

Simply Blooming Grace

If We Didn't Know

As I lied in bed last night after getting wrapped up in one of those picture yet fake perfect influencer videos who had the perfect house and the cutest style...and the right thing to say every time.

I mean we know that they aren't real—but somehow it still stops us in our tracks. If we are really honest with ourselves, sometimes we let our imagination fly, right? Please tell me I'm not the only one.

You know the clickbait videos...

She showed how beautiful a DIY House could be...

She showed how lovely a styled woman could be...

She showed the magic product that was missing from my life that would make blank beautiful in my life...

I found myself comparing my life to someone else—and the spiral staircase I was about to fall down that would be a joy killer for sure. I'd sheepishly admit, I've felt the bruising from that fall before.

But this time, the LORD asked me a question in that moment that flipped my comparison kills mentality to great contentment.

If you didn't know would you care?

If I didn't know my Brady Bunch styled house was considered in need of cosmetic remodeling to keep up with some trend, would I care?

Or would I still be grateful for the warm safe place for my kids to run on that paint stained carpet...

Or the outdated appliances that still filled their bellies at the second hand family dinner table?

If I didn't know my body was considered a little fluffy would I care if those jeans wouldn't fit or the number inside them?

Or would I still be grateful for the comfort in hugs of a mom and something for my husband to love well...

Or embrace my curves and feel beautiful in the body my Creator created fearfully and wonderfully?

If I didn't know my closet was considered dated or out of style would I care if I didn't match the other moms at church or in the grocery store—or those gorgeous Christmas cards still on my fridge with coordinating outfits?

Or would I enjoy the clothes that made me smile, because I felt beautiful in them?

If I didn't know my kid wasn't the smartest student in the class, or behind in his IEP goal, or my homeschooling wasn't as good as the cottage crunchy mom next door, would I care about performance?

Or would I embrace the knowledge they were absorbing and appreciate their personality—and the growth at a pace that was manageable and realistic as this momma and her amazing child?

If I didn't know that my home was considered plain or weird for not keeping clutter would I still feel judged?

Or would I embrace the facts that I just simply dislike housework and their wasn't anything wrong wanting to keep it simple, so I could do what I actually wanted to do.

The truth was apparent—if I didn't know what I didn't know, I'd be content with my life.

It wasn't me being ignorant or being a camel head in the sand...

It wasn't me not continuing to grow...

It was simply a thought that set myself free from the ugly monster of comparison and into the heart of a grateful girl.

If I didn't know what I didn't know—if I didn't know what others said my life was like...I'd still say it was a great one.

So I stuck the blinders on, stepped back into the unknown, and chose to enjoyed the amazing life He gave just for me today.

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (New International Version)

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

—Rachel Redlin

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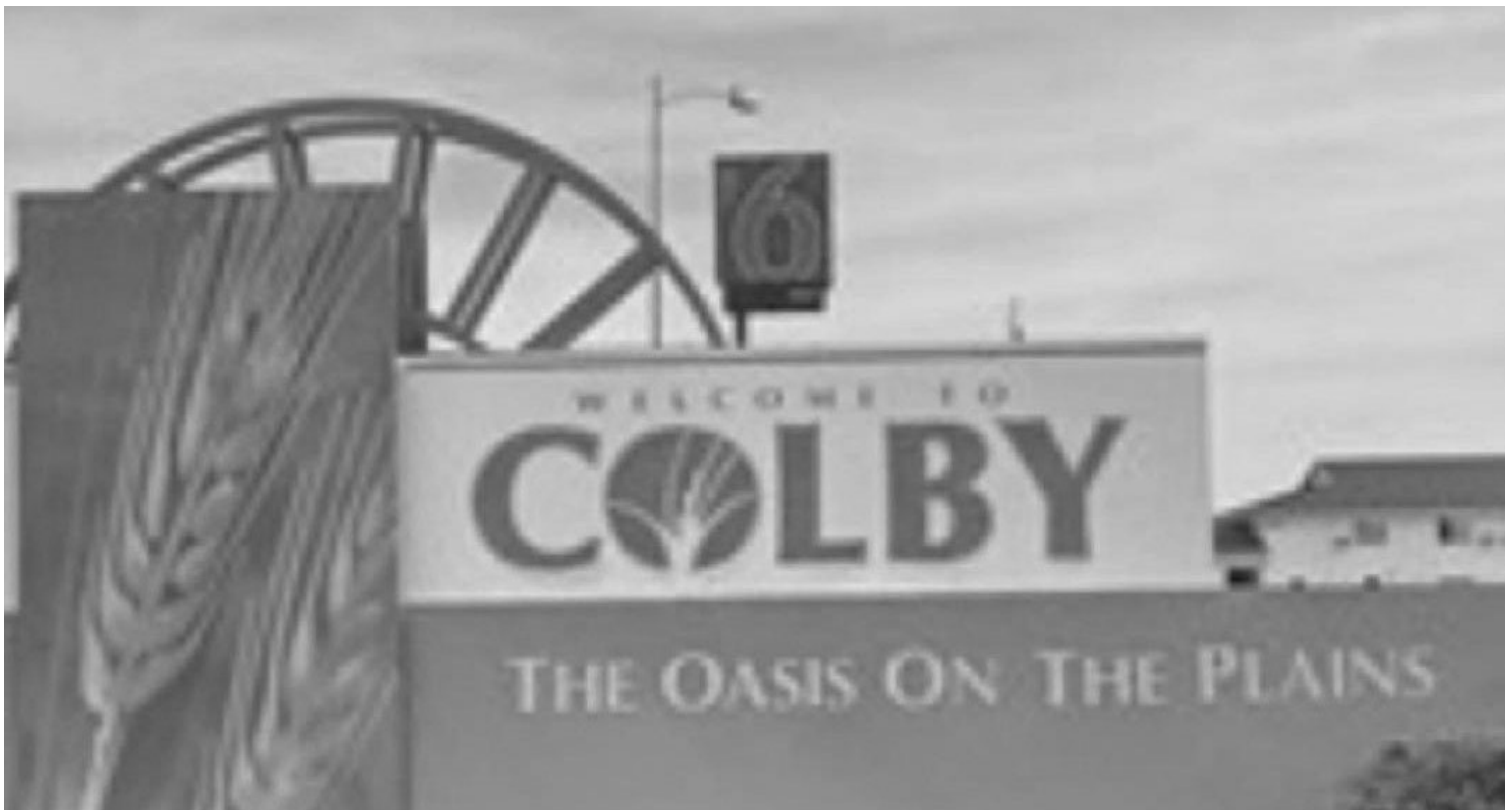
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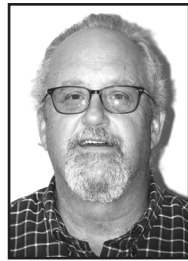
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4-H and FFA Teaches Responsibility, Dedication



matt price

• thoughts from the editor

August is here and many in our communities start thinking about football and the other fall sports. Official practices will be starting and the first scrimmages and games will be just a few short weeks away.

Let's face it, sports in our communities gets a lot of attention. Our athletes get a lot of attention and for their hard work, talent and performances...they deserve it.

Yet, there is a segment of our population that only, really, gets the attention they deserve once a year...and that time is now upon us.

The fair week(s) are already started around Northwest Kansas and there is a rush to put the finishing touches on animals and projects that have taken months of hard work and dedication. For the people in Thomas County, who had their fair last week, it's all about recovery. And it's not just the children who will be or were in the spotlight.

Fairs are the ultimate "Open" competition.

No matter what age or indeed most categories when it comes to animals or growing vegetables and the like, there is a competition for that.

Got a special chicken or rabbit? Enter it into the fair. Can you grow monster squash? Enter it into the fair. First timer or long timer - everyone has a chance at the fair.

Yet, the most watched, observed and supported are our children who are involved in 4-H and Future Farmers of America. I know that currently most are a part of a 4-H clubs but I know that FFA clubs, especially at the high school level, are in these parts as well.

These programs are all over our nation. They are here in the rural part of America like a hand in glove. Yet, they are also in the cities and semi-rural areas as well.

Back in 1998, living in San Jacinto, CA, before I became a full time pastor and had gotten into the newspaper business, I was

a restaurant general manager and trainer. At that time I was actually commuting from San Jac into Anaheim, CA – a horrible, traffic congested nightmare of a commute that took hours at times.

It was to my surprise, one night when I came home to find out that the family had a pig.

Our middle daughter, Jennifer, had gone and joined FFA and had decided to raise, care for, show and then sell a pig.

What did I know about pigs? Nothing. Had my wife or I ever owned a pig? Not.

There was a lot to learn and the first thing I wanted to know was...where was this pig? It certainly wasn't in the back yard!

Come to find out, "Pork Chop" was residing at the FFA barn complex at the high school. I knew where to find the class rooms and the football field but I didn't even know where to go looking for this barn.

I found out.

Like parents who have children in sports, parents who have FFA or 4-H children must be supportive. If your child doesn't drive and doesn't live on a farm (and they didn't hand out "farm licenses" there) they will need transportation to the barn. They will need to transport feed. In their first and in our case, only year in FFA, they will need money to buy the feed.

If the child gets sick...Pork Chop still needs to eat every evening.

I have gotten to interview and know in the past year a few 4-H kids. The ones I have met have a few things in common.

They are dedicated. Some of these projects and animals take many months. While there was snow still on the ground and the last school year was far from over, these little business persons were preparing for late summer.

For many of these children, they are participating in a legacy that their parents and grandparents participated in. It's a family tradition but their parents, having known the benefits of the programs, try to stay as hands off as possible.

They may front the first year's "starter" money but after that...the children are going to have to learn how to run their own business.

It is absolutely amazing to me to hear a 12 year old boast that he made a good investment with a sheep last year because he kept her for breeding and now is going to show her two lambs.

I was shocked to hear a mother tell me that the children have to file taxes because the buyers at the auction are so generous that the government wants their cut.

With their profits, the children have to make decisions on their projects for the next year and then buy and finance them. That's legos, sheep, pigs, goats and more along with the feed.

Then there is the work. Morning, evening, rinse, lather, repeat. An eight year old and a 10 year old work together to lift a 50 pound sack of grain into the bin. It's all part of the experience and business.

Teach a pig how to show using only a stick? Know the difference between a female and male insect? The dedication and perseverance of the children will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

If you get the chance, take a walk t in the fair barns. The animals just don't get dropped off. Some of these kids will have to be dragged away at night because they don't want to leave their animals. There is feeding, grooming and last minute training. But most of all...? There is love...lots and lots of love.

Do It While You Can

Do it while you can, Do it while you feel like it.

The chances of you doing something now are greater than ten years from now. First, you may not be here ten years from now. If there is a career change you want to make then make it as soon as possible. The sooner the better. If there is education or training you are thinking about pursuing then begin now. The longer you wait to start the longer it will take to finish.

The younger you begin a career the better the chance you have of it being better, bigger and greater. The young people who take off to New York City, Hollywood or Nashville to pursue musical or acting, typically have a better chance of success. It's easier to catch fish, where there are fish to catch.

People who enter the military in their early twenties can have a retirement in their forties or they can stay in service even longer if they wish.

The person who begins working at an early age and faithfully saves money every month can have a million dollars or more in their retirement account by the time they are sixty.



from other pens

• Glenn Mollette

The earlier we start the better we do. However, not everyone has the opportunity to start early. This is why you start when you can. Life is different for all of us. We all were raised in different environments. Often, information, mentoring and life coaching were not available. Some had to figure it out on their own. That's not easy, but we do the best that we can.

The Bible reminds us to "Remember your creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'" Ecclesiastes 12:1. On the heels of this verse is one to keep in mind as well, "Youth and the prime of life are fleeting, but a life lived for God is forever." 2 Samuel 22:4

One section of scripture that should be a waving flag to us is Luke 12. A

man reaches a state in life where all he can say is "I have so much laid up in store for many years. All I have to do is take it easy, eat drink and be merry." But God called him a fool and he died that very day and went out into eternity.

Thus, we never know when our time will end. Therefore, take your vacation sooner rather than later. Enjoy what you can see, hear and do today. Love on the significant people in your life today. Do the good deed today. Do what you want to do. Do what you can do and do good things, whatever that may mean or look like to you.

Help those you can, but there is only so much you can do. You are one person and you can't save the world. Don't live your life in such a way that you end up saying, "I wish I had done this. I wish I had done that."

We all deal with being good stewards of our time and minds. It's not easy but why not start today?

Dr. Glenn Mollette is the author of Uncommon Sense. Available wherever books are sold.