

Seeing the ends of the earth

By [Gretchen E. Ziegenhals](#)

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When our girls were still quite young, my husband Norm and I moved our family from our fast-paced life and work in Chicago to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where Norm had accepted a teaching position. Feeling a bit like Abraham and Sarah, we made a radical change of landscape.

We had no time to transition from the modern architecture of downtown Chicago to the seemingly empty prairies of Saskatchewan. While Norm drove the truck with our belongings, the girls and I simply got on a plane at O'Hare and landed at the tiny airport in Saskatoon, where I batted the gnats away from my face and breathed in the fragrant and strangely silent prairie air.

I learned about the power of landscape in my life.

I made a habit of tucking the girls in our stroller every day and walking the few minutes to the edge of town. I marveled that we were truly at the edge of something and nothing. Streaming north in front of us were only wide open sky and prairie. My girls had never seen a horizon. I told them that if we walked far enough, we would hit the North Pole.

This radically altered landscape in our lives, which we first thought of as emptiness, had much to teach us. We learned to be attentive to the small things--prairie dogs, wind in grass, Canadian geese. But we also learned more about our importance, our insignificance--and about the reflection of the creator in the wind, grass and sky.

"It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a

tent to live in." The words from Isaiah 40 echo the perspective that I felt in those days in Saskatoon. "Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?"

Today I spoke with a friend whose husband is struggling with a rare cancer, while her special-needs son requires much of her strength and patience. "I just want God to give me the big picture," she sighed. "I need to know that things will be alright in the long run."

I thought of the words of Isaiah: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable."

Sometimes being able to actually see the ends of the earth--or at least its edges--helps us acknowledge God's power.