

# NOT WHAT HE EXPECTED

**J**EFF SCHALLICK SITS in a small trailer on the windswept plains of Wyoming, tracking chemicals and sand. Life after college hasn't been quite what he expected.

The crew is busy outside, servicing wells that draw natural gas from deep within the earth. "Hydraulic fracturing is high-pressure work," Jeff says, "mentally and chemically." Shifts are twelve hours long, two weeks on and one week off, alternating days and nights. Worksites shift from state to state, depending on the client, but just about all of them are remote.

Jeff spends lots of time in extended-stay hotels, wondering why God called him there.

As a chemical engineering student at the University of Pittsburgh and a CCO student leader, Jeff led outreach for his fellowship group, attended the CCO's Ocean City Beach Project, and participated in the CCO's first Jubilee Academy cohort. He's extroverted. He's sharp. And he's very thoughtful about the integration of his faith and work. "I really believe that work needs to be an act of worship," Jeff says, "because when it comes down to it, what

we do most of the time is work. If we don't see God in that, we miss out on a lot."

However, Jeff has realized that "a big part of my first job has been finding out that this isn't as easy as I imagined."

For example, Jeff cares deeply about God's creation. He understands the controversies surrounding hydraulic fracturing, but he also sees natural gas as a cleaner fossil fuel, a way to provide energy as we move toward renewable sources.

But Jeff often feels like a small cog in a huge machine. "Sometimes I fall into the rhythm of just keeping my nose to the grindstone," he says. "It's hard to remember the big picture."

And if work hasn't been everything he imagined, neither has his personal life. He works two out of every three weekends, so it's been hard to connect with a church community. His friends and family are on the other side of the country. Compared to college, life can be "utterly lonely."

"The straw that broke the camel's back was when I lost my girlfriend," he says. "It felt like God was taking everything away. I knew the 'right answers,' but you get tired of Christianese, of easy answers. I knew that people in the Bible prayed, 'Why, God?' So I decided to be honest with God."

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Answers did not come right away. Many have not come at all. Jeff still finds himself in a season of questions, but with honesty comes peace.

"One day I read this Gospel Coalition article," Jeff remembers, "and it was about trusting God as the 'better dreamer.' Like even when we have plans for our lives that seem to be trashed right now, they may not have been the best plans. In those moments, I turn it over to the better dreamer with the bigger view. God can dream a better future for me than what I can dream for myself."

As he keeps an eye out for God's big picture work in the world—and in his life—Jeff is determined to be faithful in his present calling.

First and foremost, he aims to be incredibly competent. "Even if I can't get answers to the big questions," he says, "I'm going to be competent and bless other people with excellent work." And when he remembers that God is with him and cares about the work he's doing, Jeff knows that he can pray about the details of his day—about handling a challenging co-worker, filing the paperwork he needs, or finding the best solution to a problem.

Jeff also prays about his interactions with crew members. As an engineer, he is second-in-command, but "I don't hold it over other people," he says. Instead he tries to ask questions, admit when he's wrong, and help out when he can. "Engineers can sometimes get cocky or standoffish," Jeff says, "but you can't beat experience out here."

In all of this, Jeff continues to learn. When he gets frustrated, he calls his mentor, CCO staff member Andy Moore, or one of his best friends from college. "Having unbiased people to process with is critical," he says. He's also working his way through a

couple of books—*Work Matters* by Tom Nelson, and *After College* by Erica Young Reitz—learning and relearning as he goes.

**'M JUST BEGINNING** to find God here," he says. "The root of the word *vocation* is *call*, something you listen for. It's easy to think that you just picked the wrong job and something is wrong with you, but what I really need to do is to maintain a posture of listening to God. That's how I find my way forward."

*Jeff Schallick graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2016 where he was involved with the CCO's Cornerstone Fellowship at Bellefield Presbyterian Church. Andy Moore has served as CCO staff at Bellefield since 2007.*

