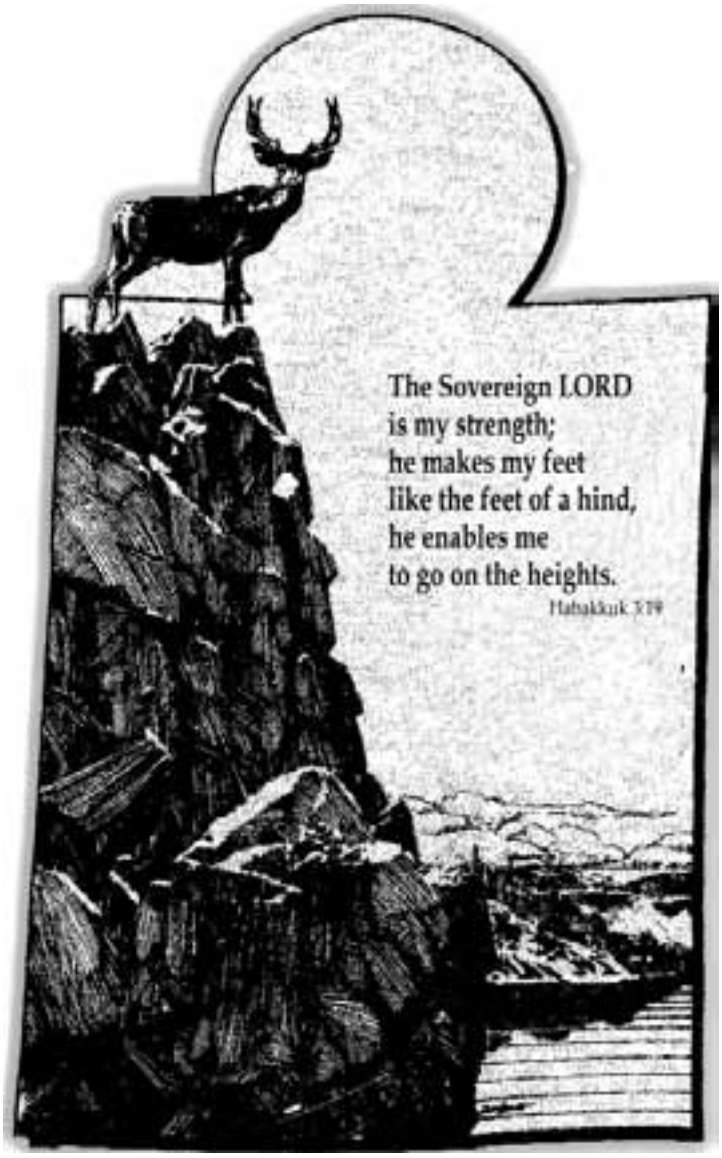
Going to the High Places

Introduction



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

email: Mikedowg@aol.com

Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Hinds' Feet on High Places

Introduction

Welcome to a wonderful journey!

Hinds' Feet on High Places is an insightful guide to help convey a Hebraic lifestyle that focuses on Jesus. One of those classics that emphasizes the lifelong Christian journey, *Hinds' Feet* crystallizes issues that **all** followers of Jesus face if you yearn to be transformed into the character of Jesus and faithfully find the welcome of salvation at your journey's end.

The allegory format chosen by Hannah Hurnard penetrates your heart with deep spiritual truths as surely as a spear point. By using the physical realm which can be visualized, your spirit can better grasp the transformation process each self-denying, Jesus-exalting step of the way.

As you put yourself into the story, you can reflect on your own life. Perhaps more clearly than ever before you'll appreciate the encounters and circumstances that our Father intended for a very special purpose: to help transform your character into the likeness of Jesus.

Frantic busyness, aching personal pain, agonizing betrayal — a whole host of factors have together convinced many to give up "ascending to the High Places." Through our study of the various elements of *Hind's Feet on High Places*, we hope to strengthen your resolve to press on in your own transformation process.

At the same time, Sue and I hope that you'll be able to help others to cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that they too can walk along the path that brings our Father such joy — to see His children growing more like His Son.

[You can find indepth discussion of this process in our December 2002 newsletter, *Acquire the Character of Jesus*.]

A Journey on the High Seas

Hinds' Feet holds a special place in Sue's and my own faith pilgrimage. About 18 months before proclaiming Jesus as Lord of my life I had been challenged to read the Bible for the first time. I got myself a small pocket edition to carry with me. My initial motivation was to disprove the Bible to the person who'd challenged me in the first place. Not noble, I admit, but that alone got me into it!

I made a pact with myself that I wouldn't sit in the bathroom without reading that Bible. (It proved to be a great place of privacy, and nature's calls guaranteed uninterrupted daily study!)

I read through my copy twice in a little over a year, but what a profound motivational change the second time around! I'd discovered the first time that I couldn't disprove the truth of God's Word. I pored through it the second time to see what God wanted from me.

As I read I was becoming increasingly frustrated with my religious heritage and practices. Finally, one night as I was stretched out on my bunk reading my Bible, the Lord Himself spoke to my spirit, inscribing in my heart what I needed to do to follow Him.

Shortly after yielding my life to follow Jesus, I left for the Far East on a 10-month Navy deployment. I asked Him to connect me only with other men who were devoted to my Lord. I'd had enough of the empty religious practice of my past. My heart's desire was to search out everything Jesus wanted both *for me* and *from me* no matter the cost.

Among the 600 men of the ship's company I located 3 who were on a similar spiritual journey. Two books, along with the Bible, became instrumental in our Christian training. The first was *Hinds' Feet on High Places*. As I look back, it seems strange that a book about a young crippled girl could have had such a powerful impact on our lives. But we were readily able to see ourselves in her odyssey, especially as we encountered our own shipboard adversaries.

The other book that focused us on fol-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

lowing Jesus was *In His Steps*, an old classic by Charles Sheldon. In this fictional story a pastor challenges his congregation to spend the next year being guided in thought, word and deed by the question, **"What would Jesus do?"** The resulting changed lives of the characters in the book inspired our little fellowship to do likewise.

These two books so gripped my soul that for years I could recommend only these two books and the Bible! During that cruise Sue mailed me boxloads of these books! In turn, I wrote joyful letters about the wonderful things God was doing aboard the ship. And to my immense delight, she soon reported that she too was a follower of Jesus!

Halfway through the cruise Sue and our little boy met up with me in the Philippines. The next day she and I and several men from the ship hiked up to a mission village north of Manila, where we were baptized in a stream that flowed through the jungle.

The truth of the Bible and the influence of the two books prompted great changes in us Christians on the ship. We saw the Book of Acts being relived, both through the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit and in the numbers of men who were putting their trust in Jesus. Lives were being changed!

We were experiencing what Jesus had promised: "*I tell you the truth, anyone who has trust in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12). Walking in confident trust in our Lord, we experienced most of the miracles we'd read in His Word, from divine healings to demonic deliverances.

If we saw it in the Word of God, we believed it was relevant to our own lives in Jesus. We also learned about devotion to one another as family in Jesus. If we had any disagreements we relied on the command in Philippians 3:15,16: *"If on some point you* ***think differently****, that too* ***God will make clear*** *to you. Only let us* ***live up to*** *what we have* ***already attained****."*

Paralleling the journey of Much-Afraid and Sheldon's characters who pledged to be guided by "What would Jesus do?", we brothers on the ship discovered that as we began our own journey to the High Places, people responded differently to us. We were just men who wanted to represent Jesus in our actions and attitudes because we took His words seriously: *"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).

As the only officer in the initial band of brothers, I found that even my presence was enough to arouse mocking and derision. Often without saying a word I ended up having to eat alone at my table, bombarded with filthy talk and coarse jokes at my expense. The enlisted brothers experienced that same ridicule and ostracism. But our comfort came by the sure knowledge that we'd left the "valley of humiliation" and were on our way to the High Places.

My worst persecutor was the senior watch officer. Angry that I was no longer practicing the traditions of his denomination, he scheduled me for nights on end for the midnight to 4 AM watch in the Combat Information Center. Picture night after night with little sleep, yet daily responsibilities to fly and carry out shipboard duties.

But everything we brothers endured caused us to intercede more for those who ridiculed us. God answered our prayers in such unexpected ways. One predawn following my watch I found three officers seated in my stateroom. Like Nicodemus and his nocturnal visit, they asked me to teach them about Jesus.

Another time, when flight operations were curtailed during a thunderstorm, I found myself in a room filled with men waiting for the storm to end. One of the men whom Jesus had healed from intestinal bleeding a few days earlier asked, "Would you teach us about Jesus?" Everyone became quiet, and for the next two hours I shared my Jesus with them.

These weren't isolated instances! Shortly after we arrived at Okinawa to pick up a contingent of 2000 Marines, several of them walked up to me. "We heard you walk with

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Jesus. Would you teach us about Him?"

These kinds of encounters were happening to all the brothers. God even changed the course of two typhoons in response to prayer to show Himself strong and to allow us to visit our families in Tokyo on time! The "altar" experiences along the path to the high places were precious jewels to each of us. We had no problem at all understanding the memorial stones that Much-Afraid stowed in her keepsake bag. Our journey to the High Places, refreshed with continual reminders to ask ourselves what Jesus would do, taught us the path of living for Jesus.

By cruise end our brotherhood had expanded to 125 men committed to following Jesus. And those of us who had seen Him use those two little books to complement His Word now had our own stories to relate! We had become living epistles flowing with testimonies from our own life experiences. We could heartily agree with John, *"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may also have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3; see also John 3:11).

And remember that vengeful Senior Watch Officer? At the end of the cruise the Lord impressed on me to go to him in private. Kneeling before him, I asked his forgiveness for having entertained bitter thoughts against him. I found out the very next day that he'd gone to the chaplain to request a Bible and sign up for the next ship's retreat!

The Covenant Gospel: A Pilgrimage

Many years after that momentous cruise Sue and I spent three months in Israel. Our research there on the earliest church reaffirmed the truth of salvation as a *pilgrimage*. A pilgrimage is a sacred journey that is chosen for purposes greater than your day-to-day life in the world. A pilgrim must leave behind the familiar and comfortable in order to complete the journey. The allegorical pilgrimage in *Hinds' Feet* hammers home the Hebraic framework of the Gospel our Father offers to each person on earth.

It's during your own life pilgrimage of trial and triumph that you are transformed into the nature of Jesus Christ. And at your journey's end awaits your salvation at the Judgment Throne of Jesus. This is how our earliest forefathers in the faith understood the Good News that was shared by Jesus and the Apostles.

[For more on the Gospel embraced by the early church, read our five-part March/April 2002 newsletter, *The Covenant Gospel*.]

So, where do you begin in order to get to the High Places? First, you fix your eyes on the *goal*! Can you identify with the *longing* of Abraham and the heroes of faith acclaimed in Hebrews 11? *"[Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. . .[Likewise we are] longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called [our] God, for He has prepared a city for [us]"* (Heb. 10: 10,16).

Secondly, you've been been called to separate from much of what was once part of you. That separation can be scary! It's not just leaving behind those who don't want to go with you. The journey also brings a loss of your old identity. All of who you once were, your mind, will, and emotions, will be transformed during your journey. Your soul and spirit will be taken over more and more by the work of the Holy Spirit as He transforms your life and character. He intends for you to be a picture of "Jesus in the flesh" to everyone you encounter!

Paul's admonition still stirs the hearts of those focused on loving and living with Shepherd: *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to attest and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will"* (Rom. 12:2).

[We discuss at length the pilgrimage journey in our June/July 1999 newsletter, *"Crossing the Jordan"*.]

As you're preparing yourself to leave your particular valley of humiliation, bitter-

ness, fear, or whatever yours is, it's vital that you keep this in mind: Our Lord intends to do a mighty work in your life! You'll be called upon to recognize His hand and to cooperate with Him during your odyssey!

I'd like to address men in particular here. We men frequently struggle with the whole idea of a pilgrimage. We tend toward immediate solutions to problems. It's often difficult for us to hold onto long-term goals and develop a plan of action to get us there. Men are often "sit-com" oriented; quick resolutions, then on to the next situation.

Compare this short-sighted view to a man whose life goal is to *"**get** married"* versus a man whose goal is *"**being** married"*. Once the former, whose goal is only *getting* married, achieves his goal at the wedding ceremony, he refuses to walk in the role of husband. The time he spends with his wife involves only his personal wants and needs. He doesn't provide for her, concern himself with her desires or needs, maybe doesn't even care if she spends more time with others than with him. He's got what *he* wanted; he's "married", with no personal cost, no self-denial, no growth in "husbandhood". In other words, he demonstrates no evidence that he's any different now than when he was single.

Is there any wonder that this self-centered attitude and self-gratification motivation underlie the epidemic of divorce both within the church and outside of it?

True salvation is more like a person who seeks the lifelong growth in intimacy and companionship of *being* married. The ceremony is just the beginning. From that moment on he devotes himself to growing deeper in union with his beloved in hard times as well as in good. When he is confronted with personal complacency or sin, he responds in humble repentance because *his goal* is that important to him! And as he grows deeper in love and obedient trust in Jesus, he finds his love for his wife correspondingly deepens.

Does this sound like *a lot of work* to you? Well, so do dying to self with each decision and taking up your cross each day! But when your focus is on Jesus and the joy set before you, that striving becomes a privilege. Take Paul's words seriously: *"Therefore, my dear friends, since we have these promises* [of His presence housed in us as our Lord, and His marvelous reconciliation]*, let us **purify ourselves** from everything that can defile either body or spirit, and **strive** to be completely holy, out of **reverence for God**"* (2 Cor. 7:1).

Salvation, then, represents your ongoing journey to the High Places with your indwelling Shepherd. The pilgrimage that our Hebraic forefathers understood begins with a biblical command: to publicly acknowledge that Jesus is **Lord** of your life. This implicitly means that you are His beloved bondservant/slave! From that critical point the transformation of your character into His character can begin.

Deeper Into the Funnel

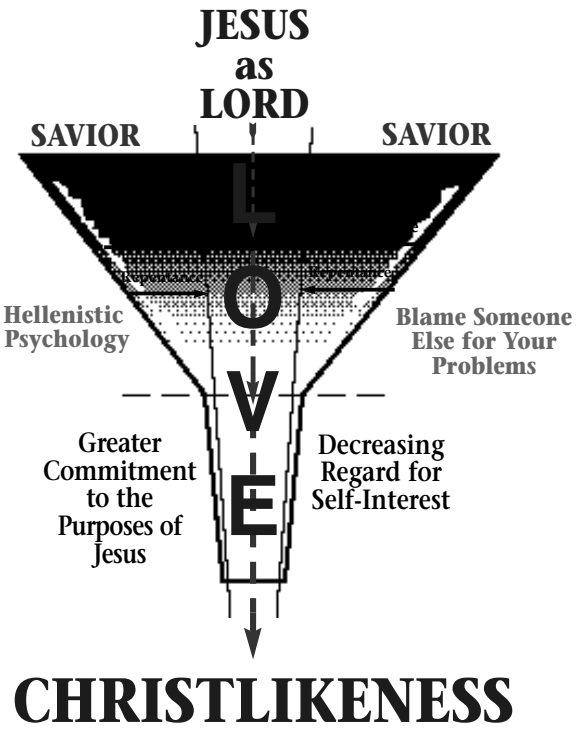
*"If you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one **goes on** trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one **keeps on** making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance"* (Rom. 10:9,10, JNT).

Examine the funnel diagram on the next page. The funnel represents another visual snapshot of your pilgrimage to the High Places.

The **Lordship of Jesus** is your entry point to your pilgrim path in Him and into the funnel. In order to progress deeper into the funnel to mature into increasing Christlikeness, you must respond to Jesus as He really is — Lord!

This means learning to reject or to yield to Him all that you are in your sin nature — all of your will, your rights, your possessions, your plans. You become His "disciple". It is a conversion that demands that you weigh the cost. The depth of that relationship is revealed in Jesus' words: *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate* [in compar-

ison to their intense love for Him] *his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his own cross [his decisions to deny himself and kill self-will] and follow me cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26,27).



While your discipleship journey calls you to ever-increasing obedient trust in our Master, His love is the power that draws you onward. Like the invisible pull of gravity, your humble choice to submit to the Lordship of Jesus at each and every step of your path draws you downward into the funnel. Isn't this what Much-Afraid does as she places each memorial stone in her bag?

The tug of His faithfulness never lets go! When you sin, His Spirit seeks you out and brings you to repentance through His kindness (see Romans 2:4). God pursues you to the point of your yielding so that your broken heart and spirit can once again enjoy the fullness of His presence as your Lord and continue your journey. *Repentance* is what keeps you in the center of the funnel, and brings you back to the center of His love whenever you sin. Repentance is also what keeps you from stopping or turning back on your journey to the High Places.

As you progress along your pilgrimage you pass into the funnel stem. Here the love of Jesus is so compelling that you don't desire to think about yourself, but *only to do His will*. (You'll encounter this truth later in Chapter 15, *The Floods*, when Much-Afraid pulls the stones from her keepsake bag to recount and take ownership of her "altar" experiences.)

Your personal discretion to choose what *you* want to do withers as you continue to yield yourself as a beloved bondservant to His will. God's goal for you as His child is to be changed by His Spirit into Christ-likeness in such a way that there truly is evidence that you are a "new creation." And that creation is *you* being conformed to the character of Jesus.

Those who embrace a false gospel of "being saved" as a sort of fire insurance fail to get hold of the pilgrimage which our Father wants for His children. Those who are unaware of the salvation pilgrimage cling to the sides of the funnel, their old nature, and refuse to allow it to die. The sins that plagued them before their "conversion" still dominate them because they have never chosen to die to self and rise up in Jesus (see Romans 6). In a sense, the sides of the funnel are like the "Valley of Humiliation" that must be fled in order to move on to the High Places.

Tragically, through the influx of rationalization and psychology into the church, *sins* that call for repentance are now considered "problems" to be considered. No longer are believers held accountable to take personal responsibility for their own sins. Failure to repent finds them always bogged down in defeat, unable to escape the sides of the funnel. Only through repentance can they come into the center of the funnel of Jesus' love, where their spiritual eyes are solely on Him, not on their own fleshly needs and desires.

And consider this: Hellenist-influenced pastoral counseling convinces troubled believers to analyze their past to find out

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

who is at fault for their problems. While analysis may reveal factors that contributed to their distress, the individual never passes from victim to victor.

Grievously, those who choose to cling to unforgiveness find festering in their hearts a wound of distrust against God. They perceive that since He didn't protect them from their past hurt, He won't be found reliable in any of His promises either. Thus many Christians survive as perceived perpetual victims of both God and the people or circumstances from their past. Until they hold on to even a rudimentary trust in the Sovereign Lord from Whom nothing is hidden, they'll never climb out of their valley of hurt.

The Hebraic pattern of dealing with past hurts and wrongs committed against you calls you to first stop seeing yourself as a victim. Then repent for your bitter unforgiveness and resentful attitudes. Confess them to our Lord and purpose to leave them behind in the dust where they can be consumed. True freedom calls you to tear down the bondage bars by forgiving from your heart. And our Father may even prompt *you* to ask forgiveness for all those years of bitterness and unforgiveness that kept Him from using your life for His purposes!

As you'll discover on your journey to the High Places, you must choose to forgive in your heart the one(s) who have hurt you. After you have forgiven them, whenever they come to mind, pray God's blessings for them. Then watch how our Lord brings His healing to you. HE takes away the sting of the memory and releases His peace so you can press on. As you choose to keep your focus forward on Him, your testimony of His healing brings Him praise and offers hope to others.

Choosing the Path of Life

On the pilgrimage that leads to your salvation by Jesus, your starting point is *justification* through His blood sacrifice.The penalty for your sins has been paid for by our Lord! From then on, your journey is a process of *sanctification* as the Holy Spirit aligns your mind, will and emotions into conformity with the character of Jesus.

Hebraic Healing—the path to the High Places
- Reflect, repent, forgive from the heart
- Focus on Jesus and press on
- Glorify our Father through testimonies of healing and hope

Hellenist Analysis — the prison in the valley
- Dwell in past regret, identify someone to blame
- Plod on as a victim, waiting for vengeance
- Grumble about the present, ignore the future

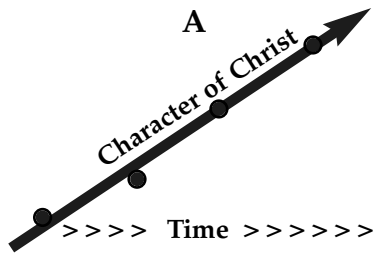
Being "sanctified", or set apart for God's purposes, calls you to immerse yourself in His Word so that you can walk in the truth He has revealed. Then, as you encounter those in the world who need His truth, you'll be equipped and empowered by His Spirit to serve our Father's purposes. Jesus eloquently revealed this process: *"**Sanctify them** by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I **sanctify myself**, that they too may be **truly sanctified**. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message"* (John 17:17-20).

The awesome responsibility and privilege of your faith walk is affirmed by Paul: *"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"* (Phil. 2:12,13).

The four diagrams below represent various potential pilgrimage paths. Only one leads to the High Places. If character development in Jesus could be measured, the dots represent where you would find an individual over time. As you study them, try to determine which one best describes your experience to date.

Diagram A pictures an ideal yet unreal path. No one is an absolute reflection of the character of Jesus, especially at the beginning of their pilgrimage! Otherwise, they

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

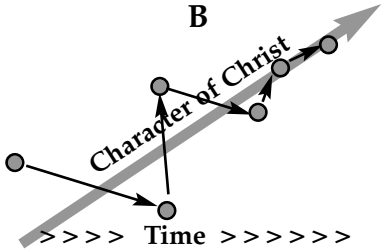


would have no need to be sanctified, or made holy, through the sufferings and battle victories they undergo throughout their life.

Now, some people may have an easy-to-get-along-with nature that fools others into thinking that they're Christlike already. In fact, they may even deceive themselves into thinking they're "Christian" just because they don't think they've sinned! But this *appearance* of personal goodness may be the very block that keeps them from perceiving their heart's depravity and need to humble themselves before the Cross.

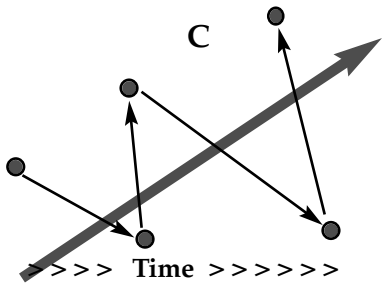
Hidden attitudes of the heart that are contrary to the Word of God may be harder to detect than outright offensive actions, but they still need to be recognized as sin to turn away from so that forgiveness can be received from our Lord.

Diagram B depicts a more typical salvation pilgrimage. When you first responded to the Holy Spirit and put your trust in Jesus, your personality with its old inclinations and rationale still ruled your mind, will and emotions. Over time, as you study and internalize and apply God's Word, as you experience suffering for your faith, as you repent from your sins at the Spirit's conviction, a change in your character takes place.



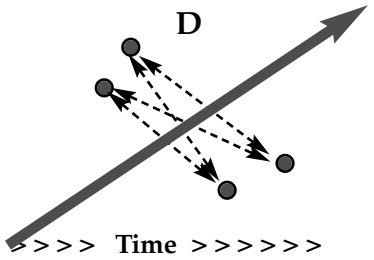
He empowers you to conform increasingly to the motivations and character of Jesus. Your growing love and desire to please Him make following your old inclinations painfully unthinkable, or so dirty when you stumble that you resist more staunchly the next time. Diagram B, like the funnel mentioned earlier, depicts the pilgrimage nature of gradually becoming conformed to the character of Jesus.

Diagram C represents people who may be very knowledgeable about Christian truths but *aren't changed* by them. Perhaps you know some of these folks. They attend lots of conferences, read all the latest Christian books, take part in the liveliest worship. But something is terribly missing.



During their pilgrimage their heads become more filled with knowledge but their hearts are unchanged. They can talk *Christianese*, but their character doesn't reflect Jesus any more than when they first began the journey.

Diagram D illustrates the "hinged" Christian. He moves back and forth but *goes nowhere* along the narrow path. *"As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed"* (Prov. 26:14). He never gets out of his old behavioral rut. Some emotional event or stirring encoun- ter may briefly shake him, but then he returns to the same place. Nothing really changes in his life, especially if he's been taught that "he's saved" and that's the sum total of all he needs to know about Jesus!



Because he attends church service and Sunday school, he perceives that he's "in motion" along the path. But he has no devotion to Jesus, no evidence by his decisions or

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

life that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within.

"Hinge" Christians may be religious by habit but have no connection to the Vine. Most typically they flee relationships that could hold them accountable to turn from sin and press on in their pilgrimage to Christ-likeness. Because of their spiritual activities they think they're moving onward, but to others they appear to be pivoting in place covering the same old turf.

Guidelines

Whether this is your first journey to the High Places or a return trip, examine your own pilgrimage thus far. Which diagram most accurately reflects where *you* are at this point? Ask our Lord to open your eyes of understanding as you venture on in this series with Much-Afraid so that you will see His path more clearly and yearn to count the cost of being conformed to His character.

We'd like you to be able to follow along easily as you read the book and go through this study guide. In each of the chapters of the book we have numbered our paragraphs sequentially to correspond with the paragraph indents of the author. For instance, when we want to cover something in the third paragraph of Chapter 1, our discussion will begin with the number of the paragraph and a few words from the first sentence, such as:

3. In the first place...

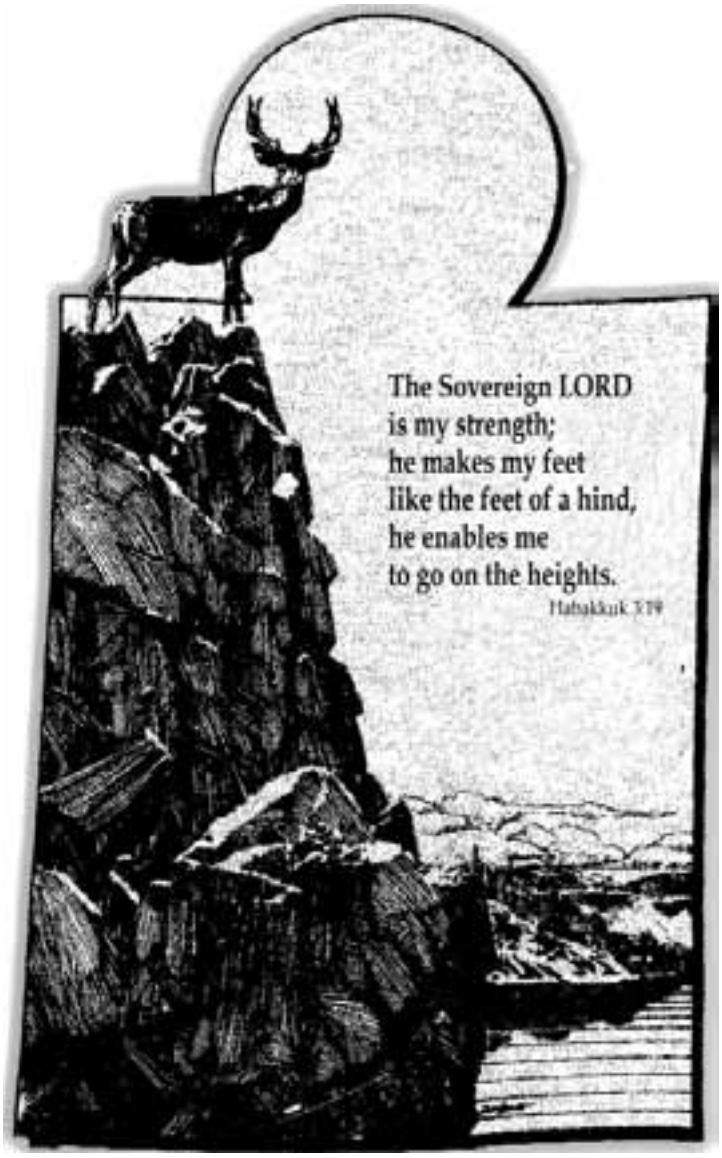
We trust that you will be blessed as you journey with us. You may have been to the High Places before and this is a return trip. We have found in each return there were other things our Lord needed to prune along the way so that we could be more effective in what He was calling us into.

After every trip to the High Places you become burdened to serve the Lord Jesus in a greater way. We have found an increasing militancy in our love. This has been especially important for us these past two years as we moved West to help introduce Native Americans to Hebraic foundations. God has instilled such a loving burden to do whatever is needed to bless them! We believe you will find a similar new purpose upon your return from the High Places.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Part 1 of Chapter 1.
Invitation to the High Places



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Hinds' Feet in High Places

Part 1 of Chapter 1:
Invitation to the High Places

Our Father has extended to you a marvelous Covenant of life in Jesus! When you embrace that Covenant, you are offered the same invitation Much-Afraid received. The Shepherd invited her to leave the valley of her earthly identity to take a journey of transformation to the High Places.

Did she fully understand what sort of venture she was embarking on? No! But neither do many who call themselves "Christian". The concept of pilgrimage, that is, the sanctification process in which you are transformed into the likeness of Jesus, has been lost to much of the Church. Accordingly, it seems fewer are leaving the valley for the High Places.

Think of your departure from the valley as a shuttle launch at Cape Kennedy. The greatest amount of energy is needed not during the flight but at the initial separation from the launch pad. Your earthly identity has been intricately connected to your life in the valley. So many are like Much-Afraid, imprisoned by their valley relationships.

Yet, to acquire the nature of Jesus we must all leave the valley. As you prepare to depart, it's appropriate to ask others who are close to you to join you. The Shepherd's invitation is for them as well. If family and friends come with you the trip will be easier as you encourage each other.

If others refuse to come, you still need to press on! Don't linger in the valley — get to the High Places yourself! You can return later to help others after you have been changed!

We are numbering the paragraph indentations of the author to guide our discussion of the first part of chapter 1. Let's prepare to leave the valley of our earthly identity...

2. For several years...

Much-Afraid had been in the service of the Shepherd for quite awhile but had not yet left the Valley of Humiliation. She knew the Shepherd and sincerely yearned to please Him as a devoted worker. But as we will come to recognize, He wanted much more in their relationship than her activities on His behalf. *This is true for all of us.*

Much-Afraid counted among her friends two in particular, Mercy and Peace. We may surmise that Mercy and Peace had already been to the High Places. These two were surrounded by the same agitating villagers of Much-Trembling. But they were able to serve the Shepherd with joy because they served in the power of *Who He is*.

This transformation could never occur in the life of Much-Afraid if her heart remained mired in the oppressive atmosphere of Much-Trembling. Therefore she would also need to leave the tranquil little cottage and the valley of her earthly identity to which she was so attached if she would journey to the High Places.

Do you know how much our Lord yearns for you to know Him ***as He really is***? In order to fathom the nature of Jesus you have to leave behind your earthly identity and your religious comfort zone. God never instituted "religious practice". He ordained a *way of life*. Our focus is *conformity to Jesus*, Who describes Himself as *"**the way** and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6).

Jesus is not only the way to the Father, He is the *Incarnate Way of life* for us. The men and women who first put their trust in Jesus were called *"The Way"* (see Acts 9:2). As you get closer to the High Places, your understanding that you are today's representative of *"The Way"* becomes all the more clear.

Along the way of your pilgrimage to the High Places you'll be transformed into His character as the Holy Spirit works in you. Being set apart *by Him* for *His purposes* as *His ambassador* in the world is the aspiration of Jesus in His prayer for all who would follow

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Him: *"Sanctify them **by the truth**; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have **sent them into the world**. For them I **sanctify myself**, that they too may be **truly sanctified**. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will **trust in me** through their message'"* (John 17:17-20).

Remember, to be sanctified is to be *set apart for His purposes*, that is, to have Kingdom aspirations. By your trust in Jesus you are united with every other believer, past, present and to come who will be lovingly set apart — sanctified by Jesus.

As an example: I know Sue much differently now after 33 years of marriage than I did on the day I said "I do" to her. We have been *changed* during our marriage pilgrimage. And in your relationship with Jesus you will face time and again opportunities to be changed by His Spirit into Christlikeness in your character. The changes come as a result of each individual choice you make along the way.

Sometimes those changes can be prompted by very unChristlike responses to attitudes and motivations you see in others! I remember that a year before I yielded my life to Jesus I met a man who absolutely *radiated* trust and joy in Jesus. He spoke of Him as though He knew Him intimately, and overflowed with testimonies of amazing answers to very specific prayer needs.

I *envied* that man! And that envy of his walk with Jesus stirred my heart to seek Him all the more in the kind of walk that saw Jesus responding with power. Years later I could embrace that brother with heartfelt joy that his trust had been a catalyst to spur me on!

- What "lovely little cottage" of personal comfort might you have to leave behind as Jesus calls you to journey to the High Places?

- Who do you know who walks in Peace and Mercy no matter what the circumstances, while your life is an inner shambles? Do you "envy" them enough to ask our Father to reveal what's keeping you from walking like that?

3. In the first place...

For several years Sue and I surveyed people who came to our retreat ministry about their early home life. We discovered that only one out of forty had been raised in a home where Jesus was *Lord*. While many had grown up in religious families that attended church, their religion was for the most part separate from their daily lives. Aside from grace at mealtimes, little of a spiritual nature permeated their home.

- How would you describe your own religious upbringing?

Much-Afraid was chained by her own crushing self-appraisal of her disabilities as well as the contemptuous pity of her relatives. Her outer appearance, however, merely reflected the inner afflictions that tormented her entire clan. In our book *Demolishing Strongholds* we show how God relegates families who fail to love Him to demonic strongholds for several generations until someone has the courage to break the bondage. The influence of these strongholds can represent the "valley" in which you grew up.

For instance, Sue and I grew up in the Valley of Rejection, in which our thoughts, decisions and actions were filtered through the lens of not being accepted. On page 37 of our book we list different family strongholds that we have encountered. The symptoms of the spirit of rejection in my family were addiction (alcoholism), compulsive behavior (immorality), and seeking acceptance. Sue's family was plagued by unworthiness and withdrawal. On the surface our families looked different, but we were stung by the same demonic oppression. [The list of

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

strongholds is reproduced at the end of this article.]

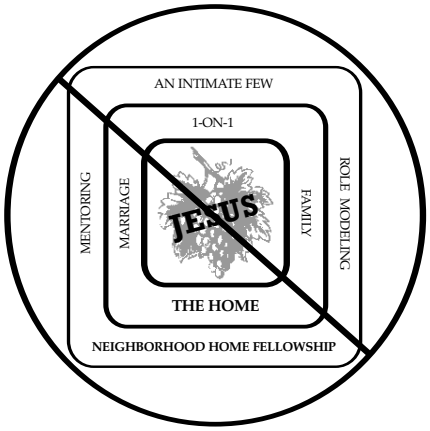
The symptoms under each stronghold can operate like the relatives of Much-Afraid: Craven Fear, Gloomy, Self-Pity, and so on. They discourage you and beat you down — never wanting you to leave the Valley of your Strongholds. We've found that in most marriages both spouses have the same prevailing stronghold(s). The symptoms may be different, but it's as if the *strongholds* married each other. Perhaps that familiarity was a factor that attracted the couple to each other — "He/She *understands* me!"

A mass destruction of marriages is taking place in the Christian community. Can it be that many couples are tarrying in the Valley of their Strongholds as their love disintegrates around them? Couples who are determined to share a healthy marriage that *grows* in love and the character of Jesus must leave the valley *together*. If one spouse chooses to stay behind in their valley, their marriage covenant will never reflect *union in Jesus*.

Keep in mind that strongholds are *relationship destroyers*. Demonic agitation and influence chokes the intimacy you desire with your Lord and with others in your life.

Even after the strongholds have been demolished by the authority of Jesus, you still need to have your God-given needs met. Old behavioral ruts in your life path need to be filled in with godly responses so that you don't again seek unrighteous ways to have your human needs met!

Strongholds: ***Relationship Destroyers***



Our Father created Adam and Eve with seven specific needs, the same ones you have. These needs are what motivate you. When you meet these needs God's way you reap wonderful blessing. When you try to have them met *outside* of God's will, destruction rains down on you, especially in the area of your relationships.

Seven Human Needs

1. Dignity
2. Authority
3. Blessing and Provision
4. Security
5. Purpose and Meaning
6. Freedom and Boundary
7. Intimate Love and Companionship

Your seven needs are covered more fully at the end of this article.

After I (Mike) renounced the stronghold of rejection I found that I had an immense need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. Through Sue's love and the encouragement of our home fellowship these needs began to be met. I was 47 years old when I first experienced the dignity our Father has always desired for me. My motivations were transformed. Love took over where rejection had once oppressed me.

Sue adds: "I'd always hidden behind a friendly smile, but deep inside I was a shy, fearful person. I drove myself toward achievement because that was what I'd based my self-worth on. Rather than accept my worth in God's sight, I scrambled all the harder, even after finding forgiveness at the Cross. My freedom came when that agitating spirit of rejection was cast out by the authority of Jesus. Free from the bondage of fearing to tell others about Jesus, I could eagerly testify of His love and power even to strangers!

• Are there any spiritual strongholds that are keeping you in your own particular

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Valley? Stop now and go through the strongholds sheet in the back of this section. Are any of the symptoms *habitually present* in your life now? We stress *habitual,* not just occasional! Deal with your strongholds now. The instructions precede the list of strongholds. You'll never leave the valley if you cling to these demonic influences!

- Which of the seven needs do you think are the greatest motivators in *your* life? Share these with others close to you, especially those who are willing to go to the High Places with you. As you travel together they can help you meet these needs.

- Ask our Lord if you are trying to meet any of these needs in ways that are not His. If so, repent and ask Him to help you have your needs met *His* way.

4. Most earnestly...

If you stay in the valley too long after you come to Jesus, you begin to have doubts that your life can change even if you do hear the invitation to the High Places. Much-Afraid was plagued by this doubt:

> "She feared that there could be no deliverance from these two crippling disfigurements and that they must continue to mar her service always."

Doubt keeps many from ever leaving the valley of their own strongholds. Oh, people "move around the valley," that is, from broken relationship to broken relationship and from congregation to congregation. The sad thing is that they themselves are not changed. They're still captive in the Valley of their Strongholds. And that nagging little inner voice keeps insisting, "That's just the way you are. You won't *ever* change!"

If you're beset by that deception, take it captive and bring it into the Light of Jesus. Remember this important passage pertaining to strongholds:

> *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and* ***we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*** (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

After your strongholds have been demolished in the Name of Jesus, you still have an ongoing personal responsibility: to *take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* No one else can do this for you. If you chew on thoughts that you know are ungodly, you'll find the trip that much harder, as did Much-Afraid. It is impossible to entertain demonic voices and enjoy trusting fellowship with the Shepherd.

Jesus has promised that through His Spirit you can be transformed into the likeness of His character. Any area of your being that you believe can't change is hiding behind a lie! You are a new creation in Jesus, and that means that *every part* of you can be conformed to His image as you continue on your life journey!

Does this mean that you'll become infinitely perfect as He is? No, but yielding your mind, your will and your emotions to Him will bring about changes that others will notice. Then you can give Him the credit and praise for the transformations!

- What area of your life is Jesus bringing to mind that is a *besetting sin* or *area of hopelessness* that you fear can never change?

- What nagging little lies have created doubt in your heart that change can ever occur?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

5. There was, however...

When we handed out the list of strongholds from *Demolishing Strongholds* to congregations, we found that most people in each body of believers had the same prevalent strongholds. Many had been influenced by that spirit even before they ever came to the congregation.

People are attracted to groups with the same prevailing strongholds. A stronghold operates like a "familiar spirit" to attract people and make them feel comfortable and accepted. No wonder they can't (or don't want to) get out of the Valley of their Strongholds!

Those who make a move to go to the High Places are surrounded like Much-Afraid with dissonant voices that try to deter them from pressing on in Christ. In your case, you may have heard comments like, "Aren't you becoming a fanatic over this religious stuff?" or, "You're going to lose friends if you live a "Christian" life by His Word!"

- Have you ever encountered opposition from others when you tried to walk in Jesus' steps more closely?

- Are you in a faith community now that encourages one another to "stand up for Jesus" even when it's unpopular? If you're not, be careful of the influence of familiar spirits!

6. Like most of the other families...

Even if Much-Afraid agreed to leave the valley, she had to contend with her family members. We are told that:

> "all the Fearings hated the Chief Shepherd... and naturally it was a great offense to them that one of their own family should have entered his service."

Your opposition may be your own flesh-and-blood or those in your faith community who are in bondage to the same strongholds. Maybe *both* are conspiring to keep you in the Valley of your Strongholds!

In our Sept/Oct 2001 newsletter, "*Making Level Paths for Our Families",* we discuss three types of relationships. Only one type will help you get to the High Places. When you begin to follow Jesus to the High Places, your relationships move from "Activity-based" and "Positional-based" to "Value-based." It's worthwhile to review these, because Positional- and Activity-based relationships will try to hinder your journey.

Value-based Relationships

Your emotions are attached proportionally to those things you value the most. From the time of your conversion, the basis for your relationships must change if you are to *truly follow Jesus*. This new relational value system is revealed as Jesus describes to His audience His true family: *"[Jesus] replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' **Pointing to his disciples**, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever **does what my Father in heaven wants** is my brother and sister and mother'"* (Matt. 12:48-50).

Followers of Jesus place remarkable value, even unto death, on their ongoing relationship with our Father. Since Jesus is the Firstborn among those who have been adopted into our Father's family, He is your role-model for living out our Father's values. Since His Word urges you to "find out what pleases Him", your love relationship with Him will compel you *to do what He wants*. Isn't this the intensity of love and obedience our Lord requires of us? *"Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your mind"* (Matt. 22:37).

To experience value-based relationships you have to make significant relational choices. As a result of choosing to love and obey our Lord, you'll be attracted to others who place comparable value on their relationship with Him. Because of the *value* you place on your love relationship with our Father and your desire to please Him, when

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

you find others of like love, these relationships grow into the sweetest fellowship.

Value-based relationships in Christ are the strongest and most enduring. They also bring the greatest glory to our Father. If you are a parent, these are the type of relationships your children need to see *you* sharing in. Value-based relationships strengthen and encourage you to reach out to unbelievers with something a whole lot different than the values the world offers!

Positional-based Relationships

Unlike value-based relationships that call you to make conscious choices, people are "plopped" into positional relationships. For instance, all of us were born into a particular family. You weren't given a chance to choose your relatives or the circumstances of where or when you were born. This reality has important bearing on your spiritual walk. People who fail to examine and *biblically question* the doctrine of the denomination in which they were raised make their religious expression *positional* rather than value-based.

Family members who use the phrase "Blood is thicker than water" are reaffirming their positional relationship. As an example: A mother can cause unnecessary tension in her son's marriage by emphasizing *her* position in his life rather than by "decreasing" so that the value relationship he has with the wife he has chosen can increase. This is an important change in relationship: *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24).

A father whose spiritual life reveals no emotional determination for the things of God is modeling for his children a positional relationship that will make it harder for them to understand the intimate Fatherhood of God.

Where positional-based family relationships are strong, it's often difficult both to choose to follow Jesus *and* to establish value-based relationships with others who are following Him. Your positional relationships often perceive value-based relationships as a threat to the stronghold-influenced order and controls already being practiced within your family. As they see you attempting to flee the prison, they may voice concern that you're "joining a cult" or "forgetting your roots."

Activity-based Relationships

Relationships that form because of common activities are the most pervasive throughout Christendom. Church services, Bible studies, Sunday schools that focus on content dissemination rather than developing strong relationships among the participants, are all activity-based. The activity, not the relational fellowship, is the primary reason for meeting.

Heavy focus on the activity insidiously blocks out your ability to establish value-based relationships. Activity-based programs are so prevalent in the church because they are the most efficient to manage. Few leaders are needed to direct the activities of the many. Yet the many suffer by never maturing as the *family* of brothers and sisters that Jesus identified as His.

- Evaluate your current spiritual relationships. Are there people you *value* in the way Jesus described as brother, sister, mother?

- What activities would you be willing to relinquish in order to develop value-based relationships with those He puts in your path to be spiritual family? In other words, if you found others willing to go to the High Places, would you be willing to forfeit everything to join them on the journey?

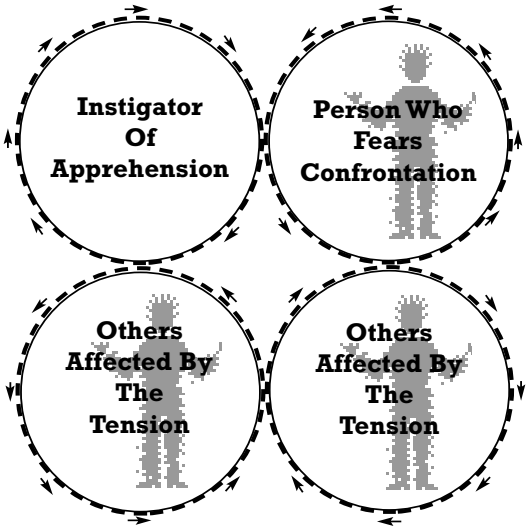
7. Poor Much-Afraid...

We are told:

"Her relatives always terrified her, and she had never learned to resist or ignore

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Co-dependent relationships look like gears meshed together.



their threats, so she simply sat cowering before them."

In our book *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* we discuss the strangulating co-dependency that strongholds produce. This is especially true in positional and activity-based relationships. Prisoner-like entanglement befalls those who fail to confront the people who are negatively affecting their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

If you are overcome by debilitating apprehension or fear when you *know* you need to confront someone who habitually causes you apprehension, you are *co-dependent*. You do everything you can to ensure that nothing will set off the instigator you so fear. If others are involved in your relational situation, you may even try to convince them to stifle their confrontation of the instigator. So *everyone* has to dance around a person who may or may not be oblivious to the apprehension he/she is causing in the lives of a number of people!

Wherever apprehension exists, love cannot grow!

The longer that discomfort and avoidance are practiced, the more deeply entrenched fear and non-confrontation become. Co-dependency is agitated by strongholds that are keeping everyone from facing the confrontation that's needed. Remember, they operate to destroy relationships.

In order to get to the High Places, everyone sooner or later finds they have to confront the instigators of apprehension in their family and faith community. You may be facing this now. As with Much-Afraid, your love and desire for Jesus must be *greater than* your fear to confront.

- Who in your life inspires fear or apprehension in you?

- Are you the person who *fears confrontation*? Are you caught in the middle between the *"instigator"* and the *"others affected by the tension"*? You need to be *extreme* in your desire to get out of the valley! You're stuck in the middle, and both sides will fight to keep you from leaving. It may sound cruel, but turn them over to Jesus for help, and then walk on!

8. The unhappy interview...

On the outskirts of the village, both as dawn broke or at day's end, Much-Afraid habitually met with the Shepherd. These meetings were important to her relationship with Him while she lived in the valley. But they were nowhere close to the life with the Shepherd she could have if she went to the High Places.

You may be a person who attends church regularly and even spends time in His Word and in prayer. Just know: If you're going to remain in the valley, you'll remain a slave to others and to the tyranny of religious programs.

Take a personal inventory of what you may need to leave behind in order to press on with Jesus. This may mean that even the religious activities that have seemed good

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

for a season need to be set aside so that you can be stretched in *character* in a new way. Jesus offended the religious establishment by *personalizing* His relationship with the Father. You, too, may need leave your comfort zone of religious activities in order to discover what Jesus may have for you that will conform another area of your character into His.

The reevaluation of your priorities is part of your identification with our Lord in this exhortation: *"And so Jesus also suffered **outside the city gate** to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, **go to him outside the camp**, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come"* (Heb. 13:12-14).

[You may find it helpful to read our Sept/Oct 2002 newsletter, *"Life Outside the Steeple"*, to help you count the cost of your journey.]

- Do you need to make some changes in your life in order to be intentional about going to the High Places?

- What are the activities in your life that have been helpful to your character growth for a season but now need to be reevaluated and perhaps deleted at this point?

10. The quiet evening light...

Sue: One night shortly after returning to the US from our research time spent in Israel I was awakened by Mike. He had just dreamed he was on a dark, dangerous mountain of desolation called Mount Horeb. Horeb is where God dealt with the prophet Elijah. In the dream God told Mike, "For four years I've desolated you to remove that which isn't like My Son Jesus. Now press on sharing this message, 'Free the captives.' Wake your wife up and tell her about this."

As Mike recounted his dream, I was dumfounded. *I* had just dreamed I was on a mountain! My mountain was a very high, half-moon plateau. My heels were against the back edge, and I understood that behind me in blackness lay jagged rocks and steep cliffs. *Danger* screamed from down there. Ahead of me, the light was growing ever brighter on the horizon.

Then Jesus spoke: "You can't go back to what once was. Only pain and death lay there. Press on into the light! You may look from side to side to see who is going with you, but don't look back. Press on!"

How very similar these dreams were! We were still smarting from past years of wounding and didn't even have the courage to share what our research in Israel had revealed. For the past four years we had been desolated by God through betrayals and false accusations. But as a result of our dreams we could see that our Lord had been using these refining fires to prepare us for His new purpose for our lives — to share the Hebraic foundations as a way of life.

Our Father was so merciful in so many ways! Had we known that our testing was going to last four years, we might have fainted with fear or given up. But to know that His fires were achieving purposes that would serve His loving will, now THAT made it worth it all! So if *you* are facing fiery troubles and disappointments, look ahead to the "mountains which bound your valley", as did Much-Afraid, and know that Jesus is faithful to hold you secure.

In Peter's second epistle he describes a pilgrimage of faith that takes you all the way to agape love:

> *For this very reason, **make every effort** to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities **in increasing measure**, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproduc-*

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

tive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be ***all the more eager*** *to make your calling and election sure. For if you* ***do these things****, you will never fall, and you will* ***receive a rich welcome*** *into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 1:5-11).

In the middle of the pilgrimage Peter indicates that after self-control, you must go through perseverance before you can obtain godliness. We know firsthand that perseverance comes during times of fiery refinement so that God can prepare you for further purposes when areas of character dross have been scorched away. To use another analogy, you undergo a time of perseverance when our Father prunes you of branches that will hinder your fruitfulness in the future.

During our eleven years at the retreat center we discovered a common hindrance that deterred married couples from pressing on together all the way into Christlike love. In the vast majority of marriages the wife recognized they were in fiery circumstances but her husband was oblivious. When confronted with her pain, he went backward to seek more knowledge about the situation while she wanted to press ahead to get through the fire. On occasion we'd encounter a husband who had embraced the perseverance but his wife was just looking to escape. But in either case, until *both* you and your spouse embrace the fiery times together, you can't press onward.

You'll find in your faith walk that you may make several round trips to the High Places and return to the Valley. The purpose of the trip to the High Places is always *to be changed* before you go back to the Valley. As Peter wrote regarding the pilgrimage, "*If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Quiet your spirit before our Lord and weigh some thoughts before Him:

1. You can't listen to the deceiving voices of spiritual strongholds in either yourself or in your marriage and make it to the High Places.

2. After you've dealt with your strongholds, think through your true needs, and survey your relationships to see who wants to go with you. As you journey together, your old behavioral ruts can be filled in by your comrades as they share truth with you from the Spirit.

3. You can't cherish positional or activity-based relationships more than you cherish Jesus if you hope to make it to the High Places. You can invite your positional and activity-based friends to accompany you, but you can't cling to their motivations on your journey. Like Much-Afraid, you may find you have to go by yourself or as a couple to be equipped in full devotion to Jesus. Then when you *return* to these relationships, you'll be able to offer them true help.

11. Through the quiet...; 12. "What shall I do?"...

If your Christian life has been spent in the Valley of your Strongholds for a long time, you'll need special determination to leave that valley. You are faced with a choice of following Jesus wholeheartedly or holding on to familiar human relationships that aren't seeking to love and obey Him. Your normal inclination and rationale can overwhelm you with concern over the effect your decision will have on others. Yet, our Lord is *looking for you* to come to Him!

He can't permit your loyalty to people to compete with your devotion to Him: *"Anyone who loves his father or mother* ***more than me*** *is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter* ***more than me*** *is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not* ***take up his cross*** *and* ***follow me*** *is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever* ***loses his life for my sake*** *will find it"* (Matt. 10:37-39). True life in Jesus can only be

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

found outside the valley when you choose to journey to the High Places.

Our Lord knows the way out of the valley. He voiced it to the Israelites: "Draw near to Me!" Only in Jesus can you find that which your soul is truly seeking. *"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In **repentance and rest** is your salvation, in **quietness and trust** is your strength, but you would have none of it'"* (Isa. 30:15). The Israelites refused to come to Him in peace to find resolve for their Lord, and only Him. Following their own inclinations instead, they chose self-destruction.

Stop to peer inside yourself. Do you look heavenward to see the joy set before you? Or, do you weigh what you might lose if you take the journey of transformation? What you *fear to lose* will be your prison. *"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe"* (Pro. 29:25).

Our Lord continues to warn His people, *"I also will choose harsh treatment for them and **will bring upon them what they dread**. For when I called, **no one answered**, when I spoke, **no one listened**. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me"* (Isa. 66:4). In the end everyone finds out that it's far better to accept His invitation no matter what the cost.

I've often told people, "Whatever you 'sweat', whether it's loss of something or fear to obey what He's telling you, He'll make you "sweat" that very thing until your heart turns to Him in trust." The emotional intensity of your "sweating" indicates the magnitude of the distrust you're carrying!

- Ask yourself honestly, "Is there any person, any activity or any possession that I value more than my love for Jesus?" If so, are you willing to ask Jesus to do whatever is necessary to change that?

- Do you "sweat" about anything at this point in your life? Financial worry, job loss, relational separation, whatever? Are you willing to turn this over to Jesus so that He can show you His will and purpose as you trust Him?

13. "Don't be afraid"...

So much of your pilgrimage depends on your willingness to *trust Jesus*. He is well aware of your pitiful circumstances and hears your tremulous cries. But He yearns for you to *bear much fruit* for His Father's glory, and some deep pruning has to occur in you if that's to happen!

Jesus made this clear when He said, *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He **cuts off** every branch in me that **bears no fruit**, while every branch that **does bear fruit** he **prunes** so that it will be **even more fruitful**"* (John 15:1,2). Jesus concludes His teaching about the vine with these words of purpose, "*This is to my Father's glory, that you **bear much fruit**, showing yourselves to be **my disciples**"* (15:8).

As Peter reports, the world's values and ways become increasingly detestable to you as you follow Jesus. Your old companions in sin think it's strange (and that *you're* strange!) that you don't want to join them in the debauchery that once satisfied you. They might even remark to others that "you've gone off the deep end in this religious stuff."

You'll discover, though, that your remorse for those former activities and your shame over your former relationships will be transformed: You'll learn to grieve over the bondage your old companions are in, and yearn for them to know Jesus. That's one of the fruits that will blossom when you reach the High Places!

- Do you still feel shame over something from your past that you need to bring to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing? Confess that to Him and receive the cleansing work He's promised! (See 1 John 1:9.)

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Recall the people from your past with whom you engaged in "debauchery" of any sort. Who does the Spirit quicken to your heart to pray for to encounter Jesus?

15. As she spoke...

Quietness of spirit and confident trust in Jesus permit your spirit to focus on what you *really long for*. What a relief that our walk with Jesus isn't a set of rules or principles! As Paul wrote, you don't base your salvation on edicts of "Do not touch" or "Do not taste". Instead, as you focus on Jesus, you can savor the anticipation of walking more closely with Him. The joy set before you can overcome your perceived loss of whatever used to thrill your heart.

Sue: At one time in my life I was fearful that if I yielded all that I was to Jesus, He'd haul me kicking and screaming off to Africa to serve Him! But His wonderful mercy has its severe aspects as well. He allowed me to wrestle over wanting to control my own life until I was pierced with grief over my decisions and actions. At last, all I could do in my awareness of my own sinful heart was to cry out, "Please Jesus, I don't want control of my life any more! If You want me, please take me!" And He graciously and lovingly responded.

We haven't made it to Africa yet, but His odyssey has led us to move 17 times in 33 years of marriage. And I wouldn't have it any other way, for His grace has been sufficient. He has taught me (and I'm still learning!) to trust Him to work in and through Mike as the spiritual head of our household. My part is to share what I hear from Him, and to cast off grumbling and complaining about circumstances. Our Lord is Sovereign, and He is well able to answer your heart's desire when your will aligns with His!

Much-Afraid voiced her own desire, "Oh, if only I could escape the Valley of Humiliation altogether and go to the High Places..." You might also express this in your own heart's longing: "Oh, if only I could leave behind who I am and become more like Jesus!" And those are words He's been waiting to hear.

- A wise person once said, "You're not ready to *go* anywhere or *do* anything for the Lord until you're ready to go *anywhere* and do *anything* for the Lord." Are there any reservations in your heart about going *anywhere* or doing *anything* for Jesus?

- What would be the result in your household if you turned your groaning into praise, your complaining into gratefulness? Are you willing to do that in your heart?

16. No sooner...

Our Lord has been waiting to hear the longing of *your* heart. Can you hear His voice responding to you as He did to Much-Afraid: "I have waited a long time to hear you make the suggestion..."?

Part of His wait has involved your own willingness to move on with Him, and your receptivity to His invitation as the Spirit has moved in you.

Your longing for Jesus gives you the "ears to hear" His invitation that He has long held out to you. Before this point in your life, the clamor of worldly desires — wealth, recognition, lust — and agitating demonic clatter have deafened your heart. But now you're ready!

The Shepherd refers to His "Father's *Kingdom*, the Realm of Love." You might think that the references to the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus makes in the Gospels are that eternal home which we're all awaiting. But look again! How often does He exclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is among us *now*! The King is proclaiming His Kingdom in the present, so that all who are indwelt by

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

His Spirit can grow in the Christlike character of the King!

The Kingdom of Love isn't just what you'll experience when you pass from this life or even when He returns. It's the NOW in which His love is transforming your character into His as you walk His pathway and make choices that either reflect Him or grieve Him. The Lord Jesus stressed that reality for His disciples when they asked Him to "teach us how to pray." In that prayer you are petitioning our Father to establish here on earth the Kingdom in which His will is carried out: *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **your kingdom come**, **your will be done** on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:9,10).

We need to be careful that as we journey to the High Places that we are not looking outside ourselves to see the work of God. The Kingdom of Love will be established within us as we journey, *"the kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17:21b). This is the wonderful feature of the path to the High Places. It begins with trusting the Shepherd and accepting His invitation. The success of the journey is found in the love that is produced in us, *"For in Christ Jesus ... **The only thing that counts** is trust expressing itself through love"* (Gal. 5:6). The Greek word for "love" in this verses is *agape*. It is the sacrificial, Holy Spirit-empowered love that desires nothing in return.

Not only is the *King* of the Kingdom the same "yesterday, today and forever." So is His Kingdom! It's unshakable because it's built upon the solid rock of the King Himself! That's why He never stops loving you, even if your decisions grieve Him. He faithfully works through His Spirit in you to reveal that your sinful choices lead to pain and grief for your life. Then He graciously reminds you that your humble repentance pours out His forgiveness on you to cleanse you. Hallelujah!

- During your quiet time graze in the Gospels and discover just how often Jesus speaks of His Kingdom. Find out for yourself what the phrase, "the Kingdom of Heaven", means to *you*.

The following passage is an excerpt from our book *Demolishing Strongholds* to help you in your journey to the High Places. There is much more to be discovered when you delve into the book. You can view it and download it for free from our website:

www.Restorationministries.org

Our life is a **pilgrimage** —

a journey during which changing circumstances force us to adapt.

Our ability to make those adaptations in the power of the Holy Spirit will determine the level of joy and peace we find in our relationship with God and with others.

Our victory of walking in the fullness of Christ will not be achieved until we meet the needs God has created in us, in the manner that He prescribes.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

God Made Us With Seven Needs

A study of the first two chapters of Genesis reveals that from the beginning God created in mankind **seven distinct needs**. These needs provide continuing opportunities for His people to pursue a wholehearted and intimate relationship with Him as they depend on Him to meet their needs. As we seek to meet these needs **within God's framework** as revealed in His Word, we provide the spiritual environment for an ever-increasing **conformity to the image of Christ.**

As we yield our **self-sufficiency** to Him and focus instead on **God-dependency** for all our needs, we will develop spiritual eyes to see His provisions and spiritual ears to hear Him say, ***"This is the way. Walk in it"*** (Isaiah 30:21). When we strive to meet these needs in a way that **seems** right to our mind, will, and emotions but is not God's way, we will suffer consequences.

The Seven Needs

Dignity

1. God Created Us with a Need for Dignity

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,' ...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26,27).

Authority

2. God Created Us with a Need for Authority

"And let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26).

Blessing and Provision

3. God Created Us with a Need for Blessing and Provision

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food'" (Gen. 1:28,29).

Security

4. God Created Us with a Need for Security

"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:8,9).

Purpose and Meaning

5. God Created Us with a Need for Purpose and Meaning

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ...Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:15,19).

Freedom and Boundary

6. God Created Us with a Need for Freedom and Boundary

"And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die'" (Gen. 2:16,17).

Intimate Love and Companionship

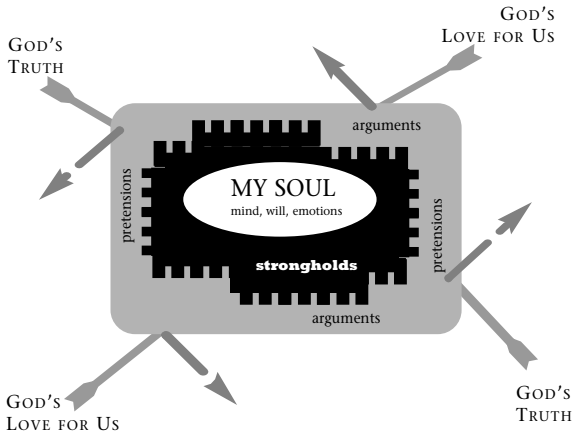
7. God Created Us to Experience Intimate Love and Companionship

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). *"For Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman", for she was taken out of man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame"* (Gen. 2:20-25).

Demolishing the Strongholds in Your Life

On the next page is a list of strongholds we have encountered in our years of ministry. For a fuller explanation of the operation of strongholds, especially as they work through generations in a family, see our book *Demolishing Strongholds*. As long as your strongholds remain, you can never experience God's love or truth. The strongholds will always block these. You may *hear*, but you'll *never experience*. That's an important difference. As one person described the Hebraic foundations, "They are practical, experiential, and revelational." We all need to walk out these truths for our Father's glory.

The **boldface** words on the next page represent the demonic strongholds. The words beneath each boldface are the symptoms that indicate their presence in your life. Go through the list and place a number from 0 to 10 next to each symptom that manifests itself *habitually* in your life. The number gives you an idea of how deeply engrained the symptom is. If the stronghold has come down through generations of your family, you may find its influence can be very strong.



Your spouse or close friend can place an evaluative number next to yours to verify what they see in you. Having someone else close to you to review your responses is helpful because you need to guard yourself against your own deceit. If you look at a stronghold and hear *rationalizing* going on in your mind, you probably have that particular stronghold, and the stronghold of deceit is trying to dissuade you.

After you have recognized the symptoms that identify a stronghold, renounce it in Jesus' Name and confess any sins that you have committed that relate to its influence. **Pray, using the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus** and the **power of His shed blood to demolish these strongholds and renounce their influence in your life.**

Remember, after the strongholds are demolished, you still have the responsibility to take your thoughts captive. Paraphrasing Paul, "You can't listen to the demonic voices and hear the voice of Jesus too."

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

OVERVIEW OF TYPES OF STRONGHOLDS

DECEIT
___ ___ Lying
___ ___ Fantasies
___ ___ Delusions
___ ___ Rationalizations
___ ___ Wrong doctrine/misuse of Scripture

BITTERNESS
___ ___ Resentment
___ ___ Racism
___ ___ Unforgiveness
___ ___ Anger/Hatred
___ ___ Violence
___ ___ Revenge

HEAVINESS
___ ___ Depression
___ ___ Despair
___ ___ Self-pity
___ ___ Loneliness
___ ___ Unconfessed sin
___ ___ Suicidal thoughts

JEALOUSY
___ ___ Spiteful
___ ___ Gossip/slander
___ ___ Betrayal
___ ___ Critical nature
___ ___ Judgmental
___ ___ Suspicious

CONFUSION (DOUBT & UNBELIEF)
___ ___ Suspicious
___ ___ Apprehensive
___ ___ Indecisive
___ ___ Skeptical
___ ___ Unsettled

REJECTION
___ ___ Addictive behavior
___ ___ Compulsions
___ ___ Seeks acceptance
___ ___ Unworthiness
___ ___ Withdrawal

PRIDE
___ ___ Vain
___ ___ Self-righteous
___ ___ Self-centered
___ ___ Insensitive
___ ___ Materialistic
___ ___ Seeks positions

RELIGIOSITY
___ ___ Seeks activities
___ ___ No spiritual power
___ ___ Spiritual blindness
___ ___ Hypocritical

INDEPENDENCE & DIVORCE
___ ___ Insensitive
___ ___ Lonely/Aloof
___ ___ Self-determined
___ ___ Devil's advocate
___ ___ Withdrawn
___ ___ Excuse making
___ ___ Lack of trust
___ ___ "Martyr" complex

STUPOR & PRAYERLESSNESS
___ ___ Distanced from God
___ ___ "Cold" love
___ ___ Distracted
___ ___ Spiritual blindness
___ ___ Laziness
___ ___ Deceived self-appraisal

REBELLION
___ ___ Self-willed
___ ___ Stubborn
___ ___ Pouting
___ ___ Strife
___ ___ Factious
___ ___ Divisive
___ ___ Anger leads to argument
___ ___ Independent
___ ___ Unteachable

FEAR & INSECURITY
___ ___ Inferiority
___ ___ Inadequacy
___ ___ Timidity
___ ___ Pleasing people, not God
___ ___ Lack of trust/worry
___ ___ Phobias
___ ___ Perfectionism
___ ___ Dread of failure
___ ___ Inability to set goals
___ ___ "Motor-mouth"

CONTROL
___ ___ Manipulative
___ ___ Striving
___ ___ Lacking trust
___ ___ Devil's advocate
___ ___ Insensitive
___ ___ Desiring recognition
___ ___ Violent

SEXUAL IMPURITY
___ ___ Lust
___ ___ Seductiveness
___ ___ Masturbation
___ ___ Fornication
___ ___ Adultery
___ ___ Frigidity
___ ___ Homosexuality
___ ___ Pornography

IDOLATRY
___ ___ Frustrated
___ ___ Hopeless
___ ___ Greedy/selfish
___ ___ Financial problems
___ ___ Wrong goals/decisions
___ ___ Living a lie
___ ___ Apathetic

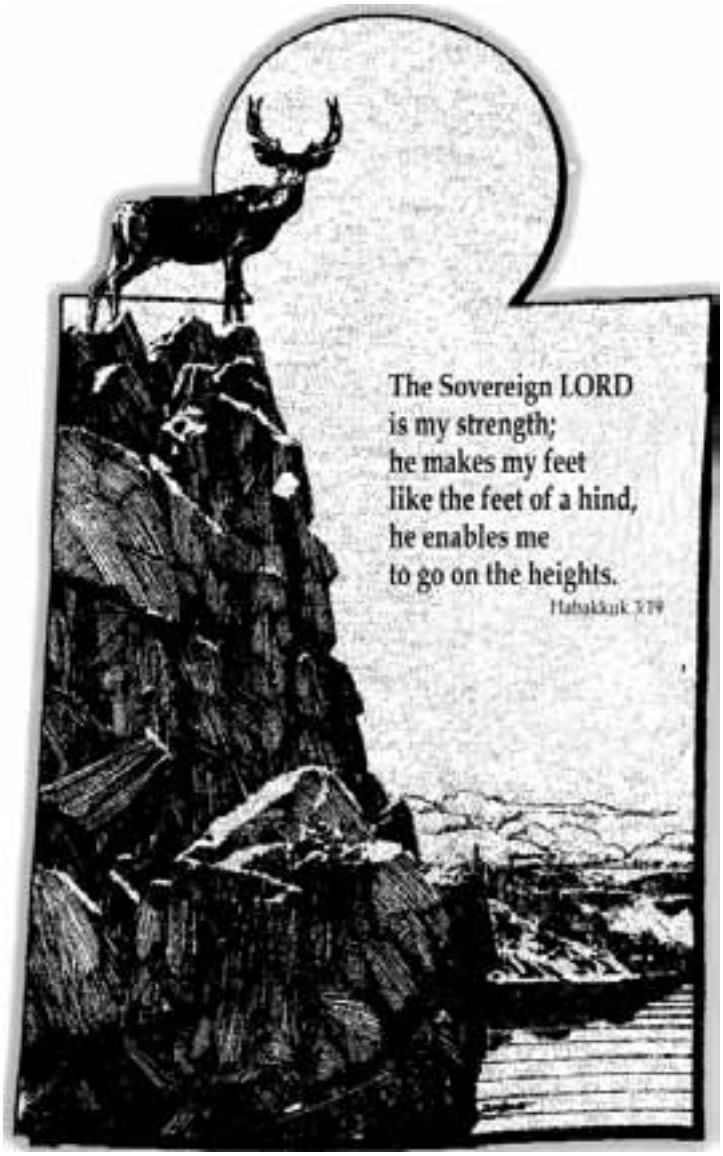
If you are unsure how to pray, you might consider something like this:

Father in heaven, I recognize the power You have given me by the shed blood of Jesus to demolish strongholds in my life. I confess that I have given a foothold to the sin(s) of _____. I renounce the stronghold of _____ by the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ according to Your Word. I take back through Your power that ground that I surrendered to the enemy and pray that You will fill me with trust-grounded obedience to Your Holy Spirit so that this area of my life will be in conformity to the image of Christ. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Part 2 of Chapter 1.
Invitation to the High Places



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

17. Much-Afraid stared...

A deep abyss may lay between your intense longing to follow the Shepherd and your own perceived shortcomings and inability to trust Him. Mentors and role models who have tasted His faithfulness along the way can strengthen the lame feet of your heart and spur you along in compassionate empathy.

Perhaps in your congregational experiences you have eagerly sought, but failed to find, true servant-leaders. These are the mature people of wisdom and experience who have embraced the transformation our Lord requires, and can help you journey to the High Places. If this has been your sad experience, you and most of the others in your faith community have been hindered until now from leaving the Valley of your Strongholds.

When we surveyed various congregation leaders we found that most were beset by the same prevailing stronghold(s) as everyone else in their body of believers! Leaders in spiritual bondage themselves can only lead people *around the valley*. That's familiar territory to them!

No one can lead you to a place they have never been themselves. Only those who have gone through the transformation process to the High Places, those who have become undershepherds to the Chief Shepherd, can be your personal guides. And there is only one way to guide others: A Servant-Shepherd must have gone to the High Places himself. Don't be surprised if the Shepherd leads you out of the valley of your religious identity on the way to the High Places.

- Recall three or four situations in which someone else's life impacted you deeply. Talk with someone you know about these special people and the effect they had on you .
- Is there anyone in your life right now who role models character traits you'd like to see in yourself? If not, are you willing to earnestly beseech our Father to make you aware of someone (or a couple, if you're married) who can come alongside you on your journey to the High Places?

18. It is quite true..., 19. But, Much-Afraid...

The Shepherd tells Much-Afraid and all of us as well, "Nothing which is an *enemy of Love* can make the ascent and invade the Kingdom." The Kingdom to which the Shepherd refers is not only what His followers will share when He returns!

How often Jesus exclaimed that His Kingdom was *among* His people in the present! The Pharisees, and many other Jewish people, were hoping that the Kingdom would represent the overthrow of the detested Roman occupation. Jesus, however, reminded them that *"the kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is* ***within you****"* (Luke 17:20,21).

Jesus went about *preaching the Kingdom,* the same Kingdom He assured His disciples had been given to them by His Father (see Luke 12:32). While others eagerly questioned if He was the King, Jesus Himself did not parade that fact. He was all too aware that the people were not looking to serve God as King but to *be served* according to their selfish desires. The Kingdom illuminated by Jesus calls for His "subjects" to *turn from* their sin and *self*-focus, be it self-righteousness, self-gratification, or self-fulfillment. Only then can you focus on the King Himself, and permit His Kingdom to rule your heart.

When was the last time you heard someone speak about the Kingdom, the *Christlike transformation* of Jesus' followers as they lovingly trust Him and obey His empowering Spirit? Not only is the King of the Kingdom "the same yesterday, today and forever"; His

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Kingdom is unchangeable as well! We each have the privilege to have His Kingdom reign in us.

His Kingdom is "not of this world" because the values and goals of His Kingdom are so opposite to those of the flesh. The values and ways that suited you so well when you were walking in your Valley must be transformed into those of the King as you learn His ways. That darkness has to go, because "nothing that is an enemy of Love can ascend and invade the Kingdom."

This is an important time to scrutinize for yourself those things that will hinder you on your journey to reach the Realm of Love. We've known too many who have begun the journey but never made it into the Valley of Loss, Chapter 13. The way into that Valley is along the "path of forgiveness." Much occurs between the Valley of your Strongholds and the Valley of Loss. But if you know that in order to embark on the final leg to the High Places you'll need to completely forgive everyone, it's good to prepare yourself now.

- Much-Afraid's personal nemesis was Craven Fear. Who in *your* life do you prefer to never have to encounter again? Why?

- Are you willing to turn from that unforgiveness and ask forgiveness from our Father for having held onto that grievance?

20. Much-Afraid stared..., thru **23. She nodded...**

The Shepherd asks Much-Afraid, "Are you willing to be *changed completely*...?" We can never stress too much or too often the importance of transformation. This topic is rarely emphasized in faith communities. Our Lord and His Word, however, stress time and again the *ongoing change* that He intends for our lives as His Spirit leads us onward! And those changes come about most often in connection with *other people* in our lives.

If you were friends with a married couple who, every time you visited them, pulled out their wedding album to show you, you'd be dismayed after a while. But if they shared *new* pictures and stories, you'd rejoice with them. That's the same difference between religious stagnation and Christlike transformation.

In the physical realm, changes are immediately noticeable. Think of the times friends have approached you to comment, "Have you lost weight?" or, "Have you cut your hair?" Changes in your *spirit, however,* might not be as obvious to other people (although they *should* be!). It's those changes in your outlook, your gratitude, your character that give you a platform to testify to the work your Lord has been doing in your life. Those changes catch the attention of people who have known the fleshly responses of the "old you" but now can see *something different!*

Sue: Let me give you an example. During my first year of walking with Jesus my sister and her family came out for an extended visit. Of course I bubbled over with talk of His wonderful goodness, and she patiently heard me out without rolling her eyes too much. One afternoon was a turning point, however. We traveled to a favorite health-food store, where I stood by a s-l-o-w-l-y filling jar of peanuts being ground into peanut butter as my sister and her children browsed.

When we pulled into our driveway and slid open the van door, the jar fell out and smashed on the pavement. I exclaimed, "Oh, we'd better get that glass cleaned up before the kids get cut!" My sister stopped in her tracks and stared at me. "The 'old' Sue would have gotten angry and yelled, but you're so calm and peaceful! All that stuff about Jesus in your life *must be true!*" After that one little incident, she was so much more open to discuss Him!

The work our Father does goes on deep inside you. Sometimes you aren't even aware that He's been at work in a certain aspect of your character until an opportuni-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ty arises in which you choose to follow His response rather than fall into your old rut of behavior. That's why it's so important for you to remember that you aren't a slave to sinful ways any more. You have the power through His Spirit to be *"more than a conqueror"*, and to *"take your thoughts captive to make them obedient to Jesus."* It's up to you whether you want to walk in those truths and *act on them*!

As you choose to trust Jesus as did Much-Afraid, you discover how life-changing it is to *depend on* the Great Shepherd. Our Father often works through those He has given us as authority figures or positional relationships such as husband or father or boss to help us trust that His will is being carried out under their auspices. In a culture such as that of the independent-minded US, not being the one to always hear *directly* is an affront to our *me-first* disposition.

Think back to the account of Joseph in Genesis. How often was he subject to the will of others so that he could learn to trust in the sovereign hand of God? He was tossed into a pit by his older brothers, thrust into slavery, then cast into prison unjustly. In each of those circumstances, someone in authority over him was the perpetrator of very painful circumstances.

While our Lord showed Joseph much favor in the sight of both the prison warden as well as the other prisoners, he wasn't always at peace to trust God to prevail. At times Joseph had a hard time seeing God's hand at work! Pleading with his fellow prisoner, Pharaoh's cupbearer, to try to get him released, Joseph complained, *"I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and here too I have nothing wrong that would justify putting me in this dungeon"* (Gen. 40:15). True enough words, except that Joseph failed to see God in all of this until years later, and missed the blessed contentment of heart that comes with acceptance.

Let's bring this ahead now to your life. You may not be responsible for the painful relationships by which you're surrounded, nor the hardship of your circumstances. But our Father is SOVEREIGN! Can you really get hold of that? Just as He was fully capable of preventing any of the painful situations that assaulted Joseph, He could intervene at any moment in *your* life. But Oh! the blessing Joseph received at the end of his jail time when our Father prompted the cupbearer to remember him! And who knows (except our Lord!) for what special purpose this preparation is being done in *you* as your character is being transformed by Him!

Most women, and wives in particular, get agitated if our Father is calling them to trust His Sovereignty to be worked out at the hands of someone else. If you're called by God through His revelation to your husband to wait or to forego an idea or a desire, you're at a decision point to *be transformed*: Do you accept with trust in His Sovereignty or do you chafe inwardly even if you agree outwardly? It's your *trust* that ultimately leads you to the love our Father both wants you to experience and also to give.

- Much-Afraid has no idea what the cost will be to "grow into" the new name she'll receive from the Shepherd. What "new name" abides in your spirit to reflect how our Lord has been at work in your life? What specific changes have to take place in you before that new name fits?

- How do you generally respond when you're denied something by your husband, father, boss? What transformation of character needs to take place in you right now in your relationships and circumstances?

24. Again he smiled...,25. As the Shepherd

The Chief Shepherd asks a most penetrating question. "There is still one thing more, the most important of all...Has love been planted in your heart, Much-Afraid?" There is only one way for the self-sacrificing

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

kind of love that reflects Jesus to become *your* love. *You need the Holy Spirit*!

As Sue and I have traveled to share Hebraic foundations through our seminars, we have found that only 3 in 100 people have the *critical deposit* that is needed to be empowered to love: the Holy Spirit.

Our Father has offered through Jesus a blood covenant that seals the union between Himself and His children who trust Him. He consummates that union much like a marriage is consummated. Through intercourse a husband and wife *become one* in intimate union. Similarly, the Spirit and the follower of Jesus become united as He takes up His presence within. The Spirit's indwelling guarantees that our Father will keep *His* part of the covenant!

That's why Paul can assure us that no charge can be brought against us before God because we are *justified* in Christ. Jesus is interceding for His own, and His part of the love covenant cannot be broken! *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 8: 38,39). Hallelujah!

The Holy Spirit is the power of God that is planted in the heart of every follower of Jesus. *He* is the "plant" that grows and blossoms as the Spirit increases His work in you, and the world's hold on you decreases. The fruit of His work in you is *love*.

Perhaps this understanding is beyond your sphere of experience. We recommend you review our March/April 2002 newsletter, *The Covenant Gospel*, to examine once more *your* part in the covenant with Jesus. Unless you embrace the covenant offered in His blood by our Father, you have no indwelling Holy Spirit. Your marriage and other close relationships will lack the love God would give through you.

- How would you describe to others *your* consummation experience with our Lord through your union with His Spirit?

26.She could thus...,27.Then will you let...

During our retreat ministry we used a little questionnaire to indicate the nature of a person's love. The questions revealed the level to which someone was an instigator of affection toward others, or whether he or she held back, waiting to receive expression of affection. We found that many were able and willing to grow in *human* love. As others cared for them, they'd reciprocate. Sadly, too many thought this was the pinnacle of Christian love — to be loved in return.

These folks gave themselves a lot of credit for being able to show love to those who loved them back! This is initially all Much-Afraid desired — to be loved in return. But we know that at journey's end we will be able to fulfill Jesus's words, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matt. 5:44).

Jesus helps us distinguish between human love and the sacrificial love His Spirit produces: *"Then Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous'"* (Luke 14:12-14).

Summing up the loving concern the Holy Spirit produces, Jesus tells the righteous *why* they will be welcomed at the Judgment Throne: *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'"* (Matt. 25;40). Selfless giving is a fruit of your transformation as you head toward the High Places. This is a pattern of Kingdom living.

One of the joys of our 11 years of retreat ministry was encountering a small but growing group of Jesus followers who freely gave themselves in sacrificial love without expecting reciprocation. Each of these special folks shared a common experience. At some point along their life journey each one had undergone deep hurt at the hands of

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

others. By choosing to forgive as Jesus did, they were able to walk in His *extra*-ordinary love.

- Everyone has in their life some difficult, hard-to-love people. Who are the ones in your life who would be blessed if you showed them expressions of undeserved mercy?

- How can you distinguish between natural human love and Spirit-empowered love? Describe the differences to someone.

28. Much-Afraid shrank..., 29."That is true...

The fearful crippled girl recognized clearly that when you love, "you give that loved one the power to hurt and pain you in a way nothing else can." Many of us never get very far on our journey to the High Places because we haven't come to grips with this fact: When we love we are permitting ourselves to be hurt by the very ones we love.

A wise friend once told us, "You can never walk in the fullness of Jesus until you wash the feet of Judas." Judas had been one of the Twelve who had intimate access to the Teacher. He'd traveled with Him, laughed along the dusty road as they walked, experienced His wondrous miracles firsthand. Yet he could still betray Him for material gain.

Someone told us recently, "There is a fine line between love and bitterness." Most of the people who hurt us in life *were* and *will be* people about whom we deeply care.

We have a special word of encouragement if you are divorced, or been betrayed by someone who was close to you, or suffered hurt in church systems. As long as your *blame* of what others did to you is greater than your *biblical responsibility to forgive*, you'll never make it to the High Places.

Too many, no matter what the cause of their bitterness, try to counter-balance the weight of guilt for their own unforgiveness by casting blame on the ones who hurt them. They perceive that the *more* they can blame others, the *less* guilt they'll experience themselves. If that's your situation, our Father will keep you in the prison of your own bitterness until you choose to forgive.

This issue of *blaming others* is why second marriages have an even higher rate of divorce than first marriages: 65%. If you're considering marriage:

> **Don't marry a person who hasn't gone to the High Places, or isn't interested in joining you on the journey. The consequences are guaranteed to be disastrous!**

How simple the Shepherd's reply to both Much-Afraid and to all of us: "To love does mean to put yourself into the power of the loved one and to become very vulnerable to pain." The key is your *response* to those painful circumstances.

Are you willing to prayerfully entrust your beloved into our Father's hands so that He has room to operate? If you try to manipulate your husband or wife into making changes just to make you happy, God will let you fail. He works from the *inside out* to bring conviction and change so that it emanates from the heart. How much more lasting and effective are His ways than your attempts that only yield antagonism and frustration!

- Who has come to mind in this section whom you loved and has hurt you?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

• Are you in a situation right now in which you've guarded your emotions from further hurt and letdown, either with spouse, children, friends?

30. She nodded...31. But it is so happy...

It would be wonderful (you might think) if our Father could just zap you with Christlikeness. Then you wouldn't have to undergo the accompanying trials and disappointments and difficult choices as you interact with family and neighbors and coworkers.

For instance, how often have you cried out for patience, only to find yourself drowning in a sea of people who exercise your patience muscles! Even a cursory examination of scripture awakens in you a sense of wonder at how often Leviticus 19:18 is repeated in the Newer Testament: *"**Love your neighbor** as yourself."* (See Romans 13:9; Matt. 5:43; Matt. 19:19; James 2:8.)

The *love* that is repeated in these verses isn't just a warm sentimental feeling. It's the self-denying work of our Lord Jesus in your heart that prompts you to respond with *actions* that evidence His life in you! At some point you'll even have love enough to obey His example: *"If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"* (Matt. 5:39b).

Much-Afraid had been "miserably content" when all she had to concern herself with was herself. But the Shepherd was drawing her out of herself to be changed into the character of Him Who sacrificed all He was to show His vast love!

That's what *loving your neighbor as yourself* does to you on your pilgrimage. As you choose to trust Him to do *with* and *in* you whatever will yield much fruit for His glory, you are changed. But that change can paralyze you with fear of the unknown! Your loving trust in the Shepherd is *the only thing* that helps you overcome your fear of the unknown and press on.

Paul wanted the followers of Jesus in Galatia to grasp this truth. It didn't matter if they (or you) were born into a "believing family". The label of Christian means nothing if He isn't *at work in you*. You are transformed into His likeness as you trust Him and obey His lead to follow through what His Spirit and His Word have directed you. With that understanding Paul could write simply, *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is trust expressing itself through love"*** (Gal. 5:6).

Remember, the love the Shepherd was describing is the kind only the Spirit can produce in us — *agape* love. "It is happy to love even if you are not loved in return. There is pain too, certainly, but Love does not think that very significant."

You may be going through this pilgrimage with a person who has hurt you exceedingly, particularly your spouse. Look deep within yourself to determine if you're harboring any guarded feelings toward him or her. Perhaps you too are much-afraid that if you allow yourself to be vulnerable to express sacrificial love, you'll be taken advantage of.

But fear not! As the apostle closest to Jesus wrote, *"Perfect love casts out fear."* That's the kind of love that only He can grow in you. Don't let your obedient trust depend on anyone else's response to you. Walk in peace as you purpose to set those fears aside. As you choose to trust, your spouse will see the changes and recognize that they *had* to come from Him! And Jesus is looking for *both* of you to make this journey together. Neither one of you will make it the High Places without the other.

• Proverbs 19:11 states, *"A person's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense."* What record of offenses are you keeping against a loved one?

• Are you willing to lay this record at the foot of the Cross to be consumed and brought up no more?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

32. Much Afraid thought...thru **34. A thrill...**

"*If* I let you plant the seed of love in my heart..." The choice to trust the Shepherd or to cave in due to fear of pain raged within Much-Afraid's heart. Despite His obvious patience and tender regard, the righteous requirement for the thorny seed to be implanted in her heart did not change. In fact, the Shepherd said nothing that would minimize the reality that His love produces pain.

Note that the *seed* of love was planted, not the whole plant. A seed represents potential. The potential of a vegetable seed doesn't yield an edible product until the right requirements are met: soil, moisture, fertilizer, cultivation. Without these necessities, the seed will always remain dormant.

The world may offer a counterfeit substitute religion — the promise of a whole plant, ready to make your life better. But it's a lie. The false "life-improver" gospel of today only *demands*; it never swells the seed into the self-sacrificing love that our Savior promises.

The true seed from Him offers blossoms of joy and peace and hope regardless of your circumstances. Your life situation might never change — just ask our persecuted brethren — but the spiritual fruit in your heart becomes mature and hope-giving.

- Unfulfilled expectations from your past can hold you back from fully trusting Jesus because of fear that your hopes will be dashed. What unfulfilled expectations of previous religious experiences are hindering you in your walk with Him?

- Think deeply. Are you, like the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, willing to press on in your journey even if you never see answers to your heart's desires here on earth?

35. The Shepherd...,36. She bent forward...

Do you recall the old song, "I never promised you a rose garden?" That's what the *thorn* of love represents. Perhaps you got married full of starry-eyed romance that somehow wilted after the first few months of reality.

At some point you began to realize that the maturing process of love translates into being on the same team rather than seeing the other as an opponent. Those who never unite in purpose and love end up like parallel railroad tracks that are heading in the same direction. Their rail ties may touch on occasion over the children or the house, but they never overlap in the intimacy of union in heart and purpose that mirrors spiritual union with Christ.

A note about the Shepherd's scarred hands. Jesus could have risen from the dead with all evidence of His suffering vanished. But *we* needed to see those scars as beautiful proof that His loving sacrifice on our behalf bought us freedom.

As you move out of the Valley, take a close look at the scars in your life. You've been whipped and slashed perhaps many times by painful relationships and circumstances. But you'll discover on your journey that those very scars that represent ugliness to you will be transformed into badges of hope as you bear witness to others of the healing power of Jesus.

He doesn't mean for you to forget your past but to be healed in such a way that you can empathize with those who have undergone similar suffering. THEY need to know that His healing is complete, and that the sting from the memory can be erased.

Sue: Mike and I have traversed some pretty rocky roads during our marriage that have left lots of healed scars. Yet *because* of the scars we can identify with the struggles of other couples. Ministering out of the testimony of a healed heart is a lot more powerful in a distraught couple's lives than expounding on some concept that you've only read about. So if you're on the brink of despair, take hope! Those scars in your life

can be transformed into marks of ownership by our Lord as you encourage others to take hold of His scarred hands.

- At what "scars" in your life do you look with revulsion, wishing they'd never happened?

- Think ahead now in terms of "healed scars". How can you envision these scars as being beautiful to others as they become testimony of hope to those who have suffered similar wounding?

37. The seed...38. He answered gently...

By now you've noticed that the discourse over love and pain has been going on for some time between the Shepherd and Much-Afraid! Since the seed of love is to be placed in Much-Afraid's heart by the Shepherd Himself, you might think that the development of love and the other fruit of the Holy Spirit will be produced by *divine intervention*. This is partially true.

Everyone has been let down at some point. All of us must avoid Satan's trap of emotionally insulating yourself against further hurt. Our Father uses *relationships* to rub up against our rough edges. This reality can be especially painful for wives, who need to see our Lord leading through their imperfect husbands as His "undershepherds" in their homes. An old rhyme captures the essence of life for Christians on earth:

> **To fellowship above with the saints we love, that is sheer glory.**
>
> **To fellowship below with the saints we know, that's another story.**

The idolatrous attitude that thinks, "I'm more spiritual than my husband", will squash the work of God in both you and your husband! He'll react in frustration to your resistance and give up carrying the shield of protection for your home. You'll plod along in anger that he's not "growing in Jesus" when, in fact, your pride and impatience are the hindrance to your journey as a couple.

As we will see shortly, the Shepherd gives the young woman two perfect companions for the journey, Sorrow and Suffering. How many of the fruit of the Spirit are also *interpersonal*? *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law"* (Gal. 5:22,23). *All* of the fruit involve interaction with other people in order to mature.

You'll come to realize in *your own* faith pilgrimage that your human companions are often "Sorrow" and "Suffering" who keep you moving to the High Places.

- Have you ever been told that you're "emotionally distant" from those in your life who deserve your affection?

- What areas of resistance are you currently erecting against the human companions of Sorrow and Suffering in your life?

39. Much-Afraid looked...thru **41. Then he pressed...**

The thorn is placed in her *heart* rather than in her brain. This fact has tremendous significance! In the Valley of your strongholds you relied more on your reasoning than on your trust in our Lord Jesus. The most prevalent of all the strongholds is Deceit — no surprise, since the master of sin is the Deceiver himself.

One of deceit's most effective weapons is *rationalization*. The voice of rationalization in your brain sounds like, "*If* I do this..., *then* this will happen." It always contains an 'if-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

then' clause for you to analyze possible outcomes before you decide to obey what our Father has revealed.

Your transformation along the journey will involve a massive change from reliance on the reasoning of your brain to walking in the trust-filled loving obedience of your heart. And how vital is that motivational heart priority! "*Blessed are the* ***pure in heart****, for they will see God"* (Matt. 5:8). A pure heart responds to the Master without hesitation or rebuttal.

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with ***all your heart*** *and with all your soul and with all your mind'"* (Matt. 22:37). The love God seeks emanates from your heart first, then your will, emotions and mind.

Your loving trust, not your reasoning, is the way of the High Places. When we get to Chapter 16, Grave on the Mountains, what else but loving-trust would cause anyone to leap into a mist-filled gorge?

I, Mike, say this to you men: You have to let your feelings grow through the journey! Love is not an intellectual motivation. Whomever and whatever you truly value in life, that person or thing occupies an emotional chamber in your heart. *"Dear friends, let us* ***love one another****, for* ***love comes from God****. Everyone who loves has been born of God and* ***knows God****"* (1 John 4:7). The love John speaks of is *agape* love — a God-empowered love given to us by the Holy Spirit.

God's love is nothing you can conjure up. Just as Much-Afraid willingly bared her chest to receive the painful thorn, you have to willingly cry out to our Father for His thorn of love to become your motivation as well.

For many years after coming to Jesus I was a fireball of enthusiasm in sharing His Gospel of life. I could corral anyone and drench them with His truth. But the most telling description of my approach was voiced by Sue: "You have great zeal but *no love*." That was true. But how much I wanted to love as Jesus does! I was fearful, though, of what that love would do to change me. When the stronghold of rejection was demolished, I began, for the first time in my life, to experience and share His *agape* love.

- Would you describe your relationship with Jesus as *mind-oriented* (I know the truth.") or *trust-oriented* (I'm known and loved by the Truth!")?

- Could you identify with the statement, "great zeal but no love"? Are you willing to cry out now for the thorn of love to penetrate your heart?

42. "Thank you"..., 43. I am more glad...

The journey, as you probably have seen, is made all the more difficult whenever Much-Afraid doubts the Shepherd. Like Eve, you get yourself into a heap of trouble whenever you *doubt*. You may fear that our Lord perhaps *doesn't* have your best interests in mind, or that maybe He'll withhold His control over everything that affects you.

All that the demons, the voices you responded to in the Valley, need is to instill a seed of doubt in your mind: *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman,* ***'Did God really say,*** *"You must not eat from any tree in the garden?" For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'"* (Gen. 3:1,5).

Eve's sin is anchored on the fact that she entertained doubt about God. Satan knew what would tempt her to sin: the same motivational temptations that John warns *us* about! The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life — each of these was wrapped around that tree that had been declared off-limits for food!

The tempting fruit was pleasing to look at, seemed scrumptious to eat, and could offer the kind of knowledge that only God was aware of. Eve could be in a position to

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

live by her own decisions, just like God! Aren't our temptations aligned with these as well when we take our focus off Jesus and bite into the lure of worldly gratification and goals and values?

As you move along toward the High Places, you'll discover how important it is for your *trust* to take full possession of each "altar" experience in your life. Otherwise, you'll learn to grumble and complain. This will fester into distrust of God. Keep remembering His promises, and grip them tightly as a shield against those demonic whispers.

If you keep praying, "Take this trial away!" you'll remain a spiritual infant. But if you can follow the example of your spiritual family in the persecuted church, you'll gain priceless insight. Rather than praying for escape or relief, many of these who have been imprisoned for their trust in Jesus pray for the strength to endure so that their loving courage can penetrate the hearts of their fellow prisoners and guards alike!

Think of the impact your life could have on others if you responded to adversity with confident trust in His faithfulness rather than gloomy desperation disguised as a "prayer request"!

Out of His wealth of love the Shepherd gives to everyone who yearns to ascend to the High Places the exact companions and situations they'll need for their transformation. You might look at your companions with disdain or revulsion. But He has given them to you to help you! Your *perception* can deter your ascent. Every irritation, every painful experience is God's tool to help you to:

1. Increase the speed of your dependency on Him.
2. Increase your confidence to trust in Him.

- In what areas are you most vulnerable to temptation: lust of the eyes (the things you want)? lust of the flesh (your perceived relational needs)? pride of life (personal power and recognition)?
- Stop and think for a moment: Is there anything you doubt God and His ability to do on your behalf?

47. He looked..., 48. Then he said...

As your infant grew into a toddler and took his first wobbly steps, your heart swelled with delight! "What a big boy/girl you are!" Each new achievement rejoiced your heart, and rightly so! For that's the joy our Father has in *you* with each wobbly step of trust you take in Him, each trust-filled prayer of gratefulness and dependency on Him.

The process of your maturing in Him is far more important than the calendar date when you yielded your life to Him. It's the same concept as in your marriage. The date of your wedding is a tiny speck on your marital journey compared to the compounded adventures and challenges of daily life together. And your pilgrimage with Jesus — your sanctification of being transformed into His likeness—is mirrored in the Shepherd's words, "No one understood better than he that growing into the likeness of a new name is a long process."

It's wise to weigh the Shepherd's warning at this point: "You are not to take anything with you, only leave everything in order." How many people have you met who go through religious services on Sunday morning but live the rest of the week indistinguishable from those whose god is themselves?

We once knew a couple in which the wife and their best friends, another couple, were ardent churchgoers, but the husband had no interest in spiritual matters. One night as the four of them gathered for dinner the man spoke up. "I know that you think you're Christians and that I'm not, but to tell you the truth, I don't see any difference between you and me!"

Think about all the trappings of your former life that you're still hauling around with you. No backpacks of worldly desires or

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

fleshly gratifications are allowed on your trip! Count everything as loss for the sake of what you will become on the journey!

And don't set yourself up for a fall by proclaiming to others what you're about on your pilgrimage. It's always tempting to share with other people, especially unbelieving family members, the next new step of faith you're taking. But so many times Jesus admonished His disciples to perform their good works, their prayer, their fasting *in secret* so that their rewards would come only from their Father's hand.

That doesn't mean you should deny it when someone comments on the character changes they see occurring in you. But don't cross the line of "Mommy, Mommy, look at me!" and broadcast the work He's doing in you. Let the work itself testify to His transforming hand on your life rather than you boasting about what a fine specimen you're becoming!

"You must be ready to follow me whenever I come to the cottage and call." The Shepherd is detailing for you the same command. Will you hear His voice? Are you faithful to come before Him in prayer, not just during a set time but also often during your day as Paul says, *"to pray unceasingly"*? Are you eager to spend undisturbed time in His Word (even if you have to get up early) so that *rhema* — His specific word for you — can jump off the page into your heart?

Prayer and life breathed by the Spirit into His Word are the Shepherd's songs that contain His "special message for you".

- In what areas of your life — your attitudes, actions, motivations — might someone who is not following Jesus say to you, "I don't see any difference between you and me?" [Think about your extended family, coworkers, neighbors, classmates, etc.]
- What adjustments do you need to make to your schedule to make room for a healthy prayer life and digestion of His Word so you can hear His voice and follow through on what He tells you?

49. Then, as the sun...

Think back to when you first tasted the life-giving warmth of our Father's forgiveness as His Spirit filled your regenerated spirit. You were eager and ready to follow Him anywhere. The sun shined brighter, and the people you encountered were divine appointments to testify of His love.

But the months slipped into years, and the "shadows lengthened". Your energetic encounters were replaced by church activities and religious practices. The blaze of your first love faded into misty grey. Sound familiar?

That's why you're on the journey at this particular point in your life— to rekindle your love for Jesus and to press on to the High Places of Kingdom living. This is your preparation time to be fully equipped to fulfill His purposes and goals for your life.

- What differences do you see between your time of "first love" when Jesus was your all in all, and now?
- What is the Spirit telling you right now to purpose to set aside because it's distracting you from rekindling your passion for Jesus and His Kingdom?

50. Much-Afraid turned...thru **52. She shrank away...**

Don't ever underestimate the intensity of demonic opposition to your determination to walk wholeheartedly in love and obedient trust. The difficulty of journeying

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

to the High Places and the struggle to have your old identity transformed into the character of Jesus is painful enough.

But you also have an adversary who will oppose your transformation at all cost: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 6:12). You, who want everything Jesus wants for you, are a bullseye target to your spirit's enemy: *"Then [Satan] was enraged...and went off to make war against ...those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus"* (Rev. 12:17).

The demons are well aware of what you are preparing to do. They can come at you like a wolf pack. Once you have prepared your heart to entrust yourself to the transformation the Lord has long-waited to accomplish, don't fiddle-faddle in the Valley.

Internalize the wonderful lesson emphasized here. We're told, "Much-Afraid shrank away from [Craven Fear] and shook with terror and loathing." The warning is given to her and to you as well: "Unfortunately, this was the worse thing she could have done, for it was always her obvious fear which encouraged him to continue tormenting her." All along your journey you'll be called upon to resist the demonic attacks: *"**Submit** [entrust, willingly yield] yourselves, then, to God. **Resist** [stand firm, refuse to listen to, turn away from potential temptation] the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7). Don't be tricked into thinking that choices and activities that "got you by" back in the Valley will strengthen you on your journey. Those old ways are poison to your spirit!

Even after your strongholds have been demolished, an ongoing alertness to spiritual assault is needed. Temptation gives birth to sin when it's entertained in your thought life rather than captured and discarded. *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**"* (2 Cor. 10:5).

- Are you able to discern between demonic assaults designed to shatter your faith, and painful trials designed by our Father to burn away dross?

- In light of your current life situation, in which category do your painful circumstances fall?

53. Her white face..., 54. The Shepherd...

Fortunately, Much-Afraid remembered to cry out for help. Let me encourage you from my own experience with the demonic wolf pack: You are never so strong in yourself that you don't need to get on your knees and cry out to Jesus for help. Nor are you ever so weak that His faithfulness to respond can't bring comfort and rest to your soul.

Physical size and masculine gender can fetter a man's awareness of how much he needs the Real Source for his victory against the assault. The most important lesson of your journey is this: The closer you get to the floor in prayer, the greater your success in the heavenly battle!

- Recall a time in your life when you were being overpowered by a wolf pack of demonic assault. How long did it take for you to cry out to the Lord, and to call upon others to intercede on your behalf?

55. Much-Afraid burst..., 56. It seemed...

In the face of temptation Peter stresses your need for personal self-control and resistance. You need to tune in to the discernment of the Spirit so that you not only recognize the "roar" of the lion but stand firm in your choice to follow Jesus. *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil **prowls around like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers*

throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8,9).

When a pride of lions goes hunting they work as a team to catch their game. They send out first the old lions who are too slow for the attack. The older ones roar to frighten the intended victim *toward* the young swift lions who are waiting to pounce.

Be careful that demonic intimidation isn't driving you *toward* more deadly disaster. I recognize that when I resist and take my stand not to be moved by the assault, I often hear in my spirit these words of powerful encouragement, *"Be **still**, and **know** that I am God"* (Psa. 46:10a).

- When was the last time that you stilled your heart long enough to KNOW that He is indeed God, and that nothing can come against you that isn't intended to strengthen your trust and dependence on Him?

57. Then, still without looking...

Despair is doubt's twin sister. Refuse to indulge in a pity-party of self-condemnation. Confess your sins and *receive His forgiveness*! If you dwell on your shortcomings and failures, you miss the tender compassion of a very real Father who remembers your confessed sins no more!

How many of us have found ourselves saying, "What's the use...?" Both of my parents and Sue's Dad are now in heaven because of their repentant trust in Jesus. I like to think they're among the cloud of witnesses cheering us on, hoping we won't give up on the journey.

A passage from the Book of Hebrews summarizes the issues of pressing on for Sue and me:

> *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a **great cloud of witnesses**, let us **throw off everything that hinders** and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us **run with perseverance** the race marked out for us. Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy set before him** endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will **not grow weary and lose heart**. In your **struggle against sin**, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood"* (Heb. 12:1-4).

Persevering family in Jesus, there's great joy set before you as you run your journey's course. Don't grow weary and lose heart!

- Is there any lingering area of shame over anything from your past?

- Are you willing to bring that episode to the foot of the Cross and receive the forgiveness and healing that you need to press on?

58. However, when..., 59. It is happy...

In Galatians 5:22 it is no accident that the fruit of joy is found immediately after love. In that sequence of spiritual fruit, these reflections of Jesus' character are intricately connected.

Each individual by himself or herself is uniquely precious to our Father. But if you're married and journeying with your spouse, you'll find a growing strength and power as you press on *together*. Sue and I are two separate individuals, but the real beauty of who we are is ***us together in Him***.

- How do you define joy?

- Are you willing to accept God's perspective on joy even if your circumstances never change?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Conclusion to Chapter 1

Getting yourself prepared for the journey in Chapter 1 is similar to the preparations for D-Day during World War II. Many elements had to come together before the Allies assaulted the beaches of Normandy. *Your* preparation to leave the Valley is critical to your success in reaching the High Places. Those men who attacked the beaches did so with *forceful determination*.

If you're to reach the High Places, you need to be confident of your desire to get there. Are you prepared for the identity change that sanctification will bring? Your sanctification means that you'll be separated out, set aside for holy purposes. This requires a change of nature, for sanctification results in the *noble dignity* our Father wants you to experience. Then you can more adequately know Him and represent Him to the world:

> *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man* ***cleanses himself*** *from the latter, he will be an instrument for* ***noble purposes****, made* ***holy****,* ***useful to the Master*** *and* ***prepared*** *to do any good work* (2 Tim. 2:20,21).

As you get close to leaving the valley for the path to the High Places, we want to voice a warning: Don't look back to what you left behind. So many of the married couples we've known who managed to leave the Valley returned because the wife kept looking back. Lot's life and those of his daughters were made that much more difficult because his wife turned around to mourn what she'd left behind.

And men, you are not beyond looking back yourselves. The Exodus of the Israelites was all the harder because, as God tested them, they looked back to Egypt for solace. Please, especially as you lose the relationships you had with those who don't want to leave the Valley of their Strongholds and their Religious Identity, DON'T LOOK BACK!

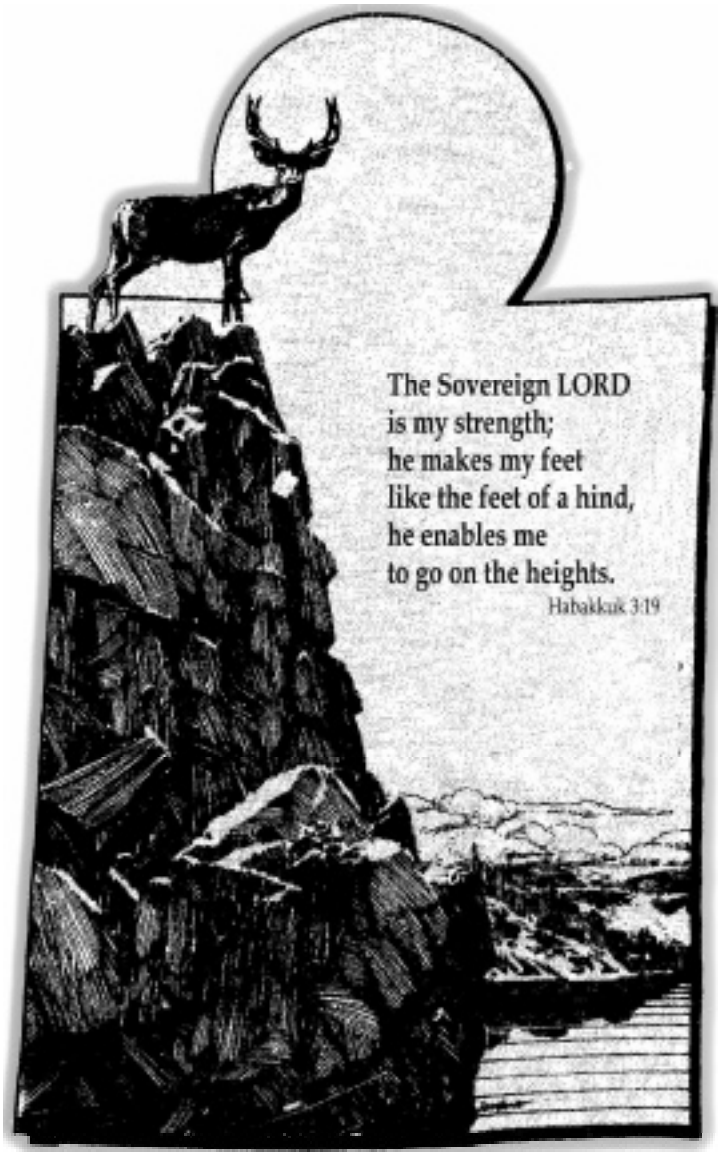
The Hinds' Feet allegory is one of the most beautiful road maps our Lord could give to show the nature of the journey and what He has in mind for each of us. To our Lord be all the glory! No one can ever be sanctified in the Valley of their Strongholds. You must *start* the journey in order to be changed.

Father, we commit ourselves to you for the power and endurance to follow your Son, Jesus, no matter what the cost. When times get tough for us, don't let us look back longingly to the Valley. You make all things new, and we cling to your promise. Amen.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 2 *Fearing Invasion*
Chapter 3 *Flight in the Night*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

In this section of our study of *Hinds' Feet* we'll be moving toward the edge of the valley of our earthly familiarity. All that seemed adequate before in your spiritual walk will melt into dissatisfaction. If you have spent a long time in the Valley of your strongholds and co-dependent relationships, this journey is going to be filled with dramatic changes in your life!

One particular difficulty confronts every human being: We all enjoy the comfort of the *known*. But this "comfort zone" is a hindrance when it comes to transformation into Christlikeness. The unknown, especially a life of obedient trust through the Spirit of God, becomes a threat to your comfort.

Never mind that you don't know where you are going. The bigger hindrance in your transformation process into Christlikeness is that you'll face your sin nature in ways you've probably never had to before.

Let's face it. The transformation process is painful. For instance, what if all you had to do was read through this guide and God changed you. That would be easy! But we know this isn't the way He works.

In order for your mind, will, and emotions to take on the character of Jesus, you must go through His process of repentance. As you venture along the journey of sanctification, you'll be confronted by the dark parts of your soul, that is, your sin nature. This is also when the demonic voices will do all they can to convince you that you are unworthy of God's love. Snide whispers will torment you that you can never be changed because you fail so often.

Continually remind yourself that our Lord loved you *before you ever knew Him*! He hung on the cross for each one of us when we were lost sinners. As you will glean from the Shepherd's loving response to Much-Afraid, He is delighted to see her time and again *choose to continue* the journey. This is the same joy our Lord Jesus takes in you. He knows where the journey of your life will lead you, and it delights Him to know that you're willing to press on.

Don't listen to the voices of discouragement along the way. There is a preparation lesson for us in Paul's' words, *"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons"* (1 Cor. 10:21). Personalize this admonition: *'You cannot listen to both the voice of the Lord and the voice of demons too; you cannot have a part in both walking in the Lord and believing demonic lies.'*

The quicker you *"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:5b), the easier you make the journey for yourself. We'll be repeating this verse often on the journey: TAKE CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT TO MAKE IT OBEDIENT TO CHRIST! Bringing your thoughts into conformity with Jesus will help to speed up your transformation process.

- Some people are more susceptible to demonic voices than others. Do you find yourself succumbing to demonic lies and altering your outlook based on their agitation? Discuss this with whoever is going on the journey with you.

- What specific instances can you recall in which you entertained these voices and responded in a way that Jesus wouldn't have?

Your heavenly Father delights in seeing you grow in *child-like dependency* on Him. This will be especially crucial if you've been successful by the world's standards. Our Father wants all of us to experience His Kingdom on earth. That Kingdom unfolds in the hearts of His children like the gradual opening of petals on a bloom.

Our Father is revealing His Kingdom to people like you and me so that His light in us can penetrate the darkness of those still struggling in the world's system. *"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven,*

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

hallowed be your name, ***your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven****'"* (Matt. 6:9,10). Our Father wants your prayers and your life to reveal your child-like dependency on Him. The older you are in the Lord, the more child-like you become in your joyful trust and reliance on Him. *"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like* ***a little child*** *will never enter it"* (Luke 18:17).

Chapter 2 *Fearing Invasion*

1. Much-Afraid woke early... through **4. Oh, I am afraid...**

It's wonderful of God to give us those times of "mountaintop" experiences in which we are especially aware of His presence or His work around us. Often during these times the Holy Spirit brings us to tears of joy and uncontrollable exuberance!

It's also at these times that the Destroyer takes special notice of you. He'll do everything within his power to rob you of fully enjoying that moment. In particular he'll exert painful or distracting pressure to keep you from bearing witness to others about your wonderful experience of our Lord's grace.

We've often experienced extreme demonic attacks close to or just after a time of tremendous spiritual exhilaration. Other followers of Jesus have shared similar experiences of attacks just as they were rejoicing in a wonderful move of God. When you read the Gospels you see this same pattern happening to Jesus. Consider the confrontations in Matthew 12 for example:

- Jesus's disciples are hungry on the Sabbath and gratefully pluck grain from the field. The Pharisees ridicule our Lord for their "sin" of working on the Sabbath.

- Jesus enters a synagogue on the Sabbath and heals a man with a shriveled hand. His loving act of mercy so riles the Pharisees that they *"went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus"* (v.14). Talk about the "blind" refusing to see...!

- Jesus delivers a man from demons, and the Pharisees accuse Him of deriving His power from Satan.

Sue and I have a pet phrase we tell people who are attacked while experiencing the wonder of God: "Keep your eyes on the *doughnut*, not on the doughnut hole." Focus on Jesus and the reality of what He has done for you. Fight to keep the Destroyer from robbing you of what our Lord has done. Jesus's words apply to you: *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). Keep your focus totally on our Lord Jesus — on His unfailing love, His sovereign power, His boundless grace — as the Destroyer attempts to darken your experience.

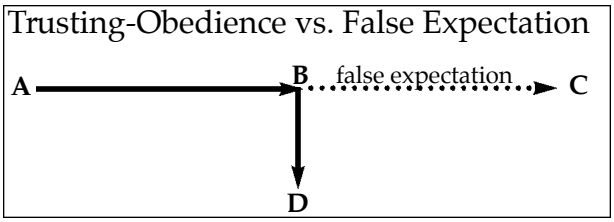
• Call to mind some of your own experiences of our Lord's mighty intervention coinciding with a spiritual attack. Which memory, the joy or the accusation, prevailed in your thoughts?

5. The morning wore on and still he had not come...

When God delays His response or answers in a different manner than you expected, your *false expectations* can be your ruin. False expectation is an indicator of your lack of trust in our Lord. From a heavenly standpoint, times of seeming delay are opportunities for you to fully prepare yourself both in focus on our Lord and in worshipful, trusting prayer.

One of the joyful aspects of prayer is that it reminds you to depend on Him. If your lifelong quest is to truly follow Jesus, your path is made easier if you grow in your trust of Him and obey without regard to the outcome. In other words, *cherish obedience* rather than concerning yourself with where

the path will lead. *False expectation* can function like pride, seeking a particular outcome and growing frustrated and discouraged when things don't end up as you expected.



For instance, say God has planned for your path to go from point A to point B in the diagram above. *You* want to go to point C, and since initially the journey heads that way, you keep focusing on C as the goal. Yet, at point B God turns the path toward D.

If you've kept your focus on Jesus in obedient trust, you're free of frustration. You're not overcome with concern about the outcome because you're eager to obey what God tells you. On the other hand, the outcome-based person is frustrated due to false expectation. This happens to Much-Afraid several times on the journey, and we all need to learn from her lessons. Happily, as she gets closer to the High Places and focuses her trust on the Shepherd's faithfulness, her false expectation evaporates.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 offers key wisdom for all of us. The pivotal element in this parable is the *oil*. We know from other parts of Scripture that oil often refers to the Holy Spirit. In the parable we're told, *"The bridegroom was a long time in coming..."* (v. 5). But the wise virgins had prepared themselves. Like them, we too need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The foolish ones squandered their time — they lacked oil when it was needed.

No one can vicariously share their "oil", the Holy Spirit, with another person. *Now* is the time on your journey to the High Places to secure your trust in the Holy Spirit in all areas of your mind, will, and emotions. No, you don't need to scour the town for Him as the foolish virgins did. You just need a trusting heart to *ask! "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit* ***to those who ask him!"*** (Luke 11:13).

Yield your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, to the Holy Spirit's control. *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us* ***keep in step*** *with the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:25). He leads, strengthens and empowers you when you choose to follow! If you're used to tossing up a quick prayer and then running off to bring about the answer, expecting God to catch up with you, you'll be disappointed.

Sadly, many denominations negate the vital work of the Holy Spirit in the daily lives of Jesus followers. Often during our morning prayer time I place my hand on Sue and pray for a greater filling of the Holy Spirit for both of us to walk in boldness to fulfill His purposes for that day.

- How do *you* understand the work of the Holy Spirit in your daily life? How does He reveal His will for you?

- How has your *reliance* on Him caused you to make changes in your life plans or circumstances?

- Would you say that you expect the Spirit to interact in your life during the day? What anecdotes could you relate that would evidence your awareness of His intervention?

6. They were to determined to overr ule...,
7. However , they knew Much-Afraid's timidity and weakness...

The enemy determined to make a "bold attack while she would be alone in the cottage and the Shepherd far away." Often your most vulnerable time comes when you entertain doubt about our Lord's loving concern for you, or when you're plagued by

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

false expectation. A successful attack needs just a smidgen of doubt about God's promise, an unconfronted fear of someone else's opinion, or a touch of self-pity.

When you are being targeted by any of these torpedoes, it's time for you to RESIST. Can this command be any clearer? *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

Peter repeats the refrain of your personal responsibility to, first of all, detect the enemy at work, and then to stand firm in your identity as one of Jesus's family. Look to your Father for wisdom to rightly discern the nature of the attack. Then turn away from those confusing thoughts and temptations, and focus on Jesus and *His* mighty power.

Particularly call to mind our suffering family in the persecuted church around the world to help you count yourself privileged to be suffering trials for His sake. *"Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings"* (1 Peter 5:9).

Over the years we've encountered people who failed to resist Satan's schemes, and their situation only got worse. The devil knew they wouldn't resist — that's why he attacked! Satan doesn't have an unlimited supply of fiends at his disposal. If you have a reputation in the heavenlies of resisting spiritual assault, he won't waste as much time on you as he will on the ones he knows will give up and listen to his demons.

Again, the key to resistance is the Holy Spirit and your ready willingness to call out for His help. The Spirit's empowerment and your complete dependency on our Father make you less vulnerable to attack.

- Are you able to discern a demonic attack and resist it by submitting to our Father and turning from the assault?

- Are there certain areas you have a more difficult time resisting than others? Are you willing to ask someone to help you be accountable in that area?

- What activities act as a stimulus for uncaptive thoughts to prevail in your mind? Will you give up these activities in exchange for the joy set before you?

8. The old Lord himself was actually with them..., 9. When he had finished...

When the battle line of resistance has been breached, the enemy will turn the tables on you. Unclean spirits using the mouths of those who refuse to leave the Valley will make it seem like *you* are the one at fault because you're the one who's departing. Remember, Satan is the source of false accusation. As the apostle John discovered, the attack is unrelenting: *"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers,* ***who accuses them before our God day and night,****has been hurled down'"* (Rev. 12:10).

Words of false accusation can take many forms, and some may actually sound plausible to your wavering heart: "You're unloving." "Aren't you being judgmental?" "You only care about yourself." Any scheme or deception it takes to put you on the defensive will occur, and this verbal assault will continue until you resist and call out to God for help.

Look at the misperceived motivations that justified the verbal attacks on Much-Afraid:

"there must be some *extraordinary misconception* in her mind."

"that she had *cut herself off* from her relatives"

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

"she had *all kinds of strange notions* about their feelings and intentions toward her."

"giving them the opportunity of proving that she had *misjudged and misunderstood* them."

Any time you choose to follow the higher road of wholehearted obedient trust in Jesus as His loving lamb, you're going to stand out in stark contrast to those who are content with complacent religious practice. People who are operating from old tapes of tradition and generational religious practices are astonished that you might actually be hearing from the Holy Spirit and walking in His power. You must be deluded!

You need to be particularly careful at this stage of your preparation. We've received phone calls from people who are already going through the trial of having the tables turned on them. Sadly, a few have given in to the false accusation and derailed their journey to stay in the bogs of the Valley.

10. Craven might not be..., 11. The whole gang talked on and on...

The whole disgruntled family of Much-Afraid appealed to her that she could change Craven Fear if she married him. The most diabolical appeal is when you are told how much *you are needed*. This subterfuge is designed to either make you feel guilty or to appeal to your vanity. The 'vanity attack' is used most effectively against people who have been in ministry or leadership positions in the church.

The 'guilty attack' generally succeeds against women, and against people-pleasing men. You'll discover soon enough that when you are devoted to pleasing God rather than people, those who are "horizontally focused" will be offended by your apparent "fanaticism": *"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? **If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ**..The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; **the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life**"* (Gal. 1:10; 6:8).

Have you ever found yourself knuckling under the sort of pressure that Much-Afraid faced? The 'guilt attack' leaves you with awful feelings. We call it "shlucked". If God in His great love for you didn't intervene when you failed to resist, you and we both would still be prisoners to the false accusations and ugly sense of failure!

If you recognize that you've failed at times to resist the enemy's tactics, know that our Lord hasn't turned His back on you. Much-Afraid's situation seemed grim. The Fearings were about to crack her feeble defenses. But then we are told, "Suddenly there came an interruption..."

In the same way, our Lord will extend help to you. You may have rejected all His previous offers and found yourself in hopeless despair. When you finally do call out for help, you may find yourself embarrassed for not calling out earlier. But it's not our Shepherd who is embarrassing you. Your own feelings of humiliation that come when you finally cry out for and receive His help are an indicator of the *pride* in your heart that has kept you from calling on His Name.

- What is your perception of our Father's response when you feel you have failed Him?

- Compare your perception with that of biblical revelation of our Father's character. What are the differences?

- Sometimes we view God through the lens of how our earthly fathers treated us when we failed. Does this misperception apply to your view of the Father? If so, repent and ask our Father to help you love and thank Him for Who He is.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

12. The Fearings carefully closed..., 13. It seemed as though all other sounds...

How did Much-Afraid know that it was the Shepherd who was passing alongside the cottage? She knew His voice! She recognized the words of the song from the "old book" because those treasured words were so much a part of herself. All of the clamor going on around her ceased as she focused her heart on Him. Is *your* heart attuned to the words of truth so that you're able to discern His voice in the middle of your busy day?

Sue: We used to raise sheep, and visitors to the retreat center loved to bring food to them in the pasture in the hope that they'd come closer. The sheep were always ready to scarf down the treats, but as soon as a tentative hand reached through the fence, they'd scatter. Yet, when Mike or I approached with the familiar call, "Sheep, sheep!", they'd come at a gallop, crowding around for attention. Every eye was fixed on us to see where we'd lead them next. The younger ones at first eyed the older ewes to observe their response. But eventually they, too, learned to trust us as their shepherds and listen for our call.

- Who stands out as a man or woman of God who has fed your soul and nourished your spirit with tasty spiritual food? Who are you currently discipling with the spiritual food you've received?

- How do you escape the clamor around you to find unimpeded quiet times to hear your Shepherd's voice?

14. As she sat listening... through **18. When this plan...**

Make a habit of reminding yourself that your relationship with the Shepherd is always a *heart* issue, not a cranial issue. When the Shepherd passed by, "Much-Afraid knew with a pang of *agonizing pain* that the Shepherd was calling her..." This is crucial for all of us to grasp. The pain in your heart that you've hurt someone or let him down is crucial, *"because your* ***sorrow led you to repentance****. For you became sorrowful* ***as God intended*** *and so were not harmed in any way by us.* ***Godly sorrow brings repentance*** *that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death"* (2 Cor. 7:9,10).

We see again that Much-Afraid's advance on the journey was borne on the hurt in her heart because of her love for the Shepherd. Real repentance isn't a question of *what* you did wrong as much as taking responsibility for the *hurt you caused*. The sorrow in your heart is the foundation of your repentance.

When you grieve over the hurt you caused, your confession gives the offended party hope that your heart is now right. The heart that grieves and is willing to change is a heart that is acceptable to our Father: *"The sacri - fices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise"* (Psalm 51:17).

- How do you feel when you realize you have hurt or let down someone?

- What action does that realization cause you to take?

19. Gradually Much-Afraid regained... through **22. The effort of her words...**

The frantic young lady called out for her neighbor, "Valiant! Valiant! Come and help me. Come quickly. Help!" There is much behind this desperate call that all of us can learn from. Let's suppose that Mrs. Valiant is a follower of Jesus who has a mature understanding of God's requirement for righteousness. Walking in righteousness produces a valiant heart: *"The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the* ***righteous are as bold*** *as a lion"* (Pro. 28:1).

Often during times of demonic attack people reach out to others for help.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Consider this:

If a Christian who cries out while undergoing demonic assault seeks *sympa - thy*, then he or she is not looking for real help. These people want your empathy. Their excuses and rationale will shift the focus of blame onto the individual they perceived has hurt them. The person seeking sympathy will usually call on a "merciful" person. Sadly, the real fruit of this spurious call for help will be unsubstantiated slander and gossip.

If a Christian under attack seeks encouragement to press on and even welcomes admonition, they're looking for help that will produce godly fruit. They're willing to accept responsibility for their part in the situation, and to follow through on what God would have them do. This person is likely to contact an exhorter or someone gifted prophetically so that they can hear a sure word regardless of the possible discomfort when they hear the truth.

A good friend found that the telephone was weaving a web of discontent in her home. Under the guise of seeking help, countless women poured out diatribe against their husbands, children, bosses, in-laws. Our friend thought she was extending mercy by listening patiently and offering comforting words.

She found, however, that listening to all that slander roused up agitation under her own roof! Her children were growing rebellious, and her husband was returning to chaos each evening. When we shared with her the darkness she was inviting into her home through these bad-mouthing calls, she purposed to slam shut that avenue of discord. Make sure *you aren't entertaining* what James calls a "world of wickedness" through the unbridled tongues of others!

On the other hand, what a joy to field calls from faithful family in Jesus who are pressing on but just need a little "course adjustment"! How you receive biblical correction, instruction and rebuke indicates if you're a "Timothy" who is willing to make changes toward godliness.

- Who in your life can you call on who you know won't cater to excuses or blame? When was the last time you turned to this person?

- Are you currently involved in a relationship in which someone is presenting to you only their side of a conflict?

- Are you a "people-pleaser" who listens to unsubstantiated accusations against a person whom you may not even know? Or, are you a Mrs. Valiant who gently but firmly redirects your friend to accept responsibility for his/her part, and then helps them to press on?

23. Mrs. Valiant hardly knew herself what it was to feel fear...

Armed with reliance on the Holy Spirit, a repentant heart, and a quickness to call out to our Lord for help, your days of fear fall rapidly behind you. The dearly beloved of our Lord Jesus understand this: *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18).

Mrs. Valiant was mature enough in Jesus to not feel compelled to climb all over Much-Afraid in her fearful immaturity. Unless you keep in the back of your mind the dreadful pit of sin from which our Lord Jesus drew *you*, you'll be tempted to respond with exasperated harshness when a brother or sister stumbles. Your admonition and rebuke should be bathed in the same com-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

passion our Lord extended to you when you were still a toddler in trust!

The growth of *agape* love in your heart, that love poured out to you by the Holy Spirit, strengthens you to be fearless. *Agape* love ripens in you throughout the journey. It abides in you as you seek to remain righteous, and willing to repent when you fail.

Paul conveys this quest for righteousness on the journey when he writes, *"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us* ***purify ourselves*** *from everything that contaminates body and spirit,* ***perfecting holiness out of reverence*** *for God"* (2 Cor. 7:1).

- Think back to your first months/years with Jesus. Can you recall anyone who came alongside you to gently correct or rebuke you when you tripped up?

- Do you have the loving courage to come alongside and correct the course of someone in Jesus in such a way that they are motivated to press on without condemnation and shame?

Self Evaluation

Fear or Love

Circle the number that typifies your motivation. Discuss with your companions on the journey your reasons for placing it where you did.

Fear ◄ 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 ► **Love**

Chapter 3 *Flight in the Night*

1. For hours poor Much-Afraid lay...

Our human nature often prompts us to project that our Lord thinks and responds to situations the same way that we do. When you fail to follow through and obey Him, you may grieve that His love for you has somehow diminished. This may be especially true if your relational experiences have been based on "conditional love" that expects a certain level of performance from you in exchange for affection.

Let us assure you from personal experience: *God loves you just as much as He always has! In your distress He even devises more cre - ative means to deliver you.*

Learn from the Shepherd. Our Lord Jesus isn't focusing on your past, no matter how sordid your choices have been. He's fixed on your future and the glory our Father will receive from your testimony of His intervention! Can't you just imagine the firsthand taste of forgiveness the psalmist himself had gratefully experienced that prompted him to pen these verses? *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth,* ***so great is his love*** *for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he* ***removed our transgressions*** *from us"* (Psalm 103:11,12).

Jeremiah as well encourages us with appreciative relief that our Father's forgiveness is complete: *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will* ***remember their sins no more****"* (Jeremiah 31:34b).

God has ordained it within the character of Who He is to forgive the sins of which we repent, and to forget them. So humble yourself, turn from the sins of which He's convicted you, and receive His forgiveness in grateful peace that those sins are GONE. Then press on in His deliverance so that your own mouth may glorify our Father.

It's important that you be healed in your spirit of those painful memories so that you can share testimonies of His faithful forgiveness with others who can identify with that past sin. They need *hope* that they too can turn from their sin and find forgiveness and healing. When you realize that the sting is gone from your memory, you can reassure others from your own experience that God will forget their darknesses as well.

Sue: I didn't realize just how powerful my own testimony of our Lord's healing of our marriage could be until He put us in proximity of a needy couple. A new friend's husband was packing to leave her, and she phoned me in desperation. As Mike silently prayed, he heard the Spirit say, "Invite the

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

couple out to dinner." I thought that sounded a little strange but I followed his counsel. She muffled the phone and asked, and to her dismay, he agreed to meet with us.

At the restaurant, the husband immediately launched into a litany of her failures. She erupted from her seat and dashed to the rest room. I followed in close pursuit. At the table, Mike confronted the man with two key questions: "Do you love your wife?" He responded he did. "Can anyone tell you what to do?" He ruefully shook his head,No.

While Mike was dealing with him, I comforted the woman and shared how Jesus had taken our painful relationship and transformed it when each of us owned our own responsibility for tattering our marriage covenant. She began to take hope, particularly when we returned to the table and the husband asked forgiveness for his verbal assaults. She did the same, and they began from that moment to experience His grace of healing. Our healed pain brought the light of hope to a despairing couple. YOUR testimony, like Much-Afraid's, can be the laser surgery that rids the cancerous blame and guilt of their power to sting.

That's why it's so important not to lose the lessons our Lord has been teaching you all along. *Reflection* is pausing to consider the lessons you've learned from your past. This can be a powerful means to acquire wisdom. It can also be a trap of past regret if you choose to cling to unforgiveness.

Study the three questions below. Which of the three best describes you? Discuss your answer with journey partner(s).

- Do you ever reflect on your past to gain wisdom that can help you make changes?

- Do you ever find yourself stung by past regret when you reflect on your past?

- Do you choose to not reflect at all?

2. She woke suddenly..., 3. The shock of this thought...

We are reminded again of the heart issue of our relationship with Jesus: "conscious of an agonizing pain such as she had never known before." You men, in particular, who are steeped in Hellenistic religious teachings to intellectually grasp the "God-out-there" may have to plead with our Lord, "Let following you *hurt* me!"

The agonizing pain in your heart when you sin against someone is a healthy thing. Pain in your heart is there because of love. If your sin and lack of fellowship with our Lord doesn't hurt you, then you are a knowledge-based "Christian." What you know *about* God is more important to you than your relationship *with* Him.

But your situation is not irreversible. Remember, this is a journey of *transforma - tion*. And the one who strengthens you to change is the Holy Spirit. Keep asking Him for help. Ask Him to help you feel the pain that your sin and wrongdoing have brought on others. If you will cooperate with Him, He will soften your heart and remove the callous layer of protection you've erected over the years.

- Do *you* feel any pain in your heart when you hurt someone? Do you ever stop to think that your callousness *grieves God*?

- Do you need to pause at this point to make sure that your *love* for Jesus surpasses your intellectual comprehension of His role as Savior and Lord?

4. He had urged her...,5. Of course he would think...

Again Much-Afraid is so consumed by her own shortcomings that she has no capacity to recall the faithfulness of the Shepherd. She's too busy "navel-gazing" to

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

remember His character. But thankfully, His thoughts and His ways are so far above our own. Don't let old guilt keep you mired in immobility. Fortunately, there was sufficient love in Much-Afraid's heart to keep her going:

> "It was the pain in her heart which was the most awful part of her distress...She could not bear it if he had gone and left her behind." Remember, love is a powerful motivator!

6. On the table beside her... through **8. The page in the little song book...**

You've undoubtedly tasted times of despair when it seems you can't even put words together to cry out to Jesus. At times like that, you don't have to think about what to say to Him. He sees the pain in your heart, and His Spirit can extend comfort to you in the midst of your sorrow.

Much-Afraid knew exactly where to reach out for peace — the beloved words of truth on her nightstand resonated with the Spirit's touch. Are you in the habit of marking in your Bible the significant dates of *rhema* when the Spirit breathes out specific words that exactly meet your situation? Those times when the Word jumps off the page into your spirit are a personal message from our Father to you. They're also delightful meat to chew on in times of reflection as you recall the particular circumstances in which He met you with that response, and how you followed through on it.

Much-Afraid's reading stirred her to action. The words, *"And now I will rise and go — out on the streets of the city, And out on the broad highway"*, compelled her to overcome her fear and venture into the unknown to seek her Shepherd.

Sue: During our stay in Israel, we weren't sure if our Father wanted us to stay or to return to the US. We were earnestly crying out for His direction, willing to do whatever He revealed as His will. Early one Sabbath Mike got up early to read his Bible. A particular verse jumped out at him from the account of Jesus healing the Gerasene demoniac: *"Go back to your home and tell how much God has done for you"* (Luke 8:39). Mike noted the date next to the verse. A week later we went into town to worship. A man from the congregation spoke on Genesis 32:9,10 in which Jacob prayed, *"O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper."* Mike hardly heard what the man shared, as he quickly wrote down the date and asked our Lord if He was indeed showing us His plan.

That morning when we returned to the house, our host met us at the door: "We were praying for you, and God has shown us that He wants you to return to the States for His purpose to be accomplished!" Our hearts were at rest. His Word and His Spirit had been made known and confirmed!

- Can you recall a time (or several!) when the Spirit has leaped within you while you were reading a passage that indicated a specific action for you to take?

- Are you willing today to begin keeping track of what He tells you from His Word and in prayer so that you'll have permanent reminders of His faithfulness?

9. Opening the door, she went out into the darkness...

A hundred Craven Fears couldn't have stopped Much-Afraid now. That is what love does. When you get a moment read through Hebrews 11, often called "The Faith Chapter." As you read it, consider the love for their Lord that these "heroes of the faith" had. Perhaps now these words from Paul will penetrate your journey motivation even more deeply: *"For in Christ Jesus... the only thing that counts is* ***faith expressing itself through love****"* (Gal. 5:6).

While you can't "measure" your love quantitatively, you can evaluate your own

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

expression of how your love passes from within your heart onto other people. Answer this brief "love test" to discern how well others are aware of your expressions of affection.

A Love Test

Circle the number that corresponds to your answer.

To what extent do you *initiate* loving affection toward others?

Never 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

To what extent do you wait to *receive* affection from others first?

Never 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always

Discuss your response with your partner(s). Then ask each other, "How would Jesus answer?"

10. She could not go...,11. Had she but known...

Sue and I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Hannah Hurnard to hammer home the issue of love. The love that God gives to us and requires from us is not cognitive in nature. It can't be analyzed. Self-sacrificial love is centered in the inner motives of your heart.

Love and pain go hand-in-hand. If you strive to avoid the pain that love inevitably brings with it, you'll lose your love as well. Often that pain comes at the hands of a person to whom you're devoted — your parents, your spouse, your children, your closest friends.

God's Word offers special counsel to husbands in particular about the painful cost of walking in the steps of our heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus: *"Husbands,* ***love your wives,*** *just as* ***Christ loved the church*** *and* ***gave himself up for her*** *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word"* (Ephesians 5:25,26). The Greek word for love here, *agape (ah-GAH-pay),* is the kind that only the Holy Spirit can give you.

For a man to love his wife as God commands, he must cry out to God for the love she deserves. If his love is dependent on her response or perceived worthiness, he's looking in the wrong place to love as Jesus loves. It's an inescapable fact, guys. Our wives are, and will continue to be, a source of pain to us as we seek to love them. But aren't we guilty of inflicting pain as well? The admonition to forgive one another applies to all of us!

Do you remember the scales from Chapter 1? Don't let yourself balance your guilt for *not* loving your wife by blaming her for the hurt she has caused you. You not only escalate the hurt, you impede yourself from going further on the journey.

Our friend Bert in Israel asked me a key question early in our stay with his family when I kept trying to tell him all the ways Sue had failed me. "Why can't you love your wife the way God commanded you to?" No excuses, no blame, just humble obedience!

And wives, blaming your husband for his perceived failures will not balance out your responsibility to bring your own guilt burden before our Lord. Only He can take those hurts, *if you're willing to release them*, and transform that pain and anger into loving affection and appreciation.

- A Christian radio station here in Colorado Springs airs prayer requests from time to time. Most are from women, and many pertain to relational difficulties in their marriages. To my dismay the station airs the actual names of the people. Are you a woman who airs her family problems with those who aren't part of the problem or part of the solution? Has it occurred to you that this activity is *slander?*

- Are you a husband who continually asks God for the power to love your wife? Is there evidence in your your life that His love is at work between you and your wife?

14. Much-Afraid could not speak...15. It came to her...

Shall we repeat the journey refrain once more? *Keep your focus on Jesus!* His foreknowledge includes awareness of what you

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

will do. You haven't surprised Jesus yet. Camp out on this promise: *"He who began a good work in you will* ***carry it on to completion*** *until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 1:6).

Only if you fail to keep trusting our Lord Jesus will you be stopped in your tracks. Trust is the glue that holds your heart in your relationship with your Lord. HE never stops extending His loving mercy, but YOU can choose not to receive it. When you give up trusting Him you grieve the Holy Spirit, and begin sliding down the slope to breaking your part of the Covenant with our Lord. As Much-Afraid noted with trembling heart, "[He] would not leave until he was quite sure that she really meant to refuse to go with him."

At this point, discuss with your journey partner this ongoing challenge: *"And let us consider how we may* ***spur one another on*** *toward love and good deeds"* (Heb. 10:24). We've already heard from some married couples in which the wife is putting up resistance to leaving the familiar Valley for the unknown heights. Wife, if your husband has already dealt with his strongholds, and if he has or is in the process of severing co-dependent relationships, then don't you be a stumbling block!

We hope you're not traveling alone on the journey. It's such an encouragement and comfort to have another man or woman alongside to bounce ideas off and to "spur one another on" in devotion to Jesus. If you haven't had a deliberate talk with your companion heading out of the Valley, now is the time! Trying to press forward toward the High Places when your companion is wavering in trust can keep you *both* from ever leaving the comfortable bondage of your old nature. Frank conversation is the order of the day — *before* you get to the far edge of the valley to begin the trail.

- Are you sensing that your companion on the journey, or even yourself, is having second thoughts about the cost of what will have to be left behind in order to press onward?

17. Just as the sky... through **19."I am here," said Much-Afraid, still kneeling at his feet, "and I will go with you any - where"...**

Can you repeat the words of Much-Afraid from your heart to our Lord Jesus right now? Can you *and* your traveling companion say to our Lord Jesus together, *"I will go with you anywhere!"*?

Mike: When we were finishing our time of research in Israel, we traveled to a small, rustic retreat center near Latrun, just outside Jerusalem. About 4 AM on our final morning there I climbed up to the rock-hewn chapel to gripe to God about why He had chosen me to share the Hebraic foundations.

I poured my heart out to Jesus as the darkness was swallowed by the dawn, reminding Him of how much I had failed Him. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit prompted me to pick up a little devotional on the stool next to me. I opened it to the lesson for that day: *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"* (Isa. 6:8). Crying uncontrollably, I whispered, "You do this to everyone you recruit!"

I've made an important discovery in my walk with Jesus. My own unworthiness has stirred in me a greater determination to encourage others to be prepared and available for God's use of them.

Commit to memory the following passage of Scripture as a good reminder along your way to the High Places:

> *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I* ***press on to take hold*** *of that for which Christ* ***Jesus took hold of me****Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and* ***straining toward what is ahead****, I* ***press on toward the goal*** *to win the prize for which God has called me heav - enward in Christ Jesus* (Phi. 3:12-14).

Our Father has called each of us to "set our hearts on pilgrimage" (see Psalm 84:5).

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

And as we shall see, the companions He's chosen for the journey are designed to propel us onward in trust!

A pilgrimage starts with the first step of trust in Jesus. Picture yourself as the pilgrim on the journey in this poem.

STEP BY STEP

"As thou goest, step by step I will open the way before thee" (Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

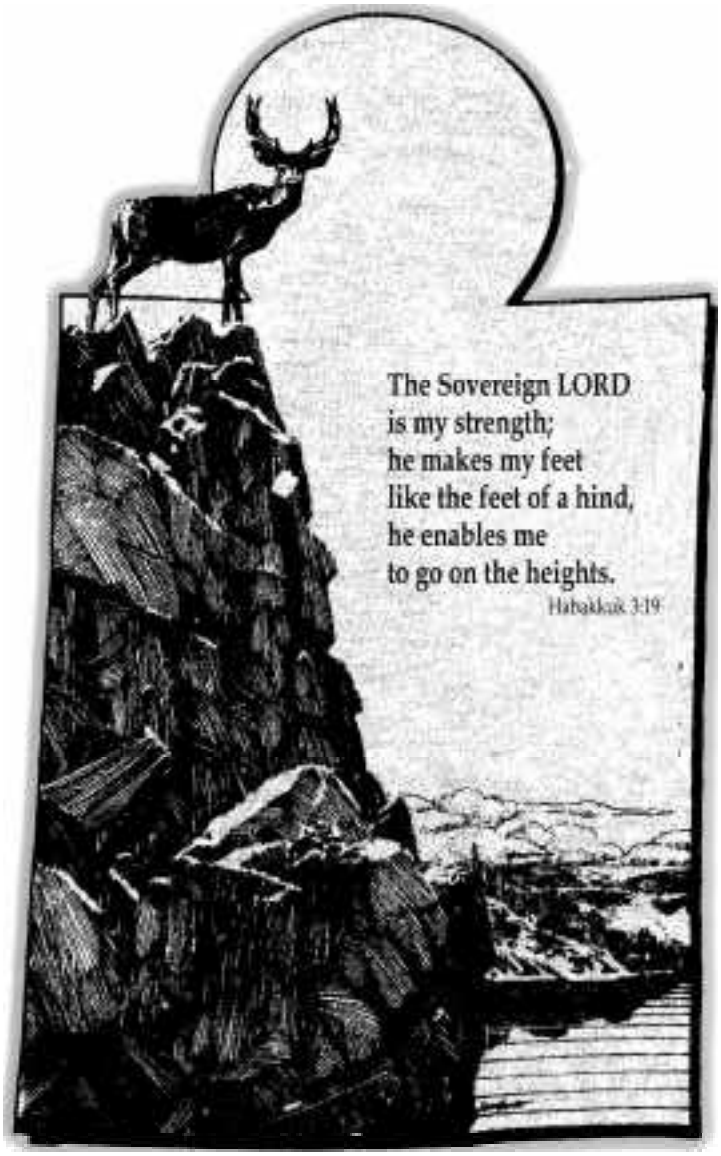
Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 4 *Start for the High Places*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

It probably seems like it's taking us a long time to get out of the Valley and onto the path that leads to the High Places. Unfortunately, in real life, few Christians *ever leave* the Valley of Their Strongholds. This is especially true if your "Christianity" has been forged on positional- and activity-based relationships.

If you're going through this *Hind's Feet* guide with a spouse or close friend, the issues that affect your sanctification, that is, your transformation into Christ-likeness, may not have been part of your normal Christian conversations before. It's easier for many of us to talk about "religious things" than probe the *heart issues* that lead to lasting life transformation.

Become Comfortable in Sharing Your Hear t

The Hebraic form of learning takes place when you *speak with* someone else. An interaction occurs as you share ideas and exchange feedback with another person. As you dialogue, you are "communicating" — sending and receiving messages and information that *can be life-changing*.

The New International Version of the Bible uses the words *reason*, *reasoned together,* or *reasoned with* as a means of conveying the idea of dialogue with someone. Dialogue infers a give and take, far different from the monologue of a sermon or lecture. Read these examples with the image in your mind of attentive individuals actively sharing back and forth as they digest what each other is saying:

- *"'Come now, let us* ***reason together,*** *" says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'"* (Isa. 1:18). Through this interchange with God, a sinner can be changed as he realizes just how utterly sinful his sins really are. In light of that revelation, his heart as it changes can receive cleansing and purification.

- *"As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue [a familiar forum for discussion for Paul], and on three Sabbath days he* ***reasoned with*** *them* ***from the Scriptures*** *[the standard against which all discussions were weighed]"* (Acts 17:2).

- *"So he* ***reasoned*** *in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the* ***marketplace*** *day by day with those who happened to be there"* (Acts 17:17). Notice that dialogue about spiritual matters wasn't confined within synagogue walls. As people went about their normal workday affairs in the public market, their *interest* in the topic was accompanied by *pursuit* with one another.

- *"They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and* ***reasoned with*** *the Jews"* (Acts 18:19). Even in a city populated by pagan Artemis-worshippers, the apostle knew he could find in the synagogue those who were interested in dialoguing about truth.

Contemporary Americans are often threatened by dialogue. So accustomed to being *spoken at* in classrooms, in church services, by the media and the Internet, most people experience sweaty discomfort if put into a situation in which exchange of ideas might make them reconsider their own viewpoint. Even your concept of "faith" may make it all the more difficult to believe that you might be wrong.

Most Middle Easterners, for instance, find reasoning together an envigorating "sport" and spend hours exchanging ideas, while most western Americans are reluctant to venture beyond "Hi, how are you?" Hesitation to get involved in anyone else's life or discuss their deeply-held beliefs reveals a serious isolation mentality that overshadows so much of this culture. Little wonder that even Christians can *talk* about "one-anothering" but *experience* so little of it!

Many Christian married couples find it difficult to discuss the heart changes God wants to make in each partner. Unless there

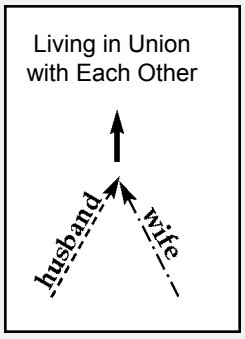
Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

is mutual trust, it's embarrassing to discuss the dark areas of your soul that our Lord wants to *change*. Yet this is the breakthrough in your relationship that must occur if you're going to press on together.

The major hindrance to communication exchange is the lecture format that so many Christians have associated with Bible teaching. When you're used to sitting quietly in a pew or Sunday school classroom listening to someone more knowledgeable than you are, the information that's offered gets locked into that format. If you've heard it under the steeple, that's where it gets filed in your brain. Without the role modeling of mutual communication when presented biblical truth, you'll be reluctant to share that information outside of the environment in which you heard it.

How often do *you* dialogue with others about the goal of applying biblical truths in a way that shows our Lord has been changing your *heart*? If your experience with biblical truth has been limited to *input* without *output*, then you're probably frustrated on two fronts: little change in your life, and powerlessness to share with others any changes God *is* making in you.

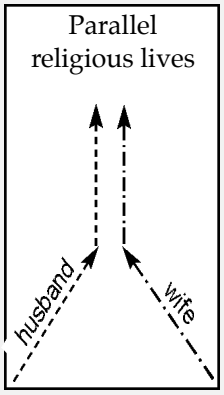
Working Toward Union With Each Other



In Israel we learned to humble ourselves before God and with each other. In openness we began to discuss the matters that increased our intimate union both with our Lord Jesus and with each other.

Our Father views marriage as a physical representation of the spiritual reality of His union with you. If you're having problems dialoguing with your life partner in the here and now, how is your communication with the Lord you can't see? That's why we're journeying together — to grow in intimate communion with our Lord as well as with each other. This takes the *humility* to be changed.

Living Without Union With Each Other



Our Lord has given you the freedom to choose, if you want, to walk through your marriage *devoid of humility*. In that case you'll be unable to cooperate with each other in the changes He wants to make in you individually and collectively. You have the choice to seek out religious forms which offer a parallel existence with each other, but no *intimate union*. (This applies to close friends as well.) Many marriages resemble railroad tracks — parallel, yet not touching. You may have common concerns, such as the kids or the house. But the *interconnectedness* of intimacy just never seems to grow — and may in fact be diminishing. Sue and I found at the retreat center that while our lives were full of activities, even "good" ones like my counseling church leaders and conducting retreats, and Sue homeschooling our son and teaching English to internationals, we really had little we did together *for* and *with* each other. Our marriage was strained to the breaking point because of this relational disconnect.

Chapter 4 *Start for the High Places*

1. It was early morning...

Can you feel the contented joy and anticipation of Much-Afraid as she and the Shepherd begin their new day's journey amid the beauty of the valley streams and rainbow-hued flowers?

There's an important lesson here. Each new day is your opportunity to choose to notice the *details of His grace* all around you! If at daybreak you're already overwhelmed by the very thought of what you have to get done before you hit the pillow again, you're guaranteed to miss the subtle nuances He's designed to encourage and strengthen you.

Much-Afraid was on the way to reaching her heart's desire on the High Places, a wonderful goal. But, because of her awareness of the very real presence of the Shepherd at her side, she was able to relish the details of His creation. She wasn't *target-fixated* on the outcome, so she could enjoy the moment!

Are you so overcome by the perceived magnitude of your life's responsibilities that you're missing out on His special touches that are meant to remind you of His nearness? When was the last time you paused to bask in a brilliant sunrise or sunset and thanked Him for making you in His image to appreciate such beauty?

Sue: Our retreat center was set high on a hill overlooking a vast carpet of stately trees and lush pastures. Once a bald eagle even soared over our deck! But do you know, sometimes weeks would go by and I'd realize I hadn't stopped even once to praise our Lord for the privilege to breathe in His ever-changing touch on the land. What a waste, an unopened gift from my Beloved! I'd been too busy *doing* to pause and *be*.

Look for His touch, savor it, and when you've experienced it, share it with someone else that day! Our Lord has set us an example of keeping track of details — let's do the same!

- Are you caught up in a rat race of life-consuming schedules and responsibilities that have robbed you of daily joy and peace? What changes can you identify that will increase your "appreciation factor" of our Lord's gracious touches?

- Think about the last time you really noticed God's hand at work. Maybe it was a laughing child, a divine appointment, whatever. Are you willing to recall these gifts He's revealed so that you can share them with someone else for His praise?

2. Once the Shepherd stooped ...

One of the important truths this chapter stresses is *humility*. Choosing to *humble yourself* is the foundational element for you to grow in *agape* love. A humble person considers others before himself: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,* ***but in humility*** *consider others* ***better than yourselves***" (Phil. 2:3).

If you are truly humble, you fully appreciate what Jesus accomplished for you on the Cross. There's no way you can hold onto a record of wrongs someone else has committed against you —Your heart understands the vast array of offenses *you've* committed that He's forgiven *you*! It is *pride* that holds onto the sting of offense and longs for retribution against your offender. But *humility* purposes to forgive so that our Lord is free to heal your heart from the pain of the offense.

The Shepherd tells Much-Afraid, and each one of us, "Humble yourself..." Our desire and quest to walk humbly before our God is the beginning of *true worship* of our Lord Jesus.

What an awesome privilege to be able to delight our Father through walking in humility! *"For the Lord* ***takes delight*** *in his people; he* ***crowns the humble*** *with salvation"* (Psa. 149:4). In return for our humble trust, He delivers us.

Can you honestly stand before the Creator of all that is and *not* bow in humility because of Who He is? *"'Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?' declares the Lord. 'This is the one I esteem: he who is* ***humble and contrite in spirit****, and trembles at my word'"* (Isa. 66:2). So as we go on through this chapter, keep humility in mind.

Mike: Do you remember my testimony in our book *Demolishing Strongholds*? Let me repeat it because it's pertinent to our discussion here.

> I first became acquainted with strongholds and their influence in people's lives while we were administrating a church retreat center in Connecticut from 1983 to 1993. During a conference held on Long Island in the summer of 1989, a prophecy was given to the denominationally diverse participants concerning southern New England. The prophecy

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

stated, ***"God is looking for a faceless people who are humble, with only the face of Jesus shining through. On November 30, 1989, the Lord is going to use these people in something special He is about to do."*** Throughout the fall of 1989 I was haunted by the question, "Was *I* humble and faceless — would *I* be one of those the Lord was going to use?"

As I read my Bible on the morning of November 29, 1989, one day before the prophesied date, I pondered Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (3:16-19), "*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may* ***strengthen you with power*** *through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being* ***rooted and established in love****, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp* ***how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge*** *— that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*

As I sat there quietly in my recliner, I was convicted that the amount of the love of Jesus that I had ever felt, even after many years in ministry, was about the size of a decimal point. The love I 'd perceived had no depth, breadth, or width to it, and it certainly did not surpass my knowledge. Later that day I was playing golf with my close friend Casey. As we walked along the course I shared with him my deep conviction from my reading in Ephesians that morning. I told him with determination, "I'm not going on in ministry until I feel this height, depth, and breadth of the love of Jesus." He joined with me in prayer right where we stood.

The next morning at 8:00 on November 30, 1989, I received a phone call from a pastor who lived about an hour away from us. In a somewhat irritated tone he began, "Mike, what's your problem? God woke me up at 4:00 this morning and told me to call you at 8:00 AM to tell you that He had heard your prayer." When I explained to him my prayer on the golf course the day before, we both sensed that this was the reason the Lord had awakened him earlier. I continued in my ministry, waiting for God to show me the next step.

Today, the followers of Jesus who are really applying the different facets of the Hebraic Restoration in their walk with Him are finding out just how *humble and faceless* they need to be for Jesus to shine through their lives. Nothing in Hellenistic Christianity had ever demanded so much of them before. What was once *external religious form* has now become *internal heart-rending change*.

- What opportunities has our Father raised for you to taste humility?

- How would you recognize if you were "nameless and faceless", available for His special purpose?

3. Much-Afraid looked at him earnestly...;
4. The look the Shepherd turned on her...

Your first lesson in growing in humility is your willingness to serve others without needing to be recognized or praised. This bears repeating:

Your first lesson in growing in humility is your willingness to serve others without needing to be recognized or praised.

Jesus certainly hammers home the blessing of secret service when you walk in His steps:

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

*But **when you give** to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. **Then your Father**, who sees what is **done in secret, will reward you**. And **when you pray**, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray stand - ing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, **go into your room, close the door** and pray to your Father, who is unseen. **Then your Father**, who sees what is **done in secret, will reward you**"* (Matt. 6:3-6).

Just as the flowers released their sweetness when they gave themselves underfoot, so, too, you give yourself sweetly when you quietly help the needy in tangible ways and intercede for others in secret. Have you ever experienced the joy of being a "secret answer" to someone's prayer?

Perhaps there's a need among your various relationships that you can answer anonymously. Then you can share the delight of the recipient who had no idea it was you who met that need! (Think "bag of groceries on the doorstep, a behind-the-scene mortgage payment, paid-for babysitter", whatever the Spirit tells you!)

A year after Sue and I gave our lives to Jesus 26 years ago, we found out by accident that a Navy Chaplain with whom I'd once served had asked his entire congregation to faithfully pray for our salvation every Sunday morning.

That example inspired Sue and me to keep a lengthy list of people we intercede for, a variety of people. Some are family and friends, others a result of a one-time meeting through which the Holy Spirit prompted us to pray for them and their families. The Spirit has prompted us to pray daily for the Bin Ladens and Husseins and the Netanyahus their families because Jesus died for them as well. And who can doubt our Father's loving power to get people's attention when they're being lifted before Him!

During our retreat center days we met some of the most humble people who were intercessors. We don't mean the showboats who run around today making much of their intercessory ministry. I'm talking about the ones whom Satan really despises, the faithful Jesus followers who pray without any need for personal recognition. This group is probably the most demonically assaulted of all Christiandom, and yet they *keep on praying for others*. You may not appreciate the people who are praying *for you* and what they're battling in the heavenlies until God breaks through.

- Do you intercede for others on a daily basis? Are you likelier to pray if others are involved in corporate gatherings? If so, why?

- Do you begin your day gratefully praising Him and rejoicing in your humble dependency on Him?

5. I must tell you a great truth...

True humility entails a deep desire for anonymity. The Shepherd captures the beauty of the secret things done in your heart when He says, "All the fairest beauties in the human soul, its greatest victories, and its most splendid achievements are always those which *no one else knows about*, or can only *dimly guess* at. Every inner response of the human heart to Love and *every conquest over self-love* is a new flower on the tree of Love." What wonderful words to find satisfaction in knowing that only you and our Lord are aware of your kindest deeds!

Mike: During our retreat center days I was privileged to spend chunks of time with men. Time and again I shared the importance of obedience no matter the cost:

"A Christian man does what God requires of him, regardless of how he feels about it."

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

This is the manly obedience for which Abraham was esteemed. How many of you would walk your child(ren) to an altar to sacrifice them as they carried the wood for the fire? Would you even be willing for your son or daughter to head for Afghanistan or Africa to serve the destitute who need Jesus?

Recently I spent time with two men with whom I've had a close relationship for several years. To my inner joy they both expressed how much I've helped them stop being "Momma's boys." Both of these guys are over 40. The Momma's boy epidemic in this country is the fruit of effeminized public education and the absence of meaningful male role models/mentors in Christiandom.

A Momma's boy:

1. Is always looking for *recognition* when he accomplishes something. "Momma, Momma, look at me!" still controls his motivation. ("Momma" might be his wife, his boss, even his buddies.)

2. Seeks out *empathy* when his feelings are hurt. He'll do anything to avoid the accountability and confrontation that a mature man would provide.

3. Is *controlled* by the women in his life. He's fearful of displeasing them, and can't face the turmoil any confrontation with them might entail. So many Momma's boys are prisoners in their own marriage because they fear their wives more than they fear God.

I have some questions for you men to honestly answer:

- Do any of the above statements apply to you?

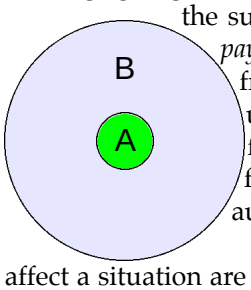
- Do your child(ren) show more respect to your wife than to you? Who do they go to for permission?

- Are you able to love your wife as Jesus would no matter how she treats you?

- When you're hurt by your wife, do you withhold affection from her? Or, do you go to Jesus for the strength to love her even if she never changes?

The Blindness of Fear and Control

A "mothering" woman has an *incomplete view* of things going on around her. **Circle A** represents the sum of variables *she's willing to pay attention to*. She sees life only from her vantage point. She is unwilling to receive input from others, or is reluctant to fully yield to men who are in authority.



The *totality of variables* that affect a situation are contained **Circle B**. From our observation, men seem to be more aware of the wider array of variables than women are. The variables represented by B contribute to a decision that benefits everyone involved.

How do your family and others close to you see you in regard to this diagram? Wives, can your husband give you input without feeling apprehensive about your response? Do you always have to get your own way, or do you concede, but pout or withdraw affection? Do your decisions really consider the feelings and values of others? (See Proverbs 14:1.)

Sue: We women can be an incredibly destructive force in our families. The vast majority of divorces are now instituted by women, and many women are finding hearty support from their mothers to sever the marriage covenant.

It takes humility and trust in our Lord's sovereignty to be a wife and fulfill your covenant responsibilities. It's much easier for a man to walk in love for his wife if he senses your trust in his leadership and his role as provider. I know from painful experience that nagging not only gets you nowhere, it antagonizes your husband! If I take matters into my own hands, I end up angry at him and agitated in my spirit.

Let's look at nagging. As a suitable helper purposely given by God to your particular husband, you need to seek His will in prayer

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

and give insights and ideas to your mate. Recognize that since our Lord has created men and women 97% different, your husband may not have considered before what you're saying, and may even not quite understand what you're trying to get across. But share lovingly and leave the rest to our Lord. If you bring up your insights, opinions or requests *more than once* (unless he's asked you to remind him), you're *manipulating the outcome*!

Years back I groused repeatedly to Mike about a decision he'd made, and we were both miserable. So I asked his forgiveness for my attitude, then turned to my Father in private prayer: "Please, Lord, either change this situation or give me peace in my heart about it!" Two months later, Mike mentioned that the Spirit had pierced his heart about that matter, and he was taking my suggestion. Thank YOU, Father, that You shut my mouth from an "I told you so!!" Because it was *God* Who had convicted him, Mike was humbled in spirit and gracious in response to me — a far more pleasing outcome than if I'd nagged him into my will!

If you give way to fear and control, you'll end up dominating everyone around you. That control will most often take the form of "mothering." You'll make yourself the most important person in the family, the one everyone tries to "keep happy." Consciously or unconsciously, you'll undermine your husband and hinder the development of manhood in your sons.

An old saying goes, "If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!" But think about what that attitude says to our Lord as well as to those in your family. You've become the *family idol*, the one everyone's fearful to confront! And in that scenario, the *shalom* of God — well-being, harmony, tranquillity — cannot exist.

- Are you a woman who can't trust your husband because of your past? Are you quick to point out faults in your husband or in other men, thinking, "Isn't that just like a man?"

- Are you a woman who tends to mother her husband? Do you take control of areas in which the Bible has assigned *him* responsibility? In particular, do you sweat family finances? Has it occurred to you that your control is destroying the intimacy in your marriage?

- Are you a meddling mother or mother-in-law? Have you had a hand in dissolving the marriage covenant of one of your children? What do you need to do about this?

6. Many a quiet, ordinary and hidden life ...

The Shepherd tells us, "Learn this lesson now, *down here in the valley*, and when you get to the steep places of the mountains it will comfort you." True humility comes as you acquire the character of Jesus. Take a moment and read Philippians 2:1-18. Many Bible versions entitle this section, "Imitating Christ's Humility." Take each verse as a Personal Review: *Evaluate yourself at this point on your journey in comparison to Jesus.*

One of the key elements of our character transformation is to *"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* When your thoughts are brought into conformity to Jesus', you can grow as a servant of others. *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — **just as the Son of Man** did not come to be served, but to **serve**, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:26-28). Shortly, we'll deal with your social responsibility to be hospitable. True hospitality is built on the *servanthood that humility produces*.

- When you consider Phil. 2:1-18, is your attitude one of joyful anticipation that our Lord can transform your character into Christ-likeness, or are you discouraged that it will never happen?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

7. Then he added, "Come...

Have you ever wondered how those who have been and are being persecuted for their trust in Jesus are able to endure with such spiritual victory? I'm amazed when I read testimonies of Richard Wurmbrand, tortured and imprisoned for 14 years for sharing Jesus in Romania, who could learn to love and forgive his tormenters. I'm humbled as I see the scarred yet radiant face of Gulnaz, a young Pakistani sister burned with acid by an angry Muslim when she refused his sexual advances, but rejoicing in the sustaining faithfulness of her Lord.

You can participate in the suffering of our brothers and sisters by being the hands and heart of Jesus. For example, contact the relief group *Voice of the Martyrs* via email at **thevoice@vom-usa.org** or visit their website: **www.persecution.com** for ways to bring comfort and help to the suffering family of Jesus. Get your kids involved through VOM's children's website: **www.linkingup.com** Pray for particular individuals. Practical ways to help include sending blankets and Christian books, writing letters of encouragement, and creatively raising funds to provide cooking utensils and food to impoverished families of prisoners.

Reread that verse in the Shepherd's songbook: "As lily among the thorn trees so is my love to me." So many of our family in the persecuted church are able to not only cope with their ordeal but to *respond with forgiveness* because the presence and example of their Lord Jesus is ever before them. HE is the lily Who empowers His "little flowers" in the midst of their painfully thorny trials. HE is the life-giving refreshment when thirst and hunger are ravaging their bodies.

Shouldn't we be praying now to grow in focus on His presence no matter what our situation is now so that we can endure the dark days of chastisement that are coming?

The Scripture record is very clear. The righteous are *not exempt* from suffering, but are comforted and delivered *in* their suffering. Much-Afraid was all too aware of her immaturity, but she also was wise enough to recognize that it was His right as her Shepherd "to love me e'er he please."

- Do you ever cringe at the thought of having to suffer for His Name's sake without shrinking back?

- What can you and your family *do today* to bring refreshment to our persecuted family who are imprisoned or denied work or food solely because they follow Jesus?

8. As the Shepherd lifted Much-Afraid..., 9. Sometimes in the silence...

I'm ashamed to admit how many times I've grumbled to God when I can't get to sleep. Some nights my mind gets mired in the muck of how much I need to get done, or zoomed in how how miserable my allergies are... A world-class pity party. But the most tormenting thoughts have to do with our work: "Is anything that Sue and I are writing making a difference in anyone's life? Are we spinning our wheels instead of running the race?"

I sometimes envy Sue because she often uses her wakeful times in the wee hours spending time with Jesus. She'll tell me the next morning of the ones He's impressed on her heart to intercede for, or the insights He's breathed out as she's quieted her spirit before Him.

She's discovered the satisfaction David experienced as he welcomed his Lord's comforting nocturnal presence: "*I am as satisfied as with rich food; my mouth praises you with joy on my lips when I remember you on my bed and meditate on you in the night watches"* (Psa. 63:5,6).

Much-Afraid turned her wakeful nights into a symphony of song as she entertained her heart with the music from the bubbling stream. She was able to shut out all the clamoring needs and responsibilities of the day and incline her spirit to the melody of

His creation. If you don't set aside time during the day to enjoy His presence, then just maybe *He'll* set apart some time with you at night!

- Are you willing to set aside your grumbling and use your sleepless hours in joyous communion with Jesus? What transpired the last time you did share the wee hours with Him?

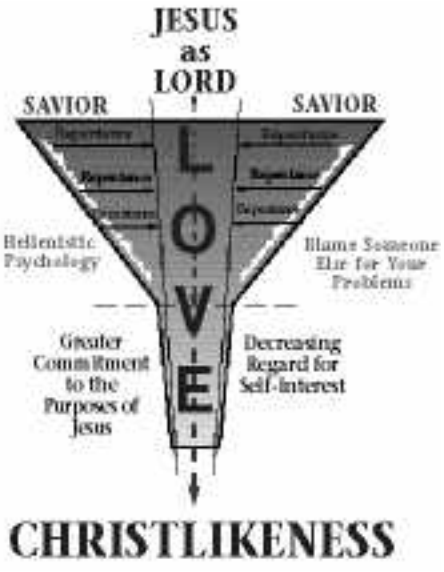
- Are you in the habit of keeping a notepad on your nightstand so you don't forget those special insights He reveals?

10. The Water Song ...

Come, oh come! let us away —
Lower, lower every day
Oh, what joy it is to race
Down to find the lowest place
This is the dearest law we know.

Doesn't this pattern of *going lower* remind you of the funnel, which we discussed in the Introduction to *Hind's Feet on High Places*? The issue of *descent* in order to *ascend* is one of the wonderful mysteries of our faith. Even Jesus descended from heaven to the cross and death in order to ascend and fill all of creation with His glory.

A humble heart cherishes the descent down the funnel in order to grow in the love that Jesus wants you to walk in. As you enter the stem of the funnel, your heart is less enthralled by self-interest and more consumed with commitment to His purposes.



- Where in funnel would you place yourself? In the center, growing in sacrificial love? On the sides needing to repent of sin? In the stem, setting aside self-interest to better serve our Lord's purposes?

11. "That is very puzzling"...,12. "The High Places," answered the Shepherd ...

Be careful of "Groupie Christianity." Your personal experience with our Lord Jesus will be minimal if you look to religious crowds and ear-tickling conferences as an indicator of your walk in Christ. Perhaps this metaphor can put your journey in perspective: *"To truly follow Jesus, always swim upstream."*

This principle was made clear as Sue and I read *Hinds' Feet* for the first time in 1977. Swimming upstream rather than flowing with the crowds was reinforced by the older mentors and role models we've been privileged to have in our journey with Jesus. They've kept us focused on the narrow gate, and encouraged us to press on toward it rather than give way to the broad path to destruction.

That decision hasn't been popular among certain family members or friends. For us, as an example, walking the narrow path meant avoiding movies or TV shows that used the name of Jesus as a curse. That was our *halakhah*, our application of the third commandment. "Up-stream swimming" for us also meant purposing to use our resources on behalf of sharing the Gospel rather than accumulating "stuff."

Each person or family in Jesus needs to prayerfully formulate their own *halakhahs* — Scripture-based life applications — on what "narrow-gate living" fleshes itself out as for themselves.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

A Lesson from the Bible: In Ezekiel 47 the prophet observed a man measuring the depth of a stream that flowed out from under the temple threshold. The further the man got from the temple, the higher the stream rose. At first the water was ankle deep, but ultimately it swelled deep enough to swim in. The stream finally became a river, emptying into the Dead Sea and making the foul waters fresh.

A verse that's foundational to the Gospel of the early Church comes to mind: *"'Whoever trusts in me, as the Scripture has said,* ***streams of living water****will flow from within him.' By this he meant* ***the Spirit****, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified"* (John 7:38,39). Because of the Spirit's presence in you, *you* can become a living stream in the world.

Over the years, we used the temple stream image to question people about their Christian focus: "If you encountered the stream from the temple, which way would you turn? Would you go downstream where it got wider and deeper? Or, would you go upstream where it was smaller and narrower, but close to the Throne?

Everyone, we mean EVERYONE, chose to go downstream, where they wouldn't have to expend any effort. But their answer also revealed how "groupie" most people are in their spiritual expression. Joining the crowds and flowing with the stream is the overwhelming emphasis of Hellenistic Christianity.

Think of how many people you know who talk in such glowing terms about their beautiful sanctuary or magnificent choir or about how well known their pastor is in the community. Size, not relational intimacy, is how many measure their faith community.

Now consider why the path *upstream* toward the Source of the living water is the way of strengthening your walk in Jesus.

- Your anointing,
- your implanting of God's wisdom,
- your direction concerning His will for you,
- your character transformation —

These are ALWAYS found in *personal intimacy* with our Lord Jesus. Your willingness to go upstream indicates how much you cherish your relationship with Him.

For many years a church leader whose congregation used our retreat center balked at this reasoning. One day "Bill" came to see me with this story.

> I have something I want to confess to you, Mike. A few nights ago the Lord gave me dream. In it you and I were leading a group of people across a meadow toward a river. Upstream was a large waterfall.
>
> As we got to the bank of the river I said, "Everybody in the river! We're going downstream." You spoke up and said, "That isn't the way the Lord would have us go. We must go *upstream*." Everybody followed you. You all jumped into the river and begin to swim upstream.
>
> I followed you, walking along the river bank. At the bottom of the waterfall I found steps that led up to the top of the waterfall. Somehow, I knew the steps led to the Throne of God. As I climbed the stairs I kept looking out at the falls to make sure I was ahead of you. At the top of the stairs I reached God's Throne.
>
> He looked at me and said, "Bill, you didn't come here the way I have ordained. Look at your feet." I looked down and my feet were all muddy. As I looked back I could see that I'd muddied all the stairs on the way up.
>
> God ordered me, "Go back down the way you came and clean each stair as you go. Then you may come up the waterfall as I have commanded." As I proceeded down the stairs, cleaning each one, I looked over toward the falls. I saw you and the people who followed all ascending the falls. You weren't climbing them, but drifting up them. I then realized that the Holy Spirit was the stream, and *He* was the one Who enables you to ascend to the Throne of God.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

By the time Bill finished telling me about his dream, his eyes were filled with tears. He said, "You know the power of the Holy Spirit that comes from going upstream." If *you* are going to proceed to the High Places, you'll be introduced to the Holy Spirit in ways that not only enable you to *grow* in Christ-likeness, but also to *hold onto* what you've gained.

The truths of this chapter of *Hinds' Feet* are so critical for you to grasp as a way of life. *No one* will ever get past The Valley of Loss in Chapter 13 unless the Holy Spirit starts to control your mind, will and emotions. *No one* lives in the High Places without the Spirit of Love.

What wonderful assurance from the Shepherd that we'll be able to "run down from the heights in gladdest self-giving...for it is only up on the High Places of Love that anyone can receive the power to pour themselves down in an *utter abandonment of self-giving*." Those words point to the power the Holy Spirit gives to live for Jesus.

As a follower of Jesus you are our Father's adopted child. In this capacity you are given a very special privilege of intimacy: *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the* ***Spirit of son-ship****. And by him we cry, '****Abba, Father****'"* (Rom. 8:15). Imagine! By the Spirit you are able to call the God of the universe *Daddy!*

The Hebrew word that expresses your love for God is *ahav [uh-HAHV]*, a yearning to cling to Him with all that's in you. The Hebrew letters for *ahav* mean *"a window into the Father's heart."* Isn't that what we all desire? The Holy Spirit makes this happen! He alone enables us to experience the loving heart of our true DAD.

- Are you a Christian "groupie" who relies on scheduled religious events with others for the deepest expression of your Christianity?

- How is your alone time with your Father? Do you know what's on His heart?

13. This saying seemed very mysterious ...

The common theme of the song of the humble is captured in this phrase,

This is the law by which we live—
It is so sweet to give and give.

One of the effects of humble servanthood is *hospitality*. Depending on your upbringing, this word can have a variety of meanings.

Sue: In all my growing up years I doubt we had someone over for a meal or an overnight more than once or twice! My mother worked long hours and was usually exhausted. As for meals, we now laugh about our expertise in preparing frozen TV dinners and icy little pizzas! But that sense of isolation from others in our home became a bit of a thorn when Mike and I married. Not only was I not used to having people in, but I was also anxious over my lack of cooking skills.

Mike: My family was about as "dirt-poor" as you could be during my childhood, but every Sunday my grandmother would make a big pot of boiled hotdogs. All my uncles and aunts and cousins would gather at their farm and spend time enjoying each other's company. The old folks would share stories and we young ones would listen enthralled, or head outside for games.

At other times my Mom's sister and her many kids would come over if we happened to have a chicken. I'm ashamed now, but I'd really get angry inside that they were eating up our chicken! But they were even worse off than we were. My parents always made room for whoever came by to share whatever we had available. Mom always cheerfully invited the women into the kitchen to help with preparations and the cleanup afterward. That's where so much of the conversation took place. To me, including people as family was a wonderful sense of *being hospitable*.

Hospitality is far more than just having someone over to entertain as a guest. Biblical hospitality *flows from the heart* of a humble person. Paul, Peter, and John all

emphasize the importance that followers of Jesus show hospitality to others.

Among the many qualities of character listed for a leader of God's people, hospitality jumps out: *"Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach"* (1 Tim. 3:2). There's a wonderful vulnerability when you invite people into your home. Guests get to see how you *really* interact with each other! After all, it's the unexpected occurrences, like the spilled casserole or burned pie, that reveal what's behind the smile.

Sue: One lesson the Holy Spirit taught me was that *people* are more important than things. How you respond when spaghetti sauce spots your carpet can either ease someone's heart or crush it. One evening a teen on retreat offered to wash the dishes. As she reached for my favorite glass bowl from Japan, it slipped from her hand and shattered on the floor. She turned to me with stricken eyes.

Smiling back my inner "Oh no!", I put my arm around her and said, 'Let's clean it up before anyone gets cut." Her very visible relief soothed my sadness at tossing out a treasure, and it was only the Spirit at work that kept her from ever knowing it *had* hurt for a moment. At least now that my favorite was gone, it didn't matter what else might get broken in the future!

The keys to true biblical hospitality are *humility* and a *servant's heart*. <u>You are *showing honor* to someone when you ask them into your home</u>. Taking the time and making the effort to welcome people into your home demonstrates your *esteem* for your guest. Most Asian and African cultures sacrifice their own needs in order to make their guests feel honored and welcome.

We find this same extravagant care in Scripture. The patriarch Abraham spared no effort to make the three unexpected visitors to his tent feel comfortable. (You can read the account in Gen. 18:1-16.) Other examples in the Word, on the other hand, point out those whose hearts were proud. They held lavish feasts but failed to extend the warmth that a heart welcome would have remembered. (See Luke 7:36-50 for the difference that humility and love make when you extend hospitality!)

In our years of following Jesus, Sue and I have received many invitations by Christians. Sadly, sometimes we felt more like an intrusion! Preparation of the meal and all that went into serving it seemed more important at times than interaction with each other.

Have you ever arrived at someone's home at their invitation and felt the brittleness of the atmosphere? You could just sense that angry words had been exchanged, and that your host or hostess had been anxiously scurrying around to make sure that you'd have a good impression of their home. Tension clouds hospitality if the *activity* is more important than *growing the relationship* of those who step into your home.

- Have you ever been invited to someone's home for dinner only to find yourself refereeing or counseling over marriage and family problems? Have you ever put others in that situation?

- Have you ever sat at a table when the husband and wife were interrupting each other, vying for your attention? Have your hosts ever tried to make you take sides in their differences with each other? Have you done this to others when they've come to your home?

- Have you ever been invited into a home where a parent and child, especially mothers and daughters, take over the dinner conversation? Have you done this to others?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Have you ever just sat there as a guest while your host(s) talked *at you,* not *with you*? Have you dominated conversations like this with others?

- When *members of your own family* arrive home, are they greeted with a hospitable attitude? Is your home a sanctuary of *affectionate expression*? Do you all truly value each other?

When you are a guest or live in a home where true hospitality exists, you feel valued and your dignity is enriched. True hospitality has the fragrance of love that permeates the atmosphere for family and friend alike. Think about this the next time you invite anyone over, or when one of your family members arrives home.

14. After that it seemed... through **16. The Shepherd laughed and answered ...**

The Shepherd reminds all of us about an important matter in our growth into *agape* love. As God's love grows in your heart, you begin to see things differently. Love has a powerful effect to heal painful memories and your response toward people who hurt you.

The humility that undergirds your love melts away the temptation of *false expecta - tion* that others should treat you better. Instead, God gives you the *grace to love*. Where there was resentment before, you'll find compassion sprouting.

Perhaps even now you have a certain someone who is a painful, annoying irritant. Maybe you're downright angry with a political figure you don't even know! But as you grow in God's perspective, which is grounded in love, you'll be moved to *grieve* over that person's situation rather than wish they were just *gone*.

The worldly response may be fear, anger, disdain, hatred. But the Shepherd's response is one of sorrow and compassion, because He knows what caused such miserable response in that particular person. He isn't excusing the actions of the perpetrator, but His attitude defuses any arrogance on *your* part to judge that individual!

- Do you respond in anger and hatred when you read about suicide bombers, political tyrants, religious persecution? How do you suppose Jesus wants you to respond?

- What does it mean to you to "love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you"? How can you put this into action?

17. As love grows in you..., 18. It was strange and wonder ful...

It's such a mercy that our Lord doesn't reveal in advance what's in store for us! The Shepherd informed Much-Afraid that she still had much to learn, "many things which you never dreamed of before." Do you think that if He'd detailed for her all that she would encounter, she would have still pressed on?

Sue: When I was in college, I was having a painful time in a relationship with a guy. But after the breakup I came across a Hemingway book entitled *The Sun Also Rises*. Now, I never did read the book, but the title gave me a lot of hope! Just when life seems darkest, you know that the light will come — the sun not only sets on your tears, it also rises and brings a new day!

I didn't know Scripture back then, but a verse comes to mind to corroborate that thought: *"But in my mind, I keep returning to something, something that gives me hope — that the grace of the Lord is not exhausted, that His compassion has not ended. They are new every morning! How great is your faithfulness!"* (Lam. 3:21-23).

As long as Much-Afraid was aware of the Shepherd's presence, she forgot her lameness and weakness. As you pray, make it a habit to

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

look up into the Shepherd's face, trusting Him that you'll be "upheld by his hand and supported by his strength."

- Think back five years. What changes have occurred in your life that you never would have imagined? Would you have altered any decisions had you known what your life would be like today?

- Are you able to trust along with Much-Afraid that whatever weakness or anxiety you're facing can be overcome by your Shepherd?

19. When she thought of this...; 20. He looked at her most kindly ...

I think most of us remember from biology class that a chick *needs* to work itself out of its egg. If you help remove the shell, you'll weaken its ability to survive. This is true in many facets of Christlike development. Within certain boundaries, your life is often a pilgrimage of learning to persevere. What you truly value in life depends on you discovering for yourself your *own* value and persevering in it.

Dr. James Dobson made an interesting observation a few years back. It went something like this: "One of the greatest mistakes Christian parents make is not allowing their children *to fail*." We're so used to rushing in to make sure our kids study for tests or do a good job on a science project (I was guilty of that one! I still remember weighing all those baby chicks when Mikey was "too tired"...).

We take up an offense for them if a buddy snubs them or a friend doesn't call. We do their chores for them when they "forget". They never get to taste the pain of failure when the problem is still small! Our intervention teaches them to always expect someone to get them out of their problems. They never learn to persevere, or to taste the consequences of their choices.

If they don't experience consequences for their decisions and choices (we're not referring to biggies like drugs, sex, reckless driving—those you *need* to enforce!), they'll learn to rely on excuses. The earlier your son or daughter learns to accept responsibility for his or her mistakes, the more readily he or she will see how needful it is to carefully and prayerfully weigh decisions and choices when you aren't there to shield them.

As you'll see along the journey, our Lord will permit you to encounter circumstances in which you have a choice. Often the choice is whether you will trust Him, or give way to fear and try to take things into your own hands. And after you've made your choice, will you persevere or give up?

Much-Afraid asked the Shepherd, "Will you not take me all the way?" You left your parents' care when you headed out on the road to maturity. They couldn't hold your hand during your painful life classrooms. If you're to grow in *spiritual* maturity, you have to let go of any fear, blame or excuses. Grab the hand of your spouse or journey partner and encourage each other to *press on*.

- To whom do you turn when the debris of life circumstances blocks your progress? Who most often encourages you to press on?

- Are you a parent who has overprotected your children, hindering their progress in decision making? What steps of release could you implement to help your child learn the consequences of his/her mistakes?

21. "Afterwards you will be able"...

The Shepherd has urged Much-Afraid to climb to the heights "this once with the companions ***I*** have chosen for you." After she has accomplished that, she'll then be free to leap with him and to make the "ascent and descent in the twinkling of an eye."

There's an important lesson here for us. We need both the "ascent" of our personal

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

time with our Lord, being strengthened and stirred to respond to His "marching orders", as well as the "descent" to follow through in fulfilling those "orders."

Think of yourself as a conduit, a pipe that receives water from above, then bends to pour it out. That which our Father has so graciously *poured into* you by His Spirit is intended to be *poured out onto others* so that they'll be strengthened and encouraged. Yet how many Christians fill up to the brim with teaching tapes, music, books — and never refresh others with what they've taken in?

Believing that our Father wants them to stay perpetually on the High Places to edify themselves, they never take their eyes off their own navel to realize that He's filling them up in order to *pour them out*! Navel-gazing is the fruit of Hellenic Christianity: cognitive input, no output — not at all the love-grounded obedient trust of the Hebraic Restoration!

That's why it's so important to have the right companions on the journey. Given the choice, you'd probably select like-minded friends who would make you feel good each step of the way, coddling you with compliments about how far you've come, and even convincing you at the first obstacle that God never intends for you to suffer.

Our Shepherd turns the *theoretical concept* of yieldedness into the *reality of trust* that's willing to endure suffering and sorrow for His purposes to be accomplished. That doesn't happen easily. Some of us have to repeat classrooms of trial in order to learn how to thwart the enemy's schemes more quickly!

Sue: We've been married 33 years and God has relocated us 18 times. Once I make a nest, I like to stay in it. Each time we move, I arrange things "just so", and never rearrange them. By now you've guessed my ongoing classroom: *change!* Just when I think that in the next move I'll be more flexible and less rooted — whammo! I get edgy and anxious with Mike, as though *he* were the cause of this disruption of my life rather than my sovereign Lord!

Now, I realize that moving might not seem like a big deal to you, but that embodiment of "sorrow and suffering" for me is my gracious Father's means to take my eyes off the things of this world and refocus them on my eternal home *where I'll never have to move again!*

The dear friends He's raised up alongside us for the journey have wonderfully forgiving hearts, just as the precious companions of Much-Afraid were handpicked to prepare her to be a "citizen" of the High Places. For her own good — no, for her *best* — the Shepherd urges her to take their hands and press on.

- Would you describe yourself as a "navel-gazer", someone who has received much from our Father but is reluctant to pour it out onto others? What has our Father been pouring into you lately that He intends for you to pour out?

- What has been a recurring issue or situation in your own life with which our Lord has revisited you to help you trust His sovereign hand more readily?

22. Some of them, you know, can visit the lower part of the Mountain ...

If you try to remain close to your relationships in the Valley of your Strongholds and to the way they think and evaluate, you'll continue to be susceptible to attack. Those who are spiritually complacent in the Valley won't give up trying to get you to forget about journeying to the High Places. As the Shepherd told Much-Afraid, we say the same to you: "We have no doubt that you will meet them as you make the ascent."

Make sure you've identified and discussed how to meet your seven God-given needs as written about in *Demolishing Strongholds*. As your needs are met *in God's way*, you'll be less disturbed by the demonic whispers tempting you to turn back to your old

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

way of life. *Now* is the time to practice taking those thoughts captive and bringing them into obedience to the way Jesus would think!

Your trust in our Lord is strengthened as you see Him at work day by day. As you learn to call out to Him for help more quickly, you'll find the famous poem of "Footsteps in the Sand" becoming more real as you experience His answer. I used to say for years as a young follower of Jesus, "If the Holy Spirit weren't going through this with me, I wouldn't go on!" Keep reminding yourself that you're never alone. Help is very near, as Paul assures us. Internalize Philippians 4:4-7 and Romans 10:6-11 so you never lose sight of His indwelling presence. Help is just a prayer away!

- Since you first started the Hind's Feet journey, how has your calling out for help changed in frequency and intensity?

- Would others say that they can see your trust in God growing, and your rationale and analysis decreasing?

23. "You will give me"..., 24. "Yes, certainly"...

Just as Peter started sinking into the stormy waters when he took his focus off Jesus, so, too, Much-Afraid latched onto worry and anxiety when she turned her focus onto *herself* rather than trusting in His promises. The lovely peace she'd basked in just minutes earlier evaporated as self-focus washed away the sweet sights and sounds that had so enthralled her.

Veteran missionary E. Stanley Jones has written extensively, contrasting the *agape* self-sacrificial love of Jesus with the self-centered, egotistical love of self that always asks, "What about *me*?" Centuries before the Incarnation, Plato had written that God is *eros*, the love that focuses on self. A whole segment of Christianity is caught up in the web that takes for personal benefit, and gives only if there's a perceived blessing attached.

Our God is *agape* — self-giving, sacrificial Love, the Love that has power to *change* us! How our Lord Jesus yearns to loosen our grip from the "love-that-grabs" so that our spiritual hands can open up to give as He gives!

- Can you think of any areas of your life in which the "What's in it for me?" or "What will happen to us if we follow the pilgrim path?" questions are hindering your desire to press on?

25. Much-Afraid paused on the bridge ...

As she got ready to cross the bridge that left the valley behind, Much-Afraid saw that "the Valley looked very green and peaceful, while the mountains...towered above them like gigantic and threatening ramparts." In your journeying with Jesus you'll probably be tempted to look back longingly through a rose-colored lens of what you're leaving behind. The leeks and onions of your own Egypt may start to look tantalizingly favorable when you consider what it might take to press on into the unknown.

Scan the Book of Exodus and mark how many times God *tested the hearts* of His people. Then note how often they responded by looking back at Egypt with longing. God had warned them that He would test their trust in Him to reveal whether their hearts would be inclined to keep His ways: *"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years,* ***to humble you and to test you*** *in order to know what was* ***in your heart****, whether or not you would keep his commands"* (Deu. 8:2).

Our Father puts you into situations of potential stress to expose what's in your heart. Will your trust withstand the heat so that the dross can be consumed and your love be purified as fine gold? Or, will He find doubt and self-preservation holding you back, resisting His fires of cleansing, and grumbling that He's too hard on you?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

No stranger to the assault of doubts, Peter was able to respond with encouragement to those undergoing fiery trials of grief and distress: *"The purpose of these trials is so that your* ***trust's genuineness****, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be* ***judged worthy*** *of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus the Messiah"* (1 Peter 1:7).

How often have you been assailed with thoughts that God must be punishing you, or that you must have sinned because you're undergoing such dire circumstances? Set your heart at rest! If the Spirit is not convicting you that you've sinned, and your journey partner doesn't have any insight in case your own heart is not hearing accurately, then look at this trial as a means of identifying with the sufferings of Jesus so that you can share in His glory!

In our June/July 1999 newsletter entitled *"Crossing the Jordan"*, we address the issue of pilgrimage and the importance of crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. It might be helpful if we recount the revelation God gave us after we'd traveled 8,000 miles around the country visiting people who were trying to establish the Hebraic foundations in their lives:

> My people today are like the Israelites whom I brought to the Promised Land. Each person who has put trust in My Son was once in Egypt. Their idols of human pursuits kept them in captivity. Those who sought truth have left Egypt. Through a variety of experiences I have been leading them through the 'Sinai desert'. Many have been hurt in different faith communities. Sadly, they do not see the hurt as part of My plan for them.
>
> During this trip around the country you are encountering many who are approaching the shores of, or who are in, the Jordan River. Through this trip I am sending you and Sue back from the Promised Land to the shores of the Jordan. You cannot enter the river yourselves or cross back over it, but you can speak from the shore to those who are on the opposite shore or in the river.
>
> The Jordan River is the *demarcation* between the Sinai and the Promised Land. The Sinai is a time of testing to see if My people will grow in their trust of Me. There are many who remain in the Sinai and refuse to enter the river. Some of these, as they've approached the Jordan, have decided to try one last religious venture, believing that they will finally experience what they've been seeking all throughout the Sinai. A few, in error, believe that seeking signs and wonders pleases Me. They are deluded — they only please themselves.
>
> Others have been trapped in the Sinai because they've blindly followed their clergy. But as these clergy have approached the river, they've realized that once the people cross over to the Promised Land they'll live *in union with Me* and *with each other*. The position and control they've had over My people would then be broken. Instead of leading them across, many clergy lead them along the opposite shoreline of the river. They point across the river to the things of the Promised Land but won't let anyone cross. They convince the people that **seeing** the Promised Land is the same as **living there**.
>
> Still others *stop themselves* from entering the river because they're held captive by the bitterness and betrayals they experienced in failed relationships in the Sinai. Rather than seeing their suffering as part of their Father's character development into My Image, they continue to resent the people and events that hurt them. Therefore I leave them prisoners in their own manmade cells in the Sinai until they humble themselves, repent, and forgive as I forgive. ***No married couple who enters the Jordan will set foot on the shore of the Promised Land unless both of them do so in union together***

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

The covenant relationship established through marriage is a physical representation of the union you share with the Spirit through Jesus. Just as you would have no spiritual power apart from His union work in you, neither will you find the power of the Promised Land without your marriage union partner if you're married.

You may be thinking that given the current state of your marriage, this is hopeless. BUT NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD! He is well able to strengthen, comfort and sustain you as He changes you and as He changes your spouse.

Keep focused on His faithfulness, and follow through on what He tells you. And keep in mind that He may choose to speak through your spouse (remember Balaam's donkey?), so don't discount the condition of your *own* heart to be ready to receive from whatever instrument He chooses to use.

Remember: Our Father tests your faith in the Sinai to expose and burn away the dross of distrust in Him. Your propensity to yearn for the comforts and familiarity of the world and how things used to be is the dry sand of Egypt. But your continued trusting obedience will lead you across the Jordan *if* you are willing to cross it under the terms *He* desires.

- What areas of God's testing are going on around you right now? What do you think God wants you to learn through these times?

- If you're married, are you and your spouse "on the same page" insofar as desire and willingness to cross the Jordan together? As you discuss this, determine what's holding you back and how you can overcome the obstacles.

Self Evaluation

Doubt and Trust

Circle the number that typifies you. Discuss with your companions on the journey your reasons for placing it where you did.

Doubt ◄ 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 ► **Trust**

26. As these scenes rose before her; 27. Then, as she looked up in his face ...

Many of the trials and tests in your life are unexpected intrusions. Keep your focus on Jesus, and don't let yourself concentrate on your circumstances. Much-Afraid knew what she (and all of us) must do when we are tempted to look back: "I will *trust* you and *do* whatever you want."

Did you notice the connection between her trust and her response to take action? How many times have you *said* you trust Jesus but were paralyzed from taking action when His Spirit prompted you?

We have an older friend who for years told us that she wanted to be on the "front line of the faith" but couldn't because she needed to care for her ailing husband. Then the man passed. Our friend told us that the Lord had spoken to her a word, "Evangelize." We've prayed daily that she will have eyes to see the many daily opportunities He's raising up around her, and that she'll follow through in obedient trust. How easy it is to give way to the lethargy of inactivity rather than step out in faith!

As parents, it was a wonderful joy when we knew our son trusted us to guide him rightly. Even though we fell short so many times, it was a delight when we could see God using us to help shape his growth and understanding. That's why it was all the more painful when he chose to *distrust* our counsel and had to suffer the painful consequences of choices we knew couldn't succeed. If you're a parent, you perhaps know what we're talking about here.

This distrust issue impacts marriages as well. A man truly feels respected when he experiences trust from both his wife and his

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

children to make decisions that benefit the whole family. Almost as painful as having an unfaithful wife is the hurt a man feels when he *doesn't* experience the respect that trust gives him.

Certain elements of western Christianity are encouraging wives to act independently of their husbands, particularly if the woman feels she's "more spiritual" than her husband. Alongside that is the intense control of peer pressure even on Christian children that tries to override the counsel of fathers. Both situations have robbed many men of the respect due them in their homes.

Instead of coming home from work to the joyous welcome of their wives and kids, many men feel as though they're imposing on the preordained schedules of commitments and lessons and meetings that leave no time for his input or involvement. His wife and kids have cemented their lives into obligations and activities that have eliminated the family mealtime together. (And we realize that sometimes this chaos is husband-driven, too.) That runaway treadmill shreds the well-being and harmony that your home is supposed to provide. Sometimes a man can feel as if his home, as it is, is the *last* place he wants to be to find peace!

- Wives, picture yourself on the bridge as Much-Afraid. Would the Shepherd be able to praise *your* eyes as beautifully full of trust that He works *in and through your husband* to teach you to trust His loving sovereignty? How can you show your husband in very real ways that you do respect him as Jesus would have you?

- Are you feeling alone right in the middle of your family life? Is there anyone with whom you can talk about it? Ask our Lord to reveal to you the root of your loneliness.

28. In a very short time... through **32. "No, they are not dumb"...**

When your life is manageable and you feel like everything's going great, your response to our Lord is generally different than when you're desperate. You're probably quick to hum songs of praise in your heart and exult in your peaceful state when all is running smoothly. But just let a "steep and difficult" obstacle crop up, and you shiver under the cloud cover and reach out for help! That's when you need the strong arms of the companions He's given you in your loadbearing relationships. They can't take away the problem, but they can encourage and strengthen you to trust in the One Who can!

Mike: Sometimes as Sue and I labor to share with others the things our Father has put on us to write, we get overwhelmed by discouragement. The enemy sneaks alongside to whisper, "Your work is fruitless. No one's being impacted to seek after Jesus by what you're writing. You're not really hearing from God."

You can bet I cry out to our Lord! And then He faithfully stirs a precious brother or sister to call with a word of strengthening encouragement to press on and keep trusting Jesus! Or an email arrives from someone we've never met who has made radical changes in his/her life as our material has confirmed what the Spirit has already been prompting him/her!

What a wonderful promise from our Lord that He indeed has companions for each of us on the journey, especially when the path is rock-strewn and treacherous.

- Can you recall a time when you were on a steep and difficult place, and someone unexpectedly stopped by or called or sent a card that lifted your heart in grateful thanks to Jesus?

- When was the last time our Lord prompted you out of the blue to be a voice of comfort,

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

strength or encouragement to someone? How did you follow through? How did the person you contacted respond?

33. They are good teachers; indeed, I have few better ... through **35. "I can't go with them"...**

Much-Afraid is given the same traveling companions imparted to every follower of Jesus. While Sorrow and Suffering are conscientiously avoided in the pleasure-bent Hellenistic Christiandom of today, they really are God's very effective way to grow in Christ-likeness.

Even before He was incarnate, Jesus was prophesied to be the *suffering* Messiah: *"He was despised and rejected by men, a* ***man of sorrows****, and* ***familiar with suffering****. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was* ***despised****, and we esteemed him not"* (Isa. 53:3).

Following that same theme the writer to the Hebrews identified Jesus as the One Who *suffered* to bring His followers to peace with our Father: *"In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation* ***perfect through suffering****"* (Heb. 2:10).

Is it any wonder that we who choose to follow our Lord must embrace our Father's pattern to perfect *our* faith? *"To this you were called, because Christ* ***suffered for you****, leaving you an* ***example****, that you should follow* ***in his steps****"* (1 Pet. 2:21).

Earlier we mentioned the precious privilege of calling our Father "Abba". Now gnaw on the rest of the passage: *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,* ***if indeed*** *we* ***share in his sufferings*** *in order that we may* ***also share in his glory****"* (Rom. 8:15-17).

What does suffering do to help us in our walk? Suffering is to us in many ways what the confining shell is to a chick. The need to break out of our complacent security strengthens our development in patient endurance. Isn't this what Paul is trying to tell us?

> *Not only so, but we also* ***rejoice in our sufferings****, because we know that*
> *suffering produces* ***perseverance****;*
> *perseverance,* ***character****;*
> *and character,* ***hope****.*
> *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has* ***poured out his love into our hearts*** *by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us* (Rom. 5:3-5).

In modern parlance, ***"No pain—no gain."***

Isn't it wonderful of our Lord to *veil* our suffering until it coincides with His timing? What if you knew *in advance* all that you'd endure during your pilgrimage of transformation? You might never leave the Valley! How merciful of the Shepherd to veil Sorrow and Suffering at the beginning of the trip until Much-Afraid learned to lean on them for strength.

If you are misjudging some of the suffering you're going through, this story we shared in a newsletter years ago may encourage you:

It was good!

A king in Africa had a close friend he grew up with. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, 'This is good!'

One day the king and his friend were out on a hunting expedition. The friend would load and prepare the guns for the king. The friend had apparently done something wrong in preparing one of the guns, for after taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off. Examining the situation the friend remarked as usual, 'This is good!' to which the king replied, 'No, this is NOT good!' and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

About a year later, the king was hunting in an area that he should have known

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

to stay clear of. Cannibals captured him and took him to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to the stake. As they came near to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone who was less than whole. So untying the king, they sent him on his way.

As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend. 'You were right,' he said. 'It was good that my thumb was blown off.' And he proceeded to tell his friend all that had just happened. 'And so I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this.'

'No,' his friend replied, 'this is good!'

'What do you mean, "this is good!"? How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year?'

'If I had NOT been in jail, I would have been with you!'

- Write several sentences to explain how you deal with sorrow, suffering, and life's setbacks. Can you think of a particular situation in which something that started out as a setback proved in the end to be a blessing?

- Has your suffering brought you closer to our Lord Jesus, or made you more guarded? Have you stored up memories of your own victorious suffering so you can encourage others in their suffering?

36. A strange look... through **38. She looked at him piteously ...**

If anything, those who have grown in their trust in our Lord learn this: How very sovereign He is in all things! Peter and the other Eleven were at a crossroad. Jesus had spoken a difficult word about his body and blood that had caused all the other disciples to walk off, leaving this little band alone with the Master. What doubts must have assailed them at that point!

And then... Jesus asked that most poignant of questions: "Don't you want to leave, too?" The angels held their collective breath. Would Messiah be forsaken even by His closest friends? Peter spoke for them all. *"Lord, to whom would we go? You have the word of eternal life. We have trusted, and we know that you are the Holy One of God"* (John 6:68,69).

Even though she was robed in fear and doubts about the unknown future, little Much-Afraid could not deny the reality of the Shepherd and of His call upon her heart. Nor can we: "Then [we] looked at the Shepherd and suddenly knew [we] could not doubt him, could not possibly turn back from following him... Even if he asked the impossible, [we] could not refuse."

There is always *peace of soul* when you choose to trust Jesus. Conversely, you'll never find peace without trusting Him:

> *Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was [God] angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would* ***never enter his rest****if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were* ***not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*** *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands,* ***let us be careful*** *that none of you be found to have* ***fallen short*** *of it. For we also have had the* ***gospel preached to us,*** *just as they did;* ***but the message they heard was of no value to them,*** *because those who heard* ***did not combine it with trust*** (Heb. 3:16-4:2).

God's sovereignty, His wondrous love, His omnipotence, and all His other attributes add up to only one issue: Can you trust

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Him for **Who He is**? Well, do you? Is He truly the revealed God of the Bible to your heart, or is He some far-off deity you doubt so that you can wallow in your fear and worry? Why not memorize the prayer that set the course of obedient trust for Much-Afraid: ***"Help me to trust you as much as I long to love you."*** Your trust becomes a *growing experience with our Lord* when you make the decision to trust.

- Ask yourself just where you would be now if you hadn't followed Jesus. Can you now feel a sense of compassion for those who have yet to encounter Him?

- What is the most recent crossroad you've encountered that caused you to *have* to trust Jesus because you had no other recourse? When the crisis was over, how could you recognize that He had intervened?

39. As he heard these words the Shepherd suddenly lifted his head and laughed ...

Can you imagine what it's like for our Lord to hear you express your trust in Him? How beautiful it must be for Him to hear these words, "I want to trust you as much as I love you" when you're facing a choice to doubt or to trust Him. That's because He knows the victory to which your trust will lead!

*"For in Christ Jesus...**The only thing that counts is trust expressing itself through love**"* (Gal. 5:6). Trust can be contagious, because it expresses the abiding peace and joy that a loving walk in Jesus brings.

Sue: I taught conversational English to international women at a nearby university. Most had little opportunity to get together with other women as their husbands were busy graduate students. Many of these women were from Mainland China, and most had little knowledge of Jesus.

Every so often one would mention a political or social issue and ask what I thought about it. Realizing that most people raised outside this country were told that America was "Christian", I knew I needed to be specific. So I would respond, "As a *follower of Jesus*..." That little phrase of identification often prompted followup discussion of what it really means to be a "Christian." And what joy when some asked me to teach them about Him personally from His Word so they might encounter Him too!

- When you picture Jesus, what expression is on His face? In His voice? Describe your impressions of Him.

- Would your description of Jesus or your accounts of Him in your life attract others to seek Him?

40. When the last note had faded ...

So often throughout the Bible the Lord tells us to *"fear not."* <u>We don't really know what trust is until we face something to fear.</u> One of the most common fears people have is that they will be put to shame. We have encountered so many Christians over the years who have been imprisoned by fear that if they *publicly* identified with Jesus, they'd be shamed or mocked.

Have you ever missed an opportunity in which the Holy Spirit was prompting you to say something about Jesus or to pray with someone at that very moment, but you didn't open your mouth because you were uncertain of the response you'd receive?

Sue: I feel *awful* when a chance to bring praise to Jesus or hope in Him to someone slips by. Recently I was seated on a flight next to a young man who revealed his difficult work schedule. He and his wife had been married for four years and were in DEEP credit card debt. Recogni-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

zing their pit and anxiously wanting out of it, they'd agreed for him to work at a good-paying job that required him to be away on alternate weeks. Both were exhausted, and she desperately wanted children.

I periodically tried to interject testimony of how God had helped us, and gave some counsel regarding his situation, but he didn't seem to respond. BUT, instead of asking him if he'd like me to pray for him to Jesus then and there, I just shrugged inwardly and opened my book. He fell asleep, and I was nagged by the thought that I'd missed an opportunity.

When the plane landed, he woke up and gathered his stuff to deplane. I probably could have stopped him at that point and asked to pray, but I didn't... I have since asked our Lord to bring another Jesus follower into their lives, but I hope this sorrow at my own hesitation will prompt me to be courageous the next time!

Shame is linked to pride. A humble person knows no shame. Humble trust reinforces our Lord's promise, a promise that cannot be shaken: *"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and* ***the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame"*** (Rom. 9:33). Let's trust His prompting to represent Him by name so that others will encounter Him in us!

- Do you often experience feelings of shame that hinder you from the following through on the Spirit's prompting? When was the last time you kept your mouth shut when you *knew* He wanted you to speak?

- Have you considered that God is addressing your *pride* as you experience shame? What do you purpose to do to change this?

41. Much-Afraid stood quite still ..., 42. "Others have gone this way"...

Do you remember this one portion of the *Step-by-Step* poem we shared at the end Chapters 2 and 3?

> One step thou seest—then go forward boldly,
> One step is far enough for faith to see;
> Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
> For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

True humility-based trust in God is concerned with choosing the step He's giving you and then taking that one step. Trust will keep you from being concerned with the *outcome* of where that step will lead.

Mike: I had completed my seminary degree requirements and was working as a special assistant to the institution's president while Sue was taking courses. One day the Spirit spoke clearly to my spirit: Leave your job and move back to Connecticut. I'm going to take your father home soon."

My dad had suffered from a serious blood disease, and only painful transfusions were keeping him alive at that point. I shared with Sue as well as a few close friends what the Spirit had told me. They all agreed I should move back to take care of my father until he died. Interestingly, though, a number of other Christians had angry retorts: "You're supposed to leave your parents and cling to your wife!" (Sue was staying in Massachusetts with our son to finish her semester.) "How can you provide for your family if you're taking care of your father?"

But my spirit was at rest with the one step I'd been given. I brought Dad home, and Mom and I took care of him until he passed to Jesus five weeks later. I didn't *need* to know the next step until that occurred!

Our Lord was already at work behind the scenes setting into place the next step. While I was caring for Dad, the Board of Directors from a nearby retreat center made contact with me. After Dad's passing, Sue and I took over as the center's administrators, where we'd serve for the next ten years.

- Are you a person who is known for taking one step of trust without having to know any more than one step?

- Have you been seeking God's will about a matter for some time without receiving any guidance? Could you be asking for more than our Lord wants to reveal to you?

43. She stepped for ward ... through **45. Then before Much-Afraid..**

What a relief to know that in all aspects of our lives, Jesus the Shepherd *leads the way*! To the extent that you call on Him in trust to show you your next step, He'll reveal it. He's gone there before, no matter *what* you encounter. That's why He endured life in the flesh as we do, so that no trial or temptation could confront you that He hasn't endured.

Just as He promised His disciples, He repeats to you: *"My peace I leave with you."* His peace never evaporates or gets used up! Your decision point is, "Do I appropriate that which the Spirit of Jesus so unfailingly offers me, even (and especially!) in my sorrow and suffering?"

Again, we are faced with a choice of whether or not to press on. The Hebraic Restoration is an obedience-based walk with our God. Your trust-filled obedience and growing love for our Lord is what makes you a true follower of Jesus. Are you ready to prayerfully say to our Lord Jesus, "I will go with you. Please lead the way."?

- On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your level of hope at this point that He will transform your character into His likeness as you press on?

46. When they could see him no longer...

In the next chapter Much-Afraid encounters pride. How important, then, is the warning of that final truth: "The development of hind's feet is a secret process, demanding that there should be no onlookers." That doesn't mean that you can't share what you're learning with others.

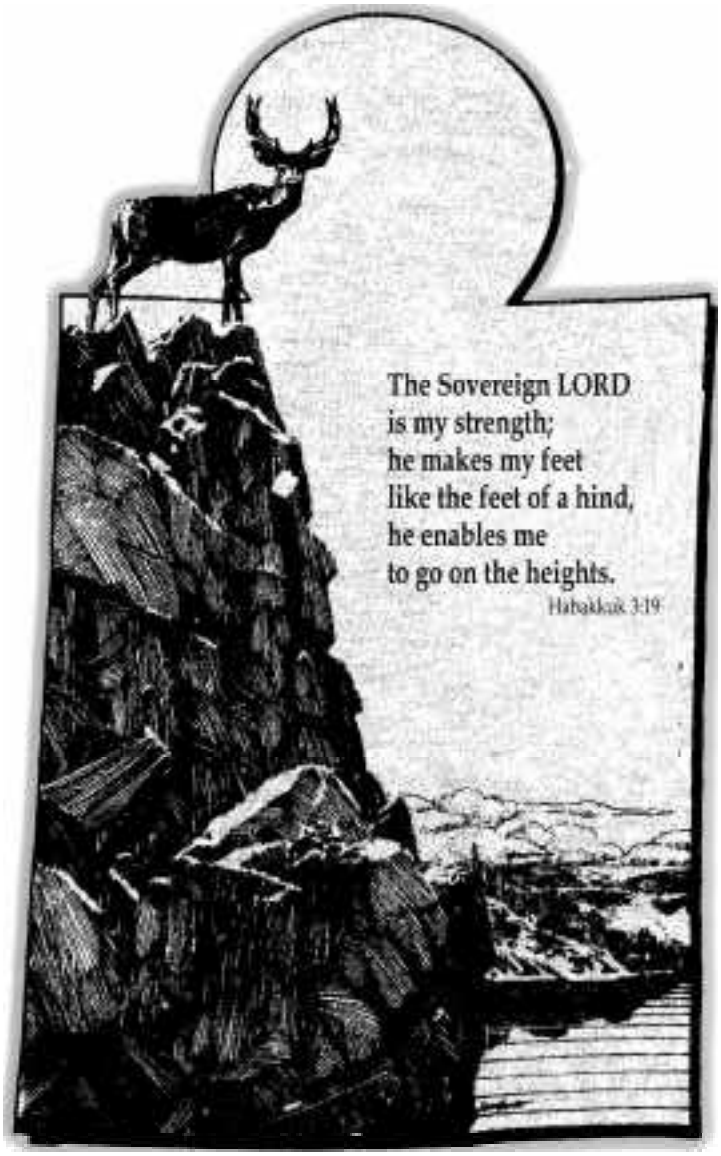
But exercise the humility to realize that our Shepherd's work in each of His sheep is going to be very unique. What He does in you may be different than what He does in your spouse or journey partners. Don't birth expectations that everyone else should be learning at the same rate *you* are! Remember, true testimony reveals what *Jesus* is doing, not what *you're* doing!

Humility knows no fear, only loving servanthood — the willingness to show selfless hospitality to others. Before we begin our next chapter, why don't you and whoever is going with you discuss and explore the importance of *walking humbly* with your God.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 5 *Encounter with Pride*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

Pride is much more than a five letter word. It is the very essence of Satan, whom the Bible indicates wanted to be worshiped as God. There's no indication that his desires have changed, although his dire end is disclosed ! He is the embodiment of the anti-Christ spirit that John tells us is now operating to seduce the world into worshipping our adversary.

There is no middle ground here. Either you worship our Father *in Spirit and in truth*, or by default your life worships the prince of the power of the air.

Pride touches the core of our earthly identity. It is part of our ego, the driving force behind our quest for recognition, importance, and feeling good about ourselves. Pride affects all humans to one degree or another. But in Jesus Christ, pride becomes confronted by His desire that we learn humility — to esteem others above ourselves, and to serve them in His Name.

Foreign to our human nature, Sorrow and Suffering are indispensable in producing true humility of heart. Some of you, especially if you're married, are finding tensions being aroused along this journey, perhaps even to the point of irritation and anger. But as sure as you may feel about your own particular viewpoint, it's *pride* at work in you! The differences you're confronting aren't your real problem, the *negative feelings* are.

Let's go on into this chapter and see how Much-Afraid's encounter with pride taught her an unforgettably painful lesson.

Chapter 5 *Encounter With Pride*

1. From the very beginning...

As Much-Afraid discovered to her dismay, the steepness of the path obliterated any "rose garden" mentality she may have imagined regarding her journey. The ascent to Christian maturity surprises you with both joy and complications. Our Father has designed your life pathway so that you will both need Him and need others — journey companions — so that you'll be stretched. If you could walk in triumph alone you'd never understand the interconnectedness of the Body of Christ and the interdependency of your spirit to Jesus and to each other.

Much-Afraid didn't realize that she was part of a strong three-fold cord with her two companions. (You, as well, have such a cord with your partner(s) and with the Spirit of Jesus!) Her companions were *available* to assist her, but she had to choose to receive their aid.

Her interaction with Sorrow and Suffering was not intended to frustrate and drag her down, but to draw her onward and lift her spirit upwards. It's really a matter of perspective, isn't it! What you might perceive as punishment from God or attack from the enemy may really be a refining fire so that your disbelief in Him can be burned away.

Much-Afraid, as well as we, needed to understand that our loving Father's intent is to conform us to Jesus. Since He walked the path of suffering to achieve His goal, we too must follow in His steps. (This is a good time to pause and ponder 1 Peter 1:5-7 to reinforce our Father's goodness in helping you to mature your trust's *genuineness*.)

Much-Afraid discovered what all of us find as we begin to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. We've written in a prior newsletter about the differentiation among the "*called*, *chosen*, and those found *faithful*." In the final assessment of our Christian lives, all three are critical: *"They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his* ***called, chosen and faithful followers****"* (Rev.17:14).

A warning: Those who stop either at being called or chosen will attack those who press on in His power to be found faithful. As with Much-Afraid's relatives, people who choose to stay in the Valley of their Strongholds often attack the ones who try to leave.

This is where you need to make your life's decision: How far do you really want to go with Jesus? The *call* emanates from God.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Many may hear His invitation to life, but as the parables of Jesus so poignantly reveal, many get sidetracked into the pursuits of this world.

So many responded at first with zeal to follow Jesus, but after His discourse regarding His blood in John 6, many of His *disciples* — those who had responded to the call — turned away. Jesus tells us, *"For **many** are called, but **few** are chosen"* (Matt. 22:14).

A certain nature testifies to those who are found faithful:

- They *"**produce fruit** in keeping with repentance"* (Luke 3:8a).

- They are assured that *"the kingdom of God will be taken away from [the unfaithful] and given to a people who will **produce its fruit**"* (Matt. 21:43).

- They have heeded the warning of Jesus: *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you **bear fruit** unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4).

The faithful will be fruitful! The yielded of heart are available vessels for our Father to receive much praise by the work the Spirit does through these faithful ones. And that loving, trusting availability determines just how much fruit the Spirit brings forth in His faithful one: *"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop — **thirty, sixty or even a hundred times** what was sown"* (Mark 4:20).

In *God's Instruments for War*, we recount "A Parable of War" written by our friend, Paul Knight. Sue and I hope none of us gives in to the lethargy and dissipation that the coming darkness is already producing in the lives of many who say they are God's children.

A Parable of War

We were sitting outside the village frustrated. We had been enlisted to defend and win the allegiance of the members of the village for the Crown. But there seemed to be so little response to the consistent goodness of the throne. We, the soldiers of the King, were growing tired and apathy was around us like a dense fog.

It was then that we heard the blast of the horns warning us that they were advancing. The Enemy, whom we had grown to hate and despise, was advancing his troops close to the village.

We knew full well that the enemy and his workers were ruthless. They breathed the fire of hatred. As the others around us began to speak, we knew that the village we were caring for and seeking to win would be devastated. One of the female soldiers with us began to cry out in alarm for the innocent children who would be devoured in the jaws of wickedness and deprivation. Her voice cracked with fear and urgency, for she had been one of their prisoners. Her scars, emotional and physical, were still fresh.

Those around the woman, knowing that the King had prepared us with a power far beyond that of our enemy's, stood in resolve to fight. We shouted to our fellow soldiers to stand and bear arms for the King, to defend the village and to fight against the advance of the army.

We sent messengers into the village, sounding warnings again and again that the enemy would take prisoners. We testified to the tactics of the enemy and to the promised care for those who follow the King. Some followed and took up arms with us. We resolved to defend to the end those left and to continue begging their enlistment under the King's banner.

When we returned to our camp outside the village, we again tried to rally our fellow soldiers to stand and to prepare for battle. The enemy had landed and was advancing with greater strength. We could hear the hellish cries of those who were being taken and those who so joyously performed the enemy's deeds of war. From the infants to the aged, we knew that they would be trampled and put in bondage. Untold horrors would be their fate. We again cried out to our fellow soldiers to stand and to fight.

A few of us ran to our fellow soldiers and with tear-filled eyes begged them to stand and to bear arms. But the fog had grown so thick, it seemed not only to block their vision but to silence our cries in their ears. They continued to rest and to talk.

One of our comrades was again explaining

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

how to fight, how to use weapons. He was explaining the need to defend ourselves and the people of the village. With sweat on his brow and with great passion he began to lift our fellow soldiers up, urging them to stand. In panic he was running from person to person, propping them up, but they did not want to stand. In exhaustion, our comrade fell among them. We wept.

With greater determination we began to fight, still urging our fellow soldiers to stand. All around us the devastation, even of the King's army, began to overwhelm us. Still we cried out to stand and to bear arms for the One Who cared for us. We shouted out the names of the villagers. With fading breath we called out, "Help us, please fight with us. The enemy is here!"

Tragically, so many who hear and accept the call are never found faithful. How few go on to fight and bear fruit for the King...

- You've come to this point after leaving the Valley of your fears. What are your current trials and challenges? Who is facing them with you?

- When was the last time you were encouraged to press on in your walk with Jesus so that you could be available for our Father's use of you to *bear much fruit for Him*? Are you used to hearing soothing words about Jesus meeting all *your* needs so you can "be at rest"? Has it occurred to you that your greatest peace and rest come precisely when you're walking in the purposes He has for your life to impact others for His glory?

2. It was not very long...

Three sharp realities confronted Much-Afraid at this point:

- the steepness of the climb (her life's journey)
- her own lameness ("so little trust")
- her enemies (her Fearing relatives))

That initial thrill of breaking out of complacent religious practice in order to grow in the character of Christlikeness generally loses its luster pretty quickly. The parable of the four kinds of seed in Mark 4:3-20 portrays your *depth of determination* to press on to His goal for you.

The first type of seed is filled with "me" focus: "*I'm* clean! *I'm* free! *I'm* loved!" Those are wonderful truths, but if you don't exercise diligence to fill in the ruts of your old priorities and choices with the responses of Jesus through His Spirit and His Word, then your new life will be deceptively snatched from you. Satan doesn't give up His possessions easily!

Other enemies burst the bubbles of joyous trust in the second type of seed. When troubles or persecution come your way because of your relationship with Jesus, you falter. Your friends might call you a rebel or religious fanatic and scorn you. With no rootedness in Him, you fall away and become inoculated against the Gospel: "Been there, done that" is your cynical attitude when someone else shares Jesus with you. The path you embarked on became too steep for you, and your spiritual lameness was insufficient to keep your heart yearning for Jesus.

Worries, wealth, and worldly desires can choke any potential for fruitfulness from the third type of seed. You may be like Peter, confident that you are a trusting disciple. But then swells of doubt wash over your trust as worry and anxiety squeeze your heart. You begin to doubt that He's even listening, much less that He'll answer.

Whenever you sense distance between you and your heavenly Father, cry out to Him for help immediately! When you feel as though He's far off, you're not only extremely vulnerable to attack, but much more likely to listen to accusatory voices. When you decide not to embrace the sorrow and suffering He's designed for your character development, you leave open your heart door to attacks of pride and self-sufficiency.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Are you more concerned over your well-being, security and reputation than you are about being available to Jesus anywhere, anyhow, to any person He directs you?

- Do you secretly resent your husband for not stretching financially for a roomier house, newer car, nicer furniture? Do you secretly resent your wife for not being content to live within the means of your income? Do you secretly resent our Lord for withholding from you a longed-for perceived need?

3. To explain this we must..., 4. Who was Much-Afraid...

Being "singled-out" is very special, whether as a child picked for a team, a teen writing a winning essay, or an employee receiving recognition for a job well done. Being among the "called, chosen and faithful" of our Lord Jesus is the most wonderful singling out there can be!

To be singled out for inhabitation by His Spirit and then joyfully sharing in the work He's prepared in advance for you to do is a life that shines, overcoming the world's darkness in your personal realm of relationships. That way you never have to fear looking over your shoulder at what you've left behind for His sake!

- What stands out in your life as an honor, event, or achievement in which you were singled out in a positive way? How did you feel at the time?

- Were you ever singled out in a painful way for your ethnic heritage, your appearance, a personality quirk, or a failure to perform adequately? How did you feel during that episode?

- How did the positive selection impact your self-esteem? your involvement in other activities or relationships? the response of your family, friends, coworkers toward you?

- How did the negative singling out impact your self-esteem? your involvement in other activities or relationships? the response of your family, friends, coworkers toward you?

5. So it happened...

"Did you hear about so-and-so?" That has to be one of the most common conversation openers that ever greased the gossip skids. Whether you know the pinpointed person or not, you're likely to be showered with TMI — Too Much Information, as our niece calls it — unless you exercise these key habits. Refuse to listen to the morsel; instead, ask the one speaking to join you in meeting with the subject to determine if the information is true. The Bible is very clear about the evil that the tongue can perpetrate, especially through slander and gossip. So watch your tongue as well as your *heart*, because that's where those sinful thoughts originate! (Mark 7:21)

Be especially vigilant against so-called "prayer needs" that are gossip in disguise. You know what we mean: "Please pray for my husband, he's hooked on pornography." "Please pray that my boss stop treating me so badly." Or the classic, "Please pray for my parents to come to Jesus — they've treated me and my husband so bad by ...."

Do you see what's wrong with this picture? Are YOU able to contact the maligned individual to understand the WHOLE story and thereby help bring about reconciliation? As Proverbs 18:17 reminds us, *"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward to question him."* What might

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

seem to be a prayer request is *slander* because you haven't verified the validity of the statement! Be careful in what you hear or read or send via the phone or the Internet. Lots of people can take up an offense on your behalf against someone they've never even met when all they're hearing is one-sided information!

If you and those with you on the trip have freed yourselves from demonic strongholds, you can bet you're receiving considerable demonic scrutiny. Satan has lost the influence in your life he once had, and now you're on the journey that will enable you to be more useful to his enemy, Jesus Christ.

The strongholds of others who were once close to you in the Valley of your Strongholds are now being agitated to hinder your trip. Satan knows your weaknesses and will send messengers to turn you from the journey of transformation.

In *Restoring the Early Church* we recount a fictitious satanic meeting called to halt the progress of the suffering, persecuted early Church:

> In the third century Satan must have called a BIG meeting with his demons. Hades 1, he probably called it. Since persecution had failed so miserably, this diabolical council needed to develop a new strategy to undermine the life of the church...The objectives were clear: The plan would have to diffuse the self-sacrificing love that carried the church through conflict, distract it from intimacy with God, and devalue the importance of the individual believer...Someone came up with a very simple idea: 'Trying to keep it small hasn't worked—let's make it big!' What would happen if the church suddenly became acceptable? Many would come just for social reasons. They would quickly dilute those who are really in God's clutches. And imagine all the programs and activities they would have to plan to keep those people happy. Nothing chokes out intimacy as well as busyness. The church would eventually become a machine, chewing up individuals instead of loving them. They couldn't possibly teach all the followers to walk with God personally, so they would soon substitute rules and guidelines for His ever-present voice. The machine would have to be run by professionals. The others would become nothing more than spectators and bill-payers. (from *The Naked Church* by Wayne Jacobsen)

Satan wouldn't be beyond giving you worldly success to rob you of your childlike dependency on your Father. Don't let *circumstances* be a way of determining whether you think God is pleased with you. Our persecuted brethren around the world would differ with you vehemently!

- When was the last time you were on the disseminating end of a tidbit about someone else, even if it was disguised as a "prayer request"? When were you on the receiving end? Has the Spirit been speaking to you about making some changes in this regard?

- Have you ever been the *subject* of a slanderous attack and found out about it? How did that affect your relationship with those who you know heard the slander or passed it on without talking with you about it?

6. A great consultation went on...

Much-Afraid's relatives had no qualms about resorting to plots to turn her loyalty away from following the Shepherd. Did they think they were doing wrong in this scheming? No!

You'd be amazed at the number of scheming plots that take place in the Bible. Jesus was plotted against repeatedly by religious authorities. And Paul! Hardly a chapter goes by after we first encounter him (post-conversion) in the Book of Acts that someone isn't out to destroy either him or his reputation!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Today's plots aren't confined to politics, businesses or criminals. Any time you take an unpopular righteous stand in an unrighteous situation, someone's going to try to discredit you. *How you respond* to that attack is key to your spiritual progress.

Our Lord is sovereign. He could intervene at any time to expose the plot, reveal the truth and vindicate you. But then His higher goal of spiritual maturity in your life would be stunted. Some things you just have to go through, as we see in Much-Afraid's case. Remember this if you recognize that plotting has been or is going on against you: Our Father wants only what is best for you, and can turn the most unpleasant situations into gold for your character!

- Can you think of a time when a plot was planned or enacted to tarnish your reputation or remove you from a position of influence?

- How did the outcome change your life, both your inner person as well as your life circumstances? Looking back, how would you describe God's involvement to bring about a change for your good?

7. In the end it was unanimously decid - ed...,8. Besides, it was a well-known fact...

What is it about pride that brings about our Father's resistance? Our culture idolizes feeling good about yourself and getting noticed. That's why so much advertising is based on the premise that if you have their particular product, you'll attract admiration and have reason to elevate your self-appraisal.

But that horizontal focus leads down two very slippery slopes of comparison. If you succeed in gaining attention for who you are and what you have, you'll esteem yourself higher than others, a trap Paul warns against in Romans 12:3. Your self-evaluation should be according to the measure of trust God has given you, based on Kingdom values with Jesus as our standard.

If you come up short in your comparison with others according to the world's standards, you'll be inclined to bury yourself in despair and self-rejection. Neither pride nor worldly sorrow allow you to be available for our Lord's purposes.

If you yearn to be found faithful, you'll recognize and avoid the three varieties of pride found in this verse. Pride serves only self!

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world,

- *the cravings of sinful man,*
- *the lust of his eyes*
- *and the boasting of what he has and does*

comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15,16).

Think about the implications of that passage for a moment. If any of these motives drives you, *"the love of the Father is not in you."* The very love that you desire to have cannot be yours if any of these motives is a quest in your life. Now, pause here and describe the motives of your life to your journey partner. Are they Spirit-birthed or sin-derived?

If you discover that your motives are self-serving, **Repent**. Purpose to turn from that and receive our Lord's forgiveness so you can walk on the path the Spirit wants to empower you. You can draw great strength from the verses that enjoin us to *please God*! HE gives you the will and the desire and the power to serve His purposes as a loving child. Remind yourself of His goodness and of all He's done and is doing in your life, and respond with *gratefulness*!

Your most effective weapon against the subtle attacks of pride is a robe of humility. Our Lord saw fit to mold you as the vessel He intends you to be, and for that you need

to incline your heart toward Him with thanksgiving rather than grumble about your appearance or level of capabilities. Without His strengthening presence *none* of us could accomplish His will and walk in His love!

- Do any of these pride traps — craving for what you don't have, lust for physical gratification, boasting of acquisitions and accomplishments — plague you? Are you willing to *turn from these motivations* in order to *"count it as dung and suffer loss"* if He called you to do that?

- What dissatisfaction of yourself or your life circumstances do you want to put on our Lord's altar so you can press on with thanksgiving and contentment?

9.Much-Afraid and her two companions...

Just when you feel you're progressing in character transformation, a test challenges your resolve. Maybe you've had a lifelong battle with anger but have found to your delight that you're able to recognize the former fuses that set you off. You've responded with self-control and forgiveness through the work of the Spirit. In fact, you feel so good about your progress that you're starting to wonder why others give way to anger or rage or frustration. After all, *you* aren't!

Even if it's just in your thought life, picking at the scab of anger in your neighbor when you yourself would have the same response were it not for the work of Jesus in you is PRIDE. The same goes for your response to those who have yet to encounter Jesus and His power to change lives. Don't forget what He lifted *you* out of in order to stand on His higher ground! We ALL have humble spiritual beginnings because we each were slaves to sin. To cast darts at those who live under Satan's tyranny will not win them for Jesus!

- At this point in your journey, what is the besetting sin that you're most thankful is no longer your prison?

- Have you ever found yourself despising someone else for a particular sin, wondering how they could ever do such a thing? What is the Spirit telling you about your attitude?

10. Pride himself...; 11. How do you do...

As we mentioned earlier, *distance from God makes you vulnerable*. Paragraph 10 indicates, "Yet apparently the Shepherd himself was not with her." You know that He's never more than a call for help away. But that feeling of distance can hinder your readiness to cry out to Him. Often you find yourself confronting temptation in your own strength, and wondering why you're sinking.

One of the most disarming attacks of the enemy is flattery. If there is a tinge of pride in you, those slippery words will have their intended effect. *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you..."* (Luke 6:26).

A friend once said that our strengths can be our greatest point of weakness for the enemy's attack. The arena in which you see our Father using you can become a trap if you draw your identity from that particular work. For instance, at the retreat center several younger people in particular so trusted my prophetic counsel that they started to rely more on me than on seeking out God's will themselves. God may have given me the insights but it became a trap because they weren't learning how to hear the Shepherd's voice themselves.

As our reputation at the center grew, so did the attention of those in various church leadership capacities. Those who believed that the gift of prophecy was valid for today and was helping to change lives were grateful. Those who were threatened by some-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

thing they didn't believe were agitated. It's a good thing I didn't believe all the press I was getting, because God had other plans for our lives. He intended to put the prophetic gifting on a back burner so that we could more adequately walk in His new assignment for us.

"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives" (Pro. 27:21). Be sure that you remember the Source of any goodness that has come about in your character along the way! You aren't "naturally good" even though you might be more prone to do "good things" than others are. It's only through reliance on the Spirit that you're able to bless anyone so that they can give praise to our Father in the manner that Jesus did!

- In what particular arena do you think you operate most effectively? Have you found yourself relying more on your own expertise than on the work of the Spirit to function as our Lord wants you to?

- Are there any areas in which you've thought, "I could never do *that* for God! That's not who I am!"? Are you willing to yield to His right to assign you to something in which you feel you're inadequate?

12. "Much-Afraid," said Pride seriously...

Have you ever noticed that when your life seems to be going well — no storms, no trials, no temptations to speak of — your awareness of your need for diligence to seek Jesus in prayer and His Word starts to slip?

In the fray of assaults and stress, you *know* how much you need His power and His *rhema* (God's personal guidance for you), to press on! But when the calm lull of complacency has lulled you to believe it will always be this pleasant, BE ON GUARD! The battle may not be raging in your life at the moment, but in order to press on, there will be skirmishes to recognize and confront!

Sue: Mike and I have learned to not be surprised by a wolf-pack attack after a period of rest and renewal. One or two problems might lure us into thinking we can handle them on our own. But when the bottom drops out, we're awakened to our need for more diligent prayer and insights from His Word and from those praying on our behalf!

It's comforting to know that even when we stagger under assaults, we aren't the only ones crying out for His intervention. As Peter so kindly reminds us, *"Stand against him {the Adversary}, firm in your trust, knowing that your brothers throughout the world are going through the same kinds of suffering"* (1 Peter 5:9).

- How would describe your part in the spiritual war right now: On the frontlines? In the background supporting the warriors? In the hospital recovering? On leave, relaxing? Desperate for the skirmish to stop?

- What recurrent situation most often drops you to your knees to call out to the Shepherd for His intervention?

13. "My dear cousin"...,14. Do you know what will happen to you?...

If flattery doesn't trap you, then comes the lie that "...he will abandon you altogether, and you will be put to lasting shame." <u>This is a direct attack on the character of Jesus and on your personal trust-based relationship with your Lord</u>!

Has He ever broken any of His promises to you? Of course not! He's loved you too much to give in to the old nature desires you may be coddling, so any so-called "unanswered prayers" are a lie from the enemy. He *always* answers the cry of His trusting child — but His answer is according to *His will* and what is best *from His perspective* for His beloved child!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

If you're a parent, think back to how many times you had to say "No" or "Not now" to your child. You didn't say that to hurt him! You just had greater wisdom in the matter than he did.

Satan loves to stir up doubt about our Father's faithfulness. Note the sneering insinuation to Much-Afraid that the Shepherd is "well-known to have seduced other helpless victims." If you perceive that you're a victim who is being dragged along this journey into Christlike character, then you've swallowed the lie.

If your spouse or traveling companion has to nag and drag you to pursue Him and walk in what He's revealed, then you're giving way to religion rather than to a relationship with the Shepherd of your soul.

His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It's YOUR stubborn willfulness or deceived fearfulness to change that is proclaiming to others that His path is impossibly hard!

He Who has promised to never forsake you is faithful to hold onto the hand you extend. Remember that Peter began to sink in the crashing waves when he took his eyes of trust off the Savior. You, too, will falter if, in your own "wild, desolate" circumstances, you choose not to trust. Jesus NEVER lies! Satan ALWAYS lies!

- Did you come to Jesus believing that everything from here on in would be easier — "happy ever after"? What have you learned along the way that has shifted your toddler perspective to the more mature reality that His true joy can withstand the worst trials?

- What's the worst thing that could happen to you if you pressed on in the obedient trust and love that Jeus is calling you to? Do you fear being put to shame by that "worst thing"?

15. Poor Much-Afraid tried to pull...

Once you try to fight back in your own strength you're on the devil's turf. Your carnal nature, your old fleshly domain, and his evil nature are very much alike. That's one familiarity you should pull away from as soon as you recognize it!

FLEE that pride or whatever your fleshly impulse is, and call out for help to your heavenly Father!

Sue: I can identify with Much-Afraid's struggle! I recall how torn I was between wanting ME as the boss of my life, and turning my life over to Jesus in humility to receive His forgiveness and reconciliation with my Father. Mike's sister had been so dramatically changed by Him when she repented and received His Spirit. She became one ball of fire in sharing the Gospel!

But that frightened me. I really feared that He might drag me off to Africa as a missionary if I yielded to Him! I'd never thought that I'd sinned or needed to "be saved" (talk about pride!), and I sure didn't want to give in to something I thought was "horribly plausible and true."

Praise to Jesus that He brought me to the point of peering into the wickedness of my heart — my selfishness, my anger, and yes, my pride — so that I had no doubt about His love and His offer of forgiveness and fellowship with Him. (And I was even willing to go to Nigeria had the door opened!)

- What struggle are you engaged in (or have been recently) that seems "horribly plausible and true" if you yield to the desire of Jesus to lead you onward?

- Recall an instance in which you knew He was calling you to humble yourself, even if you realized the outcome could be painful. How did it turn out? What did you learn from this situation?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

16. Did she not often find..., 17. It is a ter - rible thing...

Can you see why it's so important to take captive those thoughts that don't conform to Jesus? If you allow them to fester, they'll nibble away at your trust in His sovereignty and love! Much-Afraid started to doubt the Shepherd's lovingkindness because she felt she couldn't endure the ridicule her vain imaginings were conjuring up. She was edging back toward the "elemental spirits" that had so controlled her in the Valley (see Gal. 4:8,9).

The more you entertain the fears that Pride insinuates, the more you'll set them in mental concrete as fact — and they aren't even real! Join hands with your journey partner and renounce Pride and all its corollaries, trusting in the loving power and authority of the Shepherd to fill in that old rut with a peaceable spirit that *fears not*!

Sue and I often hear demonic whispers designed to trip us up. Yes, they frequently align themselves with thoughts that have previously crossed our minds. Demonic thoughts can build upon your own doubt or unbelief. The issue is, *How long* will you entertain thinking about them?

Our recent article, *The Hebraic Restoration Confronts the Jewish Roots Movement,* met with tremendous gratitude from some readers and with scathing counterattack from others. Some who once supported the work our Father has called us to have turned against us. But others can't thank us enough as they've seen the slavery of minimizing (or even forsaking) adoration of Jesus in favor of ritual observance that much of the Jewish Roots Movement is producing.

Because we care so much that people cling to Jesus alone as their righteousness, we're vulnerable. But this is where our Lord and our encouragement of one another are invaluable in helping us bring those nagging thoughts into conformity to Jesus.

The God-ordained fruit of spiritual warfare is to increase our dependency on our Lord and be conformed to His nature. Don't lose sight of this wonderful objective, even if you lose a battle now and then. Sometimes losses are a good thing — they make us more determined to cry out for help *earlier* and *more deliberately* when the next attack comes.

- What troublesome thoughts have lately been agitating your peace and joy and trust?

- Will you purpose to take these thoughts captive and conform them to thoughts outlined by Paul in Phil. 4:8: *"Finally, brothers, what - ever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praise - worthy — think about such things"*? What particular thoughts can you remind yourself about that fulfill these parameters?

18. "Come back, Much-Afraid"...,19. Entirely against her will...

Let's remind ourselves about our spiritual pilgrimage. Where are we going? *Why* are we going? We're not going to some geographical destination. No, most of the change that will be produced will be in the unseen areas of your heart. And your heart's circumcision will produce a way of life that's far different than your past!

The Kingdom of love is not a mythological entity like Camelot of old. That's because the love that represent's Christ's Kingdom is an *action*, not a dreamy feeling! Our Father created us in union with Jesus to fulfill the good actions He's already prepared in advance for us to do! (Eph. 2:10)

Yet He didn't call His people to be mere functionaries. Those who walk in the Kingdom of Love are in relationship with Jesus, a love covenant that He initiated. And He is building together worldwide a spiritual dwelling place for Himself composed of all who trust Him. The question posed by Pride to deter Much-Afraid is actually one

each of us needs to answer: "Is living on the High Places worth the cost you are asked to pay for it?"

If your response is yes, then He will accomplish great and mighty changes in your character as you walk with Him. The changes the Spirit effects can't help but be noticed by others: *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16). And the testimony of your changed life gives hope to them that they too can trust Jesus and find Him conforming their lives to His character.

Much-Afraid's admission is a good one for all of us: "I am seeking the Kingdom of Love."

- Today's world is full of ideologies that deny Jesus and His eternal Kingdom in heaven. Can you see how the enemy has used Pride to infiltrate all corners of our society — scientific, philosophical, religious, educational to name a few — to deny the truth of the Gospel? How might you and your family be impacted by this lie?

20. "I thought as much"...; 21, Poor Much-Afraid!...

During the transformation process that comes as part of the journey to the High Places, all of us become painfully conscious of the darkness of our own soul. None of us was born with a Christlike character! This transformation can come about only for those who embrace the sanctification journey that begins when you are born again in Spirit.

Pride's argument with Much-Afraid used the same ammunition the Pharisees of Jesus' day used against the Jewish masses. By misusing God's Word the rulers held in bondage the very ones God had designed for them to bless! Only the Temple dignitaries felt they had it right with God — and paraded their self-righteousness around for all to see,

How radical was the approach of the Rabbi from Nazareth! He welcomed with joy those who knew they were "poor in spirit", who were all too aware of their sinful unworthiness to be welcomed by God. Yet their hearts longed for Him, and that hunger led to trust. Through their heart circumcision they could bypass reliance on dead works that could never lead to salvation anyway!

Notice how cousin Pride distorted Much-Afraid's spiritual frame of reality. From God's perspective, His blood-bought children are beautiful. They're cloaked in the righteous loveliness of Jesus! But from the world's standards of appraisal, the humble who recognize their need for forgiveness are "ugly and deformed."

That's the difference between those who think they're good enough to merit God's favor and those who know their total dependence on the grace and mercy of the Shepherd. His reality and the truth of His love reawakened Much-Afraid from her desperation. She knew in her heart that He had called her His beloved. Thus she could cry out for Him to come to her aid with His powerful presence!

Don't let the demonic voices cause you to believe that God is *against* you because of the darkness in your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions. Your *repentance* rather than your human strength is more powerful in the battle for your soul. Through repentance — turning from your sin to God's way — you give the Holy Spirit opportunity to work: *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 1:6).

How timely for Much-Afraid to remember the Shepherd's words, "***I*** pledge myself to bring you there, and that you shall never be put to shame." The Spirit of the Lord can bring so much about in a humble, repentant heart. Remember His promises, and refuse to battle in your own strength: "Come to me Shepherd! Come quickly!"

- How has our Lord changed your heart into that of a humble "publican", grateful that

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

He has chosen to love and redeem you?

- When was your most desperate hour? Did you think to call out to Jesus right away, or did you try to press on in your own strength first? What did you learn from your experience that can help others in their trials?

22. There was a sound of loose rattling...

As grateful as we are for the coming of the gentle Babe in Bethlehem, we're overwhelmed with awe at the scriptural truth that our Lord on high is returning as a mighty King, the Lion of Judah!

Descending on the clouds, surrounded by countless warrior angels, this God Who Is Revealed will be seen by every eye. Among those awaiting His coming there will be great rejoicing. But those who have denied Him throughout their lives and not trusted to the end will cower in fear and hatred.

The face that was "terrible to look at" from Pride's cowardly standpoint was the face of Love itself to Much-Afraid.

Recall the church buildings in which you've worshiped in over the years. How many featured statues, images or stained glass of the humble Baby and His mother, or the suffering Jesus who, for all that the sanctuary portrays, never rose victoriously from the dead? Those images are hard to displace with the reality of the unconquerable Lord whose very presence caused the apostle John to fall on His face in wonder! He IS the One of Whom all the Scriptures and the prophets testify!

A drawing of the shepherd who fights for his sheep comes to mind...

- Have you ever been in a situation in which you doubted that your Shepherd was even hearing your cry? How did His Presence break through?

- Throughout your childhood and into your teen years, what impression of Jesus did you have based on visual images you'd seen in church buildings or by the media?

- Now that you understand His Lordship as your King and Bridegroom, how has your mental image of Him changed? Are you able to envision His sovereign power and love *on your behalf* because He loves you so much?

23. "Much Afraid," said the Shepherd...,
24. For the first time...

We see in these paragraphs the Shepherd's first rebuke of His beloved Much-Afraid. *She* was the one who had chosen to resist the companions He'd given her. Then, vulnerable, she had allowed the temptation of her adversary to not only engage her

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

thoughts but to "Take her hand" and agitate her almost to the point of fleeing the Shepherd's path!

Her experience is a warning for each of us about the pattern the enemy uses to diffuse our loving obedience to our Shepherd's will. Your thought life is very powerful, for from it emerges all sorts of wayward actions. That's why we're admonished to constantly patrol our thoughts to align them to those of Jesus!

If your thoughts are allowed to run astray, they'll arouse emotions in regard to those thoughts. You may then take action based on those emotions, and finally become a slave to the perception that's locked itself into your mind like a fortress — a stronghold!

For example, perhaps you recall a past angry encounter with your father. You mull that over and begin to get agitated and maybe self-defensive. Those emotions then convince you that you're not going to make contact with him until he apologizes for hurting you. To back that up, you decide you're not even going to attend any family functions where he might be present.

Look what's happened here! That one uncaptured thought not only drew you to ire but convinced you of one-sided guilt against someone the Bible tells you to honor! Your father may not even be aware of your grudge, so you're really only hurting yourself with the unforgiveness. If you don't forgive others, then your Father in Heaven won't forgive you. (Matt. 6:15) Now you're really in hot water, just because you didn't conform that thought to Jesus' perspective!

Be careful! Much-Afraid responded to the Shepherd's gentle but firm rebuke by recognizing her need to depend on the strength of the companions He'd given to help her. But she still had to suffer the consequences of her choices to linger with Pride. Her feet smarted, but worse, her heart was chastised, "full of pain, so bitter with sorrow."

- What consequences of a choice you made to disobey our Lord's will most impacted you to not go that way again?
- What is your most recent experience in which you entertained thoughts to the extent that they agitated your emotions? What actions did you take based on those un-Christlike emotions and thoughts? Are you wiser today to recognize this devilish ploy to slime your mind?

25. She learned in this way the first important lesson on her journey upward...

Remember, pride is so consumed with self that dependence on Jesus and enjoyment of His presence is forgotten. Much-Afraid had to learn her lesson through anguish because she never anticipated that her journey would call for struggle against old enemies.

One of the facets of pride that many of us overlook is *false expectation*. You can recognize false expectation in a variety of ways:

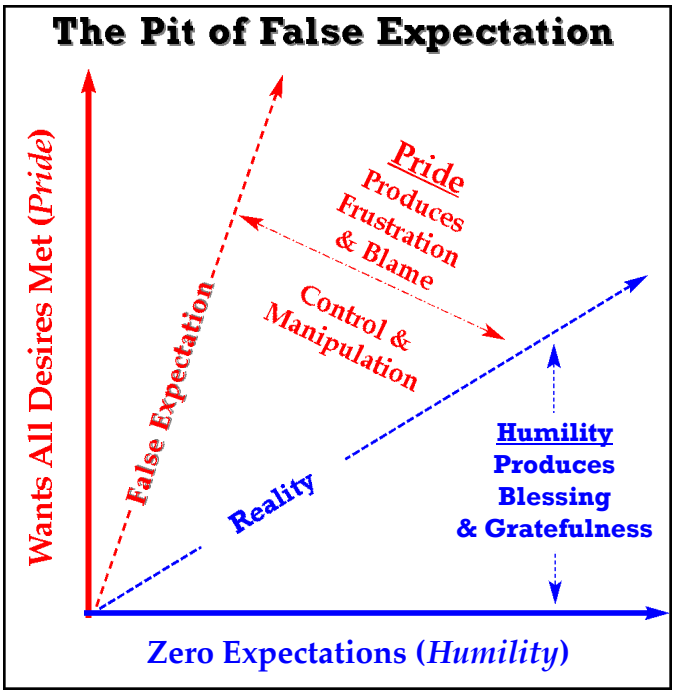
- Expecting others to act more positively toward you.
- Comparing yourself to others.
- Desiring something other than what your Father has given you.
- Ungrateful for what our Father has done for or given you.
- Finding yourself easily annoyed.

Look at the chart on the next page. The gap between Reality in life and False Expectation produces grievous results. Your attitudes fail to conform to the humility Jesus seeks in you, and you become susceptible to demonic influence. You may demand certain "hoops of behavior" that others have to jump through in order to please you.

A humble person's lack of false expectation opens up him or her to discern blessing

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

even in sorrow and suffering. Their lives bespeak gratefulness in all areas, because they expected nothing. Consider these things as you go through your day.



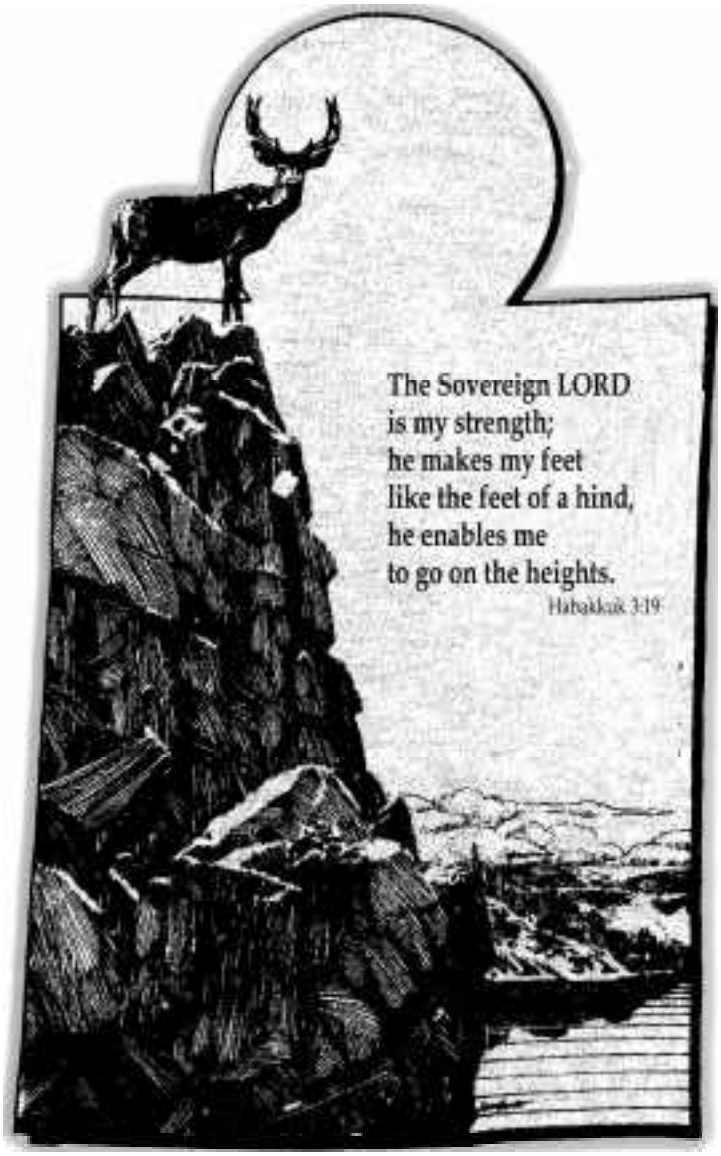
- Describe the last time you were angered, disappointed, or hurt when someone failed to live up to your expectation. Did you feel let down? How did you respond to that person?

- When you look at the chart that pictures the Pit of False Expectation, where would you put yourself? How have you (or *have* you?) grown in humility toward the zone of Zero Expectations?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 6 *Detour Through the Desert*



Restoration Ministries International

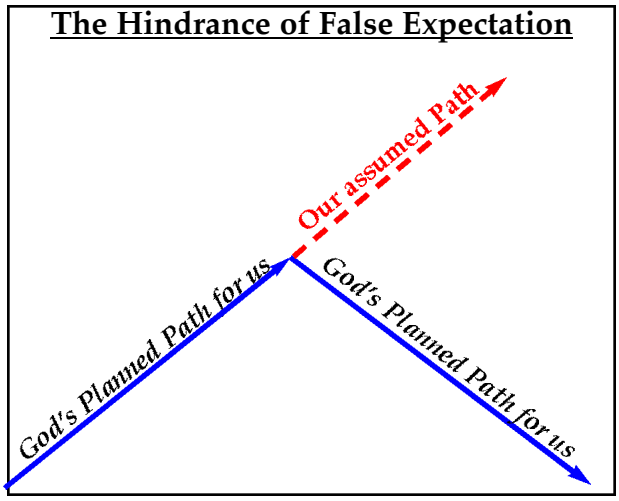
Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

Okay, let's be honest. Deserts aren't particularly scenic or appealing at first glance. In fact, they can actually be life-threatening! This is true in the spiritual deserts of our lives as well. Our journey through this barren, arid and seemingly lifeless season is necessary before we can climb upward to the High Places. We are all carrying "excess baggage" that's going to hinder us in Christlike character growth — and that's gotta go!

Traveling down into the deserts in your life often begins when you encounter *unexpected situations* that take you by surprise. Unless it's a party, few people enjoy that which they're not prepared for. We are creatures of *expecta - tions and assumptions* regarding our future. But this can be detrimental to our willing obedience to follow the Shepherd, especially if our expectations don't align with *His*



planned path for our lives. Taking that first step onto the desert trail calls for victory in the initial skirmish, that is, accepting Divine alteration to our cherished plans.

Once you accept the change to your well-thought out but false expectations, the desert itself and the pyramid can send your resolve fleeing. Your ego and independence are assaulted as you're called to discover the beauty of total submission to our Lord Jesus. We trust, however, that you'll find out for yourself that Egypt is not only needful but good!

When Sue and I were preparing to move from Parks, Arizona last year, the Holy Spirit stirred in Sue that we were "moving to Egypt." At first we perceived that the Lord was hiding us away in a place that demonic forces would never think to look:the "Protestant Papacy", Colorado Springs! Now that we've lived here for 8 months, we can see that this is also a period He's set aside for further refinement in our lives.

We don't usually write about the difficult experiences we go through. Many who live in the Valley have never let themselves follow Jesus into the desert, so they sometimes misperceive our words. But perhaps as you see how our Father has chosen to operate in one particular arena of our lives, you'll be encouraged by His faithfulness in all sorts of situations facing your own life. For instance, while we haven't had a salary since November 1982 and have little in the way of savings, our Lord has gloriously provided for our needs all these years.

Are we exceptional Christians because of this testimony? No, not at all! This is how He told *us* to live, the rhema for *our* lives, not for everyone else's. But people who live in the Valley project how they'd feel under these circumstances and get nervous for us. They think we need money! No! Our Father is our Provider, and very creative is He when it comes to meeting needs according to His riches in Glory.

Sometimes He responds by prompting particular individuals to share in His work through us. Their response encourages us that *someone* believes in what we're doing! Other times our Father shows His creative side, almost like a Dad playing with His kids. One time He indicated that we were to get rid of our van, which had become impossible for Mike's disabled Mom to get into. We needed a low, 4-door sedan. At the same time, we needed to reprint *Demolishing Strongholds*. With $300 to our name, we needed to come up with $23,000. As Sue and I began to pray, our Lord prompted a businessman from Texas to call. He offered to buy our 800 number because it spelled the

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

name of His business!

A short while later a jeweler whom we'd never met but who had corresponded with us sold a large diamond at his store. Our Lord impressed on him to send us the proceeds! Add to that a few other responses, and within 2 months we had all the funds our Father wanted us to have to fulfill His purposes for us at that point in time!

We hope you're encouraged by His faithfulness in these accounts. You'll find that you may have to return to the desert of Egypt several times in your life for further refinement. Our loving Lord needs to purge some dross in you to be useful for His further purposes in your life.

This is a pivotal chapter in your journey to follow in the steps of Jesus. The key is the *total submission of your will* to that of our Lord's if you want to hike out of the desert as "Acceptance-with-Joy".

Chapter 6
Detour Through the Desert

1. After meeting Pride...

Much-Afraid bore a painful limping reminder of her encounter that entertained cousin Pride's thoughts and opinions. Pride's exaggerated view of himself had cowed the fearful girl. She even began to believe his deceptive lies about how she should be treated by God.

Her growing apprehension in Pride's presence almost convinced her that her own unworthiness guaranteed failure in the journey. Then Pride overstepped his bounds by maligning the promises of the King. *That* spurred in her the memory of His love, and drove her to cry out to her faithful Shepherd!

Happily, Much-Afraid's companions were steadfast in their resolve to press on and faithful to offer her their strong arms for encouragement. This time she was willing to accept their help!

Like our frail traveler, you too need both a companion for the journey as well the willingness to accept the Shepherd's will to continue onward. If you decide to put on the old stiff upper lip and "hobble along painfully" in joyless misery, you'll continue to rise and fall according to your circumstances.

Much-Afraid had been called out from the worldly Valley and chosen to serve our loving Father's purposes. Naively, she (and we) thought that our walk with Jesus would be a superhighway to heaven, bypassing the inconvenient stoplights of temptation and trial.

In truth, however, all we really *know* about our journey is the point to which we have now come, and the glorious home with Jesus that we'll eventually reach. That in-between period is fraught with traffic jams that convince you you're running on empty with flat tires!

But just as true as the promised destination is His faithfulness to never forsake us. *Our* part in the faithfulness covenant is to trust our beloved Shepherd and stop resisting His will! More than that, we must cooperate with Him because He *does* love us and He *is* sovereign! He is fully aware of every rock and pothole along your way. Wrap the hands of your heart around His loving power to sustain and strengthen you so that you can begin with Much-Afraid to make "better progress."

- Which past experiences are keeping you "hobbling painfully" in joyless religious practice because you're looking back over your shoulder in fear of what others are thinking about you?

- You know you've been called out and chosen by our Father for this journey, but are you finding joy conspicuously absent as you begin this phase to the High Places? Are you beginning to feel like a martyr, as though no one around you understands?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

2. Then one day..., 3. She stopped dead...
Notice Much-Afraid's response to her first sight of the desert — "amazement and consternation." She was not only taken by surprise that the path didn't all lead to her expected goal; she was also convinced that the path would be downright hostile!

Relying on only what her eyes could see, an endless expanse of desolation, Much-Afraid recoiled. The only relief from the barren starkness were the ancient towering pyramids — no comfort at all because of their very strangeness.

Maybe that's how you see your life situation right now. Changeless, hopeless, convinced that it's not about to get better any time soon. Let me share a secret with you. The desert really *isn't* barren and lifeless!

Our Navajo friend James taught us a key lesson three years ago when we first visited him in Arizona. Accustomed to the lush green trees and verdant pastures of New England, we too recoiled when confronted with intense dryness and brown jagged cliffs of the Southwest.

One dawn James invited us to hike these brown hills — and we were grateful it was early so we could avoid the triple-digit heat! To our amazement James pointed out almost every step of the way fragile blossoms hiding in the shade of rocks, and scampering desert mammals, and tracks and scat of deer and coyotes. It dawned on us that the desert was literally teeming with life — life forms *different* from that which we were used to!

We just needed the eyes of someone who loved the desert to introduce us to a new perspective of beauty. That which is unlovely about your current circumstances may not change. But the work of the Spirit in you can change *your perspective* about your own personal desert.

What appears to be bleak and desolate may actually be a fertile field for your spirit to deepen your dependence and trust in our Father's faithfulness. He may also be wanting to open your understanding to service to Him that's removed from what used to satisfy you.

That very special morning as we hiked with James, he revealed that he knew that our hearts were growing in love with his people. He wanted to seal that love by "baptizing" us into the beloved land of the Navajo. As he rubbed the red-brown soil onto our arms, we realized that our Father was transforming our preference for "green" to a grateful appreciation for "brown" — because both reflect His glorious fingerprints!

- Are you so caught up in your narrow perspective of false expectation that you can't see any beauty in the "rocks and sand" of your life? Stop right now and ask the Spirit to open your eyes of understanding to thank Him for the beauty that is in the ashes of your difficulties.

- What idols of "green trees and fertile fields" are holding you back from receiving *with joy* the desert His sovereign hand has planted you in for now?

4. Much-Afraid looked to left...; 5. "I can' t go down there"...

How incapacitating *fear* is to moving onward on your journey! Much-Afraid incredulously viewed the unscalable walls as a barrier to her progress, completely missing the passability of the desert trail because she didn't want to go there! Her heart was set on a worthy goal — reaching the High Places with the Shepherd — but the *time* wasn't right. Her spiritually immature heart wasn't yet ready to fully serve the King.

Much-Afraid was still captivated by her misperception of the High Places as instant deliverance from her suffering and weakness! She needed an alteration of understanding that the High Places are oneness in love and trust with the Shepherd, a relationship rather than a location. She also was

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

being called to immediate willingness to overcome any obstacle that would stand in the way of pressing on in and with Him.

Your desert is part of your pathway to the High Places. Plant that reality into your spirit before you take another step! If you've been bamboozled into believing that God's grace means you should never suffer, or that you must be "in sin" because your life is so hard — cast down those lies right now! Our Father's grace means that He loves you so much that He's willing to stretch you to enable you to be conformed to the character of Jesus.

That crucial metamorphosis calls for you to walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21), the same steps that plodded paths of exhaustion, abandonment, and betrayal. The humanity of Jesus could not have drunk that sorrowful cup were it not for His absolute confidence in His Father's faithfulness to fulfill the joy set before Him. But He knew the heart of His Father and recognized that for this purpose — the redemption and reconciliation of mankind — He had become one of us.

Is your love for Jesus and your trust that our Father is mightier than your circumstances enough for you to press on, even if you can't see beyond the desert horizon of your pain? Let's look at a real life example.

Mike and I are blessed to be in a load-bearing relationship with a dear younger couple who are training up their children at home to love and serve our Lord. Sometimes the exhaustion of this responsibility overwhelms the joyous privilege. We're grateful that we are able to share with them the testimony of His faithfulness to us in educating our son at home for five years. Our stories and those of others we've encountered help them to see beyond the "sand and stones" to discover streams in their desert.

Do their circumstances change after our conversations? Generally not! But their perception is altered so that the pyramids of life which seem so foreboding become islands of opportunity rather than another Everest to scale. Look for those in your relational realm who can be bolstered by your recounting His faithful intervention!

- What little jabs are plaguing your spirit that you've perhaps strayed off your Shepherd's path because your life is so hard? Ask our Father for the "wisdom that doesn't find reproach", as James 1:5 promises, in order to discern between the self-inflicted pain of personal doubt and unbelief, and the refining fires designed to burn off dross.

- Recall previous paths in your life journey that looked impossible to follow — but then our Lord intervened mightily. What lessons did you learn about His character and your own that stirred you to praise Him when the crisis was resolved?

6. She then lifted up...; 7. "Shepherd," she said despairingly...

Crying out to Jesus is universal to all of His followers, whether we're motivated by pain, by frustration or by despair. You can count on His faithfulness to respond because of His love for you, but it will always be with *His* answer and not necessarily the one you want to hear! As Paul assured the struggling Philippian believers, ***"The Lord is near"***, as near as His Spirit in you!

Look at Much-Afraid's phraseology referring to her companions, "the guides *you* gave me." Did you catch that accusatory note of unacceptance and disownership? That stubborn resistance echoes the older brother of the prodigal son. Disclaiming any relationship with his younger brother, the angry brother confronts his father with arrogant accusations: *"This* ***son of yours*** *comes, who squandered your property with prostitutes, and for him you slaughter the fatted calf!"* (Luke 15:30).

The wise father gently but firmly rebukes his prideful son by reaffirming their relational connectedness: "This ***brother of yours***..." (v. 32.).

Was the older brother accurate in his

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

appraisal of his sibling's sins? Quite. But did he have even an inkling of the ways and character of his own father in regard to forgiveness and grateful joy? Not a bit. The gracious father laid out the reality of the lad's changed life from his relational death to life, but the older son would have none of it. His own misplaced anger justified his selfish rationale and left no room for appropriate deference to his father's will. He not only didn't see the wider picture from his father's perspective, he didn't *want* to see it!

To Much-Afraid, heading down the desert path in obedient trust was as unacceptable as humility and forgiveness were to the older son. But that resistant misperception of the truth in no way altered its reality. The desert *is* the pathway to maturity in Jesus, and your reluctance doesn't change that fact!

A wonderful song born on the wings of personal tragedy came out about ten years ago. We were in Israel at the time, rediscovering our love and appreciation for each other even as our Father was preparing a new pathway for us to serve Him. The lyrics of "God will make a way" rekindled our hope, especially as we viewed from our host's upper balcony the arid bony ridges of Judean wilderness.

> By a roadway in the wilderness He leads me, rivers in the desert will I see. Heaven and earth will fail but His Word will prevail, He will do something new today! God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see, He will make a way for me. He will be my Guide, hold me closely to His side. With love and grace for each new day, He will make a way.

You may be in a wilderness of sorrow and suffering yourself, or know someone dear to you who is struggling. Or maybe your spirit is desert-dry at the moment. Has it occurred to you that your Shepherd *is* your Guide who is holding you closely to His side? His promises are flowing gently alongside you, but you aren't seeing them because of the turbulent waves sweeping across your soul's shoals!

But Jesus never contradicts His Word! The work of His Spirit is the "streams of living water" that evidence His presence (see John 7:38,39). You need to decide to drink from them in grateful trust that He does love you enough to walk with you in your desert. He's preparing you for very particular Kingdom purposes!

- Ask Him to give you "Spirit eyes" to see those rivers of refreshment and strength in your desert. Write these down as a remembrance as He reveals them through new awareness of His creative ways of response.

- Describe a time when you were the resentful older son in the parable, grousing because you didn't get what you thought you deserved while someone else who was "undeserving" was blessed. How did our Lord reveal to you your despicable attitude? Are you still tempted to grumble from time to time about your lot in life?

8. He looked at her...; 9. "Oh, no" she cried...; 10. "No," said the Shepherd...

*"**Hope deferred makes the heart sick**but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life"* (Prov. 13:12). Whatever you long for, if the culmination or fulfillment keeps getting put off, your anxieties increase and your peace is robbed.

This waiting period can make you vulnerable to voices of despair, doubt, and conjecture about the future. You may even find yourself exaggerating about how long it will take to occur, just as Much-Afraid did: "...it may be months, even years before that path leads back to the mountain again."

If you're not trusting our Father now in

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

the present, you'll be doubly disinclined to commit to Him your future. If you find yourself conjecturing about how the future might turn out, stop and take a look at the quality of your trust in our Lord at this moment. You may need to revisit that classroom first!

Sue: How often have you wished the future was *right now*? You probably felt much as I did as a teen, moaning that you couldn't wait til that time when other people wouldn't be telling you what to do!

And then that moment came, or so I thought — college, freedom to make all my own decisions! Not quite. I discovered that I'd traded one set of boundaries (my parents') for another (course requirements). Sure, I could choose my major, for example, but within that field were very definite parameters of courses that had to be followed if I were to graduate. I could have decided to exercise my freedom and skip such delights as Kinesiology, Physics, and the ultra-boring Philosophy of Education — but then I wouldn't get my degree either.

But because of the goal set before me, I was motivated to submit to what was necessary. I willingly postponed the "freedom" I'd so longed for in high school in order to accomplish a future outcome.

Much-Afraid is on a similar path, only her classroom is the rest of her life. The decisions she makes now will set the stage for whether or not she makes it to her goal, the High Places. Just as I would not have been adequately prepared to teach physical education without enduring those courses I didn't care for, Much-Afraid has some course requirements to undergo if she's to be fully prepared for usefulness in her Shepherd's work. For the "best to become possible", what *seems* like the worst must be traversed.

- What particular goal(s) has ever been worth it to you to persevere through preparation that otherwise you would have chosen to avoid? For example, a spot on a team? A job promotion? Boot camp? Having to raise support for a missions trip?
- How resistant are you to the right of an authority person in your life to direct your path without grumbling? Are you able to look beyond that person to see that he/she represents the Shepherd in shaping yieldedness and malleability into your heart?

11. Much-Afraid felt as though...

At some point in your life you may have your own treasured mountains from which our Father has called you away. That pain in your heart was so intense, and your Father knows that! But your level of willingness to follow His will rather than your own desires is a measure of your character development in Jesus.

Sue: The year and a half that we spent on the high prairie in northern Arizona was the heart's delight of this country gal! We awoke each morning to a sunrise that filled the sky and lit up the panoramic mountains that surrounded us on three sides. And to this day I can still smell the honey aroma of the Ponderosa pine bark! Then...

Our Father had prepared another place for us — in a city of 400,000! And my heart echoed Much-Afraid: "You really mean that we [Mike and I] are to follow that path down and down [away from the high prairie] into that wilderness and then over that desert [the city], away from the mountains indefinitely?"I even experienced her "sob of anguish" in my own heart as the rental truck pulled away from the house down the long dirt road through the pines and onto the highway!

But do you know, after the "evening of pain, joy comes in the morning!" As I chose each day to trust that His love for us and His plan for us would bring greater fulfillment to my spirit than the mountains had to my soul, He soothed my heart. AND, He even revealed to us some delightful hiking trails and biking paths just minutes from our city home!

A thought to consider for your own desert experience: Part of His loving kind-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ness to you may be that He *hasn't* shown you how long this dry season will last! If you know in advance that it was going to be very long, you might give up right now in despair. If it was about to end soon, you might have a "short-termer's" attitude like an eager sailor awaiting discharge and neglect the vital lessons He's teaching you right now.

- Our Father knows precisely where you'll be a year or five from now, and exactly what circumstances will be confronting you. *How* you reach that destination is up to you. What attitude adjustments do you need to make so that this present season of your life won't be squandered by regrets when it's passed?

- What treasured relationships, locales or life situations have you had to leave behind during the past year? five years? over your lifetime? Has that anguish been fully healed, or has it lodged way back in your heart to the extent that you avoid investing your heart in others for fear of painful loss in the future?

12. He bowed his head silently...

At some point in your desert experience you're going to have to realize that our Lord is not obligated to explain to you "why", or "how" all of this distress has to happen. That silence in your spirit is not *His reluc - tance* to comfort you but *your resistance* to follow through in trust on that which He's already confirmed as His will!

Remember, Much-Afraid's desert only *seems* endless. Because she was faltering in yielding her heart's desire, she's even losing her joy in her Shepherd — and He's right there with her! (Just as His Spirit is right there with and in you!) She's become more addicted to the outcome of reaching the High Places than she is in the very real presence of the One Who leaps there.

The psalmist helps put our focus on the chief matter at hand: *"**Delight yourself in the Lord** and **He will give you** the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:4). Only when Jesus is your chief delight will your desires align with His so that you indeed receive with joy what He does give you.

- What desires of your heart are most evident in your thought life? How do they align with your present circumstances?

- How have you grown in patience and in trust that endures as you've found yourself in various desert seasons of your life?

13. Then He answered her very quietly...

We followers of Jesus get caught up in *what* we are doing, or *what* we want our Lord to do on our behalf. We fall into the pit of the *what* at just about the same time our Lord is testing our hearts to see if we *love Him*. What a challenging question for the Shepherd to ask Much-Afraid (and us), "Do you *love me enough* to accept....?"

Sue: I can't tell you how many times I've gotten so absorbed in finishing a project that I've missed the emotional needs of those around me because I was so intent on the "what"! The Jesus in my husband or my son or my friends was left standing in need because I had room only for what I was doing. Don't fall into this trap!

You may feel underappreciated because you aren't being commended for all your efforts, but if the heart needs of those who depend on you are being kicked around or ignored, then what good was the "what" project you finally completed?

Mike: I wish I could say that I always give

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Him a resounding, "Yes!" but that wouldn't be true. I very often have to fight my way through attitudes of frustration and grumbling. *"Taking my thoughts captive and bring - ing them into conformity to Jesus"* is a daily exercise. I get upset with myself because of how often I have to fight through my own emotions until I yield and Jesus has hold of my ambitions. Sometimes I hear a soft word, "I'm glad you wrestled until you got the victory."

- Are you a person who gets totally absorbed in a task or activity to the exclusion of others and their needs? How do you respond when you're interrupted in your activity?

- The agape love of Jesus in you can discern between the needs you have and the needs of others, and which to respond to at a given point. When you get caught up in the "tyranny of the urgent", responding to the biggest pressure rather than to our Lord's quiet voice of guidance, how do you disconnect from that hassle?

14. She was still crouching at His feet...

Much-Afraid has tearfully grasped a vital truth — <u>love and trust are intertwined</u>. How often Jesus impressed this truth on His disciples: *"If you love Me, you'll obey My com - mands."* John, the disciple whose life was blanketed with love from and for Jesus, repeats this connection as a refrain.

Trust is the obedient outpouring of that which love commands. Your love can't be confined to a statement of creed or to your emotions alone. It must be evidenced by the obedience that acquiesces to the Beloved's voice.

Love that is revealed by obedient trust is a daily decision — in fact, a many-times-daily choice to heed our Master's will by speaking, thinking and acting as Jesus would. In fact, if only all those who wear WWJD bracelets and flash those bumper stickers really lived by *What Would Jesus Do*, followers of Jesus today would make the same impact on society as did the first century Christians!

Humility is another vital key to our pilgrimage adventure, no matter what your particular representation of that journey fleshes out to be. How our Lord yearns for us to voice and *to mean* the same humble yieldedness to His will that Much-Afraid confesses, "...I do love you, and you have the right to choose for me anything that you please."

- When was the last time you purposely considered What Would Jesus Do-Think-Say before plunging into a situation?

- Can you sense the powerful work going on in Much-Afraid's heart a she chooses to grasp the Shepherd's hand and forge ahead with Him into the fearful unknown rather than stay where she is on the sidelines of safety? What decision is facing you right now that is calling for you to "trust and obey" the Shepherd you love?

15. It was very early morning...

Darkness flees when Light enters it. The darkness of indecision can leave you in perpetual depression if you choose to let it rule you. Or, you can press on into the light the Shepherd has shown you thus far. What you have to lose is your "trembling, rebelling will." <u>Each time you choose to allow your self-preservation and and self-determination to be consumed by the fire from the Throne of grace, you're undergoing an altar experience</u>.

As with obedient trust, humble yieldedness is a lifelong heart motivation you must

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

often recapture along the journey. Just when you think you're yielded, our Lord has something else to stretch your loving-trust in Him so that we can be more closely conformed to Jesus.

Life episodes that find you yielding to your Beloved are the "altar" experiences we all encounter along the journey. To come to an altar, you must have something to sacrifice on it. By now you recognize that your sacrifice is always *something of yourself* that our Lord wants placed on and consumed at His altar. It's not so much *what* you are offering up as the *willing attitude* with which you offer it. *"The sacrifices of God are a* ***broken spirit****; a* ***broken and contrite heart****, O God, you will not despise"* (Psalm 51:17).

Sue: In the forest across the road from our retreat center was a large flat rock amidst tall trees and low bushes. One afternoon following a precious time of conviction and yieldedness of heart and will, a group of about 20 women joined me at the rock, our communal "altar". We each selected a twig to represent some attitude or behavior that our Father was calling us to cast down, then snapped our twig and placed it on the rock.

These twigs weren't "holy relics" but symbols of joyful submission to our Lord in a particular realm of each woman's heart. By picturing these twigs being consumed by His love, we were able to have a mental stake in the ground that from henceforth that area did not have rule over us.

A contrite heart doesn't make too big a deal about what he or she has placed on the altar. Humility-based love for our Lord Jesus and deep heart appreciation of what He sacrificed for us reveals our offering as insignificant — except for the loving trust that motivated it.

Maybe you need to put on your own mental altar a nagging sense of rebellion that distrusts our Father's best for you. You may even want to do this with your journey partner as a witness so he or she can remind you, if need be, that you're no longer a slave to that old-nature will!

- Are you willing to lay down your own area of rebellion or doubt or fear that that keeps you from following your Shepherd as a beloved lamb? If so, mark down this date and your circumstances as a reminder of the obedience that's been prompted by your love for Jesus.

16. "Pick it up and take it ...; 17. Much-Afraid took the stone out of the ashes...

You may not be in the habit of reflecting. Too many of us don't take the time to reflect on the *altar experiences* of our past. The Shepherd had Much-Afraid pick up memorial stones all along her journey so she'd remember her altar experiences. She, like we, need to take ownership of not only what *changes* the Shepherd has made in us, but the *manner* in which He made those changes. This is vital!

The dark little pebble left in the ashes of Much-Afraid's self-will was her own jewel of remembrance. It represented her first step into a *trust that endures*, rather than her former motivation tinged by a desire to leave the painful Valley situation behind.

Be careful that the "anguish of your first surrender" doesn't become a more vibrant memory than the lesson of yielding your loving trust to your Lord! Otherwise, you may find yourself revisiting the arena of your anguish one more time.

And don't let yourself despise this small beginning. It's what you *do* with your thoughts and reflections that matters. Beware of allowing your past perceived failures to weigh you down with a giant boulder. Instead, let your "pebble of remembrance" remind you of of the victory that was brought about as your will submitted to His.

A loving submission that *willingly* yields to His Spirit is vital to your spiritual progress. Much-Afraid needed that altar, and she had to build it with *her own hands*. That which happened on the altar—the flame that "came from somewhere"—was the work of God.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

In a similar vein, the Israelites were commanded to bring their sacrificial animals before the Lord's priest. They were required to lay their own hands on it to transfer their guilt, then kill it themselves! That way they would be bloodied themselves, intensely aware of the deadly cost of their sin.

What an impression that must have made on the children who watched this! Then the priest, God's chosen representative, offered the blood and selected parts to the Lord by fire, which consumed the meat and fat as an aroma to heaven.

Only God can "consume" our sins through the blood of Jesus our sacrifice. Our part is to trust in His shed blood on our behalf, and to receive the forgiveness that that blood bought us!

A curious command is given by our Father to the Israelites close to the outset of their wilderness journey. Moses is told to order the people to make on their garments a fringe with a blue thread on each corner. Every time they look at their corner fringe tassel they are to *"remember all the Lord's commands and obey them, so that you won't go around wherever your own heart and eyes lead you to prostitute yourselves; but it will help you remember and obey all my commands and be holy for your God"* (Numbers 15:37-40).

We all need reminders of our Lord's faithfulness to lovingly set parameters for our lives, as well as the previous situations that stirred us to violate His ways. Make sure your own "heart and eyes" don't lead you to spiritually "prostitute yourself" to set Him and His commands aside to pursue your own gratification!

- As you reflect on your altar experiences, do you cringe that our Lord may ask you to place more on His altar in the future? Or, do you cherish the character change He was able to accomplish in you at each altar along the way?

- What would be the first memorial stone to go in your little bag?

- Do you find yourself spending more time over past regrets than in gratitude for His faithfulness to forgive and to cast the guilt of those sins behind the Cross?

18. Then they began the descent...; 19. They reached the desert...

A long journey begins with the first step. The Red Sea parted at the first step of trust when Moses obediently held out his staff. The floodwaters of the Jordan River gave way at the first step of the ark-bearers. And Much-Afraid's heart was refreshed as she took her first step of descent into the desert.

Her obedient trust in the Shepherd provided the basis for the subsequent "sweetest joy and comfort" *despite* the continued accompaniment of Sorrow and Suffering. Peacefully aware of His Presence even in the midst of her uncomfortable surroundings, the Shepherd's song melted away her pain.

Study the lyrics to this song that's set to Solomon's Canticle. The loved one is a closed garden, a shut-up spring, a sealed fountain, a wasted orchard. How true of each of us, cherished by His grace yet vessels of *unfulfilled potential* to bless others!

Modern western Christianity focuses on self-fulfillment, self-esteem, self-gratification — products by which no one else is blessed. Whose spiritual thirst is slacked by a spring that's boarded up? Whose heart is refreshed by a dried-up fountain that offers no mist of comfort to a weary friend? And how can anyone even find fruit in an orchard that's run to waste by tangled vines of worldly encroachment?

Yet the Shepherd has great plans for that garden to be an aromatic essence of His power and purpose! Step out in the opportunities the Spirit brings your way so others

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

can praise the Master Gardener for the fruit He's ripening in *your* life!

Rarely does the Holy Spirit spring on you a gift that can't find use to bless others. That abundant living overflows out of His work in you to bring praise to our Father and to bring evidence of His love to others.

- What spiritual gifting has He appointed to your spirit to edify others in the Body of Christ? Peruse Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-13, and 1 Corinthians 14:1-6 for discussion of specific gifts imbued by the Holy Spirit.

- Hymns and Scripture songs focus on the faithfulness and character of our God. What songs in the past have ministered peace, joy or comfort to your heart? Replay some of these songs that so stirred you earlier and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

19. They reached the desert...

Much-Afraid's debilitating weakness diminished because she leaned on the Shepherd. While we all like the image of strolling arm in arm with Jesus, our reality puts Him in the form of brothers and sisters He sends to fulfill your needs.

Sadly, we often miss out on "Jesus" in our midst because we don't recognize Him in the people we encounter. He might be in the weary elderly woman struggling with a heavy shopping cart who rewards your assistance with a grateful smile and a squeeze of your hand. That "good feeling" you get when you've served someone He's shown you is His Spirit in you patting your spirit on the back with a "well-done."

But how about other opportunities He gives you to serve Him, such as praying for the angry driver who cuts you off? You can be the gracious presence of Jesus to him by exercising self-control and lifting that needy individual up for an encounter with Him.

Note that before Much-Afraid chose to follow the Shepherd to the desert, all she could perceive was pale hot sand. But once she got closer, she noticed shady huts of restful protection from the heat. Had she given into self-will and decided to refrain from descending the path, she would have been forever plagued by her fear to trust Him completely.

Sue: You're probably familiar with Corrie ten Boom's account of her father withholding her train ticket from her until it was time to board. She didn't need it any earlier than that. Our Father's intervention works that way too. Mike and I have found that He generally doesn't stockpile provision for us, and when He does accumulate funds, it's to fulfill a specific purpose He's about to reveal.

The mobile home we'd been renting from an old friend is a case in point. In late April my brother-in-law, who had been handling my invalid mother's estate, told us that funds we'd been holding for her were no longer needed. He also indicated that she'd be blessed if we used them to meet personal need.

Three weeks later, our mobile home's owner mentioned that she'd like us to settle our living arrangement by purchasing the home. Mike and I had been praying for months about whether our Father wanted us to buy it, and His timing of provision was perfect! We also had confirmation from praying friends and our hearts were at rest. To top it off, immediately after we closed on the mobile home, a beautiful double rainbow lit up the sky over our newly-purchased home. To us that was a "smile from Jesus" that His plan was accomplished!

- How were you able to *serve* somebody today because our Lord provided you with an opportunity to bless that person? How were you able to humbly and gratefully *receive* the service of someone He sent to you today?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Much-Afraid was surprised to see that a blessing which had been hidden from her sight was ready and waiting for her because the need was there. How do you determine if what appears to be the answer to a particular need is really of Him? When did you last receive His provision for a need in a way that prompted you to share the testimony with others?

20. "Much-Afraid," he said...

Most of the time when you read about Egypt in Scripture you get a sense that it's a place to get out of, or come away from, or avoid going to.

But wait! Abraham set foot there, as did Joseph. Even Jesus' parents brought Him there as an infant to escape Satan's deadly scheme, thus fulfilling prophecy!

The Egypts in your life probably seem like a blast furnace. But only intense heat can melt the silver and gold hidden in your heart to remove the ignoble dross alloyed with them. Only fire can solidify the form of the pot your Master wants to cradle in His loving hands. In fact, only the harsh heat of a forest fire can pop open certain seeds to once again revegetate the land with fresh new growth!

The desert of Egypt is also the place to which our Lord brings you so that no distractions can interfere with what He wants to strengthen in your relationship with Him. We have all been sinful Gomer in a spiritual sense, so Hosea's prophecy applies to us as well: *"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her"* (Hos. 2:14). Your desert experience is a special time. What you learn in the desert can't be learned anywhere else.

Valley people, incidentally, have a great aversion to any type of desert experience with our Lord. They prefer the anonymity of crowds rather than intimate time spent alone with Jesus that brings the courage to press on.

- Are you willing for your present furnace fires to crack open seeds that may take your life and plans in a new direction? How does that thought make you feel?

- When have you tried to forestall the fires of Egypt by running away from a situation or relationship that our Lord had designed for your good?

21. "Abraham, was the first of my ser - vants...; 22. Much-Afraid looked up...

Have you ever studied those seemingly endless genealogical lists in the Hebrew Scriptures and thought to yourself, "Who cares?" Since all Scripture is breathed out by God, it's a valuable arsenal for your journey with Jesus. Scripture teaches you, convicts you, corrects faults, and trains you to live rightly and justly. As an Ephesians soldier, you need all the spiritual equipment He has to offer so that you'll be fully prepared for Kingdom work!

So even those lists have a purpose! For one thing, they show us the interconnectedness each of us has with the lineage of Jesus! Who belongs to whom is very important to our Lord, as evidenced by His documentation of all those families, clans, tribes and nations!

None of us was intended to live as a solitary atoll amid swirling seas of unconcerned others. Our names are listed in the Lamb's Book of life, and I sense that He's kept track in the spiritual realm of our own genealogy of who "midwifed" the new birth of each of us who is listed there!

Ten years ago in Israel our Lord showed Sue and me the relational foundations which He told us to call "The Hebraic Restoration." The Restoration is built upon the trust-filled obedience of Abraham. Abraham is the

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ancestor of all who trust Jesus (Romans 4:17).

If Abraham had to go to the pyramids of Egypt, then all of us as his spiritual descendent must if we want to embrace the trust-filled relationship with our Lord that he did.

From God's perspective, being called and chosen to endure the fires of Egypt to be purified for His use is "a great privilege". He indicated nothing about you enjoying that privilege, but implied everything about you being grateful to be included in that glorious "line of succession" of all who have faithfully endured their afflictions. To these awaits a crown to proclaim their Royal Lineage!

- Can you trace your spiritual lineage? Who was praying for you to encounter Jesus? Who nurtured your interest and quickened your awareness of your need for forgiveness of your sins, reconciliation with our Father, and intimacy through the Holy Spirit? Who helped fill in the ruts of behavior and attitudes left by your old sinful nature?

- Are you willing to contact some of these faithful servants to let them rejoice with you in the work He's been doing in your life?

23. Then all of a sudden...; 24. "Fear not, Much-Afraid...

By this point on your journey you might be identifying with Abraham and Sarah in their lonely exile as they left all that was familiar to follow their Lord. Or maybe you feel akin to weeping Joseph, betrayed and wounded by his own family!

The great nameless host of others in the procession experienced their own God-ear-marked trials as well. The apostle Paul was probably the most rejected servant of God who ever lived, betrayed and abused by Jew and Gentile alike — yet he completed his race to the victory tape.

How precious a victory for Much-Afraid that she didn't shrink back from the hand proferred to her in the line. As she grasped that hand, the verses that had been hidden in her heart were called forth by the Spirit. Learn a lesson from her. In order for you to appropriate strength from the promises in God's Word, they must be implanted there in the first place!

A casual chapter or psalm here or there will reap only crop failure. <u>For the Word to take root, it must be faithfully implanted, reviewed and implemented so you live by it!</u> The words come to life a, rhema — personal marching orders for you — only if you take the time to pray them into your spirit.

If you can't set your hand on your Bible in three minutes time because you have no idea where it is, you'll find little fruit from this *Hinds' Feet* commentary. The encouragement to press on in Jesus comes as the Spirit quickens your spirit to put into action what His Word has already shown you as His will. This little study guide just outlines some points you may not have considered to act upon!

- When was the last rhema — the last specific word from the Spirit earmarked especially for you — that you received? Did you note it down? Purpose to keep a pad of paper by your Bible so you won't lose those God-breathed gems!

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you describe your zeal to discover meat in the Word?____ Will you purpose to set aside a block of uninterrupted time each day to feed your spirit from the Word, and then share what He's shown you with your journey companion?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

25. After this they went back...; 26. But the Shepherd...

Can't you just picture little Much-Afraid with her Shepherd as they approached the vast ancient pyramid and walked inside? She'd never seen anything like that before, so massive, so unfamiliar. Yet isn't that like our Father to use that to which we're unaccustomed in order to focus our concentration on all the details of the situation at hand?

Sue: I love museums! I love to concentrate totally on each display and take in the intricacies and creativity that went into each exhibit. (I could lose myself in the Smithsonian!) So I can just imagine the intensity of focus in Much-Afraid as she surveyed the granary, her first stop. So many varieties of grain! So many ways of threshing it! And then the grades of flour, each suited to very particular needs!

I like to think that the "finest possible powder" for the "very best wheat" are the faithful followers of Jesus among the Persecuted Church around the world. As I pore over the articles in such publications as the Voice of the Martyrs monthly magazine, I find myself tearfully praying for these devoted family members of mine — and swallowing back gulps of shame at my own petty grumbling.

No, these aren't "perfect Christians" — but they have been living in a way that got them noticed as followers of Jesus! Can I always say the same about my life, the use of my time and resources and energy? No. But the Shepherd has set you and me on a different path in a different place for now, and He asks only that we be found faithful in our walk, even as we participate through prayer and provision for our suffering family.

Some simple ways in which you can be the hands and heart of Jesus are: letters to government officials on behalf of Christian prisoners (include a stick of gum and it will be read!); blankets and clothing for the destitute who have no breadwinner; Bibles, Jesus videos, or cassettes in their language. It's yet day, and you can minister hope to the least of these, His family.

- Do you ever get irritated that other believers are so different from you, perhaps in their goals or values or lifestyle? Have you ever considered asking our Father to understand His perspective as to their very different purpose in Him than yours?

- When you hear about the men, women and children around the world who are suffering for their trust in Jesus, what is your response? Are you willing to ask our Father to show you very real ways in which you can relieve their suffering and that of their families?

27. Watching them for a while...

Ouch! All of that breaking and bruising and crumbling hurts! But until the kernels of self-will are transformed into the precious flour of His will, your life will never produce the lifegiving "best wheat bread" that can nourish and feed others.

All of the different facets found in the pyramid, the grinding of grain, the potter's wheel, and removal of dross, are designed to perfect us for God's further purposes. *"In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man* ***cleanses himself from the latter****, he will be an instrument for* ***noble purposes****, made holy, useful to the Master and* ***prepared to do any good work****"* (2 Tim. 2:20,21).

For many of us, the grinding takes longer than we'd like! We're on the potter's wheel far longer than *we* think necessary, and we are in the fires much longer than any of us wants to take the heat. Let's remind ourselves and encourage each other that our Lord does everything *in accordance with His own will*. The pyramid experience is designed

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

to help us see how REALLY Sovereign He is.

Two insights result as you grow increasingly aware of our Father's sovereignty:

1. God is *absolutely trustworthy* because nothing is outside of His power or plan.

2. In light of His sovereignty, your will, that is, your own plans and desires, becomes less significant and satisfying to pursue. Joy is found in pleasing Him, in bringing our Father joy! Paul offers us a simple command, *"Find out what pleases the Lord"* (Eph. 5:10).

Men, one facet in particular of our Lord's refining process is found in the proverb, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another"* (27:17). Men need intimate, loadbearing fellowship with each other. That is, their very character development comes from within the realm of relationship in which biblical confrontation is permitted and cherished.

If you yearn for a man to serve as a resource of wisdom and encouragement in your life, start seeking our Lord earnestly. As this verse implies, you need sharpening!

- How would *you* go about determining "what pleases the Lord"? Do you understand that pleasing Him is not earning grace but pouring out the loving response that gratefulness precipitates?

- If you are a woman, are you willing to join a significant man in your relational sphere in fasting and praying for a mature follower of Jesus to serve as a mentor or brother for this man?

28. "See," said the Shepherd gently...

Dill has a very distinct flavor that permeates the food with which it's cooked. (You can't miss the pungent odor of a dill pickle — nothing subtle there!) Cummin is altogether different in form, and requires a different process to make it useable. Corn for meal is far more coarse than, say, the powder of fine flour. The corn would lose its unique texture and flavor if it were ground down like wheat. So how does this affect you?

Our Father chooses to use each of us in a very unique way. The apostle Peter had a tough time understanding this. He knew God wasn't haphazard in His dealings with people. (After all, as a devout Jew, the sovereignty of God was not an issue!)

But note his response to Jesus' words about the hard path that lay ahead of him: "Lord, what about [John]?" In so many words, Jesus made clear that their paths would be very different, as indeed they were. Both would pen God-breathed words of life to glorify God and guide Jesus' people to come. And both would pay the ultimate cost of their devotion, but in very different ways.

The various methods for grinding the grain of our lives according to how our Father intends to use us are essential for us to understand. Never should we compare ourselves to others! Now put *yourself* in Jesus' response to Peter: *"If I want him to...* (fulfill His purpose in for you)*, what is that to you? You must follow me"* (John 21:22).

Our Lord's loving plan for each of us requires different means to perfect His will in us. Anchor this in your inmost being: ***The journey is all the more easier if you do not compare yourself to anyone else.***

- Who do you know at this point in time whose life you'd gladly exchange with yours? Why?

- Are you willing to confess your dissatisfaction with your lot in life and turn from that to receive our Father's forgiveness? He'd love to bathe you with contentment if you'd thank Him from your heart for His sovereign care for you!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

29. As Much-Afraid watched the women pounding...

The Shepherd informs Much-Afraid that He brings everyone to Egypt so that He can grind them until they become "bread corn for the use of others." *Usefulness to bless oth - ers*—isn't that the foundation to the servanthood our Lord requires of each of us? This is the crucial point of all spiritual gifts, that our Holy Spirit giftings be used to edify others. *"So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts,* ***try to excel in gifts that build up the church"*** (1 Cor. 14:12).

Most Hebrew words from Scripture are defined by *how they're used* rather than what they look like. Our Father didn't put His people here to contemplate Him or argue fine points of theology. He purposes us to *live out His Word* for His praise. Be the bread that gives life, don;t just talk about it or wish you had someone else's rye when He's given you sourdough!

Mike: Perhaps I've shared this with you before. When I worked as a Controller of a Christian College, a well-known student took a summer job as a servant in one of the large mansions that dots the North Shore of Boston.

One afternoon on his day off he stopped by my office and plopped down heavily in the chair. When I asked him what was wrong, he said, "Did you know I took a job for the summer as a servant?" I nodded and asked, "So what's the problem?" "The problem," he stated glumly, "is that they treat me *like a servant*. I have no will of my own!"

The growth of Jesus' character in you magnifies your desire to be used by our Lord and by others for our Father's glory. Pride can't survive the humility of true servanthood. Isn't it comforting to know that grain isn't going to be ground forever? Once it is bruised and broken, it's useful for the Shepherd's purposes. This same pattern holds for us.

Our June 2003 Newsletter entitled *"Are You Suffering From the Woes?"* addressed, in part, the need for married couples in their 30's properly preparing to survive their 40's. The 40's are a time of great testing. For most men this period is their season as a Wounded Warrior. A time of tremendous physical and emotional transition, he enters the Wounded Warrior like a caterpillar. With appropriate help and understanding he can emerge from it a butterfly. The most significant transformation, however, comes in regard to his understanding of God. By the time he finishes this period, he has developed a trust in our Lord that far surpasses anything he could ever imagine.

I entered the Wounded Warrior period in 1990. I was 44 years old. My experience began with a prophecy given to me and tested by the elders of our congregation. After they read it, they said to me, "*You* don't have to do anything about what's written here. God will ensure that He fulfills His words to you."

Before I tell you what happened, let me share an excerpt from that prophecy:

> 7/23/90
>
> Harken to my voice, my little one. For I the Lord am here to *refine by fire*. For my servant Mike *shall be broken*. I have prepared the fires that I shall make him walk through, and they shall be used to *crush the flesh* in him.
>
> And I promise you that the sweet and fragrant aroma of Jesus shall pour forth as he is *tempered and tried by my Spirit.* And my anointing shall rest upon him in purity and power, and great prophetic words shall be uttered through his mouth. But the testing that is coming upon him shall *scathe him* and *be painful* as I flush out all that is not like me.

What pain as I was assailed with plots and betrayals by close friends and others I'd helped over the years. With each attack the Lord forbade me to defend myself. One day I complained to Him in deep anguish. I heard Him say, "*Read the Book of Acts and*

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

find out ***how many plots****against my people occur there."* I read the book and found 13 plots. He then whispered to my spirit, *"If I permit people to plot against my children, what makes you any better than them?"* I repented and purposed to yield to whatever He wanted to do to me.

Finally, in the fall of 1993, with our marriage holding on by a thread, the Lord took us to Israel to receive a prophetic message for the United States. The fires ended on December 31, 1993. Fortunately, our Lord brought me to my older friend, Bert Schlossberg, who confronted my rationale and helped expedite my path out of the wounded stage. I had passed through the Wounded Warrior trials and could understand spiritual dimensions I never could have envisioned as a young warrior. Those painful fires had transformed me. At that point our Father gave to us the facets of the Hebraic Restoration which we now share.

I grieve for you men who don't have an older man to serve as iron to sharpen you. Your time in the pit of misery will be prolonged if you don't have a "father" who can bring you up out of the pit of your trials. Your wife and family will suffer needlessly because of your isolation.

For all of you, make this thought a banner in your heart: The truths of the Restoration are ***a river of love given to His children by our Father for healing*** If you want to wholeheartedly embrace our Father's restorative truths, He needs to remove your earthly desires and pursuits. Self-focused goals and motives only tarnish the love He would pour through you.

- How would you have responded had you been given a prophecy warning you of the refining fires headed your way?

- Have you passed through the wounding stage of your life in which your physical capabilities diminish, your children don't need you or interact with you in the same way they use to, and you and your wife aren't on the same page? How did you handle this? Did you just try to bluff or bully your way through it?

30. After this the Shepherd took her...; 31. As they watched, the Shepherd said...

One Sabbath while we were in Israel, we went to our usual congregational gathering. This particular morning something caught our eye: a potter's wheel and a bucket of clay on the dais.

After a joyful session of exhuberant praise, prayer, and sharing, a youngish woman took her place on the chair behind the wheel. We were enthralled as she grasped a hunk of damp clay and explained the nature of clay and potmaking. She forcefully kneaded and shaped the material with skilled nimble fingers as her sharp tools carved intricate designs into the pot's neck and sides. The scraped-off clay that didn't suit her purpose was pushed off to the side.

Before our eyes the shapeless lump of clay had been transformed into a lovely, narrow-necked vessel. So sleek! So perfect! We all oohed her creation. Then, unexpectedly, she produced a hefty blade and slashed the pot with a mighty whack! Each half coupled to the center as we held our collective breath!

The potter smiled. "Did you think I'd keep a vessel that can't be used? This pot is as fragile as crystal *until it's fired*!" And so with us. Our usefulness depends not on our appearance but on our relationship with the Potter whose plans indeed involve fire! The yielded clay must be suited to the Potter's purpose, then submit to the fires of preparation before it can serve Him. The "fairest and finest vessels" have undergone the fires of Egypt all the while securely held in the Potter's hand.

The potter's wheel epitomizes absolute submission. The clay passively yields to the creative whims of the potter. Keeping still

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

hasn't been my strong suit. I find it easier when our Lord gives a prophetic word about where He's leading me! Without His prophetic affirmation I get down on myself and misperceive what He is doing. Then I struggle on His wheel until I cry out in humble yielded trust in His sovereign power and love. May I learn from my beloved Master!

- What sort of "pot" do you envision yourself to be in the Potter's hand? Describe the shape, color and use of the pot you picture.

- What pains you the most: the firing process at His hand or your regret over the "clay that's been scraped off" by Him because it wasn't beneficial to you?

32. Last of all He took her up...; 33. "O thou afflicted...

Only our Father can look at a rough rock of a person and see the brilliant gem inside! Of course, if the rock is left alone it will always be just a rock, not likely to bring praise to God.

However, to the rock that allows the smelter to submit it to the oven's heat, a dramatic rebirth occurs. Never underestimate the power of the Spirit of Jesus to transform an ordinary person into an extraordinary saint!

Perhaps your life has been more like the gold, which needed only to be refined of its dross. Perhaps this gold is like people who were raised in loving homes, pretty much obeyed their parents and teachers, and went on to live decent lives. When made aware of their sins by the Spirit's conviction, they submitted to Him gratefully and came through their smelting shining and useful.

But gold is pretty rare. Not many of us fit that category we described! Most of us identify more with the ignoble stones that require a lot of time in the oven. But when we grasp the intensity of love our Lord has for us even while we were yet sinners, we rocks come through our trials "flashing as though we had received the fire into our very hearts!"

In case you were wondering, you don't have to ask to be put into the fire. Our Lord loves you too much to let you remain a rock. He knows your reaction to flame is to shrink back for a moment, but He also has set before you a wonderful image of the beauty He can create if you submit.

Just as HE initiates a relationship with you and HE convicts you of sin and makes it detestable to drive you to His Cross for forgiveness and reconciliation, so also HE purges away your dross through refining and remakes your character with His Spirit. All the while His Spirit comforts and encourages you and gives you hope — *if* you choose to listen and to trust!

God's heat has a way of fanning your desire for holiness. Lukewarmness could never produce that. You begin to be appalled by the dross of your pet sins and worldly desires. You sometimes find yourself repenting and repenting repeatedly. You just can't stand the iniquity that keeps you from the fullness of your relationship with Jesus. This is the path to holiness, and God's heat is what gets us there.

- When you first submitted to Jesus, were you basically a chunk of gold that just needed a little smelting to burn off a few sinful habits and attitudes? Or, were you a rough hunk of rock with a few crystals of right decisions here and there that needed a lot of heat to refine?

- Has your willingness to endure the fires increased or decreased over time? When were you last at the point of crying out, "Enough is enough!"

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

34. "On the last morning...; thru 37. Much-Afraid thought of the things...

Much-Afraid appreciated the wonderful lessons she was learning from her time at the desert pyramid. But still, her surroundings were devoid of anything *green*.

Quite out of character for someone generally fearful, Much-Afraid ventured past the now-familiar tents and huts to explore a secret nook behind a wall. There in the silent sunlight was a surprise of golden loveliness — the solitary little flower!

That little blossom was confident of its Creator's provision — a lifegiving drip of refreshing water that was eagerly awaited and gratefully received. Only the sovereign plan of a loving Father could have put that seed and that dripping pipe in the same place!

Four adjectives are used to describe that little flower: lonely, lovely, hopeful and brave. The "lovely" part was not a choice; it was predetermined by the Master's hand. It's "lonely" status also was not a decision but an inescapable reality. The other two descriptions, however, were entirely volitional.

The plant could decide moment by moment whether to trust in the faithfulness of the Planter to send the drip. Or, it could worry and fret that the water might stop. It could determine to face its precarious existence with courage, or to throw in the figurative towel and flop over in defeat. After all, this was no carefully tended and nurtured rose garden in which the plant lived. No fertilizer or aeration here!

These factors were not lost on Much-Afraid. She herself had no control over her lack of loveliness or even her lonely removal from all that had been familiar before she began her journey to follow the Shepherd. <u>But she could decide if she was going to cling to her trust in the Shepherd's promises, and if she was going to press on in her journey with ever-growing courage</u>.

Here you are, planted by the sovereign hand of your Lord in a field that's perhaps not your first choice. A comforting prayer comes to mind: "God, grant me the courage to change what I can, the serenity to accept what I can't change, and the wisdom to know the difference."

The little flower awaiting the occasional drip of water touches my heart. It represents each of us who need a joyful touch from our Lord now and then. Everything may seem dry and empty for a season, but then our Lord intervenes in a way that shouts His love for us!

While I have had "Acceptance-with-Joy", I can't say that I have it all the time. It really gets tough when Satan's hoards come at Sue and me in what we call a "wolf pack attack." Before we can fully recover, we're overwhelmed by the onslaught.

Acceptance-with-Joy is the place to which our surrender and yieldedness leads. This goes beyond just having pleasant circumstances. That joyful acceptance comes from deep within your heart where the Spirit brings joy *despite* your circumstances.

- Have you ever been blessed by breaking out of the box of familiarity to explore new territory or a new relationship? Describe how that experience or encounter changed you.

- What changes need to occur in your heart so that you can respond to your life situation with serenity?

37. The tiny plant answered...; 38. Much-Afraid thought...

Sue: Ahh, Acceptance-with-Joy. That name "stole into her heart" to comfort Much-Afraid. The flower's name would not have had nearly the impact had it been "Acceptance-with-Resignation" or "Acceptance-with-Martyr-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Overtones" or "Acceptance-with-Pay-back-Demanded"—all of which I've experienced at some time or another!

Much-Afraid was wise enough to realize that although she hadn't been eager to come, the Shepherd had chosen to bring her "for His own purpose." Trusting in Hin rather than bemoaning her frailty, she was able to proclaim her own "Acceptance-with-Joy."

And at this point in her odyssey, she commemorates her lesson with a second pebble.

- Recall anecdotes from your life in which you were "Acceptance-with-(anything other than Joy). Have you reached the point in your journey in which joy permeates your heart in spite of your "daily grind"?

- Contrast the threshing floor, the whirring wheel, and the fiery furnace with the offer from Jesus for you to find joy in Him through it all. Are you willing to choose the joy as *your* second pebble?

"*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you [transform you by His Holy Spirit] through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thess. 5:3).

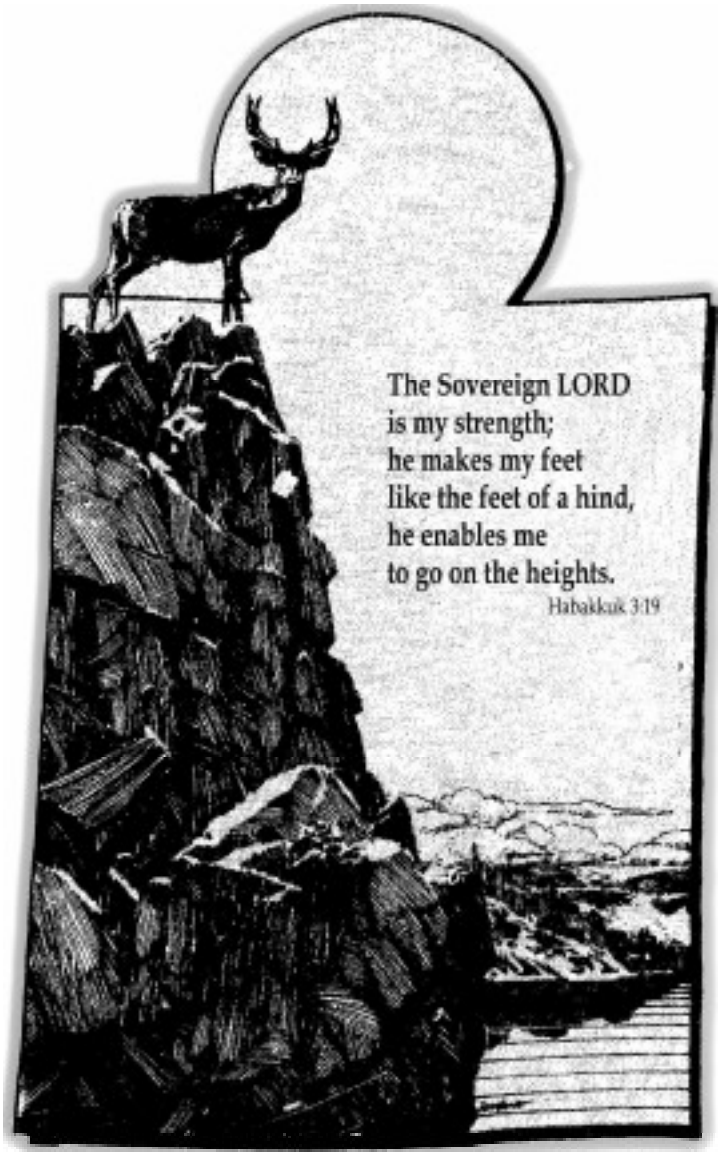
We want to conclude this chapter with an illustration of the transformation that takes place on our way to the High Places. When you come into this world, you are composed of spirit, soul, and body. Your soul is your mind, will, and emotions. The journey to the High Places, that is, the sanctification brought about by the Holy Spirit, results in a change of what controls you. From birth your body is controlled by your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions. But when the indwelling Spirit is given to you in your second birth, a transformation of control takes place. Now you can be led by the Spirit of God. Your mind, will, and emotions take on a new set of motivations and biblical values. You lose one identity in order to take on a whole new identity. Beautiful, isn't it?

Human Bir th	Human Development	Born Again
1. Body	1. Soul	1. Spirit
2. Soul	2. Body	2. Soul
3. Spirit	3. Spirit	3. Body

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 7 *On the Shores of Loneliness*
Chapter 8 *On the Old Sea Wall*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

Because the themes are interconnected, we'll cover two chapters in this lesson:

Chapter 7 *On the Shores of Loneliness*
Chapter 8 *On the Old Sea Wall*

The detour we made away from the mountains to the pyramid of refinement probably seems the most painful thing that's ever happened to you! All of us were born with a sinful, carnal nature that rules our attitudes and behaviors. After you've put your trust in Jesus, the sanctification process, in essence, is the Holy Spirit transformation from sin's control over your soul to Spirit rule within you.

As you've discovered, your carnal nature doesn't give up with out a fight. As Paul warns, "*The sinful nature [your carnal self] desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other"* (Gal. 5:17).

Losing the carnal identity that feeds your ego is a struggle, a painful process that lasts longer than most of us desire. But this battle is necessary if you are to put on the humility and yieldedness which are essential to following in Jesus' steps.

A danger lurks after your time in the pyramid. When you've finished going through God's grinding, purifying, and molding processes, you are enveloped by an overwhelming urgency *to do* something. Your impatient heart calls out, "I'm ready Lord! **Use me**!"

Yet, there is one thing more before He can truly entrust you with His work. This one thing helps you stay away from the traps of ego that Satan will set up for you as you seek to serve Jesus. Many of the most powerful anointed people of our day have run ahead of God and fallen into this satanic trap: *They fled their classroom of loneliness.* They began their work without the final ingredient our Lord wanted to impart to them.

For the impatient, their isolation on the shores of the Sea of Loneliness makes the pyramid look like a trip to Disneyworld. To the undiscerning, their period of loneliness seems as though nothing is happening that could be useful to God. Days, months, and even years go by when nothing seems to be changing. But for those who conquer their impatience, something of great magnitude is developing in the stillness of their souls.

Keep reminding yourself and your journey partner of this truth: *The Sea of Loneliness* is a time when your *inner motiva - tions* are being *changed*.

The seed of love is quietly growing as Much-Afraid proceeds along her pilgrim way to the High Places. So, too, our Father's design is for you learn to *cultivate complete trust in Him* before you leave the shore and the sea wall for the High Places. To the extent in which you both deeply desire and willingly permit your complete trust in Him to grow, you will find the rest of the journey that much easier.

Before we begin Chapter 7, anchor in your heart a fact, the reason for which He brings you to a place of isolation:

Our Father desires complete trust from you—a trust so complete that you do not have to understand as much as to obey .

Chapter 7 *On the Shores of Loneliness*

1. After they walked together...; 2. "It is now time for me to leave you...

Isn't it wonderful that the Shepherd can depart from Much-Afraid and assure her (and us), "...there is really no distance at all separating us." Scripture repeatedly urges us to *draw near* to God, and He will draw near to us. He is eager for us to reach out to Him!

The concept of *failing God* undergirds the teaching of the Hellenism which has so infiltrated the modern church. Neither our Lord Jesus nor our Father considers it failure when you call out to Him for help. In fact, your dependence is how you *strengthen* your relationship with God.

Consider for a moment the value of

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

obtaining wisdom. Being considered wise is esteemed throughout the Scriptures, and is another arena for us to seek Him out: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5). Wisdom, is *God's insight and way of doing things, and* is given generously by Him. And, He doesn't stop to remind you first of all the areas in which you fall short.

Since He assures us that He'll respond to that cry for wisdom, how tragic that so few of His children ask for His insight! The consequences of such ignorance are severe: *To act without wisdom is folly. Folly always leads to destruction.*

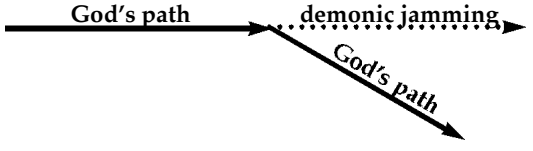
Perhaps the reason so few pray to our Lord for wisdom is encapsulated in the last sentence of paragraph 2. "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." So few ever hear the guiding voice of the Shepherd because they're too preoccupied heeding the "voices in their mind."

If you have journeyed with us this far, you know how we respond to those who contact us with their besetting mental wrestling matches: *"[YOU can] demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, [if you]* ***take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ****"* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

How can anyone ever hear the voice of Jesus our Shepherd with all this other clamor going on? Just as an army uses radio jamming to disrupt communication, Satan jams you with voices if you are willing to listen. As you continue to take your thoughts captive to make them obey Christ, you'll be able to hear our Shepherd's guiding voice.

Do you want to hear the voice of Jesus or tune in to demonic jamming?

Not taking your thoughts captive causes you to miss turns in your path, leading to your defeat.



- Are you being demonically jammed? Don't rail because of the attack or you'll play further into agitating hands. First, resist and take your thoughts captive as the Bible commands. Ask your journey partner for prayer and encouragement to keep on resisting and taking your thoughts captive as often as need be. Spiritual warfare is an ongoing development of *alertness and resistance* as you press on in our Father's purposes.

3. "Whenever you are willing to obey ...

There are some special moments when you're a shepherd. Sue and I had a flock of sheep at our retreat center as part of my counseling ministry to clergy and other church leaders. We didn't have a sheep dog, and sheep don't do well if you try to drive them along. They have to be moved every three weeks to a new pasture to avoid ingesting parasites that develop in their stool. These parasites could ultimately kill them.

So when Sue or I went out to move them from one pasture to another, it was heartwarming to open the gate and call, "Sheep! Sheep!" and watch them trustingly respond to us and enter their new pasture. They heard our call, recognized our voices, and obeyed, which resulted in their health and safety.

To be trusted is a remarkable experience. I enjoy seeing little children grab their parent's hand in times of danger or uncertainty. And if we earthly parents feel so good when our kids trust us, how joyful it must make the heart of our Jesus when we hear, trust, and obey Him!

Your season along the shores of the Sea of Loneliness is your time to die to your own rationale. All of your weighing of pro's and con's is replaced by trusting confidence in your Shepherd. Your fevered analysis is transformed into a yearning to obey Him without concern for the outcome.

I was recently sharing on the phone with an old friend about my relationship with

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Tom Woodruff and James Skeet. These two have been journey companions with me in the ministry God has called Sue and me to since we moved West 3 years ago. They've been wellsprings of wisdom as well as loving friendship as we've been preparing to produce our upcoming series, *Jesus in the Living Room*.

What's really encourages us is their willingness to seek our Lord's will on each aspect, even down to which software is most effective for this endeavor. Once we receive Spirit confirmation about what our Lord wants, we do it!

Now that may sound courageous (or strange, depending on your personal experience), but another facet to our relationship surfaced as I described it to my friend on the phone that day. To be *respected* is very important to me as a man. But respect is a by-product of other decision processes a man uses when He wants to walk in God's will and is willing to do it for His glory.

I realized that not one of the three of us who are prayerfully cooperating in this project wants to lose the respect of the others. Sometimes our decisions are painful to follow through on for the one who is affected by them. But we have little or no hesitation in following through because something beautiful in our relationship with both God and with each other would be tainted by doubt or vacillation.

Trust vs. Rationale Test

Where would you place yourself on the scale below? Do you seek God's will and obey, or do you weigh the pro's and cons' before you act?

Trust in God..10..20..30..40..50..60..70..80..90..Rationalize

- Men: Do you have an devoted male friend who holds you accountable to know and follow through on God's will? Someone whose loss of respect for you would really hurt?
- If you don't, why not? Is there something in in you that really doesn't want that level of accountability and friendship?

4. Much-Afraid and her two companions...; 5. The green valley...

Have you ever noticed that the sea has so many moods? One day the waves ripple softly against the sand. Another day the roaring surf lashed frothy foam across the sand. Perhaps these two extremes can help you picture the difference between solitude and loneliness.

Solitude breathes an essence of calm serenity, quietness to hear, peaceful moments of remembrance. Loneliness, on the other hand, cries out for intervention, for change in circumstances, for relief from negative rumination.

Perhaps if Much-Afraid had evaluated her environment from the Shepherd's perspective she would have been able to appreciate the beauty of the acrobatic gulls and whimsical crabs. But, predisposed to remembering what she had left behind rather than focusing on the lovely places to come, all she could perceive was "endless sandy desert" on one side and "endless sea moaning drearily on the other."

You may be identifying with Much-Afraid's appraisal of her circumstances in your own life, wishing you didn't have to undergo such challenges before you can rest securely in prepared service for your Father's glory! You can look at the chaos and disorder of your life as a swirling sea, or you can thank the Shepherd for His constant presence along your shoreline as your breathe in His faithfulness.

- Describe some seasons in your life when you've relished solitude. Now contrast that with periods of loneliness you've experienced, and how you coped with them.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Does the thought of walking along a deserted seashore bring a smile to you or a shudder? What past experiences come to mind in your relationship to the sea?

6. In those days Much-Afraid...; 7. She had been down into Egypt...

Remember Much-Afraid's encounter with the little flower outside of the pyramid? "Behold me, Acceptance-with-Joy". That inner acceptance of the circumstances churning around you is the initial sign that your period of refinement is over.

Sorrow and suffering take on a much more positive meaning in your life when you understand that our Father has orchestrated them for His very special purposes. It's easier to embrace negative circumstances when you see them as necessary for your own Christ-like character development.

Jesus understood the value of suffering, for we're told, *"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered"* (Heb. 5:8). How else can we ever develop the confident unwavering hope our Lord desires to form in us if we don't embrace suffering?

*"Not only so, but we also **rejoice in our sufferings**, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us"* (Rom 5:3-5).

As difficult as it is for our carnal nature to swallow, suffering is the best way for *us* to learn obedience and trust as well. Just like our Lord Jesus, we will each have our "Gethesemanes". May we each have such trust that we too say, *"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. **Yet not as I will, but as you will.**"* (Matt. 26:39b).

- Take the time to articulate to your journey partner your feelings about suffering.
- Now look into the Bible's view on suffering together. Is there a change in attitude you need to make?

8. She could look back across...; 9. She did not understand how it happened...

Sanctification — the process of being set apart in Christ's character for His use — is first accomplished in the unseen niches of your heart. Out of your heart, your attitudes and motivations are brought into conformity to Jesus. Then, over time, your inner self finds outer expression in your behavior. This is crucial for you to understand: first, the unseen heart change, then your attitudes and motives, and finally, your behavior follows.

Our contemporary psychological and materialistic culture stirs us too often to judge by what we can see and touch, much like doubting Thomas. We're programmed by schoolroom instruction and scientific processes to measure change so that we can have tangible proof by which we can verify facts.

In contrast, along your journey you've been impacted by both your pyramid refinement and your sea of loneliness.These are designed to reconstruct you away from judging everything by the external so that you can learn to cherish the *internal changes* in your character. The passage, *"We live by faith, not by sight"* (2 Cor. 5:7), becomes all the more clear, "for those who go down into the furnace of Egypt and find the flower of Acceptance come up changed and with the stamp of royalty upon them."

It's vital that your wear a cloak of humility during your journey, sweeping away any temptation to judge those who haven't pressed on as you have. These warnings should pierce your heart if you're given to comparative analysis:

*"So from now on we **regard no one** from a worldly [carnal] point of view"* (2 Cor. 5:16a).

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

*"Who are you to **judge someone else's** servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand"* (Rom. 14:4).

*"Therefore judge nothing **before the appointed time**; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will **expose the motives** of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God"* (1 Cor. 4:5).

Any time you judge another person and find that you feel better about your own practice of Christianity, you're engaging in *self-justification*. Satan loves nothing more. Even the Pharisees began with good intentions, constructing behavioral fences around the commands of God so they wouldn't be in violation. In time, they began to judge each other's performance, entering into legalistic perversion. Thus they nullified our Lord's atoning work on the cross. The Lord Jesus's appraisal of them? "Hypocrites!" Don't give Jesus grounds to say this of you.

- Do you find yourself judging other Christians by external behaviors? If a person drinks wine or beer, attends movies, dances, does that diminish your view of them?

- Why do you think we are commanded, *"Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes"?* Can it be that you're unable to see the Spirit's inner work going on in someone else's heart?

10. Therefore, though she went...; 11. Her heart often thrilled...; 12. Often, too, she found herself...

When Acceptance-with-Joy fills your heart, you begin to see everything differently. Over time your conversations with others on the journey to the High Places become filled with testimonies of "God-sightings." You see Him more and more around you in encounters, circumstances, and timing. You're more likely to perceive delays as opportunities to see God's hand at work in the unexpected and unanticipated!

Your growing aura of peace and joy, however, makes your conversations with those who never left the Valley of Their Strongholds strained. You sadly discover how little you have in common with them, and your sadness is compounded as you realize that they are not experiencing the wonder of your growing intimacy with your Shepherd. Sue and I have lost so many relationships over the years at this point. Even some who had made it to the Sea of Loneliness bolted back to the Valley because they thirsted for acceptance by others back there.

Beware: <u>the agitating voices can still reach you here</u>! Two points characterize those who turn back to the Valley of Their Strongholds:

1. They thought that resisting the devil and taking their thoughts captive was an optional requirement of God. Remember, only *you* can resist your fleshly as well as demonically-inspired thoughts, and take them captive. It's up to you!

2. Married couples who returned never owned the intensity needed to rightly align their marriage to the biblical requirement for headship. Most had a weak commitment to learning and living out their respective roles as husband and wife, preferring the world's values and interpretation.

If you've been learning our Lord's lessons and have found yourself changed so far on the journey, the Sea of Loneliness offers you the opportunity to perceive the uniqueness of God's beauty and design that you could never experience anywhere else. You begin to recognize divine timing and divine encounters with those He wanted you to

meet. You come to grasp how truly Sovereign He is, and the creative ways He has been operating all around you to fulfill His divine purposes through you.

For instance:

* You develop an incredible appreciation for others. Those you once wrestled with bitterness, you now see as divine instruments to teach you the power of forgiveness.
* You no longer care where you *live* because you are moved to plead with Him to put you where you can reach the people He has prepared for you to share His love with.

* You no longer care where you *work* because you are pleading with Him to put you where you can reach the people He has prepared for you to share His love with.

* Your chief desire is to be as used as fruitfully as possible in serving your King. You are able to perceive that everything around you can be used for our Father's glory.

God Consciousness Survey

Where do you place yourself on the scale below? How conscious are you of God's activity around you? Do you share that with others?

Unaware..10..20..30..40..50..60..70..80..90..Very Aware

- Over whom do you grieve their loss because they turned away from you and returned to the Valley?

- Describe a place you have visited a number of times that found you bearing different emotions each time. How did your emotional state affect your appreciation for your surroundings or companions?

13. One day they came...; 14. When, however, drawn by an urge...; 15. On seeing this transfor mation...

These three paragraphs summarize the essence of what happens along the shores of the Sea of Loneliness. You feel as though nothing is going on, but just wait... The Holy Spirit is making tremendous changes!

If the Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz of our retreat center days (1983-93) could meet us today, when we've been living and sharing the relational intimacy of the Hebraic foundations, they wouldn't know us! Our motivations and purposes are that much different. At the retreat center we were identified by the activities in which we were involved. Now we are known by the intimacy we have with our Lord and with each other. The difference is rather like being known by your doctor as "the man with the compressed disk", compared to your mother's loving and multifaceted perception of who you are!

In Israel the Lord told us, *"Share this mes - sage."* He didn't tell us to "*teach* this message." Let me explain: Our Hebraic ancestors who followed the path of Abraham understood that whenever people discuss the truths of God, the Holy Spirit is there giving understanding and application.

Discussion is the pattern that the first Hebrew, Abraham, used to pass on a way of life: *"For I have chosen [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him"* (Genesis 18:19).

As Sue and I began to write, we had to discuss together so many facets that enabled the earliest church to be so spiritually powerful and relationally intimate. Without being conscious of it initially, we were being changed as we prepared the material to share with others.

It's in this light that we encourage you to discuss these truths and lessons He's revealing to you with your journey partner. The *inner change* will occur in your discussions as you seek to obey God's commands. We may

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

make you aware of different facets of the truth God has given us to share, but your discussion is the means to bring them into application in your life.

- Do you have discussions with your spouse and family so you can seek together how to apply God's words to the myriad of matters that affect you and your household?

- If you haven't been discussing matters, sit down with the appropriate people and ask for ideas of how to begin — early morning, dinner, after dinner??? Purpose to set a time and then follow through.

16. It was only a short time...; 17. Spies were sent out; 18. Off they went to the shores of Loneliness...

At the Sea of Loneliness you can experience some of your worst despair. This is especially true if your Christian experience was filled with *"doing"* and you found that just *"being"* was threatening. If you've been very involved in Hellenistic Christianity, then most likely you identify strongly with *what you do for God*.

Keep this in mind: The enemy sends his demons at just the right time in order to destroy your trust in the Shepherd and to focus you on your own lonely misery. Loneliness, probably more than any other feeling, drives people down avenues of sin. To find relief, they're willing to bend their moral values and rationalize wickedness.

One of God's ways to create isolation is to alter your environment for His purposes. Many men who have been too busy to spend time with our Lord and their families find themselves unemployed. We've seen God put men, especially in their 40's and 50's, out of work in order to increase both their time with Him and their dependent trust in Him.

This is a crisis point. If you don't seek God wholeheartedly at this juncture, you may shipwreck your faith, drown in self-pity, and destroy your marriage.

Satan will send his "Red Berets" to torment you. And who better than Resentment, Bitterness, and Self-Pity? These demons are clones of the very attitudes you harbor if you misperceive your time along the shores of loneliness.

- Describe the time you've spent along the shores of the Sea of Loneliness. Did you struggle to escape, or did you learn the lesson God had intended for you to learn? What was the lesson?

- Have you found that God keeps bringing you back to the shores because you aren't learning the lesson of trust He wants to instill in you? What are going to do this time?

19. "I told you so"...; 20. Then Resentment would raise...

Have you ever been laughed at or mocked about something that was out of your control? Mockery that assails your self-esteem can be a powerful motivator to alter your life journey.

In the old novel, *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara has been thrust by the Civil War from a life of pampered wealth into a protracted season of utter poverty. All throughout the years of distress one thought drives her: "I will never be hungry again!"

Scarlett is fictional, but you probably know people who have been so humiliated that they are consumed with silencing that echo of mockery. A younger friend of ours had been taunted by schoolmates because his clothes were out of style. He swore to himself that when he was able, he would buy only the best for himself.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

He has followed that course but discovered that his labels and luxury have not afforded peace to his heart. The little boy who had been shamed years ago was still crying to be accepted for who he is rather than the image he projects.

That wounded "little boy" or "little girl" within you is a prime target for the enemy to pierce with pain if you haven't laid that pain on His alter for Jesus to heal and restore to wholeness. I discovered that need to trust Jesus to heal old emotional pain while we were in Israel. I had to choose to cast off those soiled garments of shame and resentment in order to press on without having to compensate for old wounds.

- Is there an unhealed "little boy" or "little girl" in you who suffered shame or teasing at some point way back? Have you protected or hidden away that area as you've gotten older by compensating?

- Are you willing to set this burden down at His feet so the sting of those memories can be healed, and that testimony of His healing be a life-giving instrument to help others?

21. Bitterness would then break...

Bitterness threatened Much-Afraid that the Shepherd would thrust onto her "a cross of some sort and abandon you to it." But isn't that the cost for all whom Jesus calls to follow Him? *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me"* (Matthew 16:24).

Until self and all its willful desires and ambitions is set in its proper place of submission, you'll always be prone to filter your obedience through the lens of self-preservation. Even your family relationships will be a source of imposition to you if you don't take that self-determination and put it on the cross so you can embrace the plan and call God has for you. After you yield self-preservation and self-focus, then you will be able to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

His steps lead to rejection, mockery, desertion. Yet for the joy set before Him, He endured His own cross to free us to share life and love with Him now and in eternity. Should we be discouraged or dismayed when we're put in the position of tasting some of that pain ourselves?

- Your cross is not your argumentative spouse, your bickering children, or the consequences of your disobedience. It's the life path He is calling you to! How would you define your cross at this point in time?

- What areas of self-denial are the hardest for you today? How can you help your journey partner overcome his or her distractions away from the path of following Him?

22. Self-Pity would chime in...; 23. "Poor little Much-Afraid"...; 24. "You have ever y right to feel sor ry for yourself"...

Voices! Voices! Voices! If, after several months of journeying to the High Places, you haven't developed spiritual muscle by resisting and taking your thoughts captive and making them obedient to Jesus, you'll wish you had by the sea! You'll find yourself scrambling for emotional sanity. You may be phoning people everywhere trying to find comfort because being alone is the last thing you can stand.

Even Cain received a wise warning from God when he thought about killing his brother: *"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, **sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it**"* (Genesis 4:7). To resist and fight back against the evil

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

of your own heart and the demonic hoards comes with the territory of following Jesus.

Wise military leaders reiterate, "Don't underestimate your enemy." Heed this warning even more so as you linger by the Sea of Loneliness. The demons are experienced in deception and torment, and your own carnal mind can come up with some painful agitation as well.

Satan's goal is to separate you from your trust-filled confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Who hasn't entertained thoughts like, "Everyone is laughing at me"; "All He has demanded from you so far is nothing to what He will demand if you persist in following Him." This last statement inspires fear if you let the voices have their effect. To those who have taken their thoughts captive and continue to proceed on the journey, we say, "Hallelujah!!! Let's see where Jesus leads!"

Remember, the continued assault of voices is *not* a sign of your failure. However, your unwillingness to resist and take captive your thoughts will ultimately lead to your return to the Valley of Your Strongholds. Be alert!

Even Jesus was plagued by the "voice of Satan". Matthew 4:10-11 tells us that our Lord was tested by Satan himself. This test was needed before our Father released Jesus to represent His work on earth. Immediately thereafter our Lord began to preach and heal the sick. So, too, your opportunity to bear much fruit may be just around the bend!

- When did you last feel sorry for yourself along your pilgrimage? How did you restore your peace and appropriate His comfort?

- What voices have been assailing you lately?

25. "The last remark of Self-Pity's was a mistake...; 26. When she thought of this..; 27. But it is exhausting....

Sue and I as well as others who have accompanied us on the Hebraic pilgrimage can all point to a moment when the demons overplayed their hand. At that point of realization, we were able to shove out those internal arguments and purposely focus on our Lord's faithfulness.

But resisting and taking your thoughts captive over a prolonged period of assault can take its toll. As we were being worn down, fearful that we were losing the battle, some accusatory word struck a cord of warning deep within. Slowly an inner strength began to ignite a more determined resistance, and the desire to praise Jesus outraced the the former distracting, agitating thoughts.

- What was going on in your life when you recognized an obvious demonic assault in your mind?

- Do you have some favorite Bible passages or praise songs to help you refocus your heart on trusting Jesus? Write these down and keep them handy as needed!

28. One day when her companions...; 29. When she reached the end...; 30. "You can put down...; 31. Much-Afraid lifted her face...

Keep in mind that the lesson learned by the Sea of Loneliness is designed to protect you in the future. Depending on the how difficult your further purposes in the Kingdom are to be, it isn't unusual for the verbal assaults to keep coming back at you for days or weeks.

Even some of the Christians who have been close to you over the years will become

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

like Job's friends, and give you all kinds of unwise advice. "There must be something wrong with you for God to permit this to keep happening." "Are you sure there isn't any sin in you?" One dear friend reports that every time she runs into a certain gaggle of former friends, they accuse her of disobeying God, even though she and her husband are faithfully following Jesus!

Just know this: Our Father wants you to be grounded in spiritual basics: resist, take your thoughts captive, cry out to Jesus.

The crisis point of assault often comes just a little *beyond* where you feel you can't take it anymore. With everything you have done, you *still* feel cornered. You get the feeling that your prayers are not even being heard. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* Your prayers are being heard, but something is taking place in you which our Father knows you'll need in order to meet the desire you have to serve Him: unreserved trust in Him.

There comes a moment in your crying out that reveals the intensity of your trust in our Lord Jesus. This is where the transcendent Lord rises above time and space to bring you His presence and strength.

- Do you get down on yourself when God is using difficult times to prepare you for His further work?

- One of Satan's names is "accuser of the brethren." Are there certain accusers who come into your life like wolves in sheep's clothing? Purpose today to testify with loving peace rather than intimidated fearfulness when you see them again!

32. To the horror...; 33. "O Shepherd"...; 34. "No," said the Shepherd...; 35. "Shepherd" asked Much-Afraid...; 36. "I think" said the Shepherd gently...

Any carnal attitudes you embrace during your lonely times are magnets for unclean spirits. "When you wear the *weed of impa - tience* in your heart instead of the flower Acceptance-with-Joy, you will *always* find your enemies get an advantage over you." But impatience isn't your only weed.

Astringent thoughts you harbor toward others whom you feel are responsible for your lonely condition can take root. Anger that your way has to be so hard can poke holes in your well-being. The Shepherd reminded Much-Afraid of her identity as His humble Acceptance-with-Joy. Perhaps you need as refreshing gulp of that truth to counteract deceptive lies and deceit!

- Are you harboring anything against anyone else at this time? Deal with it quickly, because you are giving the demons a foothold in your soul in which to operate.

- What opportunity did you have today to walk in the character of Acceptance-with-Joy?

37. Much-Afraid blushed; 38. The Shepherd stooped down...

I think we all blush on the journey at one time or another. If we could perfectly make it to the High Places then we wouldn't have to go on this journey to reach His character transformation. As Much-Afraid came to realize, "It had been easier to accept the hard path..."

There are few who don't balk along the Sea of Loneliness. Remember, it's a type of Gethsemane for each of us. Our cup is to embrace the difficulty until absolute trust in our Father and His Son Jesus is complete. Beginning with the pyramid on through the Sea of Loneliness, this can be a terrible time for married couples if one refuses to go on.

Quite a number of couples consist of one spouse stuck in the pyramid and the other at the sea shore. You can only imagine how difficult this situation is, and what discord assails their home! The two of them together must get on their knees to humbly seek our Father's help.

Only our Father can bring them to the same point on the journey. It's very unhealthy for an outside third party to become their answer person. Reliance on others over time will cripple their ability to walk unified as a couple.

Although all of us are tempted by impatience to see this difficult time come to an end, those who yield to agitating voices hurt themselves as well as their journey partner. Regroup in prayer and press on!

The Shepherd handed Much-Afraid another stone as a reminder of what she had placed on His altar that day. Keep in mind that before we finally reach the High Places we will all be confronted by the altar experiences we have encountered along the way. Can you gladly look back with Acceptance-with-Joy?

- If you were asked by the Shepherd, *"Do you truly delight in the changes I have made?"*, how would you answer?

- Your body reveals your impatience: tapping feet, deep sighs, shifting position, rolling eyes. How do you make others feel when you're impatient? How do you respond when others are impatient with you?

Chapter 8 *On the Old Sea Wall*

1. A few days had passed...

Surprised by joy! Can you recall a time when everything that could possibly go wrong had? And then...a gracious phone call, a revelation by the Spirit, a shaft of warm sunlight passing through the window onto your sleeping child...these small indicators of our Father's continuing love were made manifest, and *your heart could recog - nize them*!

Because He's at work all the time to stir you to follow His Son, God's indicators are always there. It's just that sometimes you don't have the "enlightened eyes" of Ephesians 1:18 to preceive them. Much-Afraid continued on with her companions Sorrow and Suffering in a direction she neither fathomed nor desired, but trusting the Shepherd's promise nevertheless.

Sue: That trust was her sustaining strength — and mine. I could never have believed that our Father could hold in His hands the tattered remains of our disintegrated marriage and bring about not only healing but new purpose and meaning! Sorrow and Suffering had been our constant companions during that journey as well.

But just as Much-Afraid found herself "unexpectedly facing back over the desert in the direction of the mountains", we too found ourselves drawn together by humility and forgiveness to be prepared for His new call on our lives. Through His Spirit we became His workmanship, created in Jesus to do the good work He'd prepared in advance for us (Ephesians 2:10). We just needed to come through the desert equipped for mountain work!

- What seemingly unending desert has drained you of hope that things would ever change?

- How did our Lord intervene to redirect your path to fruitfulness, hope and joy to show that your desert walk had not been in vain?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

2. She dropped the hands..., 3. Suddenly the path...

When will we learn as followers of Jesus to stop being controlled by our circumstances? As quickly as the path changed from endless sand to potential mountain refreshment, it swerved back again!

Your awareness of the Spirit's *constancy* in your life will grow only as you choose to focus on His abiding presence. Jesus has promised to never forsake you. So, are you willing to "practice His presence" by redirecting your mind, will and emotions back to Him when assailing thoughts tumble in?

Or, will you let yourself be swept away by currents of urgent appointments, interminable chores and clamoring responsibilities? Are you prone to forgetting that His Spirit doesn't mean for you to ignore your obligations, but to do them *with* Him? That's right, *with Jesus*!

Did it ever occur to you to quiet those discordant voices—take them captive—and concentrate on the task that you can do with Him? The prophet Isaiah urges us to be cloaked with His promise: *"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength."* But the rest of the verse grieves over those who refuse to trust His sovereign power: *"but you would have none of it"* (Isaiah 30:15).

Every time you wash the dishes, *thank our Father* for the person in your life who soiled that glass or dish. As you fold laundry, vacuum, wash the car — focus your mind purposely on *gratefulness* for the health to do these jobs for and with the people you love.

For each assignment or responsibility that confronts you at work, express thanks to our Father that you're interacting with people who need to see Him in you. Purpose to respond to them by His grace with His expression, His words, His deeds.

When you forget His presence and react out of hurry, worry, exhaustion or frustration, "gird up your loins" with humility to ask and receive His forgiveness. Then ask forgiveness of those you snapped at, and restore within yourself that serenity of awareness of His love for you.

Our Father is *for* you, even when you stumble! The difference between you and those who are without His Spirit is your willingness and power to trust Jesus, take His hand in your heart, and step out once again into the hot desert sand of life without expectation that you'll be applauded by others for your efforts!

- Do you often find yourself multi-tasking — doing several things at once, frantically waiting to at last collapse into bed when you can? Has it ever occurred to you that Martha's shortcoming wasn't her activity, but her self-pity-driven complaining and self-imposed urgency that earned her a pointed rebuke from Jesus?

- Monitor yourself for a day. What stress points set you up to become a frenetic gerbil in a speeding wheel? Are you willing to call upon the Spirit of Jesus within you to slow down your mind — the playground of false expectations — to concentrate on the one thing at hand with thanksgiving?

4. "Hope deferred...; 5. Up from behind...; 6. Then he said, as venomously

You are most prone to entertain bitterness (or other voices) when you feel isolated and bereft of people who understand what you're going through. You may be surrounded by your kids or your coworkers, but your heart aches over your dashed hopes. You keep all that pain tucked away within because you don't want to "fail God" or your husband or your faith family.

Sue: I know exactly how you feel! Early on at the retreat center we administrated, I was overwhelmed by unending tasks and a dread that I'd failed as a wife and mother. The two women I'd treasured as sisters had experienced major life changes. One had returned

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

to demanding graduate school courses, and the other had taken on a full time job besides mothering her four children.

In my pride and rejection I convinced myself that they were too busy for my woes and pain. I spent lonely days conversing with deceiving spirits that used my excessive introspection to convince me that my family would be better off without me.

I sealed my heart off from Mike, not wanting to burden him because I believed the lie that I could never change. Voices of suicide whispered in my mind. Little did I realize that behind those voices was the evil laughter of the enemy who wanted to thwart my Father's plans.

- Can you identify with Sue's experience in self-inflicted pain and self-imposed isolation that set her up to believe her distorted perspective? What circumstances have added to *your* times of isolation?

- On a scale of 1 to 10, at what level of desperate isolation are you? Is your husband/journey partner aware of your need for encouragement to trust Jesus and press on in His faithfulness? We do urge you, dear one, to turn away from the lie that no one cares. Pour out your heart to your journey partner so that together you can affirm your value to our Father through prayer and His Word.

7. In the silence...; 8. Next moment the Shepherd...

Still your thoughts and the conflicting emotions churning in you. Only then will you have eyes to see the Shepherd and a will to recall that He never lets go of those who call upon Him in trust, no matter how small or wavering it is.

Sue: This is the assurance I experienced from my Shepherd. He broke through that I was needed, and that He had very great and precious purposes for me to fulfill with Mike and our son. The transition to joy wasn't immediate, but I knew He was faithful, and I could choose each morning to trust Him to work in me. I also learned that love doesn't seek to escape, but perseveres until *He* opens the door of change.

As soon as Much-Afraid's words tumbled trembling from her heart, the Shepherd made His presence known to her. Note that He didn't commiserate with her, nor did He rebuke her. Rather, He told her, "Be of good cheer."

Interesting, isn't it? He didn't tell her to put on a happy face because of her painful circumstances. Instead, he urged her to appropriate the joy of the Spirit because "it is I." If you decide to focus on the roaring wind and stinging sand of your challenges, you'll miss the loving "It is I" Who is faithful to respond to your trusting cries.

After exhorting Much-Afraid to restore her joy because of His reality, His next words are, "Be not afraid." Again we come to the fear issue — your expectations and hopes might be dashed, you might be overcome by the worries and deceits of your mind, you'll probably fail...The list could go on and on. But the Shepherd's command is as pertinent to you as it is to Much-Afraid: Decide now to cast off that fear and doubt and unbelief. Put your trust in Him!

The Shepherd didn't take away her fear, nor will He strip away yours! You need to exercise your trust muscles and choose to disintegrate that old fear on an altar of trust. That means "your whole will" must at this stage of the journey be set before Him— not when all is rosy and cooperative, but when it's troublesome and fraught with irritation and provocation!

This is no easy task, which is why you have a partner to help you do this, even as you need to help him or her.

- What specific fears, disappointments and unfulfilled expectations have brought you to this point in your journey? When have

you faced similar crisis points, and how did you respond?

- Purpose to cast down your fears and unfulfilled expectations at a set time with your journey partner. Then note this in the margin of your *Hinds' Feet* book as a reminder of your decision to obey your Shepherd in trust.

9. Obediently Much-Afraid...; 10. From somewhere, though...

Much-Afraid has learned a valuable lesson as she builds her pebble altar. Don't put off what He is calling you to do until later, when you think you'll have more time to "do it right" or more motivation when you're at peace or in a private place.

Delighting to do our Father's will doesn't always mean a smile and eager anticipation. Many times your "delight" is accompanied by tears of conviction and a heartbeat of sorrow. But His will is far better than ours, and your delight comes in the fact that you can repeat with confidence, "O *my* God."

A dear friend and his wife had recently relocated to another state, eagerly hoping to find work and a faith community of extended spiritual family. As the weeks passed, their funds dwindled and his resumés produced no results.

As we talked on the phone, his voice shook with frustration and anger at himself. "I'm back in the same classroom I was eight years ago! Why do I keep missing what He's trying to teach me?"

Our Father gave me some insights for him to pray about with his wife. He had indeed accumulated some life experiences and wisdom that our Lord had planned for a very specific forthcoming purpose. But first, he needed to crucify his expectations — even if they seemed good — in order to see clearly the new pathway they'd be treading.

I shared with him a path he hadn't considered. Suddenly, he could see through the dust of their trials to recognize that God's hand had been on them the whole time to equip them for the next destination along their pilgrimage. And what potential lay in this new opportunity to bring God glory as he and his wife found confirmation before His throne and in His Word!

- Share with your journey partner a time when you had to crucify a particular desire or hope in favor of something our Lord had orchestrated for your spiritual growth.

- How have your "death to self-will" events along your life course prepared you for where you are today?

11. Another gust of wind...

The winds were still swirling around Much-Afraid, but because of them she was able to clearly spot the pebble of remembrance where the scattered ashes had been. Her circumstances hadn't changed — she was still on a path headed away from the longed-for mountains, surrounded by blowing sand dunes.

But how different the atmosphere was as she focused on the Shepherd rather than on her environment! As long as she walked on step by step choosing to trust in His promises, her personal enemies (Self-Pity and Resentment; who are yours?) could find no foothold with which to torment her.

- How do you purpose to deal with your own personal enemies when they stir up thoughts of unfairness, depression, or self-flagellation?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- When did you last take captive those thoughts and conform them to the mind of Jesus? Our Father knows that there's a battle going on for your mind, will and emotions, and the Spirit has promised to help us in our weaknesses as we trust (Romans 8:26). Don't come down on yourself because you struggle — thank Him for His faithfulness to cheer you on!

12. Presently they reached a place...; 13. Much-Afraid, followed by...

Causeways are a marvel to behold, and bear special meaning for Sue and me. Every year for the past seven years we've been blessed to spend time along the North Carolina shoreline with my brother and Sue's sister.

Our rental quarters are on a strip of island that can be reached only by crossing a lofty causeway that rises over the highest surf's reach. From that vantage point you can see up and down the intercoastal waterway for miles, as well as the ocean horizon in one direction and the hazy neighborhoods on the mainland.

The Shepherd led Much-Afraid to the base of just such a causeway and repeated *with great emphasis* His words that indeed, there would be a delay to their destination. But that delay would serve to bring glory to both God the Father and His Son. Perhaps revisiting that purpose would arm her will with strength when future events aroused despair and doubt!

At any rate, what a blessing to be able to look back at your own desert trials and realize how far you've come in your walk, even if your destination seems so hazy and far away. But unlike Much-Afraid, you don't have to wonder whether your goal is mere "wishful thinking." Your journey has been ratified by our Shepherd, and it's been pursued in trust by the Hebrews 11 notables who have gone before you!

- Are you strengthened by reminding yourself that your delay in coming to maturity in Jesus is for your King's glory as you press on in trust?

- A causeway passes over a body of water to link one land mass with another. You can travel in either direction, either back from where you came or onward to new territory. How eager are you at this point to cross over to the new land our Shepherd has for you? Why?

14. Then looking ahead...; 15. Somehow the roar of the wind...; 16. "And now shall mine...

Have you ever traversed a bridge or causeway and sensed great relief that you don't have to cross the churning waters by boat? The "causeways" of your life are the encouragement from our Father to lift you above the rushing waters of frantic reaction to your daily responsibilities.

From His perspective you are able to appreciate how He's carried you this far, and be reminded as you descend that every day can be a "different kind of country altogether" if you choose to inhabit His peace.

The full force of the wind which had so aggravatingly stirred up blinding dust in the desert was now a source of envigorating joy to Much-Afraid. The "glorious wine of life" took hold of her very being and freed her to shout praises to God! She was well aware that her enemies lay in wait, but she chose to concentrate instead on the sacrifice of joy that comes from praising Him with a heart of abandon.

Look with eyes of praise at your own life! You aren't starving, you have a roof over your head, and there are people who are glad you were born — and you are loved by your Lord! Climb up that causeway of praise

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

and practice spirit-dancing on the waves and wind in your mind — even if the melody is accompanied by bickering children, strident TV, or jangling phone!

It's your choice — do you cross the causeway with surging strength or crawl back down into a sandy foxhole?

- When was the last time you spontaneously burst into songs of praise or love to Jesus, even if just sung in your heart?

- Isn't it about time you and your journey partner edified each other in joyful praise? Will you?

give you as well. Then purpose in your heart to give them hope by your changed attitudes and behavior so they don't have to fear that your old-nature ways will return.

- In what areas of your life are you still prone to being a "silly little weakling" subject to the temptations of your spiritual enemies?

- How is *today* going as far as triumphing over your enemies? Do you need to come to our Father for forgiveness in any areas of heart? Do you need to ask forgiveness and make restitution for anyone you've sinned against?

17. As she sang she thought...; 18. While still on the causeway

Each day that you decide to look your enemies — self-pity, rejection, pride, whatever! — in the face and refuse to listen to their taunts, you've triumphed in a battle of spiritual proportions! Instead of berating yourself for having to consciously turn aside dark thoughts each and every day, confess to yourself and to our Father that indeed, you "need Him every hour" as the old hymn proclaims. Dependence on Him is a good place to be!

Your victory is the Shepherd's victory, because your decision to turn away from darkness into the light of loving obedience to Him brings Him glory in the heavenlies, just as He promised! So focus on those victories, and each night before crawling into bed, recount before Him the pebbles of triumph you've gathered that day. More failures than triumphs? Stop keeping score! Our Father promises to forgive the sins you bring before Him in humility, and to cleanse you from their defilement.

Equipped with that wholeness, go to those you've offended and ask them to for-

19. The change in scene...; 20. Much-Afraid told herself...; 21. Everywhere she looked...

Sue: I don't know about you, but having been raised in frosty New England, it was always such a joy to see the first crocuses peeking out of the late snow. But Spring, ahhh! Aside from allergies, what a visual feast as the fresh, eager plants unfolded their riotous colors.

Because we've lived in the dry and dusty West for quite awhile, we especially appreciate the creative diversity of our Father's palette. To the unsuspecting eye, much of the thirsty high country is overwhelmed by reddish dirt and sage green bushes. But, like Much-Afraid, when you make an effort to investigate more closely, you can stare in wonder at the fiery Indian paintbrush or vibrant yellow prickly pear blossom.

Most high country blooms aren't profuse — but that makes their appearance all the more welcome!

Pause for a moment and think of the life teeming all around you from a child's perspective — the child we're admonished by our Savior to emulate in wonder and in trust!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Walking with an inquisitive four-year-old can open up for you a whole vista of previously unnoticed beauty. Rubbery worms, delicate violets, shimmering dandelions begging to be blown — the dishes, the phone calls, the deadlines just have to wait!

Don't be ruled by the tyranny of urgent things unless you're unwilling to stroll in peace with the Shepherd. Purpose to reevaluate your hours and what is filling them. Don't let yourself be agitated by guilt or reciprocal obligation ("They invited us over, so we have to invite them back.")

- Picture yourself as a young child venturing out into a spring pasture. What will you take the time today to notice and thank our Creator for, even if you never make it out of your house?

- Are you willing to talk with your journey partner to help clear your plate of distractions and needless busyness in order to learn to laugh again in wonder? When will you do this?

22. At the same time...; 23. As Much-Afraid looked at it...; 24. You may think...

If you're willing to start growing in wonder and appreciation of our Father's small revelations of His love in your daily life, you may be recognizing that getting up in the morning is more hopeful for you. You aren't quite so overwhelmed by the coming day's realities because a new root of loving trust has been burrowing in your heart!

Don't let your daily complexities strangle that new growth. Your steps are progressing ahead, so hold discouragement and self-disappointment at bay. Your Father is cheering you on as you continue!

Sue: I'm my fiercest critic, and it shows all over my face, my disposition, and my attitude when I feel like I've failed Mike or anyone else. But even worse, I let these wrong perceptions infect our whole home with dissatisfaction. It's time to remind myself again of Paul's encouragement to the followers of Jesus in Philippi:

> *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evi - dent to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every - thing, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which tran - scends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:4-7).

Part of my needful "denying of self" is to let go of my perceived right to feel so bad about me that I lose my focus on Jesus' presence in me and in our home. Our Father knows our sorrow and has sent us a Comforter to help us move beyond our personal grief. He has us on a "strange journey" that others might not understand — and they won't until they respond to His call with ears to hear!

- Much-Afraid was "half-afraid and half-eager" to evaluate her willingness to love as Jesus would have her love. Where would you put yourself in this arena of love?

- What ways has the Spirit been revealing to you to live out the love He's growing in you?

25. But she did not weep...; 26. Much-Afraid smiled...; 27. This time, though...

If you've gotten this far in the book and the notes, you're ready to look in the mirror of your heart to find "Acceptance-with-Joy." By now you've learned that you generally have little control over what comes your

way — unanticipated bills, accidents, poor choices by your children. Whatever you're going through that's causing you to call on the Shepherd, you probably didn't plan for or ask for!

What is under your control, however, is *your response* to those intrusions into your sense of well-being. If you've been clinging to our Lord's sovereignty and love for you, then you can accept with joy whatever happens because He's your Sustainer and Strength. This doesn't mean you have to be happy that your car engine blew, but you can trust with peace and joy that He can fulfill your needs (creatively, if need be — maybe not car repair but perhaps a neighbor's offer to drive you to work!)

Much-Afraid admitted that she had allowed her memory of her growth in Acceptance-with-Joy to lapse, and noted that her *heart* needed to be sacrificed to remind her. Her yieldedness to walk in what He's shown her so far without grumbling or moaning was enough to spark radiance within her. And she was able to *run* — she, lame Much-Afraid — to His presence on winged feet!

- How have your responses to unexpected crises changed since you first began your journey?

- Can you recall some instances in which you've evidenced "Acceptance-with-Joy" in response to a situation that formerly would have agitated you?

28. "Oh, welcome, welcome...; 29. "I have come...; 30. The color leaped...

Much-Afraid was self-deprecating as she evaluated her spiritual progress. The Shepherd ignored her humble putdown but responded with words that recognized her earnest zeal. He told her to be *ready* for something *new* that would come from His hands.

Sue: I really dislike change. Once something is in its place in our home, it stays there until the next move! But I've been learning along the way that change is needful in our lives — not necessarily relocation, but willingness to be conformed to Jesus in arenas that are unpleasant and challenging.

The more I resist, the more I remind myself of a horse I recently rode. She was used to being the lead horse on trail rides, but the wrangler decided to break in a new lead horse. My mount was reassigned close to the rear. That first day she fought me hoof and tail! Whenever I relaxed a bit, she'd strain to push ahead of the others, whisking her tail, kicking the horse behind her, and flattening her ears at the horses who impeded her progress.

Each and every time I had to haul back on the reins and bring her back in line to the place she'd been assigned. This was not fun for her or for me! The next ride, we were given a position closer to the front, and she was relaxed and content. Had she realized in her equine heart that change wasn't all bad, she could have forestalled a sore mouth!

In human terms, if I seek our Lord with my husband over a matter and Mike reports a response (even if it didn't suit me!), I can accept with joy my Lord's sovereignty. Or, if I whine and moan and try to get my way, we're both miserable.

- How do you respond to change? How does your response impact others?

- What change has been the hardest for you along your journey? Why? How has the Shepherd shown you that such a change was needed for your good?

31. "O Shepherd,"...; 32. She thought he nodded...; 33. "Do you mean it?"...; 34. This time he answered...

Have you ever so anticipated a trip, only to be disappointed that it was postponed? Perhaps that was behind the inscrutable expression crossing the Shepherd's face. Much-Afraid was breathless with excitement at the prospect of finally going to the High Places. The Shepherd, though, knew she wasn't ready. She needed much more preparation before the High Places would be appropriate for her.

- Like putting waterskis on a child who can't swim, we sometimes end up over our heads in life situations. I was totally unprepared to be an arts and crafts instructor at a summer camp, and my ineptness was painfully obvious to staff and campers alike. How about you? What situation have you ever found yourself in that caused you embarrassment (or worse!) because you hadn't been fully prepared?

- Have you come to the point in which you can extend grace and mercy to those who haven't been fully prepared yet to venture on a pilgrimage to the High Places? How can you best help them?

A Final Exhortation

The pilgrimage with our Lord Jesus in which He is changing us is developing new response patterns which are leading to our Father's desired goal for our lives — Christ-likeness. In any learning process you discover steps and practices to help you along the way. There are also processes you're constrained from doing because they'll hinder your progress.

In each of these chapters we've been repeating some of the same themes, such as resisting the enemy by taking your thoughts captive and transforming them into thoughts prompted by His Spirit. We've also added new elements to your journey, such as walking in complete trust in our Shepherd. Each of these components must become a *way of life* for you. In other words, you must *put them into practice* if you want to be changed!

You may have been steeped in Hellenistic religious practices which have segmented your life into "secular" and "sacred" realms. The Hebraic understanding of our Lord is a wholistic perspective that brings Him into every venue of your life, whether your home, your school, your workplace, or your faith practices.

Your life pilgrimage is a 24/7 lifestyle in which every aspect of your life represents the depth of relationship you have with our Father and His Son Jesus. You bear the awesome responsibility of permitting your life to mirror a divine relationship as you are God's physical agent to represent Him to all who encounter you.

This journey, however, is not about *you* per se. It's about our Father and His eternal plan for the redemption of mankind. And He enlists "Much-Afraids" like you and me who are willing to leave the Valley to accomplish His task. The journey is exciting, to be sure. But to prepare us to be fully available for His purposes, He must transform us and conform us to be like His Son Jesus.

Quotes for Your Heart and Your Refrigerator

- My ***life*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

- My ***response to situations*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.
- My ***willingness to change*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

- My ***willingness to forgive*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

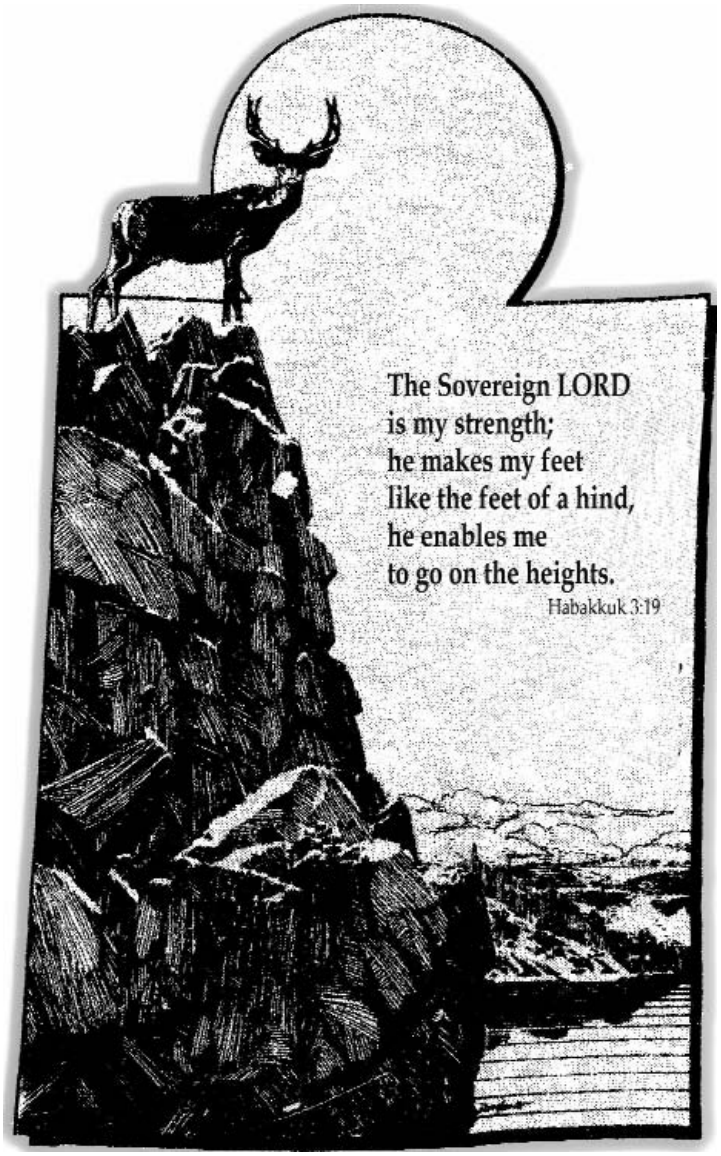
- My ***willingness to praise with thanksgiving*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

- My ***willingness to love even when I am not loved*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

- My ***willingness to press on to the High Places*** reflects the depth of my relationship with my Father.

Going to the High Places

Chapter 9 *Great Precipice Injury*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

As Paul penned to the Philippians, it's *good* to send reminders! Here's one for you. Our entire spiritual journey toward salvation is one of *transformation*. Our need to be transformed into increasing conformity to Jesus is often under-emphasized in man-centered Nicolaitanism. (We address this topic at our website under *Hebraic Articles* entitled "I Hate Nicolaitanism!")

Along the journey God's Word gives us non-optional principles to live by, such as trusting Him, forgiving others, and living righteously. Just as vital, we come to depend more and more on the Holy Spirit for guidance, encouragement and power. Through the Spirit's faithful work in our lives, and our desire to abide in Jesus and follow Him, our knowledge *about* our Father becomes *truly knowing* Him.

The next two chapters of *Hinds' Feet* find Much-Afraid (and us) dealing with the daunting precipice. This area of personal challenge is like a mid-term exam for each of us. If you've been traveling along, putting into practice the different life principles our Lord requires, then these next two chapters will encourage you. The "impassible precipice" won't appear "impossible" at all.

But maybe you've been reading these chapter studies and done little with the faith lessons they are designed to teach. You may even now be facing a situation that seems impossible to change or overcome!

We didn't intend for this series to feed your intellect. We're using *Hinds' Feet On High Places* to emphasize the all-important sanctification part of our salvation pilgrimage — transformation into Christ-likeness.

In these next two chapters our Father wants to *transform* each of His children — transform us into greater conformity to the character of Jesus. We exhort you: Don't satisfy yourself with just reading along through each lesson. Make it a *way of life* that brings *maximum glory to our Father*!

Chapter 9 *Great Precipice Injury*

1. After that, for a little while...; 2. After a time...; 3. One day they suddenly...; 4. As the sun rose...; 5. Much-Afraid fell on her knees

More times than we would choose, our lives are a continuous series of changing scenes and events. We're being painfully molded on the potter's wheel, or undergoing severe fires, or being ground into malleable powder.

But remember that earlier promise at the Pyramid, *"Grain isn't threshed forever."* There are also times, when, from our earthly perspective, we're released into seasons of ease, "with a song in your heart." As delicious as these times seem to us, they can also be periods in which our trust in our Father and our dependence on Him is minimal.

This period of ease when you are serenely strolling through life's "fields and orchards and low hills of the country" is a time of subtle testing. When you don't seem to *need* absolute dependence on our Father for guidance and strength, you can become susceptible to *false expectation*. In other words, you dwell on particular outcomes that you desire and go for them, often without seeking God's confirmation.

When you're rolling in a groove of complacency, or when a long-sought goal is almost at hand, you are bait for deception's jaws. Some of the decisions you make when your trust and dependence on your Father are minimal can thrust you into an emotional or spiritual prison for a long time afterward.

It's not as though we're without testimonies of warning, though. Paul reminded the believers in Corinth to *learn* from those who had gone before them in the Older Testament: *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down **as warnings for us**, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come"* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

This is why we encourage followers of Jesus to spend time in *both* Testaments. In

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

the Older Testament in particular you'll find abundant evidence of God's principles in dealing with His children. You'll also discover numerous examples of foolish decisions made by those who ignored or disobeyed God.

If you don't think danger confronts you as you approach a long-sought goal, consider what happened to the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan and were about to finally take possession of the Promised Land. Local Gibeonites approached the Israelites with a ruse devised to authenticate that they were from a distant tribe not under God's judgment of annihilation. The deceived Israelites, choosing to ignore their need for God's wisdom, made a treaty with them. As Joshua concedes, *"The men of Israel sampled their provisions* ***but did not inquire of the Lord****"* (Joshua 9:14).

Even if you've faithfully walked long, hard roads with our Lord, you may find yourself suddenly tempted. King David got himself in trouble during a time of leisure. Having sent his troops off to fight, *"David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful... "* (2 Samuel 11:1,2). David ends up in an adulterous affair and murders Bathsheba's husband Uriah, one of his most loyal "mighty men".

Don't drop your guard when things seem to be going easy! And *especially* be careful of decisions you make when your path is "flat and comparatively smooth." Remember how important God's guidance and confirmation are if you yearn for His blessing in and through you.

- Are you in a time of relative ease at the moment? Is your spiritual guard higher or lower than it was during your last spiritual assault?

- Can you look back in your life and detect any decisions that later trapped you because you didn't seek guidance and confirmation from God? Are you more prone to quickly "pray and go" rather than patiently "seek and wait"? Describe the consequences you've experienced from both approaches.

- When you've made a wrong decision that has trapped you, do you struggle to wiggle out of the problem, be it a painful situation or an ill-advised relationship? Or, did you repent, ask your Father for mercy, and take steps to rectify it?

As you read this anecdote, ask yourself, from God's perspective, "Is this how foolish *I* am when I complacently act on my own without seeking my Father's way?"

TRYING TO DO THE JOB ALONE

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block number 3 of the accident reporting form, I put "trying to do the job alone" as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully and I trust that the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the date of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six story building. When I completed my work, I discovered that I had about 500 pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley which fortunately was attached to the side of the building, at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to insure a slow descent of the 500 pounds of brick. You will note in block number eleven of the accident report form that I weigh 135 pounds.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Due to my surprise' of being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say I proceeded at a rather rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope in spite of my pain.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of brick hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighs approximately fifty pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block number eleven. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles and the lacerations on my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of bricks and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the bricks, in pain and unable to stand, and watching the empty barrel six stories above me, I again lost my presence of mind and------I let go of the rope. The empty barrel weighed more than the rope so it came back down on me and broke both of my legs.

I hope I have furnished the information you require as how the accident occurred.

6. As they approached...; 7. Much-Afraid stood still and stared...

Much-Afraid had been overwhelmed by the glorious beauty of the sunlit mountains — so much so that the reality of their rugged steepness never entered her mind. By rightly focusing on the Creator of these cliffs, no anxiety could penetrate her worship. But the closer they drew to the majestic cliffs, the more formidable they seemed.

Our Father enjoys bringing His children to their own "impassible precipice." Not only does it give us a chance to find how much we trust Him, but our dire straits stir us to look back at all the other painful experiences He's taken us through to transform our character.

Our own steep slopes force us to face our deep need for Him. They also give us pause to embrace our past pain and the suffering He has faithfully taken us through so that we can become increasingly more like His Son Jesus.

The helpless situation Much-Afraid found herself in couldn't be spelled out any more clearly: "The cliffs completely blocked the way before her, yet the path ran right up to them, then stopped." You can almost see the smile on our Father's face when He gets *you* into a similar seemingly impossible position!

Then it becomes your choice. Do you choose to trust that He will make a way where there seems to be no way (as the song goes)? Or, do you "tremble and shake all over" in doubt and unbelief, fearful that you've come all this way and endured so much, yet now have to turn back from your own dream or goal?

Because our Father enjoys making the impossible possible, let me share a personal experience.

> When I was released from my third tour off Vietnam, our ship was in Hong Kong. This last deployment had been emotionally devastating for me. Sue and I had been married 3 years, with more months spent apart than together.
>
> After our ship's stay in Hong Kong I was to ride it back to the Philippines and catch a military flight from Clark Air Force Base back to the United States. Message traffic had informed us of a 50-day wait before I'd be able to fly out of Clark. *Fifty days*...! I felt I could do better on my own.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

I was given permission to depart the ship in Hong Kong and begin "thumbing" my way across the Pacific. I located a destroyer that was heading immediately to the Philippines and caught a ride. By the next evening we arrived in Subic Bay, still 40 miles from Clark. As there were no flights scheduled to Clark, I checked into billeting. The next morning I walked down the flight line and came upon an Air Force medivac flight heading for Clark. They gave me a lift!

When I got to the Air Terminal at Clark, the sergeant at the counter told me it would indeed be 50 days before I could get out. As I walked dejectedly away from the counter, the sergeant called out to me. "Sir, I just found out there's an unscheduled flight coming in from DaNang heading for Travis Air Force Base in California. There are 8 open seats and I don't have time to find the personnel to fill them. Would you mind flying out in an hour?" [Even now I cry with joy as I write this!]

Sue had no idea I was coming home since she was aware of the 50-day delay. I thought, "I'll call her when I get to Travis." As I cleared customs at Travis, I was approached by 4 Air Force personnel. "We have a taxi that will take 5 of us to San Francisco Airport. Would you like to be the fifth? "Are you kidding?" I shouted.

Arriving at San Francisco Airport I heard the announcement: "Passengers with tickets for San Diego and military with travel vouchers report to gate __. At the gate the attendant looked me over and asked, "Coming back from 'Nam?" I answered, "Two days ago I was in Hong Kong when I started thumbing my way home. My wife doesn't even know I'm on my way."

That wonderful woman took some information on how to reach Sue for me. And there stood my wife when I came through the gate in San Diego. MY FATHER IS AWESOME IN TIMES OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!!!

[Some time I'd love to tell you how our Father moved two typhoons out of the way so I could see Sue and our son Mike in Japan. That, too, was an "impassible wall" that only He could move!]

Keep this in the forefront of your heart as you encounter seemingly impossible circumstances: **Your trust and dependence on your Father is at stake**! The Precipice is your place for a mid-journey evaluation of what you've been putting into practice thus far.

- Recall some "impassible walls" in your own life. How did you respond to them? How did our Lord make a way?

- What testimonies can you share of changes our Lord has been making in your life during the past six months of our journey together?

8. Just as this overwhelming realization...; 9. As the three stood watching...; 10. Then the hart would leap...

Picture this as Much-Afraid and her companions did. As they stood in front of the precipice, a hart (male deer) ascended the steep cliff, immediately followed by the female hind. This is a crucial visualization for married couples especially.

The ascent up that precipice was based on a lot of small, precise steps taken by the hart. Husbands, this analogy is comparable to God's *rhema* for you — knowing His *specific will* for you and your family. It's vital that we husbands have absolute confidence in the guidance that our Father has given us, and follow through in it as adeptly as that hart did on the trail.

Wives, make sure any inclination to challenge and question your husband's insights isn't emanating out of fear or distrust in our Lord's sovereignty. Be an encourager, not a hindrance!

I've enjoyed over a quarter century of getting up early to spend time with our Lord in Bible study and intercession. During this time with Him He's warned me of impend-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ing attacks on us or our ministry. Then I've told Sue about the warning I've been given. It's at time like this that I've asked her to tuck in close in her spirit so I can guide and shield us both.

The concept of *tucking Sue in* comes from my days of flying formation. When we would fly into difficult circumstances, the flight leader would order his wingman to pull in close. In an emergency situations there isn't time to go looking around for him!

That hart going up the precipice needed to know his hind was following immediately in his footsteps. It was nearly impossible for him to turn around to see what she was doing! "So the two of them leaped and sprang with perfect grace and assurance up the face of the precipice..." If you are married, you aren't going to get through the "impossible precipices" in your lives until you *both* come through it together — willingly.

"We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthian 5:7). Remind yourself that the challenging circumstances you face are revealing the depth of your own relationship with your Father. If you trust and depend on Him, He will give you wisdom to get beyond this precipice. And you can count on this: His wisdom is *always opposite* your own fleshly inclinations!

- Wives, are you free from worry about your children, about your family's finances, about whatever? What evidence would indicate that you *are* free?

- Can you, like the hind, follow your husband without hesitation, knowing without doubt that you have a caring Father Who is bigger than the both of you? What changes need to come about for this to happen?

11. Much-Afraid covered her face; 12. Oh, no! No!...

Terrified into immobility. Overcome by fear swirling in your mind of what *might* happen. Have you ever been in that position? Maybe you can identify with our tremulous heroine's resistance to press on. Notice how she covers her ears and refuses to receive the confident encouragement of her companions.

So often Jesus addresses words of power and truth to those who "have ears to hear." Your imaginative presuppositions that fearfully eye your circumstances keep you from calling on the Spirit with a heart of trust. You can, at this point, choose to wallow in your fears, or to rejoice that your back is to the wall and only your Father's intervention will bring resolution!

Sue: Mike and I faced a precipice shortly after we moved to Massachusetts to attend seminary. Our home in California hadn't yet sold, and we'd recently purchased another one. Then came the day when both mortgages were due and we had about $8 in the checking account.

Mike paced in worry, wondering if we'd somehow missed God's will. Meanwhile, I chuckled in delight: "Just think, we *have* to depend entirely on our Lord to do something!" I handed him a devotional article I'd just read that morning. It chronicled a young 18th century Naval officer and his wife as they sailed across the ocean. A fierce storm arose, and the wife shook in terror. The husband, however, prayed calmly. When she asked how he could stay calm when they were in such danger, he pulled out his sword and put it to her neck. "Are you afraid of me?" "No," she answered, "for I know in whose hand the sword is." "And I," he responded, "know in Whose hand the storm is."

Mike pondered this and prayed. The phone rang. Before I could answer it, the Holy Spirit told him that it was our realtor in California and our house had sold! The realtor also told us that the buyer wanted to move in right away and pay advance rent,

which paid the mortgage of the house we were living in. Because the sold house was in escrow, we didn't have to pay that month's mortgage — and since the sale didn't close until January (in a year in which we had little income), we ended up not having to pay any capital gains either! Impossible situation, you say? *Mighty God*, we respond!

Sometimes it's vital that we consider our Father's perspective of us when we hesitate to press on during a difficult time. Think for a moment about the nature of the people our Lord chooses for His purposes. Mostly they are *exactly opposite* of the world's standards of those best able to scale impassable walls! No one could have believed that a young shepherd could slay a well-armed Philistine giant!

And the followers of Jesus weren't wise or mighty by the world's standards either. As Paul concurs, there isn't much to compliment in *any* of us except that we've put our trust in Jesus! The following humorous account portrays the kind of people our Lord chooses to join Him. Do you see yourself among them?

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafter Carpenter Shop, Nazareth

FROM: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

Dear Sir:
Thank you for submitting the resumés of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests. We have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,
Jordan Management Consultants.

We can't emphasize enough how healthy it is during your pilgrimage to realize that our Lord's selection of you has *nothing* to do with your capabilities! This reality helps you be at peace in your circumstances, and to have a sense of humor about yourself. So enjoy more of your journey with a grateful heart for His presence!

- What strengths or qualities do you have that are, or would be, esteemed in the world's eyes? Has our Lord used these in particular ways? Which of these strengths has He transformed or allowed to die?

- What perceived personal weaknesses make you all the more dependent on our Lord for *His* strength and wisdom?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

13. As she crouched...; 14. "Ha, ha!"...; 15. She opened her eyes in fresh terror...; 16. "I thought somehow"...

Every time you wait too long to trust and depend on your Father, those inner voices assail you. Count on it! The murmuring spiritual strongholds that once controlled and influenced you will sidle up to see if they can have at you again.

Craven Fear reminds Much-Afraid that "you are one of the Fearings." He's counting on her immobilizing dread to steer her back to her old fleshly identity, quite the opposite of her great value and inner beauty in the Shepherd's sight.

How vulnerable each of us is when we pay greater heed to our fears than to the power of our loving Lord! Those voices will only get louder and more insistent if you don't nip them right away. Take those thoughts captive and turn your mind toward the character of Jesus in His nobility, purity, justice and love, as Paul directed the Philippian believers.

Mike: The predominant stronghold that permeated my extended family for generations was rejection. Were you aware that different spiritual anointings and giftings attract demonic attention? Years ago a well-known Christian teacher stated that the demonic force that tries to hinder the prophetically gifted is rejection.

In Israel our Father gave us a "prophetic mission" to share His restoration message. During the nearly 10 years we've shared the facets of the Hebraic Restoration, the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations have sustained us with encouragement to endure and to press on. We are sharing a message our Father gave us in advance of the Dark Days of Chastisement that are coming on this nation. Jeremiah prophesied under the same conditions of blatant sin and a complacent, self-centered religious system.

You may think that a synagogue is the Jewish version of the Gentile church — and maybe today there *is* similarity. But the synagogue got its start during the Babylonian captivity 586 years before Jesus' incarnation. Israelites who were earnest to know the Word of God went to the prophet's house for understanding unto application. In this way, God's Word and His ways became part of those who had "ears to hear" during their 70-year exile.

Their determined desire to *know God's Word* so they could walk in it made all the difference in their gathering together. Sue and I recognize that today people gather congregationally for many different reasons. But some are consumed by a *love for the Lord* that compels them to press on in everything He desires of them. We are deeply encouraged if we can help such people! Others, however, are just looking to add to their store of knowledge. These we are just not able to assist effectively.

Over the years of sharing the Hebraic Restoration, I've often encountered severe demonic attacks that sometimes drive me to despair — the same kind by which Much-Afraid was paralyzed. The battlefield of despair is the point in which the demonic voices come back for a fresh attack. The voices with which I'm most often assailed are a variety of false accusations, each trying to deceive me that my Father has rejected me. I wrestle with all my strength in Jesus to take my thoughts captive and cry out to my Lord for help.

When victory comes, I'm then able to see how my Father uses these episodes to strengthen my trust and dependence on Him, and to increase my compassion and encouragement for others who come under attack.

- How about you? What goes on in your life that brings the attack of harping demonic voices? How do you deal with those assaults in your mind? Is your trust and dependence on your Father stronger or weaker afterward?

- What buttons get pushed that drive you into a spiral of despair, making you vulnerable to agitating thoughts?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

17. "I won't go"...; 18. "Well, you can take your choice"...; 19. "Doesn't it give you"...

Once you get started down the path of vain imagination, you'll find yourself more and more agitated by fear. Sue: I realize that visual images can implant themselves in my mind, only to pop up when I least need to remember them! That's why it's so important to monitor what you watch on TV or through other media, and even what you *read* if your mind is prone to put words into mental images. Those mind pictures can become fertile ground for the enemy to agitate you when you're weak.

Besides the voices that chip away at your trust in Jesus' love, your own imagination seems to be programmed to conceive the worst. Can't you just hear Craven Fear maliciously whispering, "Just imagine those ugly, knife-like rocks..." Keep in mind that Satan is the master of *illusion*. He uses demonic voices to agitate your own mind against you. But our God is the Lord of *dis*-illusion, exposing the lie *behind* the illusion. He reveals the illusions of deceptive imaginings and empowers you to focus on the Reality of Who He is in your life. He *shatters* illusions!

Jesus defines Himself as ***"the way and the truth and the life***. (John 14:6). The Greek word for "truth" means "reality". In other words, our Lord is saying, *"I am the way and* ***the only reality****..."* We often get disappointed as God dis-illusions us by revealing reality from His perspective. The demonic illusions, even though they were false, were our deceived "reality". But Jesus is the real Reality in our lives, and He tolerates no illusions to compete with Him.

The illusions we lived under were part of our sinful, fleshly identity. Our Lord's sanctification process often makes us feel like we are being ripped apart as our deceptions and sins become *utterly sinful* to us (see Romans 7:13). We are being *transformed* from illusion to dis-illusion to Reality. Remember, following Jesus is a matter of *identity change*.

The process of this change is:

illusion > disillusion > Reality

- What deceiving illusions are you beset by, be it your perceived inability to walk away from a sinful attitude or behavior, or a wrongful relationship, or fear of the consequences if you follow through on your Shepherd's commands?

- What are you tolerating through your eyes or ears that can become an open invitation for demonic badgering?

20. "Much-Afraid", said the guides...; 21. She clung to them...; 22. Sorrow bent over...; 23. "If I call him"...;

If you want to access the Reality of all the universe, you must call out His Name! Much-Afraid's companions understood this clearly, "...you know where your help lies. Call for help." As simple as their suggestion seems, it meets with the same reason for *not* calling out to God that many of us have: "I am so afraid that if I call him, he will tell me that I must go that way, that dreadful, dreadful way, and I can't."

Until the last 3 words, Much-Afraid's statement is absolutely true. If our Lord has planned the path for you, then He wants you to follow it. You may say, "...he will tell me to build an altar, and I can't. This time I can't."

Our Lord sees our "can'ts" as temporary "won'ts". But that's what makes our pilgrimage all the more interesting for Him. As I've repeated to many, "You can do it the *easy* way or you can do it the *hard* way." [And if you've heard me say this, you're probably chuckling right now, "It's far easier to *obey* Jesus than to struggle!"]

Our Father knows how much your sin nature fights against your *spirit*, that is, your desire to live for Jesus. This battle will go on until you die. But each skirmish and subsequent victory is one of the "altar experiences" that dot your pilgrimage to salvation.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- When was the last time you could have kicked yourself for waiting so long to call on your Shepherd for help, for deliverance, or even just for wisdom?

- In what ways have you tried to find alternatives to what you knew He was calling you to do? What reasons and excuses did you use, only to feel that weight of conviction afterward?

24. Craven Fear laughed triumphantly...; 25. "Why, Much-Afraid"...; 26. He sounded so cheery...

Sometimes you get forced by the extremity of your situation to fall before our Shepherd in tears and shame. In Much-Afraid's case, her faithful friend Suffering serves her well by pricking her with a knife. Much-Afraid is brought to her crisis point with no inner strength on which to rely.

Sue: For years I resisted our Father's call to walk in loving, obedient trust in Jesus. I was an active churchgoer and participant in many committees and programs. But to yield my life to His will? No way!!

Then our Father graciously left me to my own devices shortly after Mike sailed off on an eight-month deployment. Do you know what my greatest fear was about yielding my life to Jesus? That He'd send Mike and me off kicking and screaming to Africa to be missionaries! (Actually, we almost did go to Nigeria — willingly! — a few years later until He closed that door!) From my rebellious perspective, however, that was one wall that I didn't want to climb!

Mike: Before coming to Christ I was an avid poker player. To put poker in simple terms, the stakes are increased until everyone but the ultimate winner folds his hand and gives up. When I read the Bible for the first time, I was keenly aware that this God of Scripture is an excellent "poker player." He keeps increasing the pressure until you call out to Him, reaffirming your trust and dependence on His love and faithfulness. And you can count on this: Our Father never bluffs!

You can help others in Jesus who are struggling with doubt or a resistant heart. God tells us through the writer to the Hebrew believers, *"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But* ***encourage one another daily,*** *as long as it is called Today, so that* ***none of you*** *may be* ***hardened by sin's deceitfulness****"* (Hebrews 3:12,13).

Yesterday I received a letter and a phone call from two men who have been helped by our writings. Our Father knew I needed some encouragement because it's been a difficult several months. At the end of the day I was reminded of Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian official who came to Jeremiah's rescue. As we wrote earlier, the crusty prophet who more often than not was the bearer of tidings not well-received has been an inspiration to Sue and me to persevere in trust.

The resistance against his prophetic messages was fierce. Picture Jeremiah's plight. Cast into a dark, muddy cistern, the faithful old man was shivering and hungry.

> *But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate, Ebed-Melech went out of the palace and said to him, "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city." Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies."* (Jeremiah 38:6-13).

Ebed-Melech's heart was so touched by the prophet's pain that he even thought to procure old rags as padding against the rope's harsh fibers! His courageous actions, at the

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

risk of his own life on behalf of the unpopular prophet, didn't go unnoticed in heaven. God blessed him for his kindness to Jeremiah:

> *'Go and tell Ebed-Melech the Cushite, 'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfill my words against this city through disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your eyes. **But I will rescue you** on that day, declares the Lord; **you will not be handed over** to those you fear. **I will save you;** you will **not fall by the sword** but will **escape** with your life, because you **trust in me**, declares the Lord'* (Jeremiah 39:16-18).

- Ebed-Melech was a faithful source of encouragement and help. Whom have *you* encouraged today?

- Much-Afraid may not have appreciated Suffering's stab of motivation, but "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6). Whom do you know who may be giving way to sin's deceitfulness and could use your encouragement or "pointed intervention"? What are you going to do about it?

27. She sat up and looked at him...; 28. "It is the way...

The Shepherd arrived to a Much-Afraid tormented by shame at her cowardice. But she discovered that which so many who cry out to Him find: "The shame in her eyes met no answering reproach in his." You can trust that our God is a God of *character development*, not of reproach or shame. That we may *feel* shame is a result of the Fall [see *Demolishing Strongholds*]. Shame does not come from God.

The effects of the Fall are numerous, impacting each of us because of that original decision to choose sin:

How Adam's Fall into Sin Has Harmed Us (Genesis 3:1-4:7)
1. Harms Our Hearing from God (Genesis 3:1-3).
2. Harms Our Belief in God (Genesis 3:4,5).
3. Harms Our Desires (Genesis 3:6).
4. Harms Our Actions (Genesis 3:6).
5. Harms Our Relationships with Others (Genesis 3:6).

Further Effects of Adam's Fall
1. Shame (Condemnation) (Genesis 3:7).
2. Rationalization (Hiding from God) (Genesis 3:8,9).
3. Fear (Genesis 3:10).
4. Blame (Inability To Take Responsibility for One's Actions) (Genesis 3:11-13).
5. Curse Instead of Blessing (Genesis 3:16-19).
6. Rejection (Genesis 3:21-24).
7. Vulnerability to Satanic Attack (Genesis 4:6,7).

If you do not deal with the underlying strongholds that distort your relationship with God, you will *continue* to expose yourself to the effects of the Fall. Loving intimacy with the God of Holiness will seem out of reach until you humble yourself before Him and cast down whatever is blocking out rest and delight in Jesus.

- When were you last so pierced by shame in your perceived "failure before God" that you put off coming before Him?

- Much-Afraid kept her eyes on her disabilities that she feared would keep her from fulfilling His purposes for her. What perceived disabilities (emotional, physical, spiritual, circumstantial) do you feel will hold you back from trust-filled obedience in the challenges that face you?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

29. "But Much-Afraid, what did I promise you...; 30. "Well," he answered cheerily...

Throughout the Bible our Father gives His children promises they can count on. His promises are one of the great sources of our hope! One noticeable promise of God that's being fulfilled in our midst is His restoration of the Israelites back to Israel. God is gathering them from all corners of the earth, as He promised in Jeremiah 23:3,8 and elsewhere.

Connected to His promise to the Jewish people to restore them to their Land is the going forth of the Hebraic Restoration. To Jew and Gentile alike, this restoration is the basis to the trust-filled life of Abraham, the father of all who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16).

As you grow in knowledge and personal experience of God, His promises are all the more important to your hope. The apostle Peter lived in corrupt times that parallel our own. Yet note how he encourages us to walk in the obedient trust that is our means to escape the raging storm of evil.

> *His divine power has given us everything we need for **life and godliness** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his **very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may **participate** in the divine nature and **escape the corruption** in the world caused by evil desires"* (2 Peter 1:3,4; see also verses 5-11).

Take each personal promise in the Bible and insert your name! For example, *"[Your name] who trusts in him will never be put to shame"* (Romans 10:11). Remember, shame and fear of failure are only demonic illusions. Let your trust in our Father dis-illusion you!

Sue: I used to wonder as a young Christian just what was meant by "God's promises." Then He broke through with the astonishing realization the He is the same, yesterday, today and forever! Whatever He has told His followers that is within His nature to do for them, He is fully capable of doing for me, too, according to His will and purpose for my life. Now *that* makes this pilgrimage exciting!

The path of your pilgrimage is the exact trail He has chosen for *you* so that you too can have hinds' feet and be able to leap upon the High Places. Other people's paths to develop hinds' feet are not *your* earmarked road, so don't compare your life to theirs. Comparison is always the slick path to self-pity.

- Are there some particular promises of God in His Word that bring you special comfort and peace and strength? List some of them and commit them to memory!

- Ask our Lord which people in your life could use a reminder of His promises. Purpose to share a promise of hope with the next needy person you encounter!

31. Much-Afraid trembled...; 32. The Shepherd was a very surprising person...

Mike: I have to be on special guard against voices of rejection. They frequently tempt me to feel like I'm always getting the "short end of the stick." Yet our Lord wanted to raise up a couple who could share a prophetic message for individuals and families all over this nation, and even abroad. But to prepare us, He had to bring us to the "back side of the desert, where the mountains are particularly steep and where there are no paths..." What better way to strengthen our resolve to trust Him no matter what!

The Hebraic Restoration is restoring the trust-filled walk of spiritual power and relational intimacy that have been lost for 1700 years. The majority of us who embrace it have been steeped in Hellenist Nicolaitan traditions that elevated a clergy class over the laity.

As we share the Hebraic foundations and fulfill the prophetic mission our Lord gave

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Sue and me, we have been conscious to *not* erect a headquarters or establishment seat for this movement. We can share the facets of what made the earliest Church intimate and powerful, but each person or faith community must depend upon the Holy Spirit themselves in order to live out these truths. No one owes allegiance to us, but only to our Lord.

It may take several generations, even those who endure the Dark Days of chastisement, before people begin to walk in the pattern of the earliest Church again. My concern is that we don't create "Gideon's Ephod" (Judges 8:22-27) and find people stumbling over a manmade tradition that God didn't want. Each person must discover for him/herself the covenant love relationship and true Spirit worship of our Lord Jesus!

- Before you can get up your own Precipice, you have to come to grips with every painful circumstance of your past and thank God for what He accomplished through it. Are there any events from your past that you find too painful to deal with? Talk it over with the Shepherd, and with your journey partner. Their view on your past experience can change your perspective from fearful avoidance to a badge of victory.

33. "You said, 'Now...; 34. The Shepherd laughed too...; 35. It was a really extraordinary scene...;

To do the miraculous, the preposterous, is our Lord's wonderful way of expressing His love for us. But often, in order to do the preposterous, He has to get us to a place where nothing but His intervention can accomplish the task. Again, it isn't the change in your negative or impossible circumstances that gives Him delight. It's seeing *you* change! Turning jellyfish into mountain goats is what the sanctification portion of our pilgrimage to salvation is all about. Who you once were, you can't go on being if you want to reach the High Places.

Think about the changes our Lord made in His disciples. After the burial of Jesus they were huddled behind locked doors, terrified that the unbelieving Jews who crucified Jesus would come after them next. But then..., *"Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"* (John 20:19). If that wasn't motivation to cast down fear, what would be?!

Let's move on to Peter and John after the Sanhedrin released them with orders to keep quiet about the risen Lord. Did they cower in silent fear? Here's what they proclaimed:

> *'Now, Lord,* ***consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness****. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.* ***And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly*** (Acts 4:29-31). Hallelujah!

When you take a determined stand for God and His Word, you can count on His miraculous backing. During Saul's reign the Israelites were in hiding because of the fearsome Philistines (see 1 Samuel 14). Saul's son Jonathan, however, refused to be overcome by fear. He exhorted his armor-bearer, *"Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf.* ***Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few"*** (v.6).

Jonathan's determination brought about a rout! God got involved, and *"panic struck the whole army — those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties — and the ground shook.* ***It was a panic sent by God"*** (v.15). When you determine to abide in God and His Word as your basis of love-grounded obedient trust, you can anticipate that He's going to show Himself strong in your life!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

You may find it helpful to review our March/April 2002 newsletter, *The Covenant Gospel*, to get a solid grip on the journey to your eternal salvation. If you fully understand the *goal* of your pilgrimage and our Lord's means to get you there, you can overcome your complacency or resistance to press on.

The "unknown" regarding the issues of our salvation often stymies our pursuit and perseverance to the end. Spend some time discovering the nature of the path He has you on. Then thank Him for walking it with you!

"All men will hate you because of me, ***but he who stands firm to the end will find salvation"*** (Matthew 10:22). The Shepherd didn't change Much-Afraid's circumstances. Neither did he transform her from jellyfish to mountain goat at the snap of his fingers. She was still at the bottom of the precipice, still having to ascend with her lame, twisted feet.

But where just a little while before had been despair, a *new perspective* was presented. This *unexpected insight* is the wisdom our Lord gives whenever you yield and ask for His help. And as we wrote earlier, His wisdom is the exact opposite of our own fleshly inclination. Say this to yourself, "My Lord's wisdom is the exact opposite of my own inclination!"

Trust in our Shepherd plays a big part in your willingness to follow Him. Sadly, the Israelites who fled to the shore of the Red Sea couldn't praise God until they were all the way across. Their *circumstances* had to change before they could trust Him and praise Him. And what was the sorry fruit of their distrust? Forty years of grumbling rebellion that left that generation dead in the desert.

Our Shepherd doesn't want that for you. Sanctification has nothing to do with miraculous interventions that change your circumstances. Greater than parting the Red Sea is the person whose heart can trust his Father and praise Him *despite* the circumstances! When you choose to trust and depend on your Lord, you bring Him greater glory than any change in your circumstances could.

- What causes your joy level to go up or down? Are you basically a joyful person? A fearful person? A doubting person?

- How do adverse circumstances affect you? How do you respond to negative circumstances? Fret? Worry? Hit the fridge? Pray? Thank Him?

38. "Do you believe"...; 39. Much-Afraid looked at him; 40. As she spoke, something lovely happened....

"Not my will, but Thy will be done." Isn't that what our Lord waits to hear from each of us? You will have many Gethsemanes in your life if you choose to faithfully follow Jesus. No, you may never shed any blood for His sake, but you *will* wrestle against your flesh and against tormenting demonic voices in order to embrace the cup He offers you.

One of the growing experiences that happens along your journey is the realization of how much your yieldedness pleases your Father. His delight in your obedient trust changes your earlier motivation of *why* you were willing to go any further. Your motive for starting the journey and the motive that enables you to continue often have little in common.

Initially your goal has to do with your own aspirations. By the time the journey ends, you understand the wonderful character and nature of your Lord more clearly. Your increased understanding of His love compels you to want to please Him more. Like Much-Afraid, that which once worried you now seems to melt into unimportance.

Think about the visual image of that glorious rainbow as it illuminated the zigzag path that Much-Afraid was to scale with her

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

trusted companions. Many years ago Sue and I had the privilege of being "Sorrow" and "Suffering" in the life of a friend. This dear woman could not embrace the pain she had experienced in her past. She had carried old emotional baggage into her marriage that was bringing it to the brink of divorce.

Sue and I accompanied her on a long walk, one of us on each side of her as she poured out that old hurt. After the walk we knelt down and read aloud Chapter 16 of *Hinds' Feet On High Places*, Grave on the Mountains. That was over 15 years ago, and through the healing that our Lord rendered, she and her husband are still happily married!

When that day was over, Sue and I felt like we'd been touched by a rainbow. Sorrow and suffering took on a wonderfully magnificent perspective as we witnessed a heart transformation by the Holy Spirit

- Rainbows are a sign that God keeps His promises. Can you recall any particular rainbows you've marveled at, and the circumstances that were going on at that point in your life?

- When have you been especially aware that our Father has brought a special friend or two by your side to represent His love and strength to you?

41. In the shining glory...; 42. Then she did that which only a short time before; 43. This she put in her purse...

If you are used by our Lord to help out a struggling brother or sister, know that their struggle is never over until *self-will* is placed on the altar and consumed. Anything short of the sacrifice of your will on His altar leaves your old rebellious nature still in control.

Exercise discernment and ask our Lord to show you any vestiges of self-will still lurking in your heart. Unless you fully yield to *His* will rather than yours, you'll be unprepared to overcome that challenging life precipice you're facing. And your self-will and self-determination will rob your Father of the glory you *could* have given Him by exchanging your will for His.

Note that Much-Afraid doesn't have to light the altar fire herself. As soon as she lays down her dread and her will on the altar, His fire consumed them. The stone of remembrance that was left was "larger and rougher-looking" than any of the previous stones because our will is such a formidable aspect of our lives to lay aside!

Sue: I admit I didn't want to leave our rural home in Arizona and move back again to Colorado Springs! My anger and frustration so agitated me that Mike never knew when I was going to either erupt in unkind words or break down crying! Finally he told me, "You need to settle this with God!"

He was right. My will was battling my Father's sovereign plan and disrupting the peace in our home. That will *had to go!* In brokenness I offered my will up to Him as a tattered, soiled sacrifice — and in His loving mercy, He accepted it and restored peace to my heart! Were my emotions immediately transformed into joyful exuberance? No, but the seed of joy was planted, and He gave me eyes to appreciate the home He'd prepared for us.

- Recall a recent "battle of wills" that you fought against someone significant in your life. Did you yield, compromise, or fight until you got your way?

- How would your home or workplace change if you chose to lay down your will *before* tension and apprehension arose?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

44. Instead, he led her...; 45. I must tell you that this precipice...

The Shepherd makes Much-Afraid aware of the other mounts and precipices, none of which by their name sounds pleasant. Reviling, Hate, and Persecution — you can understand that other challenges are in store before the High Places are reached.

Rather than abhorrence that many more changes must be made in you, look at the upcoming precipices as places for you to unload unwanted baggage — baggage from your past that you don't have the strength to carry to the High Places. Nor should you want to. The higher you get, the lighter the load you'll want to carry to the top. As the Shepherd warned, the rest of your journey is going to be as steep or even steeper! Does that dismay you?

Sue: I may heartily dislike the change of relocation, but I sure do love the way our Lord opens up avenues of refreshment in the most unlikely places! Living amid almost 400,000 people could potentially leave solitude-loving me anxious. But our Father revealed to us wonderful hiking and biking trails only minutes from our home! These have been rainbow-lit paths to energize my heart in walking in His purposes and plans even here in the city!

- Okay, we are at the bottom of the precipice. Are you still carrying any baggage? Someone who hurt you? Unmet expectations? Betrayal? What will you do about it?

46. On the way here you have...; 47. When he had said this...; 48. Lastly, he put his hand...

Love is the crucial character quality for all else to be built upon in our lives. Anything we do without love is useless to our pilgrimage. The first step involved our will — accepting with joy the steadfast faithfulness of our Lord that supercedes all our circumstances.

Does that mean we'll avoid any or all injury or suffering as we walk With Jesus? No way! The Shepherd didn't whisk Much-Afraid and her companions up to the top of the precipice, and neither will He do that for you! But, neither will you be harmed *if* you "learn and *steadfastly practice* the second lesson in the Ascent of Love." Now He has your attention, right? Just what *is* this second lesson all about?

At this point the Shepherd is no longer laughing. He understands the solemnity of your determination to press on and bring Him pleasure. He recognizes before you will that there is injury in store for you if you persevere until the end. But how gentle and loving He is as He blesses you with His Spirit of comfort and grace — precious promises you can indeed rely on in your journey.

- Having progressed this far in your journey, how would you respond to those who say that Christians who are following Jesus won't suffer?

- What brings you the most comfort when you're in a severe trial? Prayer? Music? The Word? Companionship? Something else?

49. By this time the evening...; 50. With that he smiled...

How important it is to not become satisfied or complacent in your journey with the Shepherd. He warned Much-Afraid that her enemies would surely try to torment her if she failed to move on — and so will yours! But our Father's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23), and we need expectant, eager hearts to recognize and receive them!

Jesus admonishes us in Matthew 6:34 that each day has worries of its own, so

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

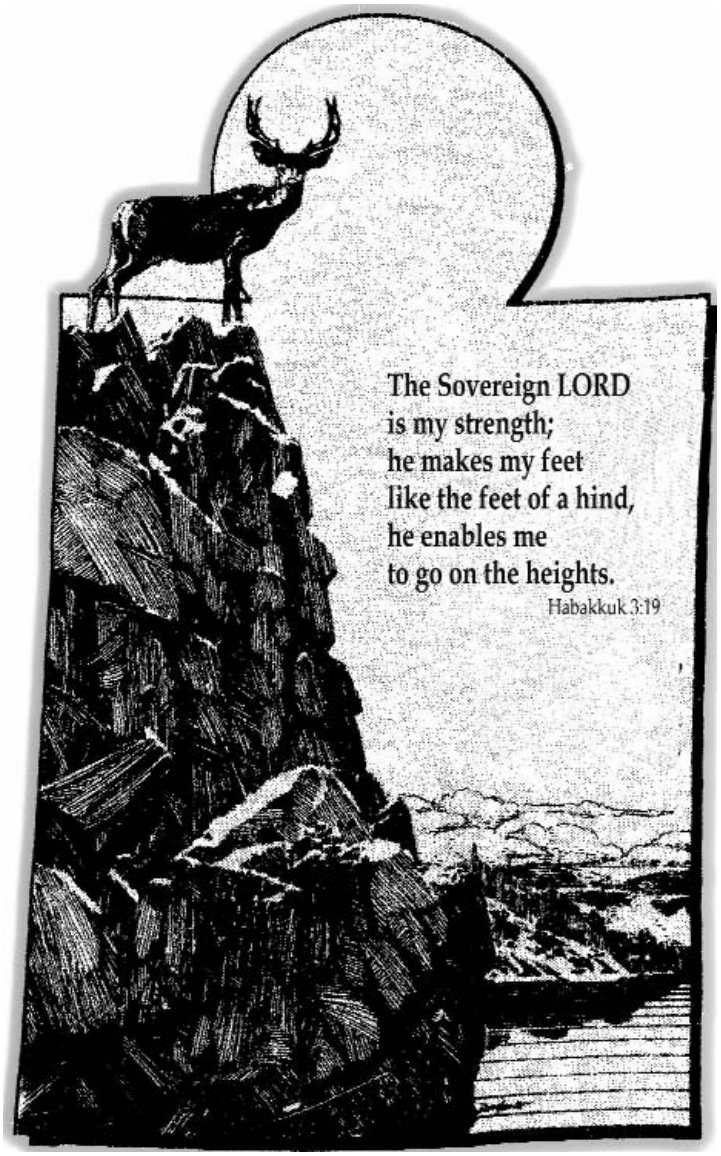
don't fret or be anxious. Each day's trials *will* come, but view them as opportunities to ensure that you are depending wholly on our Lord in trust-filled obedience. As the saying goes, you're not always fighting a battle but you're always in the war!

Perhaps, as with Much-Afraid, our Shepherd has provided you with a cave of refreshment for a period. Enjoy it! Times of refreshment, whether brief or extended, are given to replenish you for the next skirmish. Be grateful, and don't waste this time worrying about what will happen next.

- When was the last time you enjoyed a "cave of refreshment", whether for a week or just an hour? What made it special? How did you feel afterward?

Going to the High Places

Chapter 10 *Ascent of the Precipice Injury*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Chapter 10 *Ascent of the Precipice Injury*

As you continue your climb up the precipice, a vital new stone will be added to the foundation of Jesus' character being constructed in your life. Any idea what it is?

1. Once on the track...; 2. She did not look down...; 3. Just then, she looked...; 4. She remembered the Shepherd's warning...

When you're asked to undertake a new experience, be it a new job, a relocation, even an encounter with some new neighbors, does a certain reluctant fear sneak up? Do you procrastinate about making that phone call or following through in that opportunity?

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single footstep." Perhaps like you, Much-Afraid wasn't an avid thrill-seeker when it comes to trying new things. But the *goal* kept her going! Her trust in her Shepherd and in His plan for her motivated her to keep putting one foot in front of the other. And this is what your Father is asking of you: to follow in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21).

If that's your goal — your heart's desire — then you'll still have to clamber over the jagged rocks and slippery mud in your path. But like Much-Afraid, as long as you hold onto your awareness of His Spirit's faithful presence to comfort you and grace you with His strength, your goal will be in reach!

Sue: Sometimes you need to reflect about our Lord's faithfulness to have brought you thus far. That which He has carried you through is living testimony of His loving power and intervention — all of which is powerful ammunition to shield you when your past spiritual enemies try to fling rocks of shame and failure at you.

We meet far too many in the Nicolaitan system who are *well-intentioned* in their desire to serve our Father. Sadly, though, just as many fail to *follow through* on their convictions, particularly if it means forsaking their present lifestyle or companions.

You've heard some of these intentions: "I'm checking into short-term missions for next summer." "I plan to spend every Sunday afternoon sharing Scripture and praying with the elderly at the nursing home down the street." "I've decided to set my alarm an hour earlier each morning to sped time in prayer and the Word." Sound familiar? *Too* familiar?

An old saying illustrates pipe dreams of dabbling inaction: "The man who is just *putting on* his armor should not brag as one *coming back* from the battlefield."

So many Christians share testimonies of *intent* as if their plans were an already accomplished fact. They're not alone. Nicolaitanism allows *teachers* to present truths they haven't necessarily lived. This makes the whole idea of a life journey very conceptual — words without action. James, however, insists that *action* evidence the vitality of our faith: *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is* ***not accompanied by action****, is dead. As the body without the spirit is dead, so* ***faith without deeds is dead****"* (James 2:16,26).

Once you've *acted* on that which the Spirit has prompted you, you're then qualified to speak. Remember: the testimony from the *top* of each precipice you've climbed is far different than that which you have from the bottom.

- How about your own testimonies? Do they reveal actions based upon your trusting obedience?

- Are they testimonies of things you've *read* (vicariously living through others' responses), or of your own follow through in the Spirit? Is God's presence and intervention clearly seen in your testimony?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

5. So the three of them climbed higher...; 6. The track they followed...

What a delight to live so close to the soaring Front Range of the Rockies! Sue and I relish our hikes through the high forests along the glorious ridge trails west of Colorado Springs. One trail in particular opens up as you climb to reveal aerial vistas of the Springs and the vast prairies to the East. That trail is special, one on which we like to bring our friends — those who can handle a hike at 9,000 feet!

Just as heights give you a different perspective of your surroundings, so do your times of surrender at your altars along the way. It isn't so much what you *give up*, but your growing confidence in your Lord that makes the journey worth it all. You realize that *knowing about* Jesus pales to really getting to *know Him*.

As you grow in experience with our Lord you can see events in your past from *His* perspective. You realize that past hurts and letdowns were part of His development process to increase Christ-like character in you.

Your particular history, scars and all, played a large part in who you are today, even if those experiences seem as far away to you as "the western sea, along the shores of which they'd traveled for so long."

A dear friend spent a number of years in prison a while back. His accounts of our Lord's faithfulness to get his attention, cleanse him, and transform him into a "new vessel equipped for His work" have stirred many people to change. Some have learned from his testimony that they need to avoid or turn away from the path that got him there in the first place. Others have experienced the joy of beginning to serve Jesus in the fertile prison field by sowing and harvesting seeds of life in His name.

Our Father doesn't intend for you to walk in shame because of your past. Jesus *cleansed* you from all your wrongdoing when you humbly came to Him in repentance and trusted in His bloody sacrifice on your behalf. BY receiving His forgiveness for your wrong, you can be a lantern of hope to someone who struggles with disbelief that he or she can find forgiveness and reconciliation in Him too.

Any fear that those memories will hurt you are as impotent as the rocked tossed by Much-Afraid's nemeses from her past. What you went through back then was a reality. Now ask our Father for the wisdom to know how and when to use that victorious testimony of His intervention to bring help to others!

- Are there "hidden treasures" from your past about which you're too ashamed to mention because you fear others' response? Ask our Father to remove that "sting" so that these can be used appropriately to bring hope to fellow travelers!

7. On arriving there just as darkness fell...;

In an earlier study we quoted the poem "Step By Step", one that has so impacted our lives that we included it at the end of our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*. One of the poem's stanzas paints a vibrant word picture of our journey up the precipice:

> One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
> One step is far enough for faith to see;
> Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
> For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Once you take that first step of obedience, you're able to perceive things around you in a way that you couldn't have before you started the climb. As Much-Afraid continued to take one shaky step at a time, she encountered unexpected relief that had gone unnoticed from her earlier perspective at ground level. The rope and plank bridge were a welcome delight that she never would have been able to appreciate had she abandoned her quest and not taken that first step upward.

One step of *faith that leads to action* separates the true followers of Jesus from

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

those who are Christian in name only. And each step of obedient trust takes you further and further away from those who won't even embark on the first step.

Sue: I remember being surprised by joy when I first began to teach kindergarten at a small Christian school. My educational background included nothing about introducing little ones to the wonder of reading and writing. But our Father accepted my dependent, untrained willingness as a start. He constructed a "resource plank" for me and a strong rope of encouragement through my students' parents and fellow teachers so that my chasm of self-doubt was crossed with laughter and His sufficiency!

Much-Afraid also learned much along the way about harnessing her thoughts: "From bitter experience she knew that pictures thrown on the screen of her imagination could seem much more unnerving and terrible than the actual fears." Each single step of faith is powerful evidence that you are trusting the One Who has called you to take it.

When you choose to depend on your Lord, you're proclaiming boldly and clearly that His power is all you need, even when your circumstances don't appear to have changed. Continue to take your thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to Jesus. As you do, you'll grow in relaxation and be prepared to appreciate a resting place for yourself and your family when it comes your way!

- Recall an assignment of some sort that you had to fulfill even though you felt totally inadequate or unprepared. How were you able to follow through on it?

- How did you see your Lord intervene on your behalf when you cried out to Him?

8. When the plank was crossed...; 9. With a sense of great relief...; 10. Not far from the cave...

Sue: Some of our most refreshing resting places from our Father's hand have been marked by wonderful simplicity. Yes, we've marveled with the throngs at national parks and amusement areas, but do you know what? The days spent in a friend's rustic, rural cabin on a dirt road, the nights wrapped in a sleeping bag in the back of our camped van, the serene drives through the mountains just for a few hours — these are the memories that have reminded Mike and me of the importance of *slowing down* and breathing in the quiet every so often.

Much-Afraid and her companions were filled with "great relief and thankfulness" for their modest cave setting. They didn't need HBO or a heated pool to satiate their needs! A simple meal, fresh water, and comfy bed replenished them because they weren't bedeviled by a need to be entertained.

We know that getting away even for a few hours of quiet can be a challenge if you have small children. But ask our Father to open for you an avenue of simple renewal to shut down for a brief rest.

When Mike and I were caring full-time for Mike's Mom after her strokes, that one hour a day when the home health aide came allowed us a breather so that our ears didn't have to be attuned to meeting needs. And sometimes that's all you need!

- Describe a period of rest and refreshment hallmarked by simplicity that has met your need. What step would it take for you to enjoy even a brief time of refreshment?

- Are you most replenished in body, soul and spirit when you are totally alone? With a loved one? With a group of friends?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

11. Much-Afraid woke with the first light...

Envision for a moment the prophet Elijah. The beleaguered old man had done great things for God, walking in the most powerful anointing of his day. Yet in order for him to receive a clearer understanding of the Lord he served, God brought him to Mount Horeb, the Mountain of Desolation.

Mike: I can identify with Elijah in some ways. During the four years that led up to our time in Israel I went through painful trials of betrayal and loneliness. When Sue and I returned to the US our Lord gave me a reason for that scathing period of wretchedness: He needed to desolate me of motives that were not like His.

I recalled this season of refinement as Much-Afraid looked out at the desolation around her. Life's precipices are a time in which you are desolated of motivations that once had control of you. A nationally-known teacher publicly shared this concept after his bout with cancer: "Before I had cancer" he related, "I thought Jesus was number one in my life. But when I became ill, I realized that He *wasn't* number one, but about fourth or fifth. Now I can honestly say that my relationship with Jesus is my top priority." Isn't it amazing what it takes to change our motivations!

The Psalmist also understood the value of suffering to alter life purposes: *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. It was* ***good for me to be afflicted*** *so that I might learn your decrees"* (Psalm 119:67,72).

- Look around you right now. Can you see something that God would like to remove from your life because it is hindering your relationship with Him? What are you willing to do about what He shows you?

- Can you think of a time when affliction changed your character or motives?

- In your priorities, where would *you* place Jesus in your life? Where would *He* put Himself in light of your current lifestyle and choices?

12. Just then she looked up...; 13. Much-Afraid stared...; 14. At that moment...

One of the marvels of our Father's hand in the arid outskirts of Colorado Springs has been the variety of brilliant blossoms tucked into the dry grasses and gray-green shrubs. When the Psalmist exulted that "the trees clap their hands", he must have meant the flowers as well! Only our Lord Jesus, by Whom all things are made, could cause a single seedling to take root in seemingly inhospitable conditions, then blaze forth in brilliant color!

Sue: Have you ever been amazed at the sight of a lush juniper or pine rising to the sky from the side of a sheer cliff? How can it hold on? From where does it derive its nutrients? Yet there it stands, a silent witness to the Hand that nourishes and sustains it in its impossible perch!

Let's put this in human terms now. Our persecuted brothers and sisters in China and Indonesia, for example, struggle to survive with the barest of food and shelter. Yet like that little red flower, they find strength in the presence of the Spirit of Jesus within, and their life-sustaining hope of His promise of eternal life. They are vibrant testimony of the Rock Who holds them in His unfailing grip just as the crevice gripped the flower's roots.

- When have you unexpectedly come upon a tiny piece of His creation when you least thought you'd find it? What was there about it that especially caught your eye?

- Are you interceding for particular persecuted family members in Jesus? If not, consid-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

er contacting Voice of the Martyrs at their website: **www.persecution.com** for the names and needs of specific brothers and sisters.

15. "My name is 'Bearing the Cost...; 16. Then Much-Afraid recalled...; 17. She gazed at the little flower...; 18. Once more, a little whispering laugh...

Consequences result from every action you take, every word spoken to another person, every encounter you face. It's a fact of life! Even if you don't intend it, someone else's actions or involvement in your life are going to impact your life for good or for ill.

Much-Afraid is given the chance early on to consider the truth of Bearing-the-Cost's words. The little flower had no choice about the place in which she'd been left. Yet it was up to her to decide whether to shrivel up and die or to turn with hope to the light. And as we all know, from each blossom emerges many little seeds for future gardens.

Sue and I have no doubt about Who told us in Israel to share this message — our Father! We also know that it may take three generations before the fruit of what we are sharing comes forth. In other words, you may be pressing onward for a gift that your *grandchildren* may be blessed with.

Perhaps you're thinking that we're repeating certain biblical themes too often. But the apostle Peter cherished reminders, so we'll follow his example: *"So I will always remind you of these things, even though you* ***know them*** *and are* ***firmly established*** *in the truth you now have. I think it is right to* ***refresh your memory*** *as long as I live in the tent of this body"* (2 Peter 1:12,13).

We've already stated that when God brings you to an "impassible precipice" He wants you to look back at what you went through to get there. Why? Countless thousands of Christians are hindered from proceeding further because they hold *begrudging attitudes* toward God and others who have hurt them or let them down in their lives.

"Begrudging" isn't the angry type of bitterness, but a seething inner resentment — the worst kind that impairs your health and contaminates all your relationships. Unless you reverently fear God and are fully confident that He means what He says in His Word, it's impossible for you to free yourself from begrudging bitterness. This is why it's vital that you pay attention to the lesson that Bearing-the-Cost offers.

The most important character quality you can teach your children is to have a forgiving heart. Remember the Lord's Prayer? *"Forgive us our debts, as we also have* ***already*** *forgiven our debtors"* (Matthew 6:12). To be a follower of Jesus means that you have already forgiven those who hurt you, even at the moment they cause you pain. Isn't that the testimony of both Jesus and the first martyr, Stephen, *"Father, forgive them..."*?

There is no middle ground in this. If you and your children don't forgive, then our Lord Jesus warns, *"For if* ***you*** *forgive men when they sin* ***against you****, your heavenly Father will also forgive* ***you****. But if you do* ***not forgive*** *men their sins, your Father will* ***not forgive*** *your sins"* (Matthew 6:14,15).

If you yearn to follow Jesus, then love and forgiveness must go hand-in-hand in your walk. As Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 13, if you do not love, then all your activity, your gifting, and your service to God are meaningless. And consider this: If you don't forgive, you do not have eternal life. *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we* ***love our brothers****. Anyone who* ***does not love*** *remains in* ***death****. Anyone who* ***hates his brother*** *is a* ***murderer****, and you know that* ***no murderer has eternal life*** *in him"* (1 John 3:14,15).

We live in a fallen world, and people get hurt. The ultimate cost you bear for being hurt in the world is to *forgive*. Please don't treat this matter lightly. Your eternal state is at stake!

• The diagram at the bottom of the next page appeared in our August 2003 newsletter.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

How far to the right of the diagram are *you* concerning those who once hurt you?

- When you think of a particular person, does resentment come to mind? Forgive this individual from your heart, *and* consider asking him or her for forgiveness for *your* begrudging attitude against them.

19. "I have borne and have not fainted...; 20. Much-Afraid looked...; 21. At that moment a fragment...

It's all too easy to get distracted by responsibilities and even pleasures so that Jesus fades as your foremost priority. He's not looking for your respect that He's a great teacher, your sense of duty as you come before Him, or your vast knowledge of His Word. Jesus lives to intercede for those He loves, and for those who love Him!

What your devotion to Jesus has cost you in terms of material gain or worldly companions is dross compared to walking in confident relationship with Him. Others have their own relationship with Jesus to contend with. The question for you is: Do *you* have absolute assurance of His faithfulness to lead you Home?

Your answer calls for an *eternal* perspective about your life here on earth. This is often hard to maintain since we do live in this world. Yet we are warned often in the Word to not let our motivations align themselves with those of the world (e.g., John 15:19, 2 Corinthians 10:3, James 4:4).

We are just sojourners passing through this world toward an eternal destination. If we're still on earth when Jesus returns, we *"will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be* ***with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words"*** (1 Thessalonians 4:17,18).

The words we speak really do help steer other people's hearts toward the loving faithfulness of Jesus. Think of that the next time you're eating dinner with others, on the phone, online, or even at the checkout counter!

Our Father esteems the ones whose trust and hope prevail. He affirms those whose view extends beyond this world: *"[Abraham] was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God... They were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them"* (Hebrews 11:10;16).

Much-Afraid's words resounded with an eternal resonance, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire but thee." Let's make this a true song in our own hearts as well!

- Do you initiate conversations with others in

Turning Bitterness to Blessing

Comparison of the Hebraic and Nicolaitan Approaches

Hebraic: The Bible mandates that you forgive *without exception*; to belong to Jesus *is* to forgive. Forgiveness gets you out of *negative* territory on the chart to '0'. The emotional healing given by Jesus occurs as you enter *positive* territory through prayer for, and good deeds toward, the one who has hurt you. The further a forgiving person goes into positive territory, the less likely bitterness will return.

Unforgiveness											**Forgiveness**										**Blessing**
-100	**-90**	**-80**	**-70**	**-60**	**-50**	**-40.**	**-30**	**-20**	**-10**	**0**	**+10**	**+20**	**+30**	**+40**	**+50**	**+60**	**+70**	**+80**	**+90**	**+100**
enraged bitterness, hatred, begrudging, resentful											**prayer for, sympathy, compassion, enacted love and kindness**										

Nicolaitanism: Forgiveness is optional; past circumstances such as "*abuse"* and "*dysfunctional family"* are grounds for not forgiving. Few even get back to '0'; and the ones who do, ultimately end up back in negative territory — unforgiveness.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

the faith about eternity? If you don't, what keeps you from doing so? Really, think about it. Is eternity *real* for you, or just a vague hope for some future day?

- Ask your journey partner or your family what topics are foremost in your conversations. Jesus tells us, *"Out of the heart the mouth speaks."* What do your words reveal?

22. After a little they came to a place...; 23. Immediately Sorrow...; 24. Much-Afraid was so faint...; 25. Then Suffering herself...

You don't know how deep your convictions are or what your character is made of until they are tested. Eager plans and good intentions are meaningless until they are tested in adversity. That's when the cost is really borne! You really can't consider yourself to be "forgiving" until you have someone you need to forgive.

Forgiveness becomes a way of life. It's not just your relational "biggies" that need attention. Even the careless motorist who cuts you off is an opportunity to exercise your willingness to forgive! The Book of Proverbs abounds with the theme of choosing to forgive, but two serve as examples of practical application: *"A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult"* (Proverbs 12:16). *"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense"* (Proverbs 19:11). Are *you* walking in wisdom or foolishness?

Activity-based relationships are seldom tested. They aren't based on growing devotion to each other. Much-Afraid's companions didn't just offer platitudes or verses. They came to her aid as *relational load-bearers*. Coming alongside, they put their arms around her, secured her safety tether, and reminded her of the Shepherd's cordial of grace and comfort. When she was unable to even appropriate that, they poured it into her themselves!

Sue: I'm reminded of the stretcher-bound paralytic and his four faithful friends. They trusted Jesus enough, and loved their friend so dearly, that they went to extreme lengths to bring him to the One Who could heal!

In order for personal relationships to grow in intimacy as the extended spiritual family our Lord intends, they need to pass through relational hurdles in which they are tested. Negative situations in a relationship aren't always a sign of failure, but of areas that need development through further exploration. That's why we wrote *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* — to help people work through their difficulties and come through with a stronger relationship.

- What special friendships have endured the test of misunderstanding, letdown or painful argument? What steps restored your relationship?

- Who in your life has the freedom to confront you to help you to press on in your walk in Jesus? When was the last time he or she did so?

26. Then Sorrow, who had come...; 27. At last Suffering stooped...; 28. Much-Afraid gave her...; 29. "What flower was that?"...; 30. "It was the flower of Bearing-the-Cost"...

None of us likes to be known as a "moaner". Even Scripture warns against grumbling and complaining! As painful as your present situation may be, no friend can solve your problem for you — it's really a heart issue you're facing. Even the most patient of comforting friends needs to know when to back off and direct you to Jesus, the

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Key to your restored peace.

That's exactly what Suffering does. She *confronts* Much-Afraid with the lesson that had been placed before her just that morning by Bearing-the-Cost. True friends don't let another friend wallow in a pity-party. They redirect their buddy back to firm footing, in this case, applying what has already been revealed by our Lord.

Without lecturing her on the benefits of forgiveness, Suffering stirs Much-Afraid to discover within her own previous experience a solution to the problem at hand. If you're a parent then you understand this concept. Lessons that emerge from your child's own wellspring of figuring it out are likelier to be retained than those you just tell them. Sorrow and Suffering knew that the Shepherd's cordial would help their limping friend, but how much more valuable for Much-Afraid's growth in wisdom for *her* to come up with the same conclusion!

Don't feel that *you* have to come up with all the answers for a suffering friend. Instead, respond in such a way that your hurting friend can discover how faithful Jesus is in his or her own circumstances. Even praying together allows an opening for the Holy Spirit to breathe the answer into your midst.

- What evidence can you give to indicate that you are growing in "Bearing-the-Cost" in even minor irritations and frustrations?

- What particular incident in your life stands out in which someone came to your aid out of love when you were suffering? When was the last time you made contact with that person to thank them again for encouraging you when you so desperately needed it?

31. "Let us try"...; 32. As they dropped a little...; 33. There, coming toward them...

In a few chapters we'll encounter another hurdle in which only your complete forgiveness will permit you to go on further. Now is a good time to give yourself a "forgiveness check" and make sure there is no one against whom you hold any resentment, grudges, or irritation — even from your past! Have you let go of *everyone* in the freedom of forgiveness?

When was the last time you went to a funeral or visited a graveside? These are times to poignantly realize that your own earthly life is going to come to an end like all the others who preceded you. The generation who walked in front of us among our family members is all but gone for Sue and me. Now it's *our* turn to be prepared to leave this earth.

Each one of us will stand at the Judgment Throne by ourselves, bowing before the pierced Lord Who died to atone for our sins. I believe He'll be asking if we have *loved* as *He* has loved. And that means, as well, that we have *forgiven* as *He* forgives.

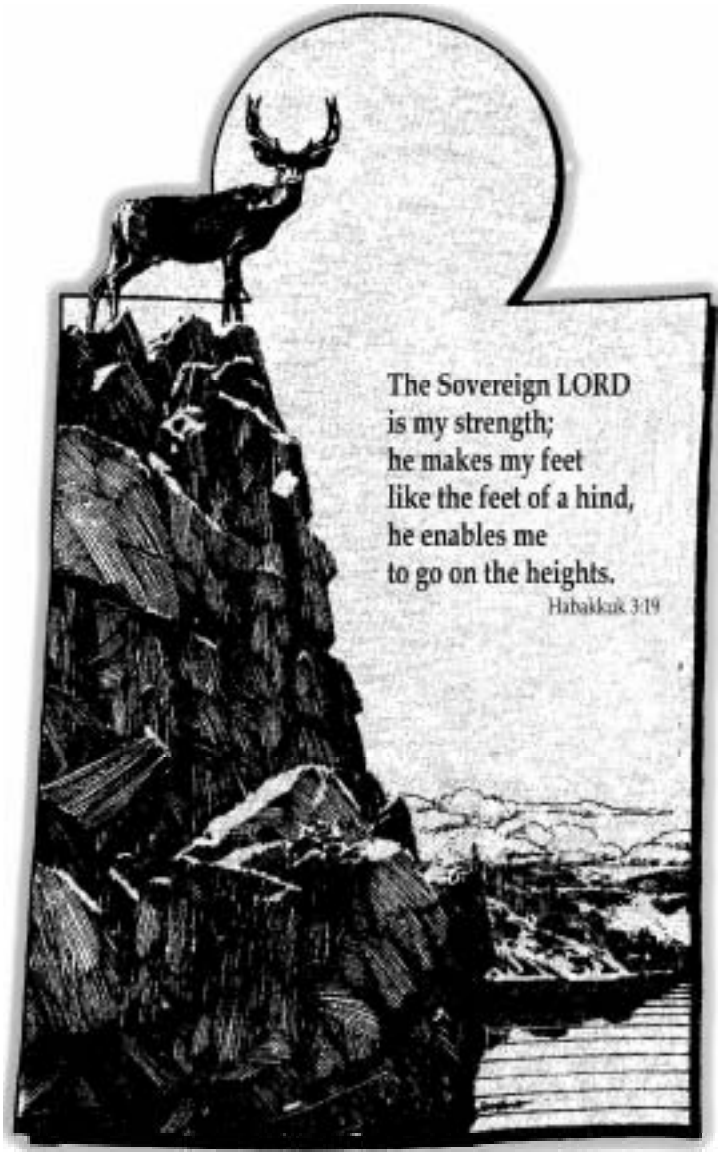
Take some time to free your mind from this world's endeavors for awhile. Get away briefly from the distractions of your family, your job, and whatever clamors for your attention. Stop to ponder the issues of eternity and the path in life you are on. Remember, you're heading toward your salvation. Your pilgrimage is not yet complete!

"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12b,13).

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 11 *In the Forests of Danger and Tribulation*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

I wish I could tell you that it's easier for me to follow Jesus after 26 years than it was in the beginning. Every day I struggle, then repent, and continue to press on. This past month since we arrived back from a trip, we've encountered one demonic assault after another. The most impossible things are going wrong as we attempt to produce our books on audio CD and develop the training video, *Jesus in Your Home*.

Yesterday my friend James Skeet told me that we don't have enough prayer coverage for what we are endeavoring to do. That is true. Even though we include our prayer needs in each newsletter, we don't know if they follow through. Be we do determine that out of love for our Lord Jesus, we'll press on in our efforts to complete the task He gave us.

Yesterday, as I was doing my laps in the park pool, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, "Continue to *lovingly persevere* and *patiently persevere*." The words *loving* and *patient* had been eluding me in my perseverance. I began to understand that God's intent was not just for me to accomplish the task. Even more important for His purposes, He wanted to change my *character*. This transformation process is usually more painful for me than the tasks He gives me to do!

Do you recognize what our Lord is trying to accomplish in *you* right now? Perhaps this chapter will make it more clear.

Chapter 11 *In the Forests of Danger and Tribulation*

1. With what joy they welcomed the Shepherd

When you've come through a difficult passage in your life journey, take the time to relish the moment with gratefulness to Jesus for His faithfulness! He promised that He'd never leave you or forsake you, so breathe in that sigh of accomplishment through His Spirit, and share the moment of delight with others.

At this point in the journey Much-Afraid is suffering from some painful cuts and bruises. Her heart wants to press on but her body is sore and tired. How pleasant is the Shepherd's touch to bring soothing and healing!

Lately we've encountered a number of followers of Jesus who are undergoing some severe physical distresses. One, a dear sister who ministers in Holland with her husband, was just diagnosed with cancer. Yet her spirit is blanketed with peace because of the faithful presence of her Lord within. And perhaps her need for 5 months of chemotherapy will give her access to radiate His faithful love to the medical staff she meets.

Are we praying that He will intervene and heal her? Sure! But just as His ways are not ours, and His thoughts far surpass ours to achieve His purposes, we'll trust with her that He is already at work in her. It's as though this couple's "assignment" from their Father has taken an unexpected turn. But just as He has brought great spiritual life to the Dutch in Delft, so may He also bear fruit among those they encounter in Florida!

Sue: My mother never expected that her final year would be spent in a nursing home because her mind had deteriorated along with her body. But my sister and I were blessed by the opportunities we had to show our Lord's love to her caregivers, and to share with them testimonies of His faithfulness as we interacted with them! And at the eleventh hour, our Father graciously opened my mother's heart to see her need for reconciliation with Him through Jesus. The ultimate healing was brought about even as her body faded away.

- When did you last experience the peace of our Lord after a trying season in your life? Have you been able to share that testimony with anyone else to bring them encouragement or to give Him praise?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

• Describe a time when you shared in the suffering of a loved one who needed medical care. What opportunities were presented for you to be the aroma of life in Christ to the new people in your life who were in involved in medical treatment?

2. "You have now to go"...

Much-Afraid has just finished the difficult assault of the Precipice of Injury when the Shepherd reveals her next step. He tells her that the journey through the forest will be "steep", it will be "quite dark", and "storms are frequent." Oh joy! But He also reinforces the *theme* of her journey through the forest — "keep pressing forward."

Nothing can harm her inner woman as she follows His will, even though she must be willing to walk through danger. The only obstacle that can hinder her progress is if she entertains voices of discouragement.

Pressing on in unfamiliar, steep ground is the same call for the increasing number of people who are embracing the Hebraic foundations. Perhaps you are among them! They are learning to persevere in their salvation journey in ways nothing else in Hellenism ever demanded of them. God's Word tells us a *goal* as we persevere: *"Perseverance must finish its work, so that you may be* ***mature and complete****, not lacking anything"* (James 1:4).

When it comes to perseverance I often feel like I'm a yo-yo, confident one day and a total failure the next. But the reality that God can use a person like me to share such a wonderful message enables me to be all the bolder in exhorting others to press on!

• How do you rate your own willingness to persevere? Have you developed consistency, or does each new steep trail of life confound you once again?

• What thoughts come into your mind when you realize that God is sending you along a very difficult path? How do you *feel*? Is there now, or, has there been, a time in which you didn't think you could go on? How did you respond? Did anyone come alongside to help?

3. It did seem strange...; 4. "The Forests of Danger and Tribulation!"...

It seems strange that we can follow Jesus for so long and discover that we are in many ways still unchanged. It's a very telling testimony that "Much-Afraid should remain so like her name."

Names are very important in many cultures around the world. A name can represent the hopes that parents have for their child, or signify some special occurrence or sign or event that happened at the time of the child's birth: Isaac (laughter), Judah (praise), even Jesus (Savior). Among many Native American cultures, a name can symbolize a particular character trait for the child to grow into, or reflect a prophetic word about the individual, such as Soaring Eagle, Walks With Joy, or Messenger of God.

The many names of our God permeate Scripture: Yahweh Yireh (God our Provider), Yahweh Rapha (God our Healer), Adonai Tzva'ot (Lord of Heaven's Armies), and many more. They reflect something of our Father's glorious character and person.

Our Father looks at your inner person, where your character is formed as your heart is circumcised. Your "old person" is rolled away as you choose to cast off the old and seek the Spirit to transform you in a particular area you've yielded up to Him. Especially when you've come through "fire and water" experiences trusting in our Lord Jesus, elements of your character are put on His "fast track" and changed to be more like Jesus!

• Since our Father is looking directly into your heart, by what name would He call you according to your character development

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

thus far? Pressing On With Courage? Fearful Of Change? No Compromise With Evil? Hassled With Tasks? Worrier? Warrior?

- Recall a "fire and water" experience from your own life in which He's made changes in your character. What "before" and "after" alterations were made? Did they last?

5. "To the next stage"...; 6. "I wonder if you will ever be able"...

The Shepherd discloses to Much-Afraid a new rung to climb on their journey to the High Places. When our Father leads you onto a new path in your pilgrimage, it's an opportunity to walk in the anointing He offers to suit the assignment.

Over the years we've encountered men and women who have had tremendous anointing but their character has changed little along the way. You've probably met a few yourself.

Scripture indicates the very real possibility that people can walk in power but miss out on a key responsibility. They fail to *nurture godly character* in their children. Eli, Samuel, even David had great calling on their lives. But they weren't the fathers their children needed. At key points in which their intervention was needed, these dads turned their attention elsewhere.

It's important that we don't confuse gifting and anointing from the Holy Spirit with great character development. Gifting is purely from God: *"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines"* (1 Corinthians 12:7,11).

Christ-like character, however, is formed *over time* as we choose to let the Spirit convict us of the carnal sin areas of our soul. He then empowers us to conform in those areas to the character of Jesus. The biblical pattern is consistent: a *heart* change produces a *behavior* change. Remember the sequence:

Conviction>>Repentance>>Character change

In many respects Much-Afraid is the same as the rest of us travelers. She asks the same question that any of us who have set ourselves to complete the salvation pilgrimage ask: "O Shepherd, wherever will you lead us next?" Sue is a "nester" when it comes to our home. Once her "twigs" are in order she doesn't want anything changed. Our Lord knows this, yet He has moved us 17 times in 33 years of marriage!

When people would ask our son, Mike, "Where is *home*?", he'd reply, "Wherever my parents are." God gave Sue and me a ministry of "availability and mobility." This kind of life isn't for everyone, of course, but our Father has given us an apostolic assignment, "Share this message." [In the Greek language, the word "apostolos" means "sent forth on an assignment." That pretty well sums up much of our past decade of following Him!] We're burdened by our Father's heart to be surrounded by those who love Him wholeheartedly and walk in obedient trust according to His Word.

Picture yourself as a lamb nestled in Jesus' arms as He moves you from one pasture to another. As the model Shepherd, He always knows what's best for you, guiding you onto the path where you're soul will best be nurtured. Only when you exercise self-will and rebel against His plans with distrust does the path seem distressing and *hard*.

But the Shepherd isn't rolling His eyes or turning away in dismay. He *knows* you! And He assures you that there is no condemnation for those who are in union with Him. We are told time and again in the Word to find out what *pleases* Him and walk in that!

Human nature is comfortable with familiarity and complacency. For most people change isn't very desirable, especially if it involves any measure of suffering or inconvenience. But this is what following Jesus requires. You can never mature until

you become more like Him in yielded submission to our Father's will and plans. You can't fully relate to Him until you understand the beauty of suffering and tribulation in your life.

But it's wonderfully amazing what our Father can raise out of the ashes of our lives in the midst of pain! Ten years ago, Sue and I were worn out from ministry. We were haggard and discouraged even to the point of discussing divorce. Now we can look back over this past decade with joy, praising our Lord for His faithfulness to change our "inner person" — our character — as He's strengthened and encouraged us to press on to the High Places.

- Do you joyfully anticipate the changes our Lord wants to make, be they character changes or relocation? When was the last major change you faced? How did you respond in your heart?

Can you say to our Lord, "I'm ready to go *anywhere* and do *anything* you desire!"? If not, what are the things that still entrap you?

7. "I am not a man that I should lie"...; 8. Much-Afraid trembled...

At this point the Shepherd is grave. Like Much-Afraid, when we doubt our Lord's ability, we are directly attacking His character. Our sinful doubt can draw a serious response from Him because we're shutting the ears of our heart from hearing Him. The Hebrew Bible overflows with testimony of His marvelous works on behalf of His people, only to be *doubted* when trust was called for. Have we learned from the consequences of their example?

Currently the anti-Christ spirit in Hellenism offers people lively worship and a myriad of religious activities. But that same spirit keeps thousands from walking in the loving, obedient trust our God demands. Anti-Christ may point people toward the *reality* of Jesus, but he leaves them filled with doubt about the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises. They peer through frosted glass acknowledging that there is indeed a God, but never move over to the door to cross the threshold into His presence by trust.

So often people who know *about* Jesus but aren't known *by* Him shuffle on without His guidance, slamming into a series of dead ends. In frustration they blame the Shepherd for their problems. And grievously, over time, the become just like the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible — very religious, but no connection with our Lord.

We have written before that the spiritual battle is over who rules your mind. Will our Lord and His Word prevail, or the lying thoughts and false expectations offered by Satan and his minions? All along the pilgrimage you need to be diligent. Take your thoughts captive and bring them into conformity to Jesus. Any conjecture over what the future might hold will only hinder your ability to trustingly obey. Any conjecture about the future is no more than a *figment of your imagination*.

- How about *your* thoughts and conversations with others. Are they filled with "what if's"?

- Are you paying attention to how God is leading you, and what character quality He is working to produce in you? Or, are you consumed with concerns about circumstances over which you have no control?

9. "Then," said the Shepherd...

The Shepherd alerts Much-Afraid and

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

us as well, "I am going to lead you through danger and tribulation...I shall be with you." The absolute knowledge that the indwelling Holy Spirit is with us in the trials we are going through is the anchor we need to go on. Is your anchor holding?

Sue: How grateful I am for the faithful presence of the Spirit of Jesus in the midst of very real danger! Once again I'm reminded that Valley of the Shadow is just that — a *shadow*. Shadows can't hurt you, nor can the dangers surrounding them when your trust is secured in the sovereign strength of our Lord.

Years ago my son and I were in Japan between visits with Mike on his ship. We'd been invited to stay with the friend of a friend in Korea, so we climbed aboard a ferry boat for the eight-hour cross over. Now you have to picture this vessel to understand how vital it was that my anchor of trust was in Jesus! The ancient wooden vessel had no seats or benches. For our overnight trip, passengers were laid out on somewhat elevated platforms and given coarse woolen blankets for covering. Little did we know what was to come...

It didn't take long before nauseous groans filled the below-deck level in which we were laid out like sardines. The frail craft was carried up the side of one wave after another, crashing violently down the other side. Bodies smashed against bodies, but strangely, my heart was at peace. A baby in Jesus, I had perfect assurance from His Spirit that "none would be lost" — the same confidence the apostle Paul had in similar circumstances!

Thirteen hours later a disheveled boatload stumbled down the gangway, thankful to be on solid turf. But my heart was rejoicing because we had been held securely in His grip. The peaks and valleys of the raging sea had been but a shadow. The reality was His Presence!

Shadows of apprehension lead to fear and darkness. One step at a time of obedient trust under the watchful eye of our Shepherd is all He calls for you to take.

Two indispensible items are always carried by shepherds. The rod, stout and sturdy, is his instrument of defense against attack. It's also his counting tool as each sheep passes under it for inspection as they enter the sheepfold for the night.

You're probably more familiar with the shepherd's staff, the long wooden pole with a crook at one end. The staff supported the shepherd as he walked along leading his flock. Even if not every sheep could see him, they could hear the clack of the staff on the rocky ground and be assured of his comforting presence. The crook could also be used to rescue a careless sheep who got tangled in briars or slipped into a crevice.

Our Shepherd's rod and staff comfort His people as well. He has at His command countless angels to minister help and protection to His frantic sheep. He answers prayer to bring about circumstances and encounters to stir His sheep to trust Him in loving dependence. So why should we worry about the Valley of *Shadow* when the Substance of the Savior is with us?

- How would the nature of the last tribulation you went through have changed if you had remembered that your Shepherd was indeed very present with you?

- How did your imagination increase your anxiety level to the point that you almost didn't follow through on what you knew our Father wanted you to do?

10. Then he added...

The Shepherd offers Much-Afraid such beautiful, specific assurances if she will just press on. Can you picture yourself safely "under His wings" in loving trust? That's the call Jesus extended to the unbelieving Jews as He headed down the hill toward the high

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

wall of Jerusalem — yet, tragically, they would not receive Him as the prophesied Messiah.

I wonder if we realize just how precarious our earthly existence is? Think of the tally of disasters that the Shepherd recounts: "terror by night" — calamities you don't see coming. What could be more frightening than a tornado hurtling down on you in the wee hours? Or a hurricane blowing down trees onto your home while you're sleeping?

How about the "arrows that fly by day"? Think about the threat of inner-city gangs bursting in to throttle you and trash your home for a few dollars or even just the thrill of it all. And it wasn't so long ago that two malevolent snipers threw the residents of several states into panic by their random acts of violence.

Disease and pestilence are no respecter of persons, either. Cancer strikes the godly and the misguided alike. Ten years ago no one even heard of ebola or hantavirus. West Nile virus has turned many into virtual prisoners inside their homes during summer sunset hours.

The Shepherd goes on to mention destruction that wastes at noonday. I can't help but think of the recent raging firestorms that enveloped a half million acres in California, wreaking cataclysm as home and personal treasures were consumed in their maw. And the ever-present threat of terrorism has altered many people's plans regarding overseas travel.

The good news? Actually, the GREAT news! We need not *fear* these very real disasters in our world! Might you find yourself concerned about one or more items from this awful list of potential misfortunes? Perhaps. But need you *fear* either the possibility or the situation itself? NO! Your heart can be covered by His feathers if you choose to walk in obedient trust through whatever calamity clouds your life.

Take a moment to personalize the following passage by putting your name in it. These are promises our Shepherd is giving *you* to encourage you to press on and complete His Kingdom purposes in and for you.

> *"He told [me], [___your name___],'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. [I,____] believe and am baptized, so [I,_____] will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be con - demned. And these signs will accompany [me,_____] who believes: In my name [I,_____] will drive out demons; [I,_____] will speak in new tongues; [I,_____] will pick up snakes with [my] hands; and when [I,_____] drink deadly poison, it will not hurt [me] at all; [I,_____] will place [my] hands on sick people, and they will get well'"* (Mark 16:15-18).

I haven't picked up a poisonous snake yet, but I *have* been saved from three close encounters with rattlesnakes. One actually crawled right across my bare foot! I have seen demons come out of people and have faced them down in the authority of Jesus's Name. I have flown crippled helicopters that shouldn't have stayed airborne, and lived. We have seen the sick healed, some even from cancer through the laying on of hands. We even met a person who was raised from the dead.

I am a yo-yo in my relationship with my Father. But thankfully *I* am not the object of our relationship; *He* is. What has happened in my life scrapbook hasn't come out of *my* ability, but through the working of His mighty power. I offer Him my trust, and He offers me the spiritual power that created everything. That offer is a no-brainer.

Sue: I talked with a salesperson recently whose son had been scheduled to fly on a helo that was shot down in Iraq. A change in schedule put him on another aircraft and saved his life. I mentioned to his mother that our Lord probably has a special purpose for her son to be given another chance. That's a sobering reminder for each of us to never take today *or* tomorrow for granted.

- During a recent three-week trip we grieved at how few churched people expected God to act on their behalf. Some of those we met were experiencing the most severe trials of

their lives, but still they had no trust in God. How about you? Are your concerns larger than God's ability?

- What near-miss situations have *you* encountered in which you KNEW that our Lord had intervened to rescue you? How has that realization changed your decisions and pathway?

11. Then Much-Afraid knelt at his feet...

The altars that Much-Afraid constructs at key crisis points are physical reminders to help her recount our Lord's faithfulness. Recounting the faithfulness of our God is a very biblical pattern. He commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover feast celebration to remind them of His mighty intervention on their behalf in Egypt — His loving protection and mighty demonstration of His sovereign power.

Again, after His people crossed the Jordan at flood stage, the God of Israel ordered them to build a monument of twelve stones, a stone for each tribe. This act of loving obedience was to prompt their recall that He was well able to wall away the waters for them to cross on dry ground. Any future challenges could be met by the same divine hand *if* they looked to Him with trust and walked according to His ways.

You've probably noticed that each of Much-Afraid's altars were constructed *after* she had passed through a crisis point of trust in her heart. The Shepherd didn't take back His word that she would confront peril. Rather, He again reaffirmed His steadfast promise to be with her in the *midst* of the danger. She still had to choose if she would walk that dangerous path. The evil would be there, but she *didn't need to fear it.*

Sue: When our son turned sixteen,Mike, Mikey and I and two young men who were sons in the Spirit journeyed to New York City to see the sights. None of us knew where we were headed, but we got onto a subway, hoping to stop near the berth of the aircraft carrier, Intrepid. Emerging from the subway tunnel, we found ourselves in the middle of a drug transaction between a gangster-type and a seedy recipient!

This scenario could have had dire consequences, but we felt secure enough in our Lord to smile, avert our eyes, and keep on walking! We had ended up in a, let's say, "interesting" section of the city. Gaudy expensive cars parked outside tenements held the extortionists you see on TV. My four brothers in Jesus surrounded me as we walked down the center of these alley-streets, not wanting to be too close to the shadows. I felt as though I was surrounded by a host of angels — and the guys were probably praying that that was true!

We make it a point to recount between ourselves and with others, too, His recent and past faithfulness to us. Something wonderful happens in our souls as we relish what our Lord has done for us. Our trust in Him is revitalized!

But what if nothing comes to mind? Solomon advises, *"When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad,* ***consider.*** *God has made the one as well as the other"* (Ecclesiastes 7:14). When things aren't going well, or you don't feel that you've seen our Father acting on your behalf lately, *pause and consider.* Ask the Holy Spirit to scrutinize your soul for any hidden sin. If He doesn't convict you of any, then our Lord may be trying to develop a more mature, persevering trust in you.

In any case, when things aren't going well, stop and consider.

- Recall some experiences of our Lord's faithfulness to you. When was the last time you shared some of these memories with your family and close friends?

- Look around you right now. How is our Father answering your prayers? How about

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

those close to you in your faith community: Are any wonderful acts of our Lord being reported by them to strengthen and encourage the Body?

12. Then the Shepherd smiled more com - fortingly...; 13. When he had said this...

All throughout the Bible we hear a resounding refrain: "Fear not!" During our retreat center years we found *financial wor - ries* to be the most common peace-robber among the over 5000 people who visited us. This besetting problem stirred an unexpected response from us: "God will cause you to sweat whatever you won't yield to Him in trust!" Huh?

Your fears and worry are indicators that you're trying to take control over something for which He wants *your trust*. Our Father is like a great poker player. He'll ante up the stakes until you finally give up your fear and doubt and worry, and decide to trust Him.

You can do it the easy way or the hard way, but you will ultimately fold your hand. When you finally *do* trust, you'll be grieved and embarrassed that it took you so long. The emotional suffering you went through was *needless*.

Doesn't it seem strange that the Shepherd would tell someone named Much-Afraid to *be strong*? You probably realize that without the Holy Spirit to give us our Lord's will and power, we could not obey any of the 1050 commands we're given in the Newer Testament. It's that *dependence on His presence* that the Shepherd wants His little Much-Afraid to develop — the same obedient trust that He is growing in us today too!

Sue: Muscles grow strong as they're tested. About two years ago I began to do a series of strengthening exercises each morning before I got out of bed. They take only ten minutes, but what a difference I've noticed over these many months in the ability to do more of them without nearly the strain I experienced when I first started! Spiritual strength develops the same way. Just as your muscles "remember" and grow stronger, so does your trust as you choose to press on and cast aside your fears.

Don't let your mind, will or emotions derail your obedient trust. Those "what-if's" raise themselves up like fortress walls to thwart your joy and peace. One way in which you can fortify your trust muscles is to read biographies of faithful family in Jesus who chose to confront their trials and challenges in spite of fearful consequences. They narrowed their focus in on the joy set before them rather than trembling at the thorns and briars trying to shred their trust.

Just as the Shepherd warned, enemies will always be lurking to dissuade you, isolate you, slander you. Hold onto those stones of remembrance He's given you so far as testimony of His work in your life. Chances are high that those who are trying to undermine your journey to the High Places are *devoid* of answered prayers themselves.

The Shepherd cautions that if you give way to fear, trembling follows. Your body reacts to whatever consumes your thoughts and emotions. That's one reason why so many who are depressed and fearful are so vulnerable to illness. The endorphins that your body produces in moments of joy and exhilaration are suppressed when you dwell on the negative.

As the Shepherd warned, agony follows the stronghold of fear and the physical response of trembling. Your whole being becomes a canvas on which Satan has free rein to paint all sorts of dire images.

Do you see this progression that erodes your trust?

Fear > Trembling > Agony

At what point will *you* choose to take those dark thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to Jesus? (See 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.)

When you *have* come through important times of trust in our Lord, pick up your own "memorial stone" so that you can recount in your heart yet another episode when you

chose to trust. And keep praising your Father for His faithfulness to bulk up your trust muscles for your next trial!

- Someone once wrote, "The only thing to fear is fear itself." Fear is far more than a four-letter word. It nullifies the vital trust needed that glues your relationship with your Father. Are you encompassed by fear or worry now?

- How are you responding to that worry, doubt, or fear? Repenting? Fasting and praying? Asking others to intercede for you?

14. Almost as soon as they had reached the trees...; thru 18. Then Pride...

Much-Afraid's old antagonists are ready for her. They converge on her weaknesses and potential for failure. Each of us will find ourselves in situations in which the possibility of messing up will be very real. But ask yourself: "What's the *worst thing* that can happen if I don't succeed?" Then respond with this: "The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing that I lack in Him to complete this assignment or to learn from it." That's where Much-Afraid's strength rests.

Have you noticed that the attack of the voices in your mind most often begins with *self-pity*? You begin to feel sorry for yourself because you are lonely or weary or, for some other reason, just plain miserable.

But self-pity doesn't travel alone! Sniveling behind that navel-gazing comes resentment. Resentment tears away your concentration on our Father and His faithfulness by rousing you to look horizontally. You're tempted to compare your circumstances or woes or discomfort with the "easy life" of others. Oh, the deceit we fall into when we presuppose that: 1. Others' lives are better (easier, happier, calmer) than ours, because 2. We don't trust our Father's loving purpose for us and His power to intervene.

Resentment entices Much-Afraid with the same lie that children try to use to twist their parents' arms: "*Everybody else* goes that way (or does this or has that), so why shouldn't you?" A wise teaching we received 35 years ago stated, "Others may, but you may not." In essence, you need to keep reminding yourself that your path on the pilgrimage may not be like anyone else's. Your particular part of the Body has a very unique purpose and function. Don't denigrate it because you prefer someone else's lot. "Others may, but you may not."

Peter, who knew a lot about the battles we go through in our hearts, counters those who would fall into the self-pity and resentment trap:

> *Dear friends, **do not be surprised**at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you **participate** in the **sufferings of Christ**, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. However, if you suffer as a Christian, **do not be ashamed**, but praise God that you bear that name* (1 Peter 4:12,13,16).

There is no quick path to maturity in Jesus. If we want to share in His glory, then we must chew on the gristle of suffering as well (see Romans 8:17). Sue: Recently Mike and I were on the edge of a breakthrough in getting CD audio recordings up on our website. To no surprise we were also confronting one trial after another with things breaking down and allergies sapping our strength.

One night Mike couldn't even lay down in bed. His joints were screaming, he was drowning in nasal drippage, and sleep was impossible. For two hours we cried out to our Father in prayer! And our faithful Lord rescued him. The joint pain dissipated, his breathing cleared, his body stilled so he could sleep. Do we see a correlation between the suffering and the victory that lay just ahead? You bet! It for certain is not pleasant

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

to go through, but our hearts are bent on pleasing our Father, and that arouses demonic interest!

The narrow road that Jesus speaks of *does* entail suffering. When Resentment murmurs to Much-Afraid that she's on the path that martyrs take, ask yourself if there is really any other path a follower of Jesus *can* take? Aren't we to be the ones who *"[overcome Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony; by not loving our lives so much as to shrink from death"* (Revelation 12:11)?

Sometimes the most difficult "death" for us is *death to ourselves* — our fears, our wants, our hopes. If fear keeps you focused on what *might* happen, your spirit really will shrivel. But the ones who were mighty in Spirit as examples before us chose not to give way to the possibilities. Instead, they fixed their eyes on the destination God prepared for them, waiting to hear those wonderful words, "Well done, My good and faithful servant!"

Two more interconnected enemies await our traveler. The insidious danger of listening to the repeated sneer of Bitterness (which really is unforgiveness in your heart) is that your heart becomes contaminated by its entangling roots. Bitterness builds on insinuations, slander and lies about others, even if they're just being whispered into your mind.

Not only do you vaunt yourself over the one against whom you're bitter (and that's pride), but you also begin to quicken those negative reactions against anyone who reminds you of your bitter foe. Do you see how effectual is the Adversary's weapon of bitterness in fulfilling his goal to "kill, steal and destroy"? Relationships don't even have a chance to form, much less deepen, because you've already prejudged and found as wanting those who remind you of past hurt.

If Much-Afraid had heeded the bad report of Bitterness against the Shepherd, she never would have gone another step. That reminder that she'd been through some terrifying encounters with more to come was designed to dissuade her! Bitterness conveniently left out the victories she'd experienced and the character transformations of her altar experiences. His ugly words twisted her love for her Shepherd into a *duty* of obedience rather than a loving response to please Him.You've been put on those guilt trips yourself at times — responding out of obligation to some perceived religious good work rather than from the specific *rhema* breathed into your heart by the Spirit Who stirs from obedient love.

The next guerrilla tactic flung against Much-Afraid was Pride. From a Hebraic understanding, pride and bitterness reap the same consequence: People who entertain either of these attitudes are resisted by God. What does Scripture tell us? *"But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will* ***not forgive*** *your sins"* (Matt. 6:15), and, *"God* ***opposes the proud*** *but gives grace to the humble"* (James 4:6b). Pride and bitterness are sure roadblocks in your journey to intimacy with Jesus.

Pride's venom has been agitated because of *wounding*. If there's anything our self-pride fears, it's losing face before others and being mocked or dismissed as inconsequential. Pride lies that the Shepherd's goal is to "put you to complete shame." On the contrary, His purpose is to conform us to His likeness. We may agree that we want to be changed by Jesus, but pride discounts the ways He may operate to bring those changes about!

The faithful apostle Paul sets forth Jesus as our example of pursuing the path of humility in order to reach our goal in Him:

> *Your attitude should be* ***the same*** *as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself* ***nothing****, taking the very nature of a* ***servant****, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he* ***humbled himself*** *and* ***became obedient*** *to death — even death on a cross!* (Philippians 2:5-8).

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Both the world system and the demonic entities scorn true humility because a yielded, humble heart is the avenue of God's grace.

- No one is born with the character of Jesus. How strong is your understanding that our Lord *deeply desires* to bring you to the point of change? Do you willingly seek after those changes? Or, are you passive? Resistant?

- To what voices have you been listening lately? What circumstances made you vulnerable to entertaining them? What effect did your listening have on your relationship with those close to you?

19. Much-Afraid and her companions...;
20. So they stopped for a moment...

Much-Afraid knew that action had to be taken if she was to continue without stumbling the rest of the way. Do you ever find yourself chewing on unedifying thoughts, knowing that you shouldn't but deriving some perverse satisfaction anyhow? That's your old sin nature at work. I know, because I have to fight those thoughts too!

We can't plug our ears with cotton to stop the demonic voices. And it's a deepening downward spiral in your thought life as well as your spiritual progress if you don't take action to stop them. If you haven't made this personal responsibility as much a habit as breathing, you are going to suffer unnecessarily: ***Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*** (2 Cor. 10:5).

Our Lord's half-brother James enscribed a critical pattern for us to find victory in those attacks. Breathe in his words from chapter 4: 6-10.

> *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.*

Because our Father listens to the cry of the humble, make sure that your heart bows before His loving grace. That means having "clean hands" and a "purified heart" before Him by confessing of, and turning from, that which He reveals to you as sin. When you've humbled yourself before Him in this manner, He promises to lift you up. That's the submission of obedient trust that James is describing.

Then, from the shelter of His wings, you can resist the devil and his schemes to bring you down, and he will flee. Protected by our Father's mighty hand, you're no longer a demonic target. When you draw near to our Father in this manner, He will draw near to you!

- When was the last time you followed the sequence of the James 4 passage? What were the circumstances and outcome of this experience?

21. At first the forest did not...

How exhilarating was the fresh, strong air up there on the mountains! We are blessed to live near the base of the Front Range of the Rockies, where the bracing dry air greets us every morning. And when we make the effort to climb one of those nearby peaks, an entire vista opens up beneath, stretching out to the Kansas border.

But that height also enables us to see the smog hovering over the cities to the north and south of us. Sometimes you can get so caught up in the "smog" of activities and needs that you forget to look out to the horizon in your spirit. Your perspective changes upward when you decide just to "do the next thing" in peace and not get mired in all

the clamoring obligations threatening to sink you. Revisit in your spirit our Father's promises and the purposes He's revealed for your life. Then thank Him! When you're able to hold onto the reality that walking in Jesus is a "great adventure", then those daily clouds of circumstance won't block the sunlight of your trust.

• Describe an experience in which you were able to look out from a height, whether from a mountain, a tall building, a plane, whatever. How did your perspective change because of your aerial view?

• You're probably familiar with the description of a tapestry. The back looks like a jumbled mess of colored thread, while the front is a lovely design of integrated pattern. What has recently gone on in the life of you or someone close to you that appeared to be a mess but was actually a tapestry of great beauty when the situation was completed?

22. Here she was, lame Much-Afraid...

You can't control what the world flings at you. But you *can* choose your reaction. Do you explode in distress or fear, or do you respond from the Spirit's perspective in peace? Much-Afraid has just gone through a wonderful time of joyful excitement, completely at ease in a new situation.

Then comes the storm. How often has that happened in your life? Just when your guard is down, chaos envelops your life! "A great tree fell to the earth, then another and another." So often we feel we can handle one problem or maybe two at a time, but then they come like a tidal wave! We realize at last our own insufficiency and cry out to our Lord to rescue us.

Sue: Mike had been wrestling for days to install a new program onto our computer. Even though he followed the instructions to the letter, our machine refused to recognize this "intruder". Then both our phones died within hours of each other. The buttons of one couldn't be pushed, and the other wouldn't hold a charge for more than a minute's phone conversation. That evening a videotape got entangled in our little VCR/TV combo unit. The removal process wrecked the innards. We cried out to our Lord in desperation!

The next morning our dear friend James called. He'd been praying for us and sensed the Spirit revealing that we had too few people praying on our behalf for the nature of the work our Father was engaging us. We knew exactly what he meant. Even that courageous proclaimer of the Gospel, Paul, pleaded time and again for his friends in Christ to pray on his behalf!

• Who do you know who is regularly and specifically praying for you? When did you last ask for specific prayer for a personal or family need? Did you give feedback to those praying on your behalf so they could praise God for intervening?

• For whom do you regularly pray? Do you contact those people every so often to find out how He's answered, and to update yourself on current needs?

23. The strangest thing was...; 24. At last the storm began to rumble off...

The Shepherd had warned in advance that challenging events would confront her in this forest. Fear would have reflected the "old" Much-Afraid. But note the changes that have already taken root in her heart! Rather than panicking, she immediately turns to the Word implanted in her heart and finds rest.

If you're to find comfort and strength from God's Word in the middle of crisis, you

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

need to plant it there in times of rest! The old "grab a verse at random" approach doesn't produce the "peace that passes understanding" when you've meditated on His implanted Word and applied it. Mediating means more than memorizing. It's appropriating those words as your spiritual food and drink as you call on the Spirit to fill them with meaning for your life. Then you can respond with secure trust that your trial is life-giving, not death-dealing.

Sue: A number of years ago we were returning from a time away in South Carolina. Our son had just gotten his license and was taking a turn driving. Mike was stretched out across the back seat, asleep. I unbuckled my seatbelt to reach forward and change the tape. Distracted, our son veered off the highway, then yanked the wheel hard to get back on the road. At 65 mph the car flipped onto its roof, skidded, then stopped abruptly, upright.

I remember as we smashed onto the roof that the windshield shattered into a million fragments, each filtering light. I marveled at the beauty and asked, "Father, are we going to die?" As the car righted itself (untouched by any other vehicle during rush hour, at that!) I realized we were safe. Mike stumbled out of the back seat, blood seeping from where his head had smashed the window. A kind "Samaritan" called the police from his cell phone. In due time, the ambulance hauled Mike away, and Mikey and I dealt with contacting a tow truck.

The next day, having retrieved Mike from the hospital, we had to find a vehicle to rent in order to return home. Every car in Fayetteville was already taken, as Desert Storm troops had just returned. The only transport we could find was an 18' U-Haul. We could have loaded the carcass of our car in it!

Now comes another neat testimony to our Father's faithfulness. Prior to our trip, friends had given us a $500 gift. As it turned out, we hadn't used any of it. The price to rent the U-Haul? $500! He knew in advance, of course, that we'd have the need, and graciously provided it. How great is His faithfulness, even in the howling storms of the unexpected!

Trials, suffering and tribulation are promised to the followers of Jesus. If this surprises you, then you've received a false gospel. Satan hates those who love Jesus, and makes war against anyone who holds to the testimony of Him (see Revelation 12:17).

What's to be our response to this suffering? Peter, who was sifted by Satan to test that his faith was genuine, encourages each one of us:

> *Cast **all** your anxiety on him because **he cares** for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.** And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have **suffered a little while**, will himself restore you and make you **strong, firm and steadfast*** (1 Peter 5:7-10).

When a pride of lions goes out to hunt, the older lions snarl and growl in order to drive the prey toward the younger lions who effect the kill. A life lesson from our Lord: Stand in perfect peace, not letting the enemy's growl drive us toward destruction.

Satan can use truth to trap you in a false conclusion. Here we have one of those instances. The storm was coming around the mountain again. His conclusion is for you to BOLT! As we've learned, fear is counterproductive, and fear of what *might* happen can paralyze you! But our Father's desire for you is to stand in perfect peace. When you resist the devil's conclusion, you open the door for God's refuge.

- Peace is crucial to everything else the Lord will produce in you. Without peace, even love cannot grow. Are you in perfect peace? Yes? No? What is contributing to your answer?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

25. "Look here," exclaimed Much-Afraid ...; 26. Her two companions actually laughed ...; 27. Next minute their enemies...

It was so encouraging to see little Much-Afraid take the lead in attacking those demonic agitators who had no intention of letting up if she chose to live up to her name! And what an example for us who have ears to hear the Holy Spirit and don't want the clutter of any other voices but His.

You can fill your environment with an array of "joyful noise": sing out spontaneously, pray about whatever He puts on your heart, proclaim praise for His faithfulness and loving kindness. Saturate the ears of your heart with a taste of heaven!

One of my most vivid memories of our time in Israel was the joyful praise that permeated our host's home. Whether it was a lively tape, an impromptu duet, or a prayer spoken aloud, that house was alive with appreciation for His presence!

Just as in this story, our Father ALWAYS has a "hut" of protection for you. When you choose to walk in trust, He opens your eyes to see that shelter for your spirit. Facing the prospects of another storm, our dripping travelers are delighted with their new accommodations.

How often do you squawk about your stormy circumstances rather than gratefully thank your Father for His loving willingness to be your shelter? Those nagging voices were only a door-width away, looking for a crack in the heart of Much-Afraid in which to once more distract and torment her. But she stood firm, bolting any avenue of her mind, will or emotions that would entertain the first negative thought.

Expression of thanks from your heart fans encouragement in the hearts of those with whom you share testimony. Don't just keep those "God-sightings" and interventions to yourself; tell someone else about them!

Sue: The "dead TV" I mentioned earlier needed to be replaced so that we could produce equipping videos with a computer-compatible format. After scouting at four stores, we found a set that seemingly met our needs. As the salesperson went to retrieve it, we looked at other sets. One, a well-known expensive brand, touted a feature that Mike had mentioned earlier that we needed. The set we'd picked out didn't have it, so when the clerk returned, I asked if she had any others with that particular feature.

Taking us around the corner, she pointed to a nice one that was not only suitable, but also on sale! We told her that we'd prayed that our Lord would guide us to just the right set. She smiled and lifted her eyebrows — maybe not much of a response, but she knows now that SOMEONE out there trusts in a Father who knows His kids' needs and brings an answer that suits His purposes!

This story just points out that not all of our Father's interventions are "Red Sea" experiences. Sometimes you just need eyes to see Him at work all around you, and testify to that.

- Can you recall a time when you stood still, refusing to flee because of fear-based conjecture about what *might* happen? What alternative did our Lord present to you that was totally different than what fear would have you believe?

- Do you make it a habit to be on the lookout for our Lord's intervention in your daily life? Do you voice to others when you *do* see Him at work around you?

28. Much-Afraid went to the door...; 29. There was a sound...

Sue: Ever since childhood I've relished the power of thunderstorms. Many an afternoon was spent crouched by the side of the house under the screened porch off my bedroom as light flashed against the rainy darkness, chased by booming rolls of thunder.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

From my youthful perspective, I was perfectly secure in my little shelter. Fierce storms can do irreparable damage, of course. But all of nature testifies to its Creator, so even this spectacle of His power generates awe in my heart. Perhaps I have such peace because I know in Whose hand the storm is!

- What mental picture of our Lord's power in nature comes to mind? What do His manifestations of wind, rain, earthquakes and volcanoes tell you about Him?

- Describe a particular time when our Lord's power in nature filled your heart with awe.

30. They found in the room...; 31. So in a very little time...; 32. Much-Afraid found herself thinking...

Simple pleasures become memory treasures when you receive them with contentment. We were blessed years ago to spend our weekends in an ancient trailer situated on 500,000 acres of untouched California high country. Our friends had a trespass lease on this property, and we were like little children of our King as we romped through this slice of His earthly domain!

We were pretty far from the nearest town or facility, so what we brought with us was what we had for provision. I can still smell the savory aroma of Betty's beans cooked over the old wood stove, our only heat against winter's blast. Like Much-Afraid, we basked in the "peace and thanksgiving and cheerful contentment" of our humble surroundings.

We've marveled over our Lord's "creative provision" for us for the past 21 years. Two decades ago we received our last paycheck. During that time our Lord has provided for us in such amazing ways.

He told us in Israel, "Share this message and I will provide for you." So we don't concern ourselves with going after provision. Instead, we're busied with how we can get the message of the Hebraic Restoration out to as many people as possible. Do we *work*? Yes! But not for provision. We delight in laboring to serve our Lord. And isn't this the attitude we should all have in regard to our labors? *"**Whatever** you do, work at it with **all your heart**, as **working for the Lord**, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the **Lord Christ you are serving**"* (Colossians 3:23,24).

Many well-meaning Christians have offered us gimmicks to raise money. We've declined, because to "Share" is what we were commanded to do. In the years since we came back from Israel, our Lord has added two other purposes:

1. Lead. Our Lord has emphasized the significance of the *marriage covenant,* as that bond represents the unity and permanence of our relationship with our Father in union with Jesus. If you are married, the true work of Jesus is seen as you grow in one accord together in love, purpose and meaning. Leadership does *not* emanate through ecclesiastical positions of the Hellenist-influenced system. Rather, it is an outflow of lives yielded to our Lord's purposes and walked out in the love relationships of one-anothering.

Dear friends participated in a recent International Reconciliation Conference held on behalf of tribal peoples worldwide. They discovered that hearts and eyes of understanding were opened to the power of sharing biblical truth from the context of a strong, vibrant marriage. That covenant is key to every culture — the relational intimacy that followers of Jesus seek in Him and with one another.

2. Contend for My Son, Jesus. We have written in our monthly newsletter, *Mishpachah Yeshua*, the Family of Jesus, about the domination of the anti-Christ and Jezebel spirits that control Hellenism. So little in that system focuses upon *Jesus*, "the Author and Finisher of our faith." Even His work as Messiah, by which He offers forgiveness through *repentance,* is nullified. Grievously,

the truth of *turning away from sin* and *turning to* our Father for forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus is just about unheard of in lawless Hellenism. A perverted version of grace excuses sin of all stripes.

Sue and I believe that this track record of our Father's faithfulness would come to an end if we gave way to fear. Savor Paul's assurance of our Lord's faithfulness as you taste each verse.

> ***Rejoice in the Lord*** *always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The* ***Lord is near.*** *Do not be anxious about anything, but* ***in everything****, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the* ***peace of God****, which transcends all understanding, will* ***guard your hearts and your minds*** *in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:4-7).

We've discussed at length the enemies of our thought life. Whatever your mind is consumed with will influence the actions you take. So let's ponder what it is we *should* be concentrating on, as Paul continues:

> *Finally, brothers, whatever is* ***true****, whatever is* ***noble****, whatever is* ***right****, whatever is* ***pure****, whatever is* ***lovely****, whatever is* ***admirable****—if anything is* ***excellent or praiseworthy****—think about such things. Whatever you have* ***learned or received or heard*** *from me, or* ***seen in me****—put it* ***into practice****. And the God of peace will be with you* (4:8,9).

Are you putting into practice that which the Spirit has been showing you thus far in your journey?

- Can you recall times when your body, soul and spirit found great rest and delight with minimal financial outlay, travel, or tense preparation?
- What will it take for you and your family to carve out a time at least once a month in simple retreat from your regular schedules? Do you have friends with whom you can, on occasion, trade off child care so you can benefit from some quiet time alone with your spouse?

33. The storm continued...; 34. During those quiet days...; 35. It seemed as though...

"Enforced seclusion." How do you respond when your usual agenda or schedule is pulled out from under you? In her zeal to move up to the High Places, Much-Afraid could have chomped at the bit waiting for the storm to abate. Instead, she chose to recuperate in calm peacefulness.

Sorrow and Suffering had seemed like functionaries to Much-Afraid, serving their purpose to guide and uphold her when she stumbled along the way. But now, in her shelter free of distractions, she relished her opportunity to grow in regard of her two companions as true friends.

Sue: Storms can bring people together in ways that busy schedules generally preclude. We'd been loaned the use of a home on Cape Cod for week. We'd barely arrived when Hurricane Bob barreled down on us. Bereft of electricity, Mike and I and our son and his friend laughed and talked and played board games and cards. We especially enjoyed three days of creative meals prepared over the gas grill!

We also noticed an interesting camaraderie as we strolled through the neighborhood in the storm's aftermath. People we'd never met stopped to chat with us. So many expressed gratefulness that little serious damage had ensued from the storm's powerful winds.

A blizzard during our retreat center days knocked out power for over a week. We felt like pioneers as Mike and a guy on staff armed themselves with chainsaws to free neighbors from driveways barricaded by

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

trees. Families that generally didn't have time to chat sat down together with make-shift meals to spend time appreciating each other's stories. What could have been an inconvenience turned into a memorable event!

It's sad to see how fragmented lives have become. Families spend more time in the car than they do sharing meals at home. Even hours spent with others at work, at events, or even at church activities find participants defined by what they *do* rather than who they *are*. Have you ever felt like an egg in an activity carton? Your shell rubs up against other shells but your real self never "scrambles" with anyone else.

Much-Afraid discovered during her time off the trail that her senses had become heightened to notice details she'd overlooked before. Everything takes on greater meaning when you resist the demonic voices and gain victory by conforming your thoughts to those of Jesus.

It's at this time that the Holy Spirit is able to impart to your mind, will, and emotions a whole different view of your surroundings. You can see people who once hurt you as God's instruments to teach you forgiveness. And you can better recognize the difficult situations our Lord brought to you as times to learn trust.

- Describe a time when you found yourself unexpectedly confined to quarters. How did you respond? Was it a peaceful, creative time, or were you anxious about all that you weren't able to get done?

- How is the Spirit altering your perspective of the people and circumstances of your past and your present? What changes in your perspective have taken place since you've been traveling with Much-Afraid on her journey to the High Places?

36. All these things seemed to be speaking ...; 37. One morning when the storm...; 38. Sorrow answered quietly...

The "mountain dialect" that was so refreshingly new and beautiful to Much-Afraid was really her growing understanding of things of the Spirit. Once you enter into the King's presence — not content to observe Him through frosted glass, but truly across the threshold so that His Spirit dwells in you — you find an ever-increasing insight into life from *His* perspective.

Probably the most important thing for us to appreciate is the *greater understanding* that the Spirit gives. Ponder Paul's comforting assurance to the believers in Corinth:

> *We have not received the spirit of the world but the* ***Spirit who is from God****, that we may* ***understand*** *what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in* ***words taught by the Spirit****, expressing* ***spiritual truths in spiritual words*** (1 Corinthians 2:12,13).

When we embrace the Covenant Gospel offered to us by our Father, He consummates the Covenant by placing His Holy Spirit in us. Even though we are indwelt by Him, our mind, will, and emotions come under His control only as we repent in response to His conviction. Only then is He able to change how we respond to the world around us.

Each time we yield to conviction, repent and are changed, we become less carnal and more spiritually discerning. Our understanding becomes that which is taught to us by the Spirit.

Much-Afraid's heart was stirred by the little song that Sorrow had composed as they ambled through the forest. As our Lord brings changes to your character, *you* may find new songs penetrating your heart. Music is just one of many ways to rejoice in Him, but it's an important one!

Sue: One day our Lord surprised me with joy as I was on the way to the Post Office.I

found words coming to me in a manner similar to Sorrow's experience. The tune to which they were set was a song popular then, entitled "Perhaps Love". The love that permeated the song He gave me, though, had nothing to do with worldly emotion! Perhaps as you read the lyrics, He'll give you some ideas to sing for His praise!

Perhaps Love

Perhaps love is like the sand-swept breeze
that billows in your hair,
The sparkling rush of waterfall through
diamond-facet air,
The crisp and radiant snow mist that
defines God's purity,
His precious gentle care for you and me.

Perhaps love is man and woman blessed
by holy cords of joy
Expressed in smiles of tenderness at giggling girl or boy,
Or reaching out to elderly or lonely sorrowing man,
Compassion that reflects God's caring
hand.

His love encompasses my fears and
makes them victory,
And all because of trusting faith in Christ
of Calvary,
To sacrifice my downcast lot to claim His
gift of peace,
To magnify His name with upraised voice
and bended knee.

Perhaps love is that embrace you give a
crying teenage child
Abandoned by her friends and needing to
be reconciled,
Or welcoming a foreigner bewildered and
afraid,
And leading him to life in Jesus' name.

His magnitude of love for me transcends
my every sin,
Transporting me from depths of grief to
heights of heavenly gain,
Partaking of His fellowship in trial and
suffering,
Rejoicing in the presence of Lord Jesus
Christ my King.

Perhaps love can be summed up in this,
that God so loved the world,
His only Son delivered down to bear our
sinful curse,
Yet offering peace and pardon free to all
who will believe,
Their victory, by Him secured, received.

- How are you becoming more spiritually discerning along the journey? Do you find yourself more responsive to the Spirit's conviction to turn away from sin and follow Jesus more closely?

- Do certain verses or ideas from Scripture dance around your mind? Have you ever connected them with a tune from your heart to offer to Him as a special gift?

39. "I like it"...; 40. So Sorrow sang it over ...

Early followers of Jesus — and many of His sheep today — used songs to share biblical truth with one another. That's why Paul exhorts us to *"let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with songs, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God"* (Colossians 3:16). The gold that you can mine from the Bible has great spiritual power to enrich the lives of your family in Jesus.

When our son was little, we played scripture songs for kids over and over again. What a delight to hear him singing these as he played with his toys or just skipped

around the house! Most children love the rhythm and rhyme of music. Why not plant *Scriptural truth* in their hearts instead of worldly music or TV ads?

Much-Afraid yearned to be able to follow the Shepherd wherever He went. When your life displays an unfathomable trust-filled affection for our Father and His Son, Jesus, you want to please Him even more.

In our October-November 2003 *Mishpachah Yeshua* newsletter, we included a description of "vertical" facets of a loving relationship with our Lord. We have included these on the next page. Please review them. Place a check mark next to the facets that are integrally part of your own faith pilgrimage.

Facets of the T rue Vertical in Your Life

Goal: **Increased loving-trust in God our Father, and walking in the freedom offered to you through Jesus our Messiah**

VERTICAL: the motivation of your heart and spirit made possible through repentance and the indwelling Holy Spirit

Love for and *trust in* our Father (see Proverbs 3:5,6; Mark 12:30) are the heart issues that bring you continuing spiritual growth. Out of this growth, our Father and His Son Jesus receive glory from your life. At the same time, *you* grow in increasing Christ-likeness.

Worship and Praise (see John 4:24) are exuberant expressions that reveal your true heart toward our Lord. Through worship and praise your spirit is able to convey its most joyful expression of recognition of our Father God. Your expression isn't a form or style of worship or praise that pleases God, but emanation from a forgiven, repentant heart.

True, sacrificial love for others (see Matthew 25:31-46) can emanate only out of the quality of loving trust you maintain in the vertical. Your ability to genuinely care for those who can never repay your kindness can only be accomplished through the love and power the Holy Spirit provides. All other kinds of love fall short of the humble sacrifice that stirs the recipient to give praise to our Father. This is what truly sets followers of Jesus apart as we live out our lives in the horizontal. The inner motivation of your heart is to glorify our Father. This distinguishes your activity in the horizontal from all other motives of mankind.

Mutual encouragement (see Hebrews 3:13; 10:23, 24) by those who follow Jesus with all their heart and soul helps you avoid the traps of sin's deceit. Satan seeks to trap you in self-pity and despair, and entice you to entertain "pet sins" of which you refuse to repent. He tries to convince you that our Father isn't hearing you, or has even rejected you. Your self-consumed, self-pitying attitude sends the message to our Lord that *He is untrustworthy*. True fellowship counters deception with testimonies of answered prayer and our Father's faithfulness. Biblical encouragement can recount God's past and present acts of kindness toward you as His beloved child.

Fellowship with the righteous (see 1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14) is critical to your faith expression. We have written how critical interconnected fellowship in homes was to the earliest Church. The primary purpose of their gatherings was to uphold communal righteousness by repentance, prayer, instruction in godliness, breaking of bread, and one-anothering in order for the Father to answer their prayers (see James 5:16-19;1 Peter 3:12, Acts 2:42). The righteous walk in *obedience-based* trust. They seek God's guidance and His commands, following them without rationalizing the consequences to their obedience. Love for God and a desire to walk in the righteousness of Jesus boldly compels you to *know* and to *do* His will (Proverbs 28:1).

Your *sufferings* (see Romans 5:3-5; 8:14-17; Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:20,21) are character transformers, not trials to avoid at all cost. You yearn to give the Potter freedom to change within you all that He desires, and to form in you whatever will suit His purposes. It isn't that God changes anything *around* you; He changes *you*. Your identification with Jesus in His sufferings increases profoundly even as your peace and joy in Him increase (see Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:1-16).

Having your needs met God's way (see Genesis 1:26,30; 2:8,9;15-25) is the only way you can really experience the freedom offered through Jesus. Your need for dignity, authority, blessing and provision, security, purpose and meaning, freedom and boundary, and intimate love and companionship can only be experienced when your generational strongholds are demolished. As these needs are met, you experience a greater fullness in your relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus, and with other people.

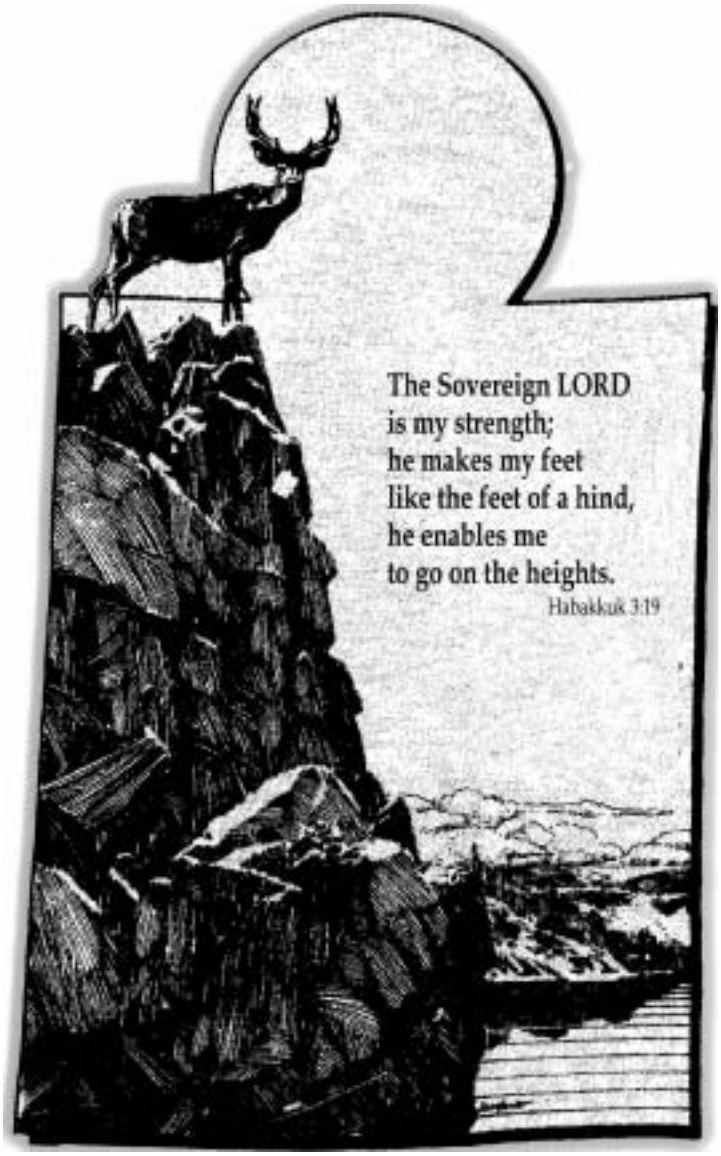
Removal of generational strongholds (see Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6) frees your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, for the Holy Spirit to change you into conformity to Jesus. Even many who have embraced the true Gospel still find themselves struggling with bondage to strongholds passed along from generation to generation. The transformation promised to them as part of their sanctification is impossible until these influences are demolished. Demolish the strongholds that impede your soul's transformation into Christ-likeness! Then you can reflect the character of our Lord Jesus to Him.

Repentance that produces righteousness (see 1 John 1:9) is key to your ongoing relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus. You can have no true fellowship in Jesus with others in the horizontal if this vertical fellowship is obstructed through abiding in tolerated sin (see I John 2:7-10). Repentance is your first step in embracing the true Gospel, and it is the glue that maintains your fellowship until you are welcomed into heaven.

Embracing the true Gospel (see John 7:38,39), the one Jesus speaks of, is the first step of living in the vertical. As you embrace the conditions of the Covenant offered by our Father, He seals you with the Holy Spirit guaranteeing His part of the Covenant promises. The salvation offered in the true Gospel is not a point in time, but the *culmination of a pilgrimage* (see Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Philippians 2:12,13) which ends when our Lord proclaims your name in front of the hosts of heaven (see Revelation 3:5).

Going to the High Places

Chapter 12 *In the Mist*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

In this chapter we come face to face with the consequences of allowing our *passion* for our Shepherd to fade, to take second place in our hearts and minds. As focus on Him and His will decreases, the door of opportunity for deceptive voices squeaks open, allowing them to gain preeminence in our thoughts.

How vital it is that we leave no room for any other voice to influence us but that of the Holy Spirit!

As you join Much-Afraid in her journey through the mist, dig into the psalms of David. Time and again that shepherd-turned-king was assailed by doubts from within and assaults from without — yet he recognized that solace and strength come only from crying out in trust to his Lord.

That trust needs to be firmly in place as we continue our journey to the High Places. Your "mist" experience is preparing you for the fiery trials to come!

Chapter 12 *In the Mist*

1. At last the storm gradually died down...; 2. When they started...

Much-Afraid and her two companions have gratefully weathered the torrential storm safely sheltered in the cozy cabin. Perhaps you've been experiencing a breather yourself after facing a personal crisis that assaulted you or your family. You probably wish that that sense of peace could last longer. But chances are, our Father has other "spiritual growth opportunities" in store for you.

You may be experiencing some painful reminders of the cost to you thus far in your travels. Perhaps there are some formerly dear relationships that have turned away because of your zeal to follow in the Shepherd's steps. Maybe you long for the phone to ring or the email to bring you news from those with whom you once shared friendship.

But your time in the mist is a preparation period in which you need to confront any lingering doubts you have about the Lordship of your living Shepherd and your willingness to follow Him *anywhere* through *anything*. This time in the mist is a very necessary time of personal evaluation before you climb any further.

The Israelites of old could have shortened their desert experience by 38 years had they chosen to trust God without reservation. Yet they chose to make a presumptuous stand of disbelief at Kadesh Barnea (so near the border of Canaan!). They sent out twelve spies to see if the Promised Land was as good as the Lord had said. Then they believed the fear-based reports of the ten, shoving aside the faith-based trust of Caleb and Joshua.

For their disbelief they died in the barren sand. Not one of that adult generation would see the promise fulfilled. *Your* doubt in His faithfulness carries similar dire consequences!

- Describe a period in which you felt you were being called to give 110% for quite a while before the goal was reached. How did you respond when that effort was finally over?

3. She began to realize that...

Just as trees and vines pass through different seasons of rest, preparation and production, so do followers of Jesus in their life pilgrimage. After the joy of bearing fruit fit for harvest, a grapevine's leaves are tattered, the branches straggly, and the entire plant in need of recuperation.

During the cold winter months the plant may actually appear dead, but the roots are still vibrant with potential life! If those roots decided on their own to send up shoots too early, a freeze would destroy the tender buds. That season of rest in the dark is vital for the health of the plant.

Much-Afraid had endured the thrill of the various trials she'd undergone so far. The new test, however, was quite different, call-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ing on her to continue to trust and love the Shepherd in the day-in, day-out trudge of the mist which blocked out the sun's warm penetration.

You've been through those times yourself when the thought, "Will this ever end?" insinuates itself into your attitude as well. Whether you're a mom with energetic toddlers or an employee with a demanding boss (or whatever your repetitive situation that never seems to change), our Father is presenting you with a classroom for patient endurance and steadfast loving trust to emerge with greater maturity in your character.

The real danger during this season is a grumbling, complaining heart that becomes sluggish in its trust. Beware!

> *For God is not so unfair as to forget your work and the love you showed for him in your past service for his people — and in your present service too.* ***However,*** *we want each one of you to* ***keep showing the same diligence*** *right up to the end, when your hope will be realized, so that you will* ***not become sluggish****, but will be imitators of those who by their* ***trust and patience*** *are receiving what has been promised"* (Hebrews 6:10-12).

- Would people who know you well describe you as a grumbler or complainer when trials come your way? When did you last grumble? About what?

- Do you find greater satisfaction when you're accomplishing something, even under pressure, than when you lose sight of God's purpose in your character development through tedious times?

4. At last she burst out...; 5. "No, it won't"...; 6. Much-Afraid pretended...

As soon as you entertain thoughts that rail against your circumstances, you're voicing music to the enemy's ears! Words that Jesus would never say overtake your mind so convincingly that you begin to believe them. The same exaggeration of truth that Eve swallowed along with the fruit convinces you that God doesn't have your best interest at heart. In fact, you begin to suspect that you may *never* escape the drudgery that's so irritating you.

Redirect those complaints that issue from burgeoning resentment. Ask yourself if your Shepherd has ever failed you in any matter. Our great High Priest fully understands your present trial because He's been there! Jesus has been confronted with the temptation to grumble (though He never did), and He knows your weakness. But He continuously invites you to lift away your veil of mist and *"confidently approach the throne from which God gives grace, so that [you] may receive mercy and find grace in [your] time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16).

If you've ever flown any distance, you realize that even though you may be taking off in a fogbank, once the plane passes through the clouds you find yourself in brilliant sunlight. That doesn't mean that the sun didn't exist while you were on the ground; you just didn't *see* it from that perspective.

The writer of Ecclesiastes assures us that that "for everything there is a season" — and this season of mist, too, will pass. If you enter a new season of life with presuppositions of how long it will last, you're sure to be disappointed!

- Are you wearing down those around you by giving way to complaining thoughts?

- What circumstances are you facing right now that can become a catalyst for grumbling?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

7. "Have you noticed, Much-Afraid,"...; 8. Much-Afraid had not...

Sue: Mike and I have lived in 17 different homes during our years together. Some have been delightful, others more of a "roof over our heads" variety. But we have learned from our various relocations that our Father has very real purposes for each home, whether in what we're able to accomplish there or whom we're to encounter.

We've never been sure whether each season would last months or years. All that was understood was that our Father would make known when a new season was approaching.

Sue: When Mike and I returned to Connecticut to care for his invalid mother, we had no idea what that would entail on a daily basis, nor how long our care for her in her home would last. But we sure learned to grasp onto our daily bread's worth of grace and strength from Him!

We also discovered so much darkness lurking in the recesses of our hearts that popped up unexpectedly and horrifyingly to two people who had thought we were loving and compassionate! We can look back now and see how needful that period was in our character development in order to share with others that which our Shepherd wanted us to experience firsthand.

When you find yourself listening to voices of resentment, take those thoughts captive! Much-Afraid failed to exercise a discerning heart when she considered those malevolent thoughts. Resentment made very sure he didn't mention the Shepherd's name or His purposes and plans. By focusing Much-Afraid on her bleak circumstances, he succeeded in diverting her attention from love-grounded obedience to her Lord.

Don't let circumstances dictate Who God is to you! If you bemoan that you don't feel any progress in Christlike character, or that you don't see that your life is impacting anyone around you in a Godly way, you're stuck in the "horizontal" reference framework. You're disbelieving that our Lord can make the changes He desires as you yield to His will. Then you begin to distrust that He's even guiding you through His Spirit.

When those doubts beset you, call out to your Shepherd! Seek out someone mature in their trust in Him and *listen* to what they offer in counsel and testimony! Ask them about their own time "in the mist" and how our Lord delivered them. Find out what they learned about the importance of life experiences in which no progress seemed evident for a while.

Much-Afraid was blessed that her two companions didn't coddle her doubts or smooth over her resentment. Instead, they redirected her to the faithfulness of the Shepherd and the unbending principle of staying on His path. *That's* true ministry! They may well have been thinking of David's comforting words: *"You keep me alive when surrounded by danger; you put out your hand when my enemies rage; with your right hand you save me.* ***The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me"*** (Psalm 138:7,8a).

You can't keep your enemy from whispering thoughts of doubt and resentment. But you *can* take those thoughts captive and recognize that they aren't emanating from the Holy Spirit!

- How can you catch yourself when you're about to give way to grumbling? What Bible verses are especially helpful to you?

- Who in your life is effective in confronting your shortsightedness and turning you back to wholehearted trust in your Shepherd?

9. "But," persisted Much-Afraid...; 10. Their only answer was...; 11. Sorrow and Suffering took...; 12. To this they replied...

A little wedge of resentment lodged itself firmly in Much-Afraid, inviting another "unJesus" voice to attach itself like poison

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

oak around her mind. And not being content to moan alone, she tried to get her two companions to take up her plaint against the Shepherd.

Have you ever noticed what a predictable tactic that is? People who are resentful and bitter want you to take their side, even if you've never had reason to resent the one against whom they're bitter! It's as though your agreement will justify their right to carry such an ugly weight.

At any time Much-Afraid could have stopped those voices by recalling the faithfulness of the Shepherd and His unfailing love. If she'd crawled out of her own self-imposed gloom she would have perceived that the mere presence of her companions fore and aft were testimony of her Shepherd's kindness to her on the journey. Instead, she chose to gnaw on the gristle of discontent.

Do you ever find yourself so entrenched in your own perceptions that you don't have room in your mind for the facts? Sorrow and Suffering were so unshakably confident in the One Who had directed them that, even if they *were* going in circles, their hearts were at rest.

- How do you respond when you're on the receiving end of someone else's grumbling or voiced resentment against a third party?

- Do you ever use others as a sounding board for your discontent or bitterness because you're reluctant to go to God, knowing that He will cause you to be accountable and stir you to repent? When is the last time you sounded off at another person to vent your resentful feelings?

13. "You poor little thing"...; 14. So they went on...

"If I were in charge, things would be different!" Have you ever felt that way, wondering why someone who is as incompetent or unfeeling as _____ (fill in the blank) has authority in your life?

And look at the button Self-Pity pushes: wasted time, fruitlessness! We Americans are so time-conscious, probably because we feel we have so little of it. But restructure that thought according to our Father's purposes. If your priorities overlap His, you do have enough time to live fully without waste. He *is* a God of order.

If you're frantic, He didn't put it there; *you* did, by pursuing your own motivations and goals. It's all too easy to get sucked into obligations and activities that our Father hasn't earmarked for you, your spouse or your family.

STOP before you agree to another meeting, program, or invitation. Heed the life-giving injunction: *"Be still, and **know** that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10). You can't refresh your heart with His loving presence unless you quiet your thoughts and focus on His loving sovereignty.

The perceived quality of fruit is not determined by the tree's opinion but by the taster. Your fruitfulness matters to the One Who is producing it in and through you *for His pleasure*! Never measure your fruit by the lives of others. It's only by His grace that they're bearing Kingdom fruit at all! Straining to *be* or to *do* or to *have* beyond what our Shepherd has for you yields grumbling, thanklessness and a restless heart.

- How do you occupy your time when you're not meeting obligations or someone else's needs? Do you find restorative refreshment in what you choose to do in your moments of discretionary time?

- Against whom do you most often harbor resentful thoughts about the way in which he/she exercises authority? Have you taken those thoughts captive, then asked forgive-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ness of that person for not being there for them with the right heart and attitude?

15. Suffering doggedly led the way...

You may have decided all along that there was no turning back on your journey to the High Places, but your *attitude* can make everyone else traveling with you miserable. Jesus, the heart circumsiser, is dealing with your love for Him and your obedient trust in His ways of deepening that love.

You, on the other hand, are complaining inwardly (or outwardly) so much that your very presence can be annoying to those who have to be around you! No wonder the mist seemed to get "thicker and colder and drearier than ever" for Much-Afraid. She recognized that she was responding from her old flesh nature, yet she continued to wallow in her emotional mud.

Sue: It's all too easy for us women to blame our hormones (or lack of them, for some of us!) for our irritability or unkind responses.But our Creator knows our weakness in this area as well, and wants us to call upon Him for His Spirit to work in us so that we don't lash out at others.

How many times has your husband (or boss or friend) had to take a deep apprehensive breath before confronting you about your attitude or behavior? Much-Afraid's slipping and stumbling are as uncomfortable for her companions as for herself. But, her stubborn refusal to trust the Shepherd's way has brought this on her.

Don't expect anyone else to cater to your rebellion and inner turmoil. That's manipulation — using behavior to control others. The Bible refers to it as sorcery, and you sure don't want to suffer the consequences of that! (See 1 Samuel 15 for the sorry tale of Saul's deceptive rationale that led to rebellion and opened the door for sorcery in his life.)

Each of us needs family in Jesus who are steadfast in their trust and purpose in Him. Their example as well as their witness testify to how much we need our Lord's perspective. That's why the apostle Paul can exhort the believers at Philippi to do everything without complaining or arguing (see Philippians 2:14), so that their lives will shine like stars in the midst of their perverse, sin-grubby society. Go and do likewise!

- What thoughts lure you the most when your life is "unspeakably tame" and seemingly purposeless?

- If you are a woman, when did you last take advantage of your monthly cycle to exercise manipulation or control by your attitude or words? Have you asked forgiveness from those you violated because of this?

16. At last, one afternoon...; 17. It has not been mentioned...; 18. It was not pleasant to think...

Why do we, like Much-Afraid, wait so long to express our trust in our Shepherd? Regardless of the quality of our voices, the Holy Spirit yearns to stir us to lift praise and delight to our Father!

When David spent day after day watching his woolly charges graze, he may have hoped at times that his future would hold more for him than this. But during these "treadmill times" he also composed some of the most comforting songs of praise that have ever been recorded. Dig out your concordance and notice how often references to songs and singing appear!

When you sing to our Lord, not only do His ears take delight, but your heart grows warm as well when your song is from your spirit! By turning her heart

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

toward the One Who is life, Much-Afraid chases away the tormenting voices of Resentment, Self-Pity and Bitterness. As her hope is fleshed out in song, her jubilance soars!

Sue: Certain songs never fail to bring me to tears of gratefulness for my Savior and His love. Just the thought of someday seeing Jesus face to face and awaiting a "Well done, My faithful one" stirs me to keep pressing on in His love and His purposes, even on the days when I'm ready to scream, "ANYTIME NOW!!"

Keep in mind the strength you draw from calling upon His Spirit within to sing through you to the Throne of mercy. Come before Him with a song in your heart each morning before stress can overtake you, and each evening so that He's the last One your thoughts rest on before you sleep. (See Psalm 92:1,2).

- Has anyone ever made fun of your singing voice to the extent that you rarely sing around others?

- Has the Holy Spirit ever given you lyrics or a tune you've never heard before that keeps coming back to you? Have you written the words down so you'll have them as a special gift from Him to share when appropriate?

19. "Why, Much-Afraid"...; 20. There, striding toward her...; 21. "O Shepherd"...

Did you notice that at the time Much-Afraid chose to begin to express trust in the promises of the Shepherd, the mist had not yet broken? She didn't sing because everything was cheery; rather, she sang in spite of the mist! And just at that point of expressed trust, the Shepherd made His appearance — and the mist rapidly cleared away.

What can we learn from this experience? Well, we know that even a "mustard seed" of hope in the great Promise Keeper dispels the irritating voices that try to confound our trust. And, we see that Much-Afraid's song was actually a recitation of Scripture that she'd previously heard from her companion Sorrow. As well, we see that a praise song directed to our Lord dispels mist-like confusion and refreshes our hearts.

The Psalms overflow with text that was originally designed to be set to music. Think of how many of these writings begin with "To the tune of...", or declare the exhortation, "Sing to the Lord"! There's a wonderful healing power when we lift our voices in melodies to our Lord, especially since only mankind has been equipped in our Creator's image to set words to music!

We can learn a lot about offering to our Lord "new songs" by listening to children when they're unaware of being overheard. Many times you'll hear them pipe up with all sorts of jingles set to tunes they may have never heard before. And what a teachable moment for you to take even familiar melodies and fit Scripture verses to them to learn as a family!

Sue: I recently came across a simple song that powerfully summed up the goal of our pilgrimage to the High Places. Notice that there's nothing complicated or intricate in the words — just scriptural truth in singable form. As you read it, see if a tune comes to your heart to make it personal!

I Want To Walk As A Child Of The Light

I want to walk as a child of the light,
I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world
The star of my life is Jesus.

In Him there is no darkness at all
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light in the city of God,
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God,
I want to look at Jesus.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Clear sun of righteousness shine on my path
And show me the way to the Father.

I'm looking for the coming of Christ,
I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race
We shall know the joy of Jesus.
(©1970 Kathleen Thomerson/Celebration)

Even in your loneliest, darkest hours, if a hymn or Scripture song comes to you, sing it! The Spirit can use that spark of trust in our Shepherd to bring light into your sorrowful situation and melt the gloom with hope.

- Dig up some of those special songs that so blessed you in your early walk with our Lord. Share them with someone close to you and talk about why they were so meaningful to you at that time.

- Ask our Lord to put a new song into your heart as you pray and search His Word. Then share that gift with those in your faith family.

22. "Tell me,"...; 23. "Sorrow taught it to me"...; 24. "I am glad you sing it"...

Scripture tells us that our Lord will rejoice over the city from which He will rule, Jerusalem. How much more will He rejoice over you as His Bride! The prophet Zephaniah must have been thrilled when he wrote about Jerusalem (and about all who belong to the coming King!), *"Sing, O Daughter of Zion, shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! ...The* ***Lord your God is with you****, he is mighty to save. He will take* ***great delight in you****, he will quiet you with his love, he will* ***rejoice over you with singing"*** (Zephaniah 3:14,17).

That promise yet to be fulfilled is plenty of reason to sing and shout! There *are* no promises that He will withhold from those who love Him and are called His own!

Much-Afraid still focuses with shame on her own shortcomings and weaknesses — her "bedraggled and muddy condition". She still hasn't realized the *love* which filters the way the Shepherd sees her.

Are *you* bogged down by the pain of past regret and failures? Cry out now to Jesus for a *passion* for Him and for that which He yearns to bring about in and through you! He's viewing you with eyes of grace because He knows already what He can accomplish in your heart as you continue to yield to His will.

- Have you forgotten your Shepherd's joy in you even as you struggle to put one foot of faith in front of the other? Pause here to refresh your passion in the Person of Jesus your Lord. Breathe in once again His intense love for you, even as weak as you might see yourself.

- What "crooked feet" from your past keep you from seeing yourself with His eyes of love? Are you willing to place these regrets and pain at the foot of His Cross so that you can be made whole and new in Him?

25. "O Shepherd," exclaimed Much-Afraid...; 26. Again he smiled...; 27. Poor Much-Afraid...; 28. "Much-Afraid," said he very gently...

How do you respond when a brother or sister in Jesus who is close to you speaks with you about an area in which you're stumbling? Before you jump all over that person and hotly defend yourself, remember this: *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend"*

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

(Proverbs 27:6, KJV), and *"Better open rebuke than hidden love"* (Proverbs 27:5).

It takes loving courage to approach someone you care about in order to help them make a "course correction" in their journey — a change from an area of darkness to a step of light. Yet in this "anything goes" culture, any correction is seen as "judgmental" or "intolerant".

But note Paul's call to his younger protegé Timothy to proclaim God's Word in order to *"convict, censure and exhort with unfailing patience and with teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:2). Righteousness is right even if it's painful to receive! (And Paul also reminds Timothy to walk the talk himself so that no charge of hypocrisy can be leveled at him!)

Surely we're living in a time in which people "cater to their passions" and stop listening to the truth. But ignorance is no excuse before our Father! A true friend in Jesus sees beyond the present moment of discomfort to redirect his brother or sister toward the One Whose way brings life, peace and joy.

Much-Afraid "flushed painfully" because she knew the Shepherd had noticed her slipping and stumbling. He never denied that she indeed had "stains and defilements". But his gentle response emanated from a heart that loved her enough to *confront the truth* of her present condition. Then He steered her to the greater goal that lay ahead, being *with Him* and skipping and leaping on the High Places.

Sue: I can get so caught up in doing work that I forget that the Kingdom of God is *people* who are more important than tasks. When Mike or others close to me have confronted me with correction, I've sometimes reacted as though they'd called me a failure (which wasn't the case at all!). But they've seen through a blind spot and loved me enough to point out that area to help me find the joy of walking in a way that pleases our Father. And from our Father's perspective, we haven't "failed"; we've just slipped by a truth that He's wanted to correct.

As you pray for your family in Jesus, remember that *you* may be the heart and mouth that our Lord chooses to use as His messenger of loving course correction!

- When was the last time someone who cared about you offered a "course correction" for your life to help guide you back into righteousness in a particular area?

- When was the last time you resonded to the Spirit's nudge and confronted with a right heart a brother or sister in sin?

- How do you react when someone does make known an area in which you've strayed off the path of righteous living? Are you willing to ask forgiveness for those you've "jumped" when they've spoken to you out of loving concern?

29. "Yes," said Much-Afraid thankfully...; 30. By this time the mist...; 31. "Did you really think"...; 32. She looked at him sorrowfully...

What calm and peace permeates our hearts when we turn with humility to the Lamb Who so loves us! Much-Afraid chose to rest and rejoice in the Shepherd's presence, noticing and basking in the sparkling reflection of the dripping leaves. She'd finally stopped being consumed by the tyranny of self that had blinded her to the beauty around her.

She realized that doubting Him had led to her downward spiral of listening to, then believing, the deceptive voices of Resentment and the others. The Shepherd's quiet question to her about His intervention could be summed up by King David:

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

The Lord supports all who fall and lifts up all who are bent over... The Lord is close to all who call on him, to all who sincerely call on him. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The Lord protects all who love him, but all the wicked he destroys (Psalm 145:14,18-20, CJB).

See your circumstances with the eyes of your spirit! The Shepherd is pointing you forward in hope, lifting the weight of your daily burdens as you trust that you're on the path He's set before you. When you begin to doubt that His sovereign power and love are able to keep you from straying without warning, those demonic voices are sure to once again begin their insidious whispering.

When the mist starts to encompass you, think of yourself as a small child during the night. Those fears that beset you when your bedroom light was off were just an illusion. When Dad turned the light on, you realized you really had been safe all along. And when you turn your heart away from the besetting voices and focus on the Light, your dragon-like trials will lose their teeth.

- Do you really believe in your heart that our Shepherd won't let you go astray without first warning you? What sort of warnings do you think He's referring to?

- What experience can you relate in which you purposely ignored warnings and chose to stray off His path of right living? What turned you back to following His way?

33. "You had better become a singer"...; 34. She looked at him earnestly...; 35. "I never could have managed"...

Sue: Mike and I have been so blessed along our journey to have loadbearing relationships in which we were free to speak with love into each other's lives. Passing through painful valleys with others who are committed to one-anothering deepens our trust in His faithfulness to set us back on the right path again.

When you've tasted some of life's bitter waters and found healing at the hands of companions He's drawn alongside you for a specific season, you're equipped to pass along the fruit of those relationships with others.

Years ago, the so-called "Shepherding Movement" tore the spiritual confidence of many. Self-determined "shepherds" put themselves in authority over individuals and exercised control in such a way that they fulfilled Much-Afraid's earlier fear: They *did* "drag people along without caring how they felt" as human beings and as followers of Jesus.

This highhanded approach of control did grave injustice to the biblical role of true elders called by our Father to lead as shepherds with wisdom and compassion for the sheep. By the time true shepherds reach spiritual maturity, they themselves have experienced the tender mercies of our Father in their own missteps. They've been equipped by His grace to come alongside the faltering with our Father's heart.

Much-Afraid was grateful that her companions weren't just following "the commandment which you have given them", but were truly eager to help her reach the High Places. What a difference between those who may occupy space around you in a congregational setting but never invite you into their homes, and those who are committed as extended spiritual family in Jesus with you! The former are positional relationships because you happen to be at the same place doing the same thing. But the latter have been threaded into your life fabric by the Spirit!

Committed family in Jesus rejoice with each other as lives are changed from worldliness to Christ-likeness. They understand the mutual encouragement and loving

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

responsibility to help each other press on to the High Places of Christ's character.

Maybe you feel that you don't have time to commit to come alongside a few others as extended spiritual family. Ask our Lord for His heart and the discernment to recognize those He does want you joined with in a deeper way. As you follow His lead as a family, He'll help you reprioritize your activities and hours to align with His purposes.

- Who are the companions in your life who are helping you to further reflect the character of Jesus? Who are you helping to walk more boldly along the Shepherd's path?

- Have you ever been spiritually abused by someone who misused your trust? How did that experience affect subsequent relationships?

36. As she finished speaking...; 37. They were sitting apart...; 38. There was something almost indescribably majestic...

No wonder Sorrow and Suffering are laughing at this point! They fully understand that which Much-Afraid is just beginning to grasp: As the young woman decides to turn from her doubts and unbelief, she finds ever-more secure footing in the Shepherd's faithfulness and power! The limping little soldier is learning that yielded willingness is key to a growing maturity that can pierce mists and shadows.

Only a pilgrim who has been tried and tested yet has responded with a yielded heart can make the leap from baleful resignation over circumstances to *joyful gratefulness for His faithfulness*! We may not have control over the things that come at us, but we *can* develop our Lord's perspective on them.

Once again the Book of Psalms puts into words the attitude our Father is trying to develop in us through our trials:

> *Before I was humbled I used to go astray; but now I observe your word. You **are good**, and you **do good**; teach me your laws....It was for **my good** that I have been humbled; it was so that I would learn your laws* (Psalm119:67,68,71).

- The Psalmist understands the basic goodness of God in both His Person and His ways, even when He humbles us. Recount a situation in which you were humbled for your good.

- In what ways was your character changed because of this humbling circumstance?

39. The Shepherd watched them...; 40. Sorrow and Suffering dropped the veils...; 41. The laughter died out...; 42. She looked at him...

It's all too easy to *say* that you love Jesus, yet live in a way that sets up a personal defense against actually *trusting* Him. Trust means that you *know* Him in your spirit, and that *He* knows *you*. You and He are intricately connected in love, the devoted self-sacrifice that willingly yields to His will and purposes just as Jesus does with His Father.

Keeping one foot in the camp of approval by others as an insurance policy against a new path to which He may be calling you is *not* trust! Our prophetic forebears who loved and served God didn't ask to be set apart to proclaim His messages. But they yielded to His will and were found faithful to follow through as His heart and mouth — usually at great personal cost!

The question the Shepherd poses to Much-Afraid as to whether her love is willing to trust Him completely is a poignant

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

query for each of us. *He* knows that His arms can uphold you in every trial, but are *you* willing to trust that? Much-Afraid responds self-deprecatingly about her *desire* to love, even with her "cold little heart." But she already knew that his question was leading to the reality of a new test coming her way. She was already fearfully anticipating the trial to come more than she was focusing on the faithful Shepherd standing with her.

- Offer evidence from your own life choices that you understand the difference between saying you love God and actually following Him in trust.

- Who would be the people from whom you'd most likely seek approval before stepping out in faith to follow the Shepherd? Do their lives reflect the victory of righteousness and answered prayer? Or, are they those who are reluctant to leave fruitlessness behind?

43. "Would you be willing to trust me"...; 44. She looked at him...; 45. "O Shepherd," she implored...

Much-Afraid's rock-solid trust that the Shepherd cannot lie is a firm foundation for her willingness (if not eagerness) to undergo whatever is necessary to reach the High Places. She has endured so much up to this point, and can repeat in her heart with the same conviction as the psalmist:

> *I will **go on walking** in the presence of the Lord in the lands of the living. I will **keep on trusting** even when I say, "I am utterly miserable," even when, in my panic, I declare, "Everything human is deceptive"* (Psalm 116:9-11).

Sue: I can identify with Much-Afraid's doubts at times. I *know* Whom I've believed, but I also know my own frailties. How grateful I am that my Savior is so willing to forgive my weaknesses when I call upon Him in trust! Many times I've camped on promises such as these:

> *"Because [she] loves me, I will rescue [her]; because [she] knows my name, I will protect [her]. [She] will call on me and I will answer [her]. I will be with [her] when [she] is in trouble"* (Psalm 91;14,15).

(Sometimes it's helpful to put *yourself* into those promises, even inserting your own name, just to make sure you know He's speaking to you!)

- Through what particular test might the Shepherd pass you that might cause you to doubt that it came from Him?

- Have you ever undergone a test from our Lord that others said couldn't have come from Him? How did you respond while you were going through it? What change came about in you to confirm in your heart that this trial was indeed intended by our Father to produce righteous fruit in your character?

46. He said nothing...; 47. It was then her turn...; 48. Suddenly she burst into a passion of weeping...

Much-Afraid's response to the profound thought that she might truly be deceived by the Shepherd evokes a flood of passionate tears. She didn't pause to weigh the pros and cons of loving and serving the Shepherd. Instead, her heart propelled her to trust Him no matter what circumstances confronted her.

She was willing to be deceived, if that were possible. Her very existence depended

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

on loving Him . She was no longer looking for His *hand* to meet her needs. She looked straight into His *face*, declaring her whole life to be His. As with the young shepherd David, she could declare with passion, *"I love you, Lord, my strength,...my Rock, my fortress and deliverer, my God, my Rock in whom I find shelter, my shield, the power that saves me, my stronghold"* (Psalm 18:1,2).

That's the kind of loving trust that places one foot in front of the other, regardless of where the path leads!

- If your heart and spirit trust Jesus, can you ever "lose Him"?

- When have you ever been deceived by the enemy into thinking that you've lost Jesus' love? How was your trust in His love restored?

49. He laid his hands on her head...; 50. Much-Afraid picked up a little icy-cold pebble...

Another pebble, this one icy-cold, joins the other stones of remembrance in Much-Afraid's small bag. She knows that the next test will be the most severe yet, even from the hand of the One most tender.

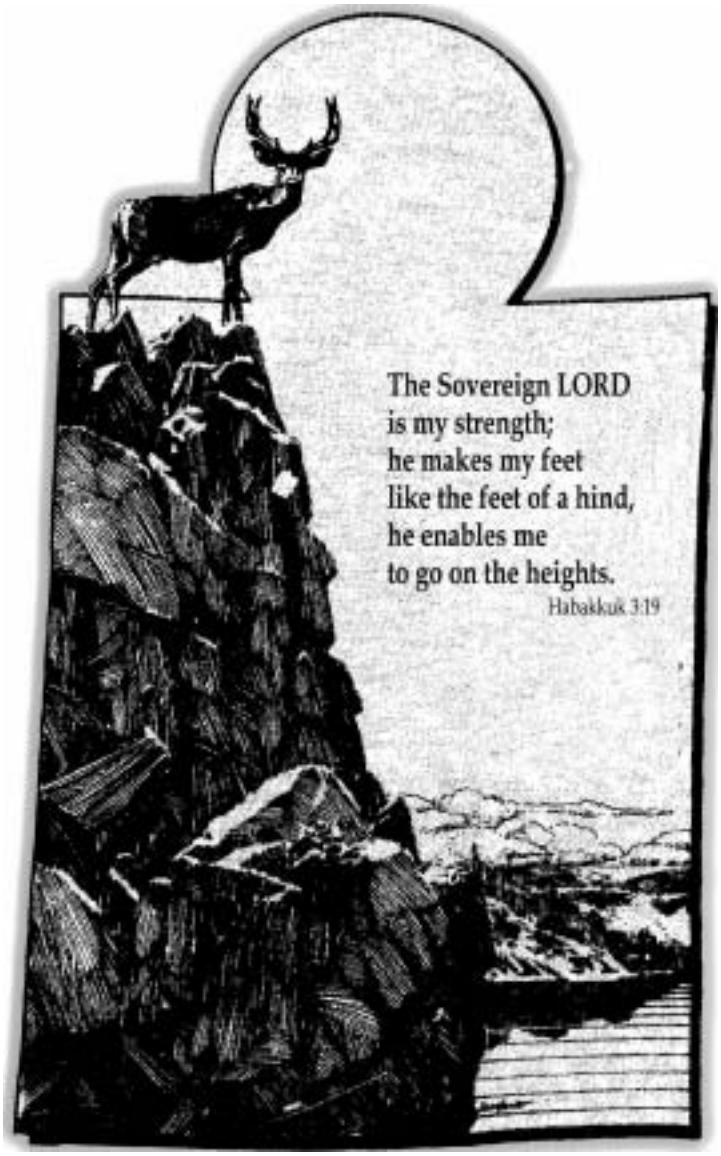
Perhaps you've encountered people who declare that tests and trials come only from Satan, that God doesn't test "New Testament saints." (That's one of many "false gospels" abounding in the Western church in particular.) The apostle Peter, a man who tasted the cup of suffering often, would differ with that concept. He assures us that our Father tests the gold of our trust in order to prove that it's genuine and praiseworthy, fit for the King. (See 1 Peter 1:6,7.)

Our Lord has proven Himself to be faithful in every custom-tailored trial we've ever encountered. Don't forget the lessons you've learned through each season of suffering. These have been opportunities to grow in perseverance, character, and especially, hope. It's *our* hope that, as you prepare yourself for whatever comes next to strengthen your love and trust, you will be quick to cry out to our Shepherd to sustain you through it until that which He needs to accomplish in and through you is fulfilled!

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 13 *In the Valley of Loss*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

Mike: With this chapter something wonderful becomes solidified in our journey to the High Places. I've been waiting for the opportunity to comment on this chapter since we began writing the series. The Valley of Loss has such significance to anyone who wants to embrace everything the relationship with our Lord requires. You cannot go beyond this point to the High Place without a complete death to, or loss of, everything you once were.

To reach the end of this chapter will require some deep soul-searching on your part. Don't try to rush through it. Stop and take to heart the issues that Much-Afraid faces, and put yourself in her place.

Chapter 13 *In the Valley of Loss*

1. The mist had cleared from the mountains...

We are told, "The path still led them along the side of the mountain rather than upward..." If you have matured to some degree in your walk with our Lord, you have come to realize that God seldom changes the *conditions* about which we pray without first changing *us*.

Facing arduous or impossible circumstances and situations is the "Classroom of Increasing Trust in our Lord." He uses difficulties to drive us closer in dependence on Him so that we may all the more trust *in* Him. He wants our trust to be a *lifestyle*, not a visit! King David assures us from his own experience, *"Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him and He will act"* (Psalm 37:5).

To Much-Afraid, departing the higher reaches of the mountain was like having to go down to Egypt again. What "Egypt" experiences have *you* found yourself facing yet again?

Perhaps you're familiar with this anecdote before. It's worth repeating because it furnishes insight into our Father's way of developing our character into that of Jesus:

> A woman visited a godly elder and asked him to pray that she would have more patience. As the older man put his hand on her shoulder he prayed, "Lord, give this woman trials and tribulations that she must pass through..." She interrupted him, "Wait! I asked you to pray for *patience*." "Daughter," he replied firmly, "you can never learn patience *unless* you go through trials and tribulation."

- When you cry out to our Lord during difficult or impossible circumstances, is your plea only that He change your painful predicament? Or, do you strongly consider that He might be wanting to deepen something in your character and trust?

- Describe an episode in your life when things finally seemed to be going well — then POW! An even greater trial faced you. How did you respond to the new challenge?

2. All three halted and looked...; 3. Much-Afraid stood and stared...; 4. Now instead of that...

It isn't unlike our Lord to bring you to points in your life that appear increasingly *more* difficult and impossible. That simple description of what Much-Afraid was facing paints a graphic picture: "even higher than the Precipice of Injury." Hey! That Precipice of Injury was one painful experience itself!

Mike: Sue and I have found during our 27 years of following Jesus that our pilgrimage is like an upward spiral. At different times along the journey it seems like you are going through the same circumstances all over again. Your pilgrimage upward has been more like a spiral than a straight path. You are dealing with some of the same issues, but at a more mature level.

You need to be careful that when the circumstances seem even more difficult, you don't begin to listen to the voices that tell

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

you that you have *gained nothing* in your pilgrimage. Maybe you sigh painfully inward, thinking that you are right back where you started, that you're no more Christlike now than way back when you first encountered Him. That's what briefly occurred to Much-Afraid as she realized they had to descend into that deep valley, "just as though they had never made a start so long ago and endured so many difficulties and tests."

You may cave in to despair if you don't recognize that the character qualities of Jesus that our Father desires to see developed in His children are accomplished over a *series* of steps and not all at once. In other words, as you repeat similar difficult circumstances in your life, you are given additional opportunity to cultivate a particular character quality. For instance, you seldom develop steadfast, unshakable love or trust in just one lesson!

In the chapters we've discussed so far, Much-Afraid has faced recurring issues. Will she continue to trust the Shepherd? Can she persistently take bitter or fearful thoughts captive? As Much-Afraid and her companions stared down into the Valley of Loss, she was experiencing the "sharpest and keenest test which she had encountered on the journey." Had everything else been a failure? Not at all! She, like all of us, are brought to tests so that the Shepherd can increase our trust in Him through unflagging dependence on His faithfulness.

Many years ago Sue and I used to backpack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. At the end of an 8-day trip Sue had gotten violently ill from tainted water, so bad that she couldn't carry her pack. On our last night I studied the map and saw how we could cut off considerable distance by bushwhacking across a ridge. Then, by following a river, we would meet the main trail.

Everybody agreed with my idea, so the next morning we crossed the ridge and began to follow the river. After three trudging hours of following the river in what I had estimated should take no more than 30 minutes, we stopped to examine the map again. To my dismay (and this brought no joy to sick Sue), we were following a *fork* of the river, not the main river. An hour later we finally stumbled upon the main trail.

How does this story apply to our journey? You can't bushwhack from one spiral to another. There are *no shortcuts* to spiritual maturity! God has His ways of developing the character of His Son Jesus in you. You need to discern what it is that the Shepherd seeks to accomplish in you, just as Much-Afraid was forced to do.

All along the way, as she has learned the Shepherd's carefully chosen lessons, Much-Afraid underwent her altar experiences. Then she could pick up another stone of remembrance. But in order to press on to the next lesson, she had to follow the path the Shepherd set. It was necessary that she leave behind two other options: to give up, or to bushwhack straight up the mountain.

- What spiral aspect of your life has been a repeat circumstance?

- What particular character trait has been deepened into greater Christ-likeness as you have confronted tests of a repetitive nature?

- When have you tried to circumvent a painful test by bushwhacking in your own strength? What did you learn from your mistakes?

5. As she looked down...; 6. For one black, awful moment...; 7. During that awful moment or two...

Here is a tested and true rule-of-thumb:

If you are going to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, you WILL have times of self-doubt.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Don't let yourself feel as though there is something wrong with you. If you intend to press on in your journey to all our Father desires in your life, you will have your *"Gethsemane experiences"*. These are our Father's way of solidifying your trust in Him: *"Not my will, but yours be done."*

Often these experiences separate the Christian *in name only* from the *follower of Jesus*. Only a follower will ever be able to answer Much-Afraid's question, "How could one follow a person who asked so much, who demanded such impossible things, who took away everything?" This is a very appropriate question when you are about to enter the Valley of Loss.

If you who have been trapped into seeking the acceptance and affirmation of others, this part of the journey is going to be all the more painful. On the other hand, if you are bent on pleasing our Lord with every step of obedience, then you understand this statement: "She had been following this strange path with her two companions as guides simply because it was the *Shepherd's choice for her*."

God's call to obedience is usually simple. He provides the barest of information and calls for you to trust and follow through. Too many who, when challenged to explain where and why they are going on the journey, provide more explanation through their own rationale than that which God told them. When you rationalize your obedience, something dies inside you. You're more likely to give up.

This is why it is important to stay within the restrictions the apostle Paul sets: *"Do not go beyond what [God says]"* (1 Corinthians 4:6b). Our rationale tends to divorce us from intimacy with our Lord. Somehow, when we go beyond what He says or has written, we set ourselves *above* Him believing that we have to justify our obedience. At that point we are no longer followers but self-determiners.

We are told that Much-Afraid looked into "an abyss of horror, into an existence in which there was no Shepherd to follow or to trust or to love." Can you feel the empty pit in her stomach as these thoughts went through her head? I am reminded of a passage in Psalms that has brought me to tears on many occasions. The Shepherd-King had been confronted about his sin with Bathsheba and was brought to conviction. His pain in violating His Lord was so intense that he sobbed, *"Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me"* (Psalm 51:11). What a piercing concern to be assailed with! But David's relationship with, and trust in, his Lord is solid. In the next breath he can implore, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me"* (v.12).

Sue: You may have felt at some point in your life that you have failed God. After I've wallowed for a while in self-pity or depression, I generally find myself sobbing to my Father because I grieve that I've "let Him down." Yet His ever-present Spirit consoles, encourages and shows me the light of His way — the path of loving obedience that leads to peace and acceptance with joy.

Try to picture yourself as Peter after he denied Christ. Think of what three years of walking with Jesus must have been like for him. Then, in light of all that loving companionship with Jesus, you deny Him. Remember, the loving restoration of Peter in John 21:15-19 is offered to all of us.

- Have you ever experienced a time in which you felt that you were right back where you started in your walk with Jesus? How did you get out of that pit?

- Are you a person who has to seek affirmation from other people to fan your self-worth? Have you found yourself trying to explain more about your steps of obedience than God has revealed to you? How did you feel afterward?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

8. "Shepherd," she shrieked...

The painful thought of living without Jesus is what many of us need to jolt us out of our complacency. This is more easily understood by those who understand *salvation as a pilgrimage* to be received at the Judgment Throne when your name is proclaimed to the hosts of heaven.

Our Father already knows our hearts and the intensity of our love for Him. But there are times that we ourselves need to know our hearts, and He has just the right tests to reveal to us if He is our all in all. King Hezekiah of old had demonstrated his trust in the God of Israel to deliver them from a powerful enemy. But he would then face a test earmarked for him — whether he could stay humble in all circumstances.

Envoys had been sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask the king about his earlier miraculous healing. We're told that ***"God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart"*** (2 Chronicles 31:31) — and what was evident in his heart was pride. And the son born to him during those fateful years after his healing would set a new standard in doing evil in God's sight.

Tests are sent to us by our Father to help us determine if our trust is the genuine article or just a self-centered appeasement through religious practices. So vital is our need for trials to refine our trust that the apostle Peter offers an entire discourse on the topic:

:

Through trusting, you are being protected by God's power for a deliverance ready to be revealed at the Last Time. Rejoice in this, even though for a little while you may have to ***experience grief in various trials***. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The ***purpose of these trials*** is so that your ***trust's genuineness***, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be ***judged worthy*** of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus the Messiah (1 Peter 1:5-7)

If we are to press on and truly follow the Shepherd of our souls, each of us must come to the same ecstatic conclusion as Much-Afraid: "You may *do anything*, Shepherd. You may *ask anything* — only *don't* let me *turn back*. O my Lord, *don't* let me *leave you*."

Sue: Do you ever cry out in despair after heartrending intercession seems to have gone unheard? A couple years ago that was a situation in which I found myself. My heart's desire for my Father to *do something* was so intense that I spent hours kneebound in prayer.

When the circumstance about which I was praying ended far differently than I had hoped for, my Father was still the Solid Rock on which I was standing. I learned once again that it was far more important to keep seeking His face — His unchanging, loving, all-powerful presence — than to focus on His hand and what He might do. And perhaps, just out of sight of my faith, He was in the midst of that painful situation as well.

- Don't be surprised when our Father tests you. If you are a parent, you frequently want to know what is on the hearts and minds of your children. You want feedback to see what your children are learning from your parenting. What has your Father learned about your heart and thoughts toward Him?

- How do you respond when you sense a separation from your Lord? (As Much-Afraid realized, He is constant; it's we who move in our trust.)

9. He lifted her up...; 10. "It is no less true...

When God delays that which He has promised, it hurts. As the proverb affirms, hope deferred makes the heart sick. This is

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

where our faith is stretched. The list of heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11 defines what that relational weld to our Lord looks like:

*"Trusting is **being confident** of what we hope for, **convinced** about things we do not see"* (v. 1);

*"Without **trusting** it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God, because whoever approaches him **must trust** that he does exist and that he becomes a Rewarder to those who **seek him out**"* (v. 6).

*"All these people **kept on trusting** until they died, without receiving what had been promised; They had only seen it and welcomed it from a distance, while acknowledging that they were **aliens and temporary residents** on the earth"* (v. 13).

Those who keep pressing on in trust earnestly seek Him out, even if all they've cried out for has yet to be fulfilled. That's all part of being "strangers" here on earth, subduing our fleshly desires and refusing to be rooted in the world's values and system.

When Sue and I moved back to Colorado Springs into this senior mobile home park, it was the last place on earth we wanted to be. The last time we lived in this city, a clergyman from one of the larger congregations read *Prodigal Church* and did everything he could to destroy our ministry. But we moved back here in response to God's direction to return. As our Ryder truck entered the city limits, the Holy Spirit quickened into my spirit this message: "The religious establishment here is going to come down soon. Who will be here to tell the people the truth?" I then replied, "We will."

Much-Afraid is told by the Shepherd, "This is the way, walk ye in it", whether she turns to the right or to the left. This passage has significance for Sue and me. Upon our arrival back from Israel 10 years ago, our spiritual father, Frank Murray, came to us with a prophetic passage: *"Although **the Lord** gives you the **bread of adversity** and the **water of affliction**, your **teachers** will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will **see them**. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will **hear a voice** behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it'"* (Isaiah 30:20,21).

Are adversity and affliction strangers to those who hear their Shepherd's voice? Not at all. In fact, these come from His hand to deepen our trust! Those tests become our teachers to reveal His utter faithfulness.

- How would you like to have been Moses? It took 10 plagues before God released him and his people to fulfill God's purposes. What delays are happening in your life to keep you from pursuing your heart's desire? How are you responding to these barriers?

11. He paused for a moment...; 12. She was still clinging to Him..

The Shepherd asks Much-Afraid, "Will you suffer yourself to *lose* or *be deprived* of all that you have gained on this journey to the High Places?" This question is especially poignant for those who still see their lives in terms of what they *have* in this world, rather than in where they are *going*. James warns us not to align our priorities with those of the world: *"You **adulterous** people, don't you know that **friendship with the world** is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a **friend of the world** becomes an enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

Have you noticed that the way down into the Valley of Loss is the **"path of forgiveness"**? Forgiveness of *everyone* and of *everything* they have done is the only way you can press on to what the Shepherd is calling you to.

At the end of Jesus' discourse on forgiveness in Matthew, chapter 18, He underscores the prison of torment that your unforgiveness keeps you in: *"In anger his master **turned him over to the jailers** until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat **each of you** unless you **forgive your brother from your heart**"* (vv. 34,35).

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Our Father cannot tolerate unforgiveness in His presence. But He loves you so much that He'll do whatever is necessary to turn your heart away from the soulish satisfaction of bitterness so that you will forgive from your heart, Your decision to forgive then frees His Spirit to flow healing streams over those painful memories and remove the sting from them.

We are told back in the Valley of Humiliation that Much-Afraid cringed whenever she was in the presence of her Fearing relatives. If you empathize with her, there are probably some particular people in your own life whose memory elicits strong emotions such as hurt, fear, anger, shame. These past few months our Lord has prompted Mike and me to pray blessing on some specific individuals whose last contact was under unpleasant circumstances. How faithfully He has been at work behind the scenes since then!

Just last week we had the opportunity through a book order to renew contact with a man we'd not seen for several years. It was definitely a ***"Joseph moment"*** of timing and receptivity, for that conversation revealed that great changes had occurred in all of us through the healing power of Jesus! We and he were both able to express gratefulness for the roles we'd played in each other's lives "back then" that had ripened into much fruit today.

Are you familiar with "Joseph moments"? The favored son of Jacob had been cruelly abandoned by his brothers and sold into Egyptian slavery. But through God's intervention and Joseph's steadfast trust in Him, the young man came to power.

Before he chose to reveal his identity to his starving brothers, Joseph needed to know in his heart that they had changed. When that time came, he welcomed them with open arms as their brother. You, too, must wait for the appropriate time to renew relationships, when our Father has tilled the soil of your and their hearts to be receptive and lifegiving.

Aren't you grateful that our Lord isn't stagnant in regard to other people's lives? Sometimes we get so focused on our little ring in His pond that we forget that He is rippling through the lives of others as well! Any grievance you're lugging about can be a smoldering torch that will flare as an "enemy of Love" on your journey. He'll make sure that it explodes into a conflagration that can't be missed until you confront your sin and extinguish it through forgiveness from your heart.

Prepare your heart and spirit *now* for those unexpected contacts with people from your past. If He's revealing some particular individuals who don't evoke love in your heart, ask His forgiveness for that darkness in you. Purpose to forgive that person *from your heart,* and then begin to *pray blessing* from our Lord for him or her.

This may *not* be a receptive time for you to initiate contact, but as you pray with a clean heart and right motive, our Father can release the circumstances and encounters into that person's life to prompt changes. You can be sure that our Father will let you know when your "Joseph moment" is ripe for restoration!

A word about forgiveness. Don't be presumptuous and go to someone who you think has offended you and say, "I forgive you." He or she may not even be aware that they've done anything to upset or hurt you! Rather than stitching up a wound, you may deepen an existing one or create a fresh gash by magnanimously "extending forgiveness" to a person who doesn't even believe that he or she has done you wrong.

Instead, follow Jesus's command. Forgive *in* and *from your heart*, just between you and God. We've heard erroneous teaching that tells you to wait until the perceived offender comes to you asking (begging?) you to forgive them. Not only is that prideful arrogance at its worst, but it violates Scripture! Neither the stoners of Stephen nor the tormenters who crucified Jesus ASKED for forgiveness. Rather, our Lord and His faithful disciple pleaded with our Father to FORGIVE their persecutors.

Jesus was very specific when taught His disciples to pray, *"Forgive us our trespasses as we **have already forgiven** those who trespass against us"* (Matthew 6:12). You forgive in and from your heart because that is where *your healing* will take place — from God's hand! You can't conjure up self-healing, but He hasn't called you to, either. As you purpose to forgive in and from your heart, He will seal that wound with a scar that mirrors that of Jesus' scars. And you will then be equipped to minister from your heart a testimony of healing to others who need to forgive.

IF your offender does ask you for forgiveness, you will have already forgiven him/her in your heart. You will be prepared in all truth to offer reconciliation and restoration in that relationship.

At this point in the journey it is critical that you be clean with everyone. Is there someone you recall who stirs flickers (or even flames) of bitterness or resentment in you? Choose to forgive them **now** from your heart, and begin to pray God's blessings for them whenever they come to mind. You'll find, as so many have, that your prayers to *bless them* will heal your own heart. This is the only way you can go down the path of forgiveness into the Valley of Loss.

Much-Afraid quotes the wonderfully endearing words of Ruth to Naomi. If you have read our article, *"The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation"*, you know that to *live in Covenant* with our Lord means to *live in union* with Him.

Isn't this the basis of the Parable of the Vine that Jesus relates in John 15:1-17? He speaks of such an intimate attachment that without that union, we cannot bear *any* fruit for Him. Since our Father will not forgive anyone who does not forgive, abiding in the Vine is impossible for those who remain bitter.

- How would you respond if someone from your past who you hoped would forget you ever lived suddenly made contact with you? Would your attitude as well as conversation reflect that you are now a follower of Jesus?

- Are you able to picture the vast incongruity of the grievance you feel justified holding on to when the King of the universe has paid the price of His faultless life for all the sin of mankind? How does that question make you feel?

- If you are truly attached to the Vine, describe your fruit-bearing for Jesus at this stage of your life journey.

13. So another altar was built on top of the descent...

The altars we make upon which we sacrifice something to our Lord should never be taken lightly. Not only do they indicate our true repentance — that we have turned away from sin to God — they are helpful reminders as we teach others the way to the High Places.

This is what King David proclaims in Psalm 32. Only after he laid his own sins on the altar of repentance would he then be able to teach others: *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you"* (v.8).

The "death to self" of the altar experience is another point at which our Lord replaces the rotted part of our old nature with the pure beauty of that part of His character. That element of our sin nature is what is being consumed on the altar, and the new slice of godliness is represented in the pebble that is popped into our hearts.

After Much-Afraid tends to her own altar of repentance, she experiences one of the most joyously exhilarating parts of her trip. Much-Afraid "herself sang the last two verses, and her heart was so full of joy..." True joy emanates from complete repentance and produces grateful worship of our Lord. As the Canticle states, a "burst of rapture"

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

lights up your soul to follow our Shepherd with ever greater clarity and hope.

- Have you ever experienced a near-death situation? How did you feel during it? How did that close call subsequently affect your life?

- If our Lord were to end your earthly life tonight, what would you have left undone? Would you wish in your heart that He'd wait until you had [fill in the blank] ?

14. Considering how steep it was...; 15. Other desires might clamor...

After you've forgiven others from your heart and repented with *"clean hands and pure heart,"* your whole surroundings seem to change. What once appeared terrifying is now easy because of your unwavering desire to please the Shepherd. Isn't it amazing what love will do to motivate us?

Consider Much-Afraid's new resolve to "love the Shepherd and to do what he tells me." It's so important that love for our Lord be our motivation to obey Him. Otherwise, obedience becomes the goal rather than love being evidenced by His work in and through us. Revisit Stipulation #4 for the Father to ratify the Covenant with you in *"The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation."* How forceful and determined are you in your relationship with the Lord?

Are you past the point in the pilgrimage where you are no longer concerned with what He will *do* for you? Have you found yourself only concerned with Him and His presence in your life?

Only when you key in on walking in obedient trust because of your love for Him can you truly be concerned with the eternal outcome of others around you. Your love for God compels you to want others to experience the same wonder.

Much-Afraid desired with her whole will to *please* the Shepherd. Have you given much thought to how pleased our Lord is when you walk according to His purposes? Sadly, some confuse *pleasing* God with trying to *earn* His acceptance. There is nothing we could do to earn our Father's love. However, *pleasing* Him is a wonderful expression of gratefulness for His loving Lordship in our lives.

Much-Afraid next has a wonderful revelation that is powerful and relative for any pilgrim to the High Places to grasp. We are told, "All the time it is *suffering* to love and *sorrow* to love." An old adage agrees: "Those you love the most will hurt you the most." Suffering and hurt are both a part of loving someone.

You can go through life guarding yourself against further hurt by those you love, and they'll never feel as though they're of any value to you. Or, you can place every hurt on an altar of repentance for your bitterness, and ask our Lord to help you love even more. Only by casting off all hindrances to love can you keep your relationships growing in loving union. Without that freedom to love without reserve, you drive in emotional wedges that will eventually destroy those relationships.

There is a song we both like that captures our Lord's desire for personal intimacy with us. It is entitled, "More"

More than the water I love the Fountain
More than the warmth I love the Flame
More than green pastures I love the Shepherd
More than my life I love Your Name
So here I am take my life and glorify Your Name

More than love I want the Lover
More than the gift I want the Giver
More than the healing I want the Healer
More than this song You want the singer
So here I am, take my life, and glorify Your Name

by J.R Vassar, © 1999 Curiosly Strong Music

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

• When you think about heaven or hell, do you think in terms of getting people 'saved", or with helping them experience grateful relational intimacy with our Father and His Son, Jesus?

• Followers of Jesus are called to obey His commands. Which commands is He referring to? How would you know if your life was pleasing to our Father?

16. The next surprising thing...17. Strange enough...; 18. Also, they sang continually...

The Valley of Loss could as accurately be described as "The Valley of Heavenly Peace." In order to have made it this far, a lot of baggage has had to be left behind. But not only have you had to discard that which was holding you back in your devotion to Jesus, you've also needed to discover a whole new way of relating to Him! Isn't this what Jesus is speaking of when He tell us, *"If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever **loses his life for me** will find it"* (Matthew 16:24,25)?

People who have followed Jesus to the High Places have seen their concern for others grow in leaps and bounds. Think of this as a proverb:

The more you die to yourself,
the more you're able to know
and understand others personally;
and meet their needs
as Jesus would meet them.

In this part of the Canticle we rejoice in the wonder of being attached to the Vine, and of the Beloved's work to prepare His tree to bear much fruit: "And this will be — when all of me is *pruned* and *purged* with fire. And where thy choicest fruit tree grows, *Thy pruning knife now wield*."

Cutting away the selfish carnal nature is painful, even when done by those the Shepherd has put in our lives. These "pruning instruments" have the right and the responsibility to expose those areas of our hearts that are unlike Jesus. Yet when your heart is at peace, neither sorrow nor suffering will disrupt your contentment.

Much-Afraid's presence in the Valley of Loss hasn't changed but she has, to the extent that her companions now evoke joy in her. She was learning that being at rest in the Shepherd's will is far more important to her spiritual growth than struggling to reach an outcome.

• How well do you really know those who are close to you? Do they feel comfortable revealing their inner self to you?

• Are you willing to forsake any self-will or preference as far as it concerns God's will for you? How hard is it for you to be content?

19. It is true...; 20. All this seemed a little strange...

You'll know you have true peace when you don't care *where* our Lord is leading you, as long as *He* is leading. But make sure you don't "spiritualize" His leadership. Our Lord generally puts people in our lives who have been given authority of some sort over us to teach us the freedom and boundaries of godly living. They are His instruments of refinement! Don't announce that you're walking in obedient trust in Jesus if you rebel against your husband, father or boss!

So many of us are steeped in an "outcome-based" world system. But in your journey with Jesus, you don't get points for fin-

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

ishing your race quickly. It's not a competition against others, but a lifelong trip of casting off the old and putting on the new.

The *process* of your growth in Christ-likeness impacts so many others around you. Whereas they knew you as [selfish, lazy, hot-tempered, irritable], you are now [kind, gentle, helpful, serving]. When others see such amazing changes and you give testimony to the intervention of Jesus in your life, He gets the praise and the glory!

Changes in character get noticed!

Dorothy, in "The Wizard of Oz", epitomizes the worldly viewpoint: She couldn't wait for the yellow brick road to get her to the destination. Winnie the Pooh, on the other hand, sees his life journey as a chance to taste the honey and smell the flowers. Do you see the difference? True repentance brings such peace that worldly concerns and outcomes lose their hold on us.

Remember, Jesus is Immanuel, *"God with us."* His presence through your repentance and desire to live righteously will always produce love, peace, joy, and heartfelt exuberant worship.

- Where is your mind most often throughout the day? In the past? In the future? Or, in the now? What changes may you have to make?

- Do the words "content" and "at peace" apply to you? Ask those close to you... What changes may you have to make?

21. In answer to her question...; 22. This also rather puzzled her...; 23. Again he smiled...;

If you've "died to self" on the way to the High Places, a visit to the Valley of Loss will not devastate you. Dying to self also means forsaking expectations. If you expect nothing to go a particular way, then you'll appreciate it when it does, and not regret when it doesn't.

Because Much-Afraid was willing to die to her dream of arriving at her goal, she was able to walk peacefully *away* from the High Places in contentment that the Shepherd was with her.

If you're having a difficult time fully trusting our Lord with something, you'll appreciate an axiom I first observed during Sue's and my 11-year retreat ministry:

If you are going to *sweat* something, then God is going to *cause* you to sweat it.

For example, when people habitually sweat financial problems, God adds to their financial problems. His goal is a heart change in which they'll gratefully shift the burdensome weight to Him. Once again, Psalms encourage our trust: *"Unload your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved"* (Psalm 55:22).

While the Shepherd's face reflected wonderful compassion, there was also "unflinching determination" toward Much-Afraid. Picture our Lord looking at you and saying, *"The good work I have begun in you, [your name], I will carry it on to completion until the day you see Me face-to-face."* He doesn't give up on us who continue to follow Him!

- Is there any concern you can't put to rest? What is it? Who have you talked to about it who will pray with you to come to peace in that concern?

- Are you able to be content just to trust that He's walking in your situation with you, even if the door has shut on a precious dream?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

24. When she realized that...; 25. When she remembered this...

To complete the rest of the journey to the High Places will cost you the complete loss of worldly pursuits and death to yourself — not as a self-flagellating martyr but as a trusting son or daughter who knows that His way is the only path to Life. Our Lord has already determined that He is transforming you to be like Him. You can help yourself in the process by studying and applying His Word, and by cooperating with Him in the things He wants to change in you.

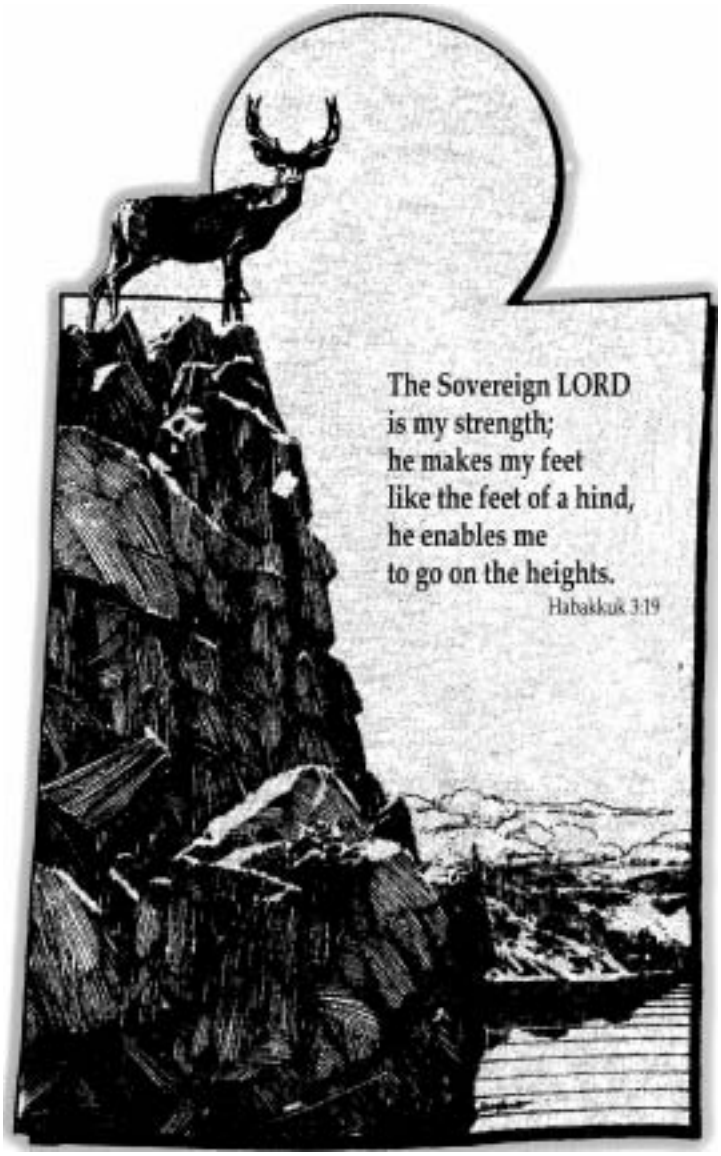
Our Shepherd is preparing each of us as His bride — a *perfect* bride. Make it easy for both Him and you to be transformed!

- Much-Afraid reacted with a pang of fear when she realized that the Shepherd would be doing still more in her heart. How does the idea of His "determination to allow nothing blemished or unworthy to remain in the beloved" impact your thoughts about the continuing journey?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 14 *The Place of Anointing*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

When you reach the conclusion to this chapter you realize that the Shepherd has brought Much-Afraid to the place of anointing "in readiness for burial." As you journey through these pages you'll see very clearly this key point:

A life-giving character quality the Shepherd desires to produce in those of us who follow Him is ***complete trust****.*

Your trust in our Lord is inversely proportional to your fear and your need to be in control of your life. Only through complete death to yourself can you abide in complete trust in Jesus.

At the end of this chapter we've included a handout entitled ***How to Gain a Good Conscience,*** a teaching from the Institute in Basic Life Principles that has proven valuable to those who desire to be available for our Father's purposes. It's essential that you be clean with both God and with people in your life so you can continue on your journey. A person who lacks a good conscience can "talk Bible", but a person *with* a good conscience speaks glorifying testimony of our Lord's personal presence and intervention. We all need to join Paul when he says, *"Indeed, it is because of this that I make a point of always having a clear conscience in the sight of both God and man"* Acts 24:16).

Chapter 14 *The Place of Anointing*

1. As it happened; 2. However, when Much-Afraid and her companions...

The Path of Forgiveness into the Valley of Loss we covered in the previous chapter is critical to what Much-Afraid is about to experience. Remember what her life was like in the Valley of Humiliation? Do you remember how her family made her a prisoner in her own home and tried to keep her from leaving the valley with the Shepherd?

The Valley of Loss is your appointed time to shed all bitterness and resentment toward everyone who has ever hurt you. If you've done this, then you're able to recognize that every human being is made in the image of God and is worth the awesome sacrifice of His Son for each one of them, including yourself. The Valley of Loss helps you to see people through the eyes of God, from His heart's perspective.

The heart of our Father encompasses love that far exceeds human definition. The Hebrew word for "love" is *ahav*. It means a *passionate* love, a wholehearted devotion. The letters themselves mean "a window into the Father's heart." This is what He desires for you to perceive so that you can experience life as *He* intends. This is where *real wisdom* emanates from — <u>seeing everything from our Father's perspective</u>.

Much-Afraid has now come face to face with mountains far higher than the Precipice of Injury that had proved so daunting. Her surroundings weren't as important, however, as the changes that had been made in her own heart to enable her to pass through the Valley of Loss. Rather than backing off or murmuring in fear, she firmly pressed on toward the high cliffs. To their great joy and surprise, there stood the Shepherd waiting beside a chairlift to the top!

Pause here for a moment to recall your own personal trials in which, in your wildest imagination, you never would have contemplated our Father's particular intervention that saved the day for you or someone you loved. Once again He was pleased to reveal His Father heart of love to encourage you to keep walking the path He's set for you.

We've waited a long time to get to this point in the book. If you've chosen to forgive from your heart all who have hurt or disappointed you, you have access to the grace that's poured out abundantly by God. While He indeed out of mercy blesses in so many ways the wicked as well as those who walk in Him, people who choose not to get through the Valley of Loss will never experience the intimacy of walking in grateful awareness of His presence.

When we encounter those who are still imprisoned by an unclean conscience toward others, we grieve because they don't

know what they're missing. When you have a clean conscience the testimonies you're able to share as a result of God's grace ring loud and bold, a far cry from the vicarious secondhand stories repeated by those who have yet to walk in the freedom of a clear conscience.

- Do you have a clear conscience toward God and all others? What is hindering you from humbling yourself to "come clean"?

- We are told in Scripture that "out of the heart the mouth speaks." What has been coming out of your heart lately? Do your words reveal His grace to you, or are there underlying chambers filled with self-justification or blame or excuses?

Word as an indispensable means of becoming more like Him.

If you decide to resist His means of developing your character, you'll have to face that classroom again. Don't you want in your heart to move along "steadily toward the High Places which had looked impossibly out of reach, supported entirely from above"? *That's* what childlike trust looks like!

- Are you still fighting God about anything? A particular person in your life? Something He wants you to do? Somewhere He wants you to go?

- What will it take for you to completely surrender? What will you have to leave behind?

3. However, that passed almost at once...; 4. Much-Afraid stepped into one of the seats...

Total surrender to our Lord is accompanied by amazing grace from Him. Relinquishing all ill feelings toward other people enables you to be completely surrendered to God. You'll find that freedom, grace and surrender are intricately connected as your pilgrimage continues upward.

You begin to acquire a vantage point of understanding people and your past that can never develop until you've passed through the Valley of Loss. You're able to no longer regard people through the flesh of your old nature but through the compassion of the Spirit.

Past hurts, letdowns, and betrayals are recognized as our Father's way of developing Christ-like character in you. When you've left behind the "sting" of those vexing circumstances, you're able to appreciate His "severe mercy" toward you. Painful experiences can be His way of causing you to draw near to Him in the dependent trust of a child. You can then grip the promises of His

5. When at last they stepped out...; 6. Above were peaks of pure white snow...; 7. It was the voice of a mighty waterfall...; 8. As they wandered forward...

All around us lays evidence of the beauty that must have been Eden. In the Garden, our first parents breathed in the unsullied fragrance of Creation, freely exulting in God's divine splendor.

Much-Afraid had been so fixated on reaching the High Places that she's missed much of His handiwork down in the valley she'd left behind. "Target fixation" can block out all but the goal or thought that's consuming you at the moment. You may believe that your particular target is worth all that focus, such as a home repair project, a work deadline, or finally reaching the end of your to-do list.

But you may also be blinding yourself from the encounters and opportunities that our Shepherd has sent to you for your personal growth and comfort — companions sent by Him for that particular moment. Beware of putting tasks ahead of people!

Sue: Sometimes I get so overwhelmed by

jobs that seem overwhelming, I just need to get out of the house to free up my senses, even if only for a little while. A short hike on the nearby bluffs or along the river does wonders for my senses as I inhale the breezes and marvel at the latest greenery protruding from the rocky landscape.

Even at the border of the Kingdom of Love the diverse display of His extravagant creation overtakes Much-Afraid with wonder. Here eyes are enveloped with bounteous color, her ears swathed in bird calls and rushing water sounds, her lungs replenished with pine-scented air. By yielding to the enchantment all around her, she was able to fully live in the moment in grateful joy.

- When was the last time you stopped long enough to breathe in the splendor of our Lord's creation? Does that concept even appeal to you?

- What is preventing you from immersing yourself for an hour or so in a slice of His outdoor masterwork? What do you purpose to change so you can be refreshed?

9. At the foot of the cliffs...; 10. As she listened...; 11. "Much-Afraid" said the Shepherd's voice...; 12. She trembled a little...; 13. "It is the leap...; 14. "Look closer," he said again...; 15. Much-Afraid did so...; 16. She gazed and gazed...

Much-Afraid is keenly aware of the beauty around her. Heightened sensitivity is a blessing from the Holy Spirit to those who take the time to quiet their hearts to listen to Him. But He's calling us to more than appreciation of the beauty in God's creation. He generates an awareness to the *divine encounters* that fit together like a fabric being woven around us.

For instance, Sue and I were just finishing our May-June 2004 newsletter entitled, *"Be Warned! Greasy Grace Fuels the Fires of Hell"*. Coincidentally, David Wilkerson's prophetic teaching letter arrived in the mail with the same topic of warning, almost verbatim in places to ours! It encouraged us that the Spirit is issuing the same warning from many venues, and that our Father's timing of confirmation was so perfect.

Yesterday, we received a newsletter from a ministry that uses our writings. We were excited by how much of the relational emphasis they had adapted! An hour later we received a phone call from an older man who wanted to use some of our material to teach on the Hebraic roots of the church. He then asked if we had other information that could deepen his message.

While we were still talking he went to our website, praising God for being able to find the very things for which he'd been searching. He mentioned that he planned to attend a conference being conducted by the very ministry from whom we'd just received the newsletter. God's divine tapestry being woven around us is what we call "God-sightings."

These "eyes wide open" occurrences are like the harmony of all the rivulets that fed into the rushing waterfall. Our Father works so uniquely in each of our lives, yet each testimony of His intervention and grace adds to the torrent of praise that rises up to His throne.

As the Shepherd and Much-Afraid continue to stand by the waterfall, they are captivated by the beauty of that water's abandonment to the will of the Lord: "Always answering the call, to the lowest place of all." This is what we His followers are called to, a call to such abandonment to Him that nothing can stop us as His servants to accomplish His will.

How different is this perspective from the self-serving ***'Name it and Claim it'*** people who demand that God answer their prayers. When you hear them pray they sound like they are commanding a subordinate to act on their behalf.

Only a heart belief that God *owes* them could motivate their commands that He act on their behalf. Prayer that is couched in

arrogant presumption grieves a Shepherd Who modeled service and death to self on behalf of others.

People who have learned the lesson of abandonment share a humble and glorifying testimony. Can you picture the Shepherd standing next to *you* at the waterfall's base, asking "What do *you* think of this fall of great waters in the abandonment of self-giving?" He presents *His* mind on self-giving in several Gospel passages. His disciples realized they were being trained up to lead, but they needed a heart transformation to follow in Jesus' steps rather than those of the power-flaunting Romans.

Addressing His bickering disciples, Jesus *"sat down, summoned the Twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must* ***make himself last of all*** *and* ***servant of all****'"* (Mark 9:35).

Jesus warned them against imitating the tyrant tendencies of Gentile rulers: *"But among you, it must not be like that! On the contrary, whoever among you wants to be a leader* ***must be your servant****"* (Mark 10:43).

Abandoning self is not a venue for false humility; rather it's focusing on the One for whom all service is given. *"If someone is serving me, let him* ***follow me****; wherever I am,* ***my servant*** *will be there too. My Father will honor anyone who* ***serves me****"* (John 12:26).

Can you see yourself sitting with Jesus as He delineates what it means to serve others? Think of the most beautiful scene you can imagine in response to Much-Afraid's wonder in the joyous water droplets, "so utterly abandoned to the ecstasy of giving themselves...It looks as though they think it is the loveliest moment in all the world." In a culture in which loving yourself and meeting your own needs take precedence, this idea is truly radical!

Mike: Many years ago at our retreat center, a group of white boys from Cape Cod spent the weekend with us. At the same time, a gathering of older black women from the inner city of Hartford asked to stay in the women's dorm for a couple days of prayer and worship.

The boys and their leader and I went out on the river to go tubing for the day. As I conversed with them I became aware of how racially prejudiced these boys were.

We got back to the center about an hour before supper. As we cleaned up and sat around, the older women took a genuine interest in these boys. Each of these godly women exhibited such a wonderful kind of love that only years of self-abandonment could have produced.

After supper I convinced the youth director to set aside his schedule of planned activities and just let things roll along. Those boys were *changed* by the loving nature of these women who had learned to trust God through all kinds of trials that living in the inner city produces.

The next day as both groups headed back to their own worlds, I saw no less than a few boys hugging the ladies with tears in their youthful eyes.

- Is it in your nature to abandon yourself (your needs, desires, ambitions, time) in order to give yourself to others?

- What kind of attitude shift needs to be made in your heart so that you can serve with the joy of the water droplets rather than with the resignation of a "martyr"?

17. "Yes," answered the Shepherd...; 18. Again Much-Afraid looked...; 19. Laughing and shouting at the top of their voices...; 20. At first sight perhaps the leap does look terrible...

The theme of exuberant joy continues, even when obstacles that might "dismay" the rushing waters gives them cause to "swirl triumphantly around and over the rocks."

Mike: I can identify with the phrase, "the next glorious crisis of their self-giving" in a unique way. Have you ever done a "trust fall" into the arms of other people? Let me

tell you about my first two falls. During one women's retreat as they were doing trust falls off our 5-foot high log, they asked if they could catch me, a 200-plus pound man. For several years I'd been conducting retreats incorporating our outdoor confidence course, but I'd conveniently avoided having to fall into the arms of anyone!

Yielding to their pleas, I clambered up onto the log. Now, these ladies didn't calculate that a man is heavier in his shoulders while women are heavier in the stern. I leaned back and fell right through their outstretched arms, smashing painfully into the packed dirt. It hurt but nothing was broken.

The following weekend a youth retreat asked me to join them in trust falls. This time I put the stronger guys into position to catch my upper torso. I fell safely and painlessly into their arms. But to "fall with abandonment" took a lot more courage the second time than it did the first!

A wonderful fellowship is shared by those who have learned the abandonment of the waterfall experience together. Concerns and worries don't even enter into their decisions. Like Much-Afraid they regard "every obstacle...as another object to be overcome and another lovely opportunity..."

That kind of opportunistic view of life leaves no room for hesitation or shrinking back in light of the unspeakable joy and glory of seeing God's grace operate around you. ***"Self-giving is life."*** As the waterfall teaches, "obstacles only add to the joy and glory of the movement."

Keep in mind:

You can never appreciate what the abandonment of complete trust in our Lord feels like until you are faced with the opportunity to doubt. The joy of complete trust comes when you're confronted with a circumstance that could tempt you to forget His faithfulness — but you choose to walk in trust anyway.

If you can clearly identify with the exuberant abandonment of the water, keep pressing on with us. If you *can't* identify, **stop.** Turn to *How to Gain a Good Conscience* at the end before proceeding on with the rest of the chapter. That will make all the difference as you finish your "anointing for burial."

- Are you a person who is abandoned to God's will? If not, what is hindering you? If yes, how do you find ways to glorify our Lord through testimony?

- Describe a situation in which you were called to give of yourself beyond that which you thought you could do. How did it turn out?

21. On hearing these words...; 22. It was not, however, that the sun always shone...

What a delightful part of the journey for Much-Afraid, spending precious days with the Shepherd as He walked and talked with her and her companions! Just think about the "many things about the Kingdom" that He shared with them, whetting their spiritual appetites for what lay ahead.

Did you as a child ever experience that delicious anticipation that accompanies a long-awaited trip or activity? It seemed as though that day would never arrive — yet at the same time, your fantasy thoughts of what it was going to be like kept you entertained for hours!

But note that even during this exquisite time for Much-Afraid, clouds and mist showed up to block the view of gleaming peaks. That. too, was an essential ingredient to the journey, for the Shepherd exhorted them all to be of good courage as those who walk by trust, not by sight. See (2 Corinthians 5:7.)

The apostle Peter assures us that we must keep pressing on in loving and trusting our Lord even though we've not been privileged to see him face to face as he had. Our trust needs to be exercised to stand firm even when we don't see obvious evidence of His intervention in our lives. His Spirit is faithfully present in tumult as well as in peace.

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Think about the ups and downs of your life. How easy is it for you to recall sunlit times of joy when clouds of turmoil are swirling around you?

- If you had the opportunity to spend an hour hearing from the heart of Jesus, what would you want Him to focus on?

23. Every now and again...; 24. On one such occasion the Shepherd...; 25. Believe steadfastly in what you have seen...

When God showed us that we were to go to Israel for three months in 1993, we didn't even have money for airfare. But at the last hour in which we could purchase tickets, an unexpected gift arrived to cover the cost. We had no savings and, when we returned to the States, we had to trust on God's provision as needs arose. *Jehovah Jireh*, God our Provider, became much more than a name to us; it became our way of life.

While we lived in Israel, our Lord would encourage us by having us find shekels on the sidewalks and streets. Discovering these shiny dime-size coins filled us with childlike delight because we know Who had caused them to be found!

During the past 10 years we've continued to find coins (and even bills!) to confirm His faithful provision as we walk in obedient trust. On occasions in which He's directed us to do something out of the ordinary, He's heartened us with coins which turn up in the most unusual places. Time and again our Father has assured us that resources would be there when needed.

We included the poem "Step By Step" in Chapters 2 and3 of this study guide. If you seek even *one* step and are willing to take that step, you'll never find God's guidance lacking. Just keep in mind that He is never obligated to explain *why* He's revealing to you that particular word. Nor should you dig a pit for yourself by conjecturing where you think He's leading.

Mike: Sue and I packed up our belongings in a U-Haul 4 years ago expecting that we were heading for a mission school near Phoenix, Arizona. During a conference there a few weeks earlier, the director had invited us to move to the mission compound to share with the staff the Hebraic foundations of following Jesus.

Just as we closed up the back of the truck, we received a call from the director. He sadly reported that some of the missionaries had invoked a little-known clause in their charter to overrule his desire for us to come. He quoted them as saying, "Mike and Sue insist that you can't minister to people you don't love. We don't even *like* these Indians, but we "do right" by them. We don't want that couple coming here."

The director paused a moment then shared an important piece of information. He sensed that God was *protecting* us by keeping us away from the bitterness and squabbling that had plagued the staff for years. In fact, he and his wife were themselves resigning in order to live among one of the tribes to teach them the Hebraic foundations.

Since we had friends we were going to visit along the way in Memphis, we decided to head west anyway. I asked God to not let us cross the Mississippi without knowing where we were going. Several friends had been praying for us. When we arrived in Memphis we received three phone calls. Each one reported that God had revealed that He wanted us in Flagstaff, Arizona.

We drove into town knowing no one. In time, though, we began to work among different Native people. Each one told us that if we'd gone to that mission that's so hated by so many Indians, no Native person would have listened to us. God *did* protect us!

We want to encourage you with the Shepherd's words, "Always go forward along the path of obedience as far as you know until I intervene, even if it seems to be leading you where you fear I could never mean you to go."

- When is the last time you sought our Lord for guidance? Did you wait for Him to give it, or did you pray-and-go, hoping for the best? Did you obey what He revealed to you?

- Do you have a testimony like that of our coins by which our Lord encourages you? What are the different ways in which He's directed your path?

26. "Remember, Much-Afraid, what you have seen"...; 27. Before the curtain closed again...; 28. On the last day they stayed there...; 29. Up there on the mountaintop...; 30. Putting out his hand...

When you've recognized a God-sighting in your life, you need to remember it so that you can recount it later. Some people keep journals so that they won't forget the details. Much-Afraid picked some gentians so that she could recount the reality of what occurred here at the place of anointing before the clouds would cover the peaks again.

In the 10+ years we've been sharing the Hebraic foundations, many people who once seemed delighted turned back again to their old ways. Unresolved bitterness most often was the culprit that defiled our relationship. Sometimes the pain of losing people we deeply care about can bring about deep despair. It's at these times that we recall our stay in Israel where our Lord showed us the relational priorities of the earliest Church.

Mike: Sometimes I refresh my determination to press on by remembering how Sue and I went away to an ancient monastery on retreat during our last weeks in the Land. We'd gone there to enjoy the quiet and to confirm with our Lord what He had shown us. I remember how I'd wandered about the grounds while Sue rested. I had entered a little chapel, finding a plain wooden table with a small bowl of olive oil on it. The Holy Spirit directed me to anoint different parts of my body to set them apart for His use: my eyes, ears, mouth, heart, hands, feet. Everything I looked at, heard, spoke, felt, did, and wherever I went, were to be set apart for Him. Then He said, "Get your wife and do the same."

I remember the next morning as we stood in the cold darkness waiting for the sun to rise over the Judean hills. As it emerged at our backs, it cast a golden glow on the field below us. Yet, a massive tree in the middle of the field remained starkly black. Later, God revealed to us the meaning of that sign: Our ministry in the US would be like that of Moses with the Israelites. Circumstances would initially become rougher for those who embraced the facets that made the earliest Church intimate and powerful. If and as they persevered, they would be strengthened in their spirit as they prepared for His use of them.

I remember asking our Father how I would provide for Sue and me when we returned to the States. He answered, *"Share this message, and **I** will provide for you."* Wanting to be sure that it was Him and not my imagination, I asked Him for a sign — that we'd receive a check in the mail from the US that day.

That afternoon when we returned to our host's home, there was a letter waiting for us. Seven days previously the Holy Spirit had urged the sender to leave work early and go home. A letter which we'd mailed a week earlier to many old friends had just arrived. Responding to the Spirit's nudge, he immediately sent a check for $100 and mailed it to us. That check arrived at the precise time our Father knew would fan our trust flames with joyful determination!

Reminding ourselves of the miraculous God's sightings from our past is a great means to fend off despair. Plus, you're stirred once again to thank the One in Whose hands your life is lovingly held!

• Why not take a moment and see if you can list 5 God-sightings in your own life.

• Does recounting that which our Lord has done for you come easily? Explain...

31. All around her, in every direction...; 32. In the heart of each flower...

The white-robed hosts of flowers permeated the air with their fragrant joy. What a glorious picture of those in Jesus who have passed from this world to the ecstacy of His presence! We're told in Hebrews 12:1 that we are surrounded by a great cloud of faithful followers of Jesus who have faithfully run the life race set before them and crossed the line into heaven.

Mike: I like to think that both sets of our parents are looking down on us as part of that "great cloud of witnesses." Do they find joy in how our Lord has been changing us over the long haul? Are they filled with delight to see us living for Jesus? Would they be proud of us if their lives here on earth had been extended?

I can still recall as though it were yesterday the afternoon we arrived at my Dad's house in August, 1978. Sue and I had both come to Christ in 1977, and I'd just left a 10 year career in the Navy. We were on our way to seminary in Massachusetts and had stopped by to stay with my folks for a few days.

I was hardly out of the car when Dad asked me to join him in the back yard. Looking me in the eye Dad asked, "Are you doing all this for Jesus and no one else?" My emphatic "Yes!!!" was met with a warm smile and his promise that he'd stand with my decision. The rest of my family couldn't understand our determination to follow Jesus. It frightened them. As years passed, however, not only our parents but other family members put their trust in the Lord Who promises to change lives!

• How would your parents or grandparents evaluate your life? If they're alive, have you asked them lately?

• Have you ever asked your parents or grandparents for input as to changes they think you should make in your life? What would prevent you from asking?

33. On the utmost pinnacle...; 34. Then the King told her to kneel...; 35.It seemed to her that a burning flame...; 36. When she recovered...

We sometimes tend to forget the awesomeness of the God Who love us. The same Lord Who tenderly comforts us and graciously forgives us is also the LORD of Lords Who rules with *"utmost authority and power."*

Before he could walk the path God has assigned him, the prophet Isaiah underwent the same commissioning cleansing that Much-Afraid endured. Her lips were seared by a burning coal plucked off a holy altar with golden tongs.

Do you understand the distinctiveness of that altar? Our Father doesn't *casually* purge our lives of sin. His plans for your life are too weighty for you to nonchalantly continue with a self-centered focus. Those golden tongs that grip *your* particular cleansing coal are lovingly wielded by One Who fully understands the pain that purging involves. That's why the process is beautiful in its purpose but terrible in its pain.

When you choose in obedient trust to walk through that trial knowing in your heart that the Shepherd's arms are carrying you, your yieldedness brings about a deeper dependence in *His* strength rather than your own.

Sue: I find that more often than not, the purging our Lord generally uses on me is through oral rebuke, correction or admonishment. Like Eve, I can be too quick to act independent of my husband's counsel or

input, and bring discord into our marriage through my own foolish willfulness. Then our Father uses Mike to impress on me what my attitudes and actions have done to diminish the peace in our home.

Do I *enjoy* being brought up short? No, but I do realize that resisting His words via Mike in favor of wanting to hear "in my spirit from Jesus" misses the character transformation that our Lord is working. I (and probably many other wives!) need to see in my husband the servant-leader He has chosen him to be.

- Are you more prone to focus on the "Abba" aspect of our Lord rather than on His awesome Kingship? What could be the danger of over-emphasizing one reality of His character rather than the complete package?

- Who in your life does our Father most often use as His mouthpiece of correction or admonishment? How do you generally respond to this messenger?

37. When he found that she was sufficiently recovered...; 38. "Much-Afraid," the Shepherd said...

Following her purging experience, Much-Afraid's sensitivity was heightened. The song bird's repeated chorus sounded like, "He's gotten the victory, Hurrah!"We shouldn't be surprised that our Lord uses elements of His creation to convey messages to His children. We've noticed that many Native Americans are much more sensitive than Europeans to God's use of His handiwork to communicate something of Himself.

Mike: For Sue and me, sunsets are a spectacular sign of His favor on memorable days in our lives. After we finished a Marriage Encounter weekend in Santa Barbara in 1974, a weekend that wonderfully changed our lives together, we were driving back along the Pacific coast in the early evening. Not only the sky but even the sea was crayon red from the setting sun's brilliant rays.

A few years later we were returning to our motel in the Philippines after being baptized in a New Tribes Mission village. The evening sky was filled with a magenta we'd never seen before. It was so *un*natural that it was *super*natural!

And when we moved into our mobile home a year ago, a double rainbow gleamed above us, confirming with His indwelling Spirit that His plan for this move was being fulfilled. We *thrill* to see God in His creation, and we delight in telling others about these colorful touches of His hand.

- What "natural wonders" from our Father's hands rouse your heart the most?

39. Then with wonderful tenderness...; 40. It was then that Much-Afraid...; 41. He said very gently...; 42. So they stood in the mist-filled wood...

At last Much-Afraid hears the words she's yearned for: the last part of the journey was about to begin! She's been given a glimpse of the Kingdom, and trembles with hope that soon she will leap among its High Places.

But have you noticed that "soon" in our Lord's vocabulary and "soon" in ours don't often coincide? We like to think in *immediate* terms while our Father's plans involve a wider purpose. To each of us He whispers, "The time is not long now." Yet in the same breath we're reminded to "hold fast" and "overcome." It's definitely not an easy slide into eternity!

The Shepherd speaks to Much-Afraid the very words that have inspired us so often: *"I know what you are doing. Look, I have put in front of you* ***an open door****, and no one can shut it."* Our Lord *knows* what He's called you to do. His own hand has personally designed a plan with *your name* on it. The doorway to fulfilling that plan stands open — He's not hiding it from you! And

no one can thwart that purpose by shutting the door. However, you must choose to cross the threshold one step at a time.

Your strength comes not only from your willingness but from your obedient trust — "You have kept My word." And, as the Shepherd states, He regards your yieldedness to His *right and authority* as Lord to do with you as He will: "You have not denied *My name*."

I wish Sue and I could say that in the years we've served our Lord, sacrificial love was always our primary motivation. But that wouldn't be true! Many times we've been beaten down by demonic forces and by the betrayal of bitter people. Sometimes it was all we could do to "obey", and "not disown" our Lord. It's embarrassing to us that we couldn't have been more noble in purpose during those times. But our Lord's words, "yet you have obeyed...", is to us His gentle hand lifting up our bowed heads.

As we near the end of this chapter, we want to encourage you, "KEEP MOVING FORWARD!" God's promises are never *behind* you, they're always *ahead* of you. You may be going through times of purification for the explicit purpose to be *nobly used* during the days of chastisement that are coming upon this land.

God is doing this for your good, and for His future use of you. Don't get hung up on feelings that you have failed Him. That is Hellenism at its core. Our God brings *course corrections* in the sails of our lives to turn us back to His way of living. "KEEP MOVING FORWARD!"

- Are you someone who is known to "keep on keeping on" with our Lord no matter what the circumstances? Be honest.

- What hinders you from keeping on?

43. A little later they were down...; 44. He answered her very quietly...; 45. Much-Afraid did not hear these words...

The anointing that Much-Afraid has experienced in this chapter has prepared Much-Afraid for her soon-coming burial. Isn't the real *burial* that leads to life found while we are still alive? That's what Jesus assures each of us in the following passages.

*"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has **lost his life for My sake** will find it"* (Matthew 10:39).

*"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever **loses his life for My sake** will find it"* (Matthew 16:25).

*"And everyone **who has left** houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms f**or My name's sake**, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life"* (Matthew 19:29).

*"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever **loses his life for My sake** and the **gospel's** will save it"* (Mark 8:35).

None of us can truly be alive and free in Jesus until we are dead to everything we once were. That includes family and anyone and anything else we hold dear. Yet this can only be accomplished through His grace. God's grace is something you *know* without doubt that you've received. Through His grace comes complete recognition and worship of Him.

- What has been the most painful or costliest "death to self" for Jesus' sake you've yet endured?

- How would you articulate to others the way in which God's grace carried you through that "death"?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

HOW TO GAIN A GOOD CONSCIENCE

[from the Institute in Basic Life Principles Seminar]

WHAT IS A GOOD CONSCIENCE?

A good conscience is a healthy conscience. It is one that is cleared of offenses toward God and toward man. 1Timothy 1:5: *"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."* The goal of a good conscience is summarized in the Greek word, aproskopos, which is translated, "void of offense." Acts 24:16: *"So I strive always to keep my conscience clear (void of offense) before God and man."*

The term means having nothing for one to strike against and not causing to stumble. It denotes a smooth road and metaphorically not leading others into sin by one's mode of life. It is a conscience which is not troubled or distressed by the guilt of offenses.

A good conscience is not stained with guilt toward God; it is blameless and innocent. Because of our sin nature, the qualities of a good conscience are only possible as we have our hearts cleansed by the blood of Christ. Any works on our own behalf toward God would not gain for us a good conscience. Hebrews 9:14: *"....the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

A good conscience is one that allows me to look every person in the eye knowing that not one of them can point a finger and say, "You wronged me and you never tried to make it right."

WHAT DOES A GOOD CONSCIENCE INVOLVE?

Every Thought

2 Corinthians 10:5: *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

Every Word

Matthew 12:36: *"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."*

Every Deed

2 Corinthians 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*

Every Motive

Jeremiah 17:9-10: *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."*

HOW DOES GRACE RELATE TO A GOOD CONSCIENCE?

Grace is not some static quality; it is a dynamic force from God which gives us the desire and power to do His will. As you humble yourself in preparing to ask for forgiveness, God will give you grace. This grace will give you the desire and the power to ask for forgiveness which will bring further humbling and further grace. The more grace you receive, the more power you will have to live as Jesus intends for you.

STEPS TO GAIN A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Introspection is not the way to gain a good conscience. Through introspection we measure ourselves by what we think is right or wrong. In the course of reading Scripture and living the Christian life, the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind offenses which need to be cleared up. When these come to your remembrance, you are then to take the steps to restore a good conscience.

God may bring to mind offenses that you have committed against any of the following:
( ) God ( ) Your father ( ) Your mother ( ) Your child(ren) ( )Your stepfather ( ) Your stepmother ( ) Your brother(s) ( ) Your sister(s) ( ) Your relative(s) ( ) Your spouse
( ) Your pastor(s) ( ) Your teacher(s) ( )Your neighbor(s) ( ) Your friend(s) ( ) Your employer(s) ( )Store owner(s)

LIST YOUR OFFENSES

It is easy to minimize our offenses, and, at the same time, blame others or justify what we did. Therefore, it would be very wise to begin this next step by asking God to revive our memory.
Psalm 139:23-24: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

WHAT DID YOU DO THAT CAUSED OTHERS TO BE OFFENDED BY YOU?

Did you speak words which were:	List Actions which were:
Critical_____	Careless_____
Judgmental_____	Dishonest_____
Slanderous_____	Improper_____
Untruthful_____	Sensual_____
Harsh_____	Disrespectful_____
Disruptive_____	Slothful_____
Vulgar_____	Destructive_____
Profane_____	Wasteful_____
Contentious_____	Disobedient_____
Indiscreet_____	Forgetful_____

WHAT ATTITUDES CAUSED YOUR WRONG WORDS OR ACTIONS?

The key to asking forgiveness properly is identifying the wrong attitudes before naming the wrong words or actions. There are two essential reasons why wrong attitudes must be confessed before wrong actions. The first reason is that wrong attitudes are usually more hurtful and offensive than wrong words or actions. The second reason is that if the offending attitude is not corrected, the person who is being asked for forgiveness is instinctively aware that the same offenses will probably be repeated.

List attitudes which were:

Proud_____	Unreliable_____
Deceptive_____	Disloyal_____
Willful_____	Unconcerned_____
Presumptuous_____	Insensitive_____
Selfish_____	Angry_____
Ungrateful_____	Bitter_____

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING OUT RESTITUTION

One of the clearest evidences of genuine repentance is the willingness to make right any damage suffered by the one whom you wronged. If you stole items, they must be returned. If you cannot return them, you should pay for them. If you do not have the money to pay for them, at least one alternative plan should be offered to the person from whom you ask forgiveness.

PURPOSE TO ASK FORGIVENESS

God is the One Whom we have offended the most. If we fail to understand this fact and to act upon it, God's blessing will be missing from our lives when we go to ask forgiveness of others.

Stop and Pray: "O Lord, I have sinned against You. I now confess my sin of _____. I thank You for Your forgiveness and cleansing me from this sin through the blood of your Son, Jesus Christ."

SEPARATE GUILT FROM BLAME

One of the greatest hindrances you may experience in asking forgiveness is the feeling that the one you wronged was also guilty. You may even feel that he or she deserved what you did. It will be your tendency to magnify the blame which you have toward the one you offended, just as it will be his or her tendency to magnify the blame toward you.

Mixing guilt and blame will not only stop you from gaining a good conscience, it will also cause these two spiritual poisons to eat away at your soul and to reduce the spiritual potential which God has for your life.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WORDING

The importance of selecting the right words for your confession cannot be overemphasized. The prodigal son carefully chose each word. Luke 15:18-19: *"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men."*

The words which you choose should focus only on *your* part of the offense.

Suggested wording:

"God has helped me to realize that I was wrong in (root attitudes and resulting offenses). Would you forgive me?

Evaluating the wording:

- It is concise and to the point. The longer a confession, the more danger there is for self-justification.
- It does not blame by implying, "I was wrong, but you were too."
- It does not communicate pride by statements like "If I was wrong..."
- It does not offer excuses such as "I got angry because I was tired."
- It does not suggest flippancy by such words as "I'm sorry."
- It does not demand forgiveness, but instead pleads for it.
- It requires a direct answer rather than a general response.
- It calls for a verbal response.
- It identifies the basic offense.

DETERMINE WHETHER A PHONE CALL OR A VISIT IS BEST

The natural tendency at this point is to simply write a letter in which you ask forgiveness. The appeal of this wrong method is that it avoids any personal confrontation. However, the lack of personal contact also eliminates the possibility of gaining one of the most important benefits—verbal assurance that you are forgiven.

SELECT THE BEST TIME TO ASK FORGIVENESS

The closer you come to approaching the person you offended, the more difficult it will probably become to ask forgiveness. Some common rationalizations that appear at this time are, "It happened so long ago."; "Things have gotten better between us."

HOW DOES THE PRODIGAL SON REVEAL SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE?

Christ's parable about the prodigal son contains rich insights about the real essence of repentance:

- Repentance begins by *"coming to our senses."*
  Luke 15:17: *"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!"*

- Repentance is admitting that "I have sinned."
  Luke 15:18: *"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."*

- Repentance recognizes personal unworthiness.
  Luke 15:19: *"I am no longer worthy to be called your son;*

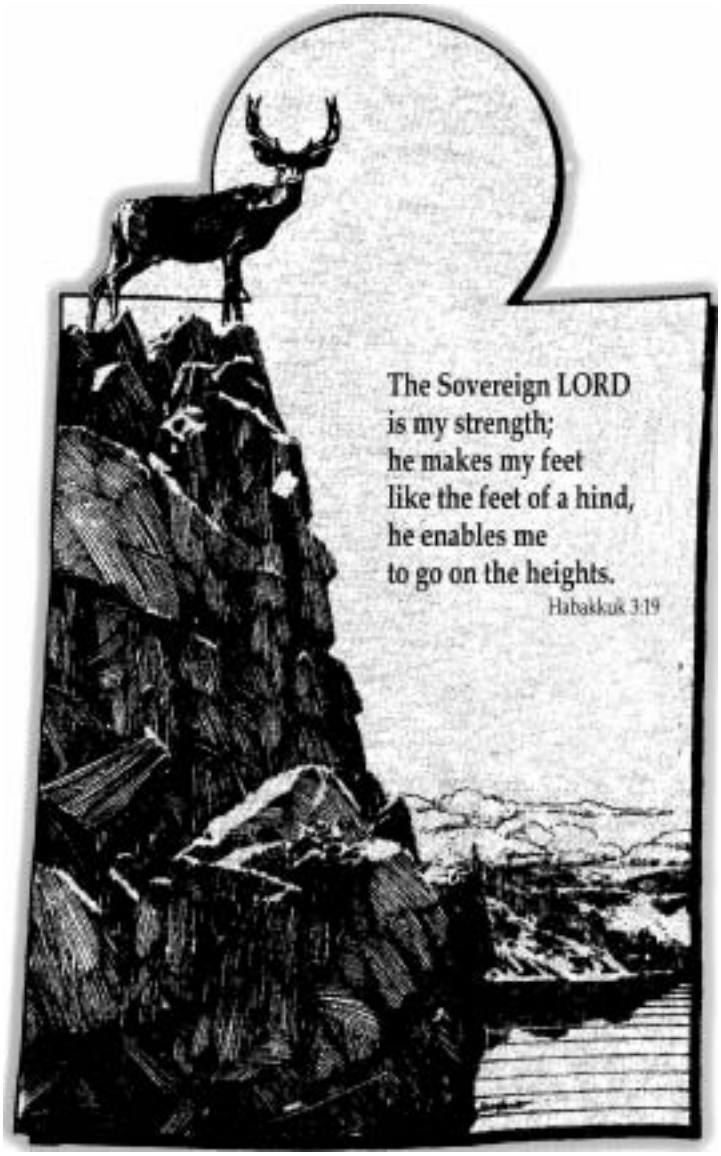
- Repentance accepts new limitations.
  Luke 15:19: *"....make me like one of your hired men."*

GOOD CONSCIENCE WORKSHEET

• **WHOM DID I OFFEND?**				
• **HOW DID I OFFEND?/ WRONG ATTITUDES?**				
• **HOW CAN I RESTORE?**				
• **WHAT SHOULD I SAY IN ASKING FORGIVENESS?**				
• **SHOULD I VISIT/PHONE?**				
• **WHEN WILL I DO IT?**				

Going to the High Places

Chapter 15 *The Floods*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

In this chapter we discover the deepest and most significant truths of the journey thus far. *The Floods* presents a vibrant picture of the nature and cost of our sanctification — the process of being set apart in Jesus to be fully prepared for His plans and purposes.

The sanctification process is first of all very personal between you and your Lord. It is based on the strength of your trust-based love relationship with Him. The nature of His work in you has nothing to do with religious form and practice, and you can't evaluate your spiritual progress by comparing it to anyone else's.

As well, this chapter crystallizes the truth that our ability to grow in the character of Jesus requires each of us to take full ownership of our past trials and the suffering He has used to bring us into conformity to His nature.

The importance of an *individual's* path of sanctification is often lost in the crowd orientation of contemporary religious practice expressed corporately under a steeple. Our Lord died for each of us *personally*. His work in us is personal, not general. In the womb He knew each one of us as intimately as He knew the prophets Jeremiah and John.

Just as Jesus learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 2:10), each of us who would follow Him must learn to accept the sufferings He has put in our path as instruments of refinement in His hands. Failure to willingly receive this makes us judges of His ways of character development.

We trust that as you go through this chapter, these concepts will all be made very real to you, so that you may proceed upward to the High Places in Jesus.

Chapter 15 *The Floods*

1. The path they followed...

Only our God is truly capable of keeping all of His promises. And, His promises are not given lightly. It's important that in times of trial we recall the promises of which He's assured us in His Word. The apostle Paul reminded the Philippians, *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who **began** a good work in you will **perfect** it until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:6).

Our God gives promises so that we may have something tangible on which to anchor our hope when times of trial assail us. If you can't recall any of His promises at this point, or haven't made it your habit to drink daily from the fountain of His Word where you'll *find* these promises, then you'll discover that many of your trials are that much more painful to endure.

Because they had walked in mature trust for so much longer than had Much-Afraid, the companions were aware of what lay ahead for their stumbling charge. Yet they unfailingly exercised gentleness and tender care as they guided her along mountain path.

If you have walked with Jesus for a while yourself, you may have forgotten what is was like to be a babe in Christ, full of desire to be with Him but awkward and unsure about how to walk in His steps. Don't give way to self-righteous pride or arrogant expectation that the weak or immature should unhesitatingly follow all that Scripture commands from the outset.

Recall how long it's taken *you* to press on in Jesus and follow through in what He tells you! Emulate Paul in his manner with the Thessalonian believers: *"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory"* (1 Thessalonians 1:11,12).

- How conscious are you of the truth that it is God at work in you to bring you into conformity to His Son Jesus? Or, are you more conscious that through your own choices, strength, and volition, you are changing yourself?

- Can you list at least three promises of God to you, both from Scripture and personal

rhema that He's revealed to you to apply personally?

2. Toward evening they came...; 3. Once inside they noticed...

What do you think was the Shepherd's "secret mark" that the travelers had noticed on the cabin door? It certainly confirmed to them that they'd reached the refuge designated for their rest and refreshment!

Early followers of Jesus recognized their camouflaged gatherings through covert use of an "ichthus", a fish drawing symbolic of Jesus' miracles and His followers as fishers of men. (The Greek letters also stood for "Jesus Christ, God's Son.)

Many today display easily recognizable signs of Christianity such as bumper stickers and crosses. However, the sure sign that one is a follower of Jesus is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Without Him, we can do nothing to either please God or to give Him glory. With Him, we are able to bear much fruit as we discern His will and carry it out.

The warm fire and refreshing repast indicated that the travelers had been expected. Are you ready at a moment's notice to welcome with warm heart the ones our Lord sends to your home? Your attitude says it all. Guests can feel either welcome or an intrusion, depending on your heart's response.

- When you encounter someone new, what signs indicate that you're encountering a fellow follower of Jesus?

- Would you describe your own brand of hospitality as obligatory or as welcoming? How do you demonstrate to your guests that their presence is more important to you than the meal you're providing?

4. How long she had slept...

You may not recognize sleeplessness as a divine appointment. Perhaps being awake during the night is more of an irritant or an indicator of worry on your part. But the deep silence of the wee hours can be the perfect setting for uninterrupted conversation with our Father, a mini-vacation of spiritual refreshment as you respond to His Spirit.

Perhaps He'll respond with a song of praise in your heart, or place specific people before your mind's eye to intercede for, or remind you of promises answered and yet to be. At any rate, you have a response choice during wakeful periods. You can scramble through your medicine cabinet for sleep aids. You can grumble and toss. Or you can use that time to let your spirit catch up with His Spirit.

Much-Afraid discerned her marching orders from the Shepherd by heeding His voice, a voice to which she was well-accustomed. Think about that the next night you find yourself wide-eyed.

- Has it been part of your experience to be awakened to commune with our Lord? How do you normally respond to wakefulness at night?

- Are you willing to forsake sleep with an expectant heart when you're roused during the night?

5. "Much-Afraid," said the Voice...

Every one of us is born with the capacity for human love. The Newer Testament calls human love "filial", from the Greek *phileo*. That kind of love is the affection and friendship we share with one another a companionable love that glues human relationships together.

But for followers of Jesus, His desire is that *agape* love replace human love as our

reason to go on walking in Him. The only source of that sacrificial *agape* love is the Holy Spirit. When we live in that love, we begin to grow in spiritual fruit production: *"(agape) love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness"* (Galatians 5:22). The love that the Greatest Commandment calls for is *this: "You shall (agape) love the Lord your God with* ***all your heart****, and with* ***all your soul****, and with* ***all your strength****, and with* ***all your mind****; and your neighbor as yourself"* (Luke 10:27). No part of you is exempt from the love that the Spirit prospers in those who press on in Jesus.

Your growth in ***dependency on our Lord*** and your growth in ***agape love*** are intricately connected in your pilgrimage. You can't grow in *agape* love unless you cultivate increasing dependency on our Lord.

For example, Jesus called His disciples His "friends": *"**Greater love** has no one than this, that one **lay down his life** for his friends. You are **My friends if** you do what I **command you**. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; **but I have called you friends**, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:13-15). As dear as friendship with our Lord is, it is incomplete without the *agape* love that puts feet to our relationship with Him.

Peter progresses through this transition from filial-based friendship with our Lord into *agape* love in order to truly follow in His steps. After Jesus's resurrection we encounter this scene by the Sea of Galilee in John 21: 15-17:

> So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, ***do you (agape) love Me*** more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, ***do you (agape) love Me***?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, ***do you love (phileo) Me***?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

We know that Peter repented of his denial of Jesus after he heard the cock crow the third time. Now, at the lakeside, Jesus restores Peter and calls him to follow Jesus by adding *agape* love to his *filial* love. Our Lord knew it would take *agape* love in order for Peter to embrace the painful kind of death that the Master foretold.

All of us will encounter this same demand somewhere on our pilgrimage to salvation — to exchange our comfort zone of human companionship for the sacrificial heart of selfless servanthood that the Spirit matures. There is a place on the journey in which our human love falls short of the love our Lord requires. The type of love we're used to expressing pales in comparison to the vibrant, life-imparting love that reflects Jesus at work in us.

This is the crucial transition that Much-Afraid faces in this chapter. We can learn much from her choices, for they are the same ones each of us must make.

- Are you prepared to offer up as a Burnt Offering all your natural longings and desires as you trust that our Father knows what is best for your life? We realize this is a tough question, especially if you're not married and yearn for a life partner with whom to share the journey.

- Is there anyone in your life whom you love more than you love Jesus? Who?

6. Without waking the two beside her...

Anyone who leaves the Valley of their Strongholds must transition away from

being ***outcome-based***, that is, doing something to *gain* something. Any concern about where the journey is leading or how you will benefit from it only inhibits you from pressing on with confidence in the Shepherd. The journey calls for you to become ***obedience-based***, that is, knowing what our Lord requires and doing it without hesitation or grumbling or fear.

When the Shepherd announces, "This is the appointed place," Much-Afraid replies, "Yes, Lord, Behold me — I am thy handmaiden, I will do according to thy word." *That* is an obedience-based answer. The apostle Peter continues his classroom lesson with the risen Lord in John 15:20-23:

> Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and ***what about this man***?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, ***what is that to you***? You follow Me!" Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Peter was well aware that the young apostle held a special place in Jesus' heart, one that was reciprocated as evidenced by John's Gospel narration. Learn from Peter: Don't ever compare yourself to anyone else! Second, if you have truly died to concern about where our Lord is leading you, then in your inner being you can agree with Much-Afraid: "I will do according to thy word."

Years ago the following poem was given to us by a godly mentor. You may want to memorize it if you're at all hesitant about the future (or even the present!). After all, it's addressed to *you!*

STEP BY STEP

"As thou goest, step by step I will open the way before thee" (Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee, In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

- Do you frequently compare yourself to other Christians? If you do, does your comparison make you feel better or worse about your own spiritual maturity?

- Do you concentrate more on discerning what our Lord is commanding you, or on evaluating the outcome of where your obedience will lead you?

- Is one step enough for you to act on? Do you feel you need to justify your obedience

when others question you about your journey?

7. She did not lie down again...

As with the five wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, Much-Afraid stayed awake, prepared in spite of her fears to act when the time for obedience came. Those times when our Father is preparing you for His call to act can leave you exposed to temptations of slothfulness. But this is the time to be on guard. Close fellowship with others who are on the journey with you can be an important part of reminding yourself of that which you set out to do — to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

He is calling you to trust with absolute assurance that He is faithful to keep His promises, sovereign to orchestrate whatever is necessary for you to walk in His fullness, and loving enough to satisfy your longing with His presence.

There is a point on your journey when everything comes together. The Shepherd tells Much-Afraid, "Take now the promise that I gave you, and the natural love in your heart, and offer them for a burnt offering." Whether it's Much-Afraid, or Peter by the Sea of Galilee, or we who have left the Valley of our Strongholds, there comes a time when our human love and longing must cease to be our life's priority.

Few ever accomplish this transformation because the heart tug to receive human love is so powerful. Only those who have prepared themselves with obedience-based motivation can put everything on the altar, trusting that our Lord is fully able to resurrect your dead hopes.

- Again, "Is one step sufficient enough for you to see and go forward? If not, what is holding you back?

8. With the first glimmer of dawn...; 9. They rose immediately...

Sometimes it seems as though your life is so hectic and distracted that you're surrounded by clamor both inside and out. The waterfall ahead of Much-Afraid sounded thunderous but she did not shy away from it.

It's all too easy to get side-tracked from our Lord's best by giving in to the "next thing" that's struggling for your attention. Emergencies do happen, but trying to cram more into an already overloaded life leads to mental and emotional disintegration. Even physical destruction ensues from multi-tasking. Witness the phenomenal rise in car accidents due to distracted cell phone users.

Don't let the supposed urgent tyrannize you. Start your day in the calm, still presence of our Lord, even if you have to stay extra minutes in bed to avoid stirring a sharp-eared little one. If you're married, take a few minutes to pray and to determine together that day's priorities — and let go of the rest. If Jesus could confirm that each day has its own responsibilities and concerns, don't pile them onto yourself.

The world system will try to tempt you away from recognizing the encounters that our Lord is setting before you for His purposes. Don't let that happen!

Finally, notice that before Much-Afraid and her companions set foot out the door, they took time for breakfast! You too need a nutritious start to fortify your body for the day ahead. If you expect your soul and spirit to be responsive to God, then feed the temple that houses them!

- What distractions gnaw at your sensitive irritation spots most often? What changes need to be made in your daily plan for your spirit to flourish rather than flounder?

- Do you neglect proper care of your body by poor exercise or eating habits? What changes can you purpose to integrate into your life so

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

that your whole testimony — body, soul, and spirit — reflect the character of Jesus growing you?

10. As the hours passed they continued to climb...; 11. They were running as though for their lives...

Our humanness would like to believe that as soon as we obey our Lord's commands and walk in His ways, everything will get better. Not necessarily so. Sometimes our lives get harder! As soon as Much-Afraid and her companions began to ascend the path the Shepherd had indicated, their way got steeper than ever before.

Mike: Sue and I are western transplants. In April of 2000 we conducted a 10-day seminar for the staff of an Indian mission school outside Phoenix. When we returned to Connecticut the mission's director invited us to move to their campus to consult with them about Hebraic principles and priorities.

We accepted his invitation and looked forward to being able to help the missionaries share the Hebraic foundations with the Native Americans. Two weeks later, as we closed the cargo door to the moving truck we'd rented, the director called. His invitation to us had been rescinded. "The missionaries here overruled me with a clause in our charter. They don't like your requirement that 'You can't minister to people whom you don't love.' They admit they don't even *like* the Indians they minister to, but consider that being *responsible teachers* is sufficient."

The director added, "Mike, I believe God is protecting you and Sue. I've submitted my resignation, and my wife and I are going to live among one of the tribes to share the Hebraic foundations with them." As we prayed standing next to the truck, Sue and I agreed that God indeed wanted us to move west. We sensed that God wanted us to stay with friends in Memphis and wait further direction, so we contacted people who would intercede on our behalf.

When we arrived in Memphis we received three prophetic phone calls telling us that God wanted us to move to Flagstaff in northern Arizona. Two days later we drove into Flagstaff knowing no one. Months later, after our Lord had opened a door to work directly with Native Americans, our tribal friends told us, "If you'd gone to that mission, we we'd never have listened to you. Those people have destroyed so many of our children at their school."

One man in his 30's who had attended the mission school told me that he is the only male survivor of his graduating class. All the others had died from alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide. Evidently "responsible teaching without love" produced decidedly rotten fruit.

God delivered us as He has many times from getting involved with what we call "entangling alliances". These are relationships that would only taint the truths of what we were commanded to share, or would side-track us from fulfilling His purpose in or through us. You've probably encountered some of these alliances yourself during your journey to obey Jesus in love-grounded trust.

In the face of *total surrender*, the voices that would attempt to deter you flee. That must have been quite a sight for Much-Afraid: all her old nemeses — Fear, Bitterness, Resentment, Pride, and Self-Pity — scrambling away from perceived danger as she, in total obedience, kept on undeterred.

- Can you remember a time when God closed one door of apparent opportunity only to open a different one? How did you initially respond?

- Were you ever in a potentially dangerous situation in which you knew that our Lord was calling you to keep pressing on?

12. "What are we to do?"...; 13. "No," said Much-Afraid ...; 14. Then the Voice spoke...

There was no way Much-Afraid was going to turn around. *Something* was compelling her to press forward. There comes a time on the journey when you find something deep inside compelling you. This is the same inner drive that Paul found, *"For the (agape) love of Christ* ***compels*** *us"* (2 Corinthians 5:14a).

Mike: Both Sue and I found within ourselves this inner compulsion when we began to work among Native Americans. In their eyes, we, as whites, represented all that has ever hurt them. Wherever we traveled we received little or no facial affirmation through a smile. Because so many are ensnared by a stronghold of bitterness, they manifest as a seething, begrudging attitude of passive aggression. Refusal to let you into their hearts or lives effectively blocks out your value as a human being.

But to our surprise we found we were madly in love with them no matter how they responded to us! Paul's' words affirmed what our trust-based obedience had formed in us: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything,* ***what matters is trusting faithfulness expressing itself through (agape) love"*** (Galatians 5:6).

Much-Afraid had matured greatly during the past few days of her journey. Her resolve was not based on either flighty expectation or unrealistic dreams. She had set her face like flint to press on in obedience no matter what.

Notice the *apparent* questioning of Sorrow and Suffering as they mention turning back. They already know the answer, but Much-Afraid needed to hear herself confirm the decision.

Jesus used a similar approach with His disciples in their encounters with the hungry crowds that had followed them to deserted areas around the Galilee. When He directed His men to feed them, they asked, "How?" He wanted them to realize that He alone is sufficient to meet every need of those who trust Him.

- Describe an incident in which you did turn back from the path on which the Lord was leading you. How did you feel at the time? Has the memory of that situation stirred any change in you?

- Are you able to look at every person, especially those who have hurt you, and see them as individuals whom Jesus loved from the cross? Can you as His follower have any less than the same love for them He had?

15. In the rocky wall beside them...; 16. Then the rains descended and floods came...

Fully trusting in our Shepherd seems pretty easy when our days are sunlit and tranquil. But what about when the gales of trial are whipping about you? If you choose to abide in trust in His faithful and powerful grip, the rains won't overcome you.

Your heart relationship with Jesus is seen most vividly when you're in the middle of everything falling apart around you. It's for good reason that our Lord is portrayed as a shepherd in both *Hinds' Feet* and in Psalm 23. Notice the wonderfully intimate interplay between the Shepherd and His sheep.

> *The LORD is* ***my*** *shepherd,* ***I*** *shall not want. He makes* ***me*** *lie down in green pastures; He leads* ***me*** *beside quiet waters. He restores* ***my*** *soul; He guides* ***me*** *in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*
>
> *Even though* ***I*** *walk through the valley of the shadow of death,* ***I*** *fear no evil, for You are with* ***me****; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort* ***me.***
>
> *You prepare a table before* ***me*** *in the presence of* ***my*** *enemies; you have anointed* ***my*** *head with oil;* ***My*** *cup overflows.*
>
> *Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow* ***me*** *all the days of* ***my*** *life, and* ***I*** *will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Because of the Shepherd's unchanging character and unfailing love, we need never give way to fear. Yet we can never experience *true* peace until we face something that would attempt to rob us of that peace, be it death or evil. The oil of our anointing comes right in the middle of what we could potentially fear. It's when we have the *possibility* of fear that we find out what foundations our faith has been built upon. Frustration and fear are indicators that we are exercising a right God hasn't given us. Frustration and fear show us that we need to put something on the altar in order to have peace.

Much-Afraid and her companions have to stoop down to enter their cave of protection to experience serenity. As often as you choose to bow before our Lord on your knees to humbly share in His peaceful presence, you'll rest in in the reality of His power to overcome your tumult.

Jesus offers us the parable of the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-27 to highlight this truth. The difference between the two builders is not what they *knew*, but what they trustingly put in to *practice*.

It's often in the face of the temptation to *lose* our peace that our Lord will have us recount the cost of our journey, just as Much-Afraid is about to do.

- Are you in perfect peace or are you being plagued? If you have no peace, are you willing to place on God's altar whatever is robbing you?

- Reread Psalm 23, this time focusing on the Shepherd's role in your life. How does your perspective change as you shift from yourself to Him?

17. After they had been there...

Mike: When Sue and I arrived in Israel 11 years ago I was mired in a deep pit of self-pity and despair. Our marriage had been drained through years of intense ministry. All that both of us could do was to place absolute trust in Jesus to heal us and to bring glory out of our needy lives to Himself.

I was constantly plagued by thoughts that God had always given me "the short end of the stick". All that I could recall was the hurt and betrayals of people over the years whom I had counted as close friends. It was on New Years Eve, 1993, that our host said to me, "Only you and the Holy Spirit can deal with this." I wearily climbed the stairs to my bedroom to take up my issues with God. As soon as I closed the door it was if He were waiting for me!

I knew immediately that He had been waiting for *years* for me to take up the sufferings and betrayals with Him, and to let go of my bitterness. I never said a word, but I underwent an altar experience in which I took ownership of all my past hurts, finally understanding that our Lord had been using these to develop His Son's character in me.

By the time Sue came into the room I was changed. Even as I looked at her I was madly in love with her, but with an *agape* love I had never before experienced toward her. Since that time there have been other "memorial stones" we've picked up. These have become milestones in our sanctification process — reminders of something our Lord has changed in us.

- Do you have, as I once did, a secret grudge toward God that you are too fearful to bring before Him?

- Are you plagued by self-pity and bitterness toward others? If you are, take it up with God. He's waiting for you!

18. She looked at the little pile in her lap...; 19. She put the stone back...

Much-Afraid is about to embark on a crucial step, the same one you need to take to truly be free to love with all the *(agape)* love the Holy Spirit would pour through you for others.

The willingness to endure suffering doesn't come easily to any of us. Yet Jesus set the example for all who would walk in His steps: *"For since **He Himself was tempted** in that which He has suffered, He is able to **come to the aid** of those who are tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18). In essence, our Lord had to embrace suffering just as we must as an indispensible part of our Father's plan: *"Although He was a Son, He **learned obedience** from the things which He suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8).

Those painful situations from your past that you have not fully embraced are only going to hinder your usefulness to our Lord in the future. They will cause you to emotionally insure yourself against being fully obedient to Him, allowing yourself an emotional exit out of trusting Him during the tough times. Partial obedience is disobedience. Disobedience magnifies into rebellion and results in your failure to proceed on in your pilgrimage to the High Places.

Why is it important to recount our life journey and the crisis points in which we find our Shepherd to be so faithful? Your own "little pile of stones" can take the form of a personal journal or even your own insights and notes in the margin of your Bible. What is needful, though is that you hold onto those proofs of His faithful work in you to so deeply alter your life.

As Much-Afraid recounted her first promise from the Shepherd, that of ultimately receiving strong hind's feet, she also became aware of the *timing* factor. While she did not yet have them, she was at least that much closer to her objective to leap in the High Places!

Many of our spiritual ancestors, the Israelites, were eagerly awaiting their Redemption. And Paul encourages the Romans that their salvation is nearer now than when they first believed — and that was nearly 2000 years ago! Since our God cannot lie, His *process* of raising up sons and daughters must be high among His priorities, since we who trust are still waiting for Jesus' return. Yet the promise still stands, for all eternity.

- Recount when you have erected emotional walls up to fend off any potential hurt.

- What will it take for you to tear down anything that hinders you from being vulnerable to the ones our Lord puts in your path to learn compassion and obedience?

20. Picking up the third stone...; 21. Taking the sixth...

Perhaps you've noticed the common denominator in each of the Shepherd's promises represented by Much-Afraid's stones of remembrance: hope. As Paul comfortingly relates to the Roman believers, *"Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently"* (Romans 8:24b,25).

Each promise has to be encompassed by trust that the Speaker is truthful, and that His promises are true. Each promise is intently re-examined by Much-Afraid for veracity, and because of the nature of the Giver, each is held for safekeeping.

You may be finding yourself in the classroom depicted by these first stones: perseverance, yieldedness, patient endurance, obedience. The grinding apart of your pride and the burning away of your independence from your loving Lord is necessary if your testimony is to shine radiant before those with whom you share. It's not enough in a pluralistic, anything-goes culture to be the bearer of just another "truth". Your words

and your life need to represent the King of Kings in His love and His power. That's the kind of testimony that gets attention and perhaps draws some to reconsider their own lives.

Whether your words attract or repel, they should at the least *evoke a response*!

Mike: Our stay in Israel resulted in a dramatic life change. We had ostensibly gone to visit friends, and came back to the States with a prophetic message to restore our Father's children to the relationship He has always desired. He warned us there that not many would initially embrace that which He told us to share. But He also promised, "When the Dark Days of Chastisement come on the United States, what you share will then bear fruit."

Rejection of the Hebraic foundations and verbal attacks against us have been the habitual pattern of our ministry. Many times all we could do is recount the promises our Lord has given us. One of these promises has found fulfillment many times over: "Share this message and I will provide for you." This He has done in the most marvelous and creative ways! Remembering His promises in times of deep distress has helped us climb out of despair into the light of grateful praise.

Next to our front door we've hung a plaque with this verse, *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"* (Isaiah 6:8). During our final days in Israel Sue and I went away on a two-day retreat for our Father to confirm what He wanted us to share back in the States.

I got up very early in the morning and went into a small chapel to pray. As I sat there surrounded by memories of past failures and shortcomings, I poured out my heart to our Lord. I felt totally unworthy to share the Hebraic foundations that He was restoring to His called-out ones.

The Holy Spirit directed me to a small devotional book on the seat next to me. I opened it to the passage for that day; it was Isaiah 6:8. I knelt down and sobbed, "You do this to everyone you intend to use!" That plaque is a reminder from the Sender for the two of us to *keep on sharing*.

- How does our Lord help you get out of the pit of despair in your desperate hours?

- What particular lessons have you derived from the classrooms of perseverance, yieldedness, patient endurance, and obedience?

22. Then as she thought of his face...; 23. For a very long time...

The unalterable fact of *fulfillment* surrounds the promises of God in His Word. By now you realize that you can't allow circumstances or fears to control your life decisions. Our Father's intervention is as powerful now as when He parted the Red Sea — and just as potent in overcoming seemingly impossible situations! He Who is well able to heal the most malignant cancer is just as capable of encompassing with profound serenity and peace the one whom He chooses to heal on the other side of eternity.

Sue: For years my very independent unbelieving father paid little heed to my testimonies of our Lord's work in my life. He seemed to think that his self-sufficient life would go on as it had for years to come.

Then he developed a circulation problem and an oozing sore on his foot that kept him immobilized for over a year. During that time I returned to Connecticut to visit him, sharing as usual the work of my Lord and His offer of Lordship to those who humbly turn from their sins and come to Him for forgiveness and reconciliation. This time he listened intently. "I guess I should think about that," he commented. Then he looked me in the eye. "I really need to take action, don't I?" I agreed.

Four months later he ended his sojourn

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

on earth. In prayer I asked my Lord for an indication that my dad had followed through. The phone rang. My sister related a story about my father a few weeks before his death. "Bill," said his doctor, "your sore seems to be healing. You're a lucky man!" "Luck nothing, replied my father, "it's God Who is healing me!"

Another phone call revealed that my notoriously stingy father had offered his grandson-in-law his new snowblower as a gift! And the morning of his memorial service, our Father highlighted for me Isaiah 58:8,9: *"Then your light will burst forth like the morning, your new skin will quickly grow over your wound...Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, "Here I am."* In my spirit I knew that not only was my father's foot sore healed, but that he had indeed cried out and found healing in his spirit as well!

The moral of this tale: Keep on praying and keep on sharing. Our Lord is well able to bring about the events that will cause your loved on to encounter Him in a powerful way!

- How has our Lord made good out of a circumstance in your life that seemed hopeless?

- Have you ever shared (or refrained from sharing) the Gospel with someone who died shortly thereafter? How did that person's passing impact you?

24. Then she dropped the icy-cold little pebble..; 25. Returning the tenth stone to the bag...

Mike: Following our months in Israel we arrived back in my mother's home in late March, 1994. On April 5th our spiritual father came to see us. Frank Murray had been born in Jerusalem in 1908. His parents had gone there with many others, where some had died of disease. They had gone to intercede that God would restore the Israelites back to their land, fulfilling our Lord's promise to bring them back one last time. [See Chapter 13 of our book, *Restoring the Early Church,* for specific prophetic passages that pertain to restoration of the Jews to the Land.]

Sue and I had encountered only a few people in our lives who were as dedicated to our Lord as Frank was. We looked forward to his coming, often calling his visits "Jesus checks." Even before he arrived we'd find ourselves scrutinizing our devotion to our Lord to see if there were any areas of lukewarmness lurking. And when he left and hugged us, it was like getting a "well done" from God.

On this particular visit he conveyed a Spirit-prompted passage to encourage us in the ministry our Father had given us. Those two verses pretty well summed up our previous few years: *"Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left'"* (Isaiah 30:20,21).

The other passage that has so greatly strengthened us is Revelation 3:8: *"I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an* ***open door which no one can shut****, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name."* Sometimes we have been so knocked down by the demonic assaults that have tried to hinder us from sharing this message that we've felt our faith is almost non-existent. But in the midst of all that battle we have not denied His Name or His Word. He truly has been all-sufficient!

That trust in our Lord has been tested often during the 10 years that we've been sharing the Hebraic foundations. Habakkuk's words have been like an arrow pointing the way to the heart attitude we want to have:

Though the fig tree should not blossom
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will exult in the LORD,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
(Habakkuk 3:17,18)

- Has our Lord called you to do something that is far beyond your own abilities to fulfill? What is it?

- What are the assaults you face in order to keep on going? What encourages you to keep going?

26. Sorrow and her sister had been sitting silently...; 27. By this time, the rain had ceased...

Matthew 7:24-27 warns us in advance that our trust will be tested. Much-Afraid could have at any time tossed the whole pouch of stones out the cave entrance into the flooding water. But she chose to cling to her hope in the Shepherd through it all. By her decision, her companions were able to rejoice in "relief and thankfulness". Her trust was indeed founded on the Rock!

We can tell you with confidence that one of the things that helps you during the time of testing is to take ownership of the stones of suffering you have gone through. See them as God's instruments in your sanctification. They are part of your priceless treasure, just as were the stones of remembrance in Much-Afraid's pouch. He's using them to conform you to the character of Jesus.

As the Lord has guided us in writing these study guide chapters, it hasn't been without painful self-examination! We've had to wrestle with attitudes, confess irritation, and cry out to Him for help.

If we failed to respond to His prompting to "come clean", we'd begin to insure ourselves against further hurt. In time our trust in the "Potter" to form us as He wills would wane. Once again Paul's words penetrate below skin deep to the spiritual heart of the matter: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but [my trust] working through love"* (Galatians 5:6), and 1 Corinthians 13.

Every human being we meet deserves the same love of Jesus from us without any concern for our personal and emotional self-protection. We may get knocked down, but God through His Word and His promises strengthens us to stand in trust-based love again and again. In this way no icy hardness can form around our hearts as a barrier to hinder His love from pouring out.

- Have you embraced all of the painful sanctification stones from your past?

- Have you secretly insured yourself against any further hurt God may permit in you life? Are you emotionally guarded against further hurt by a spouse, children, close friends, anyone else?

28. From that place on...; 29. The higher they went, the more conscious she was that her strength was leaving her...

One truth is clear on our journey to salvation:

The further along you travel,
the less you lean on your own strengths.

It's helpful to recall a basic principle of sanctification. Paul clearly understood this when he yielded to God's will concerning the "thorn in his flesh": *"And He has said to me, '**My grace** is sufficient for you, for power is*

*perfected in weakness.' **Most gladly**, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul was accustomed to seeking his Lord and *hearing* from Him. That's why, even if the message wasn't one he might have hoped for, he could respond with a most glad heart. His God's purposes were being fulfilled in and through his own frailties!

There are three steps to the process of sanctification, that is, God's way of bringing us into conformity to the character of Jesus:

- **The *Indwelling* of the Holy Spirit;**
- **The *Filling* of the Holy Spirit;**
- **The *Control* of the Holy Spirit.**

1. **The Indwelling**. No transformation into Christ-likeness can occur without the indwelling Holy Spirit. We become indwelt when we embrace the true Gospel of the Covenant. Then our Father seals us with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption. [For more on this, see *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation* under Hebraic Articles on our website.]

2. **The Filling**. As we yield ourselves in obedience to the changes the Spirit desires to make in us, our soul, that is, our mind, will, and emotions, begins to be filled with His way of perceiving our lives. And with His filling comes His power.

3. **The Control**. As our soul becomes increasingly filled with the Spirit, our mind, will, and emotions come under His control. Our motivations and attitudes begin to respond as if the mind of Christ is ruling us. The more we come under the control of the Holy Spirit, the less we are like the world in motivation, attitude and response. In time, the world system doesn't even know us.

Paul addresses the difference between spiritual life and natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:13,14:

> *Those things things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

- Are you readily aware in your spiritual journey that it is our Lord Who is the "Refiner", the "Potter", and the "Baker"? There is no doubt that He intends to change you. How do you feel about this whole process?

- Summarize briefly the changes that the Spirit has made in you from your initial indwelling by the Spirit through to His control in your life. How has the nature of your relationship with others changed during this spiritual odyssey?

30. On the second day...; 31. Stooping down at the spring where it bubbled...; 32. There is a tree growing...; 33. Much-Afraid looked on the other side...; 34. Suffering stepped forward...

One aspect is often overlooked in the sanctification changes that the Holy Spirit makes in our Father's children. We can look back and see the character changes He has made, but sometimes we don't realize the greater dependency on Him that He has instilled in us. Dependency is connected to our increasing level of trust. And trust, along with our love, is what binds together our relationship with our Father.

Dependency shows that we understand how awesome, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving our Father is. Sadly, for too many, His method of suffering in order to accomplish His purpose leaves a bitter taste in their hearts. Far too many turn back in bitterness because they've erroneously been taught that everything ought

to go great for them after they put their trust in Jesus.

The truth is: Our Lord uses situations and people to *change* us. It's far easier to pick up and embrace the stones of past situations in which we had to endure suffering than it is to embrace the *people* God has used, especially when betrayal may have been part of the suffering we endured. I can only repeat for you the precious counsel my friend gave me years ago: **"You can never walk in the fullness of Jesus, until you wash the feet of Judas."**

The "Branch" that Much-Afraid cast into the bitter water represents Jesus. NO ONE can heal the pain of past bitter experiences except Jesus — NO ONE! It is only through forgiving those who hurt us that we can take ownership of that particular "sanctification stone."

Only by crying out to Jesus for His power to heal our emotions can we truly be healed. All areas of our bitterness must come under control of the Holy Spirit if we are to find the freedom Jesus promises. That means no rationalization, no victimization, no blame, no denial.

Do you want to speed up the healing process? After you forgive from your heart the people who have hurt you, pray for our Lord to *bless* those individuals. Forgiveness only gets you back to zero out of "negative territory." Blessing gets you into "positive territory." The further you press on into positive territory through sincerely praying blessing for whoever hurt you, the harder it will be for you to be seduced back into that bitterness.

Note that the water Much-Afraid drinks doesn't become sweet, only that the stinging, burning bitterness has gone. Your memories of past hurts will not become sweet to you, but the healing power of Jesus will *remove the sting* of them. The "curative properties" of forgiveness equip you to comfort others with the comfort you yourself have received from Him. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

- Have you applied the Branch of forgiveness and cried out to Jesus, praying blessing for those who have hurt you?

- List some tangible forms of blessing through which you can demonstrate that you've forgiven from your heart.

35. After they had rested...

Much-Afraid's journey has not gotten easier per se. The path is even steeper than it had been, but her resolve to reach the appointed place and fulfill the Shepherd's command was strengthened.

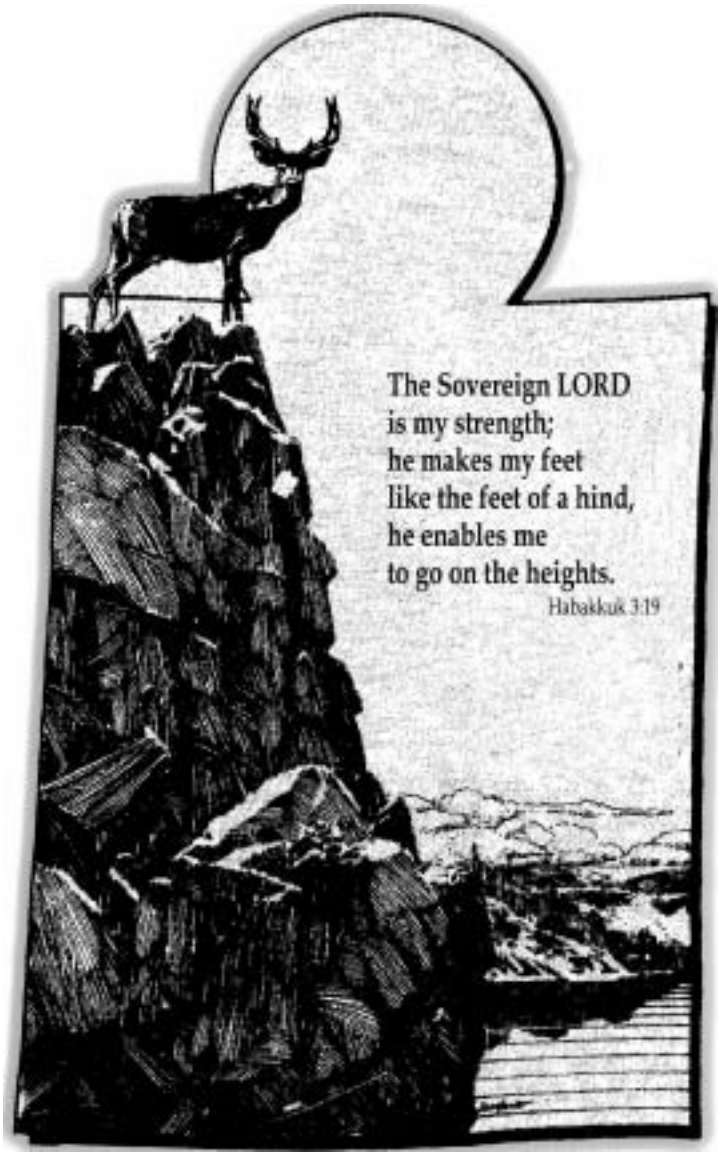
So often in Scripture we see repeated the phrase, "on the third day." Not only did our Savior rise during that time frame, but all sorts of resolutions occurred throughout both testaments. Check out your concordance and marvel at the frequency!

Your own "third day" calls for you to keep pressing on with expectant urgency before your motivation and purpose get side-tracked. For the joy set before Him, Jesus pressed on to victory. Keep going!

- In the next chapter a wonderful transformation occurs. Are you prepared to set aside human love and receive the love that only our Lord can give you? Before we get to the next chapter, is anything still hindering you?

Going to the High Places

Chapter 16 *Grave on the Mountains*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

We come to the point in our journey in which *hope* is key. Hope is the essence of that which you haven't yet seen come to pass, but still trust that it will because of the One Who brings it about!

Much-Afraid must confront the fact that the wonderful promises of the Shepherd have not yet been fulfilled. She has not reached the High Places, her feet still stumble at times, and her heart is still tangled with the very natural desire for human love to be reciprocated.

Yet she has set her heart like flint to "do that which He had told her, simply because He asked it of her." What a model of loving, obedient trust! Her only strength lies in the unchangeable faithfulness of our Lord. No matter how indiscernible the outcome may be, she's determined to follow where He leads. As the prophet Hosea assures those who are pressing onward, *"The **ways of the Lord are straight**, and the **righteous walk in them**, but in them sinners stumble* (14:9b).

Chapter 16
Grave on the Mountains

1. The path led forward...

The gaping gorge was indeed the place which had been appointed for Much-Afraid. If ever she might have doubted the Shepherd's will, this impassible chasm would have been it.

Picture yourself teetering at the edge of a mist-filled abyss, so clouded that you can't even make out the other side, and so deep that all you hear is the voice of mighty, swirling waters below. There's no safety net at the bottom, either!

Much-Afraid has grown greatly in her trust of the Shepherd, though. She doesn't have to understand or even question His intended path for her and her companions. It's that *pattern* of ongoing obedience that has taught her to wholly yield to His will. One step of faith has become enough for her faith to see — and to obey.

Has our Shepherd ever led you to a seemingly insurmountable chasm across which lies no secure bridge of prior experience to which you can cling?

We've stood a number of times at the very edge of the majestic Grand Canyon, peering into the plunging rocky depths. A certain slightly queasy churning warns me when I get too close to the brink — the next step is thousand feet down! The Canyon is huge to the point of surreal, like a canvas on which its Creator has exuberantly splashed images of rock and horizon. The mighty Colorado River at the bottom seems a rambling ribbon encompassed by towering walls.

Much-Afraid's intent gaze reveals no such detailed shape or color to give it perspective. No trails beckon her to pick her way carefully down. All that she's aware of is dense mist hovering over a gravelike gorge.

- Describe the highest point from which you've stood gazing downward. How did it feel to be able to see so far down and so far across?

- What life experience could you compare to Much-Afraid's dead end in which she knows she can't turn back or skirt around?

2. Looking at her companions...; 3. Then for the last time...

Don't you feel proud of Much-Afraid that it never even crossed her mind to turn back, even in the face of such a terrible unknown? That willingness to totally surrender herself in compliance with the Shepherd's plan shows just how far she — and hopefully we — have come in our journey together to the High Places.

She doesn't even grumble that the designated path of obedience is *downward*, not up

to the heights. What she does encounter, however, is the calm confirmation of her companions that she must jump. And, she's not alone. Her companions are eager to receive her extended hands so that they too might complete their Shepherd's assignment.

Such precious companionship is key to your inner resolve when you face a situation as life-altering as this one! Sue: Not long after Mike and I returned from our own epiphany in Israel, we were both overtaken with dreams of a mountain — at the same time! Mike's dream found him standing on Mount Horeb, the "mountain of desolation" in the Older Testament. Our Lord told him, "I brought you to this place to *desolate* you. I've used the past few years to purge you of that which isn't like Me for My intended use for you. Now wake up your wife and tell her."

Mike gently shook me awake just as I was ending a dream. I'd been standing on a mountain plateau shaped like a half-moon that stretched out into ever-brightening light. My back was to the dark, flat edge. I knew without looking that the blackness behind me was studded with jagged rocks and fell steeply downward.

The Spirit made clear that that darkness was my past, and that destruction lay in my life if I tried to recapture anything of that past. Then I heard in my spirit, "You may look from side to side to see who is traveling with you, but you must keep pressing on into the light."

As Mike excitedly shared his dream, I repeated mine. We both recognized that we were being prepared for service in an arena we'd never before trod.

- Who are the key companions our Lord has brought to come alongside you to encourage and exhort you to press on to the High Places?

- If you feel as though you're all alone at the moment, are you willing to ask our Father to give you His perspective on the people you already know? Perhaps He's placed a "companion in the rough" in your life to foster a deeper relationship with Him. Don't discount neighbors, co-workers or even casual acquaintances whom He might be preparing to be woven into your life tapestry!

4. The place into which they had thrown themselves...

If you are to participate in the sufferings of Jesus in order to share in His glory (see Romans 8:17), you're going to be called to obedience in which your dreams and plans are "bruised and shaken". Fear of potential pain and injury could have paralyzed Much-Afraid into inaction. She could have refused to leave her perch of relative safety.

But total yieldedness of heart demands that we let go of any fears or even preferences that could hinder our confidence that *"underneath are the everlasting arms"* (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Much-Afraid wasn't so foolish as to presuppose that she'd float down like a feather into the gorge or glide gracefully like an eagle, thereby escaping pain. No, her obedience was prompted by her trust in the faithfulness of her Shepherd. If He said that she needed to jump into a misty pit, then He had a purpose greater than her need to understand beforehand.

As they felt their way along the canyon floor, the three happened upon a large flat altar. This was quite unlike the pebbly altars upon which Much-Afraid had received her memorial stones of promise. Yet she had learned the significance of altars and was already *prepared in her heart* to obey.

- Have you ever taken a "leap of faith" into the unknown in obedience to the Spirit's prompting?

• How did you respond when you discovered that your obedience yielded an outcome far different from what you had anticipated? Was your determination to continue to trust strengthened or weakened by your experience?

5. "This is the place"...; 6. But for the first time on all that journey...; 7. She knelt there quite alone...; 8. It seemed that in a way Bitterness had been right...

Much-Afraid now encounters a unique situation in her relationship with the Shepherd: *silence* in response to her prayer. This is a defining point for her. Will she panic? doubt? faint? Will her trust falter in this new refining fire?

We've both had times during our journey in which it seemed as though the heavens were indeed brass. Our spirits felt utterly alone. You've probably passed through a few seasons like this too!

But that's precisely the time in which we must draw on our trust that He never fails His Word. Even if my eyes see no evidence of Him at work in my life, and my ears hear no encouraging word that this too will pass, my confidence must rest in HIS faithfulness and trustworthiness. He has promised to never forsake me, and I must choose to either lay claim to that reality or suffer the pain of doubting Him.

Your imagination can be a fertile playground for Satan to insinuate painful images. If you're not diligent to capture those thoughts, you'll *wall off* the very people who need your love — usually the ones most capable of hurting you! You can see how quickly doubt can explode into fear, and fear can escalate into emotional isolation. Don't let that happen!

If you allow doubt to nip at your trust, other unbidden thoughts will fill in the void where hope should be. Because Much-Afraid had already set her heart on trusting the Shepherd, even the memory of Bitterness's words of woeful warning had no emotional impact. The *words* he'd snarled had pretty well come to pass, but their verity had *no power to bring her down*. Only one thing mattered to Much-Afraid: "to do the will of the one she followed and loved, no matter what it involved or cost."

And isn't that what He's asking of *you*?

• What is the worst scenario you could imagine might happen to you? Can you walk in Much-Afraid's steps of trust that nothing else matters than doing the will of the One you love and follow?

• What period stands out in your life journey when you cried out to Jesus but sensed no response? How did you react when that happened?

9. The grave up on the mountains...

What gentle peace invades your heart when you have abandoned yourself to the utter sovereignty of the Shepherd! All striving ceases, all the past flagellation of self-pity and resentment and pride are extinguished.

This is the path of acceptance walked by so many of our persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide. They know deeply the companionship spoken of by the exiled apostle John, a *"fellow-sharer in the **suffering** and the **kingship** and the **perseverance** that come from being **united with Jesus**"* (Revelation 1:9).

Heaven's perceived silence leads us to an interesting point. How does the nature of your prayers change as you grow in understanding of His faithfulness, even when you know that "no Angel will call from heaven to say that [your] sacrifice need not be made"?

Jesus exhorted His disciples to keep on praying, as did the apostle Paul with the Thessalonian believers. In light of *His faithfulness*, your desperation factor can diminish or even disintegrate completely.

Mike: Sue and I have experienced our Father's response to our cry immediately at times, and later at others. Many petitions and requests are still pending! But the One Who is well able to answer is also worthy to decide *when and how* He will respond. That's His prerogative as Lord!

As you've probably noticed in David's psalms in particular, our communication with our God can encompass a full range of emotions. He created us to experience these and knows our weaknesses and frailties. He won't turn you away from bringing before Him that which He already knows is going on in your heart. Just remember that the other frail human beings He's set in your midst aren't as understanding as He is. They can't read your mind to determine if *they're* at fault, or if you are just going through a tough time yourself. Exercise the *self-control* the Spirit offers so others don't have to be apprehensive around you!

Sue: Some of my deepest disappointments have come when I've prayed *answers* instead of requests and petitions! In other words, I've been so specific in what I thought God needed to do that I boxed out His creativity and blinded myself to the unique way in which He *was* intervening!

The testimony of a dear brother can help clarify the difference between praying for needs rather than specifying answers. "I was anxious and worried because my car had broken down and I had no way to get to work. So I asked Mike and Sue to pray with me for another car. To my dismay, they refused! But then they explained that my real need was for *transportation*, so that's what they prayed for with me.

"The next day I happened to mention my need to a co-worker, and his face lit up! He lived one exit up from my apartment complex and said he'd be glad to pick me up and drop me off. Those times during our daily 45-minute commute were incredible! I led him to Jesus, and we spent the drive time praying and singing and learning from the Bible on tape.

"I started to feel a little guilty about inconveniencing him, but then his wife called me. She told me how delighted she and the kids were with the changes she was seeing in her husband. SHE didn't want the fellowship to stop! So our Lord answered the need in such a way that my earlier prayer about getting another car seems so shortsighted now."

Praying a need isn't a fatalistic "whatever will be, will be" approach. Even the blind man who trustingly approached Jesus expressed his *need*: "I want to see!" He didn't presume to tell Jesus how to do it. He just trusted that however the Master chose to meet the need would be sufficient.

Our Shepherd's provision surpasses all that we could think or ask. We just need the spiritual eyes to see the matter from His perspective and to wait on Him to reveal His response.

- Are you one who prays specific answers rather than offering our Father your need?

- Are you willing to offer up your "prayers, and petitions with thanksgiving" (Philippians 4:6) with a confident peace that you are being heard? Do you have a hopeful expectation that His timing and intervention will far exceed your heart's desire because it is suiting His purposes?

10. She felt nothing but a great stillness...; 11. After she had waited for a little...

Form in your mind's eye an image of "the flame of concentrated desire to do his will." Mike: One morning in prayer our Lord gave me a picture of a funnel to illustrate progress into the center of His will. Alongside the sides of the funnel are our human desires and the obstacles and strongholds, like cliff ledges, on which we choose to camp out rather than press on in Him.

But if you yearn with all your heart to follow Jesus and to serve His purposes, you

find yourself moving into the funnel stem. There in the stem, your desires and ambitions are swallowed up by His wonderful *agape* love. That was the place of stillness for Much-Afraid, desiring only to "do that which he had told her."

The natural love and human desires that Much-Afraid tried so desperately to root out from her very being are all that many of us have ever known. We enter this world screaming for nourishment and the touch that expresses love — and that's not wrong! Babies who *don't* receive cuddling and response to their cries fail to thrive, even to the point of death.

But the human hunger for love can overwhelm all our other motivations. We can become obsessed with requiring others to love us the way we *want* them to. That can call for all sorts of hoops for individuals to have to jump through in order for their love to be *received* as love. And such a narrow framework for love in a relationship can be crippling.

A dear older woman complained to us that she never felt loved by her children or grandchildren. We happened to know that these various relatives were actually very attentive and demonstrative in their affection. But this woman had very precise demands of them, and if they didn't fulfill these requirements, *nothing* they did was seen as loving from her perspective. That can be pretty frustrating for everyone!

Much-Afraid recognized that the roots of human love and desire in her were hindering intimacy with her Shepherd. But no matter how hard she tried in her own meager strength to dislodge them, her efforts were futile.

Does that mean that followers of Jesus can't relish the loving joy we share with our spouse, children, friends? Of course not! Jesus emphasized repeatedly the need for His disciples to love one another in very real, sacrificial ways.

But if your natural love is more important to you than your love for Him, then that natural love needs to be reexamined and diminished. Your relational priorities have become skewed. The objects of your natural love have become idols, and our Lord is jealous to be first in His people's lives. That's why Jesus spoke words that confound those who aren't united in Him: *"If anyone* ***comes to me*** *and does not* ***hate*** *his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers ansd sisters, yes, and his own life bsides, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14: 26). This means that our love for Him must be so great that in comparison, the rightful love we have for others would seem like hatred.

Do you remember the testing undergone by the patriarch Abraham, the first "called-out one"? If he was to be the father of all who trust and obey their Lord fully, then anything that might interfere had to be removed. Abraham's long-awaited and much beloved son Isaac could have become an idol to the old man and his elderly wife. Therefore, the patriarch's obedient trust was put on the line. Was he willing to sacrifice this son of the promise God had made to him?

You can almost hear the thoughts scurrying through his mind. Yet Abraham trusted this God Who had miraculously given him this now-teenager. Surely, he reasoned, He can bring him back to life even from death's dark door.

That's trust! But it didn't come all of a sudden. Abraham had to be resolute in his relationship with God long before he and the lad made their fateful climb up Mount Moriah's rocky sides. If not, his natural love would have dissuaded him, and reason would have found him balking.

Abraham, the first Hebrew, stood firm in His relationship of love-grounded obedient trust. This is the same powerful relationship in Jesus that our Father is restoring — the *Hebraic* foundation of our lifelong pilgrimage with our Shepherd. The roots which Jesus expanded into fully a heart issue emanated from this walk of Abraham with his Lord.

It's the same test of obedient devotion confronting Much-Afraid, and the same test

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

that faces each of us who yearn to walk in our Master's steps. The *agape*, self-sacrificing love that our Lord demands makes natural love pale in comparison.

- Are you in a place in your journey in which you can truly affirm that Jesus is first in your heart and life?

- How would you explain that sort of love to someone who has yet to walk in union with Jesus?

12. For the first time she felt...; 13. At that the indistinct figure behind the altar...

True fellowship in the Body of Jesus is when one Christ-follower helps another Christ-follower to walk more fully in the Master. It's always a fine line between helping someone out and presumptuously stepping in to relieve suffering that's been orchestrated by our Father for their good.

If the Holy Spirit has anointed you with a gift of mercy, it's especially important that you await His impulse before you charge ahead to allay pain or discomfort. You may find yourself forging ahead and interfering in a situation in which you don't have our Father's perfect perspective. You might be wanting to bring comfort when our Father is expanding His child's patient endurance, or even bringing him or her to repentance!

Nature abounds with examples of intense struggle needed for life to thrive. If you misguidedly peel the shell off a squirming exhausted chick, you will have stunted the muscle growth that its struggle would have strengthened. If you seemingly come to the aid of a writhing butterfly as it wiggles out of its cocoon, you will have doomed it. That struggle is necessary for its wings to fully develop.

Sorrow and Suffering wisely deferred from stepping in to tear out natural love from their companion's heart. They realized that her heartrending plea was outside the scope of their call from the Shepherd. Much-Afraid's spiritual growth would be stunted by anything other than doing their part, and *only* their part, of the Master's plan.

The Shepherd's intent was for Much-Afraid to understand that *He alone* could excise her natural desires in order for His seed of *agape* love to bloom. *"I call to God, the Most High, to God who is* ***accomplishing his purpose*** *for me"* (Psalm 57:2)

All throughout Scripture we find people crying out for help. Time and again Israel finds herself in desperate straits, calling to a God they *know about.* But they fail to *be* the people that belong to Him heart, soul, mind and strength. When their need has been satisfied, they turn away from Him shamelessly.

The God of the Bible wants a relationship with His people that far transcends "grandfather in the sky" overflowing with goodies. How vital that we today heed the warning proclaimed to ancient Israel: *"Am I supposed to redeem them when they have spoken lies against Me? They have not cried out to Me* ***from their hearts****, even though they wail on their beds. They assemble themselves for grain and wine, yet* ***turn away from Me****"* (Hosea 7:13b,14).

Our Father used trials and challenges as opportunities for seekers to find Him and for the faithful to grow deeper in Him. But all too often, shortsighted believers rush in to put a bandaid over a devastating spiritual cancer. Be sure that your help is motivated in response to the Spirit's command, and not just your own natural response to alleviate suffering.

- When has someone hampered your spiritual growth by trying to relieve a pain or trial that our Father intended to be good for you? When did you realize that your "helper" had made a mistake?

- How has the Spirit helped you discern between a door of service that He has opened and one that He has purposely closed to you?

14. Much-Afraid turned toward him...; 15. He came and stood beside her...; 16. There was complete silence...

Note that there is only one priest at this crisis point in Much-Afraid's life. He's not surrounded by under-priests to do His bidding or to assist. This priest alone is sufficient, a quiet presence of whom she has no fear.

How well Much-Afraid knows herself as she pleads with this priest to bind her to the altar! And how deep is her love for the Shepherd that she so wants to ensure that she not "be found struggling while the will of [her] Lord is done."

Rather than bring down the Shepherd's reputation, Much-Afraid preferred to limit her own freedom so that He could accomplish His will in her. She much preferred to take on His identity rather than cling to even a vestige of her former self. Her cry mirrors the plea of King David: *"From the end of the earth, with fainting heart, I call to you. Set me down on a rock far above where I am now"* (Psalm 61:2).

The complete silence that followed her request perhaps is a picture of the wonder of the angels "who long to look into these things." None in the heavenlies, neither angel nor demon, has the kind of relationship in our frailty and weakness that followers of Jesus have with their Father.

Being bound "hand and foot" is significant for you as well as for Much-Afraid. Hands often represent what you *do*, your actions. Feet refer to your ability to *go* where you need to. By this binding, Much-Afraid is affirming herself as the Shepherd's *beloved bondslave* as so often referred to by Paul. For that is truly what Lordship entails: He alone is the Master, and we, in walking with His Spirit, are His slaves as well as His co-heirs and family. He has the right to tell us, as His own, what to do, where to go, and what to say.

He has set you aside to be in union with Him for His purposes. He continues to refine you to more readily and eagerly responsive to that purpose!

- Do you have crisis points or serious issues at hand in which you find yourself struggling, complaining, or walking in less than the trust that would bring Him praise?

- How has following Jesus "bound" your hands (what you choose to do) and feet (where you choose to go)? How has your life changed as you've yielded these prerogatives to your Shepherd?

17. When he had finished...; 18. Still there was silence...

Sue: I can't help but marvel at the hope of those who have preceded us in Jesus under exceedingly difficult circumstances. From the heroes of the faith recounted in Hebrews chapter 11 to present-day martyrs clinging to Jesus through unimaginable torture, their *hope* has sustained them.

Our lives here in America generally aren't greatly impacted by the "hopes" we express: "I hope it doesn't rain." "I hope my son calls today." Yet it's an unshakable hope in her Shepherd's faithfulness that urges Much-Afraid to lay down her life. This isn't mere wish or maybe! She's betting her all that being in Him is of far greater worth than even the pleasure of human love.

She knows she's come to die to herself, to be buried to her old fears and insecurities, and to offer up the as yet unfulfilled promises which have carried her thus far. She's come to that wonderful place of finding her rest only in Him: *"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone*

is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken" (Psalm 62:1,2).

Our Shepherd is calling you, too, to a two-fold mission: to die to all your deeply entrenched desires and plans, and to cling to the hope of that which He promises to fulfill in you in His timing, even unto death.

Some people have pretty well let go of their own ambitions and desires, but they haven't committed to holding onto only His promises! It's a two-fold process — one hand lets go of the old so that the other can take hold of His and press on.

Our Father never intends for you to be drifting along purposelessly until eternity's gate opens for you. One of the most basic of the seven needs He's instilled in you is the need for purpose and meaning in Him. He's not short on revealing it to you if your heart is free from the entangling alliances of natural wants and dreams.

- What particular promises of God have you latched onto with hope as unshakable as Much-Afraid's?

- Can you agree with Job that no matter where your journey takes you, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him" (13:15)? What particular desires and plans have you willingly placed on His altar so that He can direct your path?

19. The priest put forth a hand of steel...; 20. He held it for a moment...

"The time had come." *Perfect timing* describes our Father's intervention exactly. He knows the beginning and the end of a matter, and everything in between. So why should you fret along the way if you fully trust His sovereignty and right to decide?

Timing is part of the character of our Father. Study the beautiful harmony of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and notice how the "time" element intertwines every aspect of life.

His timing is key. You can jump in with the noblest heart to attempt great things for God, but if the timing isn't His, then the fruit won't be either. How many zealous young missionaries have painfully returned from the field because the timing was not of God? Perhaps their hearts were not yet free of demonic strongholds, or they weren't yet wise with the maturity of life's lessons, or their families weren't emotionally or spiritually ready.

Mike: The Spirit has gifted me with a prophetic anointing to share God's truths to His people at large as well as to individuals as He directs. But I've learned (painfully) over the years that the moment He breathes a message to me isn't necessarily the time He releases me to share it. Sometimes I've sat on a message for years until the Spirit has said it was time!

- Recount an instance in which you spiritually jumped the gun and discovered that what you thought God wanted you to do was ill-timed, not well-received, and fruitless.

- Why was it so important for Much-Afraid that "not a rootlet was torn or missing" from her natural love and desires? What happens when natural gets in the way of agape love?

21. When he had said this...; 22. Then, utterly exhausted, she fell asleep.

Completely at peace and totally spent, Much-Afraid falls into a deep sleep. This stage of her journey has been the culmination of her preparation in her quest for the High Places with the Shepherd. She has yielded every dream, every degree of self-ownership, to the altar of love-grounded obedient trust in the Shepherd. All vestiges

of her companions, Sorrow and Suffering, have disappeared.

Oh what freedom of spirit comes when worries and fears are consumed on His altar! Sue: For our first few weeks in Israel, I was plagued by unwarranted fear of being killed (and this was long before the tragic suicide bombings that have so devastated the people of that land). Those thoughts were so vivid that I actually had dreams of specific ways in which I'd be killed!

But then the Spirit's reminder broke through my agitation: "Is your Father still sovereign? Can a sparrow fall without Him knowing?"

As I purposely chose to focus on my Father's Lordship and my "childship" relationship with Him, I realized how those fears had shifted my focus *away* from Him and onto myself. I had forgotten in Whose hand my very life depended: *"For You have been my help; in the shadow of Your wings I rejoice; my heart* ***clings to You****;* ***Your right hand*** *supports me"* (Psalm 63:7,8).

My Father's right hand of *power and authority* supports me! With conscious decision to rely on the Spirit within me, I burned up those thoughts on His altar in my mind, the very place where they had so tormented me. At that point, it didn't matter if my life or my death better suited His purposes. He was, and remains, my King and my Lord.

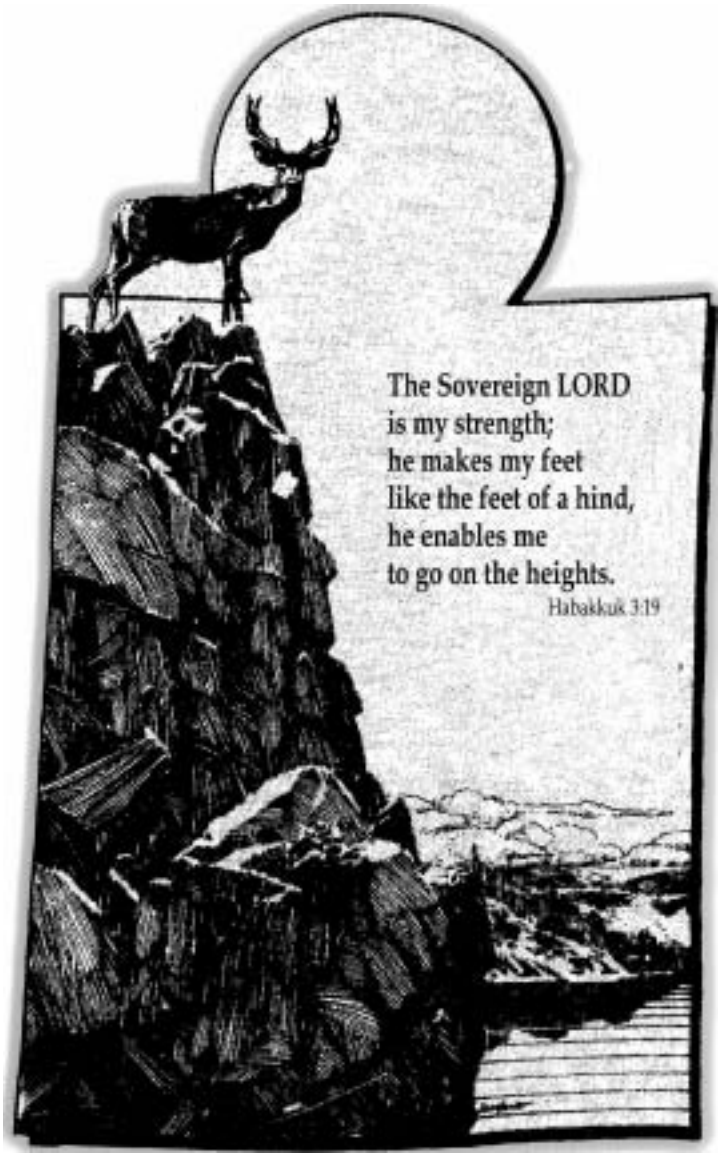
When your heart is filled with desire to bring Him praise, there's no room for debilitating sorrow and self-condemning suffering.

- Did you wince when you read about the priest's "hand of steel" ripping and rending all of Much-Afraid's natural love and dreams? What went through your mind?

- What is hindering you from letting Him consume all that's hampering you from walking in His steps?

Going to the High Places

Chapter 17 *Healing Streams*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #68
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

We are coming to closure on our journey to the High Places of fullness in Jesus. As we shall see in these four concluding chapters, arriving is wonderful! But even more important are the lessons we've learned in *how we got here*, and the burden we begin to feel for those we left back in the Valley of Their Strongholds.

The High Places are not some type of spiritual Nirvana, but an ongoing place of transformation in our life journey in which we are conformed more into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28,29). As we reflect His loving concern for mankind, we are able to redemptively represent Him to others.

As you complete these final chapters with us, keep in mind three important guideposts:

1. *Lessons you've learned* as a vital part of your testimony;

2. *Ownership of your sufferings* without blame or regret;

3 A growing burden to be used by our Lord to *fulfill His purposes*.

Chapter 17
Healing Streams

1. When at last Much-Afraid awoke...; 2. The rocky cave...; 3. She and her two companions...

The radiant sunshine that evaporated the earlier mist revealed to Much-Afraid how glorious everything around her appeared. No longer ensnared by her old fleshly desires and hopes, she could fully appreciate without pain or regret her present reality. The "burial cloths" of her death to self, drenched with traditional spices, were a blanket of sweetness rather than a painful reminder of what was no longer a part of her inner being.

Mike: I can still remember the remarkable transformation that took place in me after I renounced the stronghold of rejection. This is how it occurred:

> I was alone, confronted by a startling sight in front of me. The vision appeared as an object that looked like a big black rock about five feet high and five feet wide. On it was written the word "DECEIT." I prayed, renouncing the spirit of deceit, and a veneer like an onion skin fell off the object. Underneath this veneer was the word "REJECTION."
>
> I stared at that word, and God began to show me painful memories of my childhood — many of which I had forgotten. As I watched the scenes unfold, a growing sense of humiliation welled up inside me. Then the Holy Spirit revealed, "Those feelings of humiliation laid the foundation for the stronghold of rejection to be built in you. Now renounce that spirit's influence in your life." When I renounced the spirit of rejection in the name of Jesus, the black object disappeared. I was changed, but I was uncertain in what way.
>
> The day after my vision and subsequent deliverance from the spirits of deceit and rejection, I participated in a very difficult meeting with a group of church leaders. Their denomination was in the process of introducing some very unbiblical teachings, and the men were yielding to the pressure. As I encouraged them to not give in but to uphold God's Word at all cost, they became antagonistic toward me. It was at that moment that I realized that **I loved them *despite* their reaction to me. I realized that without the spirit of rejection influencing me, I was able to love them, rather than to respond negatively to them.**
>
> (from our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*)

Much-Afraid's experience in the rocky cave reminds us of what real fellowship in Jesus is like. Sharing what you've seen and heard Him do *unites hearts* in fellowship "with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Messiah" (1 John 1:3). When you are together with others who are sold out to follow and serve Him no matter what the cost, your conversation and your testimony radiate His presence and His perspective.

- Are you completely free from the influence of all strongholds? Why not look at page 37 of Demolishing Strongholds and be sure.

- Are you in a place of complete repentance? Ask the Holy Spirit to penetrate your soul so that any hindrance to your availability for His use of your life can be exposed and cast down.

4. Rising quietly, she went outside...; 5. In the center of the canyon...; 6. One was perched on the altar...

How vibrant and teeming with life was the very scene of Much-Afraid's altar of death to natural love! Gone was the mist of fear of the unknown, giving way to beauty throbbing in all its diversity. The penetration of *light* revealed everything that had been there before her transformation, but now was she able to perceive it.

As you walk in freedom from your spiritual strongholds, obeying only your Shepherd's voice as He leads, you begin to understand Him more. Our God is a *heart-changer*. It's not what you *do* in service for Him that really gives Him delight. It's the *love* He's able to produce in you that mirrors His character and impacts others so greatly.

His love in you is a light in your soul — your mind, will and emotions — that radiates with His power and passion. It's a heart circumcision accomplished *in union with Jesus* by "stripping away the old nature's control over the body" (Colossians 2:11).

As she thrills at the gushing cascades of water, Much-Afraid notices that her altar caps the source of waters that form the mighty waterfall. This altar source of water holds great significance for us travelers. The foundation to the Gospel that the early Church embraced is found in Jesus' proclamation in John 7:38,39, *"He who trusts in Me, as the Scripture [Old Testament] said, 'From his **innermost being** will flow **rivers of living water**.' By this He spoke of **the Spirit**, whom those who trusted in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified"* (John 7:38,39).

When you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Jesus promises that streams of living water will flow from your innermost being. The source for that vital flow is the Holy Spirit. Streams connote something in motion, poured out to bring refreshment and life wherever that water passes. Water that doesn't flow is stagnant. It suffocates life and harbors decay, much like religious form that serves self and leads to destruction.

The Spirit's empowerment sets you in motion, motion that serves the interests of the King in His Kingdom. His stream brings life!

Mike: Many years ago Sue and I and several others were studying the passage in Ezekiel 47 about the water that flowed out of the Temple. As you recall, the stream grew into an ever deepening river. I asked the group, "If you encountered the river far away from the Temple, which way would you go, upstream or downstream?" Everyone replied "downstream".

I offered a different view for them to consider. "You should always go *upstream* to the source first!" Always go to the source because there you'll find the origin at its purest. In a few chapters Much-Afraid will be burdened with compassion for those in the Valley of Humiliation who once had hurt her. But before she can ever help them with pure motive, she needs the *transformation* that only the Source can give. Please don't lose sight of this in your own life!

Many years ago at our retreat center, there was a particular church leader who always resisted whenever I pointed out a "vertical view" on whatever we were discussing. You gain a "vertical view" when you pray to glean God's perspective on a matter. His perspective comes as you carefully seek out His wisdom, as enjoined by the prophet Haggai, rather than your own "horizontal "

rationale and reasoning.

For many years this leader would come to our center with the men from his congregation, always armed with the same resistant spirit. But one day he took me aside and confessed. God had given him a vivid dream. In the dream he and I were leading a group of people across a meadow toward a river. When we reached the river bank, he jumped in and told everyone else to follow him downstream. He said, "Mike, you stood on the bank and told everyone to jump into the river and go *upstream*. Everyone followed you in your upstream course."

He continued, "I got out of the river and followed you along the banks. When you arrived at a waterfall, I figured you'd be stuck climbing it, and that I could beat you to the top.

"I discovered stairs carved into the rock and climbed them. When I reached the top I found the throne of God. He said to me, 'Bill, what are you doing here, and how did you get here?' I replied, 'I wanted to get to the top of the waterfall.' God admonished me, 'You didn't come the way I have prescribed. Look at the steps — you've muddied them. Now, go back down and clean them as you descend.'"

Bill added, "As I made my way down the rock stairs I looked over toward the waterfall. You were all holding hands and praying. Then I saw the Holy Spirit lift you up the falls." As he finished recounting his dream, Bill turned to face me. "Mike, I want to ask your forgiveness. I see now that you've been teaching us to live *by the Spirit*, not by our own strengths."

Your greatest perceived strengths can be your greatest hindrance in recognizing your dependence on *living water*. **Whatever you face, go to the Source of all strength, wisdom, comfort!**

- Would people describe you as a person of the Spirit? Do you flow day by day as a stream of the Spirit? Give an example of His transforming work in you.
- Perhaps you're a person known for your biblical knowledge, but you're operating without spiritual power. How would you describe yourself? Take the time to ask a few others...

7. For some time she stood looking...; 8. The first thing she did...

Do you ever experience in your heart a "leaping and thrilling of growing joy" and a "peace indescribably sweet"? Much-Afraid was glad to savor the full glory of the moment even though she was quite alone. She didn't need others to get her "hyped" or "psyched".

She had passed through a season of darkness and fear, yet now was in the present of fullness of joy. Even the tingle of icy water which might have previously caused her alarm or at least discomfort brought only refreshment.

Sue: Last summer we were blessed with a visit to a remote dude ranch in northern Wyoming. The full impact of the joyous moment hit me as I galloped across the high prairie, encompassed by the grandeur of my Father's creation! That sense of "perfect well-being" was a special gift, a memory of a mountain top treasure that occurred at one point in time but continues to bring joy as I relive it in my mind. And I can't help but thank once again the One Who brought it all about!

Mike: Both Sue and I experienced in our backpacking days the breathtaking chill of a glacier-fed stream rippling over us on a hot day in the wilderness. The bone-chilling refreshment turns your skin red even as your spirit leaps inside you with gratefulness to be out there relishing His handiwork!

The next few chapters will find us joining Much-Afraid as she spends time on the High Places. It's important that you don't misun-

derstand the true nature of the Christian life. It's not always a mountain-top experience, nor does our Father design it to be.

Remember that you are engaged in a war, a war over the souls of mankind. **You won't always be in the battle, but you *are* always at war with a relentless demonic enemy** (Revelation 12:17).That enemy is always prowling about, searching for an opportunity to "kill, steal, and destroy" your relationship with God and with those dear to you. It is important that when you do have a mountain top season with God, savor it with all your might! But, don't be distressed when it ends, because our Lord needs you for His purposes.

Mike: These choice gifts of refreshment are meant to renew your vigor to lovingly serve His purposes. They are times of what we call "**purposeful rests**." They're like the R & R — rest and recuperation — I had in between my times off Vietnam as a Navy pilot. Sue was even able to join me in the Philippines and Japan so we could celebrate together!

Your exuberant delight in these times mirrors your gratefulness in your relationship with the Shepherd. The apostle James exhorts followers of Jesus, *"Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises!"* (5:13). Find your "perfect well-being" by increasing your appreciation level for the insights of joy our Father does so faithfully give.

- When you're given a special opportunity to be delighted, how do you respond? How would anyone know that you relish the times of refreshment God gives you?

- Do you find it difficult to savor even the small moments of "R & R" our Father favors you with? Do nagging thoughts of responsibility rob you of full appreciation?

9. As she stood on the mossy bank...; 10. Then she remembered the healing streams...; 11. After that she began to wander...

Because she'd been so consumed with joy by the sights and sounds around her, Much-Afraid had not even noticed the transformation of her feet. She'd been so overwhelmed by the change in her heart that that which had been such an encompassing source of discomfort and shame to her earlier had lost its priority. But her grateful joy in her feet's healing encouraged her to trust the same Source for her disfigured face.

And follow through with trust she did! Can't you just envision Much-Afraid's childlike joy as she scampered around the canyon, munching fresh berries with carefree abandon? And can you also see in your mind's eye the absolute delight of our Father as she wholeheartedly thrilled in His handiwork without reservation?

All of her needs had been met by the Shepherd as she journeyed by His guidance to this strategic point in her life. She could reflect with thanksgiving on His faithfulness thus far, and rest confidently that He would never change.

We write in *Demolishing Strongholds* that **God created all of humanity with seven needs:**

Dignity
Authority
Blessing & Provision
Security
Purpose & Meaning
Freedom & Boundary
Intimate Love & Companionship

One source of strongholds in our lives is a result of seeking to meet one or more of these needs *apart* from God's will for us. Yet these needs have been designed by Him to find fulfillment in righteous biblical ways.

Our life is a **pilgrimage —**
a journey during which changing circumstances *force us to adapt.*
Our ability to make those adaptations *in the power of the Holy Spirit* will determine the level of joy and peace we find in our relationship with God and with others.
Our victory of walking in the fullness of Christ will not be achieved until **we meet the needs God has created in us, in the manner that He prescribes."**

Mike: After the stronghold of rejection was gone I recognized that I had a deep need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. I shared this awareness with Sue and our home fellowship. There were 47 years of deep ruts of old ways of thinking that needed to be filled within God's parameters. With the help of Sue and our extended spiritual family, I came to understand the dignity my Father always wanted me to experience. Along with dignity came relational security, and intimate love and companionship.

Experiencing the dignity of being His child has made all the difference of how I follow Jesus and bring glory to my Father. Would you like to fill in the needs of *your* life ruts in the manner in which your Shepherd desires?

- If you are rid of all demonic strongholds, how are the seven needs God has placed in you being met? Does one or more needs stand out as a void still needing to be filled?

- Is there someone close to you with whom you can share your need and feel confident that he or she will come alongside to help you meet that need in a righteous way?

12. Then she came to the lip...; 13. She did not think about the future...; 14. When at last the shadows lengthened...

A singular joy in serving our Lord's purpose is the loss of *self-will*. The stream of water never doubted its usefulness as gravity drew it down over the cliff. The combined drops became a torrent sounding out a tumult of joy as it swirled downward to refresh the land below.

All that our Father has been working in your life thus far has been preparing you to *serve His purposes* and bring His *restorative truth to others* — especially to those who are still far from the High Places of "inner quietness and contentment" in the Shepherd.

You can experience great peace by reflecting on your past if your trust in our Lord's sovereignty is full. While He could have forestalled painful circumstances, He allowed you to choose for yourself your own path, and to undergo the consequences that could deter you from repeating those mistakes. It's important to learn from Much-Afraid at this point and fully appreciate the present without regretting the past. You can take captive your thoughts as she did by not allowing "curiosity, loneliness and anticipation" to cloud her contentment.

Have you noticed that *contentment* seems to be such a rare commodity in the daily lives of so many followers of Jesus? Don't confuse contentment with complacency. As soon as you take for granted your relationship with Jesus, your family, or others in your life, your journey will stagnate. But when you're content, you cease striving and worrying and trying to force particular outcomes into existence.

The hope we as followers have in Jesus is so sure that we need never question our future: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 15:13).

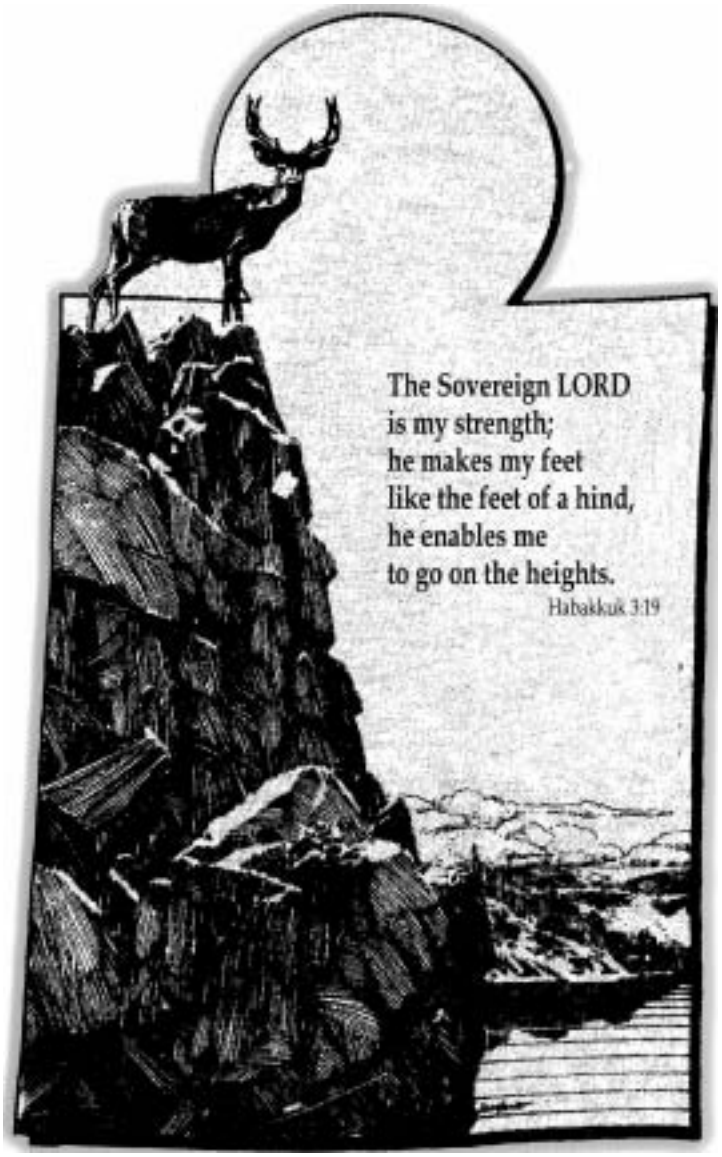
Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

- Measure your "contentment quotient" at this moment. Do you tend to focus more on your tomorrows than on the opportunities of today?
- As you reflect on where He's brought you thus far, do you fret over past failures? Are you agitated by hopes that have not yet been fulfilled?

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

Going to the High Places

Chapter 18 *Hinds' Feet*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

We arrive at a chapter full of wonderful surprises! Much-Afraid has been overwhelmed by the renewal and restoration she's found in her post-altar canyon setting. But her spirit is alive even more to the call of the Shepherd, and her yearning to be with Him overcomes any desire to remain apart from His presence. The high walls that would have deterred her before are now merely an obstacle to confront and overcome!

This is a time for you to reflect on the sovereign faithfulness of your Lord to allow the sorrows and suffering of your life to prepare you to serve Him in joy and peace regardless of your life situation. You're being groomed for service to represent Him down in the Valley from which you ascended seemingly long ago.

Chapter 18
Hinds' Feet

1. On the third day...; 2. Then it came again...

Those quiet dark hours just before sunrise can be the most refreshing moments of your day if you view them from the right perspective. It's too early for you to leap into your list of to-do's. No one else is up yet, so you can concentrate on welcoming your Lord into the new day He's awakened you to and seek His direction for it.

If anyone knew about communing with his Lord each morning, it was the man after God's own heart, David. Picture him in the silence of His tent intoning his Lord in trust: *"Give ear to my words, Lord, consider my inmost thoughts. Listen to my cry for help,* ***my king and my God****, for* ***I pray to you****. Lord,* ***in the morning*** *you will* ***hear my voice;*** *in the* ***morning*** *I* ***lay my needs before you*** *and* ***wait expectantly"*** (Psalm 5:1-3).

Sue: A few years ago I signed up to take part in a month-long, round-the-clock prayer vigil. My appointed hour was 3 AM, once a week. What a joy that sweet hour of prayer became! The first morning I wondered a little if sixty minutes was going to be hard to fill with praying and listening! My only previous experience in focused, extended prayer had been at a chapel during a time before I'd even encountered Jesus. What stands out most from that time was how often I'd glanced at my watch to see if my time was up yet!

But this time was different — a delightful garden of praise sung in my heart, scripture promises prayed back to Him, petitions according to the prompting of His Spirit, thanksgiving for His faithfulness and unalterable character — sometimes that hour stretched into two!

Wee-hour sleepless periods no longer are cause for distress but opportunities to whisper into His ear and rest in His presence — and I don't think He minds if I drop off in drowsiness as a child secure in her Father's arms! Go to bed each night having secured the day's responsibilities into the hands of the One Who can direct your path into just what He wants you to fulfill. Let tomorrow's concerns and cares, which are inevitable, be left in the realm of tomorrow (Matthew 6:34).

Much-Afraid has been eagerly anticipating a call from the Shepherd, and not even the fortress-like walls of the canyon could keep her from responding.

- How do you respond when you find yourself awake while it's still night? Do you fret restlessly because you know you have a busy day ahead? Or, do you choose to make that time a special vigil as a love offering to your Shepherd?

- Do concerns and worries often fragment your sleep? What changes do you purpose to make so you can gratefully receive the gift of sleep with which our Shepherd sustains those who trust Him (Psalm 3:5)?

3. Then she stood straining every nerve...; 4. Much-Afraid did not hesitate one instant...; 5. In a moment or two...

If Much-Afraid had not been urgently and eagerly "straining every nerve" to find a way to respond to her Shepherd's call, she might have missed the unexpected answer as it sprang up nearby.

Too often we become so tunnel-visioned in our expectation of a certain answer to a need that the pathway He reveals eludes us. Just because our Father responded in a particular way to a similar situation previously in our lives or in someone else's does not guarantee He'll answer the same way again. Keep alert for His hand of intervention that just might appear through a totally unfamiliar source!

Sue: I'd recently been wondering how to access an elderly couple who lived nearby. While my gifts of bread and knitted slippers had been received with thanks, there didn't seem to be any interest as I shared the work of Jesus in our lives. So Mike and I kept praying for some sort of inroad.

One morning I was out watering when the wife ventured onto her back porch and called out to me. Her husband had just been hospitalized and they were having to relocate to an assisted living facility. I knew from the Spirit that now was His appointed time. I turned off the water and headed over. As she poured out her grief and uncertainty, I hugged her and directed her attention to our Father. She listened carefully and expressed a desire to deepen her trust in Him. I was able to pray with her, and to gently exhort her to keep calling upon Him in trust in Jesus.

The next day I was able to visit her again to build on our previous time together and found her very open and eager to listen. The door had been opened by our Lord but I had to be willing to walk through it as His instrument!

Three weeks after the couple moved away her husband died. I don't know how God might have used my encounter with her...

Much-Afraid spotted the familiar hart and hind and remembered that they had earlier guided her on the safe path despite the apparent danger. Note that the male hart led the way, closely followed by the female hind. God's order for the family accords with this same pattern! He intends for the husband to search out and pursue His intended pathway so that his wife can boldly follow the guidance he's received and share with him whatever God has shown her as well.

Neither the deer nor Much-Afraid hesitates or is distracted from their purpose. Much-Afraid is fearful no longer — her heart has been transformed! Her focus is singleminded, and she's determined to obey. Confident that she is being guided according to His plan, she follows precisely in the footsteps of the deer.

Isn't that the essence of role-modeling — knowing that the ones you're following are trustworthy, and that you are walking out the pattern of their example to fulfill the same noble purpose? The apostle Paul often exhorts those less mature in their walk to *"follow my example even as I follow the example of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Knowing the power of a positive role model, he also encourages young Timothy in his relationship with new followers of Jesus to *"set an example in your speech, behavior, love, trust and purity"* (1 Timothy 4:12). Someone is always watching you, fellow traveler. Be alert to model the One in whose steps you purport to walk!

Mike: Sue and I grieve over how few make themselves available to mentor and disciple those who are still babes in their relationship with Jesus. So often the only contact new believers have with other followers of Jesus is during scheduled services. But that format only portrays what happens "under the steeple" rather than the 24/7 privilege and responsibility of being in union with Jesus and with one another! When Jesus is confined to the context of a service or meeting, His heart's

desire to penetrate families, neighborhoods and workplaces is never tapped or demonstrated.

Having frequently relocated, we know how it feels to not always have extended spiritual family readily accessible. But our Lord faithfully continues to work in us to be changed, and brings about those loadbearing relationships in very creative ways. Out of the love He has instilled in us, we are able to come alongside the ones He gives us to model His handiwork in our lives. Isn't this interconnectedness the fulfillment of Paul's encouragement to the Corinthian Christians?

> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction* ***so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God****"* (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

Our Father delights when His children depend on Him in trust and remain at peace in all circumstances. When our dependence on Him is so habitual that we role model it for others, we enact the strongest testimony that evidences He is our *Abba*, "Daddy."

- Everything the world needs to see of Jesus in us flows from the same trusting dependence on our Father that Jesus had. Does this describe you?

- Who in your life can you mentor to help along in their pathway as a role model and a friend? If you've gotten this far in your journey, you're ready!

6. She gave one last flying spring...; 7. "At last," he said...; 8. Still she could not speak...

There stands the Shepherd, "strong and grand and glorious", awaiting you! This berobed figure mirrors the majestic image worshiped by the exiled apostle John in the first chapter of Revelation. His welcome to both the elderly man and the awestruck young woman is equally gracious and welcoming.

The Shepherd was backlit by the glowing rosy tones of the sun rising in the east. So often scripture references the direction of the east in making mention of matters of God: the Temple of the presence of God's glory faced east; in Ezekiel's vision, the glory of God approached from the east; Jesus will return in glory on the Mount of Olives, which is directly to the east of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

This is encouragement for us each morning to rise up daily with thanksgiving. Each new dawn signifies that He has extended our lives for another day. And, as His Word confirms, "joy comes in the morning", perhaps because His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22,23)!

With so may reasons to cling to hope in His faithfulness, why would you want to continue in your old Much-Afraid identity? Sadly, it's all too easy to drift back into your old behavioral patterns and attitudes. That's why it's vital that you journey in true fellowship with those who are determined to "walk uprightly" by staying repentant and pressing on in His steps.

Our Lord did not intend that keeping a clean slate of uprightness be a burdensome chore. Listen to John's description of turning away from sin to walk afresh in cleansed fellowship with our Lord: *"If we claim not to have sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will* ***forgive them*** *and* ***purify us*** *from all wrongdoing"* (1 John 1:8,9).

Fellowship with our Father and His Son Jesus is renewed as we confess and repent of our sins. Sin can become habitual if enter-

tained, and a gateway to demonic servitude. Heed the apostle's strong warning to those who are walking the pilgrim path:

> *Children [that's us!], don't let anyone deceive you — it is the person that **keeps on doing what is right** who is righteous, just as God is righteous. The person who **keeps on sinning** is from the Adversary... Here is how one can **distinguish clearly** between God's children and those of the Adversary: everyone who does **not continue doing** what is right is **not** from God"* (1 John 3:7,8a,10).

There is indeed a very clear connection between your walk of obedient trust and your union with Jesus. Your actions evidence the truthfulness of your words. It's those who walk together in union with Jesus who enjoy true fellowship.

Because of her profound transformation, the name *Much-Afraid* no longer reflects the traveler's identity. Her new title, Grace and Glory, bespeaks the character of her Shepherd. In the heavenlies, we too who walk in step with the Spirit, responding only to His voice, are transformed into a new identity.

That new identity has nothing in common with who we were when we heeded the disparaging voices in the Valley of our Strongholds! Now the Spirit has free access to continue His transforming work to conform our character into increasing Christlikeness. As we shall see, our hearts will need to respond to our Shepherd's call to become burdened by what is on His heart.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how eagerly do you greet each new sunrise as a gift from Him, and as one day closer to seeing Jesus' face?

- As you reflect on how our Lord has transformed you thus far, what new name might best match your growing identity in Him?

9. Then he went on...; 10. Grace and Glory spoke for the first time...; 11. "No flower of love?"...; 12. At his word she laid bare her heart...; 13. Grace and Glory gave a little gasp...; 14. "Why, I planted it there myself"...

Absolutely astonished, Grace and Glory discovers that all she had yearned for but had thought lost had been quietly germinating and blossoming in her heart! Have you ever experienced a supposed loss of something precious, only to later have it returned? Even in the material realm we get excited if a misplaced treasure suddenly reappears. That's natural, just as the parables of the lost sheep and mislaid coin confirm. But to have something brought to life that you thought was irreparably destroyed... that's **super**-natural!

All along, that tiny thorn-shaped seed planted in Much-Afraid's heart way back in the Valley of Humiliation had been patiently abiding, awaiting the necessary heart condition for it to take root and grow. Her journey's trials had not been in vain. They had provided fertile preparation for her to *want* her natural human love to be uprooted.

The day that *you* responded to the Holy Spirit's wooing and purposed in your heart to turn from sin so that you could receive forgiveness and be in union with Jesus, your heart was penetrated by the Father's seed (see 1 John 3:9). The plant which has sprouted from that seed has produced the sweet fragrance of His life in you.

Isn't that blossoming our Lord's desire for each one He leads from the Valley to the Mountains of Transformation? Our Father is faithful to lead us in triumph in Christ so that He *"manifests **through us** the **sweet aroma** of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a **fragrance of Christ to God"*** (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Those who are responsive to the Spirit inhale that fragrance with joy. But those who are determined to revel in their sin find that aroma of life in Jesus repulsive. You aren't responsible for people's response to His fragrance. You just need to be that clay

vessel available to exude it!

- How are you able to detect the "aroma of Christ" in people you encounter?

- When has the aroma of Christ in you brought joy to those "who are being saved"? What was the reaction to you of those who were perishing in their sin?

15. "Then, my Lord"...; 16. "Do you remember, Grace and Glory"...; 17. That was the natural human love...; 18. "You tore it out"...; 19. He bowed his head...

Has it been a struggle for you to forsake your perceived right to experience human love the way *you* want it — reciprocated and appreciated? The longer you take to put that longing on the altar, the slower your character transformation will be. Our Lord yearns to uproot those tentacles so that *your* joy will be complete in *His* joy! (See 1 John 15:10,11.) Then His Kingdom love can penetrate those corners and crevices of your heart to change your attitudes and motivations and hopes.

During the process of your sanctification, the Holy Spirit removes the priority of human love and your proclivity to *depend* on it. Just as the Shepherd transformed Much-Afraid into Grace and Glory, you no longer *need* to love in the same manner you once did. You are no longer *dependent* on others to love you back. Instead, you can love regardless of the circumstances or response of the ones to whom you extend His love. And *this* is the love that Grace and Glory would need if she were to return to the Valley as the Shepherd's representative.

No matter how honest and earnest your intent, no human striving can ever bring about lasting transformation of your character. Much-Afraid was powerless to root out natural love by herself. And without the Priest's intervention, neither can you! The Spirit of Jesus can expose all that you are willing to have rooted out so that He can replace it with the mind and heart and love of Christ.

Sue: One verse in particular reminds me of the tough-yet-tender aspects of our Lord's character, penned by a man well-familiar with the *heart* of God: *"One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that You, O God, **are strong**, and that You, O God, **are loving**"* (Psalm 62:11,12a). That intertwining of such diverse character traits of our Lord — His might and His love, His righteousness and His mercy, His justice and His grace — reveal that only by *His intervention* can we be conformed to His image.

This heart transformation doesn't come about easily. The Shepherd had to tear out by the roots — ouch! — the natural longings of Much-Afraid's humanity in order for His *agape* love to take root and blossom. Those same hands that endured the meekness of supernatural restraint on the cross exercised a "grip of steel" in yanking out that which was hindering her growth in Him.

Half-hearted acquiescence to live as a "good Christian person" is never spoken of, much less lauded by our Lord. Only those whose hearts are steadfastly pursuing the pearl of great price will be able to perceive the Shepherd's call to absolute yieldedness. How often Scripture intones utter dependence on the mercies of God's hand:

*"**Create** in me a **pure heart**"*
(Psalm 51:10).
*"**Give** me an **undivided heart**"*
(Psalm 86:11).

And His glorious promise to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, *"**I will take you** from the nations, **gather you** from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then **I will sprinkle clean water** on you, and you will be clean; **I will cleanse you** from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, **I will give you a new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and **I will remove** the heart of stone from*

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ***I will put My Spirit within you*** *and* ***cause you to walk*** *in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances"* (36:24-27).

At this point the young woman recalls her despair when she thought the Shepherd had forsaken her back in her hour of greatest need. Can you recall a period of personal desolation when abject loneliness and grief convinced you He'd broken His word and you really were alone? Sue: Almost as if in a bad dream, I remember times of thrusting myself on my knees in anguish, crying out, "WHERE ARE YOU???" — when in reality, He was within me, grieving with me in my depth of agony.

Don't believe for a moment that the One Who has made you in His image doesn't know your pain! Camp on this: Whatsoever He has promised in His Word, He will accomplish! You are NEVER alone in Jesus! Circumstances and appearances and emotions may deceive you, but He *never* deceives His own!

And because our Shepherd sees the end as well as the beginning of your journey, He rejoices when you, His beloved sheep, respond to His love, His authority, His freedom and His boundaries! Could any of us *not* respond with the same humble joy as did Grace and Glory as she clutched those nail-scarred hands?

Perhaps it's been awhile since you've seen some of the people who knew you before you began your journey to the High Places of His transformation. Hopefully, if they encounter you now, they'll be amazed at the differences they perceive in your attitudes, motivation and actions. They may not be *comfortable* with the "new you" but they should at least notice you've changed!

And that transformation may give them reason to ask *why* you've changed. As the apostle Peter urges, *"****Always be prepared*** *to give the reason to* ***anyone who asks*** *you to* ***explain the hope*** *you have in you, with humility and fear, keeping your conscience clear"* (1 Peter 3:15,16a). Peter adds, you may be spoken against and abused for *"the good behavior flowing from your union in the Messiah"*, but your consistency and faithfulness in Jesus may eventually put them to shame — and humble them to seek after the same Lord Who has so changed your life!

- Have you encountered any specific people from your past who have commented on or even noticed any change in you since you began your pilgrimage?

- Was there ever an episode in your life when you were so despairing that you thought that even Jesus had forsaken you? At what point did He reveal His steadfast presence?

20. "And now for the promise"...; 21. She took it out...

What is so touching about the revelation of the altered stones in Much-Afraid's purse is that it comes as such a surprise to her! The jewels had never figured into her journey as a "reward" for which she could work. The pebbles had become jewels as her *heart* had been transformed.

Each stone represented a painful life lesson of death to some aspect of self-will or expectation — a struggle each time during which the Shepherd's will had taken precedence over her own. Each tempest of the soul had swirled around her decision to yield. And what hope we too can derive from the fact that our own love-grounded obedience to our Lord is producing spiritual jewels of praise for His glory, even if we sometimes focus more on our own frail weaknesses than on the joy we're bringing to Him.

These "jewels" of His workmanship in us are well attested to by Paul in his prayer for the called-out ones in Ephesus:

*I pray that from the **treasures of his glory** he will **empower you with inner strength** by his Spirit, so that the Messiah may live in your hearts **through your trusting**. Also I pray that you will be **rooted and founded in love**, so that you, with all God's people, will be given **strength to grasp** the breadth, length, height and depth of the **Messiah's love, yes, to know it**, even though it is beyond all knowing, so that you will be **filled with all the fullness of God*** (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Our Father's riches surpass anything we could ever imagine because they have the power to change our innermost heart through His love at work in us. Being "rooted and founded in love" relates directly to the implanted seed of Kingdom love being lodged in our hearts. When we truly grasp how great is His love in all its dimensions and realize that He intends for that love to be our own prime motivation rather than the facts which are in our minds, then we'll be truly "Spirit-*filled*".

- How have you been able to show the exceeding love of Jesus toward someone for whom human love would seem almost impossible?

22. "O thou who wast afflicted"...; 23. First he picked out of her hand...; 24. At that moment Grace and Glory...

Let's revisit the testimony of transformation Mike had related earlier as recorded in *Demolishing Strongholds*. "As I read my Bible on the morning of November 29, 1989, one day before the prophesied date, I pondered Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (chapter three, verses 16-19, quoted in the previous section).

"As I sat there quietly in my recliner, I was convicted that the amount of the love of Jesus that I had ever felt, even after many years in ministry, was about the size of a decimal point. The love I had perceived had no depth, breadth, or width to it, and it certainly did not surpass my knowledge.

"Later that day I was playing golf with my close friend Casey. As we walked along the course, I shared with him my deep conviction from my reading in Ephesians that morning. I told him with determination, **'I'm not going on in ministry until I feel this height, depth, and breadth of the love of Jesus.'** He joined with me in prayer right where we stood.

"The next morning at 8:00 on November 30, 1989, I received a phone call from a pastor who lived about an hour away from us. In a somewhat irritated tone he began, 'Mike, what's your problem? God woke me up at 4:00 this morning and told me to call you at 8:00 AM to tell you that He had heard your prayer.' When I explained to him my prayer on the golf course the day before, we both sensed that this was the reason the Lord had awakened him earlier. I continued in my ministry, waiting for God to show me the next step."

Now that the strongholds are gone I can tell you with confidence: You cannot share the love of God if you've never experienced it yourself! Grace and Glory had to take ownership of God's means of suffering in her life in order for her to experience the love He wanted to give her.

The *process* of Grace and Glory's tranformation from "pebbles to jewels" is captured in Mike's story of the funnel from our book, *Restoring the Early Church*.

"Early one Sunday morning, hours before I was to speak at a morning worship service, the Lord woke me up. There in my mind's eye was a vision of a funnel. As I stared at the funnel I could hear in my spirit an explanation of its meaning. Sketching the funnel on my computer, I made an overhead transparency of it.

"When I finished sharing my message that morning, I put the funnel transparency on the overhead projector and explained it to the congregation. To my surprise, people

left their seats and came forward to repent of their sins, convicted of having believed a gospel that did not include the *Lordship* of Christ in their lives.

"The following week I was asked to address a different congregation. The Holy Spirit prompted me, 'Just tell them about the funnel.' I again displayed the funnel. After I finished explaining its meaning, people again left their seats and came forward to repent. When the funnel image was presented on retreats, the explanation elicited the same response: *conviction and repentance*.

The Funnel

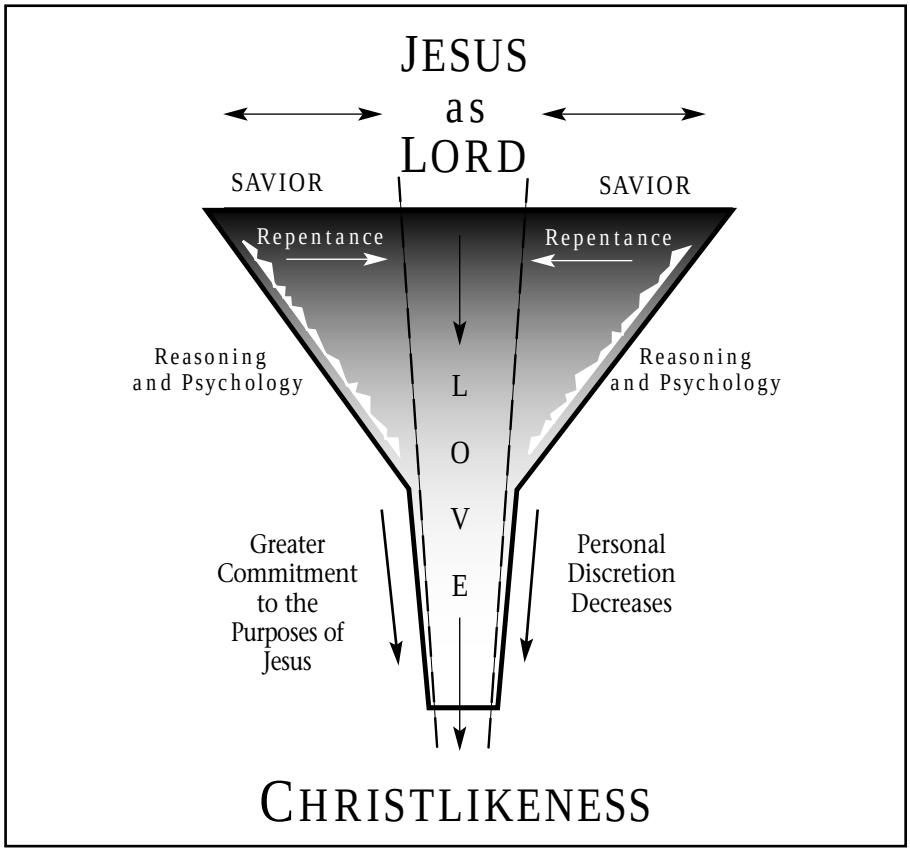
Paul offers a profound promise from God that is linked to an explicit responsibility on our part:

If you <u>acknowledge publicly</u> with your mouth that <u>Jesus is Lord</u> and <u>trust in your heart</u> that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For <u>with the heart</u> one goes on trusting and thus <u>continues toward righteousness</u>, while with the mouth one <u>keeps on making public acknowledgement</u> and thus <u>continues toward deliverance</u>" (Romans 10:9,10, JNT).

During the past few decades the Gospel has become "watered-down." Many have come to Christ with the goal of "getting saved." But salvation is the *by-product* of the biblical command to confess *"Jesus is* ***Lord.***" The Lordship of Christ is your entry point into the funnel. Lordship implies a *rejection or yielding* of all that you are in your sin nature — all of your will, your rights, your possessions, your plans. You become His "disciple". It is a conversion that demands that you *weigh the cost.*

Jesus sets the standard for the kind of relationship He calls for: "*If anyone comes to me and does not* ***hate*** *[by comparison] his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his* ***own life*** *— he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not* ***carry his own cross*** *and* ***follow me*** *cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26,27). Discipleship entails total trust and selfless obedience to the Master.

Like the pull of gravity, your *humility* to submit to the Lordship of Jesus draws you downward into the funnel as an invisible but constant force. The tug of His faithfulness does not let go of you. When you sin, His Spirit seeks you out and brings you to repentance through His kindness (see Romans 2:4). God pursues you to the point of your yielding so that your broken heart and spirit can once again enjoy the fullness of His presence as Lord.



As you pass into the stem of the funnel, the love of Jesus is so compelling that you don't desire to think about yourself but *only to do His will*. Your personal discretion to choose what *you* want to do withers as you continue to yield yourself as a bondservant to His will. God's goal for you as His child is to be *changed by His Spirit* into Christ-likeness in such a way that there truly is evidence of a *"new creation."*

If this resonates in your spirit, you can see from the funnel explanation that the popular but fallacious "getting saved" gospel consigns you to the sides of the funnel to deal with all your imperfections. Through the influx of reasoning and psychology into the church during the past few decades, *sins* that require repentance are now considered "problems."

No longer are believers held accountable to take personal responsibility for their own sins, which would bring them through repentance into the center of the funnel. Much of pastoral counseling now convinces people that they must *understand* their problems and find out *who is at fault* for their current condition.

Through the process of problem exploration, individuals may expand their awareness about their difficulties. At the same time, however, they develop an increasing unhappiness with God. Though they might not put it into words, in their hearts they neither trust Him to do what He promises in the Bible nor do they entrust themselves to Him as Lord of their lives. Thus many Christians live as if they have been "victimized" by both God and by others. They have not grasped a loving trust in a sovereign Lord.

A word of encouragement in your ongoing journey: If you will stay repentant and let the Holy Spirit draw you further down the funnel of your life to walk in willing yieldedness in His love, you'll discover that the stones of painful remembrance from your past are really precious jewels of Christ-like character being formed in you.

- If you've been honest with yourself on the journey this far, you can recognize the changes our Lord has already made. Do you? Do others?

- How can you help others who are close to you climb off the ledges of imperfections and excuses in their own "life funnel" so that they can move closer to the stem of love?

25. She marveled at the grace and love...; 26. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider"...; 27. At that Grace and Glory regarded...; 28. Now she was here and they were not...

Sue: I too marvel as I look back at my own life journey! So many potential dangers and foolish decisions that could have been disastrous were forestalled by His gracious Fatherly warning to return to His path. Perhaps you can recall with a shiver the situations in which your Shepherd directed you out of harm's way as He guarded you through those He sent to you, or kept you securely in His grip when your heart was aching. He didn't let you turn back! All those trials and challenges were preparation for this moment of your life.

At this point comes the first hint to Grace and Glory of the ultimate assignment to come now that she's in union with the Shepherd in the High Places. He tells her that she's "to go where I go, and to share my work *in the valley below*."

Grace and Glory is so caught up in her longing for her faithful traveling companions that she misses the significance of this statement. She's ascended to the High Places for a *purpose* — to share in the Shepherd's work back in the Valley in order to bring others into His Kingdom of love.

You may have been blessed along the way to find a few faithful friends who have been your companions during your seasons of suf-

fering and sorrow. Some of these special ones may have been alongside just for a specific time in which you, like iron, sharpened one another for a new assignment that took you in different directions. And that's all right! Our Father has multitudes of servants who fulfill His purposes in diverse ways among very diverse peoples.

Grace and Glory's heart appreciated the "help and gentleness and patience" that Sorrow and Suffering had so lovingly shown her all along the way. Our Father means for *your* past experiences to be used by you as instruments of hope for healing in someone else's life. He takes away the sting of those memories so you can help those in the Valley below find refuge and healing in Him.

If you have difficulty believing that, comfort yourself with Paul's confident promise "*that He who **began** a good work in you will **perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:6).

- Whom did our Lord send alongside you as special companions when you were especially needy during your journey?

- What changes have occurred in your heart to equip you to be that special companion for someone else back in the Valley?

29. Two radiant, shining figures...; 30. "Who are you?"...; 31. Instead of answering they looked...; 32. "Why, you are Sorrow and Suffering."...; 33. They shook their heads...; 34. "Brought you here!"...

The two radiant figures in their dazzling array have undergone dramatic transformation as well. The love of Joy and Peace for their young charge has been a constant despite their awareness of her very real weaknesses. But what a difference when the sorrow and suffering in your life are recognized as instruments that have led to such joy and peace in your inner person!

You are still the "you" you were before the journey, but the transformation process by which your character is being conformed to that of Jesus has made you a more radiant version of the person He always knew you'd become.

Note that Grace and Glory expresses astonishment that *she* was responsible for bringing about the transformation of Joy and Peace. If you think about it, would *you* have chosen Sorrow and Suffering to be the means by which you ascended to the High Places? None of us enjoys suffering, as the writer to the Hebrews makes clear: *"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but **sorrowful**; yet to those who have been **trained by it**, afterwards it yields the **peaceful fruit of righteousness**"* (12:11). And the endurance that is molded into our hearts genuinely benefits us and enables us to share in His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

- What situations or circumstances in your life that once caused you sorrow have you had to face again, now that your character has undergone transformation? Have you learned from the past?

- As Paul bemoans in Romans chapter 7, we'll always be faced with the possibility of doing what we don't want to do in our hearts because the demonic war against us won't cease until we reach eternity's shore. What arena of warfare is most likely to shake your peace and joy?

35. Again they shook their heads...; 36. Looking at one another again...; 37. With that they came up to her...

Transformed people start seeing the instruments of their sorrow and suffering in

a different light. Grace and Glory had once shuddered at the presence of her companions. Now she's consumed with appreciation for "Joy" and "Peace." Let's anchor for now that when *you* accept the suffering our Lord permits you, you are surrendering to His will: "Each time you accepted us and put your hands in ours we began to change."

Think of the hope you can bring to others from your own pilgrimage testimony as you encounter them struggling with diverse trials. Had you turned back or walked away from our Father's path, you never would have understood how *loving* was our Father's intent to transform you so you could come into His presence.

No parent enjoys the pain his or her children must endure on the road to maturity. Neither does our Father take lightly our pain as our souls cast off their useless, filthy garments. But we have great joy ahead of us, as did our Example and Role Model Who endured the cross for the joy that lay ahead.

Traveler, your trials and temptations don't end now that you've come to the High Places. But your *response* to them should be far different! Each time you embrace the trials the Shepherd allows is a step you take toward your own transformation. If you learn this lesson and allow it to seize your heart, the things you might cringe from can become opportunity for spiritual growth rather than obstacles to personal peace

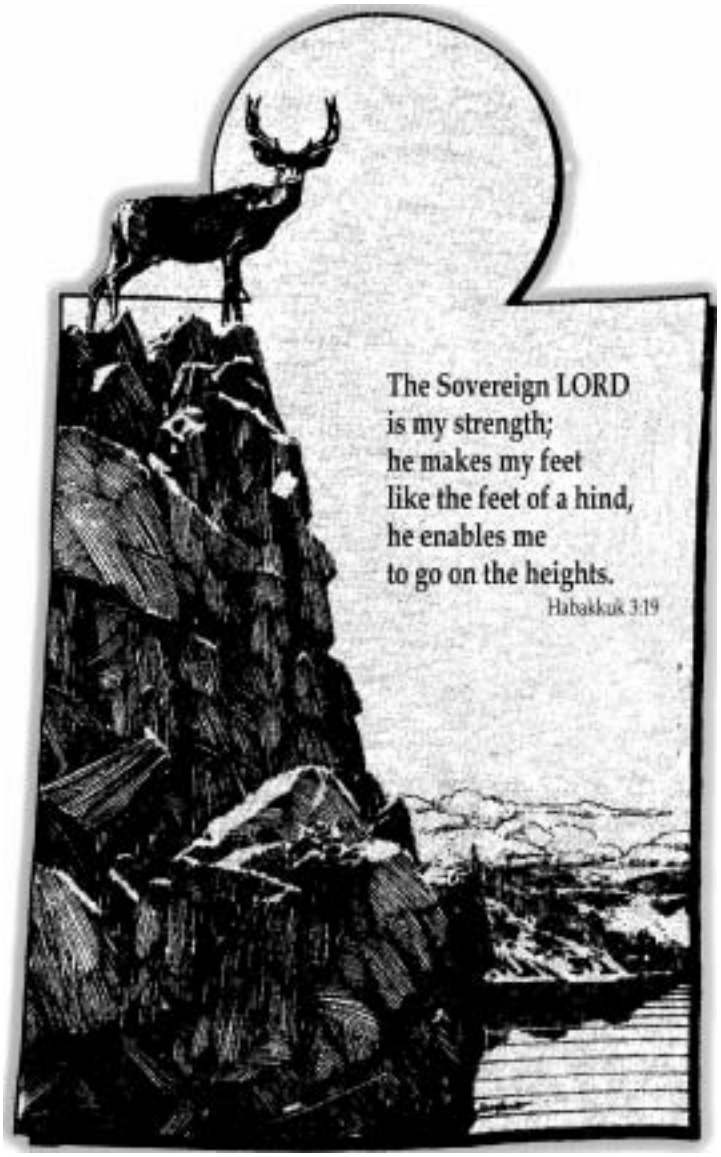
Don't be discouraged if those who are dear to you seem to resist your testimony or the changes the Shepherd has made in your life. Our Father yearns for *their* spirits to unite with His just as He has longed for and found yours! Continue to pray about ways to shine as a bright candle in His Kingdom, and be diligent in interceding for His penetration into their hearts so that their spiritual blinders can be removed. As long as there is breath in the body there is hope for the soul!

- When have you had to "cause pain" for the good of someone for whom you were responsible? How did that person respond? Did their anticipated reaction keep you from fully following through the way you needed to?

- Make a list of those for whom your heart is breaking in love and hope that they will seek the face of Jesus. Are you willing to be the instrument by which He reaches out to them if He opens the door for that to happen?

Going to the High Places

Chapter 19 *High Places*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

As you have suspected for quite some time, your journey to the High Places in which you've been transformed hasn't been intended as a one-shot "spiritual high" for your life. Our Lord hasn't called His sheep to stay huddled in a fold, mystically immersed in His ethereal presence!

He has been preparing you to *serve His purposes*: to bring light into the world's darkness, and to walk in His steps so joyfully at peace amid the world's woes that they take notice! Just as His heart poured out the love that drew you to Him on the High Places, that same heart yearns for all the lost — those who have yet to respond to His wooing — to be in union with Him.

This chapter clarifies the lessons you've been learning all along and reveals just how necessary they were, especially the painful ones, to develop your "hinds feet".

Chapter 19
High Places

1. Grace and Glory with her handmaidens Joy and Peace...

Don't be overwhelmed by all that the Shepherd has been revealing to you as you've been undergoing transformation into His character! Our journey is step by step, built on that which He's shown you along the way.

Yet each new day will present opportunity to test the solidity of your determination to press on. Be assured that our God *tests your heart* and takes pleasure when He finds you walking in integrity (1 Chronicles 29:17). Each step of the way He opens up your understanding only to the extent that you are able to grasp at that time.

The full counsel of God takes a lifetime to incorporate into your heart and your character. Your privilege and responsibility is to *apply* each revealed truth and insight — and make sure that you don't slack off in your diligence to stand firm in previously learned lessons!

As long as you purpose to seek after the Person and ways of Jesus, He'll make sure you have the chance to exercise that longing. Once again we find that great worshipper, David, breaking into passionate exhortation over that which pleases God. The king's instructions to his successor, Solomon, reflect a lifetime of seeking after his Lord: *"**Know** the God of your father. **Serve Him wholeheartedly** and with **desire in your being**; for the Lord **searches all hearts** and understands all the **inclinations** of people's thoughts"* (1 Chronicles 28:9a).

This verse is packed with intensity of purpose. Eagerly hungering to know God more and more translates into serving Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. From a Hebraic worldview, to *know* God means that you *trust and obey* Him.

Our Father isn't looking for rote activity. If you put in your token hour of Bible reading and murmur a few prayer requests, are you really following through "wholeheartedly and with desire in your being"? If not, cry out to Him! He'd love to deepen your relationship with Him if you are willing to walk in His steps to bring that about!

Don't just wallow in resignation or guilt. As David notes, your motivations and inclinations are evident to God — and He hasn't given up on you! Thrust off any half-hearted religious practices performed out of habit or guilty conscience. They reflect spiritual laziness and ungratefulness.

Grace and Glory's eagerness to explore His Kingdom is a wonderful role model for all of us! Those "new and lovely discoveries" fed her thirst to deepen her understanding and preparation for the assignment to come. And the quest to *experience* and to *share* the love of Jesus is the motivation He's refining in you.

- Are you excited each morning about the opportunity to glean rich treasure from your appointment with Him in His Word and in prayer?

• Are you willing to keep track in a journal of the "new and lovely discoveries" that He shows you during these times?

2. Even these High Places...; 3. The first thing...

Keep in mind this wonderful thought: All that you're learning to apply now is just a foretaste of the glorious *highest* High Places to come when you see the King face to face! But that fact should not diminish in the least the reality of His *here and now* purpose for your life.

Are you familiar with the "tapestry metaphor" of your life? If you flip over a lovely woven wall hanging, you'll see a mass of tangles, loose threads and chaotic colors in which there is no discernible pattern. So often in our own griefs and struggles and anxieties, all we can perceive is a tangled mass of wrong choices, ugly reactions and unrelenting frustration. But our perceptions are limited and shortsighted. Our snarled and tangled lives can often look to us like the back side of a messed up tapestry!

But that's just the view from our worldly perspective. That is horizontal, disregarding the view that our Father has from HIS side of the tapestry. Grace and Glory has acquired a "new viewpoint" from her transformation process. Things that for so long had seemed puzzling and mysterious, like a tapestry's back side, have become clear.

When you grow confident in the changes the Shepherd is making in you, you begin to appreciate the beautiful image of *His* perspective of you. All those threads of pain and uncertainty, as well as those shining seams of trust and obedience on your part, are joined with the gold of His Spirit to create a "new creation" you that's His glorious child!

Our Father has always recognized the beauty of Jesus' work in you long before it came to pass. That's because in His omniscience He understood both the "you" who had yet to journey, and the "you" who are now representing union with His Son!

• Using the tapestry metaphor, which "knots and dangling threads" of painful experiences can you now see were so vital in shaping the lovely image of you that now is so pleasing to our Father's eye?

• Are you now more inclined or less inclined to question why unpleasant circumstances and situations happen in your life?

4. It was now perfectly evident to them...; 5. She never tired of looking...

Lest we allow any weeds of self-righteousness to curl around our feet, take to heart Grace and Glory's observation: Even in Jesus we are "looking out on a tiny corner of the whole." He's done such a remarkable transformation in your life in order to prepare you to *serve His purposes*!

Growing in union with Jesus means that we grow in identity with that which burdens His heart. Paul points us in the direction of running the race well in Galatians 5:6, *"For in Christ Jesus ... the* ***only thing that counts*** *is our trusting faithfulness* ***expressing itself*** *through* ***love****."*

God isn't asking you to strive in legalistic works to qualify yourself to bear His burden for the lost. He wants you to be yielded and available to His Spirit to work *in* and *through* you to bring His goal about!

Love expresses itself as you *put it into action*. The nuggets you discover in His Word are fired by His Spirit as you apply them to your life situation. Your Bible is your life manual, but your *power* comes from Him as you put into practice the marching orders He impresses onto your spirit.

You are His conduit, His angled pipe through which He pours out evidence of His

reality *through you* onto others. And what keeps those conduit valves open is your heart motivation to *follow through* on that which He makes known to you.

Be as determined as the faithful apostle Paul, *compelled* by the love of Christ so that you no longer live for yourself but for Him Who died and rose again on your behalf! Paul reminds us *"that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that* ***they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him*** *who died and rose again on their behalf"* (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

When you return to the Valley from which He drew you out, how will you respond to even the most hurtful people you encounter? *Identify with His viewpoint.* (See 2 Corinthians 5:16). No longer regard them from the worldly viewpoint of their appearance, their past, their messed up families. Look past their prison to see *their Kingdom potential*. You were once counted as one of them in your own slavery to sin. Now you are a beloved bondservant of the King. Can you serve with His love?

- Who comes to mind as someone you're still inclined to view from a "horizontal" worldly viewpoint rather than from the "vertical" perspective of Jesus?

- Which particular "dogmatic statements" that once colored your religious thinking have been altered by your transformation in the High Places? Are you more able now to respond graciously rather than belligerently to people who are still mired in their own dogmatic stances?

6. She began to understand...; 7, She perceived that no one...

If you have gone through this study and remained unchanged in your yieldedness to serve our Lord by carrying out His commands to you, then you've been a "hearer only". How many purported followers of Jesus ignore the apostle's warning to be a *doer* of the Word, a disciple who *knows* what pleases our Lord and ventures forth to *fulfill it*?

Grace and Glory has grasped that "truth cannot be understood from books alone" — nor by teaching tapes or sermons nor seminars. **Truth becomes real *to you* when it impacts your life to change that which needs to be changed.**

The Hellenists from the second century onward argued about the nature of theological truth, engaging in councils that hammered out doctrines and organizational formats to make sure their proclamations were enforced. But few of those prescribed pronouncements stirred the hearts of men and women to *love and serve* from Spirit-empowered hearts.

When you were on the "wrong side of the grave on the mountain", you may have been plodding along one of two trails: addictively reading and listening to everything "spiritual" you could get your hands on that could tell you how to be a "better Christian." Or, you may have just been resignedly going through religious motion, wishing things could change but unable or unwilling to do anything about it.

That's what you died to on the mountain! And our Father's compassion can stir you to remember with sorrow the same chains that shackle the people back in the Valley. Rather than isolating yourself with tapes and music and books, He enjoins you to come alongside those whose perspectives are cemented to the horizontal. Enter the fray with His loving power!

You may be longing to leap ever higher on the magnificent slopes of knowing more and more about the Shepherd's ways. But remember: From the Hebraic perspective of Jesus, to *hear* truth means to *obey* what you heard! Trust and obedience go hand in hand as the key components of growing in Christlike love. When you love the Lord *as* Lord, you obey Him wholeheartedly. The

apostle whom Jesus especially loved is adamant on this point:

> *The way we can be sure we know him is if we are obeying his commands. Anyone who says, "I know him," but doesn't obey his commands is a liar — the truth is not in him. But if someone does what he says, then truly love for God has been brought to its goal in him. This is how we are sure that we are united with him. A person who claims to be continuing in union with him ought to conduct his life the way he did* (1 John 2:3-6).

The way you *use* your "hinds feet" to carry out His purposes demonstrates your faithfulness to the "small part of His glorious whole" that He's revealed to you.

- Did you use to fall into one of the two categories mentioned earlier — addicted to spiritual books/tapes/seminars, or haphazardly negligent in your spiritual pursuit? How would you talk with someone close to you who is mired in either swamp?

- Describe how you put into use today that which our Lord showed you from prayer or from His Word. How did your testimony or action strengthen or encourage or comfort a brother or sister in Jesus, or a not-yet believer?

8. Paradoxical as it may seem...; 9. So graciously did he adapt himself...

If you had been blind all your life and then were suddenly healed, you'd be overwhelmed by all that assailed your eyes! Think of how hard it would be to focus in on just one thing when so many diverse colors and shapes and textures were competing for your visual attention.

You'd also need some hands-on guidance with your new ability. You'd have no idea of the distance of anything beyond your reach. All of your previous experience had measured space by touch. You'd have no means of reckoning the speed of an oncoming car or its distance from you because your visual perspective has not yet been trained to teach you that. You might even walk off the edge of a cliff if not restrained by a sighted companion because depth would have no meaning for you as yet.

Just as the Shepherd needed to train Grace and Glory to *use* her hinds' feet, we need to put our love and obedience muscles to the test. When we put into practice the insights and character changes He's been transforming within, we discover that these "applications of Kingdom love" embolden us to take greater leaps of faith. *As* Grace and Glory followed in the Shepherd's steps, she enjoyed the "unbroken communion" that deepens as you stretch your trust by applying it in your every day life.

To revert to our former analogy of the funnel: the more you slide with Jesus down the funnel stem of love, the more immediate and satisfying will be your enactment of *His* perspective and motivation. And, the quicker you will be to repent when you do miss the mark of His ways and heart.

Did you notice the Shepherd's example as a *role model* in His training process? He never put Grace and Glory or her companions in danger, but He did make sure that they were challenged to tackle greater "leaps of faith" as they became more adept. Crags that would have immobilized Much-Afraid in the past were easily traversed by Grace and Glory.

The Father heart of God shines through here as the ideal model for parents. Sue: When our son was almost 5, we were given a small two-wheeler on which he could learn to ride. I spent countless afternoons by his side, holding tightly to the seat at first, then loosening up as his balance improved. One morning while I was out, Mikey approached his dad and asked if he could ride his bike. His dad told him to put on his helmet and

get the bike out of the garage. Then he told him to go riding! Mikey hesitated, then jumped on and sped down the street unassisted! When I got home, I asked, "Where's Mikey?" He gestured down the street. "He's riding his bike." "But, " I gasped, "he doesn't know how to bike alone!" Mike answered, "Tell *him* that!"

This dad understood what the Shepherd had known about Grace and Glory — a beloved child can trust his or her parent's judgment about their abilities!

Another lesson jumps out as Grace and Glory leaps after the Shepherd. He always *restrains* Himself so that she and her companions are never left behind. He never disparages their "newly acquired capacity" or complains that they are not trying harder.

That's an insightful warning for us as we return to the Valley and encounter those who are either just beginning their pilgrimage or are only somewhat along in their journey.

Kingdom love never blows its own horn of ability. Neither does it coerce or manipulate responses from unprepared hearts. Be sensitive to each person, and pray for discernment to recognize what it is our Lord wants you to do as you invest yourself in another.

The person who loses sight of his mentor's model is likely to step off the path and get lost in distractions. Remember, you were once a Much-Afraid too. Jesus wouldn't intimidate or discourage those who are struggling — nor should you!

- Describe some new skill that you learned from another person. What was the attitude and interaction like of the person who was teaching you? For example, did your teacher's approach pattern the encouragement, strengthening and challenge of the Shepherd with Grace and Glory?

- How patient and encouraging are you when you teach others? Have you ever just given up trying to help someone acquire a new skill? What did you learn about yourself during your instruction stint?

10. For Grace and Glory ...; 11. On one of these occasions...

The Shepherd had met the greatest needs of Grace and Glory's life. He had showered her with the ***dignity*** of a new heart in Him. He had lovingly directed her as the legitimate spiritual ***authority*** in her life. All throughout her journey He had covered her with evidence of His ***blessing and provision***. He had encouraged her ***freedom*** to explore the ***boundaries*** of His Kingdom. He had provided her with ***relational security*** with her beloved companions. She had been energized with the ***intimate love and companionship*** that is allegorized by the Song of Solomon. And He is about to reveal to her His plan to fulfill her need for ***purpose and meaning*** in life.

These seven needs were given by God to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. They are the very same needs that we all have. We can fulfill them by obedient trust in the One Who has shown us how to live through His Spirit and by His Word. Or, we can choose the siren call of the world, our fleshly desires, and demonic temptation, and suffer the consequences of those decisions. (Our book *Demolishing Strongholds* expands on this concept. It's a free download at our website.)

Before Grace and Glory could head back down into the Valley to serve others in the Shepherd's name, she had to expand her horizons beyond her own self-fulfillment. As joyful as it was to frolic in her ever-expanding ability to leap, she needed to be directed back to *His mission* for her hinds' feet transformation.

To help her see beyond her own objectives, the Shepherd exposed her to "some of the vistas to be seen from the new viewpoint." Jesus had buoyed His disciples that

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

His Father is glorified when they bear much fruit (John 15:8). Reflect for a moment on the new vistas He may be bringing before you as ways to bring glory to our Father.

In light of your particular spiritual gifting, He may be preparing some lonely children who would love to join you for snacks and homework help after school so they don't have to prowl the streets or go to a house that's empty until their parent(s) come home from work. Maybe you could gather together some other followers of Jesus to write letters of encouragement to Christian prisoners in persecuted lands. The Shepherd may be calling you to help a garrulous older neighbor see her need for repentance in order to be reconciled with her estranged children.

Ask our Shepherd how you can be His servant among others He puts in your pathway. You may just be the answer they need to one of their own seven God-given needs!

- What "new vistas" of opportunity to bear much fruit for our Father's glory has the Shepherd been stirring in your heart?

- Which of the seven needs that the Shepherd has met in Grace and Glory's life during her journey are most urgently awaiting fulfillment in your life? Who is He revealing to you as a person He might use to help meet these needs?

12. "Grace and Glory,' he answered, "do you think you understand now how I was able to make your feet like hinds' feet and set you on these High Places?"...; 13. "Think back over the journey you made," he replied, "and tell me what lessons you learned on the way."

This is a key culmination point for you, Traveler. It's critical preparation for you if you are to bear the Lord's burden of heart for those back down in the Valley.

- Take some paper and all the time you need to write out your own reply to the queries the Shepherd gives to Grace and Glory. Share in the greatest detail possible how He has changed you. Write it as a letter to your Lord. [Please don't go further until you've done this. You'll gain much if you pause to write now!]

14. She was silent for a while...; 15. Then their journey along the shores of Loneliness...; 16. She recalled the descent down into the Valley of Loss...

Grace and Glory has recollected with vivid detail each step of her journey, some heartbreaking and some "rapturous". Yet she doesn't allow herself to become entangled with *regret.* This is important for you to keep in mind as you reflect on your own journey. You can use each shovelful of what you *should have done* back then to bury yourself in worldly sorrow. Or, you can learn from those painful experiences and purpose to walk God's pathway and help others learn from your testimonies.

Grace and Glory's memories filled her silent thoughts with *wonder and thanks* — the *only* acceptable response for her loving Father's intervention in her life! She never categorizes her past choices and experiences into "plus" or "minus" columns according to whether they were good or bad. That's because she knew that all those *parts* encompassed the *whole* of her journey. Had she missed any one of those steps, her preparation to serve her Shepherd would have fallen short.

What a mercy of God that Grace and Glory could not have imagined at the outset "what lay ahead of her and the things which she would be called upon to pass through." If *you* had foreseen the suffering and storms and losses that would assail you on your life journey in Jesus, you would probably have strayed off the path long ago yourself!

But praise be to God Who holds you in His grip and directs your steps, catching you when you fall. That awareness brings new appreciation that "underneath are the everlasting arms"! (Deuteronomy 33:27).

- Grace and Glory's reflections of each step of her journey has produced not one shred of regret. Are you able to learn from her example and articulate to others why you aren't wallowing in guilt over your past sins and painful choices?

- Ask the Spirit to begin to reveal to you those particular people close to you who need to stop looking back over their shoulder so they can press on, cleansed and prepared to serve His purposes. (See Luke 9:62).

17. At last she put her hand on his...; 18. He nodded without speaking...; 19. The third thing that I learned...; 20. A very lovely smile broke out on his face...

You would do well to appropriate in your own heart the four lessons that Grace and Glory gleaned from her journey of transformation. In fact, you could probably recite many more lessons than these! But walk in the truth of these four and you'll maintain your determination to *live for Christ* in a way that brings hope to others.

Insert *your own name* into each of these lessons and see if they represent what you have learned along the way.

1. I, _____, learned that I must **accept with joy** all that **you allowed to happen** to me on the way and **everything** to which the path led me.

Don't be too quick to skip over this one. It's foundational to all the rest! If you're still stung by regret and pain, then you haven't fully yielded to our Lord's *right* as your Potter to shape and mold you any way He chooses. The scars on your heart are no surprise to Him. He allowed each and every trial and sorrow so that you would draw closer to Him in fully yielded, loving trust. Take Peter's words to heart: *"Dear friends, don't regard as strange the fiery ordeal occurring among you **to test you**, as if something extraordinary were happening to you. Rather, to the extent that you share the **fellowship of the Messiah's sufferings**, rejoice; so that you will **rejoice even more** when his Sh'khinah is revealed"* (1 Peter 4:12,13).

Your life will probably not be any easier or less strewn with obstacles now that you've learned how free you can be in Jesus. But, your *response* to the impediments and challenges you face should be far different! Paul's encouragement to the Roman followers of Jesus will become an ever-growing reality as you Accept-with-Joy our Shepherd's plans and purposes for you, your family and those traveling with you in loadbearing relationships:

> *Through [Jesus] and on the ground of our trust, we have gained access to this grace in which we stand; so let us **boast about the hope** of experiencing God's glory. But not only that, let us also **boast in our troubles**; because we know that **trouble produces endurance**, **endurance produces character,** and **character produces hope**; and this **hope does not let us down**, because God's love for us has **already been poured out** in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"* (Romans 5:2-5).

2. I, _____, learned that I **must bear** all that others were **allowed to do against me** and **to forgive** with **no trace of bitterness**.

There is a huge difference between the "self-pity of victimization" and the *redemptive purposes* of our Father to bring good out of the evil committed against you. Many people *voice* that they've forgiven those who have pained them, but *live* as if imprisoned by their past.

Jesus warned His disciples to keep looking ahead and not be caught looking back at what they've forsaken for His Kingdom's sake. You have the opportunity now to plant fresh seed in straight furrows as long as you're not more concerned with what *was* rather than what *is* and *is to come*.

It's not enough, from our Lord's perspective, to just ignore the painful sting that certain memories evoke. "Bearing-with-Love" receives power to *bring good* out of evil circumstances. That's pro-active!

Holy Spirit power propels you into "positive territory" to bring about the loving action and attitude that *blesses* those who have persecuted you. Because your response in Him is so *super*-natural, you may gain the hearing of the very ones who despised and hurt you earlier!

Bearing with LOVE bears no resemblance to "Bearing with *Resignation*." From a Hebraic perspective, love is evidenced through *action* that emanates from a clean heart. Words that are not backed up by outflow ring hollow. The love that serves the King by serving others is the redemptive proof of a fully healed heart.

3. I, _____, learned that our Lord never regarded me as I **actually was**. He saw me as I **would be** when He had done what He had promised.

Have you ever regarded yourself as 'lame and weak and crooked and cowardly"? Maybe instead you just thought you were "somewhat needy" and wanted merely to make some adjustments to your faith walk. The church at Laodicea hadn't understood how drastic was their need for transformation. In fact, they didn't think they had any spiritual problems at all!

But our Lord loved them so much that He *rebuked* them so they would *turn from their sins*. By repenting, they could take hold of the sure hope of winning the victory and sitting with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21). And He loves *you* so much that He will do whatever is necessary for *your* spiritual "wrinkles and blemishes" to be smoothed away. He sees you from eyes that are unclouded by sin or regret. Your beauty lies in your yieldedness of love in Him.

Grace and Glory wanted so much to "regard others in the same way" that He had regarded her — with the same compassion, love and graciousness that recognized her wonderful Kingdom potential. Don't get discouraged by the stubborn resistance of those back in the Valley who are clinging to their prison bars of complacency and religion. *You* were there once, and the Shepherd graciously wooed *you* to come to the High Places!

Don't lose sight of how you once were. Then you'll be able through His Spirit to extend the same compassion as you walk uprightly in the midst of those who are so spiritually needy. Remember that *His standards* don't change; only *lives* are changed!

4. I, _____, learned that **every** circumstance in life, no matter how crooked and distorted and ugly it **appears** to be, if it is **reacted to in love** and **forgiveness** and **obedience to Your will** can be **transformed**.

This lesson, observes Grace and Glory, was part of the first one she learned. However, there is a difference here. The primary focus in the first lesson was on her (and your) heart transformation in response to her personal suffering and struggles. This final lesson moves from yourself to the impact your life has *on others*. In other words, your love-in-action and unmerited forgiveness can can change the lives of other people!

Sue: I am so stirred when I read the testimonies of our persecuted, suffering brothers and sisters in other lands who are able in Jesus to *love* their tormentors! Richard Wurmbrand shared a story from his 14 years of torture and confinement in Romanian dungeons for having remained true to Jesus.

A small boy ventured into the office of a prison warden. In the child's hand was a lovely flower. The child explained that his own mother, a Christian, had died in that prison, and that today was her birthday. Since he couldn't gift her, he told the war-

den that he'd like him to give the flower to his wife as a present in honor of his mom. The warden was greatly impacted by the child's pure heart of forgiveness and love of Jesus that radiated from him. Not long after, the man himself became a follower of Jesus.

The warden understood full well the consequences of that decision, for he related his story firsthand among his fellow prison cellmates.

That young boy was walking in the powerful truth expressed by an apostle who understood suffering: *"So let those who are **suffering according to God's will** entrust themselves to a faithful Creator by **continuing to do what is good**"* (1 Peter 4:19).

Your transformation really can make a difference in other people's lives. And your intercession on their behalf stirs our Father to release the events and encounters in their lives that will give them spiritual eyes and ears to recognize His call to them.

Hold on to what you've received! **Take the hurtful situations that you will inevitably face and make them redemptive.** Purpose now to bless those who insult you and persecute you for following the Shepherd with loving, obedient trust.

Be alert and clear-minded for opportunities. And don't lose the ground that you've already gained on your pilgrimage!

- So many lessons to remember and learn from! How would you evaluate your own appropriation of these four life purpose lessons? In what areas do you still need to yield for His work to be deepened in you?

- What changes do you need to make in your attitude and response to those He has put in your life who are still mired in stagnant religious complacency?

21. Therefore I begin to think...; 22. At last he spoke...

Reread Grace and Glory's summary of her journey to the High Places. She reiterates the purpose of our transformation process: to make an eternal difference by overcoming evil with good:

> **My Lord, You *purposely* allow us to be brought into contact with the bad and evil things that *you want changed*. Perhaps that is the very reason *why we are here in this world*, where sin and sorrow and suffering and evil abound, so that we *may let you teach us* so to react to them, that out of them we can create lovely qualities to *live forever*. That is the only really satisfactory way of dealing with evil, *not simply binding it* so that it cannot work harm, but whenever possible *overcoming it with good*.**

Darkness speeds inexorably on into greater darkness. But with what hope the apostle Paul proclaims the power of your transformed life to change that darkness into light! *"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may be **blameless and pure** children of God, **without defect** in the midst of a **twisted and perverted generation**, among whom you **shine like stars** in the sky, as you **hold on to the Word of Life**"* (Philippians 214-16a).

If Paul thought things were twisted and perverted then, surely his words are all the more applicable now! But the command still holds true for followers of Jesus to hold onto and to live out the Word of Life.

The world, the flesh and the devil are not going to give up warring against your hunger to walk in Jesus. But don't give in! Make no allowances for any of these arenas of darkness. *"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). Shouldn't his followers be living for His cause as well?

A word of caution as you return to the Valley. Don't hang out only with those who

are alongside you in your journey of obedient trust in Jesus. **You've been redeemed and cleansed for a purpose — to intersect evil with His good so that these people can be changed too!** You are a tool in the Carpenter's hands,

- planing away rough edges that crop up in your own life so that you can speak from a pure heart;
- sawing off things in your life that could hinder your testimony of His transformation power;
- hammering His ways into your own life so that others can see what uprightness looks like in everyday actions and attitudes;
- routing flawless edges of His beauty and grace by going the extra mile to meet the needs of others.

Heed the Shepherd's counsel to Grace and Glory. Her *yieldedness* to learn each lesson enabled *Him* to change her. You aren't on this life pilgrimage so you can check off each lesson and character change like a to-do list. Yieldedness comes from your *heart*, and then shows up in your *responses*.

Keep your "first love" intact and growing — then you'll continue to "leap and run" in His Spirit.

- How often do you interact in more than just a casual way with those who are still enmeshed in the world's values? How can you be light to them without preaching at them?

- In what ways can you interact with those who are still "of the world" without either being like them or judgmental of them? How might either of these traps ensnare you?

23. So remember this...; 24. "Accept and bear and obey the law of Love"...; 25. Off he went...

"As long as you are *willing* to be Acceptance-with-Joy and Bearing-in-Love", said the Shepherd... Your willingness to choose the Shepherd's path of continuing transformation is your protection against once more becoming "spiritually crippled."

It's also your *will* that keeps you available to serve Him by working amid the vast neediness of the world — one by one, person by person. You may not change society, but you can touch individual lives deeply and permanently as He works through you. And that is the fruit that lasts on Jesus.

His Law of Love at work in you is lifegiving and refreshing, a stream of pure flowing water. The Song of Moses vividly recounts the Lord as our Source of living water to those who thirst for His presence:

> *"Hear, oh heavens, as I speak! Listen, earth, to the words from my mouth! May my teaching* ***fall like rain****. May my speech* ***condense like dew****, like* ***light rain*** *on blades of grass, or* ***showers on growing plants****. For I will proclaim the name of ADONAI. Come,* ***declare the greatness of our God****!"*

Parents, especially, or anyone who has a place of loving influence in a child's life, this passage is speaking directly to you! Just as the heavens release the showers and the earth responds with growth, so too your proclamations of our Lord's greatness will till the fertile soil of that growing child's heart. Don't miss those opportunities for the law of Love to be made real to the least of these!

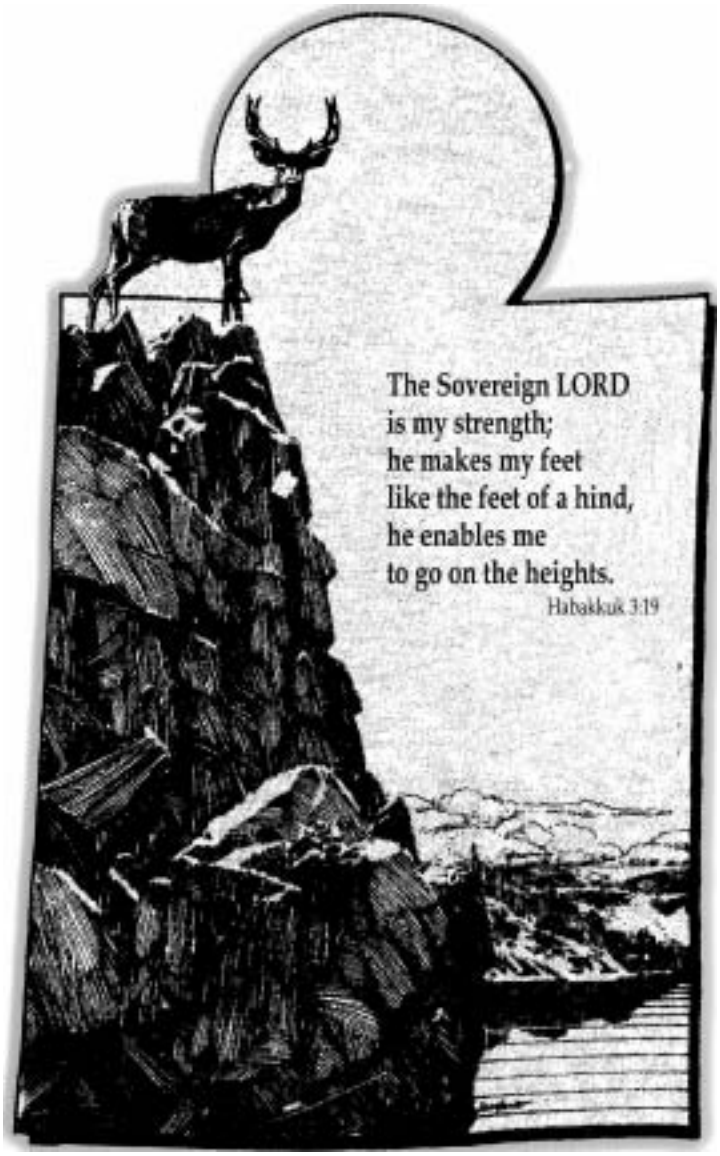
One last exhortation emanates from the loving Shepherd. *Accept* that what He specifies all throughout Scripture has sprung from His heart and purposes. *Bear* the cost that following Him will entail. *Obey* that which fulfills His love each day with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. As the Shepherd assures Grace and Glory, "This is the lovely and perfect law of the whole universe." The world has yet to see this love wholly put into action, and the Creator waits...

- To whom have you spouted a deluge of Bible knowledge but failed to shower with life-giving, truth-founded testimony of His love at work in and through you?

- Your responsibility and privilege in living the Law of Love is to accept, to bear, and to obey. Are you walking these out with joy and peace, or with some other response?

Going to the High Places

Chapter 20 *Return to the Valley*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Introduction

At last we complete our journey to the High Places! But just as with Grace and Glory, our Shepherd brought *you* to the heights to prepare you as His *Self-giver* to be poured out among those in your own Valley of acquaintances.

It's back there that His fragrance in you can emanate on an everyday basis, not just among those who are receptive, but particularly among those who have yet to encounter His Spirit clothed with flesh — YOU!

This chapter will have no "challenge" questions for you after each portion, as that which has needed to be asked has been offered to you already. But carefully consider the continuing revelations of insight that come to Grace and Glory at this stage. May our Shepherd keep bringing opportunity to you to apply that which He shows you!

Chapter 20
Return to the Valley

1. The place to which the King of Love...; 2. These the King himself transplanted...

The serene garden packed with such lovely diversity of living beauty is tended by the King's gardeners. They're ever busy about His business of pruning, tending and preparing for new seedlings and tender shoots.

Sue: I've always loved the process of getting our garden ready, plowing the winter-hardened ground, yanking out the dead growth, raking the soil smooth to receive the tiny seeds and tender young seedlings. Getting my hands covered with dirt is part of the pleasure, as is the daily responsibility to make sure the plants are watered, fed, and kept weed- and pest-free.

But without my Father's intervention, all this work would be for naught. HE's the one Who brings life from the seed, showers them with sunlight and rain, and accomplishes the marvel of producing luscious, nourishing vegetables for me to joyfully harvest!

Our Lord graciously works *with* you and me to cause the rain and the snow to water the earth, bringing forth the bud that gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater (Isaiah 55:10). But as with all physical realities designed by our Lord to instruct us, there is an underlying truth for the gardeners of His spiritual seeds:

> *So is my word that* ***goes out from my mouth*** *— it will* ***not*** *return to me* ***unfulfilled****; but it will* ***accomplish what I intend****, and cause to succeed* ***what I sent it to do*** *(Isaiah 55:11).*

The Shepherd in the midst of His gardeners was constantly "teaching and advising those who tended the vines." And as you return to His weeded, tangled garden that's in such disarray in the Valley, you'll have plenty of chance to exercise your own gardening skills:

•pruning any dead or decaying buildup in your own home and family;

• tending to the one-anothering of your loadbearing relationships so you can each be strengthened and encouraged to press on in your life journey with Jesus;

• fertilizing the seedlings of the less mature with the pure food of His Word and power of His testimony at work in you;

• assisting and role-modeling for the tender shoots the trust that gets exercised with every windy blast of trial and persecution.

You are uniquely prepared and suited for all these privileges and responsibilities. He's granted you spiritual gifting, *rhema* from His Word as you earnestly seek Him, and power enacted through loving obedience and intimate communion in prayer. Apply these with a heart that's *"humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love, and making every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit gives through the binding power of peace"* (Ephesians 4:2,3).

3. One day, however,...; 4. All of a sudden Grace and Glory...; 5. Without a word she

sat down...

Perhaps like Grace and Glory you understand that much has changed back in your own Valley of Humiliation while you've been undergoing transformation. She gratefully acknowledges that while she's been leaping about the heights with joy, others who have long served the Shepherd faithfully in the same dark Valley are still about His business there tending His flocks.

She recognized that not all had been so terrible back there, as she *had* been able to enjoy sweet fellowship with the King's workers. However, her own heart had been so caught up with her own hateful fear and bitterness that she had not been available for His use. She needed to be free from those demonic influences, those controlling voices, before she could serve as joyfully as His workers could. It wasn't the place but *herself* that needed to be changed!

6. Others she had known were there, too...; 7. Poor Aunt Dismal...

Mike: This is one of the most crucial tests of our spiritual journey. Over the years, we've been able to discern when strongholds are completely gone from people. The sign of this freedom is their great compassion for those who once hurt them.

As Grace and Glory thought of her relatives in the Valley, "a pang of compassion and pain shot through her heart." The wretchedness of her relatives' lives no longer evoked memories of their atrocities against her. Instead, she recalled them from the Shepherd's perspective, weeping over their bondage. No longer did she need to brace herself against their hurtful treatment.

How often have you failed to dig deeper into the reason behind the hateful response of someone toward you? Did you take into account that they were responding to the agitating voices inside them — the same kind that used to torment you?

Grace and Glory could now perceive her aunt's brokenness as emanating from pain over her children's unhappy marriages and shameful behavior. And those relatives had been determined to wallow in their own darkness, rejecting all previous overtures of the Shepherd to lead them to His fold. As is true today, they loved their darkness more than they loved the light, and resisted the light so that the evil of their actions would not be exposed (see John 3:19,20).

8. As Grace and Glory sat looking down...; 9. Suddenly she discovered that her feelings...; 10. She could scarcely bear the thought...

Grace and Glory's tear-filled eyes and throbbing heart were but a small measure of that which our Shepherd feels toward those who have yet to come to Him in trust. She never could have made the leap from disdain to sorrowful pity had He not transformed her heart. Through that "new light" she could ache for them because she too had suffered wretched slavery in her former life experiences.

Demonic agitation deceives those imprisoned in the Valley, and cooperates with their own sin nature to keep them from even perceiving that they are in spiritual bondage. Now that you have experienced the joyful freedom of responding only to the voice of the Shepherd, your heart can tremble with compassion for the darkness that others endure. As the apostle Peter proclaims, you've been called out from the darkness into His wonderful light to declare His praises — whether they're received or not. (See 1 Peter 2:9).

Don't be embarrassed that the folks back in the Valley remember you in all your former darkness and fear as "one of them". You may detest the bitterness and pride and resentment that used to be in you just as it is currently in them, but they're still captive while you've been set free! And since the Shepherd could make such wonderful changes in you, can't He do the same for them?

Live out those changes, and always be prepared, as Peter exhorts, to give witness about how that came about through Jesus! Agree with your accusers that you were once

controlled by bitterness or rejection or fear or whatever. Ask forgiveness for the hurt you caused them by not walking the way a supposed follower of Jesus should. Then respond to them in love the way the Shepherd would, so they can *see the difference!*

11. When she thought of that...; 12. "Yes," said Joy (who had been Sorrow)...

Sue: I find it helpful to keep in the back of my mind Grace and Glory's proclamation of hope: **"If the Shepherd could deliver *me* from all my fears and sins, couldn't he deliver them also from the things which torment them?" Yes, He can!!**

No doubt He had sent many of His servants into your life with seeds of truth that weren't yet ready to be planted in your heart. But their interaction with you was necessary. Perhaps you may have been unmoved, but someone around you may have been impacted in a way that bore fruit for the King.

Someone once said that some people need only a few contacts with the Word of Life (or His ambassadors) for them to repent and know Him as their Lord. Others need a multitude of encounters. You never know where you are in their particular journey of contacts. You just might be the one who gets to harvest some of the seeds scattered by others!

13. "But," cried Grace and Glory...; 14. Then Peace (who had before been Suffering)...

Grace and Glory wants desperately to know the answer to that which is piercing your own heart: How do you reach those down in the Valley who seem to have no desire to follow Jesus?

Peace has an answer since she had so intimately experienced Suffering. *Desperate need* can be a powerful catalyst to open hardened hearts to the reality of the Shepherd. They may at first just be calling out for His hand of physical help, but that crack in their own independent self-sufficiency can allow greater Light for their spiritual need to shine through.

Sue: I just finished reading a powerful account of our Lord's penetration into the African country of Mozambique. Daunted by the darkness of animism, witchcraft and Islam, the people had long resisted missionary efforts. But our Father's arm is not short to make Himself known.

Through a few choice vessels He rescued multitudes of orphans, the poorest of the poor, to establish them in Himself with hope and miraculous healing. They became living testimonies among their own people! But He didn't stop there.

He then sent two devastating floods that wiped out the entire economy of the country. Even the moderately well-off were brought low — right to the bottom where His passionate followers were able to lift them to His reconciling truth!

People cried out in shame over their own guilt and that of their entire country in having failed the Only True God, Jesus. What a tremendous harvest has erupted from the devastation! Spiritual treasure amid material poverty has been transforming lives that "are ready now", as were Grace and Glory's desperate relatives.

In light of current events in modern culture, our country seems ripe for similar catastrophe, even beyond the unrelieved drought in the West and floods in the East. Will you be ready with His heart of compassion to walk in the midst of your Valley to show them His transforming power?

15. "Yes!" exclaimed Grace and Glory...; 16. At that very moment...; 17. Grace and Glory turned to him...

As your concern for those back in the Valley grows, your Lord is close at hand, cheering you on! You're learning to identify with the grief He bears for them. He's been waiting for you to volunteer your heart and hands and voice to serve Him by reaching out to them.

Perhaps they've had a lifetime of religious experiences that have disillusioned them and blinded them to the reality of Jesus in His loving Lordship. Maybe they've rebelled against church practices that have

had nothing to do with Jesus but were forced on them by their parents or focused on man rather than God. Or maybe some blame God for all the pain they've endured in life, even if their poor choices have brought it on themselves.

But Grace and Glory no longer disdains them. She realizes with growing awareness that "they *don't know* anything about the joy of the High Places and the Kingdom of Love." They've been around the joyless rule-keepers and political fanatics and proudly self-righteous — but they haven't encountered Jesus in the fullness of His joy as reflected by a transformed former Much-Afraid!

And that's where *you* come in...

18. "And her daughter Gloomy"...; 19. "He has done so"...; 20. "And her sister Spiteful"...; 21. "They are wretched indeed"...; 22. "And then," continued Grace and Glory...

Grace and Glory recounts by name the various relatives who had so mistreated her in the past. Yet now she is overwhelmed by pity as she understands the Shepherd's perspective on their misery.

Each one wanted to escape their painful unhappy existence but ended up worse off than before. You can never find peace by trying to *"escape from"* your circumstances or relationships. The underlying cause for your misery will always hound you. Only by detecting His will and *"going to"* the places and people He directs can you walk in joyful peace despite your circumstances.

Grace and Glory's relatives are reaping the consequences of their own choices. They've selected their own bonds of affliction. And the Shepherd knows that their misery will only increase until and unless they turn from their darkness of heart.

23. "I know him,"...

The worst of the lot, Craven Fear, has not escaped the King's intervention. The King has had to "interfere and chastise him many times to try and correct" him.

Our Lord does indeed reach into the lives of the wicked to get their attention. He desires for them to turn from their sin and come to Him, but they must choose to respond to His call. Those who are headed for destruction refuse to "*receive the love of the truth that could have saved them"* (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

Our Shepherd is patient, *"for it is not His purpose that anyone should be destroyed, but that everyone should turn from his sins"* (2 Peter 3:9). Yet He cannot forsake His righteousness and justice to overlook wickedness or wink at rebellion. Paul warns us that *"all who have not believed the truth, but have taken their pleasure in wickedness, will be condemned"* (2 Thessalonians 2:12).

We must therefore be about His business in the power of His love for those we encounter, whether they are willing to perceive their own wretchedness and climb out of it or not.

24. "No, no!" cried Grace and Glory imploringly...; 25. He made no answer...; 25. "I see what you mean"...

Grace and Glory cries out as she grasps the root of Craven Fear's problem — he needs to be delivered *from himself*! No one else is to blame for the outcome of someone else's life, no matter how difficult their childhood, their physical or emotional afflictions, their circumstances, or their treatment by others. What we *do* with the hand we've been dealt determines whether we'll find deliverance in Jesus or continue down the broad path to destruction via the world's ways of pain relief.

The King's face illuminates with contentment and happiness from the intensity of earnestness in Grace and Glory. She's now equipped to be "His voice" to persuade them to let Him help them.

Are *you* as eager as she is to be the *King's voice* — even one that cries out in a wilderness of apathy and self-centered lawlessness? Your testimony, undergirded by His love, can be persuasive in a very powerful, non-manipulative way. No one can take away from you the transformation He's brought about in

your character. You just need to respond with the determination of your spiritual forefathers who declared, "Here am I — send me!"

When God needed to send to the Gentile Cornelius a messenger to share the Gospel. He recruited Peter, an unlikely candidate whose own anti-Gentile prejudice had to be transformed into God's perspective.

God so loved the people of Ethiopia that He sent Philip to share the truth with the chariot-borne eunuch. The latter became the spiritual father of the entire Ethiopian church, regarded as such to this day!

Mike: Our Lord recruited Sue and me in Israel to bring His prophetic message of Restoration to the United States with these words from Isaiah, *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, '**Here am I. Send me**!'"* (6:8).

The Shepherd says to each of us, "I need a voice to speak for Me, to persuade them to let me help them." Will you be that willing voice?

27. "Do you think they will listen to you?"...; 28. "No, I don't"...; 29. "O my Lord"...; 30. "True," he agreed...

The message still needs to be delivered, even if the messenger has been less than loving in the past. Don't fall for those deceptive whispers of the spirit of rejection or inadequacy that try to silence you or compromise the truth.

The Three-Self Patriotic Church of China has sunk into the pit of compromise with wickedness. They preach "love and harmony" but are forbidden by the government to speak of redemption in Jesus or His glorious return to establish His Kingdom. To do so brings imprisonment and fines! Yet the "underground church" presses on boldly to proclaim the full Good News.

We in the States face a different sort of compromise. Referring to some all-encompassing, nebulous "God" of all religions is *not* proclaiming Jesus as the only true God and King! Those who are fearful of political or social incorrectness will not hear; but those who are poverty-stricken in spirit will quench their thirst at the living stream of Jesus. Make Him known!

As with Grace and Glory, "This is indeed a specially favorable time for us to go down and try to help them." Be ready to proclaim the Word and the transformation power of Jesus *"whether the time seems right or not. Convict, censure and exhort with unfailing patience and with teaching"* (2 Timothy 4:2), evidencing His power as He works through you.

31. He rose to his feet...; 32. Suddenly she understood...; 33. The thought of being made one...; 34. "At that he began leaping...

As you have now come to understand, the Shepherd calls us out of the Valley of our Strongholds to transform us so that we can represent Him to others. In "gladdest abandonment" we can lovingly help others no matter what they have done even to us.

There is no hesitation at all in the joyful descent of the waterfall. Comprised of myriads of individual drops, the "many waters" represent every tribe and nation and language, each receiving their own witness to the King. And what wonderful truth that "He loves each one of us as though there were only one to love!"

Keep in mind these insights from Brother Andrew as you return to those everyday relationships and circumstances in your own Valley. The founder of Open Doors ministry that serves the persecuted church around the world, Brother Andrew has spent his seventy-plus years living out that which he's tirelessly exhorted others to do — one day and one person at a time.

> The real calling of God is not to a certain place or career, but to everyday obedience. And that call is extended to every Christian, not a select few. Then, as we follow His everyday call, He opens doors to where He wants us to go and closes doors to where He does not want us to go. That way, faithfulness to God's calling is within our reach every day,

Produced by Restoration Ministries International • A Gift-supported ministry (1 Cor. 9:11)
• www.restorationministries.org • e-mail: mikedowg@aol.com

and life becomes an adventure as we obey His Word and walk through the doors He has opened for us.

Mike: Our own pilgrimage began when I refused to go on until I experienced the love of God,

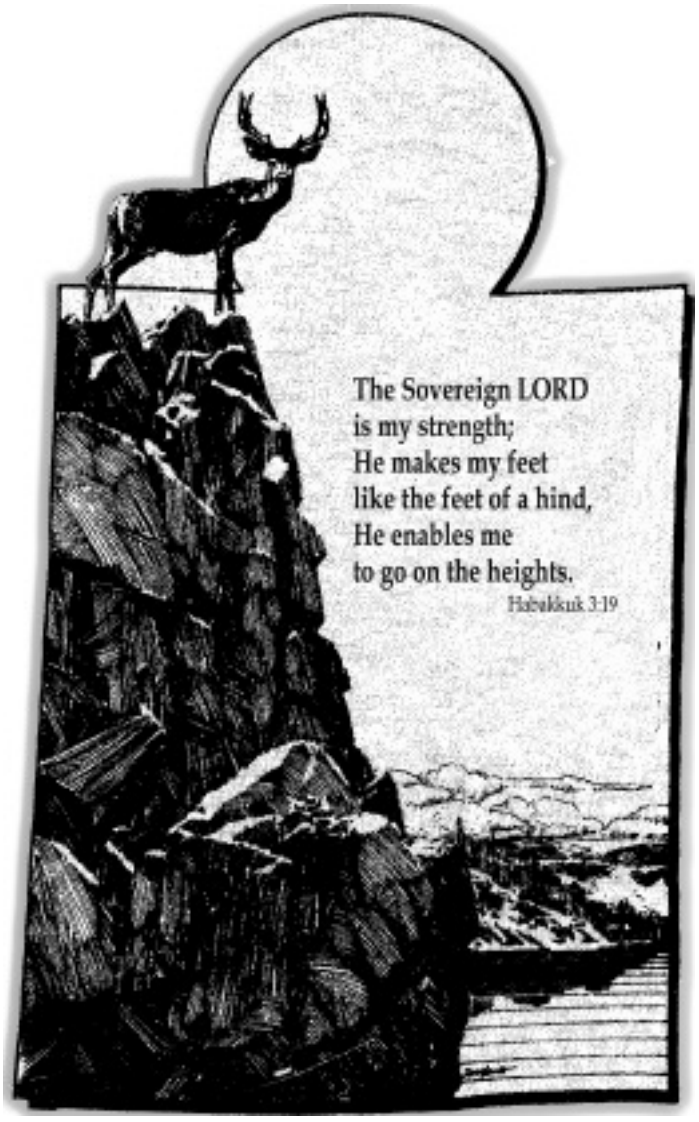
> *"that He would grant [me], according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in [my] inner man, so that Christ may dwell in [my] heart through faith; and that [I], being rooted and grounded in love,* ***may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge****, that [I] may be filled up to all the fullness of God"* (Ephesians 3:16-19).

May this reflect the continual yearning of your heart as well. In love we minister, and in love we share that which we've learned on the pilgrimage to our salvation. Thank you for joining us.

Mike and Sue

Going to the High Places

21. *Reviewing The Pilgrimage To Hinds' Feet*



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
205 North Murray Blvd, #25
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
(719) 573-4911

Restorationministries.org

Introduction

Recently we've been encouraging Christians we meet to prayerfully read (or reread) *Hinds' Feet On High Places* in order to understand their need to view their lives as a *pilgrimage of sanctification*. In our discussions with them we realized that we've been dramatically changed ourselves during the ten years since we wrote the 20 lessons of our study guide for the book, "Going To The High Places" (free at our website). So we thought we'd share with you some of the insights we've gained.

> We first became aware of Hannah Hurnard's allegory in 1977 and are convinced it's a prophetic book describing the life-transforming pilgrimage <u>everyone</u> must go through *if* they're to experience the *love of Jesus* and to live with Him as *LORD of their lives*. Our Shepherd may use different circumstances and events in His followers' lives, but the *character qualities* He wants to develop within them are all the same.

As we wrote in our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation,* the first followers of our Lord Jesus understood the authentic Gospel to be a <u>pilgrimage to their salvation</u> for followers of Jesus who by His grace endure to the end. The concept of *journey and pilgrimage* is deeply embedded within the Hebraic mind and throughout the Scriptures as well. Abraham, the father of all who follow our Lord Jesus (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7), was himself a nomad. His faith and obedience are a foundational pattern for the Hebraic Restoration.

All who follow Jesus as their Lord are called to live as strangers here on earth (Hebrews 11:13-16; 1Peter 1:17,21). We are still journeying toward our eternal home. Enroute our Lord desires through His indwelling Spirit to mold our character to be like His. That ongoing process is *sanctification*. Yet sadly, so many in western Christendom have no awareness of the biblical concept of pilgrimage. And in this age of easy believism and the lie of universal salvation for all "good people" no matter what their religion, our Lord's unconditional requirement that we be transformed into His likeness has been silenced.

> The truth from our Lord's perspective is that the moment you were born again, the Shepherd found you as with Much-Afraid in *Hinds' Feet,* in the Valley of your Strongholds imprisoned by rejection, bitterness, fear and insecurity, or whatever. But that isn't where our Lord and Shepherd wants you to *remain*. He changes His followers as they yield to His Spirit's work in them!

> *"Now the* ***Lord is the Spirit****, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory because* ***we are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory,*** *which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit"* (2Corinthians 3:17,18).

Hinds' Feet On High Places describes the key Christ-like character changes we each must go through in our pilgrimage of sanctification. Again, the events each of us face during our life journey may be different, but the *Christ-like character qualities* we must each acquire are the same. This is why we can mutually support each other on our journey out of our particular "Valleys."

As with Much-Afraid who is progressively transformed *during* her pilgrimage to the High Places, we too need to fasten ourselves around our Lord's plan for our own pilgrimage of being progressively changed into His character. If you haven't done so recently we encourage you and

those close to you in the faith to reread *Hinds' Feet On High Places* again. Why?

1. If you've been to the High Places even once and have experienced the *love* of our Lord for you, you must overhaul your previous perceptions (your toxic memories) of the past events and hurts you've undergone. If these aren't changed based on the love of Jesus that you're experiencing, you're imprisoned by your *past view* of people and events from the Valley of your Strongholds.

[For more on toxic memories and how they are healed see: Lifebyte 73. *Stop Toxic Thoughts—Replace Toxic Memories*; The Way of the Lord, Lessons 33 & 34, *The Lordship of Jesus: Mutually Becoming More Like Him*; Teaching E-mail 72. *Do You Need A Booster?*].

If you've been to the "High Places" and have experienced the love of your Lord in and through you, you also need to ask His Spirit within to show you how He used various people and events in your life to help you become more like Jesus. Again, if you don't allow His Spirit to revamp your toxic memories, you'll hold resentment and bitterness toward the very people He used in His transformation process. You'll also limit the Lordship of Jesus in your life, fearing what He may tell you to do next.

2. If you've never left the Valley of your Strongholds, or have fallen back into its old ways and patterns of response, you need to review what's at stake if you stay there. Neither sanctification nor salvation is found in the Valley, even if everyone you know is locked there in spiritual bondage with you!

Your journey and its purpose are wonderfully captured in Hebrews 13:20,21:

"May the God of peace, Who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ***equip you with everything good for doing His will****, and may* ***He work in us what is pleasing to Him****, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (Hebrews 13:20,21).

Our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to [Your] Salvation,* is difficult to wrap yourself around if you can't feel the importance of *pilgrimage* and your need to be *transformed*. The Shepherd's exhortation to Much-Afraid to follow Him to the High Places must be embraced by all who belong to Him. Neither salvation nor becoming more like Him is found in the Valley of your Strongholds.

Consider the pattern of your life journey from the Shepherd's viewpoint:

1. Leaving the Valley of your Strongholds may be compared to the deliverance you receive through the Name of Jesus. Your trust in His Name alone as you renounce the unclean spirits frees you from demonic agitation and influence in your mind, will and emotions.

2. The journey from the Valley of your Strongholds to the High Places and the regeneration that takes place in your soul (your mind, will and emotions) along the way is *your transformation* from the toxic memories which the demons produced into Christ-like character qualities out of which you think, speak, and act.

3. As with Much-Afraid, "Sorrow" and "Suffering" are your close companions along the way. They are the people who care enough about you to confront your demonically-induced toxic memories. These un-Christ-like motives have most likely been with you a long time, wrapped like tentacles around your identity. If you're like most people, you get defensive when someone confronts you about your toxic memories and motives because they've been such a part of you.

But in order to take on the love of your Lord and emanate from that vantage point, you'll need to suffer the loss of the identity

you had while in the Valley of your Strongholds. You'll need others who care enough to 'sorrow' and 'suffer' with you as your unChrist-like motivations are confronted by them. And, only Jesus can heal these!

A warning to consider:

Over the years thousands have been freed of demonic strongholds as they've used our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds*. But many have continued to maintain the same relational commitment to people who refuse to be free themselves. For example, we cited in our workbook that when we passed out the *List of Strongholds* within a congregation, almost everyone there was plagued by the *same prevalent strongholds*. When the freed tried to continue fellowshipping with those who refused to be free, the freed eventually found themselves ensnared by the same demonic strongholds all over again.

Rather than leaving the Valley behind, those who became free just *moved around* the Valley of their Strongholds. And when they tried to help others in the Valley, they were like a prisoner who's gained freedom from his cell but not from the prison. Many ministries today in Christendom parallel that image—people still imprisoned talk through the bars to people within cells. Please realize this: Unless you're transformed *outside* the Valley of your Strongholds, you'll never truly be free. And because of that, your life and testimonies offer no real hope to others!

"One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off" (1Kings 20:11).

An essential point is made in this verse, one that separates the **opinionated**—those who live in the Valley and have yet to fight the battles—from the **convicted**—those who've pressed on in obedient trust and made the journey to the High Places. It has to do with the experience that's gained through paying the cost of sanctification. On her journey to the High Places, each leg of the pathway for Much-Afraid was chosen by the Shepherd. But she had to overcome her own *sin nature and rationale* in order to keep going. Because she chose to trust the Shepherd and follow His directives, an internal transformation took place through each difficulty she experienced.

In Chapter 19, "High Places," Much-Afraid has been transformed into Grace and Glory. She realizes something few in the Valley of their Strongholds can grasp:

"...truth cannot be understood from books alone or by any written words, but only by personal growth and development in understanding, and that things written even in the Book of Books can be astonishingly misunderstood while one still lives on the low levels of spiritual experience..."

Personal growth and ongoing development to become more like the Shepherd can only come when a person has chosen to leave the "Valley of Who They Were" and to pay whatever the cost *until they love* with their Lord's heart motive. The fruit: they will unreservedly serve Him because of that love.

In our June 4, 2014 Prophetic Insight, *Do You Live in La La Land?*, we discussed the difference between being *convicted* and being *opinionated*. We'd like to review that with a small adaptation focused on the journey to the High Places.

The difference between **opinion** and **conviction** is this: with *conviction* you've willingly paid the cost, whether relationally or materially or in ongoing death to self, to become what the Shepherd wants to make of you. On your pilgrimage out of the Valley of

your Strongholds the Shepherd has tested you, solidifying your conviction. By the time you arrive at the Pyramid [see Chapter 6, "Detour through the Desert"], you're beginning to understand that the Shepherd intends to *change your character*—your heartfelt motives to be like His own.

"I bring My people into Egypt that they, too, may be threshed and ground into finest powder and may become bread corn for the use of others... no one threshes it forever; only until the bruised and broken grain is ready for its highest use."

It's *after* you've been on the Potter's wheel or have had the dross removed or have been ground into the finest flour that, like the little flower outside the Pyramid, you too can proclaim with conviction, ***"Behold me! My name is Acceptance-with-Joy."*** You joyously embrace all that your Lord allowed to happen to you along the way and everything to which the path led you! Rather than trying to evade those refining experiences you lay down your will on the altar and say, "Behold me! I am Acceptance-with-Joy."

You can be sure that the path and events in your life which the Lord has chosen in order to change you are *not* going to be like anyone else's. But *your specific journey* is the one He knows is exactly what you need to become like Him:

"Always go forward along the path of obedience as far as you know it until I intervene, even if it seems to be leading you where you fear I could never mean you to go."

Sad to say, most preaching and teaching is **man-contrived, palatable-to-the-self-will opinions**. It's "Valley talk!" The words have cost the speaker nothing to say them, and the listener only develops *opinions* in hearing them. Therefore people remain comfortable and unchallenged in the Valley of their Strongholds.

The preacher or teacher has *never been tested.* What they share emanates from their head knowledge rather than being sifted through the *love of Jesus,* which comes through sanctification. If you belong to Jesus as LORD then you need *transformation,* not the complacency of hearing Valley talk. Take the Shepherd's words to heart:

"Whenever you are willing to obey Me, and to follow the path of My choice, you will always be able to hear and recognize My voice, and when you hear it you must always obey. Remember also that it is always safe to obey My voice, even if it seems to call you to paths which look impossible or even crazy."

Bearing-the-Cost—
Having A Forgiving Heart

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14,15).

On her journey to the High Places Much-Afraid encountered another flower, "Bearing-the-Cost," also known as "Forgiveness." Our Shepherd knows that people will hurt you, let you down, and betray you. He also knows who they are and what they did to you. BUT we who want to experience *the love* of our Lord Jesus must bear all that He allowed others to do to us and *to forgive* with no trace of bitterness. It's then that we can become "Bearing-*with-Love*" and receive our Lord's power to change the pain of past wrongs into wonderful testimonies of deliverance and transformation.

You must become like Joseph, who'd been betrayed by his brothers but could see how God used his suffering: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"* (Genesis 50:20). For each of us our Lord has a grander plan for our past hurts than our toxic memories can ever let us perceive.

As did Much-Afraid, each of us who earnestly desires to experience our Lord's love must come to a depth of humility in which we hold NO record of wrongs against anyone. In His sovereignty and foreknowledge our Lord knew the hurts you'd receive at the hands of others. But when you refuse to forgive them and replace your past bitterness with blessing them (Luke 6:28), you cut off all further progress on your journey of transformation. In fact, <u>if you don't Bear-the-Cost and forgive from your heart, you *will* return to the Valley of your Strongholds.</u>

Let's see what life is like for those who *don't* forgive and instead choose to remain in or return to the Valley. They abound within Christendom today:

Many avoid any responsibility to forgive from their heart by using the mantra, "I was *abused*." The word "abused" removes any sense of need to forgive. It also closes any door of inquiry as to any wrong that individual did themselves especially within a marriage, *and* conceals a lot of other information that most Christians refuse to probe into.

If you do ask the "abused" person how many of his or her Christian family, friends and/or congregation prayed and/or fasted with them over their situation, you're either confronted with silence or with an uncomfortable response of "none."

We've puzzled over why the "abused" person and those who could have helped never fervently sought the Lord for His perspective and remedy. We've come to realize that most Christians don't ask that question because once the "I was abused" buzzword is used, all other investigation ceases. Keep this in mind whenever you're only hearing one side of the story: *"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him"* (Proverbs 18:17).

A lesson to draw from this: Don't let the "abused" person share gory details. We're warned, *"The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts"* (Proverbs 26:22). Gossip, as with slander, lets someone share one-sided negative information about another who isn't present. *You* sin by listening.

All too often as we've tried to help the "abused" see their need to *forgive and bless* their offender, it's like trying to stop a freight train. They've repeated their tale of woe to so many Christians that they believe their own version too much to allow themselves to change. And compounding their bondage in the Valley are clergy. For example, if you ask most clergy about the divorces in their congregation, you'll find that *none of these leaders* counseled a couple with marital discord to ask the entire faith community to pray and fast on their behalf. Only people who've been to the High Places have the confidence to call upon the Shepherd for deliverance and healing.

<u>One more time</u>:

If you've been to the High Places and can feel the love of our Lord in you and yet are carrying past hurts by what others have done in the past, you need to alter your toxic memories by *forgiving* those who initiated their formation and *praying* for God's blessing on them. This is especially true concerning ei-

ther or both of your parents. You must recognize *how sovereign* He has been in allowing ALL your past hurts so that He might Father you in His mercy and love in Christ. The pain of your toxic memories can begin to heal when you understand how *out of His vast love* He was using painful situations to transform you to be more like His Son.

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:12,13).

"You have persevered and have endured hardships for My Name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love" (Revelation 2:3,4).

We hope that you'll press on in the Lord until you Bear-His-Love toward everyone. His Love is nothing like human love. In the ever-increasing darkness that's encroaching on this nation, you're going to need all the Love our Lord can impart to you. That's why you must get yourself to the High Places at least one or more times while you still have opportunity.

Acceptance-with-Joy and ***Bearing-the-Cost*** need to be your heart motive so that by His grace you truly are ***Bearing-with-Love***.

Keep this in mind as you help one another both during and after the journey: If you've experienced the love of Jesus and it has motivated your grateful service to Him, don't let your love grow cold. Now more than ever we need to hold tight to the undergirding hands of Jesus and mutually encourage each other to not respond with self-preservational obligatory "cold" love. *"But* ***encourage one another daily****, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be* ***hardened by sin's deceitfulness****"* (Hebrews 3:13).

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Hinds' Feet On High Places also reveals a pivotal pattern in becoming a vessel fit for loving service to our Lord Jesus:

You must appraise and own the cost of the choices you make in life, especially if you choose to follow Jesus as LORD of your life. It's those painful choices you make, those which are usually opposite what your *sin nature* and *rationale* would tell you, that powerfully and effectively encourage others to make the journey to the High Places.

With each choice you make, whenever you overcome your human resistance, our Lord gives you the grace to press onward. That experience of obedient trust gives you a resounding testimony about Him and His faithfulness whenever anyone calls on Him. And be sure to let yourself set aside any and all sense of failure or regret over shortcomings you've had along the way on your journey. Because of His foreknowledge about you and His full forgiveness as you confess and repent, you can never fail your Lord.

"Don't you know that I never think of you as you are now but as you will be when I have brought you to the Kingdom of Love and washed you from all the stains and defilements of the journey? If I come along behind you and notice that you are finding the way especially difficult, and are suffering slips and falls, it only makes Me think of what you will be like when you are with Me...on the High Places."

All that you may have had under your control was whether you made the journey harder on yourself by even listening to the voices of your sin nature and rationale. With our Lord's empowered

Love, don't allow yourself to *judge others* by who they are or were. Rather, envision them through what our Lord can change them into. Don't ever consider another person to be harder for our Lord to reach than you were!

"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"
(Acts 4:20).

When you've been the High Places you've learned to:

- Call upon your LORD more readily!
- Trust your LORD more completely!
- Love your LORD more deeply!
- Serve your Lord unreservedly!

Remember that before Much-Afraid became Grace and Glory she was driven by a "longing to be loved." When she became Grace and Glory on the High Places, a wonderful thing happened for her, something each of us who belongs to our Lord must also undergo:

"Longing-to-be-loved... That was the natural human love which I tore out from your heart... so that the real Love could grow there alone and fill your whole heart."

If you've been to even the lowest of the High Places once, you have your Lord's Love to want to help those in the Valley. With your new Love-based freedom you can now help those in prison! The desire to want to help them at all costs is how you truly know you've been changed. Grace and Glory describes the way those who've been *convicted and changed* by their pilgrimage to the High Places are vastly different than those who have *only opinions* in the Valley:

"I have noticed that when people are brought into sorrow and suffering, or loss, or humiliation, or grief, or into some place of great need, they sometimes become ready to know the Shepherd and to seek His help... Their very misery and loneliness and sorrow will make them more willing to listen to news of Your grace and Your desire to help them... We will go to them and speak to them to show what You have done for us and what You are willing and able to do for them."

Yet those who've been to the High Places and can *love without being loved in return* MUST tell others of what our Lord Jesus can do for them, even if they find themselves misunderstood!

Telling others what our Lord Jesus has done to transform you gives people more hope than all the verses you can spout at them. Many of the people who never left the Valley can readily quote the Bible. But those who've been to the High Places have accepted-with-joy and borne-the-cost of their ongoing sanctification. Their words hold out hope for others because they *bear-them-with-Love*.

When you've been "down into Egypt" at least once and endured the grinding stones, the potter's wheel, and the furnace, you know deep within yourself that with that acceptance a gulf has opened between you and your *past* life and your *past* self. It's a gulf that can never be closed because *His* Love is now *your* Love. Others need what you have!

From the heights we leap and flow
To the valleys down below,
Sweetest urge and sweetest will.
To go lower, lower still.