

Stepping into the ocean and our beach vacation

After a long day of driving, we arrive at the beach.

The boys can't wait to get out of the car. They are excited to see their cousins, of course. But they also want to see the ocean.

Their Grandma and Grandpa are hard at work making dinner, and we could offer to help, but we would probably just be in the way. Besides, our boys are itching to run down to the sand—and dinner seems to be at least 20 minutes away.

We have time for a quick walk.

"OK," I say. "Let's go down to the beach. But we won't go in the water. We don't want to get wet." I don't want to be giving outdoor showers on our first night and miss dinner.

My sons happily agree, and we head out the door. They run ahead of me down the sidewalk, pausing for a moment when I call to them, and then sprinting off again.



We reach the sand, and I remind them that we aren't wearing swimsuits. "Just stay on the sand. We can go swimming tomorrow."

They agree—or I think they do—and then bound off through the sand. They are free of that long car ride, free of their regular routine, free of the shoes they've ditched in the sand, almost free of their mother who can't possibly keep up with them.

The sun is low in the sky, and the tide is coming in, moving closer and closer to them as they dance across the sand.

And that ocean? Oh, it's calling to them. Before I know it, both boys are galloping through the water, stomping and splashing. One of them falls in, and he jumps up, dripping and laughing.

I can't help but laugh, too. What kind of mother takes her children to the beach and thinks they can stay dry? Only a mother who's still trying to shift into vacation mode.

I watch our children romp and play, full of that first-day-at-the-beach excitement. There might be other people nearby, but I'm only aware of these two children, full of life, full of joy.

The beach is a place full of wonder. The ocean is magnificent, powerful, and moving with a rhythm all its own. Standing on the sand and looking out at the horizon, I can see only God's creation. And, as our boys laugh and shout and jump and splash, immersing themselves in nature, celebrating the moment, I feel the same way. These children are so fully His.

Too soon, perhaps, I announce we have to head back to the house. We gather our shoes and begin the walk back, a little wetter, a little sandier, and a little freer of the cares of ordinary lives.

The boys were right, I realize. To start this vacation right, we had to step into the ocean.