

# Chattajack 31 A Journey to Lake Nick-a-Jack

## By Rod Morris

### Blog 4. Why I Kayak

*Before I begin this week's blog, I want to give you an update concerning my health. Both cardiologists agreed that the ablation procedure would be the best course of action to correct my A-Fib. I will be having the two-hour surgical procedure on Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your many prayers. Both Hope and I are so grateful for the love and support that we have received.*

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At the last Sports & Rec Plus staff meeting, President Rick Mitchell asked me, "Do you like training for the kayak race?" My answer to him was, "Yes and No." I realize that answer appears to be inconsistent or even wishy-washy. The truth is that the pleasures of kayaking are paradoxical. Let me explain by starting with my no answer.

Training for a kayaking race is hard and strenuous. Even though I have three different kayaking workouts, they are long; it is hot; the seat is uncomfortable; and it gets boring seeing the same things all alone. My workouts last two to four hours and pushing myself is a mental challenge. It is easy to say, I've gone seven miles, I'll do an extra mile next time. But deep down I know that I have to stick with my training schedule. No, I don't like this aspect of kayaking. Anyone involved in any training for any sports knows and understands this fact very well. But the same is true in just about every worthwhile endeavor we do. Becoming a doctor requires long hours of study to finally become board certified to practice medicine. I know a concert pianist who spent ten years to perfect just one piece of music. Men who have been pastors their whole life have devoted themselves to countless hours of Bible study in the quiet of their office. And the list goes on and on. To achieve any goal requires dedication and commitment. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. You might remember I have used this passage in previous blogs to describe that we are in a race.

*<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight not as one who beats the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Today I want to look at specifically at the athletes whom Paul is describing. The games were especially important to the Corinthian citizens as their city was the home for the Isthmian Games. These games were second in importance only to the ancient Olympic games.

Athletes had to train diligently. Paul tells us several things about the athlete who really wanted to win. Winning requires effort and the athlete must be temperate in all things. This means that in his training to compete he had to follow very strict rules for the previous ten months before the games. An athlete had to refuse the nicer things in life that might hamper their quest for competing. Training requires discipline, which is never easy. Besides the long, lonely hours of training, an athlete has to endure the physical pain of sore muscles and even sometimes injuries that hamper their training timetable

In this passage Paul uses the phrase, **but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**. This literally means to be led about as a slave. Paul is telling us that his inner man was to be the master over his body not allowing his desires to rule. When you train your body to compete, your mind has to be in control, otherwise your body would say it is time to quit, I'm tired. No, I really don't like training, but I push on to achieve my goal to compete.

But I also answered Rick with a yes. When I am out on the river everywhere I look, I see the handiwork of God and the Scriptures come alive to me. In Genesis chapter one we read how that God created the heavens and the earth. He perfectly designed and created everything down to the finest detail with everything working in flawless harmony. My physics professor in college once said that physics helps us see the finest details of the universe God has created. He was so correct because my training for the Chattajack River race has allowed me to see many details which most people miss out on seeing. In reality, they are missing the blessings I see.

Recently, where I kayak on the Tennessee River we had the annual mayfly hatch. I was more than a little annoyed by the billions of flying insects as I paddled through the water. But what was annoying to me was life for the many species of animals living in or near the water. I watched fish jumping out of the water trying to catch a meal; I thought about creation again. God created these pesty little bugs to be food at just the right time. But not only for the fish... I also saw spider webs intricately woven into the trees along the shoreline snagging their next feast. And not just the fish and spiders... the swallows could be seen zooming with dive bomber precision grabbing as many of the tiny insects as possible before returning to their nests. It is thoroughly a pleasure to watch the swallows feeding on the mayflies circling and even skimming the surface of the water. You might even catch a glimpse of a turtle basking himself on a fallen tree as he rests before going out to look for food. Over and over, I could clearly see the cycle of life put into place by God at creation.

Birds of prey frequently are seen on my outings. It is common to see ospreys and once in a while I spot a bald eagle. One of my most interesting recent memories was observing an osprey diving from about two hundred feet into the water and

then coming up with a fish. You have to wonder how many mayflies that fish had eaten, and now he is food for the osprey to take back to his young hatchings. I didn't just see ospreys catching fish, I watched a great blue heron walking in the shallow waters dipping his head into the water and pulling out a fish. These are magnificent birds with a wingspan of six feet and as their name indicates, are adorned by God with a pale blue plumage. And there were also furry little creatures taking advantage of the opportunities for a meal found along the shoreline. In the early morning you can watch raccoons scavenging for their next dinner. You might even see a deer drinking the cool water of the river just after sunrise reminding me of Psalm 42:1, *"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God."* My immediate question to myself is, "Do I have a spiritual thirst and desire for a deep intimate relationship with the one and living God?" Abruptly I pray that I do!

You can only marvel at the variety of animals doing what God had intended for them to do when He spoke them into existence. As I watched God's handiwork unfold before me, it was as though Scripture came alive. I wasn't just seeing God's creation but actually was a part of it. Here are a few verses that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

- Psalm 33:6 *"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."*
- Colossians 1:16: *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible."*
- Hebrews 3:4 *"For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God."*
- Hebrews 11:3: *"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God."*
- Jeremiah 32:17 *"Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for you."*
- Romans 1:20: *"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world."*
- Romans 11:36 *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

As I see creation all around me, I eventually begin to look at myself and how I fit in God's plan. Genesis records for us the events of day six of creation when God created mankind.

- Genesis 1:26-27 *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his*

*own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Looking all around me at not just the animals, but also the trees, the hills in the distance, and even the water surrounding me; I am in awe that mankind alone was created in the image and likeness of God; this includes me.

Too often we take our lives for granted not realizing just how special we are in the eyes of God. King David and the Apostle Paul reminds of this fact.

- Psalm 139:13-14: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb."
- Ephesians 2:10 *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Mankind is truly special in the eyes of God as these verses tell us.

Yes, as I paddle, I am reminded constantly by King David where he sums up God's creation perfectly in Psalm 19:1-4:

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

David is absolutely correct when he says that creation showcases the handiwork of God. It doesn't matter what you are doing, if you are really paying attention to your surroundings, you can't help but marvel at what God's handiwork.

So, you can see why I told Rick, "YES" I do enjoy kayaking because it lets me remember what truly is important because kayaking allows plenty of time to think. As I think and see the handiwork of God coming alive before me, I quickly remember the most important thing in my life, and that is my wonderful gift of salvation. Nothing is more important than how we respond to Jesus. Saying yes to Jesus means salvation and the abundant life that it brings including heaven forever with God. Saying no to Jesus means a life without hope and eternity apart from God forever in the hell. At twelve years of age, I realized that I was a sinner who needed to repent as the Spirit of God was drawing me to Himself and said yes to Jesus. Having been blessed with Biblical teachings my whole life (I was literally in church nine months before I was born), I had learned that God in His righteousness cannot look upon sin meaning that He couldn't look upon me. But God had a plan to allow mankind to enter into His presence, and that plan was Jesus. Jesus came to the earth as God incarnate, lived a sinless life, and died on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the world. Scripture reminds us over and over that we must repent and call upon the name of the Lord in order to have our sins forgiven thereby receiving salvation.

- Acts 2:21 *"And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

- Acts 2:38 *“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Joel 2:32 *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

While it sounds simple, it is because God made it simple. Paul clearly explained that after we repent of our sins, we are to confess Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.

- Romans 10:9-10, 13 *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Now you can see that even though I don't enjoy the difficult workouts on my kayak, the benefits of seeing the Word of God come alive far outweighs any of my efforts. And not just seeing Scripture come alive, but being reminded of my wonderful gift of salvation and the ultimately my responsibility of telling others about Jesus.

Even as I complete my kayak workout and I am physically exhausted and ready to rest, scripture comes to mind as I am reminded that God rested after He finished all His work.

*I hope that this blog is an encouragement to you as you also seek to become more like Jesus every day and seek to reach the world for Christ where God has placed you in your special race. My request is that you not only pray for me, but also for the ministry of Sports & Rec Plus and our plans to have booth at the race. You can learn more about his ministry by visiting our website: **[sportsrecplus.org](http://sportsrecplus.org)**.*