

March 2020 — *Mission on the Mountaintop and in the Wilderness*

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Where do you find God? Is God in the clean crisp air breathed in at the mountain's summit? Do you feel God in the wilderness, when the right direction is not clear?



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As a child, climbing to the mountaintop was not easy. I especially recall making my way to the summit of Lookout Mountain with my church youth group, at Montreat Conference Center, in western North Carolina. It was a climb I reluctantly made with much encouragement and even physical support from fellow travelers.

Once at the top, there was no denying God's presence — even God's breath — among us. Birds chirping, miles upon miles of mountain ranges in view, and air filling my lungs cleaner than one can imagine.

God is indeed on the mountaintop, yet God is also present in the wilderness.

It is in the wilderness that we lose our way. That we wonder why, where and how God is acting in our lives. It is here, that God finds us as we are. There is no need to climb, to achieve, to succeed — we are found as beloved children of God regardless.

When it comes to mission, it is the mountain climb itself and our searching in the wilderness that prompts deeper reflection. Mission is both the striving to be a transformative presence in the world, while recognizing that we too are being transformed through mission in partnership.

Mission is both an active and passive word. It is something we do and something transformative that happens within us.

'Mission matters' because at its best, it is an exchange between cultures offering their very best. It is traveling to a new place (or welcoming others into our space) and finding our way together as children of God. It is offering our resources and God-given gifts, recognizing that we, too, are the ones in need.

Mission on the mountaintops and in the wilderness has one thing in common — it strives to make the world a better place by relying on God’s grace. Mission at its best recognizes that God is at work in many ways and in many places. God is walking before us, behind us, beside us, and all around us. Mission is God aiding us in our journey, smoothing the rocky paths around the world through partnership and relationship.

This Lenten season we focus on the wilderness as Jesus spent much time there. We, too, reflect upon times that we have felt especially near or far from the God who loves us dearly. Eliminating things that separate us from God, we strive to experience a wilderness, praying that God will find us anew. Adding faith-filled habits to our day, we strive to connect to God in significant ways, experiencing a renewed divine presence in our midst. Our Lenten practices create mountaintop and wilderness experiences in our ordinary lives, making them not so ordinary after all.

Let these experiences also create a renewed sense of mission that transforms us, so that we may be sent to serve all our neighbors in God’s world.



[Christina Cosby](#), a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, recently joined the World Mission staff as mission specialist for the Middle East and Europe. *(Photo by Matthew Collen)*