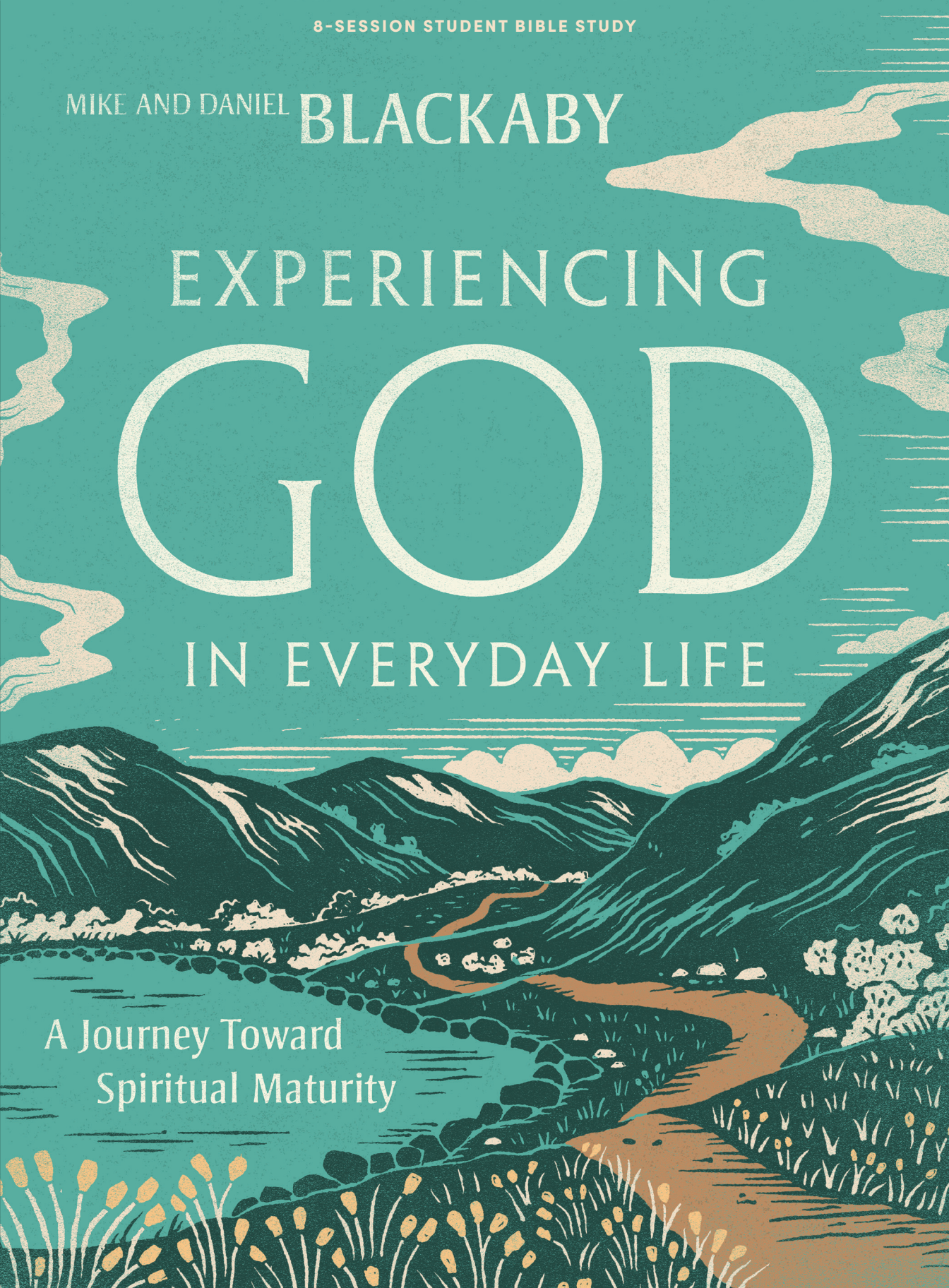


8-SESSION STUDENT BIBLE STUDY

MIKE AND DANIEL **BLACKABY**

EXPERIENCING GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A Journey Toward
Spiritual Maturity



MIKE AND DANIEL **BLACKABY**

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GOD
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

A Journey Toward Spiritual Maturity

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INTRODUCTION

If God is *everywhere*, then shouldn't we be able to experience Him . . . *anywhere*? That sure sounds exciting, but it doesn't always feel true in our lives. We've experienced times when God felt close and we were overwhelmed by His amazing presence, exhilarated by the sense of being caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. Have you felt that before?

But there have also been times when we were caught up in the routines of our ordinary lives and nothing "God-sized" seemed to be happening. Can we really expect to experience God and His eternal purposes when our days are filled with school, chores, and so many other regular activities?

Yes, we absolutely can.

Years ago, our grandfather, Henry Blackaby, wrote a book called *Experiencing God*. His book resonated with readers, impacting millions of people all around the world. Our grandpa helped many people experience God personally and realize the amazing truth that God is at work all around us and invites us to join Him in His activity.

Experiencing God and His activity all around us is an exciting way to live. However, we can also become conditioned to expect God to only do "big" things around us. When these extraordinary moments aren't happening, then God can feel distant. We may even feel as though we're doing something wrong. But what if God is doing amazing things all around us and we just didn't realize it?

Think of your life as an unfolding journey, a story filled with countless characters, exciting locations, and obstacles to overcome. But here's the thing about journeys: While there will surely be some big and memorable moments, most of your time will be spent simply moving forward, one day at a time, as you progress down the path.

We've come to understand the importance of the "everyday" experiences of this journey. These are the moments that make up the bulk of our lives. We go through our routines each day, and it's these "ordinary" moments that mold us into who we are and who we will become. What if we came to recognize God's presence in *these* moments? In the unassuming, unexciting, and unappreciated experiences that string together over time to make up our unique story? How might we see these moments differently when we realize God is there? If you long to find meaning, purpose, and value in the regular routines of your life's journey, this book is for you.

We are excited for you to join us for the next eight weeks. God is all around you, and every single day offers you opportunities to experience Him. These moments will add up over time to transform you into the person God intends for you to become. Prepare for a journey toward spiritual maturity as we learn to experience God in our everyday lives.

—Mike and Daniel Blackaby

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This study works through eight “realities,” or central truths, that will guide us on a journey of growing in spiritual maturity. Each session focuses on one of these realities of experiencing God in everyday life. Each of the eight sessions includes two elements: group time and personal time.

GROUP TIME

Each session includes group study. Being in biblical community with other Christians is essential for our spiritual health and maturity. The group experience includes teaching and questions to help our group grasp that week’s reality and look ahead to the week of personal study.

PERSONAL TIME

Each unit includes five days of personal study.

Day 1 introduces the week’s reality through a story then further unpacks that reality through Scripture reading, commentary, and questions. At the end of Day 1 each week, there is a verse to memorize.

Days 2–4 further examine different aspects and applications of the week’s reality with Scripture reading, commentary, illustrations, and reflective questions.

Day 5 (Weekly Rhythm) invites us to begin practicing spiritual habits that coincide with that week’s reality. Choose one or more spiritual habits to “practice” throughout the week. The habits are not just additional activities to clutter up our busy lives—they are strategic actions to cultivate new rhythms in our life and to lead us to take steps toward spiritual maturity.

An introduction to the spiritual habits we’ll be developing can be found on the next two pages. A Habit Glossary can be found at the back of this book (pages 182–88) to help us as we are establishing new spiritual rhythms.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional resources, visit lifeway.com/everyday/. You’ll find free leader helps and downloadable resources to help guide students through this study.

ESTABLISHING A RHYTHM OF LIFE

Spiritual habits are biblical practices that draw us into deeper relationship with God. They aren't activities we perform to check a box but patterns that focus our attention away from ourselves and onto God and His eternal purposes. If you consistently focus on God and His purposes, you will experience spiritual growth. Scripture refers to this as *remaining in Christ*. Jesus said:

“Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.”

John 15:4-5

Our spiritual habits connect us to the Vine (Jesus), and that connection sustains our spiritual health and produces fruit.

Just as your everyday life is filled with many routines and practices (wake up, get ready, go to school, hang out with friends), your spiritual life is as well. The sum of your spiritual habits is your “rhythm of life”: the ongoing way you make time and space to remain in Christ.

Spiritual maturity doesn't happen by accident. Taking the time to plan for your spiritual growth is meant to help you intentionally pursue Christ. Some habits you will try out, grow from, and continue; others you will try out and discontinue or come back to at a later time. The habits that reinforce your rhythm of life are not a set of unbreakable laws—they will need to adapt as the seasons of your life change. Consistency over time is the goal. What works today may not be feasible or effective in the future.

This book invites you to form two primary types of spiritual habits: **short-term** and **long-term**.

Short-term habits are the habits we pursue on a daily or weekly basis. These habits are the time-tested building blocks for life—like gratitude, giving, and community.

Long-term habits are the habits that require more dedicated time or attention. We pursue these on a monthly, semesterly, or yearly basis—habits like fasting, going on a spiritual retreat, or practicing prolonged periods of silence and reflection.

FOUNDATIONAL HABITS

AT ALL TIMES

Here at the beginning of this study, let's consider **foundational habits**. These are the spiritual practices that all followers of Jesus should engage in day by day and week by week over the course of their lives. While there are many habits like this, here are five essential ones to start doing today.

1. DAILY TIME IN THE BIBLE

Scripture is the primary way we hear from God. Whether by reading or by listening, seek to engage Scripture daily to hear from God.

2. PRAYER

Prayer is the primary way we communicate with God. Scripture commands us to pray at all times. Our lives should be characterized by a prayerful openness to God.

3. GIVING

God grants us the opportunity to partner with Him in His work in the world, and one of the primary ways we do this is through financial giving. Our generosity supports God's work and grows our trust and dependence on Him. Even as a teenager, you can start the discipline of giving now so that as you grow, it's already a spiritual habit in your life.

4. COMMUNITY

The church is a gift from God. We are called to live in community with other Christians. Seek to be a part of a local congregation where you can serve God and develop God-centered relationships with others.

5. WORSHIP

Worship is our whole-life response to God. His glory and character demand our praise.

PART 1

WALKING WITH GOD



The background is a solid teal color. It features botanical illustrations in a lighter teal shade. At the top, there is a horizontal band of tulip-like flowers. On the left side, there is a vertical strip showing a close-up of plant leaves and stems. In the bottom right corner, there is a small illustration of a landscape with a path and flowers.

REALITY

1

GOD DRAWS YOU INTO
HIS ETERNAL PURPOSES

REALITY 1

GROUP TIME

REALITY 1: GOD DRAWS YOU INTO HIS ETERNAL PURPOSES

Have you ever climbed a mountain? Reaching the peak and looking across to the horizon and all the activity going on in the valley below is exhilarating. Being on top of a mountain is a special experience that gives us a different perspective than we are used to.

We have mountaintop experiences in our spiritual lives, too—moments with God and events where He feels close and our faith is strong and alive. It might happen at camp, on a mission trip, at a retreat, or in an amazing time of worship. These mountaintops can be defining moments in our relationship with God.

- 1 Have you ever had a spiritual “mountaintop” experience? If so, what was it? How did it shape your faith?

We sometimes believe that being spiritually mature means continually living in these mountaintop experiences. We sometimes even think that if we’re not having amazing mountaintop experiences all the time, we’re doing something wrong. But the truth is, we don’t live on the mountaintop. Most of our spiritual maturity happens in the valleys of ordinary life.

- 2 Who is someone you would describe as spiritually mature? How did he or she become spiritually mature? What have you learned from this person?

READ MATTHEW 17:1-9.

This was a mountaintop experience for Jesus and three of His disciples. Peter thought, as we often do: *Let’s just stay here on the mountain!* But Jesus knew that they couldn’t—something greater was in front of Him. Many times we see mountaintop experiences as the end destination of our faith. But God sees them as preparation for what’s coming next.

- 3 What was coming next for Jesus? Why would this mountaintop experience help Him with what was coming next?

Not long after this mountaintop experience, Jesus would be betrayed by Judas, arrested, falsely accused, and crucified. As He and His disciples made their way down the mountain,

Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone else what they had experienced until after His resurrection. Whether they realized it or not, this mountaintop experience was preparing them, too, for the difficult road that was ahead.

4 When has a mountaintop experience with God prepared you for what was coming next in your life?

While the transfiguration was an extraordinary event, coming down the mountain was ordinary. Some of the most life-changing moments with God happen in the most ordinary times—on the way to school, at home, on a normal Sunday morning at church, after band practice, or even in the locker room before a game.

5 When have you experienced God in an ordinary moment of life?

One of the most important realities to awaken to is that God is at work all around us and wants to include us in what He is doing. By learning how to experience God in our everyday life, we are drawn into His eternal purposes.

6 How would you define God's eternal purposes?

Spiritual maturity is a journey; you don't get there overnight. As you grow in spiritual maturity, you will begin to see people and situations the way God does. You will learn to be sensitive to what He is doing all around you and to the eternal purposes He is drawing you into. Ultimately, spiritual maturity is a journey of growing in your relationship with God through the ordinary moments of your life.

7 Where do you feel like God is drawing you into His work right now?

8 How did this session help you think about what it means to be spiritually mature?

This week, you will have five days of personal study that will help you grow in experiencing God in your everyday life. You will be exposed to Scripture and habits that will open your eyes to what God is doing and how He is working all around you, even in normal, everyday life.

Close in prayer.

EMBRACING GOD ON THE JOURNEY

FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP TO THE VALLEY

As teenagers, we attended an annual summer camp for a week of powerful worship, new friendships, less-than-stellar food, and games. One summer, it seemed as though everyone experienced God in a special way. Some discovered God's love for the first time and committed their lives to follow Jesus. Others confessed sins or hurt that they needed healing from. Many even felt God calling them to dedicate their post-high-school plans to Him and become pastors or missionaries. The Sunday after we got home from camp, many stood at the front of our church and shared their new commitments and callings. There were lots of tears in the room as the church celebrated what God had done.

Skip forward a few months: We were all back in the grind of school, sports, work, and other activities. The feelings of closeness to God and each other that we had experienced at camp seemed like a faded memory. Relationship problems, school pressures, family drama, and a whole lot of other distractions crept in to occupy our time and attention. Why did God seem distant now? Had we left Him at camp? Was He actually relevant to our lives in the "real" world?

Some friends who had boldly stood before our church and claimed that God was leading them to share the gospel story in far-off countries started struggling to even get to church gatherings on Sundays. Others who had felt God's loving presence so closely slipped back into bad habits. Some began to doubt God's existence entirely.

Thankfully, this wasn't everyone's story. There were others who quietly committed to grow in their faith. They might not have come home from camp with the most hype or with ambitious future dreams, but they moved forward with consistency. Rather than trying to recreate the special atmosphere of the "camp high" back home, they came to realize that God was already there. He had always been there; they just hadn't had eyes to see it. Now they did, and their faith continued to grow from that point on.

We were some of those teenagers who set our minds and hearts to seek Him daily in the routines of life. Of course, there have been highs and lows along the way. Not long after that camp, we both faced some of the greatest struggles of our lives and experienced God in the

depths of sadness and confusion. We also experienced God in many joyous moments. Most of the time, though, our walk with Jesus hasn't been marked by extreme highs or lows but by a daily choice to turn our eyes towards Him and trust Him with each step forward. We've found that God often surprises us in unexpected moments if we're faithful to follow Him daily. We don't need to try to create the perfect circumstances to conjure up an amazing experience with God because He is already present and on mission all around us—we just have to have eyes to see Him.

1 How would you describe your faith in God at this point in your life?

2 When in your life have you felt closest to God? When have you felt the furthest away?

EXPERIENCING GOD ON THE JOURNEY

The Bible tells us a fascinating story about Jesus and His disciples. The disciples had already seen Jesus do some amazing and miraculous things, such as teaching big crowds or healing people who were possessed by demons. Where they probably would *not* have expected anything extraordinary to happen was during a routine boat ride *between* ministry events. But that is exactly where the disciples experienced something they would never forget.

READ MARK 4:35-41.

Several of the disciples were professional fishermen, so they had traveled across this sea countless times. There was nothing unusual about a routine boat ride—unless, of course, Jesus was in the boat with you. Living life with Jesus changes everything.

On this occasion, they saw sailing simply as a necessary commute from one place to another. But along the way, they got to experience Jesus in a powerful new way. God is everywhere, which means that you can expect to experience Him *anywhere*—even in the middle of your everyday activities.

You can encounter God at times you would expect, such as during church gatherings, mission trips, and summer camps, and these are important. But as the disciples learned, the most powerful experiences with God often come when you least expect them as you travel through your everyday life with Jesus. A relationship with God, like any other relationship, is built over time. Each day presents you with an opportunity to experience Him.

Do you want to see and experience God in your everyday life? You don't need to continually seek out new "big" moments. God is also in the small, everyday routines, and He wants you to experience Him there. He has a plan and purpose, and He wants you to be a part of it.

- 3 Describe a time in your life when you experienced God at an unexpected moment.
- 4 In what part of your ordinary routine would you *least* expect God to do significant work?
- 5 Name at least one area of your life where you sense God is working. Pray that God would make this clearer to you.

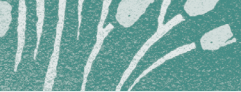
Reality #1: God *draws* you into His eternal purposes. God is inviting you on a journey over the next eight weeks. Think of it like a boat ride between where you've been and where you're going. As you travel, God is there, and He's inviting you into His activity.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

This week, commit to memorizing **Philippians 2:13**:

For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

You can use the card included in the back of the book.



DAY 5: RHYTHM OF THE WEEK

DEVELOPING A RHYTHM OF SPIRITUAL AWARENESS

ABOUT RHYTHMS

God is at work all around you, but the rhythms of your life—the patterns and routines that direct your actions and focus your attention—can become misaligned with God and His purposes. Over the course of this book, we will guide you to intentionally develop rhythms that focus your everyday living on God.

HOW TO

The best way to develop a new rhythm is to create healthy habits that reinforce it. Each week on Day 5, we will provide a list of suggested habits. These are not just activities to clutter up your already busy life—they're strategic actions to lead you down the path of spiritual maturity. If done right, these rhythms will bring more freedom to your life, not less.

These habits are designed to help you develop a long-lasting rhythm. Consistency is key. Over time, you may wish to try a new practice or add additional habits once the first ones become second nature. You're also welcome to brainstorm additional options that suit your personality from the Habit Glossary on pages 182–88.

RHYTHM OF THE WEEK

Let's start by developing a **Rhythm of Spiritual Awareness**. God is at work all around you. How aware are you of His presence throughout your daily routines? If you aren't noticing God's activity, you may be more focused on the distractions of the world than on God. Allow the following habits to begin pointing your spiritual eyes toward God's presence and activity around you.



HABITS

1. GRATITUDE

During your morning routine as you get ready for school, commit a portion of that time to thanking God for His goodness and the ways He has blessed you. Write the word “Gratitude” on a note card or sticky note, and put this note on your mirror or bedside table so that you remember to be grateful each morning.

2. SEEING

Place a note on your bedroom door that says, “Help me see what You’re doing.” Every time you leave your room, ask God to reveal His activity to you. Every time you return, take a moment to reflect on one way you saw God at work that day.

3. LISTENING

Commit to have a “silent” commute (no music, podcasts, audiobooks, etc.) on your way to school or another location one day each week. Use that time to prepare your heart to recognize God’s presence throughout the day ahead. If you are riding with other people, let them know what you are doing and ask if they would like to join you in their own moment of silence to listen to God.

4. ENCOURAGING

Each morning, pray for God to bring someone to your attention, then seek to give that person a word of encouragement by the end of the day, either in person or digitally. You might be surprised how often you will hear the feedback, “Your encouragement came at the perfect time.”

5. REFLECTING

Start a spiritual journal. Commit to writing down at least one thing you saw God do each day before the day ends. (You may want to keep your journal on your pillow or nightstand as a reminder).

FROM THE MOUNTAINTOP TO THE DAY-TO-DAY

Many of us first meet God in a powerful mountaintop moment. But what comes next? The reality is, our Christian lives are not lived on the mountaintop but on a daily journey of learning to experience God and follow Jesus. God invites us to take part in His story daily as He pursues His eternal purposes in our world. Some days may require major leaps of faith, but more often, we'll take small steps of faithfulness in the everyday moments of our lives. God desires for us to experience Him not just on the mountaintops but in all the places in between.

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