

## **MOUNTAIN HIGH, VALLEY LOW**

**Luke 9:28–45**

**Dr. George O. Wood**

“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.’ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen. The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. A man in the crowd called out, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.’ ‘O unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’ Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to

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his disciples, ‘Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it” (Luke 9:28–45, NIV).

My sermon today is called “Mountain High, Valley Low.” The title is suggested to us from the topography that Jesus is on. He is on a mountain where He is transfigured and He is at the base of the mountain, a valley where there is critical need.

I’ve always been in a Christian atmosphere. My early years, as many of you know, were spent in the Assemblies of God churches, where we placed a great deal of emphasis on spiritual experience, as we do now. I can remember times in my own life of seeking the Lord, on a Sunday night service especially, or a revival meeting or at a youth camp, where I would want to have such a relationship with the Lord in that place, that it would always characterize me every day after that. I’d always be on a spiritual high. It was frustrating, as a young Christian, to come out of revival meetings and go back to the real world of school or later, work, and find that the great emotions and the high tide of spirituality that I felt in the meeting weren’t always there the next day. I would think maybe something was wrong with me, which it probably was.

Things really came to a head when I was a first year student in seminary and I’d gone off to Pinecrest Conference Center in the mountains and had a real experience with the Lord; I’d come back to smoggy Pasadena and found that I was struggling with the decisions I was making, struggling with the choices in my life. I would look back a few days later and say, “Where did all that spiritual reservoir that I picked up at the camp disappear to?”

If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, you know that’s a pretty accurate description of what sometimes we go through. We don’t stay, seemingly, on a high everyday. But thank the

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Lord there are highs and we also grow in the lows. This Scripture which shows Jesus in the height and Jesus in the valley gives us some marvelous insights in dealing with the mountain tops and the valley lows in our own experiences.

I want to suggest three things about the mountaintop and three things about the valley low.

#### **I. Mountain highs generally occur in our life when we have resolved a big issue in God's will.**

That certainly is the case here with Jesus. The big issue had occurred a week earlier. Luke notes that the mount of transfiguration takes place eight days after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.

And for all those of you who like detail, Matthew and Mark note that the lapse of time was six days and Luke says "about eight days after." It isn't because Luke failed to count accurately or the other gospel writers failed to count accurately. Evidently, they're reckoning time differently. Luke, in his reckoning of time, counts the confession at Caesarea Philippi as one day and the transfiguration as another day. Whereas, Matthew and Luke are just saying there are six days in between. So you add Luke's two days of the confession and the transfiguration to the six days in between and you have eight days.

Anyway, there had been an important issue resolved at Caesarea Philippi, three issues in fact. One is the identity of Jesus. The disciples are now ready to own Him as the Messiah, even though He has revealed Himself in a different way than everybody thought the Messiah would. Secondly, Jesus, for the first time, tells them that the Messiah, namely Himself, is going to die and rise again from the dead. That was brand new information to them. The third thing is that Jesus tells them what they're going to do. They must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. And it's not going to be a life of popularity or of sitting in some governmental

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administrative office under a king and collecting taxes and having a great time in the political back rooms. There has been a momentous decision, just days earlier, and now that decision is resolved. And the mountain high comes because there's been a resolution.

Several years ago, I was in a small group where we were asked to do an exercise spiritually of taking a piece of paper and pen and drawing a graph that illustrated the highs and lows in our spiritual life. And to see, from the time we were born until now, how our life was doing in terms of our relationship with the Lord, whether we were climbing or going backwards or having more downs than ups or whatever. It was a very intriguing experience. I've never found anybody yet that draws the lines straight, starts out and climbs with no variations. I find some Christians draw their spiritual growth line in loops, and they're going forward and going back. But they're getting higher as they keep looping. There are others that sort of draw it in a sort of zigzag line and hopefully, the highs today are higher than the highs five years ago, or the lows are higher than the lows five years ago. Sometimes that's not the case.

I thought, in regard to mountain highs, I'd just redo that exercise this week and look at the graph line of my spirituality, which I'm not going to show to you. As I looked at it, I found there were seven highs in my own personal experience. I never realized this before. Seven times when, above all other times, I was uniquely closer to the Lord and affirmed by Him in some way or another. As I look at those seven occasions, I find that all of them had to do with the resolution of conflict. All of them occurred in moments when I was making decisions. All of them required me to make a decision that was in God's will. The first of which, at the age of ten, I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

None of us like conflict. None of us like going through hassles. It seems like we never get out of them. But you never get to the mountaintop unless you climb the mountainside. Part of getting a

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breakthrough in spiritual experience is arriving at a conclusion. That, of course, starts out when we, for the first time, proclaim Jesus as Lord of our life and we're willing to lay aside our own ideas of salvation and God and who Jesus is, and accept His. We come through that conflict and we find we're a new creature in Christ. The old has passed away, the new has come...and the glorious feeling. The people who have just given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ know a reality of inner joy that is just unsurpassed.

There are other occasions in our life when we must reaffirm God's will for us. It may be in selecting a life partner or making a career choice. Or it may be choosing to serve the Lord when we don't feel like it. And it may involve being true to the Lord when it's not comfortable or easy and we'd rather do something else. We finally say, "Lord, I know I want to do this but I know it's wrong if I do it. I'll serve You instead. I'll be loyal to You." We find the Lord affirms us when we do that, when we become obedient to Him when we don't feel like it.

And, too, we find ourselves on a mountaintop when we've chosen to press through after trouble and sorrow in our life. We've been hit by some mighty blow. Instead of vegetating in grief for the rest of our life or saying, "I'll never live again. I'll always be this way," there comes the new grass that grows up in our life. That new sign of green, and we begin saying, "Lord, I believe You," and there's a new sign of hope, and we find a resurgence of the Christ-life in us and it brings us to that mountain experience.

Anytime you've resolved a really big issue, you've gone through conflict to get to the resolution, and the Lord is affirming you in that time, our highs are directly related to resolving an issue and a conflict.

**II. The second thing about mountain highs in this passage of Scripture is that mountain highs confirm us and assure us that we are on the right course.**

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That's certainly the case for Jesus. He has announced that He is on His way to be killed. That is, by no stretch of the imagination, an easy thing to announce, let alone do. Is He acting in God's will? Does He have the right understanding of what God intended for the Messiah to do?

That decision—to press through to the cross—is now affirmed and it's affirmed in several different ways. It's affirmed by what happens to Jesus personally. The Scriptures tell us that He was transfigured. That word is somewhat archaic and it's a little difficult to get a hold of. There's a better word to describe what happened to Jesus. It's literally the Greek word used in the New Testament, which is carried directly over into the English language, the word “metamorphosis.” Jesus, at the mount, was metamorphosed. Those of you who have studied biology know what the word *morphe* is, or “morphology.” Morphology is the study of form or structure and *morphe* means “form” and *meta* means “to change”. So His form was changed.

Never before had anyone seen the divine nature in His physical body. They'd always seen the man but now the divine nature shines through the human. It turns out that Jesus, in the divine nature, is dazzling and radiantly light. God is light. Jesus is the light of the world. He has this beyond description kind of change, both in His personal being and in His clothes, which Mark says was whiter than anybody could bleach.

Just to pause another moment on that word *morphe* for “form.” The Greeks had two words for “form.” One was the word *schema* and the other, the word *morph*. We get our word “morphology” and “scheme” from *schema*, which can also mean “fashion” or “style.” The difference between these two words is that one is transitory and the other is permanent. *Morph* is structural. It goes on and on. But *schema* or fashion or style is changing.

Illustrate. When the Greeks would talk about maleness or femaleness, they would refer to it in terms of *morphe*. I was male from conception. I will always be male. But my *schema*, my

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outward appearance, the scheme of my life is changing. The beautiful bright red hair is fading to gray. The curly locks are gone. And I don't look like what I used to look like. But I look better than what I'm going to look like in a few years. So there's a trade-off. The *schema* is changing. Schema is always changing. The *morphe* is permanent and unalterable. That's why it's so significant when used of Jesus. He was in the *morphe*, the form, of a man. That is, His being a man was not some plastic cosmetic job, having a thin layer, veneer, of manhood plastered over His divinity. But He was *morphe*, fully man and He was also fully God.

Philippians talks about His being in the form of God, the *morphe* of God, but taking the *morphe*, the form of a servant. Unalterable. Interesting enough, this concept of *schema* and *morphe* comes over to us in Romans 12:2, where the Apostle Paul tells us, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world [*schema*, don't adopt the outward fashion and appearance of the world, which is passing away and is only transitory] but be transformed [*morphe*, metamorphosis] by the renewing of your mind." In other words, go through a structural change in your life, which involves a new "you" emerging out of the old. And the new you is the person of Christ metamorphosing in your life.

Jesus is affirmed in the transfiguration by what happens to Him physically, the divine nature showing through. We're affirmed as we see Christ's life emerging through us also.

Jesus is confirmed and assured that He's on the right course by Moses and Elijah, who appear, talking with Him, on the mountain. We say that phrase "Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus," but actually it's a startling thing. Moses had lived between twelve and fourteen centuries before Jesus, depending on when you date the Exodus, which is a whole other question. And Elijah, eight centuries before Jesus. Here they are, talking to Jesus. The scribes, the religious leaders,

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had been saying that Jesus was of the devil and that He broke the law of Moses. If He broke the law of Moses and was against Moses, then what in the world is Moses doing talking with Him? That's the point, the gospel point of the story, to Jesus' own day. Moses endorses Jesus. He met with Him on the mount. We don't know exactly what mount it was, by the way, the Gospels never tells us if it was on Mount Hermon in Lebanon or on Mount Tabor, as many think, across the Jezreel Valley, south of Nazareth. Or if was it Mount Yarmuk in Galilee. I think it's that one. They were meeting with Him. What were they talking about, these representatives of the law and the prophets? What were they talking about? Luke is the only Gospel writer that notes what the subject of the conversation was. They were talking about His departure in Jerusalem. The word in the Greek, you will find on any door. If you go to Greece today, you will see it on any door in Greece. It's the word that means "exit." The way out. In the English, who of these two went through an Exodus? Moses, of course. He found God's people and was sent to deliver them out of slavery through the Red Sea and the miracle of God's deliverance into Canaan.

Jesus is called to bring God's people into a new exodus, out of the land of bondage to sin, of death and the devil, into the land of God's freedom, through the Red Sea of His cross and His resurrection. So Moses and Elijah are talking to Jesus about the new exodus which Jesus, the Messiah, is going to make, showing their approval with the plan that He has announced.

I think Moses and Elijah, too, represent for us that, in the presence of Jesus, you have both the raptured and the risen. Because Elijah was raptured, and Moses was risen. God buried him at Mount Nebo, which means that he had a pre-Christ resurrection. The raptured and the risen. Moses and Elijah represent that.

That must have been a tremendous moment in Moses' experience. Because he'd never been in the Promised Land. He died east of the Jordan at Mount Nebo. Now, for the first time, he stands

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inside the land that God had promised and he gets to stand there with none other than the Messiah, God's Son. Which is God's way, I think, of secretly letting us in on a clue that He always fulfills our heart's desire, even if it's not fulfilled within our earthly lifetime. He'll always fulfill it. Moses' great dream was to be in the land of promise and the Lord says, "You're not going to do it in your earthly life but I've got the time and place and you're going to love it." Jesus is affirmed by the fact that the Father speaks personally. The setting for the Transfiguration is evidently in the evening, because the disciples are sleeping. They want to make overnight shelters and Jesus' appearance is glowing and Moses and Elijah have a radiant appearance. Now the shekinah presence, this cloud of God's glory, moves in. Since God is not a man, and therefore, does not have the body and parts of a man or mortal, his presence comes mysteriously in the figure of the cloud. And out of the cloud, enveloping Jesus and Moses and Elijah, the voice speaks. Only three times in Jesus' life does the voice of the Father appear—once here, once before His baptism, three years earlier, and once, a few months later, in His last week in John 12. Each of the times, the Father is saying to Jesus, "You are right on course and You're My beloved."

He is affirmed and assured that He is on the right course. And it's God's way of rewarding us for hanging in there and being true, by giving us, in our own life, those kinds of assurances.

Although they may be of different intensity than those given to the Lord, the Father does give us the assurances that come out of obeying Him.

### **III. The third thing about mountain highs is that they're both temporary and lasting.**

Temporary, in that they did not stay hour by hour, day by day, year by year. The experience was there and then it was gone. Peter would have liked to have prolonged the moment, that's why, when he sees Moses and Elijah getting ready to leave, he says, "Let us put up three shelters."

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People criticize Peter, but let's recognize that he's being humble. Notice he didn't say, "Let's build six shelters." There were six people on the mountain, including Peter, James, and John. He said, "No, we can sleep outside." We'll make something special for the honored guests. Mark's Gospel tells us that Peter said this because he did not know what to say. Luke says the same thing, "He did not know what he was saying." There are two kinds of people. Those who have something to say and those who have to say something. Peter is definitely of the second variety. You may know some people like that.

This is one meeting I'd like to have been at. I'd like to have been there. How was it that Peter, James and John knew it was Moses and Elijah? Did they know it intuitively? I kind of suspect that Jesus introduced them. It was a great occasion. It honored Peter and James and John, because they were just at the start of the new age. Moses and Elijah's work was completed. And they certainly were not at the stature level of Moses and Elijah. They were just three years in the school of Jesus and they hadn't done anything on their own.

Jesus knows that there will come a day when we'll look back on the story and say, "What he had were the pillars of the old age and the pillars of the new age." They wouldn't have thought of themselves at that time as pillars, but when Jesus gets done making and molding us out of the clay, we do become pillars. Pillars have two functions: they provide support and they beautify.

Both of these happen with these three in the hands of Jesus, as they happen with us.

But the experience is temporary. They and we would like to stay on the mountain, but we can't.

In fact, when they're coming down, "Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen." The Lord had many reasons for telling them not to tell, but I think the chiefest one was that He knew the spirit of competition that was among the Twelve, that cropped up after a few days, right at the end of Luke 9, where they started arguing about who was the greatest. The

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three right away could have said, “We’re the greatest because Jesus took us and we had this experience.”

Have you ever listened to somebody give a testimony and you felt left out? It’s almost like a testimony that builds the person up and says to the rest, “What’s the matter with you that you didn’t have this experience?” Paul had an experience in 2 Corinthians 12, which he kept to himself because he realized it was too private to share with everybody. It would make other people feel left out if they hadn’t had a similar experience. That’s what happens with Peter, James and John. Jesus says to not talk about this. I think they went to the other nine, “Too bad you missed being with us on the mountain. We’d like to tell you what happened and how close we were to Jesus, but the Lord told us we couldn’t tell. But it’s sure nice to be in the privileged inner three.”

The experience was temporary, but it was also lasting. Short-term, intense experiences with God tend to produce long-term memories and benefits and a long-term supply of resource and energy. Decades later, Peter, now the great apostle, with pen in hand, at the end of his life, writes his second letter. He writes, in chapter 1:16–19, about this experience which had lasted all those decades. “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (NIV). Peter says that

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experience goes on living and it makes God's Word all the more sure; and you'd do well to listen to us because we were with Him on the mount.

Fourteen and a half years ago, there was a very brief space of a couple of weeks in my life when God, in an intense experience, gave me the inner direction to become pastor of this church. I've gone these years in the strength of that initial direction, which has been reaffirmed in small doses over the course of time. But it was the intense first stage that set the direction. Those times confirm and assure us that we're making the right choices. Those times are both temporary, the intensity of the experience passes, but the effect of it lasts. Don't let anybody disparage a revival or disparage a spiritual breakthrough. True, the emotionality of it may have different levels of intensity, but the effect of it can go on and on and on as well. It should.

There are some things about valley lows. Maybe more of you identify with valley lows than mountain highs. Maybe we spend more of our time in the valley than on the mountain and that's why. Three things about valley lows:

#### **I. Valley lows occur when the problem we face is greater than our ability to resolve it.**

Here, Jesus comes down to the foot of the mountain and the nine disciples have a big problem. A boy who is an only son—and Luke is the only gospel writer to let us know that about this boy; Luke as a doctor has a penchant for detail: he notes that the widow's son was an only son, he notes that Jairus' daughter was an only daughter and he notes that this was an only son. He's concerned about families with just one child. He picks that detail up. He says that this boy was possessed of an evil spirit that brought upon him speechlessness and the loss of hearing.

Furthermore, this evil spirit knocked him down. And the word which he uses is the word for "striking someone" as in boxing, when someone throws a haymaker into him and knocks him to

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the ground. The disciples had tried to cast this evil spirit out and they couldn't. The problem was greater than their resources. And that's when a valley low occurs.

I got to thinking, "I wonder what's blocking their success in bringing deliverance to this boy?" It seems to me there are two things from the text of Scripture itself and one additional thing we can legitimately add.

**A.** One thing that's certainly blocking their success is unbelief. Jesus says that, "O unbelieving and perverse generation" They did not see that He could be at work through their life in this way.

**B.** Another thing that Jesus points out to them is their lack of prayer. That's not picked up by Luke but by Matthew and Mark, where Jesus rebukes them for their lack of prayer. Jesus had given them the power to cast out evil spirits, but He did not mean for that power to be automatic. They needed to keep that power renewed through prayer.

**C.** I think a third thing that blocked them from dealing with the problem was the resentment in their own life. They had, at this moment, to be resentful. The fact that they are resentful is seen, some moments later, in that they break out in an argument on who's number one. What's happening is that the other nine are saying, "The three got to take a trip with Jesus and we didn't get to go and we feel left out and we think it was mean and nasty of the Lord to do this, to play favorites, to spend His time with three people when He's got twelve of us," and all these kinds of things that sometimes happen in the body of Christ. We feel some people are being singled out for reward and we're getting left out. Why did Jesus choose them? I'm just as good as they are. I gave up as much. I gave up more than Peter. Why didn't He take me?

I've found that when there's resentment in our life, we don't really come out of the valley. We find that the thing that we're wrestling with becomes bigger than our resources to deal with it.

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If you're in a valley today, would you take a moment to look into your life and see if there's unbelief? If you believe that this time you've finally gotten in a jam that even the Lord can't get you out of. Is there a lack of prayer? "There's no use praying because I'm not coming out of this anyway. Besides I'd rather do it my own way. If I pray I'll have to do it the Lord's way and the Lord knows I want to kill the guy; I don't want to pray about it! I'd rather get even, not forgive." Thirdly, is there resentment in my life? I feel dumped on, so help me, because I'm dumped on I'll get mine and I hope they get theirs.

We find that, when those attitudes are present in our life—the attitude of prayerlessness, the attitude of unbelief, the attitude of resentment—the problems are really greater than our resources to deal with them. We have to ask the Lord to help us in those areas.

How are you facing your valley low?

**II. The second thing about valley lows is they become growth times if we experience the corrective and redemptive work of the Lord.**

Jesus does two things: He corrects the disciples and He's redemptive in that He heals the boy and this valley time becomes an opportunity to see the Lord at work, doing the things which He does best—bringing His healing and reconciliation to a very troubled situation. It's Jesus' light that makes the difference. Then and now. It's His presence. So our valley time can be a time of tremendous growth if we allow the Lord to be present.

I ran across this story this week, which I understand is a true story. Its setting is in the nineteenth century. There was a great large stone cathedral in Europe, which had a magnificent pipe organ. In preparation for the Sunday services, on a Saturday afternoon, the sexton (and that's the old English word for church custodian) was high up in the choir and organ loft—which in the great cathedrals is located in the back—doing a last minute check. He had all the doors to the cathedral

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locked and, therefore, was startled when he heard the sound of footsteps on the stone stairway, coming up into the loft that he was in. He stopped and, at the top of the steps, emerged this man, who was in rather old, dirty clothes, looking like he'd been traveling, sort of a migrant. The man greeted him and asked if the sexton would be so kind as to open the organ console so that he could look at the organ. The sexton replied that he couldn't do that, that it was off limits and that the organist had given strict orders on how the organ was to be treated and so forth. But the man persisted and kept saying, "I've really come a long ways and I'd like to see the organ." So the sexton said, "All right," and pulled the console back so he could see it. Then the man said, "Would you mind if I sat at the organ bench. I'd just like to sit there and get closer." Again, the sexton said no. But finally he gave in. Then you know the next question. "Can I play the organ?" He argued with the guy for a while and then said, "I know I'm going to get in a lot of trouble, but I need to get out today, so go ahead and play the organ." The guy turned around and began playing the organ. Suddenly, the sexton heard the most beautiful music he'd ever heard in his life. The great pipe organ was filling the sanctuary with all the magnificence that a pipe organ has. After playing for a while, the stranger stopped and slid off the bench and started down the stairway. "Wait," said the sexton. "That was the most beautiful music I've ever heard in my life. I've got to know your name before you leave. Who are you?" The man turned around and said, "My name is Mendelson." And indeed, it was Felix Mendelssohn, the great organist and composer of the nineteenth century. The sexton softly said to himself, "Just think. I almost kept the master from playing his music in my cathedral."

I thought of that in regard to our own lives. Just think, we might in our valley times, almost keep the master from playing the music of His life in our own cathedral. In our valley times, we need the presence of the Lord working in us, teaching us to praise rather than to blame, teaching us to

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forgive rather than retaliate, teaching us to serve rather than to withdraw, playing His music in our life. Valley times can become growth times, if we let the Lord do His corrective and redemptive work.

### **III. The last thing about valley times is they require us to trust in Jesus, who knows what He is doing even when we don't.**

In verses 44–45, Jesus says, “Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.” To them, it was all a fog. What in the world is Jesus taking about? Where is He going? What is this business of the cross stuff?

That’s the way it is in our own lives, as we follow the Lord. They say, “Give your life to Jesus, and suddenly everything will go great.” If you’re single, you’ll fall in love with Mr. Right or Miss Right. You’ll marry and live happily ever after. You’ll get a split level house and money in the bank. Wouldn’t that be great? But then, suddenly, we find...hey Jesus! You’re going the wrong way. I thought I’d bought into this, what’s this stuff of cross? What are You talking about? You know I was faithful. I paid my tithes. How can you be more faithful than that? Then we find ourselves involved in valleys. Lord, I don’t understand. I don’t understand how You’re working good out of this. Surely, “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” means “except this,” what I’m involved in. That could never work together for good. Where are You going, Lord? That’s not what I intended. That’s not what I wanted. Lord, it’s not fair.

Those are serious things from the heart. We feel that way when life goes wrong. We say, Lord, I didn’t bargain for that! When I started to follow You, I didn’t know I was going to have to do this and walk this road.

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What this text of Scripture is saying, is that even when we don't know what Jesus is doing in our lives, where He is going with our life, He knows where *He's* going. What we need to do is get in step behind Him and let Him go ahead, before us. We'll sometimes be afraid and we'll sometimes be confused and we'll sometimes say, "Lord where are You going with me?" Just keep following Jesus. You'll get to safe ground. Just keep following Jesus.

There's a great little story from World War II, in England, in the days of the German Blitz. A father was in a home, a little house, with his boy, and a bomb dropped right next door to them and destroyed a building, and there was a whole lot of fire, not only because of that bomb but because of other bombs that had fallen. The father grabbed his little boy by the hand and raced out of the house because he feared his house was going to go up next. As he came out onto the front lawn, he saw a great big hole that had been made by a shell, so he dived into the hole and then realized his boy was still up on the ground. He called out to the boy, "Jump!" and the little boy called back, "I can't see you!" and indeed, he couldn't, there was so much smoke and stuff blowing around. It was impossible to see. But the father, looking up, could see the outline of the burning buildings and the smoke. But there was enough light looking up to where he could also see the silhouette of his boy and he said, "It doesn't matter if you can see me. I can see you and I'm waiting. Jump!" And the boy jumped to safety into his father's arms.

I think that describes what this passage is all about. Sometimes, we say to the Lord, "But I can't see You!" and the Lord says, "It's ok. I can see you. Now trust Me."

Valley lows come and require us to know that Jesus knows what He is doing, even when we do not. A writer has said that the Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death. Not because we can see, but because of the certainty that we are seen. Not because we know all the answers but because we are known.

## **MOUNTAIN HIGH, VALLEY LOW**

**Luke 9:28–45**

If you're on a mountain today, we rejoice that you've come through difficult times of climbing and have now reached a moment when you're being affirmed and assured by God. Those are marvelous times. Enjoy it as long as it lasts and then, go under its permanent power. But if you're in a valley, the Lord is calling you to trust Him anew. Let him play His music in your life. Walk on. Not because you can see clearly or because you know the way ahead. Walk on because He sees clearly and He knows clearly and He will direct. So trust in the Lord with all your heart.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, how easy it is at moments in our life to say, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." How difficult it is to say it when we are in the valley, when our problems seem so much bigger than us and even seem bigger than You. So we need Lord, the help of the Holy Spirit to trust. I pray, Lord, for those friends who find themselves here today in a valley, where life has not treated them as they had hoped. I ask, Lord, that You would minister to them, minister to the inner man, the inner woman, so that we might grow in You during this time and deal with the thorns that emerge in our own life. I ask You also to give that quiet confidence that You are at work, working all things for the good and even in the valley, if we'll let You, You're working for the good. Thank You, Lord, for those today who are in the mountain high. I pray for those who are just about to the peak, who are right now working through very serious decisions in their life. That You'll give them the courage to go all the way with that decision, all the way to please You. For some, Lord, this may be a moment of deciding to follow You and coming to the top of the mountain and saying, "I know who You are. Jesus, You are the Messiah, God's beloved Son. I receive You as Savior and Lord." May some today who are on that mountain and may others—who are on a mountain because they have made choices which were loyal to You in spite of personal cost—may they feel Your arms wrapped around them today, assuring them and

**MOUNTAIN HIGH, VALLEY LOW**

**Luke 9:28-45**

confirming that decision which they have made. Thank You, Lord, for Your presence. In Your name. Amen.