



# T H E M O U N T A I N

The Mountain | *I Didn't Come to Take Part; I Came to Take Over* | Chad Bruegman | 8.27.17

LG Weekly

## START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

**Do you remember going back to school shopping as a kid? Share something you remember buying (clothes, school supplies, sports equipment, etc.) that you were really excited about!**

## SHARE

Mountains...from a distance, are beautiful, majestic and seem so silent when you sit and stare at them, however, when you embark on a journey up the side of one you begin to experience a whole new world.

Throughout the Bible, God has revealed himself to people on mountainsides. In this series we will look at a few of those stories and what God wanted to show his people. God's purposes prevail. At times we see Him reveal his glory, might and power. Other times, he calls, restores, promises, leads and challenges. As we study these stories and learn more about God's character and love for us, let's not just ingest more information, but ask God:

*Given what I am learning about you God, what is it you are showing me and how do I need to respond to your leading in my life?*

Up on the heights of the mountain, you are stripped of vanity and brought to a place of decision. It is a place where you are tested. The mountain will demand all of you at times—as the mountain humbles the proud—but, if willing, God wants to reveal himself more and more to you and to each of us.

One of the most memorable mountain-top stories in the entire Bible is the epic showdown on Mt. Carmel between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal. This week, Chad spoke about this intense face-off and the experience Elijah had on the mountain getting to witness the Lord's provision in such a powerful way. The story seems like a scene straight out of a tribal war movie—the endless taunting and trash-talking, the gruesome sacrifices, the mass amounts of false prophets flailing about, and the fire ball being unleashed from heaven. But the high-pressure events on Mt. Carmel take on even more weight when we consider that the whole ordeal is a desperate effort to end a three-year drought.

Since the kingdom divided after Solomon's reign (becoming Israel and Judah around 975 A.D), the nation of Israel had been ruled by evil kings, whose sins and idol worship "aroused the anger of the Lord." Ahab, the seventh king of Israel did more evil than all the kings before him.

### **Read 1 Kings 16:30-33**

Ahab pursued idol after idol and constantly led the people of Israel astray. His marriage to the Phoenician princess, Jezebel, opened the door to even more foreign gods—Baal and Asherah. The Lord's anger rose at the nation's dependence on these worthless idols and the divided hearts of the people until finally, the Lord allowed drought and famine to plague the nation. He had had it with their fickle love and forgetfulness. Even though the Israelites knew their heritage and could tell of all the Lord had done to save them, they instead cried out to false gods and worshiped whatever or whoever they thought would save them.

**What "idols" do you think our culture worships?**

**In seasons of metaphorical drought or famine, why do we, like the Israelites, tend to forget all God has done in the past to provide and look for other sources of hope?**

**Are you more likely to go searching for other idols like King Ahab or be led astray by someone else's idols like the Israelites?**

### **G R O W**

The reality that we, as humans, craft idols for ourselves—expecting other things to offer comfort, relief, and hope—is not a surprise to our Creator, nor is the temptation to have a divided heart. Elijah confronts the people of Israel on this same condition in the following verses:

## **Read 1 Kings 18:20-22**

Elijah asks, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” There is no reason why Israel should have had to struggle to make up her mind. The evidence was in! The Lord, the God of Israel had shown himself time and time again to be faithful and powerful beyond reason—but despite it all, the people kept searching for other things in which to place their trust. Elijah was the only prophet of the Lord left whose heart remained wholly devoted to the Lord.

Remember the Lord’s first two commandments in Exodus 20? *“You shall have no other Gods before me,”* and *“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything...?”* And what about the greatest commandment in Deuteronomy 6 and Matthew 22? *“Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart.”*

Purity of heart, that we be wholly devoted to the Lord and God alone, is of upmost importance to God. Many of the Mosaic and Levitical laws—prohibiting the mixing of seed, animals, or yarn, for example (see Deut. 22:9-11)—were in place for just that reason. These commands and the effort the Israelites took to ensure they were not broken meant they were constantly reminded of their promise to be undivided. They had agreed to be all in for the Lord and to love and serve him only! Therefore, they could not be double-minded and there could be no mixture between good and evil. In order to receive the blessing of relationship, the Lord required 100% of his people’s love. The stipulations served as a tangible reminder that the Lord, the God of Israel, demands he be worshipped alone. No other idols can be in the running for the attention and love of our hearts.

Humanity’s duplicitous tendencies are brought to light all throughout Scripture as authors in the Old and New Testament warn of the dangers of having a divided heart.

## **See Psalm 199:13, Isaiah 29:13, Luke 16:13 or 1 Corinthians 10:20-22**

The warnings against humanity’s tendencies to be double-minded were needed then and they are still needed now. Just look at the way marriage and relationships are viewed from the world’s perspective today. Exclusivity in relationship is becoming a rarity while polyamorous relationships, the practice of loving multiple people, are rising rapidly in Western civilization. Vows of total loyalty are abandoned or laughed at. Why would we need to be exclusive when there’s so much out there with the power to please, the ability to gratify our cravings, and capacity to satisfy our wants? Society has made it okay, and worse, normal, to transfer our love and affection from person to person. It’s the pervasive storyline weaving itself through our culture and our relationships.

But the Lord is a jealous God. He wants ALL of us. And what's even crazier is he deserves it. It is only out of a fully devoted heart for the Lord that we gain a confidence in our relationship with God like that of Elijah's. When we are 100% all in for the Lord and his mission, we are gifted an intimacy with him that could not exist apart from our absolute dependence on and pursuit of the Lord. *Elijah had God's ear because God had Elijah's heart.*

**Who or what has your heart today? If you feel like your heart is divided, between what gods are you wavering?**

**Why does our purity of heart (the "all in" commitment to Him alone) matter so much to God?**

**Can you point to a time in your life when you found yourself wavering between two (or more) "gods"? What made it so hard to make up your mind?**

## **M O V E**

It feels so natural to go through life with a divided heart that we often forget there's another way to live. And in our forgetfulness, we miss out on the blessing and confidence that comes from an intimate relationship with God. So what would the Lord have us do? In 1 Kings 18, before God allowed rain to fall on the weary land, anything and everything false had to first be slaughtered.

Because the Lord demands wholeness and detests double-mindedness, anything that competes for God's rightful place in our lives must be put to death. We have to abandon the worthless idols that exist in our hearts demanding the love that belongs to the Lord. It is only then that we will experience the confidence and intimacy of being wholly devoted, 100%, all in for the Lord.

Imagine that tonight, as you sleep, a miracle occurs in your life. Maybe it was Chad's sermon, this study or the great conversation in Life Group, but a miracle happens nonetheless, and when you wake up, your heart is no longer divided! You sense a new, 100% devotion of your Spirit to God and an all in awareness that God has your whole heart.

**What is your first clue that something that has changed? What about your life would be different?**

Thinking about what our lives would look like if we suddenly ceased having divided hearts illuminates the reality that we have some work to do. Life would be different. Maybe we have divided hearts after all.

**Read James 4:8**

In order to experience a confidence and intimacy in our relationship with the Lord like Elijah did, we have to make the first steps to purify our hearts. God isn't interested in our worship or our sacrifices if we are double-minded. He asks for our firsts, our best, and our whole heart. Our purity, loyalty, and total devotion is what matters.

**What steps do you need to take in order to purify your heart today?**

**How might your Life Group or the community around you be able to offer tangible support to you as you recognize and slaughter the idols in your life?**

**P R A Y**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the journey of becoming wholly devoted to the Lord. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

**T O G O**

**Matthew 5:8**

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

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