



FAITH matters

September 28, 2026

“He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth – the Lord God Almighty is his name.” Amos 4:13

The grandeur of mountains holds special meaning for me. They exist all over the world with qualities and landscapes that make each kind unique. I was born and raised in a quaint small city built against the foothills of the San Bernardino mountains, a southern extension of the more familiar Sierra Nevada range that cuts through a large portion of California. Surrounded on three sides, the highest peaks vary in elevation from 6,000 to 11,500 feet, almost as high as the Colorado Rockies. The mountains are massive, rugged, challenging, remarkably beautiful, and I love them.

Some of my fondest memories are from times spent there. It was a short drive to find relief from the hot summer temperatures of the valleys; for church picnics, summer camps, hiking the trails, collecting huge Sugarpine cones, horseback riding, and swimming or wading in the cooler lakes and streams. One had to be mindful of snakes, foraging bears, and an occasional mountain lion, but the campgrounds were usually booked months in advance, and still are. Daytime on the mountain can be pleasantly warm, but by late afternoon, the temperatures drop enough to require a sweater and a campfire. The soothing sound of the wind passing through the lofty aged forest, the crisp air, and the scent of spruce and pine evokes a feeling of wellbeing that calms and renews the spirit. God's outdoor cathedral.

One of my favorite things growing up, and still is, is watching the glorious sunsets on the mountains when the sun wanes in the west. It's colorful any time of year, but nothing compares to the winter view of the peaks dusted with snow when the last rays of sunlight fall on the slopes. The hues vary daily: brilliant shades of magenta, gold, fire-flame orange, and cobalt, display the stunning artistry of Devine design. Even the opening lines of my high school alma mater, written 125 years ago, speak of it. *"Where the purple snow-capped mountains, Reach the clear blue sky...There, beneath the God made heavens, Beautiful both day and night..."* Generations have been part of the legacy. Our three children graduated from the same historic school and know the song well.

Mountains ranges can be inspiring, but as we've recently heard and read about, there are real dangers, too. Rock slides are common everywhere, and each season, motorists, hikers, or skiers require rescue. The injuries and accidents can be fatal. Near our former home, tourists often question road signs pointing out the Santa Ana River when there's barely a trickle of water winding over boulders that cover a wide barren area. When heavy rain storms hit, or the snow melt begins, it's another story. I've witnessed roads and bridges torn away, and structures moved from their foundations by the torrent of flood waters hurling it's way downhill to the Pacific. The capricious nature of the steep terrains must be respected at all times.

This summer our family gathered with friends in Jackson, Wyoming, near the base of the majestic Teton mountains. Our youngest daughter celebrated a special birthday, and our grandson's participated in riding and roping events at their ranch camp at 9,200 ft. Daily our stay in Jackson offered new experiences and memorable meaningful moments together. We saw eagles, elk, and herds of bison that randomly crossed the roadways, stopping traffic in both directions. Free roaming cattle did the same. There were even casual visits from a one-antlered moose who came to dine on greenery and lounge in the yard of our lodge every day. We named him Melvin.

Vistas in any direction were breathtaking. The imposing jagged peaks still held snow in the craggy valleys in July. We boated on several lakes, picniced, climbed the narrow rocky trail all the way up to Hidden Falls, and white-water rafted a portion of the Snake River. It was both humbling and exhilarating to be part of the experiences. Photos fall short of capturing the scope of it. We commented regularly on the spectacular handiwork of our Master Creator. *"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."* Isaiah 55:12. The promise is true. Resounding hallelujahs!

In a few months, Fred and I will be returning to California and family for the winter. I'm looking forward to it. I miss the mountains when I'm away

for too long. John Muir put it nicely: “The mountains are calling: and I must go!” But more than that, the stately contour of the tall peaks point me heavenward, *from whence comes my help*. Even after all the years, I still greet them each morning with a very grateful heart and a sense of awe, along with a full mug of freshly brewed coffee.

~Written by Char Kamper

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