

The Power Points of Life:  
“The Power to Look Up”  
Luke 24: 44-53

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He lived in a shack on the edge of town. He wore overalls to church before casual dress was cool. He didn't own a car; he didn't have job. As a sixteen-year-old kid, fresh from the courthouse with my driver's license, it became my privilege to drive Porter home from church on Sunday. I would pull into Porter's driveway. He would get out of the car and then as if it were an afterthought, although he never failed to do it, Porter would peek back into the car and say, “Keep looking up, Bubby, keep looking up.” Now you know my childhood nickname. However, it's the message that I want you to claim. “Keep looking up. Keep looking up.”

**KEEP LOOKING UP TO JESUS**

The name of the game in ancient Greece was marathon races. They invented the Music City Marathon in which twenty thousand people in our city ran a month ago. Comparing the Christian life to a marathon race, the author of Hebrews says, *“Laying aside everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles us, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”* Look up to Jesus.

It's Memorial Day weekend in the nation. It's Ascension Sunday in the Church. For most Americans it's time for fun in the sun. Some of us will observe this holiday by looking BACK. We will take some flowers to a special place of memory. We will relive our life with those who are dear to us; we will shed a tear. Memory is God's way of keeping those with us who have gone before us. There are times when we are wise to stop and look back.

I suppose if you have a loved one in Iraq today the word would be look OUT. Look out for car bombs; look out for suicide terrorists. Look out for insurgents who will give their lives to create chaos. We want you home; look out. Whatever your opinion of the war, whatever your political persuasions may be, let us remember that over two thousand four hundred young men and women have lost their lives in this conflict and over eighteen thousand others have been wounded, many of them seriously. Let us pray for soldiers who are still there and for innocent civilians who have suffered so much for so long. May the God of Grace and the Lord of Compassion look out for all His children.

More than looking back, more than looking out, I invite us today to look UP, to look all the way up to Jesus, the author of our salvation, the perfecter of our faith. When we don't know where we're going—He is the way. When we wonder in whom to believe—He is the truth. When we doubt that we can make it—He is the life.

Here is the mystery of the Gospel. Jesus goes before us and walks beside us. He blazes the trail and orders our steps. I know that blows our time-warped minds, but it is the truth of the Gospel. He is taken up into heaven, but lo, He is with us always, even to the end of the world.

So look up today—not to the mountains that lie before you, not to runners competing in the race. Look up to Jesus who knows that you can do it and will encourage you every step of the way. Keep looking up.

### **KEEP LOOKING UP TO THE SCRIPTURES**

He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Your roadmap of faith is here in this book, the Bible. The word of God continues to suffer in the hands of men. People buy it, but seldom read it. People read it, but misinterpret it. People challenge it to profit from it. People credit it with sayings that are simply not there.

This is a test—Which of the following statements can be found in the Bible?

1. Cleanliness is next to godliness.
2. God helps those who help themselves.
3. Confession is good for the soul.
4. Money is the root of all evil.
5. Honesty is the best policy.

Answer—None of the above.

An educated person sat in my office a few years ago telling me why he could no longer be a Methodist. “You Methodists just don’t believe the Bible,” he lamented. “In what way?” I inquired. “Well, for one thing, you don’t insist that the seven days of the creation story are seven, twenty-four periods which opens the door to the possibility of evolution. And you ordain women when Paul clearly tells Timothy that women should be quiet in church.” Sensing that I had already lost a member, I went for the kill and replied: “Are you, an educated man, willing to ignore generations of theological scholars and centuries of language experts who clearly explain there is more than one way to translate ‘day’ in Genesis, One? While Paul advises Timothy to keep the women quiet, lest they be considered temple prostitutes, he also says to the Church of Galatia that those who have been clothed in Christ are neither *“Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ”* (Galatians 3:28).

Which part of the Bible are we going to believe and which interpretation of the Scriptures can we embrace? O, that God would open our minds to understand the Scripture—not just our favorite passages, but all the Bible.

Our country is a buzz about The Da Vinci Code. Both NBC and CBS have done documentaries on it. Hollywood has baited the Church into providing free advertisement for the movie. Defenders of the faith have flooded the market with counter attacks. People are constantly talking about it over lunch. Meanwhile, Mr. Dan Brown must be laughing all the way to the bank as his novel stays on the best seller list. I’ve said it before, but let me say it again. The Gnostic theories, on which the novel is based, were debated and declared heresy

in the First Century. Both NBC and CBS have concluded that the secret society that is supposed to be guarding the truth is a hoax established by a Frenchman with political aspiration. The Da Vinci Code will pass away, along with its deceitful assumptions, but the Word of God will stand the test of time.

Read novels for entertainment. Read the Bible for instruction in the way of life.  
The Bible contains all things necessary for salvation.  
The Bible is amazingly accurate in matters unrelated to faith.  
The Bible has endured the test of time and skepticism of people.  
The Bible is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

### **KEEP LOOKING UP FOR MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES**

In Verse 51 we read, *“And while He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up to heaven.”*

Phillip Yancey writes, “Of all the doctrines concerning Christ, the Ascension represents my greatest struggle.” Why didn’t Jesus clean up the messes of the world before he left? What was He thinking when He left it all up to us? If Jesus had stayed on earth, He could have answered our questions, solved our doubts, mediated our disputes of doctrine and policy. Instead, He disappears in the clouds. How odd of God to do it like that.

But the disciples didn’t see it that way. Verse 52 says, *“Then they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple praising God.”* They stayed in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place of fear, the place of failure, the place of doubt, the place of disappointment.

It’s moving time for Methodist preachers. You can’t go to a Methodist meeting this time of year without people saying, “Are you going or staying?” Maybe it’s because I haven’t moved very often and when I did it was never on queue from an annual conference, but I think this entire fruit basket turnover damages our reputation as United Methodists. I was at an ecumenical meeting Thursday morning at the Marriott downtown. I introduced myself to a colleague of another denomination. He immediately replied, “You Methodists move around all the time.” “Well, this one doesn’t,” I responded.

Often my advice to others about marriage, the job, and the church is to stay in Jerusalem. Bloom where you are planted. Certainly it’s not perfect in Jerusalem, but it won’t be wonderful over yonder either.

Do the work of ministry. I don’t know why Jesus left it all up to us, but He did. Who am I to question the Almighty? Meanwhile, there are strangers to welcome, souls to save, prisons to visit, sick to heal. There are children to baptize and youth to confirm. There are poor to help and widows to serve.

Lord, you give your Great Commission:  
Heal the sick and preach the Word.  
Lest the Church neglect its mission,  
And the Gospel go unheard.

Keep looking up; keep looking up to Jesus. Study the Scriptures; serve the world.

Amen.