



Excerpt from Focus
Devotional Memoir

DR. BROWN CARES

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN:
DEVOTIONAL SERIES

Climbing The Mountain: Devotional Series

Excerpt From Focus Devotional Memoir

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Climbing The Mountain 1: Twenty Years Preparing

Psalm 91:1 (ESV)

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

In the movie “Independence Day: Resurgence”, both the heroes and the invaders had twenty years to prepare for the previously defeated invaders to try to make a comeback. In those twenty years, the invaders appeared to make exponentially more progress preparing than the heroes did. Nevertheless, the natural efforts and twenty years of preparation of the heroes, along with courage, tactics, and selflessness were enough; the heroes pushed through with everything they had and succeeded. The heroes lived to see another day.

The ‘before’ and ‘after’ difference and impact that twenty years of preparation can make led me to reflect on my own path. Less than one year from writing this, I will have spent twenty years preparing for a momentous occasion. An occasion that marks the completion of twenty years of tertiary education training as a physician, scientist, and leader, in medicine, biomedical science, precision medicine, translational science, physics, arts, humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and being human. The last two years of the twenty may feel the most challenging of all, and truly the pinnacle of the mountain may be the most challenging to reach. Yet the mountaintop will be reached and celebrated, while preparing for the next mountain. The next mountain may not be another two decades of training, but another two decades of living, giving, loving, and being loved. Those matter most as we climb each mountain.

I suspect you too are climbing your own mountain(s) right now, or perhaps you feel the sun (and Son) shining on your face at the pinnacle of the mountain. Wherever you are on this mountain journey, look around you to see who else is climbing the mountain. How can you reach out and help them climb higher, better, and more safely? How can you love on them as they take one step closer up the mountain? How can you share your story of how you managed to progress so well up the mountain? Of course, ‘well’ can be defined in so many ways.

I am sure you may have your battle scars to prove it.

For some, those scars are on the outside.

“Know your scarology!” I had been told in the congenital heart disease clinic. Perhaps you have scars on the outside that tell of the sort of surgeries you have had on the inside. Or perhaps your scars are on the inside, silently telling of the sort of heart and soul ‘surgeries’ you have experienced on the way up your mountain.

Perhaps there is someone heading up the mountain who could benefit, learn, and grow from hearing the stories that your scars on the inside may tell. When God brings you someone struggling with what He brought you through, let Him show you the most meaningful way to help that someone up their mountain. In the process, it may help you too.

Here’s to another year, or two, or three, five, ten, or twenty of climbing.

Let's keep climbing, together.

Lord, thank you for allowing us opportunities to climb together. Thank you for preparing us for each phase or season of our lives. As the winds, rains, or scorching heat comes, thank you for being our refuge and strength, our very present help in trouble. Take us up to Mount Sinai with you. Shine your glory on our scars. Heal us, teach us, love on us, grow us, together. Amen.

[Disclaimer: I would not formally endorse or recommend the movie for all ages or hearts due to language, (killing) aliens, and so on, though I hope you see my point above.]

Climbing The Mountain 2: Trusting in Him

Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them,
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me..."

You and I both know that how you trust the Lord
determines how you climb each mountain.

How you trust in Him is so beautiful, and should be what you fall back on always, as He is your rock, your redeemer, and your shield. When those moments come, and they will, remember...

How you trust Him enough to believe the big vision
He has for your life in the first place.

How you trust Him enough to believe that you shouldn't give up.
How you trust Him enough to climb the mountain for you
and take you along with Him.

How you trust Him enough to choose the right situations
and circumstances for you.

How you trust Him enough to bring you through.
It doesn't matter how big or how grand the vision or passion is.

There is only one reason you can achieve it.

That reason is found in Matthew 28:18.

That's most of all the important reason.

Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them,
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Then there's Matthew 28:19-20, Jer 29:11-13, Psalm 139:1-18, and Ephesians 6:11-20.

Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (ESV)

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

When those moments of self-doubt and inadequacy come, recognize that what's happening is found in
Ephesians 6:11.

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to
stand against the schemes of the devil.

Hold 1 John 4:4 close in your heart.

1 John 4:4 (ESV)

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them,
for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Let each person you come across know that you have found this
incredible way to climb your mountains.

*Lord, thank you for assuring us of your grace, presence, help, strength,
and love as we climb each mountain dressed in your armor, never on our own and never alone. Amen.*

Climbing The Mountain 3: The Core Of The Mountain

Matthew 7:7-8 (AMP)

"Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened."

Matthew 6:33 (AMP)

But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right-the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.

As I sat quietly before the Lord one morning,
He ministered over me through these verses.

I asked Him to give me the desire, will, and time to study well for my ever-present upcoming board exams. I decided I would keep on asking until it had been given to me continuously, and flowing over.

I told Him that I am seeking Him, a place of solace, peace, comfort, refuge, discipline, and strength in Him. I claimed His promise that when I first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right-the attitude and character of God], all these things He places on my heart will be given to you also. The primary things on my heart that morning were the hunger and time to study well for my board exams. I committed to seeking Him for these things until I found them.

Finally, I proceeded to knock. I knocked upon the door of God's heart, pressing into Him for the hunger and time to study well for my board exams.

I remembered that as spiritual colleague had described my board exams as a mountain that I am now well poised to climb. When I knocked on the door of God's heart that morning, God showed me that I was opening the door to the mountain. I was opening a door at the foot of the mountain. Where I stood. When I walked in through the door, I walked into the core of the mountain.

I asked God what that meant. Why was I opening a door and walking into the heart of the mountain, instead of coming up the outside of the mountain. God started to show me how the essence and core of the mountain systematically determines the rest of the mountain. He was showing me that if I could understand the core and heart of the mountain,
I could understand everything I needed to know about the mountain.

Then the mountain became a volcano. He showed me that if we could put a balm on the lava of the heart of the volcano, at the core of the mountain, then we could prevent an eruption of the volcano. He showed me that quelling the lava at the heart of the volcano, at the core of the mountain, could lead to a peace and calm that my soul craves. Currently, in my soul, I fear the mountain as a potentially erupting volcano. A volcano that God was showing me He could calm.

Of course God could calm a volcano. I didn't realize, until that moment, that I had in my heart and soul viewed the challenge of finding the hunger and time to study well for my board exams as a potentially erupting volcano. Yes, my spiritual colleague had described them as a mountain. I didn't realize that they actually felt more like a potentially erupting volcano.

There is so much to learn, and so little time in which to learn it.

There is so much to study, and limited time and energy to study it all.

God showed me that He would chart my course. He would show me how to conquer and calm the potentially erupting volcano of a mountain, as He would lead me into the core and heart of the mountain. When I had prayed earlier, I had presented him with my favorite request regarding professional activities: Triple E. When faced with time-limited challenging professional activities, I often ask him to help me to complete the activity efficiently, efficaciously, and expediently. So I asked Him to grant me expediency, efficiency, and efficacy, as I faced this mountain or potentially erupting volcano. I asked Him to guide me with supernatural insight and wisdom to complete the activity, and I even invited Him to blow my mind, as He likes to do.

Lord, thank you for charting my course. Thank you for giving me the hunger and time I need to do what you are calling me to do. Amen.

Climbing The Mountain 4: Not In Vain

Romans 8:18 (ESV)

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

As I put the crutches under my arms, tears came to my eyes as I thought about walking to physical therapy, then walking to my car, then coming back and doing this again tomorrow. The discomfort in my upper back from doing the work of lifting and moving the crutches to take the pressure on to my upper back and off of my knee and feet was unexpected. It seemed like every intervention to address the knee injury led to discomfort somewhere else. First, it was aching in the left foot from bearing all my weight on the left leg, to spare the right knee. Then it was the sharp pain in the right foot, when bearing weight on the right leg with the still unstable right knee. Then it was the finger injury on the right hand that really had nothing to do with bearing weight on the right knee, except that being unstable on the knee probably contributed to my slamming my finger in the car door and causing a tiny cut on a fingertip that was now completely purple all the way to just before the joint. Or maybe it was just my preoccupation with walking on the knee that distracted me from removing the finger before slamming the car door. One of the ladies at work joked that the right shoulder would be next. Little did she know how correct she was, since the discomfort in the upper back is in the area of the shoulder bones, the scapulae, large bones that help move the shoulders up and down, which is an inevitable movement when you're using crutches, no matter how appropriately you try to maneuver them. In a quick moment, thoughts about the injured knee, the prior aching left foot, the prior sharp pain in the right foot, the still healing and partially numb right fingertip, and the discomfort in upper back washed over me, and in an instant I just wished everything was fully healed. I fought the desire to want to find solace in something else. I fought the desire to go home and bury my face in ice cream. I fought the desire to find something more interesting to eat than the salad I had already planned on.

I said to myself, silently repeating over and over, "Write it out. Write it out. Write it out!"

I had recently committed to writing out my thoughts, feelings, and emotions, as I process these daily circumstances, with a caveat. I didn't feel that God was calling me to write out my experiences in journal entries as a "Dear diary" opportunity. I felt that God was challenging me to write more devotional entries like this, so that you can see into my vulnerable moments that may relate to yours, while telling you how I rose above it, in a way that will hopefully resonate with you.

So, here I find myself "writing it out", in hopes that you will see yourself somewhere in these pages, and find the peace you were looking for with the One that solves all my problems.

Yes, he solves them. Not in my time in, but in His.

Let me be clear though. I am very excited about the opportunity that God gave me, which was absolutely incredible. During that opportunity we all went hiking, and while coming down from the top of the mountain, I injured the right knee. I know that God orchestrated everything for me to be at that opportunity for two weeks, and I am ever grateful for the collaborations, networks, inspiration, camaraderie, learning, growing, mentoring, and teaching that occurred during those two weeks. The knee injury doesn't negate any of that, and I know full well that God in His

sovereignty allowed it to happen. Yes, he could have prevented it, but clearly preventing it was not His intention. I'm not saying it was His intention to injure me. I am saying that He allowed the injury to happen, by my own actions. I know that He is using this injury somehow for His glory and for His kingdom. It may not be immediately obvious, but I know this is His purpose.

As I learn more about physical suffering, as small, simple, or transient as it may be, it leads me to depend more on Him. Part of His entire purpose for creation is dependence, communion, fellowship, relationship, and love with him. If an injured knee, and related discomfort in the left foot, right foot, right finger, and shoulders are what I need in my life to bring me to the level of relationship that He requires of me, I'll take it. Tears are currently falling as I write these last few sentences, as His Spirit confirms to my spirit His purpose, that bringing me "to my knees" by calling attention to my knee is His allowance for nurturing my relationship with Him.

"Don't let it go to waste," I am telling myself. "Let this knee injury not be in vain". There is so much growth for me to do with the Lord. There is so much more nearness that I can have with him. No matter how much I feel I might be committed to him in my daily life, and in my spiritual life, there is so much more available that He is calling me to. If injuring my knee and in some tiny way hurting my feet and hand and upper body as a result are to lead me to exponential growth in him, I welcome it.

Lord, help me to rest in your through every trial and circumstance. Help me to give my thoughts and challenges to you. Please draw me close to you and help me to lean into you. Amen.

Climbing The Mountain 5: Oil, Salve, & Ashes

Psalm 100:1-5 (ESV)

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

I have entered into the heart of the mountain.

Psalm 100:3-5 (ESV)

"Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!
For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations."

Entering into the Lord's territory in the heart of the mountain. The place where God pours his oil of anointing like a salve on the wound at the heart of the mountain spouting lava.

As the salve hits the lava, it immediately turns to ash.

*Lord, thank you for bringing me into the heart of the mountain. Thank you for meeting me here.
Please pour your oil of anointing like a salve all over me and all over the wound at the heart of the
mountain. Let the salve turn the lava to ashes, and give me beauty for ashes, strength for fear.
Please hold me near.*

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