

Sabbatical Reflections: Part 2 of 3 - June 8 - July 7

Arlington Cemetery stirs different emotions. When we first arrived, my cousin Sara took us to my uncle's grave. Lawrence Wagenseil was a career Navy man who captained two ships and served as the executive officer at the Newport Navy Base upon retirement. To be at his grave I felt gratitude—thankful for his service, thankful for his life. At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, you feel the gravity and ugliness of war. At the top of the hill, you can walk through Robert E. Lee's former home a bit dazed and confused. How could such distinguished gentlemen and professor Christian also fight to enslave human persons? A look to the northeast over the Potomac River provides the most panoramic view of Washington. Lincoln's Memorial looms large, the Washington Monument stands tall, and the Capitol declares the great privilege we have in living in a democratic republic.

Who knows what my kids will remember about our Great Eastern Adventure? They took in an amusement park in Cincinnati, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, the Atlantic Ocean, and museum after museum in D.C. We saw special matriarchs on each side of the family. We worshipped among godly people in two different Virginia congregations. I think I'll remember reading Lincoln's two addresses in his Memorial. He was a man who knew that our country was both a "great nation" and a country where two sides can "read the same Bible and pray to the same God and [yet] each invokes His aid against the other." His closing prayer back in 1865 is just as relevant in 2022, "With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

One unplanned experience in my second month away was a Father-Son getaway with my oldest son, Samuel. I have 4 years left with this young man before he walks out my front door. He is no longer a boy, far from it. He's wiser, more responsible, and intelligent than I was at 20. Still, my work as a Dad is not done. We celebrated the man he's becoming and set a plan for growth and skill acquisition for the four years to come.

Some of you have heard me say, "You will be the same person you are today in five years, except for the books you read and the people with whom you interact." I still stand by this, but as a Christ-follower, the most significant friendship you can pursue is with Jesus, and the most transformative book you can read is the Holy Bible. The sabbatical gave me amazing opportunities to reengage some extended relationships and to turn the pages of some interesting authors. But there's still nothing sweeter than communion with the Living God by His Spirit and through His Word...still I forget this. I call another person, read another online article, only to realize my soul is hungering for Jesus. Friends, the next pull you feel to text a friend or click a link, know that that is a longing only God can meet...go to Him.

Some books finished in month 2:

The Intentional Father (highly recommended if you have sons under 17) by Jon Tyson
Andrew Peterson's *Wingfeather Saga* Books 1-3 (family audio books for long car rides)
The Morning Star: Wycliffe and the Dawn of the Reformation by G.H.W. Parker
Year of Wonders by Geraldine Brooks
Coraline by Neil Gaiman (a gripping little young adult suspense novel that I loved)
1066 and All That (a silly English pseudo-history book)
The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (a book for everyone's short list)
My Antonia by Willa Cather