

Soaring to the Heights



Motivate

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Introduction to devotional series “Soaring to the Heights”.

I have been asked to develop a series of devotionals related to becoming involved in missions. The premise of this material is what we can learn by looking at what is involved in soaring in the heavens and applying that to God’s call to mission.

Why this idea? It is because no matter what actual form of transport we use, whether we walk, ride in a boat, car, or plane we need to key our eyes on God. In a sense to soar so that we can keep our focus on God and on the mission we have been called to participate in.

There are many ways to reach those people. We can walk or maybe ride a horse or donkey. We can ride in a cart or in a boat. These were the primary avenues of reaching people for so many years. More recently we can now ride in a vehicle and can fly. Options that have increased our ability to reach people. In all of these a critical factor has been a vision of going where God calls. And an ability to soar, to let God open our eyes and hearts to all that is possible when our focus is heavenward.

There will be five sets of devotionals in this series. Here is the list and the focus of each. The overall theme for them is taken from the process of entering air or space, which in many ways is not very different from entering a remote location on the planet.

Here is a description of each of the five sets of devotionals.

Soaring to the Heights: Motivate– In any endeavor a key element is motivation. What motivates our choice to become involved.

This series of devotionals is to provide time to focus on, think through, and review all that will be or has been part of the process to encourage a person to choose to heed God's call to missions and its related ministries as an avenue of service in the kingdom of God.

The scriptures for this section are drawn from the Pentateuch and the Books of History

Soaring to the Heights: Mobilize – At some point is time to commit ourselves. It is time to take all we have learned and put it into action. It is a scary exciting moment. It is filled with all kinds of emotions, fears, worries, and hopes. It is like the moment when you are accepted into school. It is like the moment when you sign a contract for a job. It is like the moment when a bride and groom say "I DO." It is about the moment when you say YES to the Lord's call on your life.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on those decisions, whether taken in the past or being taken now. It is about reviewing the consequences of such a decision and the reality that, once the decision has been made, life will never be the same. It is about facing the fear and the joy of choosing.

The texts for this section are drawn from the books of Poetry

Soaring to the Heights: Function – The idea of soaring is about learning to live at a new level spiritually. In some ways it is similar to what a plane deals with when taking off. There are several factors that come into play and need to be dealt with. These have to do with weight, amount of fuel, and final destination. If we do not care for them properly then we will fail. As in all endeavors in life our actions involve choices and how they will affect our plans and our ability to function. When we handle all those choices correctly then we will be

able to soar, able to carry out the work that we are given. These choices also affect how long it takes to arrive at our destination. We choose to go to school after secondary school. We choose an occupation. We choose a place to live and so on. The choice of marriage and kids - depending on the person. The choice of hobbies and activities. I can go on. All are part of how I function in the role God has given me.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of allowing time to reflect on past choices, current decisions, and thinking about the impact of any other choices that may be necessary. Learning to make wise choices is critical as we move from one phase of life and enter into the next phase of life – or, in this context, as we move forward in the mission of God

The texts for this section are drawn from the Prophets

Soaring to the Heights: Validation – We all want to know that all we have done has a point and will bring about the desired results. It is when we begin to see the fruit of all that has been done and being able to accomplish the goals that have been set.

In life, all the choices have this focus, they are designed to bring us to the point of carrying out specific goals and accomplishing key responsibilities. In life it is finding employment or raising a family. In the church it is becoming engaged in the mission of God.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of, as before, reflecting on what happens when you have found the place where God wants you to serve. It is about reflecting on what it means to use the lessons learned, the skills obtained, and the relationships developed in carrying out what God has called you to do.

The texts for this section are drawn from the New Testament

Soaring to the Heights: Mission – Consider this. Every rocket sent into space has a mission. Some are for communication. There are exploratory satellites. There are manned missions, like the space station and moon. There are military satellites. There are weather satellites. So many kinds and each designed to carry out a mission. There is also often a set time and location for the mission. Some satellites have a short-term purpose and limited location. Some, like voyager, are sent off on long journeys with a vast purpose. Some study the earth, and others study the beyond.

It is the same in life. We all have a mission. We all have a time and place of service. The goal is that all of us, in carrying out our portion of the mission, can work together to accomplish a greater mission, the call of God to proclaim the good news to all tribes and nations.

This series of devotionals is for the purpose of reflecting on how you fit into that greater mission. It is about thinking through the value of what you do, no matter how small or unseen, in making the mission possible. We often don't realize how important everyone is to the work being done. In mission aviation, it is the same. We need each other. We need people who keep things functioning. We need people to communicate; we need people to explore. We need people to carry out specific work at specific times. We need people who commit to long arduous efforts and we need everyone in between.

The texts for this section are from references to the heavens found in all of scripture.

May God use this series of devotionals to encourage and inspire you as you play your part in carrying out the great commission. May God richly bless you as you spend time in meditation and reflection. May you sense, over and over, the

truth that God has called and that when God calls, He provides all you need to do what He has called you to do in His service.

MAKE MY PATH

YOUR PATH

HELP ME TO MAKE THIS

OUR PATH

THAT I MAY NEVER

BE ALONE

AS I FOLLOW YOU TO

YOUR THRONE

Motivate 1 Genesis 1:8 – God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

So, what do we know about this word *expanse*? Before this, there was heaven and earth. Now, He adds space. He adds something to separate two types of water. I am going to assume that this could be clouds—the water above—and the bodies of water like lakes, oceans, etc.—the water below. God creates an expanse.

This is not an easy word to grasp, especially if you are earthbound. The earthbound, in general, cannot see even a small portion of what this means. The few who have stood on a mountaintop have a greater idea, but it is still a limited perspective. About the only way you can truly gain a perspective of what this is, is by being in the midst of the expanse. You have to become like a bird, and then you can understand the sheer reality of the expanse. It crushes us into nothing. It surrounds us with its vastness—a vastness we cannot begin to comprehend. Now, instead of a mere mile or so of vision, we can see, dare I say, hundreds of miles. And we are a mere speck in this expanse.

But that is not the limit of it. For a few—those who have hung weightless in space—this expanse becomes immeasurable. And even then, we can only view a tiny portion of all that God created for us to enjoy.

Do we dare pause and let it overwhelm us, and so become overwhelmed with what God has created for us to experience? Do we know where we fit in this vast expanse? If not, then stand on the edge of a high mountain. Better yet, take a trip in a small plane. Even better—jump out of a plane and skydive. Let the expanse do the talking and just watch and listen.

Motivate 2 Genesis 1:9 – And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so.

Do we understand what this means, this separation or collection of waters in specific places? Do we understand how critical this step was?

Can you imagine a world with no land visible? A world so flat that... I am sorry, that boggles my mind. Truthfully, I believe even the most seasoned sailor—one who loves the sea—yearns to hear the phrase *land ahoy*. To find a place where they can stand and not worry about having to maintain their balance with every step, every action. To not have to worry about whether there is enough wind to get where they want to go, which, I might add, is land.

What about us as we move about in God's world? Do we want to be forever adrift on an endless sea? Or do we hope for dry ground, a stable place that gives us a chance to rest and not be buffeted by wind and waves?

In so many ways, God has declared for us such a place. In the original story, it was called Eden. But we blew that opportunity to enjoy peace and God's presence. We have been caught in the sea of sin and disobedience, and no matter how much people say they enjoy life as it is, there is always a desire deep within to find land, so to speak.

We live in a world that is much like an ocean without land—always in movement, always unstable and unpredictable. Ask any sailor about that, and they will tell you, if they are honest, that it is so. But is the land that much more stable? In some ways, yes, but in so many ways, no.

The only truly stable place, the one place that is always the same, the one place we seek, is.....

Motivate 3 Genesis 1:14 – And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years."

So, do you know how to navigate? The art of navigating by the sun, moon, and stars is becoming a lost art. Now we have GPS, which is becoming so accurate it can tell you where you are in great detail. When we lived in Papua New Guinea, it was still not quite accurate enough to deal with navigating the mountains of Papua New Guinea. There were still some situations that relied on VFR. So how good are you at visual flight? Do you know how to plot your path using just the sun and moon? And maybe the stars at night?

Can you imagine what God was thinking when He set those lights in the expanse of the sky? *If I don't, they will surely get lost. At least with the lights, they can know the time of day and night. And if they take the time, they can learn which way to go, and over time, they will get better at it. More importantly, they may even begin to see where I am in the vast expanse I have created for their enjoyment.*

Well, we did get lost. And worse, we have often misused those lights. We turn them into gods, giving them more power than was intended. We have lost our way. Thankfully, a few have seen the truth and sought to restore the purpose of the lights. David stated, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge."* (Psalm 19:1-2)

So, what are you depending on to find God? Are you depending on a man-made GPS (false religion) or VFR (human philosophy)? Or are you letting God's light guide you to Him?

TAKE ME THE FAILED
CREATION

NOW MADE YOUR NEW
CREATION

TAKE ME AND REMOLD THIS
BEING

INTO ONE THAT IS SEEING
ALL I CAN BE IN YOU

Motivate 4 Genesis 1:15 – "And let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth."

Let me ask you this: Just how good is your eyesight? Have you ever had a truly complete eye exam? One that involves a complete analysis of your field of vision and your night vision in combination with that field of vision. Oh, you don't know what a visual field is.

Here is a definition for you: A field of vision is the entire area that a person or animal is able to see when their eyes are fixed in one position.

But along with that is another factor. This has to do with your ability to see color and black and white. The color cells are mainly in the center of your eye, while black and white are on the outer fringes. This is where your ability to sense motion and your ability to see at night reside. These function best when you are looking directly ahead. With practice and focus of mind, you can become aware of much more than just what is in front of you. You can begin to see things before they enter the center of your vision.

Night vision is the same. It is being able to see movement at the edge of your sight—to see something before you see it. Am I making sense?

God gave us light—a bright light to see all of creation. A nightlight to help us see beyond what is evident and see Him moving around us.

Motivate 5 Genesis 1: 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth,

Did you feel lost in the last devotional? Not a surprise. When we start talking about vision, sight, field of vision, and night vision, it is not easy to understand. Why is that? It is because we tend to fixate only on what is directly in front of us.

God gave us two lights—one for the day. This one is easy: light, clear and bright, which makes it easy to see. So easy that we can easily miss so much. Why? Because we tend to fixate on what can be seen easily. That is not wrong. In fact, there are so many marvelous things to be seen, things that reveal the incredible ability of God to create.

The second light is not so bright. It is not as easy to see by this light. It takes practice and patience. Why? Because it takes time for our eyes to adjust to the lower light levels. That means we have to be patient and stay away from bright lights if we want to make use of that light.

If we do, we will see another world—another aspect of creation. God created a number of creatures with unique abilities to see at night. They fly, walk, run, hunt, and more in the night as if it were day.

Now, what do you think? Why is there a light that is limited to guiding us at night? How is this night light giving light to us? Well, if you learn how to use it, you can accomplish much in the night. If you learn to see the movement at the edge of your vision, if you learn to refocus, you might see more than you expected.

God is like that—challenging us to see beyond what is evident, to see... You fill in the blank.

Motivate 6 Genesis 1:20 – And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky."

And so begins movement above the earth, space restricted to only those created beings that have wings.

Wings, what are they? An incredibly complex structure that allows two critical things to occur: lift and gliding. A structure that allows free movement through the air as the wing is lifted and then lifted again when it descends, remarkable feat of engineering as well as a clear understanding of aerodynamics. But then, God created all the rules and knew what was required for flight to be possible. He knew what it would take to fill the sky with creatures designed to follow those rules.

For centuries—millennia—man has studied this and desired to have that same freedom. The freedom to fly above the earth, not from the top of a mountain, but from within the sky. The freedom to experience flying.

All too often, though, we forget that the primary purpose of birds flying is to meet their needs—to get supplies for their home, to get food for themselves, and to get food for their family. All too often, we get focused on nothing of true value.

Birds fly because they were created to fly. Why do you fly?
Birds fly to live. Why do you fly?
Birds fly to care for the next generation. Why do you fly?

We need to take time and think through the *whys* behind our actions and choices. All too often, they are self-satisfying, self-gratifying, and just plain selfish, all under the false deception that if we accomplish what we desire, we will be free. Freedom—real freedom—is not just about flying; it is about doing so with the purposes that God instituted for such activity.

MAKE THE WISDOM OF THE
SEERS

BE THE WORDS THAT MY
LIFE STEERS

EVEN AS THE BIRDS KNOW
THE ROUTE TO FLY

MAY I NEVER ERR AND GO
AWRY

Motivate 7 Genesis 1:21 – So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Man has learned to fly, and in doing so, he has created an incredible number and variety of birds. Each of them has its purpose, and that purpose is related to design, size, and function.

- **Helicopter** – Lands and takes off in small spaces.
- **Cessna 206** – A plane for short runways and small loads.
- **Boeing 747** – A giant plane designed to transport large quantities of people and materials.
- **Apollo** – A rocket ship to carry people into outer space.
- **F-22 Lightning** – A plane designed for war.

When God created birds, He saw that they were good. When we created birds, we quickly saw a way to use them for war. We invest incredible amounts of resources into those planes. It's sad.

How much of what we create is good? How much of our life and resources do we commit to doing and making what is good—not in our eyes, but in the eyes of God?

We have learned to fly. We have learned to create an incredible number of birds in which to fly. We have learned to fly to any and all parts of the world. We can fly over the highest mountains, and with modifications, we can fly below the ocean's surface. The principles are much the same.

But have we learned to fly the way God wants us to fly? Where do our rudders, ailerons, flaps, and propellers really take us? We may be aerodynamic in what we create, but is it good? Will what we create and how we use it be seen as good by God?

Motivate 8 Genesis 1:26 – Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

This is not an easy phrase or concept to consider. Think about it. How does one rule over an animal that can, in an instant, be airborne and beyond reach the moment it does so?

As we consider this, we need to keep in mind that, at this point in time, there were no environmental issues to deal with. There were no species on the brink of extinction to protect. Furthermore, man had not been given permission to use birds as part of his daily diet.

So again, what does it mean to rule over birds? Consider the rules of flight. There are very clear rules that you must abide by if you want to join the birds and fly. If you don't abide by the rules, then you will not get off the ground, and if you do manage this, you are certain to crash in short order. These are not the results you want to have.

So, what about ruling over birds? Those who are wise take the time to understand how life works and then adjust their goals and expectations accordingly. If we want to enjoy the presence of birds in our world, then we will need to understand how they live. From there, we learn how to live in accord with those realities.

It is not about asserting control. You have no control over the rules governing flight. What you do have is the ability to use those rules to enjoy flying. You have no control over the nature of birds, but you do have control over your ability to enjoy them and learn from them.

When you rule yourself correctly, the rule of everything else will fall into place.

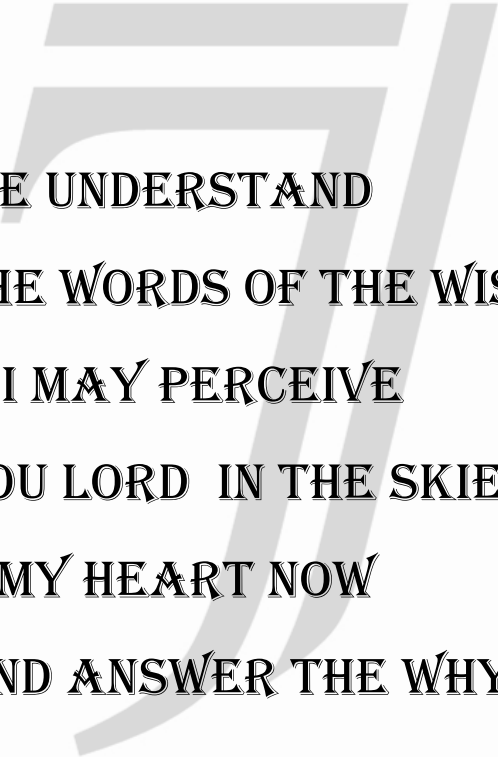
Motivate 9 Genesis 1:30 – "And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food."

Could you imagine being responsible for feeding everything on the planet? I sometimes wonder what is involved in feeding all the animals in a zoo. Feeding snakes, amphibians, birds, cats (big and small), all manner of deer—the list of animals could go on and on. From what I can determine, it takes a significant number of employees to manage this. Oh, and did I mention caring for the fish and... yep, a long list and an incredible amount of effort.

Even more amazing is that they feed themselves without any help from us. God planned it that way and then stated it for us so that we would not have to worry about caring for each and every creature. Alongside all of that, He made a garden for man so that man would have everything he needed as well.

Now, I enjoy going to a zoo and seeing even a small part of the incredible variety of life that exists on this planet. I also enjoy going to an arboretum or botanical garden. There, I get a chance to see the plants God has provided for feeding this entire planet. What is interesting is that estimates suggest there are about 20 times as many animals as plants. Yet, the most dominant form of life on this planet is plants. God knew exactly how to provide for feeding every living creature—in the water, on the land, in the air, and yes, even in the ground.

Each of them has learned how to find the food available and use it. We have another food source that animals neither need nor can access. We have a God who loves us and provides for our spiritual feeding—that is, if we let Him. Just like all the other food, it is only available if we seek it out and use it.



LET ME UNDERSTAND
THE WORDS OF THE WISE
THAT I MAY PERCEIVE
YOU LORD IN THE SKIES
OPEN MY HEART NOW
AND ANSWER THE WHY'S

Motivate 10 Genesis 7:14 – They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind—everything with wings.

So how many species of life were on the ark? Scientists suggest there are over 2 million species on this planet that have actually been discovered. Almost half of them are insects and simple organisms. The next largest group is aquatic in nature, with a total of less than 250,000. According to one site, the rest—birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals—total about 37,000. If there were a pair of every one of those on the ark—wow. But I want to focus on the birds, about 11,000 types, ranging from as small as the bee hummingbird to the great condor. That is a lot of avians. I don't even want to think about what that involves.

The key phrase above is “creature that moves along the ground.” Many birds can easily float in the air above (gulls and eagles) or even float on the water or a piece of flotsam (ducks and pelicans). The experts say the ark could handle 40,000 animals and their food. Remember, there are a total of 37,000 species that needed a space on the ark.

What is the point? Why all the number crunching?

God knew what He was doing. Do you believe this in your heart of hearts? Do you trust God to care for the details? Do you truly believe God is fully aware of all that is happening and why it is happening? More importantly, do you believe that it all has a purpose and is designed to open your heart and mind to the truth that we have a loving and caring God?

He knew exactly which species needed to be on the ark and designed it to meet those needs.

Motivate 11 Genesis 8:2 — “Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.”

Have you ever thought about all the things that fall or pass through the sky on their way down to where we are? Just for fun, here’s a list — starting from far away and moving closer to home:

1. Far away: meteors, meteorites, space dust, light, cosmic rays
2. Middle distance: satellites, spaceships, space debris, rockets
3. Close distance: rain, dust, pollution, debris from tornadoes and hurricanes, planes

Did you know that planes are technically in a controlled fall? The more power exerted, the more lift they generate — but I like to think of that as “falling upward.” If you reduce the power enough, the plane will begin to descend. The hope, of course, is that the descent remains under control. When it is, we call it a controlled glide.

The best example of this is the space shuttle, which essentially fell back to Earth in a controlled manner. But that’s the point — most of the items on the list above fall in an uncontrolled way. That means unless something intervenes — to destroy what’s falling, to take control of it, or to provide a safe place of shelter — there is always danger.

So, here’s the question: does the pilot truly have control of the plane? How many variables does he have to manage just to stay in control?

External forces like birds, rain, dust, wind shifts, changes in air pressure, and clouds — all of these can affect flight. And that’s just the outside. Inside the plane, there’s a long checklist of components, any one of which could malfunction and cause loss of control.

God was in control of the weather. Is He in control of you as well?

Motivate 12 [Genesis 8:7](#) — “and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.”

Sounds like a lot of wasted energy — and very frustrating. If I were that raven, I’d be upset. Upset with Noah for sending me out. Upset with the water for not going down fast enough. Upset with the wind for not making it easier for me to fly. Upset with God for even allowing this to happen. Upset with anything I could find to be upset about.

What about being upset with yourself for not going back to the boat and roosting on the roof? Who knows — maybe the captain would part with a little food so you wouldn’t be hungry.

So, what about you? Are you likely to get upset about how long it takes to get things done? Get a license, get certified, get here, then there. Get a passport, get a visa, learn a language, learn how to live in another culture. Get parts, get fuel, get anything.

Do you get upset in traffic? Do you get impatient with others? Why?

I’ll tell you a good reason: you use your standards, your habits, your way of doing things as the standard by which you judge everything around you. Am I wrong? We all do it. We have our way of doing it — and we’ll fly around and around and around like the raven until things fall into place for us.

Never mind the cost, the frustration. Never mind what others think or do. Never mind that there may be a better place than where I am. Never mind that others may be smarter than us.

The doves came home.

What will you do when nothing is ready when you want it to be?

IN THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD

BRING ME LIGHT

IN THE BLINDNESS OF MY NIGHT

GIVE ME SIGHT

IN MY LIFE OF DARKNESS

MAKE ME THINE

IN A WORLD THAT IS BLIND

HELP ME TO SHINE

Motivate 13 Genesis 22:17 — “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.”

The estimate for the number of grains of sand on Earth is 1 followed by 27 zeros — an inconceivable number. The estimate for the number of observable stars is 4 followed by 22 zeros. Again, a mind-blowing figure. But do you realize that, on the clearest night, you can only see about 3,000 of those stars?

Oh, and that's if you're not looking at the Milky Way. Then the number jumps to billions. Pick up a cubic foot of sand, and you'll have about 1 billion grains in your hand.

Here's another fascinating number: it's estimated that the total number of people who have lived on Earth is around 117 billion.

So why would God use such incredible numbers when speaking to Abraham? It surely wasn't just about the numbers.

The point wasn't about quantity, but about the fact that God would use the faith of one man to accomplish the impossible — at least impossible by human imagination.

I would love to take a night flight in a small plane and see the stars from that perspective. Then I'd pause and consider what God could do with one person of faith — maybe even me — to accomplish something wondrous and beyond my ability to imagine.

God calls us to open our minds and hearts to a universe of possibility. The key is: will we believe that He can use us to accomplish more than we can dream of?

There Abraham stood, maybe on a patch of sand. The stars shone above, revealing God's creation. If God could make something as simple as sand and as vast as the universe — both innumerable — then what can He do with a life lived in faith?

Motivate 14 Exodus 9:22 — Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt — on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt."

I am always awed by the appearance of a thunderhead. Most clouds are docile things. They float along at a specific altitude, minding their own business — which, basically, is to create shade and provide rain. They are usually predictable and bring welcome refreshment.

Thunder clouds are totally different. They form quickly and become incredibly dangerous — both to those on the ground and, even more so, to those in the air who are caught unaware of their formation. Nobody chooses to be caught in the effects of a thundercloud: the rain, the lightning, and — worse — the hail. They are fascinating to watch, both from the ground and the air.

Airplanes are constantly scanning for them. Remember, they can form quickly and rise from near the ground to over 40,000 feet in the air — so high that even modern jets are not able to fly over them. The turbulence would be incredible. And for sure, there is no good reason to try to go under them either — again, the turbulence and the onslaught of what descends from these massive engines of chaos.

As I said, they are quite a sight to view from afar. But they're quite a different matter to experience. We do our best to avoid them — but that's not always possible. Life is just like that. It is filled with thunderclouds, creating tumult in and around us. They alter our plans, change our trajectory, and create confusion.

A key question is not so much how we will handle them — because, if we are truly trusting God, then we have the resources we need to do so. The real question is: are we able to use those resources to help those less fortunate when the hail of reality descends and crushes?

Motivate 15 Exodus 10:21 — Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt — darkness that can be felt."

On several occasions, I've been deep underground as part of a tour of a cave or cavern. Almost always, there comes a moment when the guides say they're going to turn off the lights. They encourage everyone to stand still and not move. Why? Once the lights go off, you understand. You have no concept of where you are, and any movement can put you at risk.

On another occasion, my son and I joined a group to climb a mountain. We started at midnight with only the stars and our flashlights to guide us. The guide was very clear that we should not wander off the trail and that we needed to remain in contact with the group. The goal was to reach the summit by dawn. We did so. On our descent, we saw just why we were given such clear instructions. Many times, we were on narrow paths, and a deviation of just a few feet could have resulted in a fall of several thousand feet.

They say blindness heightens the other senses. That may be true, but those senses can never replace the reality of seeing what is around us. There is no way to describe the visual wonders to someone who has lived in perpetual darkness.

Now consider the task we've been given. We are not called to plunge people into darkness with a judgmental attitude. We are not to control the light and keep people in darkness for whatever sad reason we may have. We are called to reveal light to the blind.

Sounds like an incredible task. It is. Our job is to let that light shine through us — and not dim it along the way.

Think about that... and what darkness truly means for those without the LIGHT.

LORD PROTECT THIS FEEBLE LIFE

KEEP ME SAFE FROM HARM

LORD PREPARE ME TO FLY

TEACH ME TO GROW

LORD PROTECT THIS MY HEART

THAT IT MAY GROW STRONG

LORD PREPARE THIS BODY

SO THAT I CAN SERVE

Motivate 16 Exodus 19:4 — “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.”

Tell me, which would you prefer: to spend days on foot, trudging over mountains and through rivers; to spend hours in a vehicle on really poor roads; or in a plane, flying over all the struggle below?

I would choose the plane, but there are problems with this. Where you start the journey and where you end the journey need to be well prepared. You cannot take off or land anywhere. With a vehicle, it is much the same, and maybe even more challenging. The process of developing roads, even bad roads, can involve an incredible amount of work. Someone is bound to say you could take a boat. That, too, has issues. You can only get to a limited number of places. After that, it's back to dealing with other options. The fact is that before you can get anywhere in a vehicle or a plane, someone has to get there on foot. That means you have to have two very important points clearly in mind: the point from which you will start the journey and a very clear idea of where you are going. God knew where the starting point was and where He was taking the people of Israel. He also knew clearly the route to take and what would be involved in making the trip. So, do you believe that God knows the path you are to follow, and will you trust Him to provide what will be needed along the way? You may want to fly, but sometimes we need to walk before we can fly.

Motivate 17 Exodus 24:10: *“and saw the God of Israel. Under His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.”*

When I read this, my mind goes to the phrase, “a clear blue sky,” and I wonder, what does that mean? For one thing, it suggests unobstructed vision and the ability to see whatever may be present within my field of vision, which, because it is the sky, involves an incredible and vast realm to enjoy and observe. It also suggests the ability to see a single color in its fullest expression—sky blue. It is not often we are able to see one color at this level or intensity. Almost always, colors are mixed with others. That is also incredible. But to have one color that is so dominant and so intense is something to consider.

So here they are on the mountain of God. They are being allowed to come into the presence of God, something that is fearful and dangerous. What they see is more than they understand. They are seeing God unmixed with anything that would distort or distract their vision. It is like a clear blue sky. All they see is God, but in a way that will bring awe and not ruin.

They are allowed to realize, at a sensory level, the total and complete reality of God and of His presence all around them. What is sad is how quickly we forget this truth. We allow so many things to alter our ability to see and know God’s presence in and around us.

It makes me wonder, what would it take for me to remove the distractions that I create so that I could see His presence? What would it take for me to always have a clear blue sky and that level of awareness? How would that change how I live and act in relation to God and to the world around me?

Motivate 18 Exodus 25:20 The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.

When I read the phrase “their wings spread upward” two images come to mind. The first is a very common one and one that can be seen in the behavior of ducks, chickens and various other birds who spend a significant time on the ground when raising their offspring. They spread their wings and form a shelter over their offspring as protection against rain, sun, and other dangers. The second has to do with flight. It is the position of the wings when taking off. The wings need to be in an upward and open position ready for the first downstroke. This is critical.

In a plane it is the first step. Lowering the flaps or positioning them for takeoff. Without this step the ability to take flight becomes much more difficult and requires a great deal more energy, space, and time before flight can be accomplished.

Consider this in regard to our relationship to God. Do we know how to position ourselves to gain two important purposes? Do we know how to position ourselves so that God can spread his wings of protection over us? The chicks know what to do and quickly run to their mother in order to enjoy the place of safety she is able to provide. God is willing to protect us.

Then do we know what is needed to fly, to enjoy God’s presence? The birds know what position they must take for this to happen. They know about the right position of their wings for flight. God’s word is filled with the directions we need to enter God’s presence. Do we make use of it and learn to fly?

LORD I SEE THE CLOUD ABOVE

HOW IT MOVES AT YOUR DIRECTION

LORD I SEE MY LIFE BELOW

HOW AIMLESS IS MY DIRECTION

LORD I WATCH HOW THE WIND MOVES

HOW IT GUIDES THE CLOUD ABOVE

LORD I WATCH HOW THE SPIRIT MOVES

HOW IT PROVIDES YOUR DIRECTION

LORD MAKE ME LIKE A CLOUD

THAT I MAY MOVE AT YOUR WILL

Motivate 19 – Leviticus 26:19 “I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze.”

These are dire warnings. No clouds, maybe. Clouds don't always produce the rain we hope for. Why? Why would this happen? It's because, though there is enough moisture to form a cloud, there is not enough moisture to create rain.

Pretty but unproductive. How often do we get involved in activity that is simply unproductive? We work and work. We toil and work. We slave and work—and get nothing for all our effort. Talk to a farmer who has labored in the sun, plowing, planting, weeding, and hoping, but receives nothing. Why? Without adequate rain, plants don't produce. Without rain at the right time, the plant may grow but will not bear fruit. The phrase “sky like iron” or “a bronze sky” reflects this situation. They describe unproductive weather—clouds but no rain, and a sun so intense that it burns the plants. It's like doing what you think is right, but what is not right in God's eyes. There is no rain, no presence of God. So, it doesn't matter how hard you try or what you hope for—the result is nothing.

The promise of this passage is the result of open rebellion against God: willfully serving other gods, thinking you can hide it from Him. Not possible. Over and over, the warning is given and the consequences are listed. When we refuse to walk according to God's plan, our prayers become unproductive. They bounce back off an iron sky. They have no moisture, no life, on their way up to God—and are even more dead on the way back. An iron sky repels the produce of a bronze ground.

How do you know when the sky is iron, and the ground is bronze?

Motivate 20 **Leviticus 11:23** *But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.*

Why do we enjoy watching some birds and maybe a few insects as they fly? You know what I mean—eagles, hawks, gulls, hummingbirds, and butterflies. But there are others that we dislike and are almost afraid of—things like bats, hornets, vultures, and bees.

The reason they were detested in Scripture was for reasons of health. They carried diseases. In fact, some of the birds we watch in wonder are on that list as well. Yet all of them have the marvelous ability to fly.

In our everyday lives, we have the things we detest—people, places, food, and more. But why do we detest these things? Of course, there are things about them we should detest, like hate, racism, bigotry, and more. But they are not the people, but their behaviors and attitudes. The issue is, can we look behind the attitude and behavior and still be amazed at what God has created?

For behind the fear, behind the threat, behind what we detest lies a creation of God—a creation made in the image of the divine.

The directions about the birds above were about how to treat them as food, not about how to see them. They were still marvelous creations of God who served a purpose. You just were not to eat them.

The task we have been given is learning to see the creation of God that is being hidden by the detestable behavior and attitude. All too often, we let what we detest prevent us from seeing the person God wants to save—the person God wants to use us to reach.

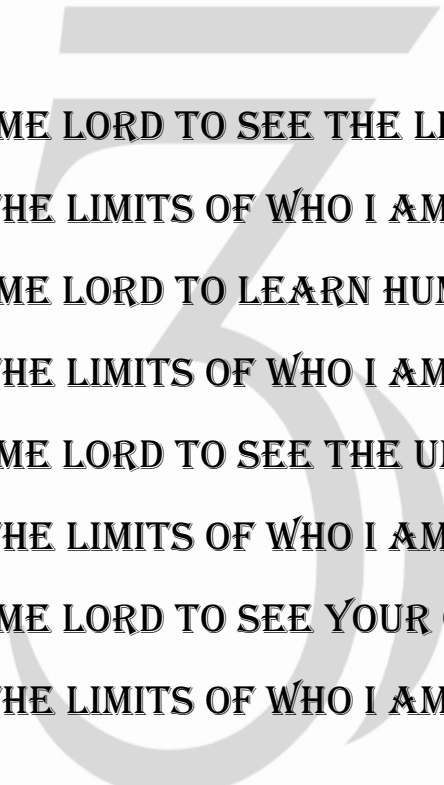
Motivate 21 Num 9:17 Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped.

I remember some of those wonderful carefree days when I just lay down in a field and stared at the clouds. I would look at the clouds and imagine what they looked like. You know, that one looks like a horse or a car or some object. If I stayed there long enough, they would change shape and become something else, or just become a nondescript form.

Why is that? Well, in general, clouds don't move in a controlled manner. They are random because the water and air movement inside of them is random - controlled by a number of forces like wind and temperature. You would not place any trust in what you see because it won't last.

Now imagine a cloud that doesn't change. It always has the same shape and has a very defined place. Its movement is not random but very clear, and everyone - and I mean everyone - pays very close attention to its movement. At night, it becomes fiery. I am not sure what a fiery pillar would look like, but if it is anything like a thunderhead, then it is dark with constant flashes of lightning or fire from within. Either way you can't ignore it. It becomes a constant reminder of who is in control of critical aspects of your very existence.

Now for the reality check: how many of you wish you had something like this cloud in your life to direct your choices and life in general? But, do you really think that would make life easier? Consider this - the group followed this cloud for forty years and still managed to complain and object. A whole generation died because they couldn't follow directions. It is not about how we get directions, but do we believe in the One giving them.



HELP ME LORD TO SEE THE LIMITS

THE LIMITS OF WHO I AM

HELP ME LORD TO LEARN HUMILITY

THE LIMITS OF WHO I AM

HELP ME LORD TO SEE THE UNIVERSE

THE LIMITS OF WHO I AM

HELP ME LORD TO SEE YOUR CREATION

THE LIMITS OF WHO I AM

Motivate 22 Num 14:30 Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

The uplifted hand - a symbol of promise, hope, and responsibility. It also is an interesting way to illustrate key aspects of flight: weight, thrust, lift, and drag. Flight is the ability to become suspended in air. Does a hot air balloon fly? Hmm. Well, for a hand to be uplifted, something needs to make that possible and done so in a way that holds it suspended in the air.

Weight – all objects have weight. The amount of weight will affect all the other factors in the equation that determine what makes it possible to maintain its position above the ground.

Thrust – this is the amount of energy required to move it from the ground into the air. A balloon uses hot air for its thrust. A hand uses the power of the muscles of the body to do so.

Lift – this relates to getting an object off the ground. Think of a helicopter hovering as the same as a hand experiencing lift and hovering.

Drag – drag is in the resistance to the act of being suspended in the air. Friction is the main form of resistance and relates to and affects the other three.

So, God, in uplifting his hand, had to overcome the weight of our sin. Had to impel or move history in a certain direction to accomplish the work that the hand represented. He had to lift all the people, nations, and events to sustain all he was going to do and had to deal with all the resistance that would occur as a result of fear, doubt, and lack of faith. Are you helping or not?

Motivate 23 Deuteronomy 1:28 Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'"

What does it mean to blow something out of proportion? I am sure we have all heard this phrase at one time or another. We let ourselves be overwhelmed by the size of a task or the time involved in accomplishing a task. It becomes unsurmountable.

To be honest no one can build walls up to the sky. The sky has no limit. - it keeps on going and going and going. You see the stars are part of the sky and a wall that reaches to the stars is not even possible.

When we make these kinds of statements, we are defining our limits - or perhaps more accurately, we are limiting ourselves to avoid the possibility of failure. Yes, that is the more accurate reason behind such statements. When we blow something out of proportion, it is more often an attempt to avoid trying, and so avoid failing, being laughed at, or scorned for making extravagant, unrealistic promises and claims.

The other side of this is just plain lack of faith. I don't believe in myself. I don't believe in others. More importantly, I don't believe in God. Furthermore, if I don't believe it can be done then I don't want someone else to succeed and prove me wrong.

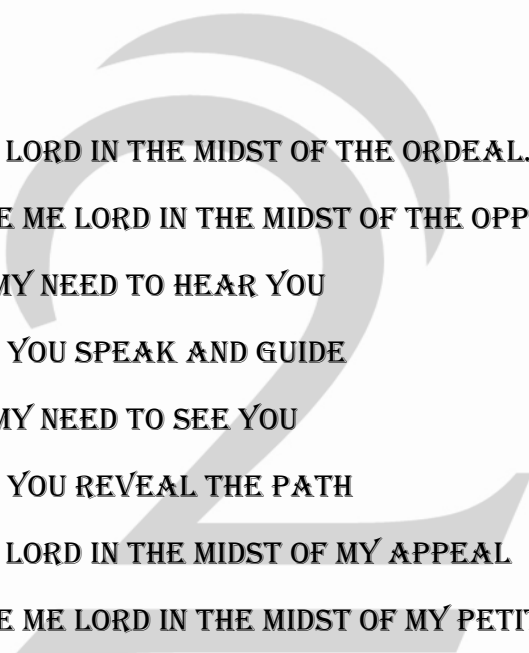
Do you see where this is going? In the end, if we succeed in blowing things out of proportion, no one attempts what we have decided is impossible. How many things in this world were at one time considered impossible? Question - How many of those 'impossible' things are now essential items in reaching the world with the gospel? How many have ignored the walls and done the impossible to tell others the good news? What impossible thing does God want you to do?

Motivate 24 Deuteronomy 4:19 And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars — all the heavenly array — do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

The word idolize means to make something into an object of worship and then give it control over your life and world. In the past, people idolized things of the universe. They idolized the sun, moon, stars. They created beings to control what they could not control - like seasons, harvest, weather, water, and so many more. They created beings to control their fate and explain why things happen the way they do. In the end they have created millions of idols - all to replace the one true creator of it all.

But today, we don't create idols, do we? If you agree with that statement, then you are not very astute, because we are still making idols. We idolize people. We idolize buildings. We idolize almost anything we want to be like, have control over, or that could possibly give us some measure of control over what is out of our control.

Somehow, we still think that if we in fact pay homage to whatever we idolize we will in some way have a better life, avoid dilemmas, and find solutions to whatever hinders us from having what we want - not what we need, but what we want. Could that happen in the process of flying? To have the feeling of power over the elements and the freedom to fly where we want to. It's all a deception. God's warning is very appropriate for us. Don't be enticed by what you think has value. It is either a sham or temporary and fleeting. In the scope of the infinity of God, our universe is barely a blip that passes almost without notice. Keep your eyes on God. Keep him in control and you will be....



HEAR ME LORD IN THE MIDST OF THE ORDEAL.

SEE ME LORD IN THE MIDST OF THE OPPOSITION

MORE IS MY NEED TO HEAR YOU

AS YOU SPEAK AND GUIDE

MORE IS MY NEED TO SEE YOU

AS YOU REVEAL THE PATH

HEAR ME LORD IN THE MIDST OF MY APPEAL

SEE ME LORD IN THE MIDST OF MY PETITION

Motivate 25 Deuteronomy 28:24 The Lord will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

So what do you think is the most destructive and dangerous things for planes? If you are like me, a number of things, come to mind - things like windshear, lightning, hailstones, tornadoes, flying objects, and the really big one, a hurricane. And of course, they are dangerous, but for the most part, you can avoid them. You can evaluate the weather and decide if you will fly or not. You can look around you and see where the danger spots are and avoid them - and now we have radar to help us.

But there is one thing that is always present and not always visible. When it becomes visible, it joins that other list. The item is dust. You say, Dust? You've got to be kidding." No, I am not. If you don't take precautions and it gets into your engine it can cause irreparable damage. If you are not paying attention it will impact your vision and impair the function of radar and as a result give false readings. That is never good.

In life, it is not always the big and obvious things that make life difficult. It is the small things that slowly accumulate that can throw us off track and create serious problems. Like with dust, every motor needs air filters to keep these small particles from entering the motor and doing serious damage. These filters need to be checked, cleaned and replaced. If we don't do this, over time the motor will be damaged and fail.

In life, we need filters. We need the fellowship of others to help us see what we can't see. They can act as filters - helping us remain accountable and protected from our own limitations and blind spots. If we don't have this, then over time we become lost in the dust.

Motivate 26 Deuteronomy 32:11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.

How many of us realize that birds will actually force their chicks out of the nest? They will evict them, so to speak and let them fall. The point is that they need to learn to fly. If they don't fly, they will not survive.

Now, imagine with me that you are a chick in an eagle's nest. You're high up on a mountain ledge or in a really tall tree. The next thing you know, you've been pushed out of the nest. You are flapping your wings and still falling. Then suddenly, your parent swoops under you, and catches you on their wings, softly drops to the ground and lets you off. The parent carries you aloft and once again you are falling and flapping. This cycle will be repeated until you finally are able to fly.

Now, who tires first? Do you tire of trying, or does the parent tire of pushing you out, catching you if needed, then bringing you back to the nest to try again? Do you tire of trying? The truth is, if either of you tires before you successfully fly, well - I think you know the answer to that question.

God is even better than the eagle. He already knows the best time to commence the process, how well we will do in the process, and how long it will take (actually, God never gives up on us). The truth is, as long as we are willing to keep letting God push us into the unknown, he will always be there - to lift us up if needed, guide us as needed, and then lead us so we can follow. "Ready or not" is not the issue. The issue is do you trust God that he knows what needs to be done -and whether you have the faith to believe that you will fly. Why because God knows you can with his guidance.

Motivate 27 Joshua 8:20 The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the desert had turned back against their pursuers.

Have you ever done any skywatching? Not just looking at the clouds, but looking at the clouds to get some idea of what the weather will be like and what you may need to prepare for?

The phrase “red sky at night sailor delight, red sky in the morning sailor take warning,” comes from this idea of skywatching. Other things are part of this process. Things like sudden changes in the weather, wind direction, amount of light, and even sound are all indicators of a possible change in the weather. Things that we need to take note of and respond to. Some older people say they can feel change in their bones.

Nowadays, we have all kinds of warning systems that, as they say, give us a “heads-up” on what to expect. Sometimes they are right, and sometimes they are wrong. They say they have no control over the weather, and that conditions are constantly changing. It is a best guess and crazy at it seems, we trust them, even though they get it wrong all too often.

Good news. We have the ultimate source of truth - an early warning system that is infallible when it comes to sin and its consequences. In God, there is no guessing, no errors. He is always right. And yet, how often are we looking for signs to know if God has spoken, if we should do what he has told us to do? How often do we second guess the clear and perfect directions of our creator? Instead of moving forward, we wait. And when we finally move or act, it is all too often too late.

So, how much smoke is enough for you to obey his clear directions?

LORD IN THIS DAY I SEEK YOU

LET YOUR GLORY BECOME MINE

LORD IN THIS DAY I DESIRE YOU

LET YOUR PRESENCE BE KNOWN

LORD IN THIS DAY LET THEM SEE

LET YOUR GLORY BE REVEALED

LORD IN THIS DAY LET THEM KNOW

LET YOUR PRESENCE BE PROVEN.

Motivate 28 Joshua 10:11 As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

How many of you believe in guardian angels? Many do, and believe that each child has one. I am not so sure about that, but I am aware that angels have played a significant role in God's plan. He has used them to defeat the enemies of Israel as well as punish Israel. Paul knew that an angel was protecting him during his journey to Rome. Peter was rescued by one from prison. One could make a rather long list of the part angels have played in carrying out God's commands.

I myself am positive that on at least two occasions God sent an angel to watch over me and my family. I didn't see them, but I know they were there. At times, God acted directly - as in the above story. It is one of many instances where God took direct action to teach, lead, and protect people as He revealed and carried out his plan to save us all. To be honest, we don't always see or realize what God is doing. If we do, it is after the fact - when we look back and realize what has happened and how it was impossible without God's intervention or his sending of an angel for that purpose.

It would be so dramatic to see our enemies destroyed by hailstones. The problem with that is they will never get to hear the gospel and know God's love. What I would rather hear and see is how God has appeared in a vision or a dream and conquered the person through love. How God has prepared him for another kind of hailstone - one made of flesh and blood - one who has heard the call to mission and willingly goes where they are sent.

Motivate 29 Joshua 10:13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day

So how fast would you need to travel to avoid the sun setting on you? Well, you would have to travel at about 1000 miles per hour if you are at the equator – and at a lesser velocity as you move away from the equator. 1000 mph at equator because at the point it 24000 miles around the earth. At the equator only fighter jets can maintain this speed, but won't last because the fuel tanks aren't big enough. About the only thing that manages to stay in the sun all the time is a satellite set in the right orbit. It is placed in a stationary orbit between the earth and the sun, and it manages to not fall to earth. The difference is that the plane changes in position in relation to the earth, while this story is about the earth standing still for 24 hours. There are multiple miracles happening here. One, the earth standing still in relation to the sun and, two, the fact that the people were not flying off of the earth as the earth was still traveling at more than 66000 mph around the sun. And did I mention that the moon paused in its orbit as well. Do we realize how incredible our creator is and how incredible what he created is? This story is about so many aspects of the wonders of what God has created and, even more, His absolute control over every aspect of it: gravity, friction, lift, distance from sun, placement of moon. On that day, God set aside an incredible number of laws - laws He Himself created and therefore has absolute control over.

What about you? Are you a marvel of God's creation? Do you realize what God has accomplished in making it possible for you to have control of what he has created? Let him stop you where you are so you can contemplate what he has done.

Motivate 30 2 Samuel 22:12 He made darkness his canopy around him — the dark rain clouds of the sky.

This phrase comes from a passage where David is describing how God rescued him from the hands of his enemy. It contains a series of illustrations that are filled with grandeur and power. It is a forerunner of a later encounter of great prophet, who experienced the destructive power of nature only to discover that God was not in those forces nor going to reveal truly his presence and character through them.

Now, while it is true that on occasion God has acted in this way - he has shown himself and his power and it is terrifying to say the least. But as Elijah discovered, that was not what God wants us to see and learn about him. He discovered God, not in the violence, but in a still calm voice. David, also, talks about God meeting him by calm waters in a place where he could lie down in peace and know God. Let's be honest. Most of the time, we want the God of power and terror to come and act on our behalf. But in reality, all that does is scare people. Those responses don't last. Many call them "foxhole conversions" or "confessions" and once the threat is gone so too the promise.

So here we are, almost at the end of these 30 days. What were you hoping for? A mighty cloud? A loud voice? A miraculous encounter? Instead, we need to hope for the still, small voice - the quiet pasture, the place where we can pause and hear not the crashing thunder of impending doom, but a place where we can hear the soft voice of a lover, one who has come so close as to become part of our world and can hear our most intimate and private thoughts.

That is where we need to be and what we need to learn – to find a place where we can meditate, and where God can whisper.

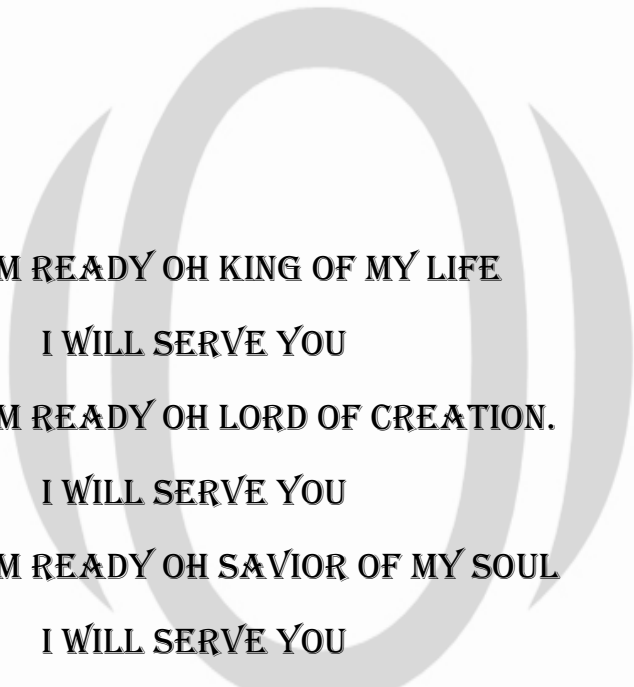
Motivate 31 1 Kings 6:27 He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room.

Cherubim are one of two types of angels that have wings. The other, seraphim had 3 sets. In the Bible, each type of angel has specific roles. In this passage, we have the cherubim, who are always depicted as being present in the holy of holies and always watching over the Ark of the Covenant - a place described as the seat of God. Their role is to protect and proclaim the honor and glory of God.

Cherubim are placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden so that man cannot enter by so entering defile it with their sin. In many of the passages describing heaven and the throne of God the cherubim are always present. Along with protecting the glory of God. They also proclaim it in a loud voice. They make sure that all know they have entered the presence of God.

What about you? Are you one who performs these functions as well? Do you proclaim the glory of God? Do you protect his honor and glory by your words and by your very presence? This means that people should know who you serve and what the focus of your life is.

If a cherubim appeared, you would have no doubts about how to behave - or what you risk by not behaving. Do those around you realize who you represent? The more complicated question is this: does your presence draw them towards God or repel them? If cherubim suddenly appeared, people would cower in fear and terror - and rightly so. Their presence is frightening. I hope that is not the response people have to God's love. Do they His glory through you?



I AM READY OH KING OF MY LIFE

I WILL SERVE YOU

I AM READY OH LORD OF CREATION.

I WILL SERVE YOU

I AM READY OH SAVIOR OF MY SOUL

I WILL SERVE YOU

I AM READY OH MASTER OF THE COSMOS

I WILL SERVE YOU