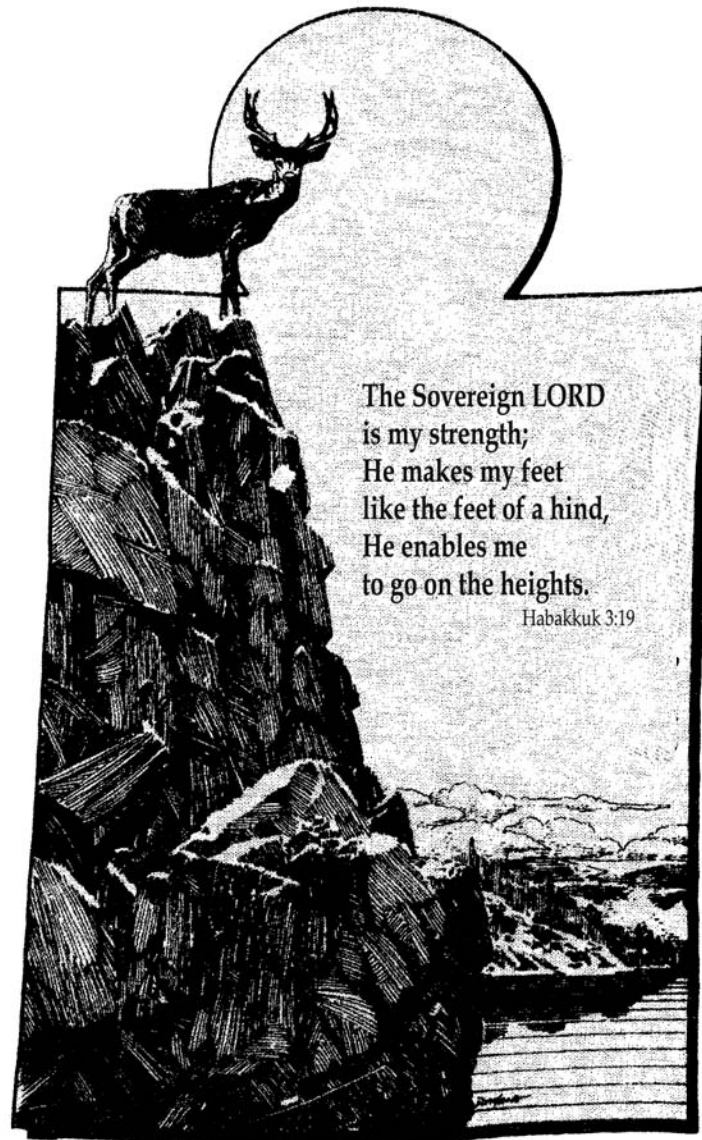


Going to the High Places

Chapter 4 *Start for the High Places*



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



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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 Heart

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 invigorating "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

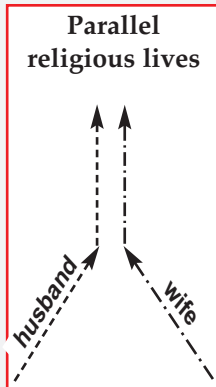
is mutual trust, it's embarrassing to discuss the dark areas of your soul that our Lord wants to *change*. Yet this is the breakthrough in your relationship that must occur if you're going to press on together.

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 bib-

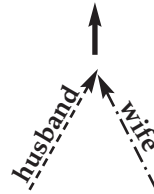
Living Without Union With Each Other

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.



Working Toward Union With Each Other

Living in 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.

lical 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.

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 subtleties 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

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 irri-

tated 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:

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 standing 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 as our Lord and Savior, 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. 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 these people because of our confidence in our Father’s ability to answer. Who can ever 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 Christendom, 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.”

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 Christendom.

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 *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.

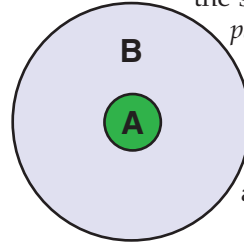
I have some questions for you men to honestly answer:

- 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

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?

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 song-book: “As a 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 on 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.

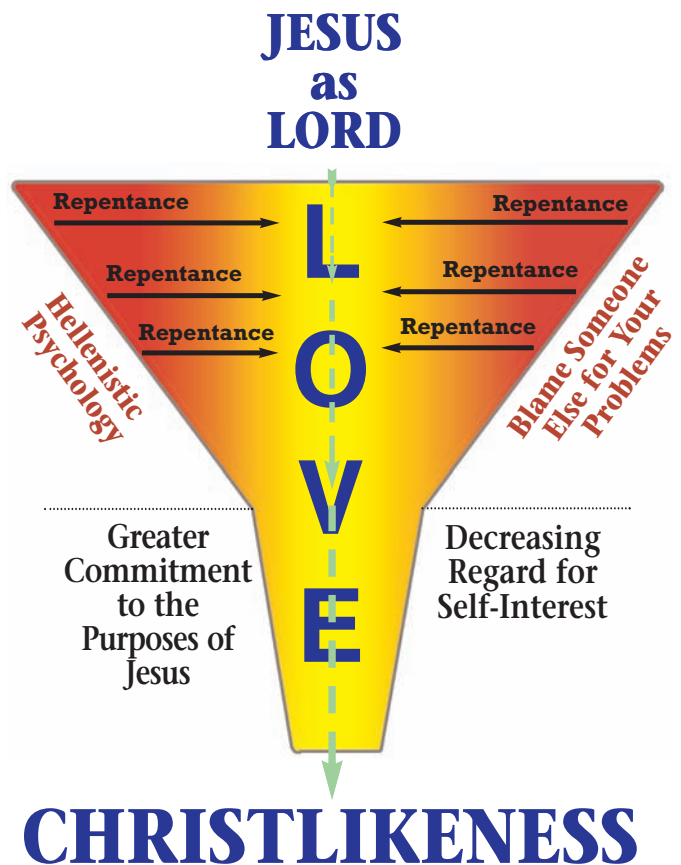
A humble heart cherishes the descent down the funnel in order to grow in the love that Jesus wants you to walk in. As you enter the stem of the funnel, your heart is less enthralled by self-interest and more consumed with commitment to His purposes.

- 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 an expletive. That was our *halakhah*, our application of the third commandment. "Upstream 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 how "narrow-gate living" fleshes itself out for themselves.

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 a 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.

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 sonship. 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*. You are showing honor to someone when you ask them into your home. 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* with 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?
- 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 expectation* 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 wonderful...

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 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 some-

thing 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 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 over four decades and God has relocated us 19 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 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 "Footprints 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?

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.***

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.

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

- 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.

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 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, 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 Christendom 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 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 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."* We don't really know what trust is until we face something to fear.

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. Recognizing 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 of 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 num-

ber 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 forward... 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 sor-

row 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.