



Week 1: God is On the Move

Scripture Passage

Genesis: 1: 1-8

Focus Statement

The work of creating begins with God in the book of Genesis. The Spirit of God swept over the waters and spoke creation into existence. God is on the move.

ME

In Genesis, God is creating, sweeping and speaking. Share a time when you have felt or seen God sweep over, speak to you or a situation.

WE

Maybe we have seen or experienced a time of great movement; it can be something scary like an earthquake when the actual plates of the earth moved, or it can be something exciting like moving to a new home or career.

GOD

As God creates, God sweeps over and speaks into being all of creation; God is actually part of the movement. God moves the water of the Red sea, moves the clouds for rainbows, parting heavens in Jesus' baptism and an earthquake rocks the earth at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. We can see throughout both the Old and New Testaments how God's movement continues. This contrasts with the idea that God simply created the world and let it run its own course (also known as "deism"). Our God is not abstract and aloof. Our God is living and moving.

God's continual creating and speaking is not limited to "nature;" it also happens in our individual and communal lives. In our baptism liturgy we talk about the chaos that existed until God swept over the waters. In sweeping over the chaos of our lives, God creates a clean heart in us, the start of something new. By uniting us in baptism, God creates Christian community, which participates in God's work in the world.

YOU

Jesus empowers all of us to be part of this dynamic movement. The reason we can move, the reason faith can move mountains, is because God did it first. We are all created in the image of God; therefore, we can participate in God's creating, sweeping and moving. Create new opportunities for people to be welcomed, whether in person (when appropriate), or online We can sweep over (fill in what needs light in your context) _____; we can move mountains.

WE

Imagine a world with no movement, no breezes blowing etc. Our world is waiting on us. In your community, what are the mountains that need to be moved? What are the obstacles and opportunities waiting for your faithfulness? Challenge your congregation to imagine sweeping across your neighborhood with the power of God.



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Week 2: Mountains Can Seem Like Obstacles

Scripture Passage

Genesis 12:1-9

Focus Statement

Sometimes movement can be uncomfortable. Faith requires that we face obstacles trusting in the plan of God.

ME

Share a personal reflection story of being uprooted; maybe this is moving jobs, going to college, getting married, moving to a different home or even church.

WE

We can relate to being moved out of our comfort zone. As a church we are asked to have faith often when we cannot see the destination. Highlight times in your congregation when they have been asked to have faith without knowing the results. Maybe this is starting a new ministry, a new way of doing mission, or facing changes in their community.

GOD

God instructs Abraham to literally step out in faith. Discuss what it means for Abraham to move; he leaves his family, a place of safety, away from his community. Highlight that Abraham is uprooted at 75 years old.

Abraham leaves without a set destination Sometimes God will call us to something without showing us where it will lead Abraham continues to listen to God along the way; keeping connected to God moves him forward.

Notice that Canaan, which is the Promised Land, is the first stop on the journey, but Abraham and his companions don't know that yet. They keep going and eventually come back to Canaan. Sometimes our paths are like that too, twisting and turning, and doubling back. The goal is not to get where we are going as fast as we can but to trust God at each stage of the journey, taking one step at a time.

YOU

Abraham is not alone. Throughout the Bible, people are called to step out of their comfort zone. Highlight a few favorites such as the prophets, Jesus and early disciples. You can also add stories from church history--John Wesley's story of coming to America set the foundation for the church even though he saw it as a failure.

WE

As we journey in faith, God will offer us instruction. We might be well established, and it would be uncomfortable to change or move to a new thing. But do we have the faith that God has a plan? Maybe not for our benefit today, but for the benefit of the generations to come.



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Week 3: Mountains as Opportunities

Scripture Passage

Luke 1:39-45

Focus Statement

Both Mary and Elizabeth have been swept over by God's spirit, which has led to the unlikely motherhood of both. We are reminded that nothing is impossible with God.

ME

Think about a time when you were faced with a challenge and uttered the words, couldn't, wouldn't and shouldn't. Luke 1:39-45 features the lives of women of great faith and strength. Share a story about a woman in your life or in history who did something seemingly impossible, such as Amelia Earhart, Sally Ride, etc.

WE

We've all faced situations and challenges that seem to be impossible. Life can be hard, even in the church. Lift up places where your congregation or community has had to face impossible circumstances.

GOD

Through the power of God, both women became pregnant. Both women showed faith in different ways. Faith requires belief – belief in God's ability to make a way when the way is not clear to human understanding, belief that when God asks something of us, God will give us what we need to follow where God leads. This is a place to explain the challenges that both women faced Elizabeth was getting older and did not have children.

This would have already been difficult, especially in ancient times when having children would have been a societal expectation for Elizabeth. Not only that, but when she did become pregnant, she had to care for her husband who had suddenly become mute (Luke 1:8-23) and the social disgrace they had suffered because of it (Luke 1:24-25). She had faith that God would provide. She also supported Mary's faithfulness (1:45) and recognized the special relationship her child had with Jesus. What seemed like an obstacle (pregnancy at an old age) became an opportunity to be faithful and serve God. Mary faced the extraordinary challenge of being a young, unmarried mother in a society that would not have accepted that. She had to deal with Joseph's questions and fears, not to mention her own. She had to somehow wrap her head around the impossible – that she miraculously became pregnant. Mary's faith didn't make the challenges disappear but, in her faith, God gave her the strength to persevere and face them head on.

YOU

There are opportunities for deep faith today, even in a world that is skeptical about faith and questions the value of church. Mary and Elizabeth's unwavering faith introduced the world to Jesus. We are called to that same faith.



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WE

Actively moving in faith allows us to see God. How will we strengthen our faith? This is the place to challenge your congregation to go deeper, begin Bible studies, take part in mission activities, listen to God through the intentional practice of prayer. Next week we will dig deeper into how we will live into being people who will move mountains.



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Week 4: You Move the Mountain

Scripture Passage

Hebrews 12: 1-2

Focus Statement

The mountains you face might be obstacles to overcome, but they can also be opportunities for you to step out. But, with God, none of these mountains are impossible for you to move.

ME

Discuss the perseverance of someone, physical, spiritual or emotional. This can be a personal example; maybe an athlete, Holocaust survivors, Nelson Mandela, etc.

WE

Throughout history, the church has faced times where it needed to persevere. Highlight some examples of the universal church or your congregation.

GOD

We are not alone, God has us in journey with those who support us in faith, a cloud of witnesses. God is also with us. We are called to persevere. Go back and talk about the perseverance of your previous examples such as Abraham, Mary and Elizabeth. Hebrews 11 provides many more examples. Their examples point to the necessity of constantly connecting with God.

In perseverance we come to see some of our mountains are obstacles, and others are opportunities. We have an example in Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of faith; consider what that implies. Hebrews 12:2 indicates that Jesus' perseverance in faith led to his death on the cross. Faith will not always be easy. We may go through times of suffering. But through Jesus' pioneering faith, new life is made possible "for the sake of joy." As pioneer, Jesus is a model of perseverance. With Jesus as the perfecter of our faith, we recognize that we can never get it right or run the race on our own. We rely only on the grace of God in Christ to work in and through us.

YOU

How will we be pioneers, demonstrating great faith in a new way. God is calling us to do new and seemingly impossible things. You can highlight new ideas for your community here.

WE

Who today is willing to join the movement of running with perseverance and faith? If worshiping in person, consider inviting people to take the first step towards mountain-moving faith, by coming forward to the altar, and inviting God to sweep over them. Allow people to come forward; give them time to just be there. Do not rush this opportunity. Have a musician play if this matches your experience. This is a chance for anointing and individual prayer. However, you might choose to just pray over all those who came forward. If worshiping online, invite people to "unmute" or comment to show their commitment to mountain-moving faith. You may choose to pray over all



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those who have done so, or reach out for individual prayer with those who have done so following the online service. If the latter, inform them ahead of the “altar call” that this is your plan.



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