

Old Faithful Slows but Grows

Old Faithful is a cone geyser located in Wyoming's Yellowstone National Park. It was so named in 1870 by the explorers who discovered it during the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition of the uncharted territory.

Here is what one of them, Nathaniel P. Langford, wrote in 1871:

Judge, then, what must have been our astonishment, as we entered the basin at mid-afternoon of our second day's travel, to see in the clear sunlight, at no great distance, an immense volume of clear, sparkling water projected into the air to the height of 125 feet. "Geysers! Geysers!" exclaimed one of our company, and spurring our jaded horses, we soon gathered around this wonderful phenomenon. It was indeed a perfect geyser ... It spouted at regular intervals nine times during our stay, the columns of boiling water being thrown from 90 to 125 feet at each discharge, which lasted from 15 to 20 minutes. We gave it the name of "Old Faithful."



Since that day, Old Faithful has been faithfully monitored and her eruptions logged and chronicled. Eruptions can shoot 3,700 to 8,400 gallons of boiling water into the air from a little more than 100 feet to its highest recorded blast of 185. Eruptions can last anywhere from 1.5 to 5 minutes. Intervals between eruptions can range from 45 to 125 minutes.

Since the mid-20th century, the intervals between eruptions have gradually increased from approximately every 65 minutes to an average of every 90 minutes today.

Some have come to see this increase in intervals as evidence that the geyser is no longer worthy of its characterization of "faithful." But the truth is, the geyser is actually more predictable today than it was decades ago. Old Faithful spews 65 minutes after an eruption, lasting less than 2.5 minutes, or 91 minutes after an eruption, lasting more than 2.5 minutes. It is believed that this unusual reliability is due to the geyser's independence from other thermal features.

Old Faithful's environs have been impacted by earthquakes and turbulence in the geological landscape, but the geyser's response to the changes has grown more predictable with time because it is not connected to any other thermal features. In other words, her reliability is independent of the reactions of thermal features.

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The question for us today: Are we the hardy kind, like Old Faithful? If so, we won't blame our actions or reactions on the behavior of others. We'd grow increasingly more reliable and trustworthy with age and maturity.

With the coming of the new year, there will be earthquakes and turbulence in our lives. Others may lose their heads. But we can model ourselves after Old Faithful.

If we take responsibility for our own sanctified response to the tremors of life, we will grow in wisdom and endurance. This truth also applies to our spiritual walk.

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing (James 1:2-4 NLT.)

– Beecher Hunter