

Mountain Top & Valley Flop

I. Slide#1 Announce:

- A. Baby dedications 2nd & 3rd.
- B. Changes:
- C. **Richy** - Jn.4:23,24 says, But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.
 - 1. I've asked Richy to move **full time** into the role of raising up worship leaders.
 - 2. He's proved himself & his giftings over & over in raising up young worship leaders.
 - 3. He will continue with the leading of HS worship...but also helping identify & raise up Jr High youth as well.
 - 4. He will help out the other ministries in our church that need worship leaders.
 - 5. And, also help us out in the sanctuary as our Service Coordinator.
- D. **Andrew Paulson** - is a teacher at Paloma Valley HS. He teaches AP Human Geography.
 - 1. He will be overseeing our High School Ministry.
 - 2. I prayed specifically for him, thinking that it was an impossible feat. As I knew he loved what he does, both in teaching & coaching basketball. But asked anyways :)
 - 3. AP brings to the table a giftedness in discipling/coordinating with our volunteers.

II. Intro:

- A. Last week we had the radical revelation that Jesus was the Christ/Messiah (8:29)
 - 1. 6 days have passed since Peter tried to barricade Christ from His Cross, now we have before us the Dress Rehearsal of Jesus' 2nd Coming, in all His splendor.
- B. Slide#2 Show *Ladovico Carracci Transfiguration Painting*.
- C. This week we get to experience a mountain high & valley low.
 - 1. The Christian life is full of hills & valleys - Deut.11:11 the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven.
 - a) If you want to share in the glory of Christ on the mountain top, we must be willing to follow him into the sufferings of the valley below.
 - b) Mountain top experiences are great, but remember no fruit grows up there; all the fruit is grown down in the valley.
- D. Slide#3 Title/Outline: Mountain Top (2-13) & Valley Flop (14-29)
- E. Prayer: Moses asked, Please, show me Your Glory.
- F. Slide#4 I went to Mammoth on Mon, got acclimated, did a 10 m. hike on Tues, to 10,700'.

1. **Explain:** times I had to slow down(oxygen); **thrill** of being alone w/God in His backyard; **the** time when I found out I wasn't alone(dog) **Slide#5**; **ominous** clouds rolling in **Slide#6**; **most** beautiful trout (browns/golden's).
2. Just as high altitude transforms a landscape in the **physical** world, **so does** real prayer in the **spiritual** realm.
 - a) You climb to the top, & things you thought so **massive**, are now so **puny**.
Other objects you greatly **underestimated** look **very impressive** now.
3. **So spiritually**, this morning we get a **God's-eye view** of life, of death, & of glory.
4. From **the mountain-top of secret prayer**, we gain insight of the hardships & frustrations of **Valley life**.

III. **Slide#7 MOUNTAIN TOP (1-13)**

- A. **Slide#8 THE MOUNTAIN (2)**
- B. (2) **Which mountain?** – Mnt's were often special places of revelation in Scripture.
 1. Tradition says **Mnt. Tabor** – but it is a low mountain, 1,843'.
 - a) **Plus at the time** there was a Roman fortress during this period at the top.
 2. A more likely location **Mnt. Hermon** – it's the highest mnt in the whole region 9,400'.
 - a) It also sits just north of **Caesarea Philippi** where they are traveling from.
 - b) So 6 days travel & they find themselves *"on top of the world looking down on creation."*
- C. **Slide#9 THE GLORY (3)**
- D. (3) **His Transfiguration** – Here Jesus' 3 closest disciples are given a brief glimpse of **His glory**.
 1. Matthew & Luke say his **face** changed. All 3 recognize the **clothes**.
 2. **Transfigured** = *a change on the outside that comes from the inside*.
 - a) The opposite is **Masquerade** = *outward change that doesn't come from w/in.* (www)
 3. Here comes dazzling proof that God indeed does transform **suffering** into **Glory**.
 4. It was an experience given to strengthen Him & them for the dark days to come.
 - a) **How does your Sunday Worship experience prepare you for the frustrations & challenges of weekday life?**
- E. **Slide#10 THE EXTRATERRESTRIALS (4)**
- F. (4) **Why Moses & Elijah?** [Moses had been dead 1400 years; Elijah 900 years]
 1. **Both** these men had previously **conversed w/God** on mountaintops.
 - a) **Moses** on Mnt. Sinai (Ex.31:18); **Elijah** on Mnt. Horeb [Sinai's whole mnt range] (1 Kings 19:9).
 2. **Both** had been shown **God's glory**.
 3. Moses represented the Law, & Elijah the Prophets.
 4. **Both** had amazing **departures** from earth.
 - a) **Moses** died & was buried by God; **Elijah** was raptured up into heaven in a flaming chariot.

- b) When Jesus returns He will **raise** the bodies of the saints who died, & will **rapture** the living saints.
- G. They were talking w/Jesus about His **decease** (death/departure) Lk.9:31.
1. I used to think, “what a **theological** conversation that must have been?”
Now I think, “what a **relational** conversation that must have been?”
 - a) When facing the hardest thing in your life, you want *perseverance, encouragement, hope, promises*, not terms & definitions.
 - b) His Suffering would not be an **Accident**, but an **Accomplishment**.
 - c) They came to encourage Him to “**Go On!**”
- H. **Slide#11 THE SLEEPY TRIO** (5,6)
- I. (5) The 3 disciples fell asleep(Lk.9:32) & almost missed Moses & Elijah, & Jesus in His glory.
Can you imagine missing that?
 1. **But**, with the altitude, long walk, & long prayer meeting...they were tired.
 - J. 3 Tabernacles - Peter may have been thinking of the Feast of Booths/ingathering, long associated with the coming kingdom. Peter seemed to have assumed that the kingdom had arrived.
 - K. (6) Peter wakes up & didn't know what to say...so he said something??
 1. Ever fall into that trap?
 2. If there was a time to be **silent** it was now.
 - L. **Slide#12 THE CLOUD COVER** (7)
 - M. (7) **Cloud cover** – This was none other then the **shekinah glory**, that manifestation of the presence of God. (Heb. *Kabod* - Gk. *doxa*)
 1. The cloud by day, fire by night in the wilderness.
That cloud that passed by Moses in the cleft of the rock.
The same cloud that filled the Tabernacle, & filled Solomon's' Temple.
 - a) It has been 600 years since anyone has seen the **shekinah glory**.
 2. One day we will be **in** this same cloud...Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them **in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thes.4:17
 - N. **Hear Him** – Peter spoke out of turn...the Father cuts him off.
 1. Listening involves obedience.
 - a) When your mother used to ask you, “**Did you hear me?**” she wasn't asking a question about your hearing ability, but about your **obedience**.
 2. What happened on the Mnt. of Transfiguration was a confirmation of Peter's testimony...“**You are the Christ!**”
 - a) **Confirmed:** by who showed up, Moses & Elijah; by Jesus' glory; by the Father speaking.
 - (1) But also it was a revelation of the **glory** of the **cross**.

3. Here **the Father** focuses **not on the vision, but on the Word of God...hear Him!**
 - a) **Slide#13** Peter never forgot that voice – 2 Pet.1:16-18 NLT For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.” We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.
- O. **Slide#14** THEY SAW NO ONE, ONLY JESUS (8)
- P. They saw no one anymore, but only Jesus – That’s key.
 1. This is the test of any vision.
 2. Virgin Mary sightings? One question Who does it promote?
 - a) **Most often**, Mary/the Rosary/praying a certain prayer regarding her esteem.
 3. This is what all our **experience**, all our **theology**, all our **work** should come to – *seeing only Jesus!*
- Q. **Slide#15** THE COMING OF ELIJAH (9-13)
- R. Seeing **Elijah** it hastened a question about him(11).
 1. **i.e.** How did You(Jesus) show up before Him?
 2. **Elijah is coming** – Mal.4:5.
 3. **Elijah had come** – in the person of John the Baptist (Mt.17:13).
- S. Peter, learned he couldn’t camp out there in his mountain top pup-tent...there was work to be down in the valley.
 1. As I said, If you want to share in the **glory** of Christ on the mountain top, we must be willing to follow Him into the **sufferings** of the valley below.

IV. **Slide#16 VALLEY FLOP (14-29)**

- A. **Slide#17** THE CONTRAST (14-16)
- B. What a **contrast** we have here.
 1. From Glory to Shame; Mountain top to the Valley floor; Light to Darkness; Power to Helplessness.
- C. **See Raphael’s Transfiguration Painting**
 1. Raphael captured the overwhelming **contrast** between the glorious Mnt of Trans & the troubled world waiting below.
- D. (15) **Greatly amazed** – Was his countenance different like Moses when he came down from Sinai w/face aglow?
- E. **Slide#18** THE BOY (17,18)
- F. (17,18) Poor young boy – He was deaf, mute, epileptic, & demon possessed.

1. “A cruel spirit lies in wait for him like a bully waiting to pounce on a kid coming home from school. It sneaks up on the boy, jumps him from behind, & mashes his face into the dirt – all the while, delighting in the tyranny.” (Max Lucado)
2. Like a lion he singles out the youngest, most vulnerable one, & ruthlessly runs him down.

G. Slide#19 THE FAILURE (18b,19)

H. Their failure to heal the boy: a) grieved the Lord b) gave support to the enemy c) robbed God of glory.

1. Their problem was **unbelief**. They had the tools (6:7 **power**)
2. When will you get it? Jesus asks.
3. Fitting words for the church today – *We are so well equipped, rich, instructed...& yet so powerless.*

I. Slide#20 THE FATHER (21,22)

J. Imagine being in the fathers shoes - While others were teaching their sons a **trade**, he was just trying to keep his son **alive**.

1. He couldn't leave his son alone for a minute. Who knew when the next attack would come?
2. His father remained on call, on alert, 24/7. [Caregivers can relate]
3. He was desperate, tired, & his prayers reflect both.
 - a) He drops to his knees (Mt.17:14)

K. Jesus draws the father out - Allowing him to **unburden** himself.

1. Prov.20:5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out.
2. This would help him also to recognize the **desperate extremity** of his boy's plight.

L. Slide#21 THE MISPLACED “IF” (22,23)

M. The misplaced “If” – The tense implies **doubt**. (i.e.) “this one's probably a little out of your league...but if you can...”.

1. Jesus turns it back on the father “If you can believe”?
2. His **unbelief** needed to be healed 1st, & thus was more important than **the demon possession**.
3. Like this man, we often see an **if** in relation to our problems. And we too put it in the wrong place. “**If Jesus can help me overcome this sinful habit.**” “**If He can change my life.**” No, the real issue is, **if** we can believe, He both **can** and **will** respond.
 - a) Don't misplace your **if** & put it on Jesus, wear it yourself.
 - b) Is there something you know is God's will for your life but you have doubts? Then maybe you've misplaced your **if**.

N. Slide#22 THE MOST HONEST PRAYER (24)

O. Lord I believe help my unbelief – 1 of the most honest men in all the bible.

1. “Help me to **understand**. And where I can’t **understand**, help me to **trust**. And where I *can’t* **trust**, help me to **overcome my unbelief**.”¹
2. Jesus was saying, “the working of this miracle depends on your faith, not on my power alone.” (other times Jesus just did it not dependent on their faith)
 - a) Don’t you warm to this man’s raw honesty, for **our faith** is *always mixed with unbelief*.
3. I agree with Max Lucado when he said, **Some of you pray like a Concorde jet** – smooth, sleek, high, and mighty. Your words reverberate in the clouds and send sonic booms throughout the heavens. If you pray like a Concorde, I salute you. If you don’t, I understand. Maybe you’re like me, more a **cropduster** than a Concorde. You aren’t flashy, you fly low, you seem to cover the same ground a lot, and some mornings It’s tough to get the old engine cranked up.
 - a) Yah, more often we come more like a **crippled lamb** coming to a **shepherd** than a **proud lion** roaring in the jungle.

P. Slide#23 THE GREAT COMFORT (25-27)

Q. And enter him no more – those words must have brought such great comfort to the father.

R. (26) The demon put up one last vicious fight & took out his spite on the boy as he left.

1. The Redeemer returns the stolen goods to their rightful owner.

S. Slide#24 THE LOST POWER (29)

T. The 9 disciples had neglected their spiritual disciplines & lost their power. (see 6:7)

1. Maybe they thought since they were given the power they would just do this in their own strength? Thus they didn’t think to **pray**.
2. *Jesus was teaching them that the **faith** which brings **power** is a **faith that prays**.*
3. **Prayer** is the vital link (fasting is not in most manuscripts) between the transforming power on the mountain top & the desperate needs in the valley.
4. For them as for us... *“Prayerlessness leads to Powerlessness.”*
5. Do you spend too much time in **discussion** (14) & too little time in **prayer**? (29)

U. An organist was getting ready to play as the service began. When he put his hands in the keys there was no sound. Everyone knew something was wrong, so the preacher quickly got up and led in a prayer. The janitor was aware of the fact that they hadn’t plugged in the organ. So we went over there during the prayer, plugged in the organ, wrote a note, and handed it to the organist. The note said, *“after the **prayer** the **power** will be on.”*

1. Slide#25 That’s right, isn’t it? *“After the **prayer**, the **power** will be on.”* (Vines, Mark)

¹ Ken Gire, Incredible Moments, pg. 78.