

THE MOUNTAINS OF GOD

Mountain climbing can teach us a lot of discipleship principles. Our Christian walk is not just a short distance sprint, it is a long distance marathon – a mountain marathon. There are steep ascents, inevitable descents, but we must stick to the path, follow the guide, take regular compass (conscience) readings, consult the map (God's Word) and constantly re-evaluate our position and our progress, persevering to the end.

I have had the joy of hiking in the Cedarberg, the Drakensberg, Mount Mulanji in Malawi, the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, and of course Lions Head, Devils Peak and Table Mountain frequently.

All of my children, from as young as four years old, have hiked Lions Head and Table Mountain. Even very young children can undertake the great Christian adventure of Discipleship. It may be easier for those with long legs, but even by short steps we can get to the top of a great mountain.

The high points, in more ways than one, of our Great Commission Courses, are the mountain hikes, which we undertake at all times of day and night, and in all weather conditions. One of our principles is to never cancel a hike (or an outreach) because of adverse weather conditions. Of course, it is easier to climb in good weather, in pleasant temperature and with perfect visibility. However, when duty calls we need to be willing to climb in fog and mist, rain and storm. In such times of high winds and pouring rain it is even more imperative that we stick to the guide – always within sound of his guiding voice and within reach of his helping hand. We need to trust in the guide, even in the dark and the mist.

Of course, there are always those stragglers who lag far behind, go astray and get lost. There are also some who race ahead of the guide and get into trouble, wasting time by going down the wrong path. Sometimes these necessitate search parties to bring them back.

Mountain climbs can be very dangerous. We need to be well prepared, with tough boots, jerseys for cold weather, rain jackets for wet weather, alert for danger, and conscious of weather changes. We need to understand the times and know what we need to do in every circumstance

We need to carry enough food and water, and First Aid supplies for any eventuality. Mountain climbers also need flashlights. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

The Mountains of God recorded in the Bible point us to many high points in God's providential history and provide us with vital insights to a dynamic discipleship walk with the Lord.

The mountains of **Ararat** (Genesis 8:4) remind us that God is a just and holy God. He hates evil and He judges wickedness. However, He graciously provides salvation for His people. The Ark that God commanded Noah to build is symbolic of the salvation we can enjoy in Christ. However we need to note that there was only one Ark and only one door

to the Ark. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6).

We should also notice that, just as God did not save Noah from the Flood, but protected him in the Flood, God does not save us from all our troubles, but He saves us through them. After a tumultuous year, the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And immediately God provided work for Noah and his family. He gave them principles for government and a promise. Every time we see a rainbow we are reminded of God's Covenant with Noah and his descendants.

Mount **Moriah** (Genesis 22:2) reminds us of the sacrifice that Abraham was called to make. Abraham was commanded to offer his own son to the Lord. Abraham and Sarah had miraculously conceived Isaac way past childbearing age. God had promised that all the families of the nations would be blessed through his descendants, who would be as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the sand of the seashore. Now he was commanded to sacrifice his only son!

Yet, Abraham loved God so much that he was willing to do this. He trusted God so implicitly that he immediately obeyed the Word of God. Mount Moriah reminds us that we may not always understand God's will, but we can trust it, and we must obey it. As Abraham so prophetically said on Mount Moriah: ***"God Himself will provide a Lamb."*** And God did provide for Isaac then, and He has provided for us in, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ who is ***"The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."*** John 1:29. God expects full surrender and unquestioning obedience.

Mount **Horeb** (Exodus 3:1-2) reminds us of the life-changing encounter which Moses had with Jehovah God in the Burning Bush. Through the ingenuity and courage of his mother, Moses had survived the death sentence of pharaoh against all the male Hebrew infants. Adopted by the daughter of pharaoh, raised in privilege, the throne of Egypt was not beyond his reach. Yet, Moses rejected the riches and pleasures of Egypt and chose rather to suffer with the people of God.

In exile he saw the Burning Bush. ***"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground...I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying...I am concerned...I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land...so now, go, I am sending you to pharaoh to bring My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt...I will be with you...I Am who I Am."*** Exodus 5-14

God hears the prayers of His people. God sees their distress. And He called, equipped and empowered Moses to command pharaoh to let His people go. Here on Mount Horeb we see that God calls and He sends. We are called to service. We are saved to serve.

At Mount **Sinai** (Exodus 19:11-23) we see that God is holy. God's people are called to be consecrated, set apart, to proclaim His Word to all nations. At Mount Sinai God writes, with His own finger, on tablets of stone, His Law. As the Psalmist David celebrated: ***"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."*** As the Apostle Paul wrote: ***"The Law is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ."***

“What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees...for your own good.”
Deuteronomy 10:12-13

The Lord commanded the children of Israel: ***“To proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses”*** of the Law (Deuteronomy 11:29). The curses of disobeying the Law of God were proclaimed on Mount **Ebal** (Deuteronomy 27:14-26). The blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience are fully listed out in Deuteronomy 28. The mountains of Ebal and Gerizim remind us of the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience to the Word of God ***“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now chose life so that you and your children may live.”*** Deuteronomy 30:19

Mount **Carmel** (1 Kings 18:19) reminds us of the Prophet Elijah’s courageous confrontation of the evil false prophets of Baal. Elijah challenged them to a contest before the whole nation of Israel. They would each build an altar, and pray to their god, and the one who answered with fire would be recognised as the true God. The 480 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah, called upon Baal from morning until noon, shouting and dancing and cutting themselves with knives until their blood flowed. Yet, despite their frantic prophesying there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah repaired the Altar of the Lord, arranged wood, placed meat on it, and had large jars of water poured over the offering and the wood repeatedly. Then, at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed: ***“Oh Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel...so these people will know that You, Oh Lord, are God, and that You are turning their hearts back again.”*** 1 Kings 18:36-37

Then the Fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil and evaporated all the water in the trench. When the people saw this they fell face down on the ground and cried out: ***“The Lord – He is God! The Lord – He is God!”***

We need to repair the altar and restore true worship ***“in spirit and in Truth.”*** The stones remind us of the Bible doctrines we must know. The wood on the altar reminds us that we need more than knowledge in our head, we need faith in our heart. The meat that Elijah laid on the wood reminded us that we need to live the Truth. We need flesh on the bones of our doctrine. We need to put feet to our faith. The water poured over the sacrifice on the altar reminded us of the ministry of prayer. We need to pray the faith.

However, while there were two altars, only one had the fire.

When did the fire fall? When the altar was repaired, when the sacrifice was offered, when the water was poured and when the prayer of faith was made. Where is the fire in your life?

Mount **Hermon** (Mark 9:2) reminds us of the transfiguration of Christ. The Lord Jesus had taken ***“Peter, James and John with Him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There He was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white...and there appeared before them Elijah and Moses who were talking with Jesus...Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them and a voice came from the cloud: ‘This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!’”*** Mark 9:2-7

Mount Hermon reminds us of who Jesus really is. That if we love Him we will obey His commands. Obedience is an essential part of true worship.

Of greatest importance is the atonement which Christ achieved for us on Mount **Calvary**. In the Cross we see that God is holy, He hates sin. But we also see in His provision of **“the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”** that God loves us and He is merciful and provides for our Redemption. **“God Himself will provide the Lamb.”**

And lastly, we must look at Mount **Olivet** (Acts 1:12) from where our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven. Before ascending He gave the Great Commission to be our supreme ambition. Henceforth His last command must be our first concern. To make disciples, to teach obedience to all things whatsoever He has commanded us. Here on Mount Olivet we see the fulfilment and completion of our Lord Jesus' first mission on earth. However, we are assured that He will return again in Judgement, as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, to judge the living and the dead.

Through these peaks of Revelation we gain progressive insight into the Word of God and clearer guidance for His work. We see that God judges sin but He provides for the salvation of His people. We see the necessity of obedience and sacrifice, and that God calls His people to service. God can be encountered and experienced. God is holy, He hates evil. We reap what we sow. There are consequences for our sin, but God rewards faithfulness and obedience. There are times when we need to be courageous and bold, to stand up, to step out and to speak out, fighting the good fight of Faith. We can't live on mountain tops, but we need to climb mountain peaks to gain proper perspective and inspiration for the battles in the valley. God hates sin, but He loves us and He has conquered sin, death, hell and the grave. He has risen and He has ascended victorious with all authority, power and dominion in Heaven and on earth. He will return to judge the living and the dead.

How are you doing on this mountain marathon in your adventure of discipleship? Are you sticking to God's path, following His Holy Spirit, listening to your conscience, consulting the map of His Word? Do not straggle behind. Keep close to the Guide, never turn back, never give up. Persevere and endure across all the mountain tops that God will lead you over.

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring Good News, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation...your God reigns!”
Isaiah 52:7

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