**Teen & Adult Devotion**

Have you ever had a “spiritual high”? What happened afterward?

Often when we go on retreats, gatherings, or mission trips, we have powerful experiences and make promises to live differently, but then we crash. The life of following Christ should not be like a series of spiritual sugar highs, with the inevitable crash. It should be different.

The mountaintop experience that the disciples had in Mark 9 was more than a caffeine high. It gave them strength. At times when they questioned what was happening around them, they could return to this mountaintop experience and draw strength from it. The mountaintop experience didn’t happen to protect them from the cross but to empower them as they moved toward the cross. Oftentimes we, like Peter, want the glory of heaven without the struggles of earth.

What is the point of mountaintop moments on a mission trip, in a quiet time, at a retreat, at church? Not to protect us from the challenges of life but to encourage us to tackle the challenges of real life, all the while knowing that God is on our side and is working for our best and his best in our lives.

Spend some time journaling today about a mountaintop experience you’ve had in the past, perhaps at a retreat or on a mission trip. Was your mountaintop experience a caffeine high or a catalytic experience pushing you deeper in your relationship with God?

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

Mark 9:2-13

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURES**

Exodus 24:12-18; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Revelation 1:12-18

**Worship & Sermon**

This sermon unpacks Jesus's radical command in Mark 9 to "cut off" a hand or foot if it causes you to stumble, revealing that it's a hyperbole about pride, not physical sin. The sermon places this command in the context of the disciples arguing about who was the "greatest."

Jesus confronts their pride, telling them to become a "servant of all" and to embrace the humility of a child. The "stumbling" he speaks of is when our pride—whether through authority, wealth, or talent—causes others, especially the vulnerable, to stumble.

The speech concludes that we cannot "cut off" our pride on our own. Instead, Jesus does the impossible for us, becoming a true servant who is cut off on the cross. He frees us from the burden of being great, so we can humbly serve others as He served us.

**Here are the questions for REFLECTION or Discussion this week:**

1. Can you think of an example, where someone's pride (in their talent, authority, or possessions) had a negative impact on others?
2. Read Mark 9:33-37.  Jesus repeatedly used the example of a child to teach humility, in a culture that viewed children as weak and unimportant. In what ways do you think we still struggle to see value in the "weakest" members of our society or communities?
3. Read Mark 9:42-50 and Mark 10:17-31.  How does the rich young ruler fail to cut off his “hand” or “eye”?  What is a "hand" or "foot" in your own life—something you're proud of or cling to—that might be getting in the way of a deeper walk with Jesus and cause harm to your neighbor?
4. How does seeing Jesus “cut off” for you on the cross change the way you view greatness?