

# Mountains and Their Blessings

“The mountains are calling and I must go.” John Muir

There’s something about a mountain. From the breathtaking beauty of a mountain peak, to the view of the valleys below, they do something to you. God uses mountains in the scriptures and in our treks in the outdoors to illustrate his power, to show us about faith, and to bless his people in many ways.

The mountains of the nation of Israel are for the most part barren of trees and grass, but they have their points of inspiration. There is a monastery still on the heights of the Mount of Temptation, above the area where Jesus was tempted and overcame the devil. And Mount Hermon in modern times, far to the north, has snow year round.

The mountains of the Carolinas and Virginia are often filled with trees and green undergrowth. They rise high toward the heavens, and moments of inspiration begin as we travel toward them, or even climb toward their summits.

Some of my highest times of faith have happened in the mountains. Youth retreats, church trips, family vacations, and study leave seem to happen best in the mountains. They are one of those thin places, where heaven and earth seem to come together. And God speaks there in ways we may not be able to hear in other locations.

We can give people blessings mixed with mountain metaphors. May you have a mountainous day! May you find God in the mountains. And this one, from Edward Abbey, “May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. “

Sometimes the best place to be blessed by mountains is in solitary moments when there is no one there but you and God. As the views unfold, as wildlife happens by, or as you simply meditate on the God who made them, new worlds are revealed.

At other times we climb together, lifted up by the companionship, skill, and spirit of our friends or family. The church is like this, and must always be climbing upward, never satisfied with walking on the ordinary earth. We must plan to walk with God, and God really has powerful messages to share in the mountains.

“You don’t climb mountains without a team,” writes Mark Udall. “You don’t climb mountains without being fit, you don’t climb mountains without being prepared and you don’t climb mountains without balancing the risks and rewards. And you never climb a mountain [by] accident - it has to be intentional.”

Mountains are not always the physical peaks and ridges. Wherever we are, we can find mountaintop experiences which God has in store for us. When we are really blessed by a

worship time, when we find a spiritual insight from God's word, or when God draws near in the midst of a difficult moment. All these and more can involve God's spiritual alpine adventures.

It is very important to see that mountains can look very different at the various stages of our lives. They are much taller when we are children. They are fun to climb and exercise on when we are teens or young adults. And they are just a source of the presence and wonder of God when we are older. Generations behind us travelled over the mountains inch by inch on Conestoga Wagons. We zoom through the tunnels and race along interstates which have been blasted through those same mountains today.

“If one tries to think about history, it seems to me - it's like looking at a range of mountains. And the first time you see them, they look one way. But then time changes, the pattern of light shifts. Maybe you've moved slightly, your perspective has changed. The mountains are the same, but they look very different.” ~ Robert Harr

Look for the shifts and movements of the mountains God allows you to see in your life. Move mountains with faith like the grain of a mustard seed. Find the ups and downs to be blessings instead of banes. See God's mountains from up close.

Visit the mountains this fall if you are able. If you like computers, look at them on 3-d tours or in photographs online. Pick up a book on the mountains of the world. Buy or borrow a book on God in the process of moving mountains for his people.

Ask God's empowerment to be able to see mountains as blessings. Remember past mountain visits and find the joy which comes from being lifted just a little higher.

“When I wake up every morning,” songwriter and singer Carole King says, “I smile and say, 'Thank you.' Because out of my window I can see the mountains, then go hiking with my dog and share her bounding joy in the world.

Mountains can be blessings. Happy climbing!