

Looking Up to Look Around

It has been a while since I last ran in Cameron Park, but I used to get out on the trails at least once a week. One day after work I wanted to go to Cameron Park and run along the river trail. It was about 5:45 and the sun was setting, but I figured I had enough time to squeeze in a quick run before the last of the sunlight faded away. I must admit that running in Cameron Park at night was not the wisest choice I have ever made. When I got on the trail I realized it was much darker in the woods than it was back in the parking lot. To keep from tripping on roots or turning my ankle on rocks I kept my eyes focused on the trail right underneath my feet. I was always looking down at the path, remaining focused on what I was going to do next.

When I run, I find myself thinking about very random things. On this occasion I was thinking about bears; I was in the woods so naturally bears come to mind. I wondered what would happen if I encountered a bear on my run. Would I be fast enough to get away? What if I tripped on a rock and the bear caught me? Maybe I would just jump into the river. Can bears swim? This was all running through my mind when I heard a noise just off the trail. I looked up from the path my eyes were focused on and no more than 10 feet away from me was a big black figure. No, it wasn't a bear. Thankfully it was just a man wearing a black t-shirt and a black backpack, although, that fact didn't stop me from jumping out of my shoes.

This man startled me because I hadn't noticed him as I was running. My head was down and I was focused on the trail beneath my feet. If I had simply looked forward rather than down I would have noticed this man and could have saved myself from having a minor heart attack.

There is a story in Mark 5:21-34 where Jesus is headed to Jairus' home to heal his twelve year old daughter who was dying. I would think healing a twelve-year-old girl is an important task so I imagine Jesus was pretty focused on getting where He needed to be. I picture Jesus with His head down pushing his way through the crowd using Jairus as a fullback. This wouldn't be a time to take the scenic route, and it certainly wouldn't be a time for any distractions. Jesus had to be focused on where He was going. But on His way, Jesus notices when someone touches Him and He stops. He is on the way to heal a dying child and He stops. When He finds out who it was – a sick woman- Jesus stays there to hear her story. He gives her His full attention taking time in the middle of his important business to seek the welfare of those around Him. While He is there with the crowd, a servant from Jairus' house shows up to tell Jesus and Jairus

that the little girl has just died. If only Jesus hadn't stopped. This little girl's life was far more important than what He stopped for right? Jesus eventually makes His way to Jairus' house, and He knew something that everyone else didn't. Jairus' daughter wasn't dead; she had only fallen asleep. What if Jesus hadn't stopped? Since He is Jesus and can make whatever decisions He desires I wouldn't have held it against Him for not stopping. If He hadn't stopped, He would have missed the opportunity to bring healing to someone who needed it and more importantly love someone who needed to experience His love.

Many of us approach our daily walk with Christ in the same way I approached running through Cameron Park. We are so concerned with our important business that we forget there are things surrounding us, worth our attention. If we would look up and look forward rather than down then we would notice those who are in need and hopefully offer a helping hand.

On the other hand, keeping our head on a swivel and looking all around is not the solution to our problem, for if we are constantly turning our heads and noticing what is going on in the world around us, we will miss the path before us. When we devote too much attention to the world around us we forget that we do have specific tasks in our own lives to which God is calling us.

The proper head alignment in this walk with Christ is looking forward. When we look forward we can see both the path we are called to run upon and the world around us that is in desperate need. Many of us do have important business to care for, -remember, Jesus was headed to save a little girl- but our important business must not get in the way of the opportunities God has placed along our path. What position is your head in as you walk daily with Christ? Are you looking down at your feet, making sure every step is perfect as you go about your day? Are you looking around and taking in everything life has to offer? Or, are your eyes looking forward at the path God has laid before you, a path that includes important things in your own life that He has called you to as well as His calling to seek the welfare of those around you.