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Disney (September 18, 2011)

Like doctors, attorneys, and other professional types, pastors are required to complete continuing education. I needed to get another class in this summer, so I was excited when I received an invitation to a worship conference for leaders to share what is working well in their churches. I got even more excited when I read it was held at Disney World, and the culmination of the week would be the Magic Kingdom closing early to the public, so worship leaders from all over the country could gather around Cinderella Castle to worship the King of Kings and Prince of Peace.

Immediately I had two imaginary moments form in my mind: the first was telling my girls we were going to Disney World. In my mind, I would make the announcement, and they would react in thrilled shock, jumping up and down in excitement, hugging me with their skinny little arms, telling me what a great father I am, and then they'd say, "I love you, Daddy."

The second moment formed in my mind was entering the shining kingdom. We would leave behind our draught town for tropical Orlando. We'd let the girls wear their princess dresses outside the house, and then go walking around a castle built with real gold, while beautiful music played in the background, and songs of praise were sung, and they'd hold out their hands, and say, "Thank-you, Daddy."

My first disappointment came upon the announcement. Instead of just telling them we were going, we waited for a special moment, then did a bit of a treasure hunt, where I wrote short verses sending them from one spot of the house to the next, until they finally found the last little note in the refrigerator, with Minnie Mouse holding a note reading, "Since your princess eyes are shining, and you mini-mouse tails are curled, pack your bags girls, in ten days we're off to Disney World!" However, instead of responding as I imagined, there was simply silence. Then came one quiet, timid word, "Really?"

My next and last disappointment came when we got there. After a couple of flights and a bus ride, we wanted to cool off and relax before going into the kingdom, so we swam in the hotel pool. It was a very nice pool, but it was not what we came for. However, when I was ready to

leave the pool behind for something much better, the response came, “I like it here. Can’t we just stay here?”

I was still frustrated by their response to the announcement, and then I got even more frustrated when they just wanted to stay at the hotel pool. I mean, I put all this effort into an

important announcement, and it got blandly received. Then, I put all this effort into taking them somewhere way beyond their expectations, and they just wanted to stay where they were.

But then I was frozen by a realization: so often we are just like this with God. He makes the most exciting announcement He could in shocking, poetic words, yet we quietly, timidly muster, “Really?”

Then He brings us to where we are today. And it is a good place to be. We are doing just fine. We’ve been blessed. But then He says, “I have something so much better waiting for you. Come on. Just take my hand and follow me.” And how do we respond? “I like it here. Can’t we just stay here?”

As an individual, do you know where God is calling you to go? Do you know what drab and mundane things He is asking you to leave behind, so you can experience something much greater? Pray about it. Ask Him for yourself, “Where do you want me to be? What do you want me to be doing? What must I lay aside to get there?”

As a church we need to ask the same things. It would be easy to say, “Things seem ok now. We got through the denomination change just fine. We have a staff. We have a little money. We have some new faces: young and old. I like it here. Can’t we just stay here?”

The Bible testifies a thousand times over that when we ask God, “Can’t we just stay here? Can’t we just keep everything the way it is?,” the answer is always, “No.” When nothing changes, nothing changes. And even if we’re not crazy about change, God always wants us to change. We are accepted as we are, but we are created to become so much more.

You have heard the best announcement God can make: “You were created with care. You are loved. Your past wrongs have been forgiven by Jesus. Your future is so beautiful it cannot be described at all.” Now He offers to lead you from where you have grown comfortable to

somewhere far greater. God has something better for us waiting -- we just need to go where He guides. And -- as a friend taught me -- where He guides, He provides.

When you follow the Father to where He leads you, you will leave the commonplace to enter a glorious shining kingdom, you will leave your everyday clothes to be dressed as royalty, you will stroll around a castle built with real gold, with soul-tending music playing in the background, heart-wrenching songs of praise being sung, and -- at long last -- you will take His hand and break his heart by saying, "I'm so sorry about before. I do love you, Daddy. Thanks for everything."