

**All-Terrain Discipleship**  
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We are in a series on discipleship called Forward in Faith. I'm speaking today on All-Terrain Discipleship.

All-terrain vehicles are designed to handle a wider variety of terrain than most other vehicles. Most cars are designed to drive on paved streets. But all-terrain vehicles can go off road and travel on all types of terrain - up hills, through mud or sand.

Throughout our lives, we experience many diverse types of terrain. Mountains represent high times, valleys represent low times, deserts represent dry times and floods represent times when we're overwhelmed.

All terrain discipleship means that God has empowered us to travel on all these types of terrain. And it means that there is something we can learn from each of these terrains that will help us grow spiritually.

### **1- Mountains**

Mountains are significant in the Bible. Many awesome things happened on mountains in the Bible.

Moses received the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai.

Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

Jesus preached a famous sermon we call the Sermon on the Mount.

Mountains can represent many things. One of the main things mountains represent is the best times in our lives. The times of blessing. The times of spiritual highs when we're close to God. In fact, we call them "mountaintop experiences."

Peter, James and John experienced a mountain top experience with Jesus.

Matthew 17:1-9 says:

*Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed so that His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light.*

*Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus. Peter blurted out, "Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I'll make three shelters as memorials—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

*But even as he spoke, a bright cloud came over them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy. Listen to Him."*

*The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground. Then Jesus came over and touched them. "Get up," He said. "Don't be afraid." And when they looked, they saw only Jesus. And they went back down the mountain...*

We see several lessons here about mountain top discipleship. First – you can get a revelation of Jesus on the mountain that you won't get anywhere else. Secondly – when you have a mountain top experience, you will usually want to stay there. Thirdly – A mountain top experience can make you think it's about you rather than Jesus. But follow the advice of the Father: Focus on Jesus, not yourself. Listen to His words, not yours. And then do what He tells you.

And Jesus told them not to tell anyone about it and then He led them right back down the mountain. Here's the thing about mountaintop experiences. You always have to come back down to reality. I did a study on mountaintop experiences in the Bible. Almost every mountaintop experience was followed by a major problem in the valley.

In Genesis 22 Abraham went up Mount Moriah where he passed a major test of his faith in God. God provided a lamb. When he came down he had to face the death of his wife Sarah.

In Exodus Moses went up on Mt. Sinai where he met God face to face and was given the 10 commandments. When he came down he had to deal with people worshipping idols.

In 1 Kings 18 Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel by calling down fire from heaven. When he came down he had to face the threats of Queen Jezebel who was out to kill him. Elijah became afraid & depressed and ran for his life.

In the passage we read from Matthew 17 – the disciples saw Jesus in His glory and they also saw Moses and Elijah. What an experience! Yet, when they came down off the mountain they had to deal with a demon-possessed boy.

The point I want you to see in all these stories is that spiritual highs are sometimes followed by spiritual lows, or tough times, or times that require us to give out rather than take in. The result is that we want to stay on the mountains. It's easier up there. God's glory is there.

When it came time for the disciples to come down from the mount of transfiguration, they begged Jesus to stay up there. The disciples wanted to hang out on the mountain in the glory. After all, God's supernatural power and glory are on the mountaintop; ordinary life and death are in the valley.

## **Valleys**

God's presence is on the mountain top; people are in the valley. Sinful people – demon possessed people – needy people.

We cannot stay on the mountaintop because the people in the valley who are sinning or sick or possessed – need the power and glory of God we've experienced. They're not coming to the mountain. We must take the mountain to them!

Moses is an example of this. It was on Mt. Sinai that Moses received the 10 commandments. But God tells him Go down from here at once because the people had become corrupt and God needed him in the valley below. As soon as he descends the mountain top he encounters the idolatry of the people. The Israelites built a golden calf to worship. Moses intercedes for the people and destroys the golden calf.

He had to leave the mountain top because He was needed in the valley. And we must leave our mountain tops because God needs us in the valley.

It's in the valley that we find lost and hurting people. People who need us to share Christ with them. Jesus needs us in the valley, so we can preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to release those who are oppressed.

You see the battles happen in the valley.

In I Sam. 17 David faced the giant Goliath in the Valley of Elah.

In Ezekiel 37:1 The Lord set Ezekiel in the middle of a Valley of dry bones.

In Hosea 2:15 The Valley of Achor means the valley of trouble.

In Psalm 84:6-7 The Valley of Baca means the valley of tears.

Obviously, valleys can be difficult places of troubles, tears, and tests. But there is also victory in the valley.

In the valley of Elah, David defeated Goliath.

Ezekiel prophesied life and the valley of dry bones lived.

The Valley of Achor (or trouble) became a door of hope.

The Valley of Baca (or tears) became a place of springs.

When Jesus brought the disciples down the mountain, Matthew 17:14-20 there was a man with a demon possessed son who said to Jesus:

*"He often falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to Your disciples, but they couldn't heal him." Jesus replied, "You unbelieving and rebellious generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to Me."*

*Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and from that moment the boy was healed. Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" "Because of your little faith," He told them. "For I assure you: If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

The disciples had to learn that there two types of mountains in life. There are the mountains we climb – so we can experience the joy of the mountain top. But there are also the mountains we must move. Mark 11:23-24 says:

*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be*

*cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*

Mountains that need to be moved may be unanswered prayers, unexpected delays and unpleasant situations.

On the mountain top it's easy to tell light from dark. It's easy to understand God's purpose. But when we're moving mountains it's hard to see clearly. We must walk in what we know rather than what we see. We must remember what we've heard on the mountain tops. When we're moving mountains, we must rehearse our mountain top victories.

You see, life is about Mountain climbing and mountain moving. Every time God takes us higher, there is going to be a new opposition a new mountain that needs to be moved.

Moving mountains is when our "talk" turns to "walk." It represents challenging times of testing and growth. James 1:2-4 says:

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

We can have joy because we know God is taking us to a new level.

We have joy because we have victory.

We have joy because we know God is maturing us.

Have you ever noticed that we can be walking along the road of life doing fine until we hit a bump in the road? The bump causes our inward character to spill out. Sometimes it isn't very pretty. Just remember it wasn't the bump in the road that caused our inward character, the bump only revealed our inward character. What's inside isn't created by the problems; the problems only reveal the true character that's inside.

And that's the very reason the disciples had to come off the mountain top. You see it doesn't take much faith to be on the mountain top. It's when we descend the mountain that we must put our faith into action. So, Jesus had to cast the demon out and the disciples had to face their lack of faith. One moment they are on the mountain top experiencing God's glory and the next they are in the valley dealing with demons. Both are necessary in our lives.

We must learn to go up the mountain in the presence of Jesus and we must learn how to come back down the mountain and take the mountain to the people in the valley! It's true in our spiritual lives and our daily lives!

We can experience the high of getting married and going on a honeymoon – but we’ve got to learn how to come down from that mountain and get along with each other in daily life!

We can experience the high of graduating from school, but we must learn how to come down from that mountain and get a job!

Learning how to come down from mountain is very important! Mount Everest is the highest mountain on earth at just over 29,000 feet. Over 6,000 individuals have climbed Mt. Everest and over 300 people have died trying. Here’s the amazing thing: way more people have died descending than climbing up.

Scientists attribute this to the fact that people exhaust themselves on the way up and they run out of energy. They make the mistake of sitting down and refusing to move. Lying down and resting seems like the right thing to do when you’re tired, but it becomes the sleep of death!

And there’s a spiritual application to that. You have to be extra careful coming off of a spiritual high. Sometimes, the highs are so good and the lows are so painful that there is something within us that just wants to hang on to the highs.

But let me ask you: Is it possible to stay on a spiritual high? No, it’s not. If you read the Bible, what you’ll find is that the Bible is a parade of highs and lows, one right after another. Here’s some examples:

Daniel was very blessed because of His faithfulness to God. That’s a high. But because of his faithfulness to God, he was thrown into a den of hungry lions. That’s a low. But the lions didn’t eat him. That’s a high.

Jonah ran away from God. That’s a low. He was swallowed by a great fish. That is a low. But the fish vomits him up on dry ground...is that a high or a low? It’s a high. After all, there are only two ways out of a fish!

Go to the New Testament and you’ll see Jesus at His baptism and His Father’s voice is heard from heaven, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” That was a high.

What happened immediately after that? He’s in the desert for 40 days being assaulted with temptation by the devil himself. That was a low. But He overcame the devil in the desert and that was a high.

## **Deserts**

We too must learn how to become like Christ in the desert – in the dry times – in the hungry times – in times when the enemy attacks. And how did Jesus win the battle in the desert? By speaking the word of God. And we overcome in the desert the same exact way.

## Floods

These are times when we are overwhelmed. It happened to the disciples when Jesus told them to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat. A storm arose and their boat was being flooded. Luke 8:22-25 says:

*As they sailed, He fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.*

*"Where is your faith?" He asked His disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him."*

When Jesus asked, "where is your faith" – I don't think He meant "Why didn't you calm the storm." His concern was that they did not trust Him in the storm. Jesus knew His destiny was to die on a cross, not in a boat in a storm.

So, if Jesus tells you to go somewhere and storms come up – keep rowing! Keep trusting Him. If Jesus said, We're going to the other side – then we're going to the other side!

All the difficult terrain we must traverse in life are there to help us become like Christ – who travelled the same terrain.

And because Jesus stayed faithful to God in the highs and the lows, it is in the highs and the lows that we will learn to become like Jesus.

When you boil it right down, our character is developed through our obedience and our trust in God during different terrains in life.

We must trust Him when we're up on a mountain.  
 We must trust Him when we're down in a valley.  
 We must trust Him when we're dry in the desert.  
 And we must trust Him when we're being overwhelmed by a flood!  
 God will be with you all those terrains.

He will be with you in the valley just as much as He was on the mountain. In fact, most miracles happen in the valley, not on the mountain!

When you are in a desert or in a flood – His word will deliver you. God is right there with you in all those times.

There will be disappointments in life, but every day that passes is one day closer to the time when we will be with Jesus. Everything's gonna work out in the end – so if there's still some things that need to be worked out – you're not at the end yet!

So today whether you're moving a mountain or climbing a mountain...  
 Whether you're on a mountain top praising God or in a valley fighting demons...  
 Whether you are in a dry wilderness or in an overwhelming flood...  
 We have this promise of God no matter what the terrain.  
 Isaiah 43:18-21 says:

*Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to My people, My chosen, the people I formed for Myself that they may proclaim My praise.*

God created you and chose you for Himself – that you might proclaim His praise in all terrains of life.

So – what terrain are you currently traveling?  
 He won't leave you when you're on a mountain!  
 He won't leave you when you're in a valley!  
 He won't leave you when you're in a flood!  
 He won't leave you when you're in a desert!  
 He's the God of the mountains, the valleys, the deserts and the floods!

And praise is your all-terrain vehicle!  
 So, if you're on a mountain – praise God and hear His word.  
 If you're in a valley – praise God and build your faith.  
 If you're in a flood – praise Him and see His deliverance!  
 And if you're in a desert – praise Him and watch Him make a way through that wilderness!  
 Praise Him and watch Him create a river out of wasteland!

Come on somebody!  
 Rejoice in all terrain – pray in all terrain - give thanks in all terrain for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!