



*Eric Muhr*

Deep into my 20s, I noticed a rising unease with the way I'd been experiencing faith. I wanted a challenge, to be growing into truth. I wanted an experience, to be connected to reality while also living spiritually. I wanted authenticity, to be fully myself, not just a collection of roles. I wanted an integrated community, a place where faith and vocation and neighbors all came together. I wanted to know God.

In the two decades since, I've found that most of these things aren't so much places you get to as they are processes of becoming. I turned 44 this last April, and I still have a long way to go before I'm fully integrated. But God is with me. Every once in awhile, the two of us stop and take a look back at all the ground we've covered together. And it is good.

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 34:1–7*

I used to work as the education reporter for a newspaper in Idaho, and part of my job was covering spring graduation ceremonies. Although it wasn't my favorite part of the job, I attended a lot of commencement exercises. Most of these events felt like little more than a jumble of inspiration about the journey we're on, about where we're headed. It was always the same.

Except one time it wasn't.

At Boise State's spring commencement in 2004, the university president asked for a moment of silence. We waited—almost 10,000 of us—packed to the rafters. The band played a slow rendition of “America the Beautiful,” and as it ended, a man yelled. The cry—muffled by bodies and distance—sounded something like a cap gun, a far-off explosion, small but distinct. He shouted a second time and then a third. He was calling a name. Michelle.

Another voice joined his from the opposite end of the pavilion, and then—a sudden swelling—the building was filled with a chorus of calls for Michelle and her classmates.

I'm still haunted by the moment, filled as it was with longing. Thousands—trapped in their seats—reached out with their voices, a compelling cacophony.

Had we been closer, we never would have been so bold.

*SONG: Take Us to the River*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, give us the courage to risk vulnerability, to call the names of those we love, to remember that you are with us in our joy and in our loneliness.*

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