

FIREFLIES

By David Wright

Are we keeping our eyes on eternal rewards—or on something else?

Several years ago I worked at an archaeological site called Aguateca, which is located in a beautiful and remote part of Guatemala accessible only by a long boat ride up the winding Petexbatún River.

One evening I was returning to Aguateca with several archaeologists after spending the day at a neighboring site. As we traveled by boat up the river, with only the quiet hum of the motor and the chirp of insects in the background, I reclined against the side of the boat, enjoying the peaceful ride and the moonless, unusually clear night. As the boat followed the serpentine twists of the river, I tried to maintain my sense of direction by tracking the North Star. Sometimes the North Star disappeared behind the dark silhouettes of the trees lining the riverbanks, but it always reappeared shortly.

At one bend in the river, I lost the North Star behind the treetops again. Once the boat turned southward, I quickly relocated it, feeling like an old-time mariner, proud of my ability to stay oriented. After a minute of watching it, however, I realized I was mistaken: I had not relocated the North Star or even a star at all. I was watching a firefly.

Only then did I become aware that many of the “stars” above me were actually fireflies hovering silently in the warm night air. Amazingly, the glow of the dozens of fireflies overhead was almost identical to the glow of the distant stars and galaxies, and the twists and turns of the boat on the river had made it easy to confuse the two.

“How could I mistake a miniscule firefly for a star of almost infinite brilliance?” I wondered. The answer was clear: it was just a matter of perspective. The relatively faint and fleeting light of the fireflies rivaled that of the stars only because the fireflies were just a few feet above me and the stars were so distant. From my perspective, the two appeared nearly identical.

Like the fireflies, temptations and trials loom large because they are

close at hand. Meanwhile, the promised blessings, like stars, can appear very distant.

Our spiritual shortsightedness can have many consequences. The more distant the reward appears, the more tempted we are to think we can procrastinate the day of our repentance and still return to Heavenly Father to claim our eternal inheritance (see Alma 34:33–34). We may begin to doubt the eternal reward or decide that it’s more fun to indulge the natural man now than to wait for blessings that may come much later. We may fear the relentless, lifelong struggle against sin or lack faith that our Savior will help us withstand the buffetings of Satan.

We all lose our eternal perspective occasionally; the challenge is to regain it as quickly as possible. Though the world may offer attractive, counterfeit rewards, we can look to Jesus Christ as we navigate the twists and turns of life and trust that He truly is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

It has been years since I took that boat ride on the river, but even today I pause when confronted with temptation and remind myself, “It’s just a firefly.” ■

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