

The Power of the Locomotive

Forever etched in my memories is the soulful sound of the whistle on a steam-engine locomotive as the train winds its way through the rural countryside.

That audible signaling device – used to warn that the train is approaching and to communicate with rail workers – was often the only nighttime interruption of the screech of hoot owls or the melodic notes of a whippoorwill as the train rolled through forests and meadows of the farms outside of Cookeville, Tennessee.

The blowing of the whistle often rode on summer's gentle breezes through an open bedroom window to stir a boy's imagination of a world that lay beyond an agriculture environment and careers that beckoned.



Trains have always fascinated me. Trains regularly passed through my hometown, which was halfway between Nashville and Knoxville, and frequently stopped at the depot for various reasons, allowing passengers to stretch their legs and/or eat and shop.

A few times, we teenagers amused ourselves by catching onto the train as it slowly began to move from the station, hung on for a short distance, and then dropped off. Crazy, I know! It's another reinforcement of the idea that God dispatches guardian angels (perhaps, in my case, more than one) to keep us safe.



Trains today still attract my attention. The power of a locomotive boggles the mind. Some trains are more than two miles in length, yet the locomotive can pull these cars across the entire country, loaded with coal, oil, lumber, ore, manufactured goods and all manner of heavy cargo.

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And they pull them up steep inclines, through mountain passes and over all sorts of terrain. It seems as though nothing can stop them. The combination of the sheer power of the locomotive and the focus of placing that strength upon two narrow rails results in a mechanism that can accomplish tremendous results.



But do you know what can render a locomotive ineffective? It's easy: simply remove it from its tracks. Despite its great power, if the train's engine is not on the tracks, it will be unable to move the train (or even itself) a single inch. Unless it is returned to its tracks, it will never accomplish the purpose for which it is intended.

And here is the spiritual lesson ...

So it is for those of us who follow Christ. God has filled us with the power of the Holy Spirit, and He has equipped us to accomplish amazing things for His kingdom. But unless we remain "on the tracks," we will become completely powerless.

We must be on guard for anything with the potential to derail us and thus remove us from our God-appointed mission.

The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride (Psalm 31:23 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter