

# “Just a South African Girl Living in an Alabama World”

“Isn’t it funny how day to day nothing changes but when you look back everything is different...”

CS Lewis

In early March a dear friend invited me to spend the night at her beautiful home in Still Waters. Surrounded by a lake, nature, and good company, what more could one ask for? The morning fog covering the lake was breathtaking. The sun baking on my back during afternoon hikes, rejuvenating. The evening air, crisp.

One afternoon, my friend and I hiked the half mile trail leading to the Smith Mountain Fire Tower. I was excited to watch as the sun set over the lake, yet my nerves sent shivers down my spine as I realized the 80 foot climb to the top of the tower. Yes, I am afraid of heights. I *encouraged* my friend to go ahead of me, that way I could slowly make my way to the top, holding on for dear life, without the focus being on how nervous I really was. The higher we got, the narrower the steps became, the more my fear made my legs weak. Finally, we made it to the top... *where did the cold wind come from, I can't look down, my heart is beating double its normal rate...* and, we were way too early for the sunset...

With more views to explore, we decided to head back down until closer to sunset. We walked and talked, as us girls do best, taking in the beautiful sights, smells and sounds. We lay on rocks like “mountain dassies,” staring at the sky as we watched the birds fly from tree to tree, trying to capture the perfect “Kodak” moment.

Time caught up with us. Next thing we knew, we were racing the clock to the top of the tower to watch the sun go down... it was setting quickly. With each level on the tower, a new photo was taken, it was just too beautiful to miss a second. The view of the sunset from the top of the Fire Tower was spectacular. A photo doesn't do justice to the beauty of creation. The colors of the sky were blue, pink, orange, yellow, red... The reflection on the water was sketched by a world famous artist. The sound of the pine trees moving in the wind, sounded as if all creation was singing His praises. It was then I realized... the second time we climbed the tower my mind was so focused on the sun that all fear was gone. I never noticed the ground getting further and further from my feet, the narrowness of the steps, or the cold winds at the top of the tower. My focus was on the *sun*.



I'm reminded of a song we sang growing up in the Baptist church:

*“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”*

What a joy it is to know the Lord. When fear strikes and troubles surround us He reminds us in His word, through creation, and even in the still small movements of the winds blowing through the trees, to fix our thoughts on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith.

**“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”**

– Hebrews 12:1 -3

I learned a new word this month: *Terroir*

Hodges Vineyards and Winery was another place we explored during our short visit. The owners allowed us to walk the grounds, take photos of the ducks at the pond, and the vineyards, recently pruned for the next season. I'm not sure how many folks take photos of "dead" vines, but we found them fascinating.



On returning home, the picture of the vines remained in my mind. I wanted to know more. I began researching vineyards, how grapes are grown, and wine made. The word "Terroir" stood out.

Some define Terroir as:

"A sense of place." "The set of environmental factors that affect a crops characteristics." "The unique aspects of a place that influence and shape the wine made from it."

The slope of the terrain, it's orientation toward the sun, underlying rock, the climate, the soil... all play a vital role in the grape growing and wine making process.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The worse the soil, the better the wine? Why? "The roots of the grapes are forced to seek nutrients for sustenance. The lack of water at the right time creates vine stress that forces development of the grapes instead of leaves and canopies." – The Wine Cellar Insider

The grapes remind me of my life, and perhaps you can relate. I'm not perfect. Sometimes I can feel like the greatest sinner in the world. Unworthy. Yet, when tapped into the right water source, seeking His face with all that I am, it is then I grow.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The terroir is reflected in the flavors and texture of the wine?

Is my life reflecting my foundation? Do I reflect Jesus? Do you? Perhaps God laid "terroir" on my heart not only to reevaluate my heart, but to encourage you to reevaluate yours. Do we reflect Christ in our actions? Do we reflect Christ in our words? Is our focus on the SON? Are we tapping in to the TRUE water source?

When looking at one of the vines and its many little stems, my friend said: "Imagine how much this vine has been through to be producing much fruit in season." Perhaps we're in a time of pruning. And it's hard. It hurts. It's messy. But fruitful in season!

I'm thankful to Father God for providing a time of rest while at the lake, and for speaking to my heart in ways that may seem strange to others, but comforting to my soul. I don't know God nearly as much as I desire to know Him, but I want more.

**"My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek."** – Psalm 27:8

**Will you get on your knees for me?**

Pray against distraction and the lies of the enemy, that my focus would be fully fixed on the SON, and continue to walk in His strength.

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