

# Go up a mountain to pray

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[ 0 : 00 ] It isn't hard to speak after them. Luke chapter 6 verses 1 to 12, 13.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the cornfields and his disciples began to pick some ears of corn, rub them in their hands and eat the grain. Some of the Pharisees said, why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?

Jesus answered them, have you never read what David did? When he and his companions were hungry, he entered the house of God and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat.

And he also gave some to his companions. Then Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. So they watched him closely to see what he would do on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, get up and stand in front of everybody.

[ 1 : 03 ] So he got up and stood up. Then Jesus said to them, I ask you which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it? He looked around them all and then said to the man, stretch out your hand.

And he did and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. One of those days Jesus went up out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God.

When morning came he called the disciples to him and chose twelve of them whom he also designated apostles. I want to talk very briefly this evening about going up a mountain to pray. Okay. Now, let me be really clear. It doesn't have to be a mountain. Okay. It could be a big hill. It could be a small hill. It could be a bench on Westcliffe.

It could be wherever your mountain is. But there's something very important about going up a mountain, to use that phrase.

[ 2 : 19 ] Something very important about finding a place which you can call yours where you go to God. Because what was happening in that particular part of Jesus' life is that they were, the Pharisees particularly, were asking him questions.

What are you, why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? How dare you? How dare you pick a bit of corn and rub it between your hands? It sounds pretty unpleasant, frankly.

A bit of corn, rub it between your hands and eat it. It's sort of a bit dry, wouldn't it? You'd need a glass of water afterwards. Why are you doing what's unlawful on the Sabbath? And then later, as he was healing the man with a shriveled hand, they were watching him.

His enemies were watching him. The Pharisees were watching him to find an accusation against him. And when he did the healing, when he performed the healing, they said, right, we've got him. What can we do? We're furious. They were furious with him. Very strong words. And on another occasion, he went to the mountain to pray.

[ 3 : 34 ] And when he came down, he called his apostles and he chose the 12 disciples. He chose the 12 men who will be with him for the three years of his public ministry.

Loads of hassle and a big decision. Loads of hassle and a big decision. Loads of hassle and a big decision.

And sometimes it might feel that we've got loads of hassle. It might feel that we've got people watching us, waiting for us to trip over.

I've certainly been in that situation in my work life. Waiting for me to make the wrong move. Waiting for somebody to say, haha, I knew you'd do it wrong in the end.

And of course, they're right. I will do it wrong in the end. And I will get it wrong. Or big decisions.  
[ 4 : 35 ] We all in our lives have big decisions to make. Big decisions which affect us. Maybe our families.

Maybe our friends. It might be somewhere like we've just heard about moving. Or it might be just a big decision that we have to make in our own heart. About who we're going to be.

How are we going to behave in this situation. And what we have here is a template. What was Jesus' response?

He went up a mountain and spent the night in prayer to God. He didn't do anything spectacular. He didn't charge around or say, I'm going to have a conference.

Or I'm going to go on a week's retreat. Now, there's nothing wrong with week's retreat. They're good. He just said, I'm going up a mountain. I'm going to get away from all this. And this was the pattern that Jesus followed.

[ 5 : 38 ] Mark 1.35. After a demanding day of healing and ministry, Jesus rose while it was still dark. And went to a solitary place to pray. Luke 5. He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Matthew 14. After feeding the multitude, He sent the crowds away and went to a mountain alone to pray. Luke 9. Before asking His disciples a great question, Who do you say I am?

He was praying in private. This was a pattern that Jesus had throughout His life on earth. From time to time, He took Himself away. He sent people away.

And He said, I am going to pray. I'm going to be on my own with the Father. I'm going to pray. Because I need that.

That's part of who I am. And that's part of my relationship with Almighty God. Now this is Jesus that did this.

[ 6 : 37 ] And if Jesus did it, it's not a bad template for us to think about. It's quite a good way of working through when we have something going on that's difficult, load of hassle, or we have a big decision.

And I suppose what I want to do this evening is very, very simply to encourage each of us to go up a mountain. Whatever going up a mountain means for you, it could be your bedroom or your favourite chair or it could be a bench or it could be literally a mountain.

There aren't many mountains just down the road, but there are quite a few quite close. But the point of this is not about where.

The point of this is intentionality about I am going to choose to go and be in solitude with my Father. There's books and books and books and books that have been written about solitude and I'm not going to pretend that I could tell you all about that or even have read them all. I've read a number of them and solitude fascinates me.

[ 7 : 58 ] As somebody who's a fairly decent, off-the-scale extrovert, solitude can be quite scary. But it's really, really important. So what can we learn?

Solitude and private prayer are essential as we seek to be with Jesus. If we want to be with Jesus, part of that is about solitude and private prayer.

And that needs to be a discipline. That needs to be something that we all engage with. Public prayer is outstanding and excellent and important. Please don't see that this is an either-or.

Joining together as God's people to pray is powerful. But solitude and private prayer is also powerful.

Solitude and private prayer. If we want to be with Jesus, we need that. Jesus prayed to His Father and shows us that big decisions require big prayers.

[ 9 : 06 ] I wrote that and I thought, I wonder what a big prayer is. I'll leave that for another day. Big decisions require big prayers. We need to become like Jesus as we come to decide things, as we come to wrestle with things.

We need to do what, to become like Jesus and pray in solitude. And then private prayer sustains us as we do what Jesus did.

Private prayer is the stuff, is the thing that sustains us through the challenges, the wrestles, the difficulties, the heartbreak, the sadness, the joys, the exhilaration, the thrill of seeing God move, hearing God's miracles, I love hearing testimony because you hear about God in the ordinary.

God just doing things because He loves us. God saying, yeah, I'll do that for you because He's Father God who loves us much.

Private prayer sustains us as we do what Jesus did. And so, when life becomes crowded, let's go up a mountain.

[ 10 : 36 ] When decisions weigh heavily, let's go up a mountain. When ministry and service drain us, let's go up a mountain.

When sorrow visits us, let's go up a mountain. When temptation presses in upon us, let's go up a mountain.

The secret place of prayer is not an escape from reality. It's God, is where God prepares us to meet reality with faith.

Amen. Thank you.