

THE HUNT

Hunting season held little significance for me growing up, though I enjoyed aspects of it. In our rural community, it was a big deal for many of my friends, and for me it meant a day off school. Our Thanksgiving break was often extended an extra day in order to give hunters the opportunity to get outdoors on the first day of gun week. Back at school we looked forward to hearing tales of the hunt and figuring out who had captured the biggest prize (aka whose buck had the most points).

Not from a family of hunters, I had no practical point of reference for what it was like out in the woods during a hunt. For instance, I had no idea why it was so funny the day one of my friends told the story of getting so excited at the sight of a huge buck that he went running through the woods and shot off three rounds before tripping and losing the deer altogether. I understood that tripping would look funny, but apparently the really funny part was that he took off after the deer thinking he could get it. I admit that until then, I really thought that was how it was done.

Having seen a few movies with Native Americans hunting buffalo, I thought a hunter was always on the move, albeit stealthily. When they spotted a herd, they'd run on foot or by horseback straight towards their prey and bring them down with the shots of many arrows. If it was a different kind of prey, it could be tracked through the woods until the hunter found the animal's lair, at which point the animal was a goner. With my interest in all things theatrical, you'd think I'd be a little quicker to follow the adage, "Don't believe everything you see in the movies."

In my thinking, hunting was a very active sport—and that meant movement. I am now married to a hunter and have a much more accurate understanding. I was able to go to the woods with Andrew for the first time this year during bow season and I was amazed at how different it was from what I had pictured. Hunting is not about the hunter doing a bunch of work tracking and chasing, it is about proper positioning and remaining *alert*, not *active*. If one does their research ahead of time, it is possible to find well-worn trails,

beds, and scat that indicate where the deer will be. On the day of the hunt, the hunter finds a place with a good vantage point, and then waits, as quietly and still as possible. The smallest motion or sound pulls the hunters attention—he is able to see and hear clearly because he has trained himself to be on the alert. And even when a deer is in sight, a good hunter will not rush into action willy-nilly. He waits to see where the deer is going, determining whether or not their paths will cross. He waits with purpose.

It did not take long for me to realize why Andrew comes home from a hunt feeling spiritually refreshed. He stands for hours in silence, and he listens. Time in the woods is time away from the noise and distraction of day-to-day life, and often God passes by. Sometimes God invites the hunter

to take action, and sometimes the hunter simply holds still, appreciating the serenity and beauty of the moment.

Pausing in the midst of my current list of activities, I wonder how the principles I've learned about hunting would affect my Christian walk if I applied them to my quest for the things of God. Or, to use a more "biblical" word, would *seeking* him look different if it had less to do with my chasing him around and more to do with waiting on him to make a move in my direction? Do I have the stamina it takes to remain alert even when I don't see him? I would like to think so, but based on my restlessness in the few short hours I sat in the woods with Andrew, I'd say I could use a bit more training.

I did, however, gain a deeper appreciation for what it takes to be a true hunter.

As a bonus, we saw four deer on the day we were out, all out of range for a bow and arrow. In addition to lacking stamina, I'm not sure I would have had the stomach to take the next step if one had come into range, so that was a blessing. ☺

Heart & Home
WITH
CHRISTA WOLF

