

Teaching E-mail 60

Have You Gone to the High Places *At Least Once?*

“The Sovereign LORD is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a hind, He enables me to go on the heights” (Habakkuk 3:19)

(February 2, 2012)

Dear Friends,

Have you ever experienced a medical situation in which your doctor didn't give you a pill to fix it, but rather *a regimen* that required your personal self-discipline to follow? In this culture few want a regimen as a prescribed course of treatment; they moan that it takes too long, or means a change of lifestyle. Countless physicians encounter return patients who complain about the same problem over and over because they refused to follow the prescribed plan of action they'd been given.

We presently live in an **instant-gratification society**. Twitter, Facebook, TV sitcoms, even the addiction of gambling all feed the part of the brain that thrives on instant gratification. We're bringing up this issue because too many Christians look for a *quick fix* to the problems or situations they find themselves in. But our Lord is too loving to quick-fix anything. His perspective for each of His own is *long term*, focused on a Spirit-controlled way-of-life regimen through which we can become more like Him.

We're saddened that there are people on our e-mail list misperceiving that the materials our Father gives us to share will be their personal “quick fix” to certain relational problems or sticky situations. For example, they want to know how to demolish their strongholds, but they don't want to press on into growing into Christ's likeness or doing Father's will. They're missing this essential reality: the truths our Father gave us are a *lifelong journey*. They lead to a way of life that reflects

the goals and heart motives of Jesus—especially extending His loving compassion to those you encounter each day.

Perhaps your heart grieves as ours do as you realize that a large part of western Christianity is populated by those Paul describes: *“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine [a biblically-based way of life]. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear”* (2 Timothy 4:3). Notice what's happening here. Rejecting the truth of Scripture, which calls for obedient response and application, they want their problems fixed *without* having to make any changes. Focused on *self-gratification*, they have no intent to bring glory to our Lord.

“All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD” (Proverbs 16:2).

The *motive of your inner being* underlays all that you do in our Lord. Those who are without the Spirit of Christ or who haven't put into practice His commands (see Matthew 7:24-27), are motivated to action by a desire to sin: *“...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death”* (James 1:14,15).

What encompasses “sin”? Sin begins with a motive of heart that's vulnerable to temptation (see Romans 7:18-20.) That very inclination to sin was passed down

from Adam to all humanity, and leads to attitudes and behaviors that are contrary to the holy standards in the Bible. However, you can also be deceived into actions you think are *servng God* but in reality are *not His will* (see Matthew 7:21-23).

Your *motives* are the foundation of all your actions. The Spirit of Jesus indwells the spirit of His followers to influence your heart motive. He strengthens you in the battle over who will rule your soul, which is your mind, will and emotions. Your sin nature resides within your soul; from that base any undemolished strongholds influence your motives, and thus your conduct. Our Lord knows that when the Spirit changes your motive, your behavior will follow.

The focus of the message our Father gave us to share is aimed at *your motives*, your reason for living. Why you, your family and those close to you in the faith live and act the way do is the bull's eye of emphasis from our Lord for you together. When you marvel at the heroes of the faith recounted in Hebrews chapter 11, are you drawn to the particulars of their persecution? Or, do you recognize and embrace their *motive* for suffering? These faithful ones saw themselves as strangers and aliens on earth. Their heart's desire was to be with the Lord forever. So for them, as it should be for us, "*they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death [even death to one's self]*" (Revelation 12:11).

For most of your life you've probably been trained to key in on **what** you think you need to change. This emphasis ALWAYS leads to "**behavior modification,**" which depends on your effort rather than the power of Jesus to transform you (see 2 Corinthians 3:17,18). And behavior modification, no matter

how "Christian" it seems, leads to pride and self-righteousness.

Keep this in the forefront of your thinking:

Motive is the force behind all behavior. Search your own motives and identify any that are un-Christlike.

Ask Lord Jesus to help you change your motives to His through His Spirit, and then your behaviors will reflect His character.

As a result, you'll give Him the glory and take no credit for yourself.

Right Path, Wrong Motive

"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"
(Hebrews 13:12-14).

Many on our mailing list have left the organized religious system to pursue Jesus as Lord and live out His Kingdom purposes. However, much of what distressed them within the religious system *hasn't left them*. Perhaps their motives for leaving the Nicolaitan religious system weren't as pure as they think. Let's look at some common issues facing many who want to leave religious systems behind:

1. At some point during their years within the religious system they begin to delve into God's Word in a whole new way. Their hearts are hungry—open to what our Lord is calling them to do out of a growing love for Him. Because of that love, their motives become filled with wanting God's commands to be their way of life. At the same time they're recognizing elements within

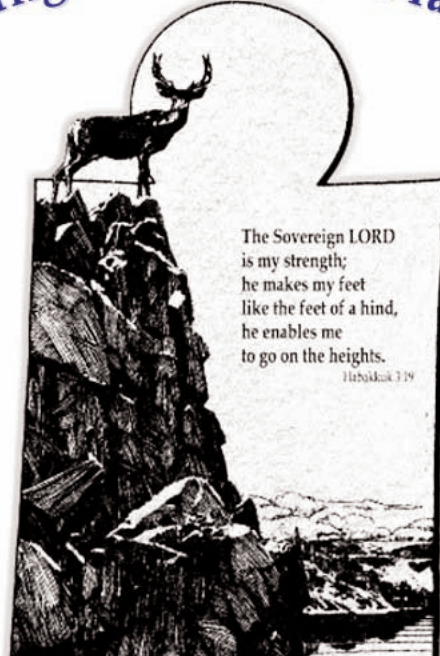
their faith community practices that don't align with God's Word—things that have been eliminated from it or added to it.

Wanting to share their exciting discoveries, they start questioning the leadership, or bringing up these points in Sunday school and Bible studies. It's not long, however, before they start feeling a "cold shoulder" from others and sense they're being talked about. Ultimately, they either leave on their own or are asked to leave.

2. After they've left, they're vexed by a taste of bitterness, trapped by memories of how poorly they were treated or by what they felt was wrong with their former faith community. It's not long before they find other disgruntled people who've left the system. But rather than appreciating how the Spirit has led them out of the Nicolaitan system which God hates, they grudgingly keep a mental list of offenses ("*love keeps no record of wrongs*" 1 Corinthians 13:5). This litany of wrongdoing hinders them from developing the loving motives the Spirit of Jesus would give them.

This is the painful position in which the majority of those who have left Nicolaitanism find themselves. They wander from one discontented group to the next, always hoping to finally meet others who understand. But they resist looking to the *Spirit of Jesus* to lead them on into what He has in store for them. Instead, they're preoccupied with this or that Christian teaching to feed their minds, always recounting some "Christian topic" they've heard or read (see Acts 17:21). But their spirit is starving; they rarely cite any divine encounters or how the Lord is using them to bless others.

Going to the High Places



Have You Gone to the High Places At Least Once

In 2004 the Spirit prompted us to write a study guide, *Going to the High Places*, as a companion to Hannah Hurnard's classic, *Hinds' Feet On High Places*. We realized as we were writing that her allegory described the nature of the pilgrimage each person must venture on in order to encompass the love of Jesus.

Hinds' Feet on High Places is a God-given road map which reveals the life-long journey of transformation into the loving motives of Jesus. In the book, one woman so yearns to be changed into the character of Jesus that she presses on against all obstacles to embrace the welcome of salvation at her journey's end.

The allegory penetrates your heart with deep spiritual truths as surely as a spear point would. Through means of the physical realm which you can visualize, 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 journey. Perhaps more clearly than ever before you'll appreciate the encounters and circumstances that our Father earmarked for you and intended for a very special purpose: to help transform your character into the likeness of Jesus.

We encourage you to use both *Hind's Feet on High Places* and our *Going to the High Places* study guide (a free download) to strengthen your resolve to press on in your own transformation process. At the same time, we hope you'll be able to help others cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that they too can walk along the life path that brings our Father such joy—to see His children growing more like His Son.

Since we first published *Going to the High Places*, we've heard from people around the world who've experienced the transformational value of going through an intentional, disciplined study of all twenty lessons—especially the people who have journeyed through this material with someone close to them! It's helped them see individual events in their lives as part of a *larger pattern of transformation* that our Lord is setting in motion. The study guide clarified the nature of change the Spirit was making in them; as a result, they could more readily cooperate with Him in the process.

If you haven't journeyed "to the high places" even once, we'd like to offer a brief synopsis of the book and point to some of the insights *Going to the High Places* provides. Let's examine the book in three sections. The first several chapters revolve around the main character, Much-Afraid, at home in the Valley of Humiliation. We call this period, **"The Valley of Strongholds,"** or **"The Valley of Believers and Unbelievers."** We

explain these titles below, under Personal Comments.

During her life in the valley, Much-Afraid had been in the service of the Shepherd. She knew Him and sincerely yearned to please Him as a devoted worker. But as you come to realize, He wanted much more in their relationship than her activities on His behalf.

This transformation could never occur in Much-Afraid if she remained mired in the Valley of Humiliation living among her relatives, the Fearings, who wanted nothing to do with the Shepherd. Therefore change was necessary. She'd need to leave her tranquil little cottage and the valley of her earthly identity to which she was so attached if she was going to accept the Shepherd's invitation to the High Places.

Personal Comments:

Think of the Valley as the place where people exercise love in their own strength and capability *without* the empowered love ONLY Jesus can instill within. The Valley with which Much-Afraid was so familiar parallels the relationships people have among their relatives, unbelieving friends, and those in their faith communities. The same prevailing strongholds are the glue that binds their relationships: "They're all like *me!*" As with Much-Afraid's Fearing relatives, strongholds are a forceful hindrance to ever leaving the Valley. The power of strongholds is always hidden in the spirit of deceit, which convinces anyone considering leaving that their departure will result in others feeling rejected.

Be aware that any relationships which are beset by strongholds will never perceive as positive any changes the Spirit of Jesus makes in you. They want you to stay and be just like them (1 Peter 4:4). The Valley of Strongholds is the snare which so many

Christians refuse to leave. And sadly, it's to that Valley that many who *start* the journey to the High Places return to after they've given up pressing on in Christ.

There's another common hindrance to leaving the Valley that we need to mention. It's what we call the **“Prison of Golden Chains.”** Those who are fettered firmly believe they're serving God because they do good things in their congregation; their activities are the “golden chains” which bring personal satisfaction and compliments from others. Some occupy positions of leadership, while others enjoy being in charge of some program or activity in the religious community. In either case, their golden chains make it hard for them to leave. Some bask in the pride of their position; others think people in their faith community would feel rejected if they left to wholeheartedly follow the Shepherd in order to become more like Him.

Those who respond with the courage to leave the valley and begin the journey to the High Places enter the second phase, what we call **“The Pilgrimage of Greater Trust.”** They've accepted the Shepherd's invitation to follow Him, but have no idea where that obedience will lead. We can see from Much-Afraid as she starts out on her journey that it won't be easy: the Shepherd gives her Sorrow and Suffering as her companions and tells her to trust them! Like so many of us who purpose to head for the High Places, Much-Afraid finds herself grumbling. She listens to voices of discouragement and finds it hard to trust in Sorrow and Suffering as they accompany her.

You may not be in the habit of reflecting on the past and discovering what our Shepherd wanted you to learn along the way from those painful events. But each of these trials was a personal “altar experience” in which you were given oppor-

tunity to lay on God's altar something you were clinging to outside His will. The lessons you resisted or forgot, you probably found yourself repeating.

All throughout the journey the Shepherd prompts Much-Afraid to pick up memorial stones and store them so she'll *remember* her altar experiences. She (and we) need to take ownership of not only the changes the Shepherd has made in us, but the manner in which He made those changes. This is essential to our growth in loving, obedient trust in Him!

As each lesson in her own “pilgrimage of trust” progresses, Much-Afraid finds her confidence in the Shepherd's plan increasing. And we see that she's finally able to pull the stones from her keepsake bag to gratefully recount and *own* how she needed her altar experiences.

Personal Comment:

On a person's “Pilgrimage of Greater Trust” they find that all the old toxic memories that have hindered their character development begin to be replaced by Christ-like motives—especially love. (For more on toxic memories, see Lifebyte 73. *Stop Toxic Thoughts—Replace Toxic Memories*; and Lifebyte 74. *Having the Heart of Jesus*.)

Keep in mind that NO ONE develops the love which Jesus works in and through you or sees people through His loving eyes and motives, until they take ownership of and appreciate their altar experiences. These experiences include the emotional wounding which people in your past inflicted, something only Jesus can heal in you. Too many in Christianity commend themselves for the human love they're willing to give. But they miss being instruments of the *empowered love* which ONLY Jesus can pour out on others through them.

It's when Much Afraid intentionally took out her memorial stones and embraced the

lessons she learned from each one that she was then able to jump into the mist-filled chasm. The consequences didn't matter any more. Her fear was gone and her heart overflowed with forgiveness toward all who had hurt her. Her trust in the Shepherd and His means to change her was now complete.

Whether you're on the pilgrimage to the high places alone or with someone else, you need to embrace ALL your past experiences no matter how painful they may be. Our Lord is *Sovereign*. That means He allowed everything in your past to happen, even if it caused Him grief in the process. If you don't fully grasp how He uses sorrow and suffering in your life, you'll go on distrusting Him.

If you choose to remain trapped by your past, you're unable to receive the love Jesus would instill in you. Why? Because you're either blaming God for those painful past experiences; or there's someone you haven't completely forgiven from your heart, and aren't ready to pray for and bless them (Luke 6:28).

When by obedient trust Much-Afraid jumps into the misty chasm, we enter part three of the journey. We call this **"The Empowered Love of Jesus."** In the book, Much-Afraid exchanges love through human effort for the love the Shepherd instills in her. This is an *empowered* love of selflessness which can only be given to someone whose heart is filled with "Grace and Glory", Much-Afraid's new name of transformation. From now on, no matter what circumstances occur in her life, her heart can proclaim, *"Behold me, Acceptance-with-Joy"*. Filled with a loving desire to please her Shepherd, she's able to see how He used sorrow and suffering to instill Peace and Joy in her.

How would you recognize if you're missing the kind of love which only

Jesus can instill in you? Here are some telltale indicators:

- Do your actions or responses habitually produce tension or apprehension in your spouse or others close to you? Then you lack the love of Jesus for one another.
- Does the process of how you make decisions together produce tension or apprehension in others? Then you lack the love of Jesus for one another.
- Do you bristle or shut off communication when certain topics are brought up? Then you lack the love of Jesus for one another.

If any of these are true of you, receive the Spirit's conviction and repent! Our Lord is eager for you to experience His love and extend it to others. That's His work of transformation in you.

Personal Comment:

Is it any wonder Father promises, ***"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You"*** (Isaiah 26:3)? The genuineness of our faith is proved through fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6,7). Our Lord loves you enough to strengthen your "faith muscles" through hardship: ***"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds"*** (James 1:2). Finally, God's Word makes clear the real goal of your pilgrimage of increasing trust: ***"For in Christ Jesus...the only thing that counts is trust expressing itself through [agape] love"*** (Galatians 5:6).

Again, as you go through various painful situations, stop and gain Jesus's perspective on them. He *is* Sovereign, and whether you want to face it or not, He permits the things which happen to you for your good because He loves you. Your narrow, self-pitying perspective will keep you trapped. His vast,

loving perspective will give you freedom by enabling you to forgive others and changing you to become more like Him.

The Shepherd transformed Much-Afraid into Grace and Glory by His love in the midst of sorrow and suffering, causing her to hold no record of wrongs. If *you* learn from your painful past experiences, He can heal your heart and use you to reflect His love to everyone—even those who once hurt you. If you’ve been even once to the High Places of intimacy and trust in Jesus as your Lord, His love within you compels you to reach others so they too can experience the love ONLY Jesus can give them.

As the Spirit quickens in you the “High Places” of love and obedience, your life will reflect through word and action your total trust in Jesus. Because you chose to leave the Valley and embark on the pilgrimage of ongoing transformation, you’ll have testimonies to share which evidence the work of sanctification He’s doing in you. And motivated by His love, nothing can keep you from going to the people in the Valley who need Jesus revealed to them.

“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 Thessalonians 5:3).

We want to conclude this Teaching E-mail with an illustration of the transformation that takes place on your way to the High Places. You were created with a spirit, soul, and body. Your spirit is eternal; your body is wasting away. Your soul comprises your mind, will and emotions. The journey to the High Places, that is, your ongoing transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit, results in a

change of what controls your motives and behaviors.

Your responses and actions in the physical realm are controlled by your soul, the area of influence in which your sin nature dwells along with any undemolished strongholds. But when the Spirit of Christ comes to dwell in you when you’re born again, you are able to free yourself from those old soulish controls. Now you can be led by the Spirit of God, Who by grace *“teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”* (Titus 2:12).

That’s quite a change! 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—that of Jesus.

The change in control is illustrated by which part of you is dominant along the way:

<u>At Birth</u>	→	<u>Human Development</u>	→	<u>Born Again</u>
1. Body		1. Soul		1. Spirit
2. Soul		2. Body		2. Soul
3. Spirit		3. Spirit		3. Body

After you’re born from above, the Spirit of Jesus seeks rulership of your soul and body through your spirit. This is the only way His empowered love can be imparted. Jesus must rule if you’re going to experience the depth of His love.

The rule of Jesus in you by His Spirit pertains even to any spiritual gift(s) imparted to you:

The gifts are given through His Spirit to your spirit. But until your soul is under Jesus’s Lordship, you won’t view your spiritual gift(s) as His loving way to *bless others*. As a result you won’t understand His loving empowerment behind the gifts. Have you ever wondered why the “[*agape*] love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13, is sandwiched

between the two passages on spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are Lord Jesus's means to empower His *doulos*, His beloved slave, to lovingly be His blessing to others. Gifts are not some form of spiritual identity, such as "I have the gift of ____." The *love of Jesus* in and through you truly makes His spiritual gift(s) so POWERFUL a blessing to others! In our book on spiritual gifts, *God's Instruments For War*, we included this:

- Every believer has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged.
- No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be humble.
- All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be harmonious.
- All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be content.

May the passage below reflect the continual yearning of your heart.

"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).

A Final Note:

As you read *Hinds' Feet on High Places* you'll notice this: Much-Afraid recognizes that there are other "higher places" beyond the one the Shepherd brings her to. In our marriage we've recognized at least five times where our Lord removed us from the Valley to transform us; then He sent us to bless others back in the Valley.

The cycle of Valley returns interspersed with pilgrimages to the High Places is totally

contradictory to most Christian thought. Many live deceived that the Christian experience should always be 'onward and upward.' So when Lord Jesus calls them away from their particular Valley, they think there must be *something wrong*. But this is often far from the truth!

Each time the Lord calls you out of the Valley, it's to further develop in you His love, mercy and compassion. That way you'll be fruitful in Him when He sends you back to the Valley.

The first time we left the Valley was the toughest. We had to leave many long-standing relationships who refused to go on with us. But with each pilgrimage to the High Places and back to the Valley we experienced the beauty of transformation and being able to increasingly see people through the eyes of Jesus. At times you'll even feel like you're seeing them through His eyes as He hung on the cross for them.

When we realized how deeply He'd transformed us with each pilgrimage, we were inspired to cooperate with each other more fully each day in whatever He wanted to change in either of us. Rather than disdaining things in each other that lack Christ's character, we look forward to helping each other become more like Him. We find that as we help each other, we love in a more empowered way.

In His love we minister to you, and in His love we share what we've learned from our own pilgrimages to the High Places. Please, prayerfully go through *Hinds Feet On High Places* and our study guide, *Going to the High Places* <<http://www.restorationministries.org/html/HighPlaces.html>>. Instill in yourself through His Spirit our Lord's way of empowering you to love as He does.

Mike & Sue