

Going to the High Places

21. *Recapping Your Pilgrimage To The High Places*



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Introduction

Over the years we've regularly encouraged the Christians we meet to prayerfully read (or reread) *Hinds' Feet On High Places* and use our study guide, "Going To The High Places." Our purpose has been to help them understand their need to see their lives as an *ongoing pilgrimage of becoming more like Jesus*.

You realize you're making progress on your journey as you find yourself learning to trust Him more and more no matter what trials you're going through. We've been dramatically changed ourselves during the decade since we wrote the 20 lessons in "Going To The High Places." So we'd like to share some of the insights we've gained.

We first became aware of Hannah Hurnard's allegory in 1977. We're convinced it's a **prophetic book** describing the life-transforming pilgrimage which everyone must go through *if they're* to experience the *love of Jesus* and live in obedient trust of Him as *LORD of their lives*. Our Shepherd uses different circumstances and events in His followers' lives, but the *character qualities* He wants to develop within them are all the same — *His*.

As we wrote in our online 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 lifelong journey, a pilgrimage to their salvation for those who by His grace endure to the end (Matthew 10:22). The concept of *journey* and *pilgrimage* is deeply embedded within the Hebraic mind and throughout the Scriptures. 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 and motivations to become like His. That ongoing process is *sanctification*. Sadly though, so many in western Christendom have no awareness of the biblical concept of pilgrimage. And in this age of rampant materialism and self-idolatry, many are seduced into making God their enemy by focusing on the world's goals and values (James 4:4; 1John 2:15-17).

Our Lord's perspective is this. The moment you were born again, the Shepherd found you like Much-Afraid living in spiritual darkness in the Valley of your Strongholds. But that isn't where He wants you to *remain*. Jesus invites you to trust in the power of His Name and free yourself from the spiritual darkness in your soul—your mind, will and emotions. It's then that your pilgrimage of becoming more like Him through His Spirit can truly begin:

*"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power to demolish strongholds**" (2Corinthians 10:4).*

*"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, **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 unfolds the process in which *Christ-like character qualities* are formed within those who live with Jesus as Lord of their lives. This is why we can mutually support each other on our journey. But realize this key

difference: relying on religious systems and journeying to your salvation have nothing in common. Depending on the former sabotages the latter.

1. When you've been to the High Places of self-forfeiting love even once, then you've begun a wonderful process. Through the Spirit you are able to replace your previous demon-influenced perceptions (your toxic memories) of the past events and hurts you've undergone. You can now start to fully experience the love of Jesus as you trust Him to do what He came on earth to do: deliver us and heal us by *destroying the devil's work* (1John 3:8).

[For more on toxic memories and how their sting is 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?*].

When you come to the “High Places,” then His Spirit within you earmarks people and events from your past through which you were emotionally hurt. Our Lord purposed that these help you become more like Him in forgiveness and character. As you've allowed His Spirit to revamp the toxicity of your memories and take away the sting of them, you've been freed from resentment and bitterness toward the very people and events He used in His transformation process.

2. If you've come to the “High Places,” then you see the people you've known in the Valley of your (Past) Strongholds with the love that Jesus has for them even in their spiritual enslavement. But as you help them start their own pilgrimage to the High Places, be careful you don't let yourself slip into old ways and become a prisoner again (see Galatians 6:1). Keep in mind that neither sanctification nor salvation is found in the Valley!
Your ongoing journey and its purpose are pointedly expressed 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).

Perceive 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: away from* the toxic memories which the demons produced, and *into* Christ-like character qualities out of which you think, speak, and act. So love for and trust in your Lord flow freely through your words.
3. As with Much Afraid you see “Sorrow” and “Suffering” as opportunities to help you to resist your sin nature. The Psalmist understood this when he wrote, “*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word*” (Psalms 119:67).
Sometimes “Sorrow” and “Suffering” are the people who care enough about you to confront you when you respond out of demonically-induced toxic memories. These unChrist-like motives had been with you a long time, wrapped like tentacles around your identity. If you're like most people, you may have initially been defensive when someone spoke to you about how your toxic memories and motives were coming across. But now your desire to be more like Jesus makes their correction a blessing.

The truth about love-propelled confrontation being a blessing shines through this verse too: “*Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it*” (Psalms 141:5).

As you’ve already begun to experience, to fully walk in the trust and the love of your Lord means you needed to suffer the loss of the old identity you had while in the Valley of your Strongholds. You’ll still need godly companions who care enough to ‘Sorrow’ and ‘Suffer’ with you as they confront any unChrist-like motives in you. And remember, *only Jesus* can heal you and change these!

A warning to consider:

Over the years thousands who follow Jesus have been freed of demonic strongholds by His power as they’ve used our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds*. But during their journey to the High Places many kept the same relational commitment to people who refused to be free themselves and leave the Valley. The sad result? All too often when the freed who began their journey to the High Places tried to continue fellowship with those who refused to be free, the freed eventually found themselves tempted and ensnared by the same demonic strongholds all over again.

YOU MUST MAKE IT TO THE HIGH PLACES YOURSELF BEFORE YOU CAN HELP THOSE TRAPPED IN THE VALLEY! Your transformation of being filled with love for your Lord and full trust in Him makes all the difference in you as His ambassador and bearer of His reputation.

“One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off”
(1Kings 20:11)

An essential point of differentiation

emerges in this verse to separate the **religiously opinionated** (those who complacently dwell in the Valley and have yet to fight the spiritual battles) from the **Kingdom convicted** (those who’ve pressed on by grace in obedient trust and have made the journey to the High Places). The key difference has to do with the experience that’s gained through paying the cost of *learning to persevere through your suffering* (see Romans 5:3,4; James 1:2-4).

On her journey to the High Places, each leg of the pathway for Much-Afraid was chosen by the Shepherd. But she still had to overcome her own *sin nature and rationale* in order to keep going. And 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 which few who dwell 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” 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*. Let’s review that

with a small adaptation focused on the journey to the High Places.

The difference between **religious opinion** and **Kingdom 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, 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.

"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 our 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 obe-

dience 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, much of the preaching and teaching today is aimed at being **palatable-to-self-will opinions**. Often the preacher or teacher has *never been tested himself* in a particular area to emerge victorious in Christ. What they teach emanates from their head knowledge rather than from being sifted through the *love of Jesus*, which comes in ongoing sanctification. Their preaching/teaching is "Valley talk!" The words have cost the speaker nothing to say them, and the listener only develops **religious opinions** and can therefore remain comfortable and unchallenged (and fruitless) in the Valley of their Strongholds.

If you belong to Jesus as LORD of your life, then you've embraced a pilgrimage of *transformation* so that you may live a life of **Kingdom conviction**. 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— Living With 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."*** In His omniscient fore-

knowledge our Shepherd *foresaw every person* who would hurt you, let you down, and betray you. He knew who they are and what they would do 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 not only change the pain of past wrongs into wonderful testimonies of healing, but to also *resist diminishing our love* when we encounter further hurts.

In your heart you must become like Joseph, who was betrayed by his brothers but could recognize 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 hurts than toxic memories will ever let us perceive.

As did Much-Afraid, each of us who earnestly desires to hold onto experiencing our Lord's love must maintain a depth of humility in which we hold NO record of wrongs against anyone (1Corinthians 13:5). In fact, if you don't Bear-the-Cost and forgive from your heart, you will ultimately return to the Valley of your Strongholds.

A warning to consider:

As you both experience *and* share the love of Jesus, you must be wary of allowing bitter people to seduce you into having a **wounded spirit** on their behalf.

You develop a "wounded spirit" when you have ill feelings toward someone who has done *you* no direct harm. You find yourself resenting an individual because of what they supposedly did to the bitter person who is telling you their woes. You've been

seduced into sin by receiving one-sided, slanderous information. And you developed an attitude against someone who hasn't wronged *you*, nor have you heard their side of the story.

As you love people with love of Jesus, don't let bitter people in the Valley of Their Stronghold of Bitterness entice you into developing a begrudging attitude on their behalf. If you do, you're headed back to the Valley.

Bitter people who are out to recruit as many "wounded spirits" as they can abound within Christendom today. Here's how you'll recognize them:

First, they avoid all responsibility to forgive from their heart by using the mantra, **"I was abused."** To them, being "abused" removes any responsibility to our Lord to forgive. It also closes any door of inquiry about any hurt the bitter person might have caused to the other party.

Second, if you ask the "abused" person how many of his or her Christian family, friends, and/or congregation have prayed and /or fasted with them over their situation, you're either confronted with silence or with an uncomfortable "none."

Keep this in mind whenever you're only hearing *one side* of a 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 graphic negative details with you. Heed the warning, *"The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts"* (Proverbs 26:22).

One more time:

If you've made it to the High Places and can feel and experience the love of our Lord in you, you need to seek our Lord to heal the sting of your toxic memories by first *forgiv-*

ing and praying for God's blessing on the one(s) who hurt you. You must recognize *how sovereign* He has been in allowing ALL your hurts so that He might demonstrate His role as Father to 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 (see Romans 8:17).

“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).

Keep pressing on in your pilgrimage in His strength, Bearing-His-Love toward everyone. As you've already experienced, 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 by His Spirit.

Acceptance-with-Joy and ***Bearing-the-Cost*** need to be your heart motive so that by His grace you truly are ***Bearing-with-Love***.

Now more than ever we need to hold tight to the undergirding hands of Jesus and mutually encourage each other to not slide into “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 reveals a pivotal way of life that's fit for loving service to our Lord Jesus:

The journey showed you that you must appraise and own the cost of the choices you make in life. This is especially true 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 other people to make their own journey to the High Places.

With each choice you made and will make, you leave behind your innate human resistance as our Lord gives you the grace to press onward. Each experience of **obedient trust** gives you a resounding testimony about Him and His faithfulness whenever anyone asks you about your faith-walk. Make sure you get rid of any and all sense of *failure or regret* over past 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.”

The only thing you 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. And, armed with our Lord's empowered Love, never allow yourself to

judge others by who they are or were. Rather, envision them through *what our Lord can do* to change them. 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).

Now that 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 which 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 the High Places even once, you have your Lord's Love to *want* to help the people still in bondage in the Valley. And with your new Love-based freedom you *can* come alongside to help them! The desire to want to help them at all cost authenticates that you've been changed. Grace and Glory describes how those who've been *convicted and changed* by their pilgrimage to the High Places are vastly different than those who just have *religious 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.”

Those who've been to the High Places and can *love without being loved in return* feel a compelling need to tell others of what our Lord Jesus can do for them, even if they find themselves misunderstood!

Telling other people what our Lord Jesus has done to transform you gives people far more hope than all the Bible verses you can spout at them without any testimony of His transformational love and work in you. Many of the people who never left the Valley can readily quote the Bible at others. But those who have been to the High Places have *accepted-with-joy* and *borne-the-cost* of their ongoing transformation. 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 blazing furnace, you know deep within yourself that with your 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.*