



Key Scriptures: 1 Kings 18-19, Psalms 40, Psalms 43

Main Point: The Christian life is a series of peaks and valleys. The peaks are for vision and the valleys are for fruit.

Hook

I don't think I know of a single person who does not like to go on vacation. In this beautiful country of ours there are a lot of options: beach, mountains, National Parks, amusement parks, sporting events. The possibilities are literally endless.

[**Teacher's Note:** Tell a personal story to get your audience to start thinking about the geography of mountain peaks and valleys. The story I told is below, to serve as an illustration of the type of story you might tell.]

When I was in junior high and high school, my brother and I took turns visiting my grandparents in Colorado for a week every summer. One summer my brother would go, and the next summer I would go. Every year was different, but the one thing they did with me on every visit was take me to Pike's Peak.

Pike's Peak is probably Colorado's most iconic mountain, at least through the lens of tourism. It is one of Colorado's 54 "fourteeners," mountains that elevate above 14,000 feet. It is absolutely gorgeous.

Now, of course I didn't climb that mountain with my grandparents. We drove the winding, 19-mile path to the summit. At the top, the views are breathtaking. The air is crisp and clear. There was even a donut shop.

But one thing that rings true about Pike's Peak, and every other mountain for that matter, is the fact that they're usually surrounded by valleys. No matter how high up you go on the mountain, there is a valley waiting for you on the other side. It may be immediately on the other side or it may be miles away, but it's there, and it's waiting for you.

Transition

One of the biggest misconceptions of modern Christianity is the idea that the spiritual journey is linear. We often enter into a relationship with Christ under the impression that our spiritual life will be a steady, upward climb. We expect a hike up a mountain where every step takes us higher, the air gets fresher, and our view becomes clearer until we finally reach the top.

But any Christian who has walked with the Lord for more than a few months knows that the path of faith isn't a steady climb. Instead, the Christian life is more of a landscape of ups and downs.

So, today I want to talk about the spiritual peaks and valleys that all of us Christians go through. You know what I'm talking about. There are peak days where our prayers feel like they have a direct line to heaven, where our faith seems unshakable, and where we see God moving in amazing ways. But there are also valley type of days where we feel isolated, exhausted, and wondering if all our hard work has made any difference in our faith at all.

It reminds me a lot of the two different spiritual tones that King David had as he wrote Psalms 40 and 43. If you're a note taker, these would be two good passages to write down and study later.

The Peak

To fully understand how high the peak potential for a Christian actually is, we have got to look at 1 Kings 18. This is one of my favorite scenes in all of Scripture.

The setting was an Israelite nation in crisis. God's people had turned their back on Him in order to worship Baal, the Canaanite storm god. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had embraced this idolatry with open arms, and, as a result, a three-year drought had left the land absolutely parched, which was a fitting consequence for the nation's spiritual dryness.

At the instruction of God, Elijah told King Ahab to bring his 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to meet him on the peak of Mount Carmel. Elijah wanted to settle this debate once and for all of who was actually the true God.

So, Elijah stood before the people and issued a pretty stinging challenge...

1 Kings 18:21 (ESV),

“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”

Then Elijah set up the competition.

1 Kings 18:23-24 (ESV)

“Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.”

This was the beginning of Elijah’s peak. On the mountain, there was no room for limping or wavering. Elijah wasn’t interested in a middle ground; he knew the truth, and his confidence in God was so high that he was willing to stand alone against the king and all of the prophets of Baal and Asherah in order to make that point known. Talk about a peak, right?!

Some of you know how Elijah felt. Oftentimes, when we are on a spiritual high, we feel this same boldness. The truths of Scripture feel obvious. We find ourselves openly speaking about our faith with ease, and the distractions of the world seem small in comparison to the glory of our God.

The climax of Elijah’s peak occurred in verses 36-38. He didn’t rely on theatrics like the prophets of Baal did who slashed themselves and screamed for hours with no response from their god. Elijah’s strategy was a bit different; he just prayed. His prayer was not long or showy; it was a 62-word appeal for God to vindicate His name and his people.

1 Kings 18:36-38 (ESV)

“And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

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