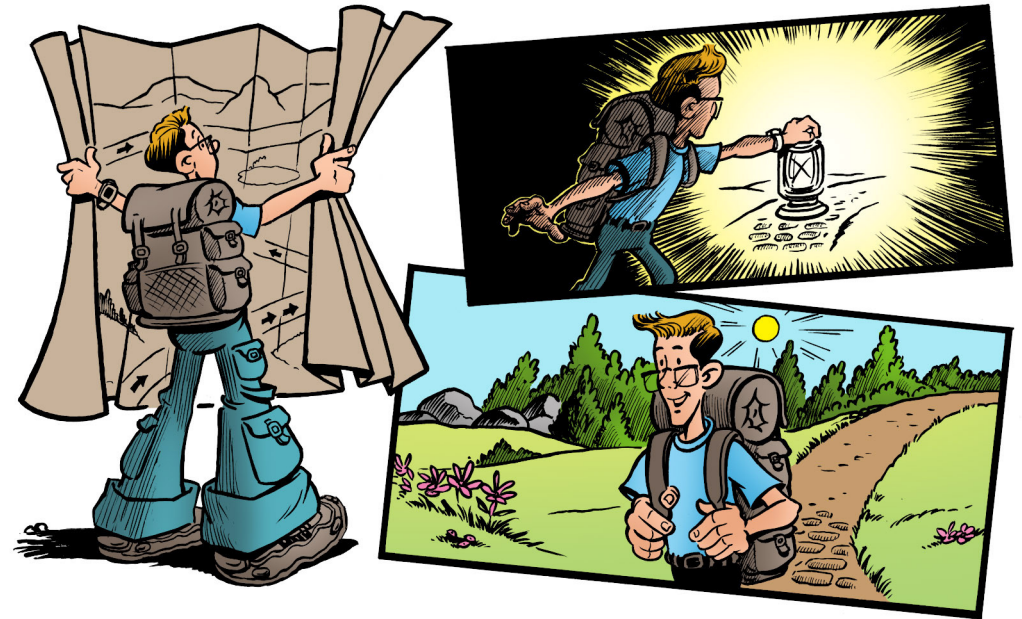




OF COURSE, THERE ARE SOME TIMES WHEN THERE SEEMS TO BE ONE CHALLENGE AFTER ANOTHER, WHEN IT SEEMS YOU BARELY HAVE GOTTEN TO THE TOP OF ONE MOUNTAIN TO FIND IT'S ONLY A FOOTHILL TO AN EVEN BIGGER MOUNTAIN YOU MUST CLIMB. THERE'S NOT THAT TIME OF REST ALONG THE PATH LIKE YOU HAD WITH SOME OF THE SMALLER MOUNTAINS. BUT JUST AS BEFORE, JESUS WILL BE WITH YOU. HE WILL WALK BESIDE YOU, HOLD YOUR HAND, AND EVEN CARRY YOU WHEN YOU'RE TOO WEARY TO WALK ANY FURTHER. THOSE ARE LIKE THE TIMES WHEN YOU CAN FIND PERFECT PEACE BECAUSE YOU ARE DEPENDING ON AND TRUSTING IN JESUS TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE CHALLENGE.²

THE MOUNTAINS OF LIFE ARE LIKE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS YOU ARE GROWING UP AND MATURING, SUCH AS LEARNING A NEW SKILL SET, OVERCOMING NEGATIVE HABITS, OR LEARNING TO ADAPT TO A NEW ENVIRONMENT. THOSE CHALLENGES USUALLY TAKE TIME AND EFFORT, BUT IF YOU PERSEVERE, THEN YOU COME THROUGH THEM WITH SUCCESS.

THE PATH OF LIFE WITH ITS TWISTS AND TURNS AND ITS UPS AND DOWNS HELPS TO DEFINE WHO YOU ARE. THE CHALLENGES SET BEFORE YOU SHAPE YOUR CHARACTER AND ARE A CHANCE FOR YOU TO DRAW CLOSER TO JESUS AND GROW MORE CONFIDENT IN THE SKILLS AND GIFTS HE'S GIVEN YOU. AND DURING THOSE DIFFICULT AND DARK TIMES ON THE PATH, REMEMBER TO USE THE LAMP OF GOD'S WORD TO GUIDE YOU AND ILLUMINATE THE PATH BEFORE YOU.



NO MATTER WHERE THE PATH OF LIFE LEADS, JESUS WALKS BESIDE YOU.

Footnotes:

¹ See Hebrews 12:1.

² See Isaiah 26:3.



S&S link: Character Building: Personal Responsibility: Perseverance-2a

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