



Wheat Affirmation: (a journal entry and part of my first sermon)

SATURDAY NIGHT, April 30th, 2005, Gayle and Joe Montgomery, my pastor and her husband, hosted a ministry support dinner for us at their house where people were invited to “partner with us” in ministry by the gifts of their prayers and financial support. At this dinner, Jill and I both shared a brief personal testimony, had dinner... and then watched a video clip displaying and explaining the following scripture: “Then Jesus said to his disciples. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” – Matthew 9:37-38. Gayle shared this video clip explaining that we had been called to “work the fields”..... and then..... everyone laid hands on Jill and Iand prayed over us.

Well, A few weeks ago, Jill and the boys had come down to camp for the first time after dropping me off here two weeks prior. This day was filled with the Aww and beauty of God’s creation. We saw lots of wildlife, and knowing that God is one who speaks to me much through nature, God, this day, was about to reveal and affirm something to me and to my entire family. We had been discussing most of the day that we might head out of camp and get away for a few hours after dinner one night. We had previously sold our second car to save money and I hadn’t had the chance to really leave camp since I didn’t have car. Well, after dinner, Jill and I asked the boys what they wanted to do and they persisted that we go on a bike ride around camp. So, Jill and I hopped on our bikes and placed the boys on the back, Caleb riding with me, and Graceson riding with Jill. We rode all over camp; down by the water, next to PU lake where we saw lots of turtles, through the challenge course and



eventually out the front gate of camp, near the silos, pedaling back behind the old wooden sheds of the field machinery. It was about 7 O' Clock or so, and we pedaled around the bend and the coooolest site appeared before us. The deciduous forest opened up on our right hand side into the most beautiful spread of amber waves of grain I had ever seen since driving across country back in high school. There was a slight breeze, the sun was low in the sky, and the boys were quiet, looking at the majestic views around them. Jill said, "this is awesome!" and we pedaled onward. The road turned from sandy gravel to a slightly warn, two lane, tire track, just wide enough for Jill and I each to take a side. As we joyfully and restfully went on, we came to another shady covering of trees where, just ahead, a light brown deer leaped quickly and quietly across the road ahead of us, about 150 feet or so. Jill whispered "coooool". I looked back at Caleb and said "Did you see that?, Pretty Cool Huh, keep your eyes peeled, there's lots to see out here". Graceson and Caleb were smiling and being so good. The road we were on had a thick forest on the left and a large wheat field on our right. As we pressed on through the shady part of the road, the trail began to be less traveled and grass was slightly growing over each lane Jill and I, each, were in. The forest thinned and we came to the edge, where the view opened up to an awesome field of wheat, directly ahead of us, on both our right and left sides. We pedaled onward, not really knowing how far this might take us, but we were enjoying the breath taking view of the vastness of this wheat field. We kept on going, biking parallel to a small, growing over water trough that feeds the fields. Grain was about up to our handlebars on each side of the road, yet just low enough where we all could see over and above it all. We pedaled and pedaled and finally came to a point in the road where it stopped, and we could go no further. "Can you here that?" I asked Jill. "You here the breeze of the wind as it blows over all this grain?" sshhhh "just listen" I said, as' we stopped and were straddling our bikes looking all around us, listening, and feeling the late day sun over us. We breathed deep as we looked in every direction around us, Wheat, 360 degrees of it, on every side of us, "be still and know that I am God", I thought. This is one of my favorite verses. What might God be saying to me out here?



We were finally here after over a year of preparation and prayer. We had answered the call to ministry and God had led us to the beauty of His creation once again. God had brought us to a place of the country, our own state, that neither one of us had ever been to, to restore or souls and to affirm our calling. Jill and I stood there, still straddling our bikes, with the boys on the back. Tears began to work their way to the ducts in my eyes and I said to Jill, "This reminds me of that video that Gayle showed us at our ministry support dinner, remember the verse that says, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" – Matthew 9:37-38'. I feel like God

has placed us out here in this field, literally, to be a worker in that field. I said, "This is it, Jill." She affirmed me in this by saying, "this is where we are supposed to be Mark, God has called us here as a family, this is where we are to be." Overwhelmed by the clarity of God's vision here, we continued to hear God's plans unfold for us. I said, "Jill, we stand here, symbolically taller than all of this wheat. The wheat is on every side of us representing the people out there in the world. God has called me and us as a family to 'rise-up' from among the people and to shepherd them, to pastor them and to lead them and to share the love and gospel of Christ." I was completely amazed, humbled and overwhelmed, that God would draw us to this place. That field was huge, and I began to only imagine and stand in Aww, that God, would call me, of all people, to stand up from amongst this wheat, from amongst the people, to be the one to bring the message of hope, the message of grace, And the message of forgiveness, to the people around this world. WOW!!! Jill climbed off her bike, as I held her bike with Graceson still on the back of it. She walked over to the wheat and knelt down and began to pull up some of it from the field. She said, "let's get some for us to have as a reminder of this day, as an affirmation that God has called us to this place, to this place in our lives to serve." "This is where we are to be Mark, and this is what our family is to be about," Jill said confidently. She began to pull up some of the wheat, struggling with a few, she laughed and said, "some will be easy to harvest and some will be difficult, but this is what we are called to do." She picked quite a handful. "I want to help mommy," Caleb said from behind me, still in his bike seat", "Nooooo, I told him, mommy will get some". Immediately following that statement, I remembered Jill saying just a moment ago, "this is what our family is to be about, this is what we are called to do". She had said the word "family", not just me and/or even Jill but our "family". So, I quickly pulled Graceson from his seat where I had been holding Jill's bike, and let him down, then un-strapped Caleb from his bike seat and let him down as well and then joined Jill as we "all" pulled some of the wheat from the field. Even Graceson grabbed a little bit. As we knelt by the edge of the field, we prayed as a family for what God was calling us to. Overwhelmed with humility, joy, and the presence of God, we rose to our feet, (take a breath) and breathed deep the moment we had just experienced. We placed the boys back into their bike seats and took turns carrying the wheat as we pedaled back home. Even Caleb wanted to carry the wheat on his lap as we pedaled. WOWwww!



Thank you Lord, for your words of affirmation and for the beauty of your creation to reveal all of this to me and to my family. I said.... Amen, Amen and Amen.... Thank you Lord...



Update To Wheat Affirmation

(Saturday, July 30 before departing from Camp on Sunday, July 31st)

THE COOL THING about this story is that the Saturday afternoon prior to us leaving camp and finishing up my internship there, Caleb asked Jill and I saying “Daddy, can we see the wheat field again”. Well, learning my lesson from before in hearing God speak through Caleb at times, I said “well, sure”. And sure enough

an awesome moment would come to our whole family once again as we drove in our car, this time, to the back of the fields where we saw the most amazing and wonderful thing. The massive fields of wheat were no longer there. The fields were rolling with *lush greenery* and *flourishing crops*. “**GROWTH**” was the word that stuck out to us.... **Growth**... The ministry and the seeds that I had planted this summer and will plant for years to come will indeed grow and the ministry that God has called us to will indeed flourish as we are lead by the Lord to be a part of all that He wants us to... This was a great way to finish up our time together at camp and once again affirm our calling, not only to the coast over the summer, but as a life time in ministry to the Lord...

