



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

The Mountain | *Miracles Follow Movement* | Shawn Johnson | 8.19.17

LG Weekly

## START

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

**If you had to pick the best thing, trip or event that happened this summer, what would it be and why?**

## 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.

**When you hear of the mountain described like this—a place of meeting God and personal sanctification—what mountaintop experiences of your own come to mind? Share these moments with your group.**

This week, we are going to take a trip up a mountainside with Abraham. Abraham is about to be tested in a way he has never imagined, yet he trusts God's character during a time of confusion. Abraham will be asked to give up the very thing he loves most. He just doesn't know the plans God has in store for him.

#### **Read Genesis 22:1-8**

- *Abraham didn't know God wasn't going to harm Isaac.*
- *Abraham didn't know God was going to provide another sacrifice.*
- *Abraham didn't know God was foreshadowing what He had already planned to do with His one and only son, Jesus.*
- *Abraham did know that he could trust God, so he obeyed.*

**Abraham means 'Father of Nations' and he is asked to sacrifice his son. How does he respond to God?**

**Why do you think Abraham got up "early in the morning" and why is this so significant?**

**Verse 5 says, 'We will worship and then we will come back.' In the midst of confusion and pain, Abraham took time to worship God. When you are going through difficult times, do you draw closer to God or run from Him and why?**

#### **G R O W**

In traditional Hebrew teaching, Genesis 22 and the hauntingly beautiful story of Abraham and Isaac on Mt. Moriah is called, the *Akedah*. The name refers to the literal "binding" of Isaac—a word whose form only appears this one time in the entire Old Testament. In Jewish thought, the story is the ultimate example of self-sacrifice and obedience to God, and in Christian history, it reveals the character of God, assures the people of God's true promises, and points to Jesus' coming sacrifice.

In reading the story, we know what follows is a test because of what is revealed in Genesis 22:1, "some time later God tested Abraham." Abraham, however, didn't have the luxury of knowing it was a test ahead of time. Child-sacrifice, as horrific as it is, was a common practice among other religions and tribes in the

Ancient Near East, so Abraham's actions were wholly out of obedience for the Almighty God. Even though God promised that Abraham's descendants would outnumber the stars, there Abraham was about to sacrifice his only son—trusting that God's promises wouldn't change.

But miracles follow movement.

**Has God ever called you to do something you didn't fully understand? Share those experiences and what obeying the Lord was like with your group.**

Though we have to imagine Abraham left this conversation with God hurt and confused, we're not left with those details. Because Abraham shares our humanity, we picture him praying and protesting to God's request, probably tossing and turning all night long wondering how on earth he is going to sacrifice his one and only son. Still, "early the next morning Abraham got up" (Genesis 22:3). He and Isaac set out on a journey to Mount Moriah—the same mountaintop where hundreds of years later, Solomon's temple would be built. This mountaintop moment foreshadows the many burnt offerings the Israelites would sacrifice to the God of Israel at the temple. Like the Lord's presence in the holy of holies on the temple mount, Abraham too felt a unique nearness to God as he grew closer and closer to the mountaintop.

#### **Read Genesis 22:9-14**

Finally, the test we knew about from the beginning of the chapter is resolved, Abraham passed, and Isaac was never the intended sacrifice. God was foreshadowing what He himself would have to do for all of us—reminding Abraham that He will provide all we need. Abraham names the mountain "The Lord provides" attributing it to the Lord's provision and fulfillment of his promises.

In verse 4, the writer introduces a word play using the phrase, "look up." The first time we see Abraham look up, he looked up and found the mountain in the distance. Though his eyes may have filled with fear and expectation, his heart was willing to worship as he sought answers and assurance. In the midst of the unknown and while being utterly confused, Abraham stood on the promises of God and kept his eyes fixed on the Lord. He knew the Lord would provide.

The second time Abraham "looked up," he saw firsthand the Lord's provision by finding the ram caught in the thicket. But had he not looked up, he could have missed seeing the intended sacrifice. Often, in order to see the provision the Lord has planned for us, it requires the lifting of our heads—it requires us to look up in

order to see the symbol or tangible gift of God's provision. If Abraham had kept his head down, he would have missed it—it took him “looking up.”

**In moments of movement and waiting for the Lord to act, where do you set your eyes? To what or who do you look to provide?**

**Think back to those stories you shared of when the Lord called you to do something you didn't understand. How did the Lord provide for you after you took that step of faith and obedience?**

**Looking at Genesis 22, what parallels can you find between this story and the story of Jesus' death?**

## **M O V E**

Like Abraham, when we hear God calling, it's up to us to decide if we're going to listen, trust, or obey—no matter how out of our comfort zone God's request may be. Be forewarned, however, there have been some crazy requests throughout salvation history. Remember God asking Noah to build an ark or the angel Gabriel letting the virgin Mary know she's pregnant with the Son of God? Like in the lives of the Bible characters we have grown to love, God gives us direction, but we have to step out. When we look up and surrender control, we see the Lord do his thing—we see him provide. Miracles follow movement.

But what if we don't really hear the voice of God? What if no angel has visited us in a dream to let us know what the next nine months of our life will be like? What is God's call then?

### **Read Genesis 22:17-18**

These verses restate the covenant God made with Abraham when he was first called in Genesis 12. God promises to make his descendants as numerous as the stars and then promises that through those descendants, all nations on earth will be blessed. Many scholars see it as a two-part covenant: the first part promising that God will bless the children of Abraham and the second part promising that through those children, all people will in turn be blessed.

And like the song says, “Father Abraham has many sons and daughters, I am one of them and so are you.” Our inheritance as children of Abraham and children of God *is one of blessing*. Miracles do happen. God is

on our side. But it does not end with that. We don't sail off into the sunset of blessing thanking God for how great we have it. No—he blessed us so we can get to work. We have a responsibility. We have a calling.

We are blessed to be a blessing.

If, lately, you've been waffling about life's purpose or struggling to discern the voice of God in your life, know that in the meantime, he's calling you to be a blessing to those who do not know him. He's calling you to proclaim his truth from the mountains. Tell others of your experiences in his presence and trace the way you have seen him provide. Your response to this call of God on your life will spur miracles.

**Is there a situation in your life currently in which God might be calling you to obey?**

**If you are in a place where it's hard to hear God's voice, how might telling others of your mountaintop experiences and tracing the Lord's provision through your life be a good step of obedience?**

**This week, how can you tangibly be a blessing to another person who may not know the Lord?**

## **P R A Y**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and in particular, pray about the situations in one another's lives in which God is asking for obedience. Thank him for the mountaintop moments in your life and ask that he will embolden you to move and be a blessing. 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**

### **Isaiah 40:9-10 MSG**

Climb a high mountain, Zion. You're the preacher of good news. Raise your voice. Make it good and loud, Jerusalem. You're the preacher of good news. Speak loud and clear. Don't be timid! Tell the cities of Judah, "Look! Your God!" Look at him! God, the Master, comes in power, ready to go into action."