

AN ELEVATED PERSPECTIVE
Pastor Stuart Farquhar – 11 September

Today I want to speak about the direction of our prayers and our praise

It is commonly thought and perceived by individuals that prayer and praise must go in the direction of God. When we speak and sing in a spiritual or religious context, then God is exalted through these acts of worship

Two weeks ago I taught from the Word of God, that not all prayers are received and heard by God.

Prayer, praise and worship is not a “switch on, switch off” event. When we meet together as a body, then the body must bring its sacrifice as a unit as we read in **Romans 12 vs 1 – 2**. This is the culmination of the lifestyle effort of a transformed and renewed mind in Christ Jesus.

Only when you have overcome in your individual lifestyle, can you contribute to the collective body dynamic

Paul says that only when this happens can you enter into true and proper worship which is acceptable and pleasing to God

Paul writes further in Hebrews 12:1-3 as if to embellish this point, by writing;

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

It is a common trend in the bible that God commands His chosen subjects to come up to Him or to come closer to Him.

This could be that God desires to speak privately to the individual or because man is “insufficiently transformed” in heart and mind

Both Moses (Exodus 3: 5) and Joshua (Joshua 5: 15) were told that the presence of and vicinity of their meeting with God was holy ground. To show respect, they were required to remove their sandals and stand on bare feet. This was ordered by God during these meetings

Another sign of respect when talking to God was to look up, to lift your head in the presence of God. Looking down was a sign of disrespect, as if the individual had something to hide. Strangely enough, earthly kings required the opposite, that their subjects were required not to look upon them or their wife and children

Psalm 121 (NIV)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 24 (NIV)

¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; ² for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. ³ Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. ⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. ⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob. Selah ⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. ⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. ¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty— he is the King of glory.

Have you ever wondered what the purpose was of mountains in God's meticulous planning?

Over and above all the obvious geographical and topographical reasons, have you ever considered the spiritual significance that mountain experiences play in your lives!

What looking up does is to give you a new perspective! It is a life changing experience! To discover yourself in the context of the cosmos! To examine yourself against the backdrop at the evening sky!

God told Abraham to come out of his tent and to look up in order to see his inheritance. We read in Genesis 15:1-6

¹ After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." ² But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."

⁵ He took him outside (God changed his perspective, his viewpoint) and said, "Look up (broaden your vision) at the heavens and count (Blessings) the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD (JOHN 3: 16) and he credited it to him as righteousness (Stood with God)

SO THEN, WHO AM I?

Psalm 8 says (NIV)

¹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. ³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: ⁷ all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

We know the role that mountains play in nature in changing the direction of weather, trapping clouds and holding precipitation in the form of snow, but these mountains in their physical form have a direct bearing on each of us in many other avenues of our lives, least of all our spiritual focus

People climb mountains for many different reasons. All these reasons are symbolic of

- a) Most obviously, because it's there to climb
- b) Because they can and they want to

- c) To find solitude away from the maddening crowds
- d) For the views
- e) For inspiration

Some people climb mountains to find themselves as a philosopher would, or to complete a climb as a conqueror would! Whatever their reason would be, it is their personal drive and objective

Here is another unique take on mountains as seen through the eyes of a philosopher John Dewey

Maxwell Droke once wrote of a conversation with John Dewey (a great philosopher) several months before his ninetieth birthday, where a young doctor blurted out his low opinion of philosophy.

“What’s the good of such claptrap?” he asked. “Where does it lead you?”

The great philosopher answered quietly, “The good of it is that you climb mountains.”

“Climb mountains retorted the youth, unimpressed. “And what’s the use of doing that?”

“You see other mountains to climb,” was the reply. “You come down, climb the next mountain, and see still others to climb.”

Then, putting his hand gently on the young man’s knee, Dewey said, “When you are no longer interested in climbing mountains to see other mountains to climb, life is over.”

John Dewey contended that people climb mountains to see other mountains. He further contends that when the drive to see and conquer other mountains dries up, life ends

Dewey is relating of course, the physical or natural drive within man to conquer mountains as his personal ambition to overcome the human or spiritual obstacles which he is confronted with daily

We see that as a man climbs, the further he goes up, the wider becomes the scope of his vision.

Not only does he now see his circumstances more clearly, but now he also sees new and different obstacles which he will and needs to challenge and overcome

These mountain experiences are either self initiated or pre-ordained. Either way they must be confronted. Every time we overcome one mountain experience we need to immediately equip ourselves to deal with the next one

Dewey says that we literally and symbolically climb these mountains to overcome them. His view as a philosopher is that they are in our lives, so confront them.

Be at peace with yourself as you tackle them in the knowledge that each one has to be overcome, or your life surrenders to it and you fizzle out and die

Of course, here again we are not only talking about the physical death after having conquered your mountain experiences, but also to those people who do not have the power and drive to overcome them and thereby lead a dull and stillborn life. They are dead and may or may not know it!

Paul refers to this as life’s race which must be completed, according to the rules by running straight. At times however, you may need to go up in order to go straight again

I am certain that you can now see where I am going with this train of thought!

In **Psalm 133:3** we read; ³ *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.*

This is a very significant scripture as it relates directly to the plans of God for mankind on the earth which we receive later through the birth of Jesus Christ and accomplished through the transfiguration in Matthew 17 on this very same mountain.

Psalm 133 refers to the common unity among men as a prerequisite for spiritual anointing. We see that this anointing bestows eternal life to all men who believe and surrender to it.

This high mountain, one of three in a range of mountains in the north of Israel (Syria) supplies such large amounts of water that it is a source of moisture for the dry and arid lands below. Precipitation in the form of snow is constantly evident on the high peaks (about 10000 feet or 3800m) and as the sun bakes the snow, the dew runs down through the sandstone and forms a river which we know to be the mighty Jordan. This same river runs from the high mountain peaks in the North right down to level plains in the South of Israel

Similarly, the blessings of God flow to His people. The intent of God is for the good of His people in this life and in the life to come. Even in our sinfulness, the blessings flow as we read in Exodus 16: 13

As we know from history the people of Israel rarely achieved the level of unity, nor the associated level of blessing which is described in this scripture!

Ultimately, this is a portrait of the kingdom of God. One day there will be the spiritual unity of God's people.

Here is a mountain range which is visible to all who live in Israel. In this desert country, its high mountain peaks are covered with snow almost all year round! The purpose of this mountain is not obvious to many until they discover its crucial importance to the cycle of life throughout Israel. Without this continuous source of water, Israel would not be the land of "milk and honey" as described in Genesis and Exodus

Of course, not many people would climb its high peaks! Why would they?

One man did climb it for a very important purpose. For the experience, He took three of His friends with Him

¹ *After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.* ² *There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.* ³ *Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.* ⁴ *Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."* ⁵ *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* ⁶ *When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.* ⁷ *But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."* ⁸ *When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.* ⁹ *As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." Matthew 17:1-9 (NIV)*

We know this to be the place because at the time of this event, Jesus was ministering at Caesarea Philippi which is near the foot of Mount Hermon

Jesus and three of His disciples climbed up this mountain to hear from God.

Not only was it a daunting prospect to climb this high mountain, but then to be subjected to the power and majesty of God Almighty.

Jesus went up the mountain out of obedience to face the circumstances of His calling!

From this lesson, we can identify with a number of characteristics relating to what the four went through on this mountain;

- 1) There are times when we must go up the mountain

²⁰ The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up (Exodus 19:20 (NIV))

³⁸ At the LORD's command Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor, where he died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. Numbers 33:38 (NIV)

⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. Psalm 95:4 (NIV)

¹ In the last days the mountain (Zion) of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Micah 4:1 (NIV)

² In the last days the mountain (Zion) of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Isaiah 2:2 (NIV)

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up (Mt Olivet) before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ Men of Galilee, they said, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11 (NIV)

- 2) Expect the unexpected when you find yourself on the mountain!
- 3) Do you know why you are on the mountain?
- 4) You are never alone on the mountain!
- 5) Are you on the right mountain?
- 6) You will receive instructions when you are there!

Of course, you could be on the right mountain or the wrong mountain for that matter, for the wrong reasons

When we look at the mountain, we see our need in its proper perspective. We may feel that we are totally alone in our circumstances at the time, but only surrender in obedience can open our eyes