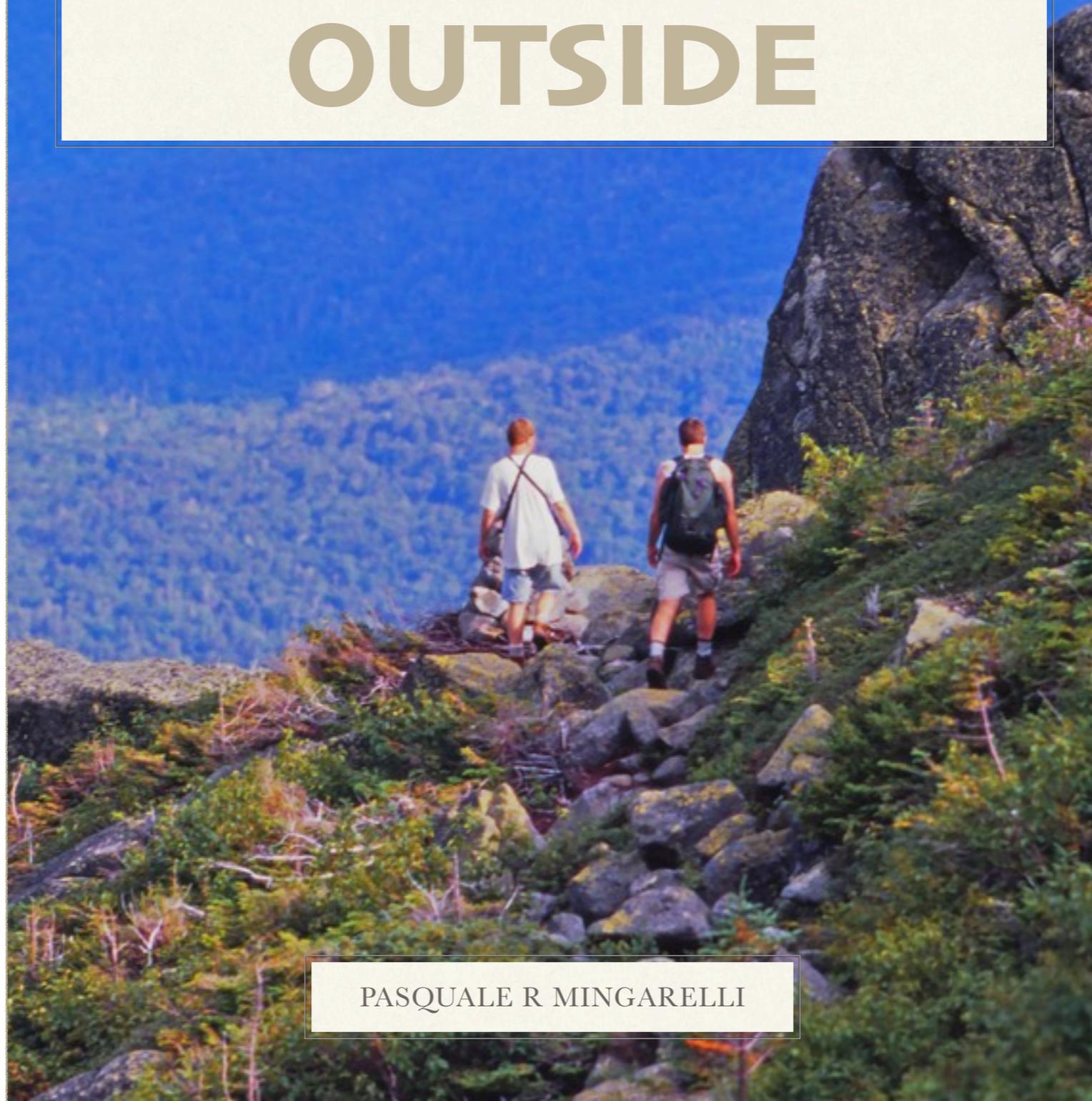


An Outdoor Devotional for Men

FINDING GOD OUTSIDE

PASQUALE R MINGARELLI



Finding God Outside: An Outdoor Devotional for Men

By Pasquale R Mingarelli

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EACH DEVOTIONAL CONTAINS FOUR SECTIONS

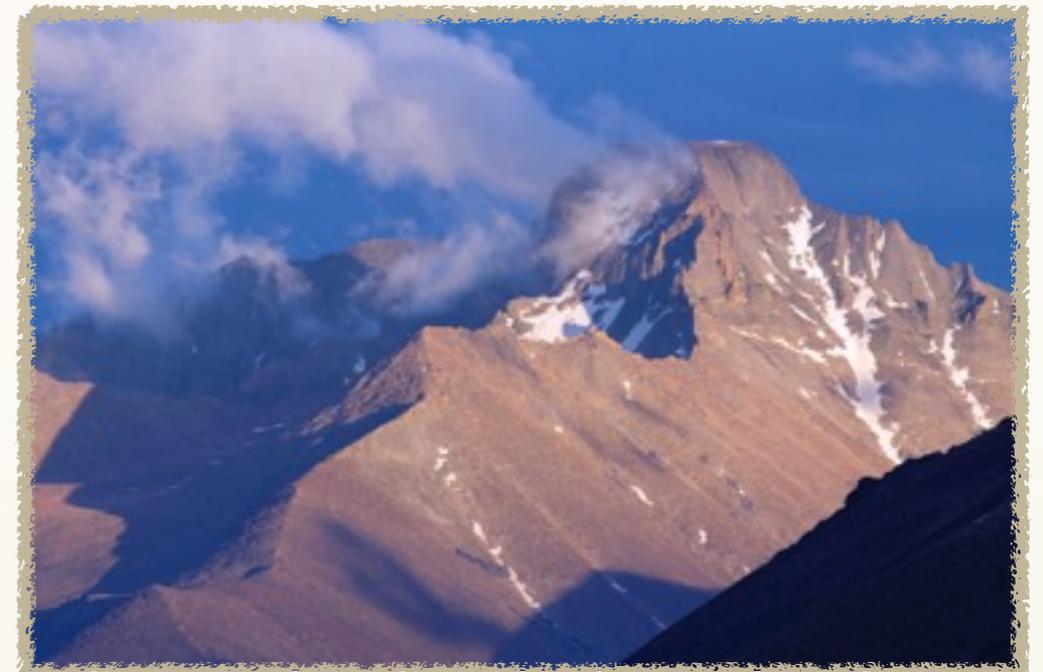
- ❖ *An opening verse*
- ❖ *The main devotional thoughts*
- ❖ *A section called “Mountain Time”, which comes from my love of reading the Bible and seeking God while in the mountains. This sections contains a Bible passage and some questions to consider.*
- ❖ *A section called “Climbing Higher with God”, which contains some related scriptures passages to read if you so choose.*
- ❖ *For more visit: visualverse.thecreationsspeaks.com*

SECTION 1

Welcome

God speaks to men differently than He speaks to women. He made men with a touch of the wilderness inside and many of us find God outside. We bond with Him there like nowhere else. We find that He speaks to the ruggedness in our souls through the outdoors as we seek Him there. May this devotional help you discover what God would say to you through the outdoors.

May you find greater strength in the strength of the Creator!



The Creator Revealed in the Creation

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)



One of my favorite quotes comes from the 19th-century naturalist Henry David Thoreau. He wrote, "Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after." Thoreau knew that we find something in the outdoors that speaks to our souls as men. Out there, we find both peace and adventure. God made us with something wild inside.

John Eldredge mentions in his book *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*, that God created man outside the garden of Eden in the wilderness. That wilderness and the desire to connect with God through adventure remains somewhere in the heart of every man.

Many of us follow this internal wilderness and desire for adventure into the outdoors. We find something spiritual there. Whether we stand on a mountain top, sit in a deer stand, fish, or run rapids in a kayak, we sense a spiritual presence in nature. We don't sense this because some mystical force exists in nature and unites everything together in a circle of life. We sense something spiritual because we find connection with the God who made us. In the quietness or in the adventure, we feel God's presence.

Whether in the rush of the moment or in the stillness of solitude, God is right there with us.

Mountain Time

Read Psalm 19:1-10.

Whether you find adventure or peace or both in the outdoors, how does nature speak to you about God? Write down your thoughts

Climbing Higher with God.

Roman 1:18-23 and Job 12:7-10

The Hunter



If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol [place of the dead], behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. (Psalm 139:8-10)

God does not sit in a deer stand waiting for us. He actively pursues us like a hunter searching for a trophy bull elk. He knows what He wants and He goes after it, not willing to settle for anything less. God pursues us through the rough ter-

rain we wander in and He wants to take us to His home. Like the hunter, God wants our life. But unlike the hunter, He does not want to slay us only to be His trophy. He wants to take us home and be in relationship with us as a father is to a son.

Not only does God hunt us, but He desires that we hunt Him. God wants us to actively pursue Him. We pursue God through reading His word, prayer, acts of service, and through fellowship with other believers.

When a hunter pursues a deer for food, he does so out of hunger and because he enjoys the taste of the meat. Those who follow God hunger for His Word, the Bible, and they pursue Him through it. The more we read it, the more we enjoy having God in our lives and we seek ways to serve Him and help others.

Mountain Time

Read Matthew 6:33 and Matthew 22:35-40

What are some ways in your own life you can actively pursue God with greater intensity? What would the benefits be?

Climbing Higher with God

Psalm 1, Micah 6:8 and Psalm 139

Alone in God's Wilderness Temple

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. (Luke 5:16)

God made us to have fellowship with other men and with Him. Fellowship with God often happens during our time of fellowship with other men, such as in men's group study or when we just hang out. But sometimes, fellowship with God happens best when we are alone with Him. A great place to meet with God alone is in the quietness of nature.

The Gospels record Jesus heading to the wilderness alone at least a half a dozen times. Several of those instances are recorded multiple times in the Gospels, emphasizing their importance. Jesus even encouraged His disciples to spend time alone with God outside. In Mark 6:31, He said, "Come



away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”

Why did Jesus go into the wilderness alone to meet with the Father? Perhaps He knew something? Maybe Jesus knew that spending time in such places can help us better appreciate God? Or maybe Jesus knew that unmatched quietness and solitude gives us rest? Whatever the reason, Jesus spent time alone in the wilderness.

Other godly men in the Bible such as Moses, King David, the prophets, the Apostle Paul, and others spent time outside. David spent most of his early years out in the wilderness. He killed both a lion and a bear with simple weapons. He lived as a warrior poet and wrote about His experience. He wrote that the wilderness is God's temple and the massive desert cliffs and rocks inspired him to call God His rock of strength (Psalm 18:1-17).



Climbing Higher with God

Read all of Psalm 18 and Psalm 29.

We feel God's strength grow in us when we take a break from the busyness of life and get outside to be alone with God, just as Jesus and David did.

Mountain Time

Read Psalm 18:1-17.

Why does David (the writer of Psalm 18) call God his rock?
How many illustrations from the wild does David use in Psalm 18? What do those illustrations tell us about God?
What does nature tell you about God?

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Great Creator

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,

(Job 38:4)

The rugged and majestic look of mountains speak to our hearts as men. We see them as both a challenge and as an inspiration. Since the mountain stands strong and great, they speak of a greater Creator of tremendous power.

When we look at them, we can't help but marvel at both them and their Creator.



Nature reveals the greatness of God in many ways. We also see the Creator's greatness when we watch a sunrise from the ocean shore or when fishing at dawn. And we see His greatness when we stand on the top of one of those mighty mountains or at an overlook in a national park. We don't only see God's greatness in these magnificent places. We can see it almost anywhere. Whenever we spend time in the outdoors, study it, enjoy it, and

think about God in it, we can see His greatness. I even think about His greatness while walking my dog. (Continued on the next page.)

The outdoors tell us that God is great. That same great God lives in us and made us above all else in His creation. He made the mountains with great strength and sculpted them with much majesty. If He created us greater than the mountains, what kind of strength and majesty did He pour into our character? A man who lives with honor and integrity is far greater than any mountain. To rely on God while standing strong against sin or for the honor of our family or country makes us far more majestic than the tallest mountain.

Mountain Time

Read Psalm 1:1-4 and Job 38:4-11.

Think about the greatness of God. How does knowing that our great God lives in us give you more strength for troubles and challenges of each day?

Climbing Higher with God

Read Job 38 and Psalm 104.

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The Provider

They all wait for You To give them their food in due season. You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good. (Psalm 104:27-28)

Each fall, the oak tree in my backyard fills with countless acorns. Jubilant squirrels from far and wide will come to indulge in the tree's bounty. What does this tell me about God? It tells me that He is a God of provision, abundance, and joy.

Psalm 104 brings to life how God remains active in His creation. Verses 10 and 11 say He created the rivers to flow down from the mountains to provide water for animals below. Verse 12 mentions that He provides trees to give a home for the birds. God cares for His creation just because He made it and it needs a caretaker.

Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount that God provides for His creation. He also makes the connection between God providing and caring for creation in the same way He does for us. He says in Matthew 6:30-32, "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What



will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

As our heavenly Father provides, He calls earthly fathers to provide. We are not God and cannot provide like Him, but He has wired us with a desire to provide. Due to circumstances that fall upon us, sometimes we

find ourselves unable to provide. Times like this prove to be very challenging. I found this to be true from my own experiences. In those times, I needed to look to God and know that He is the ultimate source. (Continued on the next page.)

Whether good times or bad, I humbly need to recognize what the apostle Paul wrote to be true, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Mountain Time

Read Matthew 6:25-34 and Psalm 104.

How does God provide for His Creation? How do you desire to provide for those in your life and what does that tell about how God made you?

Climbing Higher with God

Read Psalm 104 and Psalm 145:14-18.



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Creation Calls Us to Worship

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; The Lord shakes the wilderness . . . The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everything says, "Glory!"

(Psalm 29:8-9)

Sometimes, I find it easier to worship God in the mountains than in a building. In Psalm 29, King David wrote that the wilderness is God's Temple. The Wyoming lake in the photo is appropriately named "Cathedral Lake."

The day after my backpacking buddies and I went to Cathedral Lake, we had to backpack out of a deep valley. It took us several hours to make the long climb from the valley below. We reached the top tired and hungry, so we decided to eat lunch there and spend alone time with God.

I walked over to the far edge of the ridge to eat and read. After lunch, I stood on a boulder overlooking the valley. The mighty hand of our Creator overwhelmed me as I observed the richness of the valley and the majesty of the rugged mountains. God's power, wisdom, majesty, and in-



finite nature were clear to see. My heart worshiped Him there.

The Bible proclaims that creation calls us to worship God. Psalm 96:11-12 says, "Let the heavens be glad, and let

the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy . . .” How do trees “sing for joy”? By their very existence and innate beauty. The trees, the mountains, the fields, and the sea tell about a great God and He needs to be worshipped!

When I think about nature and worshipping and God, I am reminded of one of my favorite hymns, “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.” The Hymn writer Henry Jackson van Dyke declares:

*All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect
Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing
sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee.*

Mountain Time

Spend some time admiring the creation around you. It can be great or small. It doesn't matter. We can find something to admire in all God's creation. Think about the lyrics in the song. Let what you admire in creation call you to worship God. Journal your thoughts.

Climbing Higher with God

Read Psalm 96, Psalm 148, and Isaiah 44:23.



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The Mystery of Nature's Beauty

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

Beauty strikes men in a special way. When we see the beauty of a woman, it hits us. We all remember the first time we saw one special girl and it did something inside us. The Bible says the beauty of creation will do the same. The Scripture's original Hebrew language actually uses the same phrase to describe the beauty of nature and the appearance of the Bible's most beautiful women. The beauty of nature, when we let it, will overwhelm us and call us to find rest and peace.

This beauty calls to us and like so many other aspects of nature, it tells of something greater. Apologist Alister McGrath writes, "The beauty of the night sky or a glorious sunset are important pointers to the origins and the ultimate fulfillment of our heart's deepest desires." And C.S. Lewis is quoted as saying, "The beauty that so captures our hearts and is so fleeting draw us towards an eternal reality." In other



words, the beauty of creation points us to the greater beauty of heaven.

The Bible teaches that God originally created us to live in the garden of Eden. God filled that garden with the pure beauty of His perfect creation. So, when we spend time in the rugged outdoors today, we get glimpses of Eden. And for those of us who follow Christ, we will eventually live in the beauty of heaven. The beauty of nature is also the closest thing on earth to the beauty of heaven. The beauty of nature reminds our souls of the greater beauty of Eden and it calls to us about the infinite beauty and majesty of heaven.



Taking Time

Think about the beauty of nature and why you may be attracted to it. Think about what makes it beautiful. Think about why beauty exists in the first place. Journal your thoughts.

I started the first devotion with one of my favorite nature quotes and I want to end with one from 19th-century naturalist, John Muir: “The mountains are calling and I must go.”

Climbing Higher with God

Read Genesis 1 and Revelation 22:1-5. You can also read Revelation 21.

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PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS



Cover: Hiker in the Great Gulf Wilderness, New Hampshire

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Introduction: Hiker in Zion National Park, Utah and Longs Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

Day photo: Kayak on the shore of Turquoise Lake, San Isabel National Forest, Colorado

Day 2: Bow Hunter, Eastern Nebraska

Day 3 photo 1: Rock formations in Canyon Lands National Park, Utah

Day 3 photo 2: Rock formations in Badlands National Park, South Dakota

Day 4 both: Mount Meeker and Longs Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

Day 5 first photo: Silhouetted black squirrel, Bellevue, Nebraska

Day 5 second photo: Fox squirrel, Bellevue, Nebraska

Day 6 both: Cathedral Peak and Cathedral lake, Wyoming

Day 7 both: The Saint Louis River, J.P. Cooke State, Minnesota

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