

Going to the High Places

Chapter 20 *Return to the Valley*



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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 South. Will you be ready with His heart of compassion to walk in the midst of your own 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 practices that have disillusioned them and blinded them to the reality of Jesus in His loving Lordship. Maybe they've rebelled against

church traditions 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 foolish 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 the truth.

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 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 eighty-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, 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 & Sue