

The River

Contributed by Joshua & Margie Boswell

The bike trail gently hugs the small river as it winds through Utah Valley.

The river is not large, but, like most rivers, it is constantly changing. Perhaps that is why we love rivers so much. Perhaps that is the draw that pulls humans from every walk of life, all over the world, to rivers.

Consistently flowing, yet always changing.

Stable, sure, steady, but always moving.

The family had spent the better part of the afternoon riding down that long winding bike trail. I have a toddler seat secured to the back of my bike and our son Joshua, has a small child trailer built for two, chasing behind his bike. At 10 years old, he is strong as an ox and has no problem pulling two little children.

About halfway back, we had stopped for an hour or so to let the children try their hand at fishing. Fish can smell me a mile away… and they can hear our rambunctious clan from two miles away.

Needless to say, we didn’t get so much as a nibble.

But we did enjoy a lazy 90 minutes, relaxing on the banks of the river, watching it roll on its way toward the lake. We did talk, relax, and feel the incredible, sweet spirit that comes with a peaceful, loving, happy family.

There is no other feeling like that in the world. It is the Home Feeling and it equates to sheer joy and elation - the kind that is indescribable and heavenly in all respects.

But it was on the way home that the real magic moment happened.

Margie and all but Esther and Joshua had raced ahead to ensure that some of the younger ones’ bladders held out just a little bit longer than the trail.

As we comfortably peddled along, Esther said to me, “Dad, the other day when I was at my friend’s house, the dad said something that didn’t sound quite right to me.”

"Oh, really," I said. Knowing what friend she was talking about, I was surprised to hear that she had disagreed with their dad. He was typically spot-on as a parent. "What did he say?"

"Well," she slowly replied, "he read a few things out of a children's bible and the conclusion that he came to - I mean what he said to his children - was that the whole purpose of life is to be happy all the time. Dad, that just didn't sound right to me. I mean, it's like we're just supposed to run around doing everything we can to entertain ourselves."

The incredible depth and force of what my dear 11 yr old daughter was saying hit me like a thunderbolt. In an instant, there under the canopy of old trees and along the banks of that ancient river, I found it difficult to suppress the tears that were springing up in my eyes.

She was right... he had gotten it all wrong.

Fighting to keep my voice even, I said, "Humm, sounds interesting. Why do think he was wrong sweetheart?"

"Well, Dad, you know, there is so much more to life than just running around being happy. I don't know, it just doesn't seem right to me."

"Esther, tell me this, what was the word the scriptures used? Was it happy or was it 'joy'?"

"I'm pretty sure it was joy."

"So, that is the first thing he got wrong. He is flipping out those two words like they are the same thing. Joy and happiness are not the same thing. Now, can you tell me the difference?"

"I think joy is more like the real thing - more like real happiness and not fake stuff like those people that smile while they are smoking and drinking."

"That's right. Let me give you a simpler answer."

And now, I was really fighting to keep myself in check. I could see that my two oldest children were intensely riveted to my every word. Whatever I said in the next 2 minutes would stick with them for the rest of their lives. Not just as a memory, but an imprint on their soul, another building block to the very core of their character and perspective on life.

It is times like this that you don't want to get it wrong as a parent. Two short minutes like this can have a

dramatic and powerful impact on the life and mind and future of your children. I sensed the power of it and it shook me deeply.

The influence we have as parents is unimaginable. How often do we gloss over it and look for power and authority and influence outside of our homes? Like Ali Hafed's fabled "Acres of Diamonds", we miss the best, most valuable parts of life when we wander from our own fields of diamonds.

Taking a deep breath, I continued.

"Do you remember when the Savior gave us the Beatitudes? What was one of the last things he told the people that day? Remember, at the end of Matthew 5? He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

They both thoughtfully nodded... they remembered because, just a few days before, they had both done reports on the Beatitudes.

"So, here is my simple definition for what true joy is - the true purpose of life for us - joy is the deep and incredible feelings we have inside of us when we are on the road to becoming perfect like our Heavenly Father, and we know we are on that road. That is joy. It is a sacred gift to all those that carefully pursue the path Jesus laid out for us. That is joy."

I fell silent for a minute, letting that soak in.

"So, Esther, you are right. This life is not about running around to make ourselves happy. It is about facing the tough days, but doing it with patience and meekness, like the Savior taught.

It is being hurt by others and turning the other cheek so you can give love in return for hate. It is facing death, with all of its sorrow and terror, unflinchingly because Christ overcame death. It is dealing with the daily grind, the ins and outs, the ups and down, without losing faith, and tightly clinging to hope.

It is answering fears and doubts and anxiety and troubles, with faith and courage undaunted because you have the Gospel of Christ in your hearts. Yes, you are right, that road is not always happy and bright and bubbly, but when you walk it with Christ, you always enjoy the incredible power of true joy because you know - you know - you are on the right path.

And nothing can remove or replace or describe that feeling. That is joy. And that is why we are here on this earth. That is why we exist."

Silence overtook us again. The river silenced her laughter. The wind hushed her rustling of the leaves in the mighty trees overhead. Even the rub of the bike wheels on the asphalt path seemed to be absorbed in the magic of the moment. The world stood still to soak in the moment of two of God's children discovering who they are and why they are here.

Finally, without pretense or fanfare, Esther simply said, "Dad, don't you just love quietly riding along the river like this and talking?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't. My message had hit its mark and they felt it deep down inside.

Joshua answered for me, "Yeah, Dad, it's awesome. I guess this is what joy is."

My voice unable to escape my constricted breast, I simply thought in my mind, "Yes, son, yes it is."

And we continued our bike ride, following the path as it gently hugged the river.

You know, there is so much more to The Home Feeling...

and we are adding new parenting solutions every week.

You can experience it all by getting a full 30-day membership

for just \$1. If you like it, you can stay with us for just \$14.95/mo.

[Click here now for details...](#)
