

Perceiving and becoming

By [Tim Graves](#)

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The clouds hung over the summit like a wet towel and, as if the bathroom fan were broken, my eyeglasses fogged up. My first hike to the top of Washington's Wind Mountain was ill-timed for taking in its views of the Columbia River Gorge, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Adams.

Though I appreciate new trails, I often visit the same trails multiple times. And so it was that two days after my initial hike I was back on this challenging though relatively short trail. Unless I'd time traveled between seasons, the weather could not have been more different. On my first journey my focus was on small details. A myriad of miniature suns lining the trail lifted my mood. The drops of rain collected on vegetation while moisture saturated my skin and clothing.

Conversely, my attention the second morning was drawn to expansive vistas peeking through tall trees. My yellow mini-suns seemed duller and fewer as Sol peeped through trees. Upon reaching the pinnacle of my journey, I arrived in a glass house affording phenomenal views of the river below and snowcapped mountains above.

Each journey afforded me perspectives I needed to intimately know my new friend, Wind Mountain. Both trips around switchbacks, under and over fallen trees, and along the rocky, muddy, and packed dirt surface taught me something about its character. While each perspective is true, neither one fully reflects the mountain. Two summer mornings spent with my new companion do not wholly inform me of the mountain's nature, either.

Approaching the 35th anniversary of our wedding, I know my wife better than any other human being. Yet, I do not know her thoroughly, nor she me. Part of the challenge in understanding and empathizing with others—even those we've known for decades—is that we are moving targets. I am not the same person at this moment as I will be this evening. Like Wind Mountain, we are each living, growing, and evolving life forms.

Change is inherent in our nature. If we are undistracted, we perceive it in ourselves, our relationships with one another, and with the divine. For many, it is in nature that this universal characteristic is most obvious.

Gaia, our living planet of which we are a part, is in the continual process of becoming. As part of the living body that is creation, we too are becoming. Consequently, as I re hike a trail or relate with my wife, we influence each other. We have a novel experience.

And, so, I wonder. I wonder why we insist on quantifying one another. Why do we label ourselves and others? When we label or quantify, we seek to define the indefinable. We seek to control the divine mystery, when all we can really do is be. All we can do is *be* present with each other. All we can do is *become* together.

Perhaps this is why each trek on a particular trail inspires me. Each pilgrimage affords me another opportunity to experience the essence that permeates all that is, the one I call God. Each hike is about being and becoming an integral part of the unfolding realm of extravagant love.

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