



JGT Stellenbosch Mountain Excursion

“Great things are done when men and mountain meet.”
– William Blake

Throughout my years as a student at Stellenbosch University, the mountains were so much more than just a picturesque background. They were dreams to achieve, obstacles to overcome, a sanctuary where the modern man could reconnect with a forgotten part of his soul and a cathedral in which he could stand in awe of his Creator. It was in these mountains that I felt most at home, forged friendships that will last a lifetime and gained new perspectives of the world I gazed down on from the summits.

One of the most tragic realities I have observed as a teacher in this largely impoverished rural community is that so often the teenagers sitting in our classrooms have lost the ability to dream. Far too often has life left them disappointed and the words of others, claiming that they will never amount to anything greater than their surroundings, have formed shackles around their feet.

How can you then invoke passion and discipline without first teaching these children how to dream? How could you expect perseverance and determination if these children do not yet know that they are able to overcome?

Three of our learners that have shown great promise in the classroom, on the sports field and in leadership qualities were invited to join me on an excursion to Stellenbosch. The aim of the excursion was twofold, firstly to show them the university and allow them to start to dream of a future beyond Grade 12 and the small town they have known their whole lives, and secondly to set a challenge before them, one that they will overcome and enjoy the victory.

Following the tour of the university we made sure our bags were packed and started the journey to the summit of Stellenbosch Mountain where we would spend the night. In my opinion the quote of the day was said by one of the learners as we reached the summit:

“Wow, here we are... I can't believe it. It looked impossible, but here we are!” *(translated)*

In that moment, as we sat above the clouds, looking down at the city lights below, I knew the excursion was a success and the life lesson hopefully learnt.

