

Warm-up

Trisha shared in the Couples In Christ Women's Retreat this year about how to stay unshaken during times of crisis. What advice would you give to a friend whose world is experiencing a major quake?

- ▶ I'm stable when I submit to God and trust Him.

Part 1

Destination Imagination (vs. 18-21)

"For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind," (v. 18)

Our 11 and 9 year old grandsons took part in a national program through their school called *Destination Imagination*, a project-based educational program designed to foster creativity and innovation in students. It required them to use creativity and imagination to solve a problem. Perhaps God intends that we also abandon our conventional "here's how it works" thinking and accept something special He has designed.

These four verses in Hebrews 12 present a powerful, even frightening picture of God's holy mountain. Moses himself was terrified of it. What can we say about this?

- *There is no gloom in knowing Christ! "In Thy presence is fullness of joy...." (Ps. 16:11).*
 - *I'm no longer captured by fear of God's wrath (see Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation...").*
 - *When God speaks there can be no argument, and yet my human nature contends with the Almighty! "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).*
 - *"...they could not bear the command..."* (v. 20) – God's standards, His precepts are unchangeable. He does not compromise. He is the same *"yesterday, today, and forever"* (Heb. 13:8). And yet He is a God of mercy and grace! *"He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"* (Heb. 11:6b).
 - *"I am full of fear..."* (v. 21) – This was a holy reverence, not human fear. Heb. 12:29 proclaims *"Our God is a consuming fire"*, and we must ascribe to Him this power and position. There is no one like Him in all the earth!
- ▶ *"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9). Use your imagination!*

Coming Home (vs. 22-24)

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels," (v. 22)

Recall a time when you were away from home for a LONG time. If you had good memories of home I'm sure you were looking forward to returning there. In John 14 Jesus comforted His disciples by telling them that He was going to leave to prepare a special place for them in heaven where His Father lived. It would be their eternal home. It was worth waiting for.

I'm a resident of God's family, His shelter (Mount Zion). While living on this earth we are "aliens", but our permanent address was changed to heaven when Christ saved us! *"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household"* (Eph. 2:19 NASB). *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 1:20).

I must "come home" where God resides. My attitude and actions must reflect the values of my permanent home.

- *"to the general assembly"* (v. 23) - Other believers are in this place
 - *"and to Jesus"* (v. 24) – Jesus is in this place. Are you comfortable with Him around?
- ▶ *No one can harm me when I'm living with my Father! I feel secure in His house.*

Response Time (vs. 25)

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven."

Have you ever had clear direction from the Lord and been tempted to “talk it over” with Him, perhaps to negotiate the details? I like the instruction that Eli gave the young boy Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:9, “Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’” When Samuel responded this way to God he received a surprising response. God said, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.” God had a special message for Samuel that required him to listen carefully. God did not need Samuel’s input or discussion, only his ears and heart, followed by his response.

God is serious about what He says. He extended His grace to us and sacrificed His Son for us. He offered salvation to us at great cost to Him. His patience is incredible, and although His compassions never fail he does set a limit on how long we can take to respond. “He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.” (Ps. 103:9). Every person who knows about Him and His offer of salvation in Christ Jesus is faced with a decision. When we deliberately “turn away from Him” we essentially “crucify to ourselves the Son of God” (Heb. 6:6).

- ▶ *Timely response to God paves the way for us to synchronize with His purpose and avoid unnecessary trauma.*

6/21/15 Part 2

Unshaken (vs. 26-27)

*“This expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the **removing of those things which can be shaken**, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” (v. 27)*

Billy Graham spoke on these verses at the 1995 Crusade in Sacramento. I remember him saying that our lives are temporary, as is the world we live in, and God has planned a major shaking in the future. His Kingdom will be made of the things that cannot be shaken. The *things* that I make on this earth are not stable and will not last. Anything anchored to Jesus Christ and done for His glory is eternal. The Chinese proverb says, “If you own something that you cannot give away it owns you.”

If you find your world being shaken, ask the Lord if there is anything He wants you to release. Ask Him to sustain you in the plans He has for you, and protect you from the enemy who destroys. Ask Him for grace to endure and wisdom to accept His will for you.

- ▶ *Just as small children crave a stable, loving family environment, we must pursue the stability that comes from focusing on the Lord and His priorities.*

Practical Gratitude (v. 28)

*“Therefore, since we receive **a kingdom which cannot be shaken**, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;”*

Never underestimate the power of thanking God for His work in your life! “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18). “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Ps. 150:6). “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name” (Ps. 100:4).

- ▶ *Not only should we show gratitude to the Father, but also to His people. When we invest in people, just as God did, He is pleased.*

Ultimate Accountability (v. 29)

“for our God is a consuming fire.”

Do you like the idea of absolutes, of dependability? How do you feel about God eventually extinguishing all the evil from the world, including those who deliberately refuse His love and control? Like it or not, our heavenly Father will not tolerate opposition to His ways in heaven. But remember, He gave His Son to die for us!

If God did not deal completely with unchecked evil He would not be God! Satan tried to usurp Him (see Isaiah 14:13-14) and was cast down from heaven. Should not God reject those who refuse His great love?

- ▶ *God will ultimately destroy all who oppose Him. Heaven will have no conflict and no tears.*

Group Discussion

1. What about God mystifies you and requires you to use your imagination, based on His character? (v. 18)
2. Talk about “coming home to God”. What do you like about this idea? (v. 22-24)
3. What is the danger of failing to express our gratitude to God? (v. 28)

NEXT TIME: Lesson 14: LIVED OUT / Relationships – Hebrews 13:1-8