

Going to the High Places

Chapter 11 *In the Forests of Danger and Tribulation*



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Introduction

I wish I could tell you that it's easier for me to follow Jesus after 40 years than it was in the beginning. Every day I struggle, then repent, and continue to press on. Here is one example: We arrived back from a trip, and encountered one demonic assault after another. The most impossible things went wrong as we attempted to produce our books on audio CD and develop the training video, *Jesus in Your Home*.

During that trying time a friend told me that we don't have enough prayer coverage for what we were endeavoring to do. That was true. Even though we included our prayer needs in each newsletter, we didn't know if they followed through. But we were determined that out of love for our Lord Jesus, we'd press on in our efforts to complete the task He gave us.

One afternoon as I was doing my laps in the park pool, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, "**Continue to lovingly persevere and patiently persevere.**" The words *loving* and *patient* had been eluding me in my perseverance. I began to understand that God's intent was not just for me to accomplish the task. Even more important for His purposes, He wanted to change my *character*. This transformation process is usually more painful for me than the tasks He gives me to do!

Do you recognize what our Lord is trying to accomplish in *you* right now? Perhaps this chapter will make it more clear.

Chapter 11 *In the Forests of Danger and Tribulation*

1. With what joy they welcomed the Shepherd

When you've come through a difficult passage in your life journey, take the time to relish the moment with gratefulness to Jesus for His faithfulness! He promised that He'd never leave you or forsake you, so breathe in that sigh of accomplishment through His Spirit, and share the moment of delight with

others.

At this point in the journey Much-Afraid is suffering from some painful cuts and bruises. Her heart wants to press on but her body is sore and tired. How pleasant is the Shepherd's touch to bring soothing and healing!

Lately we've encountered a number of followers of Jesus who are undergoing some severe physical distresses. One, a dear sister who ministers in Holland with her husband, was just diagnosed with cancer. Yet her spirit is blanketed with peace because of the faithful presence of her Lord within. And perhaps her need for 5 months of chemotherapy will give her access to radiate His faithful love to the medical staff she meets.

Are we praying that He will intervene and heal her? Sure! But just as His ways are not ours, and His thoughts far surpass ours to achieve His purposes, we'll trust with her that He is already at work in her. It's as though this couple's "assignment" from their Father has taken an unexpected turn. But just as He has brought great spiritual life to the Dutch in Delft, so may He also bear fruit among those they encounter in Florida!

Sue: My mother never expected that her final year would be spent in a nursing home because her mind had deteriorated along with her body. But my sister and I were blessed by the opportunities we had to show our Lord's love to her caregivers, and to share with them testimonies of His faithfulness as we interacted with them! And at the eleventh hour, our Father graciously opened my mother's heart to see her need for reconciliation with Him through Jesus. The ultimate healing was brought about even as her body faded away.

- When did you last experience the peace of our Lord after a trying season in your life? Have you been able to share that testimony with anyone else to bring them encouragement or to give Him praise?

- Describe a time when you shared in the suffering of a loved one who needed medical care. What opportunities were presented for you to be the aroma of life in Christ to the new people in your life who were involved in medical treatment?

2. “You have now to go”...

Much-Afraid has just finished the difficult assault of the Precipice of Injury when the Shepherd reveals her next step. He tells her that the journey through the forest will be “steep”, it will be “quite dark”, and “storms are frequent.” Oh joy! But He also reinforces the *theme* of her journey through the forest — “**keep pressing forward.**”

Nothing can harm her inner woman as she follows His will, even though she must be willing to walk through danger. The only obstacle that can hinder her progress is if she entertains voices of discouragement.

Pressing on in unfamiliar, steep ground is the same call for the increasing number of people who are embracing the Hebraic foundations. Perhaps you are among them! They are learning to persevere in their salvation journey in ways nothing else in Hellenism ever demanded of them. God’s Word tells us a goal as we persevere: “*Perseverance must finish its work, so that you may be **mature and complete, not lacking anything***” (James 1:4).

When it comes to perseverance I often feel like I’m a yo-yo, confident one day and a total failure the next. But the reality that God can use a person like me to share such a wonderful message enables me to be all the bolder in exhorting others to press on!

- How do you rate your own willingness to persevere? Have you developed consistency, or does each new steep trail of life confound you once again?
- What thoughts come into your mind when

you realize that God is sending you along a very difficult path? How do you *feel*? Is there now, or has there been, a time in which you didn’t think you could go on? How did you respond? Did anyone come alongside to help?

3. It did seem strange...; 4. “The Forests of Danger and Tribulation!”...

It seems strange that we can follow Jesus for so long and discover that we are in many ways still unchanged. It’s a very telling testimony that “Much-Afraid should remain so like her name.”

Names are very important in many cultures around the world. A name can represent the hopes that parents have for their child, or signify some special occurrence or sign or event that happened at the time of the child’s birth: Isaac (laughter), Judah (praise), even Jesus (Savior). Among many Native American cultures a name can symbolize a particular character trait for the child to grow into, or reflect a prophetic word about the individual, such as Soaring Eagle, Walks With Joy, or Messenger of God.

The many names of our God permeate Scripture: Yahweh Yireh (God our Provider), Yahweh Rapha (God our Healer), Adonai Tzva’ot (Lord of Heaven’s Armies), and many more. They reflect something of our Father’s glorious character and person.

Our Father looks at your inner person, where your character is formed as your heart is circumcised. Your “old person” is rolled away as you choose to cast off the old and seek the Spirit to transform you in a particular area you’ve yielded up to Him. Especially when you’ve come through “fire and water” experiences trusting in our Lord Jesus, elements of your character are put on His “fast track” and changed to be more like Jesus!

- Since our Father is looking directly into your heart, by what name would He call you according to your character development

thus far? Pressing On With Courage? Fearful Of Change? No Compromise With Evil? Hassled With Tasks? Worrier? Warrior?

- Recall a “fire and water” experience from your own life in which He’s made changes in your character. What “before” and “after” alterations were made? Did they last?

5. “To the next stage”...; 6. “I wonder if you will ever be able”...

The Shepherd discloses to Much-Afraid a new rung to climb on their journey to the High Places. When our Father leads you onto a new path in your pilgrimage, it’s an opportunity to walk in the anointing He offers to suit the assignment. Over the years we’ve encountered men and women who have had tremendous anointing but their character has changed little along the way. You’ve probably met a few yourself.

Scripture indicates the very real possibility that people can walk in power but miss out on a key responsibility. They fail to *nurture godly character* in their children. Eli, Samuel, even David had great calling on their lives. But they weren’t the fathers their children needed. At key points in which their intervention was needed, these dads turned their attention elsewhere.

It’s important that we don’t confuse gifting and anointing from the Holy Spirit with great character development. Gifting is purely from God: “*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines*” (1 Corinthians 12:7,11).

Christ-like character, however, is formed *over time* as we choose to let the Spirit convict us of the carnal sin areas of our soul. He then empowers us to conform in those areas to the character of Jesus. The biblical pattern is consistent: **a heart change produces a behavior change.** Remember the sequence:

Conviction>>Repentance>>Character change

In many respects Much-Afraid is the same as the rest of us travelers. She asks the same question that any of us who have set ourselves to complete the salvation pilgrimage ask: “O Shepherd, wherever will you lead us next?” Sue is a “nester” when it comes to our home. Once her “twigs” are in order she doesn’t want anything changed. Our Lord knows this, yet He has moved us 19 times in 46 years of marriage!

When people would ask our son, Mike, “Where is *home*?”, he’d reply, “Wherever my parents are.” God gave Sue and me a ministry of “*availability and mobility.*” This kind of life isn’t for everyone, of course, but our Father has given us an apostolic assignment, “Share this message.” [In the Greek language, the word “apostolos” means “sent forth on an assignment.” That pretty well sums up much of our past 2 decades of following Him!] We’re burdened by our Father’s heart to be surrounded by those who love Him wholeheartedly and walk in obedient trust according to His Word.

Picture yourself as a lamb nestled in Jesus’ arms as He moves you from one pasture to another. As the model Shepherd, He always knows what’s best for you, guiding you onto the path where your soul will best be nurtured. Only when you exercise self-will and rebel against His plans with distrust does the path seem distressing and hard.

But the Shepherd isn’t rolling His eyes or turning away in dismay. He *knows* you! And He assures you that there is no condemnation for those who are in union with Him. We are told time and again in the Word to find out what *pleases* Him and walk in that!

Human nature is comfortable with familiarity and complacency. For most people change isn’t very desirable, especially if it involves any measure of suffering or inconvenience. But this is what following Jesus requires. You can never mature until you become more like Him in yielded submission to our Father’s will and plans. You can’t fully relate to Him until you under-

stand the beauty of suffering and tribulation in your life.

But it's wonderfully amazing what our Father can raise out of the ashes of our lives in the midst of pain! About 20 years ago, Sue and I were worn out from ministry. We were haggard and discouraged even to the point of discussing divorce. Now we can look back over these past 2 decades with joy, praising our Lord for His faithfulness to change our "inner person" — our character — as He's strengthened and encouraged us to press on to the High Places.

- Do you joyfully anticipate the changes our Lord wants to make, be they character changes or relocation? When was the last major change you faced? How did you respond in your heart?

Can you say to our Lord, "I'm ready to go *anywhere* and do *anything* you desire!"? If not, what are the things that still entrap you?

7. "I am not a man that I should lie" ...; 8. Much-Afraid trembled...

At this point the Shepherd is grave. Like Much-Afraid, when we doubt our Lord's ability, we are directly attacking His character. Our sinful doubt can draw a serious response from Him because we're shutting the ears of our heart from hearing Him. The Hebrew Bible overflows with testimony of His marvelous works on behalf of His people, only to be *doubted* when trust was called for. Have we learned from the consequences of their example?

Currently the anti-Christ spirit in Hellenism offers people lively worship and a myriad of religious activities. But that same spirit keeps thousands from walking in the loving, obedient trust our God demands. Anti-Christ may point people

toward the *reality* of Jesus, but he leaves them filled with doubt about the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises. They peer through frosted glass acknowledging that there is indeed a God, but never move over to the door to cross the threshold into His presence by trust.

So often people who know *about* Jesus but aren't known *by* Him shuffle on without His guidance, slamming into a series of dead ends. In frustration they blame the Shepherd for their problems. And grievously, over time they become just like the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible — very religious, but no connection with our Lord.

We have written before that the spiritual battle is over who rules your mind. Will our Lord and His Word prevail, or the lying thoughts and false expectations offered by Satan and his minions? All along the pilgrimage you need to be diligent. Take your thoughts captive and bring them into conformity to Jesus. Any conjecture over what the future might hold will only hinder your ability to trustingly obey. Any conjecture about the future is no more than a figment of your imagination—an illusion.

- How about *your* thoughts and conversations with others. Are they filled with "what if's"?
- Are you paying attention to how God is leading you, and what character quality He is working to produce in you? Or, are you consumed with concerns about circumstances over which you have no control?

9. "Then," said the Shepherd...

The Shepherd alerts Much-Afraid and us as well, "I am going to lead you through danger and tribulation... I shall be with you." The absolute knowledge that the

indwelling Holy Spirit is with us in the trials we are going through is the anchor we need to go on. Is your anchor holding?

Sue: How grateful I am for the faithful presence of the Spirit of Jesus in the midst of very real danger! Once again I'm reminded that the Valley of the Shadow is just that — a *shadow*. Shadows can't hurt you, nor can the dangers surrounding them when your trust is secured in the sovereign strength of our Lord.

Years ago our son and I were in Japan between visits with Mike on his ship. We'd been invited to stay with the friend of a friend in Korea, so we climbed aboard a ferry boat for the eight-hour cross over. Now you have to picture this vessel to understand how vital it was that my anchor of trust was in Jesus! The ancient wooden vessel had no seats or benches. For our overnight trip, passengers were laid out on somewhat elevated platforms and given coarse woolen blankets for covering. Little did we know what was to come—a typhoon!

It didn't take long before nauseous groans filled the below-deck level in which we were laid out like sardines. The frail craft was carried up the side of one wave after another, crashing violently down the other side. Bodies smashed against bodies, but strangely, my heart was at peace. A baby in Jesus, I had perfect assurance from His Spirit that “none would be lost” — the same confidence the apostle Paul had in similar circumstances!

Thirteen hours later a disheveled boatload stumbled down the gangway, thankful to be on solid turf. But my heart was rejoicing because we had been held securely in His grip. The peaks and valleys of the raging sea had been but a shadow. The reality was His Presence!

Shadows of apprehension lead to fear and darkness. *One step at a time of obedient trust under the watchful eye of our Shepherd is all He calls for you to take.*

Two indispensable items are always carried by shepherds. The rod, stout and sturdy, is his instrument of defense against

attack. It's also his counting tool as each sheep passes under it for inspection as they enter the sheepfold for the night.

You're probably more familiar with the shepherd's staff, the long wooden pole with a crook at one end. The staff supported the shepherd as he walked along leading his flock. Even if not every sheep could see him, they could hear the clack of the staff on the rocky ground and be assured of his comforting presence. The crook could also be used to rescue a careless sheep who got tangled in briars or slipped into a crevice.

Our Shepherd's rod and staff comfort His people as well. He has at His command countless angels to minister help and protection to His frantic sheep. He answers prayer to bring about circumstances and encounters to stir His sheep to trust Him in loving dependence. So why should we worry about the Valley of *Shadow* when the Substance of the Savior is with us?

- How would the nature of the last tribulation you went through have changed if you had remembered that your Shepherd was indeed very present with you?
- How did your imagination increase your anxiety level to the point that you almost didn't follow through on what you knew our Father wanted you to do?

10. Then he added...

The Shepherd offers Much-Afraid such beautiful, specific assurances if she will just press on. Can you picture yourself safely “under His wings” in loving trust? That's the call Jesus extended to the unbelieving Jews as He headed down the hill toward the high wall of Jerusalem — yet, tragically, they would not receive Him as the prophesied Messiah.

I wonder if we realize just how precari-

ous our earthly existence is. Think of the tally of disasters that the Shepherd recounts: “terror by night” — calamities you don’t see coming. What could be more frightening than a tornado hurtling down on you in the wee hours? Or a hurricane blowing down trees onto your home while you’re sleeping?

How about the “arrows that fly by day”? Think about the threat of inner-city gangs bursting in to throttle you and trash your home for a few dollars or even just the thrill of it all. And it wasn’t so long ago that two malevolent snipers threw the residents of several states into panic by their random acts of violence.

Disease and pestilence are no respecter of persons, either. Cancer strikes the godly and the misguided alike. Thirty years ago no one even heard of ebola or hantavirus. West Nile virus has turned many into virtual prisoners inside their homes during summer sunset hours.

The Shepherd goes on to mention destruction that wastes at noonday. I can’t help but think of the recent raging firestorms that enveloped a half million acres in California, wreaking cataclysm as home and personal treasures were consumed in their maw. And the ever-present threat of terrorism has altered many people’s plans regarding overseas travel.

The good news? Actually, the GREAT news! We need not *fear* these very real disasters in our world! Might you find yourself concerned about one or more items from this awful list of potential misfortunes? Perhaps. But need you *fear* either the possibility or the situation itself? NO! Your heart can be covered by His feathers if you choose to walk in obedient trust through whatever calamity clouds your life.

Take a moment to personalize the following passage by putting your name in it. These are promises our Shepherd is giving *you* to encourage you to press on and complete His Kingdom purposes in and for you.

“He told [me], [____your name____], ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. [I,____] believe and

am baptized, so [I,____] will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany [me,____] who believes: In My name [I,____] will drive out demons; [I,____] will speak in new tongues; [I,____] will pick up snakes with [my] hands; and when [I,____] drink deadly poison, it will not hurt [me] at all; [I,____] will place [my] hands on sick people, and they will get well’” (Mark 16:15-18).

I haven’t picked up a poisonous snake yet, but I *have* been saved from three close encounters with rattlesnakes. One actually crawled right across my bare foot! I have seen demons come out of people and have faced them down in the authority of Jesus’s Name. I have flown crippled helicopters that shouldn’t have stayed airborne, and lived. We have seen the sick healed, some even from cancer through the laying on of hands. We even met a person who was raised from the dead.

I am a yo-yo in my relationship with my Father. But thankfully *I* am not the object of our relationship; *He* is. What has happened in my life scrapbook hasn’t come out of *my* ability, but through the working of His mighty power. I offer Him my trust, and He offers me the spiritual power that created everything. That offer is a no-brainer.

Sue: I talked with a salesperson recently whose son had been scheduled to fly on a helo that was shot down in Iraq. A change in schedule put him on another aircraft and saved his life. I mentioned to his mother that our Lord probably has a special purpose for her son to be given another chance. That’s a sobering reminder for each of us to never take today *or* tomorrow for granted.

- During a recent three-week trip we grieved at how few church people expected God to act on their behalf. Some of those we met were experiencing the most severe trials of their lives, but still they had no trust in God. How about you? Are your concerns larger than God’s ability?

- What near-miss situations have *you* encountered in which you KNEW that our Lord had intervened to rescue you? How has that realization changed your decisions and pathway?

11. Then Much-Afraid knelt at his feet...

The altars that Much-Afraid constructs at key crisis points are physical reminders to help her recount our Lord's faithfulness. Recounting the faithfulness of our God is a very biblical pattern. He commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover feast celebration to remind them of His mighty intervention on their behalf in Egypt — His loving protection and mighty demonstration of His sovereign power.

Again, after His people crossed the Jordan at flood stage, the God of Israel ordered them to build a monument of twelve stones, a stone for each tribe. This act of loving obedience was to prompt their recall that He was well able to wall away the waters for them to cross on dry ground. Any future challenges could be met by the same divine hand *if* they looked to Him with trust and walked according to His ways.

You've probably noticed that each of Much-Afraid's altars were constructed *after* she had passed through a crisis point of trust in her heart. The Shepherd didn't take back His word that she would confront peril. Rather, He again reaffirmed His steadfast promise to be with her in the *midst* of the danger. She still had to choose if she would walk that dangerous path. The evil would be there, but she *didn't need to fear it*.

Sue: When our son turned sixteen, Mike, Mikey and I and two young men who were sons in the Spirit journeyed to New York City to see the sights. None of us knew where we were headed, but we got onto a subway, hoping to stop near the berth of the aircraft carrier, Intrepid (Mike had done his

carrier qualifications on it years earlier). Emerging from the subway tunnel, we found ourselves in the middle of a drug transaction between a gangster-type and a seedy recipient!

This scenario could have had dire consequences, but we felt secure enough in our Lord to smile, avert our eyes, and keep on walking! We had ended up in a, let's say, "interesting" section of the city. Gaudy expensive cars parked outside tenements held the extortionists you see on TV. My four brothers in Jesus surrounded me as we walked down the center of these alley-streets, not wanting to be too close to the shadows. I felt as though I was surrounded by a host of angels — and the guys were probably praying that that was true!

We make it a point to recount between ourselves and with others, too, His recent and past faithfulness to us. Something wonderful happens in our souls as we relish what our Lord has done for us. Our trust in Him is revitalized!

But what if nothing comes to mind? Solomon advises, "*When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other*" (Ecclesiastes 7:14). When things aren't going well, or you don't feel that you've seen our Father acting on your behalf lately, *pause and consider*. Ask the Holy Spirit to scrutinize your soul for any hidden sin. If He doesn't convict you of any, then our Lord may be trying to develop a more mature, persevering trust in you.

In any case, when things aren't going well, stop and consider.

- Recall some experiences of our Lord's faithfulness to you. When was the last time you shared some of these memories with your family and close friends?
- Look around you right now. How is our Father answering your prayers? How about those close to you in your faith community:

Are any wonderful acts of our Lord being reported by them to strengthen and encourage the Body?

12. Then the Shepherd smiled more comfortingly...; 13. When he had said this...

All throughout the Bible we hear a resounding refrain: “Fear not!” During our retreat center years we found *financial worries* to be the most common peace-robber among the over 5000 people who visited us. This besetting problem stirred an unexpected response from us: **“God will cause you to sweat whatever you won’t yield to Him in trust!”** Huh?

Your fears and worry are indicators that you’re trying to take control over something for which He wants *your trust*. Our Father is like a great poker player. He’ll ante up the stakes until you finally give up your fear and doubt and worry, and decide to trust Him.

You can do it the easy way or the hard way, but you will ultimately fold your hand. When you finally *do* trust, you’ll be grieved and embarrassed that it took you so long. The emotional suffering you went through was *needless*.

Doesn’t it seem strange that the Shepherd would tell someone named Much-Afraid to *be strong*? You probably realize that without the Holy Spirit to give us our Lord’s will and power, we could not obey any of the 1050 commands we’re given in the Newer Testament. It’s that *dependence on His presence* that the Shepherd wants His little Much-Afraid to develop — the same obedient trust that He is growing in us today too!

Sue: Muscles grow strong as they’re tested. Several years ago I began to do a series of strengthening exercises each morning before I got out of bed. They took only ten minutes, but what a difference I noticed over those many months in the ability to do more of them without nearly the strain I experienced when I first started! Spiritual

strength develops the same way. Just as your muscles “remember” and grow stronger, so does your trust as you choose to press on and cast aside your fears.

Don’t let your mind, will or emotions derail your obedient trust. Those “what-if’s” raise themselves up like fortress walls to thwart your joy and peace. One way in which you can fortify your trust muscles is to read biographies of faithful family in Jesus who chose to confront their trials and challenges in spite of fearful consequences. They narrowed their focus in on the joy set before them rather than trembling at the thorns and briars trying to shred their trust.

Just as the Shepherd warned, enemies will always be lurking •to dissuade you, •isolate you, •slander you. Hold onto those stones of remembrance He’s given you so far as testimony of His work in your life. Chances are high that those who are trying to undermine your journey to the High Places are *devoid* of answered prayers themselves.

The Shepherd cautions that if you give way to fear, trembling follows. Your body reacts to whatever consumes your thoughts and emotions. That’s one reason why so many who are depressed and fearful are so vulnerable to illness. The endorphins that your body produces in moments of joy and exhilaration are suppressed when you dwell on the negative.

As the Shepherd warned, agony follows the stronghold of fear and the physical response of trembling. Your whole being becomes a canvas on which Satan has free rein to paint all sorts of dire images.

Do you see this progression that erodes your trust?

Fear > Trembling > Agony

At what point will *you* choose to take those dark thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to Jesus? (See 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.)

When you *have* come through important times of trust in our Lord, pick up your own “memorial stone” so that you can recount in your heart yet another episode when you

chose to trust. And keep praising your Father for His faithfulness to bulk up your trust muscles for your next trial!

- Someone once wrote, “The only thing to fear is fear itself.” Fear is far more than a four-letter word. It nullifies the vital trust that glues your relationship with your Father. Are you encompassed by fear or worry now?
- How are you responding to that worry, doubt, or fear? Repenting? Fasting and praying? Asking others to intercede for you?

14. Almost as soon as they had reached the trees...; thru 18. Then Pride...

Much-Afraid’s old antagonists are ready for her. They converge on her weaknesses and potential for failure. Each of us will find ourselves in situations in which the possibility of messing up will be very real. But ask yourself: “What’s the *worst thing* that can happen if I don’t succeed?” Then respond with this: ***“The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing that I lack in Him to complete this assignment or to learn from it.”*** That’s where Much-Afraid’s strength rests.

Have you noticed that the attack of the voices in your mind most often begins with self-pity? You begin to feel sorry for yourself because you are lonely or weary or, for some other reason, just plain miserable.

But self-pity doesn’t travel alone! Sniveling behind that navel-gazing comes resentment. Resentment tears away your concentration on our Father and His faithfulness by rousing you to look horizontally. You’re tempted to compare your circumstances or woes or discomfort with the “easy

life” of others. Oh, the deceit we fall into when we presuppose that: 1. Others’ lives are better (easier, happier, calmer) than ours, because 2. We don’t trust our Father’s loving purpose for us and His power to intervene.

Resentment entices Much-Afraid with the same lie that children try to use to twist their parents’ arms: “*Everybody else* goes that way (or does this or has that), so why shouldn’t you?” A wise teaching we received decades ago stated, **“Others may, but you may not.”** In essence, you need to keep reminding yourself that your path on the pilgrimage may not be like anyone else’s. Your particular part of the Body has a very unique purpose and function. Don’t denigrate it because you prefer someone else’s lot. “Others may, but you may not.”

Peter, who knew a lot about the battles we go through in our hearts, counters those who would fall into the self-pity and resentment trap:

*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you **participate** in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name (1 Peter 4:12,13,16).*

There is no quick path to maturity in Jesus. If we want to share in His glory, then we must chew on the gristle of suffering as well (see Romans 8:17). Sue: A while back Mike and I were on the edge of a breakthrough in getting CD audio recordings up on our website. To no surprise we were also confronting one trial after another with things breaking down and allergies sapping our strength.

One night Mike couldn’t even lay down in bed. His joints were screaming, he was drowning in nasal drippage, and sleep was impossible. For two hours we cried out to our Father in prayer! And our faithful Lord rescued him. The joint pain dissipated, his

breathing cleared, his body stilled so he could sleep. Do we see a correlation between the suffering and the victory that lay just ahead? You bet! It for certain is not pleasant to go through, but our hearts are bent on pleasing our Father, and that arouses demonic interest!

The narrow road that Jesus speaks of *does* entail suffering. When Resentment murmurs to Much-Afraid that she's on the path that martyrs take, ask yourself if there is really any other path a follower of Jesus *can* take. Aren't we to be the ones who "[*overcome Satan*] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony; by not loving our lives so much as to shrink from death" (Revelation 12:11)?

Sometimes the most difficult "death" for us is *death to ourselves* — our fears, our wants, our hopes. If fear keeps you focused on **what might happen**, your spirit really will shrivel. But the ones who were mighty in Spirit as examples before us chose not to give way to the possibilities. Instead, they fixed their eyes on the destination God prepared for them, waiting to hear those wonderful words, "Well done, My good and faithful servant!"

Two more interconnected enemies await our traveler. The insidious danger of listening to the repeated sneer of Bitterness (which really is unforgiveness in your heart) is that your heart becomes contaminated by its entangling roots. Bitterness builds on insinuations, slander and lies about others, even if they're just being whispered into your mind.

Not only do you vaunt yourself over the one against whom you're bitter (and that's pride), but you also begin to quicken those negative reactions against anyone who reminds you of your bitter foe. Do you see how effectual is the Adversary's weapon of bitterness in fulfilling his goal to "kill, steal and destroy"? Relationships don't even have a chance to form, much less deepen, because you've already prejudged and found as wanting those who remind you of past hurt.

If Much-Afraid had heeded the bad

report of Bitterness against the Shepherd, she never would have gone another step. That reminder that she'd been through some terrifying encounters with more to come was designed to dissuade her! Bitterness conveniently left out the victories she'd experienced and the character transformations of her altar experiences. His ugly words twisted her love for her Shepherd into a *duty* of obedience rather than a loving response to please Him. You've been put on those guilt trips yourself at times — responding out of obligation to some perceived religious good work rather than from the specific *rhema* breathed into your heart by the Spirit Who stirs from obedient love.

The next guerrilla tactic flung against Much-Afraid was Pride. From a Hebraic understanding, pride and bitterness reap the same consequence: People who entertain either of these attitudes are resisted by God. What does Scripture tell us? "*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*" (Matt. 6:15), and, "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6b). Pride and bitterness are sure roadblocks in your journey to intimacy with Jesus.

Pride's venom has been agitated because of *wounding*. If there's anything our self-pride fears, it's losing face before others and being mocked or dismissed as inconsequential. Pride lies that the Shepherd's goal is to "put you to complete shame." On the contrary, His purpose is to conform us to His likeness. We may agree that we want to be changed by Jesus, but pride discounts the ways He may operate to bring those changes about!

The faithful apostle Paul sets forth Jesus as our example of pursuing the path of humility in order to reach our goal in Him:

*Your attitude should be **the same** as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself **nothing**, taking the very nature of a **servant**,*

being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself and became obedient** to death — even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

Both the world system and the demonic entities scorn true humility because a yielded, humble heart is the avenue of God's grace.

- No one is born with the character of Jesus. How strong is your understanding that our Lord *deeply desires* to bring you to the point of change? Do you willingly seek those changes? Or, are you passive? Resistant?
- To what voices have you been listening lately? What circumstances made you vulnerable to entertaining them? What effect did your listening have on your relationship with those close to you?

19. Much-Afraid and her companions...; 20. So they stopped for a moment...

Much-Afraid knew that action had to be taken if she was to continue without stumbling the rest of the way. Do you ever find yourself chewing on unedifying thoughts, knowing that you shouldn't but deriving some perverse satisfaction anyhow? That's your old sin nature at work. I know, because I have to fight those thoughts too!

We can't plug our ears with cotton to stop the demonic voices. And it's a deepening downward spiral in your thought life as well as your spiritual progress if you don't take action to stop them. If you haven't made this personal responsibility as much a habit as breathing, you are going to suffer unnecessarily: **Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ** (2 Cor. 10:5).

Our Lord's half-brother James enscribed an essential pattern for us to find victory in those attacks. Breathe in his words from chapter 4: 6-10.

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.

Because our Father listens to the cry of the humble, make sure that your heart bows before His loving grace. That means having "clean hands" and a "purified heart" before Him by confessing, and turning from that which He reveals to you as sin. When you've humbled yourself before Him in this manner, He promises to lift you up. That's the submission of obedient trust that James is describing.

Then, from the shelter of His wings, you can resist the devil and his schemes to bring you down, and he will flee. Protected by our Father's mighty hand, you're no longer a demonic target. When you draw near to our Father in this manner, He will draw near to you!

- When was the last time you followed the sequence of the James 4 passage? What were the circumstances and outcome of this experience?

21. At first the forest did not...

How exhilarating was the fresh, strong air up there on the mountains! We were blessed to live near the base of the Front Range of the Rockies, where the bracing dry air greeted us every morning. And when we made the effort to climb one of those nearby peaks, an entire vista opened up beneath, stretching out to the Kansas border.

But that height also enabled us to see the smog hovering over the cities to the north and south of us. Sometimes you can get so caught up in the "smog" of activities and

needs that you forget to look out to the horizon in your spirit. Your perspective changes upward when you decide just to “do the next thing” in peace and not get mired in all the clamoring obligations threatening to sink you. Revisit in your spirit our Father’s promises and the purposes He’s revealed for your life. Then thank Him! When you’re able to hold onto the reality that walking in Jesus is a “great adventure”, then those daily clouds of circumstance won’t block the sunlight of your trust.

- Describe an experience in which you were able to look out from a height, whether from a mountain, a tall building, a plane, whatever. How did your perspective change because of your aerial view?

- You’re probably familiar with the description of a tapestry. The back looks like a jumbled mess of colored thread, while the front is a lovely design of integrated pattern. What has recently gone on in the life of you or someone close to you that appeared to be a mess but was actually a tapestry of great beauty when the situation was completed?

22. Here she was, lame Much-Afraid...

You can’t control what the world flings at you. But you *can* choose your reaction. Do you explode in distress or fear, or do you respond from the Spirit’s perspective in peace? Much-Afraid has just gone through a wonderful time of joyful excitement, completely at ease in a new situation.

Then comes the storm. How often has that happened in your life? Just when your guard is down, chaos envelops your life! “A great tree fell to the earth, then another and another.” So often we feel we can handle one problem or maybe two at a time, but then they come like a tidal wave! We realize at last our own insufficiency and cry out to

our Lord to rescue us.

Sue: Mike had been wrestling for days to install a new program onto our computer. Even though he followed the instructions to the letter, our machine refused to recognize this “intruder”. Then both our phones died within hours of each other. The buttons of one couldn’t be pushed, and the other wouldn’t hold a charge for more than a minute’s phone conversation. That evening a videotape got entangled in our little VCR/TV combo unit. The removal process wrecked the innards. We cried out to our Lord in desperation!

The next morning a dear friend called. He’d been praying for us and sensed the Spirit revealing that we had too few people praying on our behalf for the nature of the work our Father was engaging us. We knew exactly what he meant. Even that courageous proclaimer of the Gospel, Paul, pleaded time and again for his friends in Christ to pray on his behalf!

- Who do you know who is regularly and specifically praying for you? When did you last ask for specific prayer for a personal or family need? Did you give feedback to those praying on your behalf so they could praise God for intervening?

- For whom do you regularly pray? Do you contact those people every so often to find out how He’s answered, and to update yourself on current needs?

23. The strangest thing was...; 24. At last the storm began to rumble off...

The Shepherd had warned in advance that challenging events would confront her in this forest. Fear would have reflected the “old” Much-Afraid. But note the changes that have already taken root in her heart! Rather than panicking, she immediately

turns to the Word implanted in her heart and finds rest.

If you're to find comfort and strength from God's Word in the middle of crisis, you need to plant it there in times of rest! The old "grab a verse at random" approach doesn't produce the "peace that passes understanding" when you've meditated on His implanted Word and applied it. Meditating means more than memorizing. It's appropriating those words as your spiritual food and drink as you call on the Spirit to fill them with meaning for your life. Then you can respond with secure trust that your trial is life-giving, not death-dealing.

Sue: A number of years ago we were returning from a time away in South Carolina. Our son had just gotten his license and was taking a turn driving. Mike was stretched out across the back seat, asleep. I unbuckled my seatbelt to reach forward and change the tape. Distracted, our son veered off the highway, then yanked the wheel hard to get back on the road. At 65 mph the car flipped onto its roof, skidded, then stopped abruptly, upright.

I remember as we smashed onto the roof that the windshield shattered into a million fragments, each filtering light. I marveled at the beauty and asked, "Father, are we going to die?" As the car righted itself (untouched by any other vehicle during rush hour, at that!) I realized we were safe. Mike stumbled out of the back seat, blood seeping from where his head had smashed the window. A kind "Samaritan" called the police from his cell phone. In due time, the ambulance hauled Mike away, and Mikey and I dealt with contacting a tow truck.

The next day, having retrieved Mike from the hospital, we had to find a vehicle to rent in order to return home. Every car in Fayetteville was already taken, as Desert Storm troops had just returned. The only transport we could find was an 18' U-Haul. We could have loaded the carcass of our car in it!

Now comes another neat testimony to our Father's faithfulness. Prior to our trip, friends had given us a \$500 gift. As it turned

out, we hadn't used any of it. The price to rent the U-Haul? \$500! He knew in advance, of course, that we'd have the need, and graciously provided it. How great is His faithfulness, even in the howling storms of the unexpected!

Trials, suffering and tribulation are promised to the followers of Jesus. If this surprises you, then you've received a false gospel. Satan hates those who love Jesus, and makes war against anyone who holds to the testimony of Him (see Revelation 12:17).

What's to be our response to this suffering? Peter, who was sifted by Satan to test that his faith was genuine, encourages each one of us:

*Cast **all** your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast** (1 Peter 5:7-10).*

When a pride of lions goes out to hunt, the older lions snarl and growl in order to drive the prey toward the younger lions who effect the kill. A life lesson from our Lord: Stand in perfect peace, not letting the enemy's growl drive us toward destruction.

Satan can use truth to trap you in a false conclusion. Here we have one of those instances. The storm was coming around the mountain again. His conclusion is for you to BOLT! As we've learned, fear is counterproductive, and fear of what *might* happen can paralyze you! But our Father's desire for you is to stand in perfect peace. When you resist the devil's conclusion, you open the door for God's refuge.

- Peace is crucial to everything else the Lord

will produce in you. Without peace, even love cannot grow. Are you in perfect peace? Yes? No? What is contributing to your answer?

25. “Look here,” exclaimed Much-Afraid ...; 26. Her two companions actually laughed ...; 27. Next minute their enemies...

It was so encouraging to see little Much-Afraid take the lead in attacking those demonic agitators who had no intention of letting up if she chose to live up to her name! And what an example for us who have ears to hear the Holy Spirit and don't want the clutter of any other voices but His.

You can fill your environment with an array of “joyful noise”: sing out spontaneously, pray about whatever He puts on your heart, proclaim praise for His faithfulness and loving kindness. Saturate the ears of your heart with a taste of heaven!

One of my most vivid memories of our time in Israel was the joyful praise that permeated our host's home. Whether it was a lively tape, an impromptu duet, or a prayer spoken aloud, that house was alive with appreciation for His presence!

Just as in this story, our Father ALWAYS has a “hut” of protection for you. When you choose to walk in trust, He opens your eyes to see that shelter for your spirit. Facing the prospects of another storm, our dripping travelers are delighted with their new accommodations.

How often do you squawk about your stormy circumstances rather than gratefully thank your Father for His loving willingness to be your shelter? Those nagging voices were only a door-width away, looking for a crack in the heart of Much-Afraid in which to once more distract and torment her. But she stood firm, bolting any avenue of her mind, will or emotions that would entertain the first negative thought.

Expression of thanks from your heart fans encouragement in the hearts of those with whom you share testimony. Don't just keep those “God-sightings” and interventions to yourself; tell someone else about them!

Sue: The “dead TV” I mentioned earlier needed to be replaced so that we could produce equipping videos with a computer-compatible format. After scouting at four stores, we found a set that seemingly met our needs. As the salesperson went to retrieve it, we looked at other sets. One, a well-known expensive brand, touted a feature that Mike had mentioned earlier that we needed. The set we'd picked out didn't have it, so when the clerk returned, I asked if she had any others with that particular feature.

Taking us around the corner, she pointed to a nice one that was not only suitable, but also on sale! We told her that we'd prayed that our Lord would guide us to just the right set. She smiled and lifted her eyebrows — maybe not much of a response, but she knows now that SOMEONE out there trusts in a Father who knows His kids' needs and brings an answer that suits His purposes!

This story just points out that not all of our Father's interventions are “Red Sea—Jordan River” experiences. Sometimes you just need eyes to see Him at work all around you, and testify to that.

- Can you recall a time when you stood still, refusing to flee because of fear-based conjecture about what *might* happen? What alternative did our Lord present to you that was totally different than what fear would have you believe?
- Do you make it a habit to be on the lookout for our Lord's intervention in your daily life? Do you voice to others when you *do* see Him at work around you?

28. Much-Afraid went to the door...; 29. There was a sound...

Sue: Ever since childhood I've relished the power of thunderstorms. Many an after-

noon was spent crouched by the side of the house under the screened porch off my bedroom as light flashed against the rainy darkness, chased by booming rolls of thunder.

From my youthful perspective, I was perfectly secure in my little shelter. Fierce storms can do irreparable damage, of course. But all of nature testifies to its Creator, so even this spectacle of His power generates awe in my heart. Perhaps I have such peace because I know in Whose hand the storm is!

- What mental picture of our Lord's power in nature comes to mind? What do His manifestations of wind, rain, earthquakes and volcanoes tell you about Him?
- Describe a particular time when our Lord's power in nature filled your heart with awe.

30. They found in the room...; 31. So in a very little time...; 32. Much-Afraid found herself thinking...

Simple pleasures become memory treasures when you receive them with contentment. We were blessed years ago to spend our weekends in an ancient trailer situated on 500,000 acres of untouched California high country. Our friends had a trespass lease on this property, and we were like little children of our King as we romped through this slice of His earthly domain!

We were pretty far from the nearest town or facility, so what we brought with us was what we had for provision. I can still smell the savory aroma of Betty's beans cooked over the old wood stove, our only heat against winter's blast. Like Much-Afraid, we basked in the "peace and thanksgiving and cheerful contentment" of our humble surroundings.

We've marveled over our Lord's "creative provision" for us for the past 30 years. Three decades ago we received our last paycheck. During that time our Lord has provided for

us in such amazing ways.

He told us in Israel, "Share this message and I will provide for you." So we don't concern ourselves with going after provision. Instead, we're busied with how we can get the message of the Hebraic Restoration out to as many people as possible. Do we *work*? Yes! But not for provision. We delight in laboring to serve our Lord. And isn't this the attitude we should all have in regard to our labors? "**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving**" (Colossians 3:23,24).

Many well-meaning Christians have offered us gimmicks to raise money. We've declined, because to "Share" is what we were commanded to do. In the years since we came back from Israel, our Lord has added two other purposes:

1. Lead. Our Lord has emphasized the significance of the *marriage covenant*, as that bond represents the unity and permanence of our relationship with our Father in union with Jesus. If you are married, the true work of Jesus is seen as you grow in one accord together in love, purpose and meaning. Leadership does *not* emanate through ecclesiastical positions of the Hellenist-influenced system. Rather, it is an outflow of lives yielded to our Lord's purposes and walked out in the love relationships of one-anothering.

Dear friends participated in a recent International Reconciliation Conference held on behalf of tribal peoples worldwide. They discovered that hearts and eyes of understanding were opened to the power of sharing biblical truth from the context of a strong, vibrant marriage. That covenant is key to every culture — the relational intimacy that followers of Jesus seek in Him and with one another.

2. Contend for My Son, Jesus. We wrote in our monthly newsletter, *Mishpachah Yeshua*, the Family of Jesus, about the domination of the anti-Christ and Jezebel spirits that control Hellenism. So little in that sys-

tem focuses upon *Jesus*, “the Author and Finisher of our faith.” Even His work as Messiah, by which He offers forgiveness through *repentance*, is nullified. Grievously, the truth of *turning away from sin* and *turning to our Father* for forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus is just about unheard of in lawless Hellenism. A perverted version of grace excuses sin of all kinds.

Sue and I believe that this track record of our Father’s faithfulness would come to an end if we gave way to fear. Savor Paul’s assurance of our Lord’s faithfulness as you taste each verse.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7).

We’ve discussed at length the enemies of our thought life. Whatever your mind is consumed with will influence the actions you take. So let’s ponder what it is we *should* be concentrating on, as Paul continues:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (4:8,9).

Are you putting into practice that which the Spirit has been showing you thus far in your journey?

- Can you recall times when your body, soul and spirit found great rest and delight with minimal financial outlay, travel, or tense

preparation?

- What will it take for you and your family to carve out a time at least once a month in simple retreat from your regular schedules? Do you have friends with whom you can, on occasion, trade off child care so you can benefit from some quiet time alone with your spouse?

33. The storm continued...; 34. During those quiet days...; 35. It seemed as though...

“Enforced seclusion.” How do you respond when your usual agenda or schedule is pulled out from under you? In her zeal to move up to the High Places, Much-Afraid could have chomped at the bit waiting for the storm to abate. Instead, she chose to recuperate in calm peacefulness.

Sorrow and Suffering had seemed like functionaries to Much-Afraid, serving their purpose to guide and uphold her when she stumbled along the way. But now, in her shelter free of distractions, she relished her opportunity to grow in regard of her two companions as true friends.

Sue: Storms can bring people together in ways that busy schedules generally preclude. We’d been loaned the use of a home on Cape Cod for week. We’d barely arrived when Hurricane Bob barreled down on us. Bereft of electricity, Mike and I and our son and his friend laughed and talked and played board games and cards. We especially enjoyed three days of creative meals prepared over the gas grill!

We also noticed an interesting camaraderie as we strolled through the neighborhood in the storm’s aftermath. People we’d never met stopped to chat with us. So many expressed gratefulness that little serious damage had ensued from the storm’s powerful winds.

A blizzard during our retreat center days knocked out power for over a week. We felt like pioneers as Mike and a guy on staff armed themselves with chainsaws to free neighbors from driveways barricaded by trees. Families that generally didn't have time to chat sat down together with make-shift meals to spend time appreciating each other's stories. What could have been an inconvenience turned into a memorable event!

It's sad to see how fragmented lives have become. Families spend more time in the car than they do sharing meals at home. Even hours spent with others at work, at events, or even at church activities find participants defined by what they *do* rather than who they *are*. Have you ever felt like an egg in an activity carton? Your shell rubs up against other shells but your real self never "scrambles" with anyone else.

Much-Afraid discovered during her time off the trail that her senses had become heightened to notice details she'd overlooked before. Everything takes on greater meaning when you resist the demonic voices and gain victory by conforming your thoughts to those of Jesus.

It's at this time that the Holy Spirit is able to impart to your mind, will, and emotions a whole different view of your surroundings. You can see people who once hurt you as God's instruments to teach you forgiveness. And you can better recognize the difficult situations our Lord brought to you as times to learn trust.

- Describe a time when you found yourself unexpectedly confined to quarters. How did you respond? Was it a peaceful, creative time, or were you anxious about all that you weren't able to get done?
- How is the Spirit altering your perspective of the people and circumstances of your past and your present? What changes in your

perspective have taken place since you've been traveling with Much-Afraid on her journey to the High Places?

36. All these things seemed to be speaking ...; 37. One morning when the storm...; 38. Sorrow answered quietly...

The "mountain dialect" that was so refreshingly new and beautiful to Much-Afraid was really her growing understanding of things of the Spirit. Once you enter into the King's presence — not content to observe Him through frosted glass, but truly across the threshold so that His Spirit dwells in you — you find an ever-increasing insight into life from *His* perspective.

Probably the most important thing for us to appreciate is the *greater understanding* that the Spirit gives. Ponder Paul's comforting assurance to the believers in Corinth:

*We have not received the spirit of the world but the **Spirit who is from God**, that we may **understand** what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in **words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words** (1 Corinthians 2:12,13).*

When we embrace the Covenant Gospel offered to us by our Father, He consummates the Covenant by placing His Holy Spirit in us. Even though we are indwelt by Him, our mind, will, and emotions come under His control only as we repent in response to His conviction. Only then is He able to change how we respond to the world around us.

Each time we yield to conviction, repent and are changed, we become less carnal and more spiritually discerning. Our understanding becomes that which is taught to us by the Spirit.

Much-Afraid's heart was stirred by the little song that Sorrow had composed as they ambled through the forest. As our Lord brings changes to your character, *you* may

find new songs penetrating your heart. Music is just one of many ways to rejoice in Him, but it's an important one!

Sue: One day our Lord surprised me with joy as I was on the way to the Post Office. I found words coming to me in a manner similar to Sorrow's experience. The tune to which they were set was a song popular then, entitled "Perhaps Love". The love that permeated the song He gave me, though, had nothing to do with worldly emotion! Perhaps as you read the lyrics, He'll give you some ideas to sing for His praise!

Perhaps Love

Perhaps love is like the sand-swept breeze
that billows in your hair,
The sparkling rush of waterfall through
diamond-facet air,
The crisp and radiant snow mist that
defines God's purity,
His precious gentle care for you and me.

Perhaps love is man and woman blessed
by holy cords of joy
Expressed in smiles of tenderness at giggling girl or boy,
Or reaching out to elderly or lonely sorrowing man,
Compassion that reflects God's caring hand.

His love encompasses my fears and
makes them victory,
And all because of trusting faith in Christ
of Calvary,
To sacrifice my downcast lot to claim His
gift of peace,
To magnify His name with upraised voice
and bended knee.

Perhaps love is that embrace you give a
crying teenage child
Abandoned by her friends and needing to

be reconciled,
Or welcoming a foreigner bewildered and
afraid,
And leading him to life in Jesus' name.

His magnitude of love for me transcends
my every sin,
Transporting me from depths of grief to
heights of heavenly gain,
Partaking of His fellowship in trial and
suffering,
Rejoicing in the presence of Lord Jesus
Christ my King.

Perhaps love can be summed up in this,
that God so loved the world,
His only Son delivered down to bear our
sinful curse,
Yet offering peace and pardon free to all
who will believe,
Their victory, by Him secured, received.

- How are you becoming more spiritually discerning along the journey? Do you find yourself more responsive to the Spirit's conviction to turn away from sin and follow Jesus more closely?
- Do certain verses or ideas from Scripture dance around your mind? Have you ever connected them with a tune from your heart to offer to Him as a special gift?

39. "I like it" ...; 40. So Sorrow sang it over ...

Early followers of Jesus — and many of His sheep today — used songs to share biblical truth with one another. That's why Paul exhorts us to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with songs, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). The gold that you can

mine from the Bible has great spiritual power to enrich the lives of your family in Jesus.

When our son was little, we played scripture songs for kids over and over again. What a delight to hear him singing these as he played with his toys or just skipped around the house! Most children love the rhythm and rhyme of music. Why not plant *Scriptural truth* in their hearts instead of worldly music or TV ads?

Much-Afraid yearned to be able to follow the Shepherd wherever He went. When your

life displays an unfathomable trust-filled affection for our Father and His Son, Jesus, you want to please Him even more.

In our October-November 2003 *Mish-pachah Yeshua* newsletter, we included a description of “vertical” facets of a loving relationship with our Lord. We have included these on the next page. Please review them. Place a check mark next to the facets that are integrally part of your own faith pilgrimage.

Facets of the True Vertical in Your Life

Goal: Increased loving-trust in God our Father, and walking in the freedom offered to you through Jesus our Messiah

VERTICAL: the motivation of your heart and spirit made possible through repentance and the indwelling Holy Spirit

Love for and trust in our Father (see Proverbs 3:5,6; Mark 12:30) are the heart issues that bring you continuing spiritual growth. Out of this growth, our Father and His Son Jesus receive glory from your life. At the same time, *you* grow in increasing Christ-likeness.

Worship and Praise (see John 4:24) are exuberant expressions that reveal your true heart toward our Lord. Through worship and praise your spirit is able to convey its most joyful expression of recognition of our Father God. Your expression isn't a form or style of worship or praise that pleases God, but emanation from a forgiven, repentant heart.

True, sacrificial love for others (see Matthew 25:31-46) can emanate only out of the quality of loving trust you maintain in the vertical. Your ability to genuinely care for those who can never repay your kindness can only be accomplished through the love and power the Holy Spirit provides. All other kinds of love fall short of the humble sacrifice that stirs the recipient to give praise to our Father. This is what truly sets followers of Jesus apart as we live out our lives in the horizontal. The inner motivation of your heart is to glorify our Father. This distinguishes your activity in the horizontal from all other motives of mankind.

Mutual encouragement (see Hebrews 3:13; 10:23, 24) by those who follow Jesus with all their heart and soul helps you avoid the traps of sin's deceit. Satan seeks to trap you in self-pity and despair, and entice you to entertain "pet sins" of which you refuse to repent. He tries to convince you that our Father isn't hearing you, or has even rejected you. Your self-consumed, self-pitying attitude sends the message to our Lord that *He is untrustworthy*. True fellowship counters deception with testimonies of answered prayer and our Father's faithfulness. Biblical encouragement can recount God's past and present acts of kindness toward you as His beloved child.

Fellowship with the righteous (see 1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14) is critical to your faith expression. We have written how critical interconnected fellowship in homes was to the earliest Church. The primary purpose of their gatherings was to uphold communal righteousness by repentance, prayer, instruction in godliness, breaking of bread, and one-anothering in order for the Father to answer their prayers (see James 5:16-19; 1 Peter 3:12, Acts 2:42). The righteous walk in *obedience-based* trust. They seek God's guidance and His commands, following them without rationalizing the consequences to their obedience. Love for God and a desire to walk in the righteousness of Jesus boldly compels you to *know* and to *do* His will (Proverbs 28:1).

Your *sufferings* (see Romans 5:3-5; 8:14-17; Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:20,21) are character transformers, not trials to avoid at all cost. You yearn to give the Potter freedom to change within you all that He desires, and to form in you whatever will suit His purposes. It isn't that God changes anything *around* you; He changes *you*. Your identification with Jesus in His sufferings increases profoundly even as your peace and joy in Him increase (see Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:1-16).

Having your needs met God's way (see Genesis 1:26,30; 2:8,9;15-25) is the only way you can really experience the freedom offered through Jesus. Your need for dignity, authority, blessing and provision, security, purpose and meaning, freedom and boundary, and intimate love and companionship can only be experienced when your generational strongholds are demolished. As these needs are met, you experience a greater fullness in your relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus, and with other people.

Removal of generational strongholds (see Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6) frees your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, for the Holy Spirit to change you into conformity to Jesus. Even many who have embraced the true Gospel still find themselves struggling with bondage to strongholds passed along from generation to generation. The transformation promised to them as part of their sanctification is impossible until these influences are demolished. Demolish the strongholds that impede your soul's transformation into Christ-likeness! Then you can reflect the character of our Lord Jesus to Him.

Repentance that produces righteousness (see 1 John 1:9) is key to your ongoing relationship with both our Father and His Son Jesus. You can have no true fellowship in Jesus with others in the horizontal if this vertical fellowship is obstructed through abiding in tolerated sin (see 1 John 2:7-10). Repentance is your first step in embracing the true Gospel, and it is the glue that maintains your fellowship until you are welcomed into heaven.

Embracing the true Gospel (see John 7:38,39), the one Jesus speaks of, is the first step of living in the vertical. As you embrace the conditions of the Covenant offered by our Father, He seals you with the Holy Spirit guaranteeing His part of the Covenant promises. The salvation offered in the true Gospel is not a point in time, but the *culmination of a pilgrimage* (see Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Philippians 2:12,13) which ends when our Lord proclaims your name in front of the hosts of heaven (see Revelation 3:5).