



Walking in High Places!

Booklet One

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Walking in High Places!

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Ephesians 1:3 The Message Bible

3 How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him.

Disciple,

Welcome to *The Disciple's High Places* series. I've aimed these short booklets at pointing and progressing fellow adventurers up the path to *High Places* in Christ! There are spiritual blessings in heavenly locations that God intends for us to share with Him now. In designing this series, it is my hope we can discover them together.

This booklet, *Walking in High Places*, is the first of the series. Beginning with a simple commitment to God, we learn how to walk with Jesus Christ daily. We'll focus on basic principles for nurturing a relationship with the Lord using the same simple *Strategic Tools* that we're provided to the first century Church. Our goal: walking in personal devotion to the Lord. Meet you in the *High Places!*

J. Robert Hanson

Walking in High Places!

Welcome to the High Places

Ephesians 1:3 The Message Bible

3 How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him.

Does your life feel like you're going up and down all the time? Do fantastic high points followed by deflating lows characterize your moods? Does time pass like you're on an emotional roller coaster? Thrill rides maybe fun at amusement parks – but not so entertaining for the Christian life. When you're up you're above the clouds. When you're down you wonder how long life can go on.

God has not intended our lives to be like some cheap thrill ride adventure. True adventure comes from a long-standing location called the “*High Places*.” And these *High Places* are the lands of real blessing – spiritual blessing – from the Heavenly Father Himself. Amusement parks are one thing, to be tossed back and forth emotionally in the soul is another! Falling and stumbling through our days is not what God intended our lives to be like.

In fact, the Bible reveals to us that God has lifted the disciple up and made him/her sit together in *High Places* with Christ Himself:

Ephesians 2:6 The Message Bible

6 Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

There is no being “tossed all around” in life here, just “picked us up and set us down” in the company of Jesus where He now is! Could this be true? Some contend that God is saying these things to mock humanity in its need. They argue, “God is telling me these things to play with my emotions – how can I sit in *High Places* with Jesus when He’s in heaven and I’m stuck here on the earth?”

Let’s illustrate what’s happening in this verse. Modern technology can be a wonderful thing. With the development of video conferencing, two people can carry on a fairly developed relationship for an extended period of time while still miles apart. All that is needed are certain “*Strategic Tools*” to produce a method to continue that relationship – two webcams and a pair of computers with Internet access.

The *High Places* with Jesus use the same principle, except on a spiritual level. There are *Strategic Tools* we can use to produce a method of continuing a living relationship in the company of Jesus though physically apart. And the design of these *Strategic Tools* is to produce stability and stature. These are the result of a dynamic relationship developed in the company of Jesus, with the concluding purpose of giving glory to God. The Apostle

Peter, a man known for his instability, learned these *Strategic Tools* as a method for putting his own life on a firm footing. He writes toward the end of his life:

2 Peter 1:10 The Message Bible

10 So, friends, confirm God’s invitation to you, his choice of you. Don’t put it off; do it now. Do this, and you’ll have your life on a firm footing.

When one friend initiates a video conferencing session, the receiving friend has the option of accepting or denying the invitation. To accept the invitation is to confirm that the initiator has chosen to talk to you and wants to continue in relationship together. If we don’t put it off but immediately accept the invitation, we put our lives on a firm footing. Confirming the invitation is the same as learning to diligently use the *Strategic Tools* God provides to never fall, stumble or become unstable. Then we can explore and enjoy life without the amusement park adventures human emotions are so susceptible too. Let’s look at the 5 *Strategic Tools* we can use to walk and discover the life God intends for us. This is how we can find ourselves “*Walking in High Places!*”

Strategies for Walking in High Places

Acts 2:42 New Revised Standard

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The devotion of the many always begins with the commitment of the one. Whenever we see a group of people devoted to doing something, realize the company breaks down to the individual. Let's consider an illustration using the American sport of baseball. It takes nine people to play baseball on a ball field. The ballplayers practice together and drill the same routines over and over until they develop habits that work instinctively and cohesively without thinking. Each individual ballplayer has their own personal skill set and contribution to the whole team. That talent was developed with years of personal commitment and devotion to the game as a whole. Without dedicated diligence, he has little or nothing to bring to the baseball team. Once the personal skill has been developed, that ballplayer becomes a *Strategic Tool* in the manager's game plan. But, until the player's raw talent is trained, the contribution to the team is not available.

Trainers use strategies to develop the individual's talent so he may contribute to the whole. That raw talent must be just as devoted to these plans as the rest of the team. A baseball team's devotion begins with an individual's devotion to these strategies of training.

The early church, in its beginning stage, could never have devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer or sharing with others, without the individual's personal devotion to the same strategies. There are 5 *Strategic Tools* God uses to train a disciple so that he/she can contribute to the church as a whole. These tools used diligently day-by-day create a firm footing for every believer who uses them consistently.

A. The Strategy of the Word

The first *Strategic Tool* is the disciple devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching. This was the first activity of the first century church. In modern day terms, the apostle's teaching developed into the Bible: the Old and New Testament. Simply put, the first strategy God developed to teach disciples was the devotion to study the instructions of the Bible, God's Word to man. The early church studied together effectively because, they were each personally devoted to examining what God said in His Word.

It's when we are alone, in the quiet times of reading, that we find God's Word speaking to us. Not mystically by *subjective* inferences, but practically by *objective*, concrete instructions of ideas and thoughts from the Bible.

Many folks today cannot tolerate solitude and quiet. They cannot find enough people around them. Others will claim they crave to be alone. However, both look for distractions in books, music, or even the sounds of nature – anything but silence before God. The simplest journeys are filled with sounds of radio or television. What is there

about being alone that causes us to look for distractions? Time alone can be a frightening thing! We are confronted with ourselves. Our own thoughts and ideas consume us. There is an old adage, "The idle mind is the devil's workshop."

On the other hand, God has intended time alone for our refreshment if we will devote a few minutes to Him in our lives. The surest way to keep from the "ups and downs" of life is to discover a way into His presence all the time. Firm footing awaits those who will rest quietly on their God.

However, maybe we discover practically that not all our waking moments can focus on the presence of God. We have different duties that demand our attention. In this case, what we *can* do is begin our day with Him and start a course to walk in His presence. Set aside time – wake up a little earlier than breakfast – and share a short moment with God. A few minutes reading the Bible in the morning can set us on a right path for the day. Matthew reminds us of what Jesus said:

Matthew 4:4 The Message Bible

4 Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

Every morning it is possible to hear what God says from the Bible. The *Strategic Tool of the Word* is used by God to teach us what He says to us.

B. The Strategy of Fellowship

Are you extroverted or introverted? Some find it very easy to make friends and project an image of confidence and assurance. For others, a shared ride in an elevator can be an excruciating experience bordering on sheer fear and terror. In which arena do we spend most of our time? The extrovert finds satisfaction in drawing out others to circle around their world. They are confident as long as the focus is on them. The introvert notices every nuance of attention and recoils from the potential danger of the spotlight. Both are insecure and find little meaningful fellowship with others.

When thinking of the Lord Jesus, He was perfectly balanced in all His interactions. He was not insecure in any relationships He enjoyed. And the fellowship He treasured with His disciples was secure by His perfect relationship with His Father.

The second *Strategic Tool* is nurturing a *fellowship* with the Heavenly Father on which all other relationships may be entered into. It's through this that we grow closer in relationship to God and our fellow man. Doing activities together produce friendships and cultivate hearts that love. Fellowship based upon common interests and hobbies may be fun and exciting, but when the fascination is over the friendship is lost. A fellowship that finds a foundation based upon a relationship with God endures all trials and difficult situations.

This fellowship with the living God promises growth and life. The only variable that will destroy the relationship on our part is sin. Restoring fellowship is only a prayer of repentance away. And once I established my honest, open relationship, no matter what I

am doing, as long as I do not dishonor God, I can enjoy fellowship with others no matter the activity.

Practically, that would mean loving to participate in the things my brother loves. Simple things like a game of basketball, crocheting, or looking at pictures can mean a lot to others. Society tells us that friends are established around common interests and enjoyments. Christ shared His time with the publicans and sinners. He won them by being one of them – yet He remained separate from their sins. If Peter liked fishing, He told Peter to cast out his net for a bigger catch. Selflessness in making time for other's interests can bond hearts together in the care of Christ. And this *Strategic Tool of Fellowship* produces the fullest and meaningful friendships for life.

C. The Strategy of Worship

The third *Strategic Tool* showing devotion is *Worship*. In Acts 2:42, worship is referred to in *seed form* as the breaking of bread. Paul develops the connection more extensively in his epistles later on. Just how important is worship? It's so important that Satan himself offers the whole world to Jesus if He will worship him:

Matthew 4:9-10 The New Revised Standard Version

9 and he [Satan] said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."
10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Jesus confronts Satan based on a verse from the Old Testament in Deuteronomy. “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him,” are the words of rebuttal. In this, the Lord defines worship in two ways: your *attitude* and *actions* toward God.

First He says, “Worship the Lord your God.” This has to do with our attitude and disposition toward God. Do we confess Him as King and Lord? Or, do we relegate Him to second-class status behind other interests. The key to worship is remembering He is worthy of praise no matter how you feel at the moment. Job was a man who suffered greatly, yet in the midst of all the terrible things he experienced, he found time to worship apart from his miserable circumstances. Just take a moment to thank God for who He is and what He has done for your life. Place your other interests behind Him. Eventually you will find much to thank God for and a few moments will never seem like enough time.

Secondly, Jesus tells Satan, “Serve only Him.” Not only must our attitudes be worshipful, but our actions also. The actions we choose to make for Him determine how we serve God. The Message Bible gives interesting support to this verse in Romans:

Romans 12:1 The Message Bible

1 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life — your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life — and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

The *Strategic Tool of Worship* is offering our very being of life — all the actions we do — in complete devotion and dedication to God. This commitment to serving Him is *embracing what God does for you!* Your everyday ordinary life, that you consider insignificant, brings tremendous pleasure to God when placed before Him as an offering. This *Strategic Tool of Worship* in *attitude* and *action*, gives God glory!

D. The Strategy of Prayer

The fourth *Strategic Tool* the early church practiced was *Prayer*. It's the one thing that is easy to neglect and important never to ignore. Have you ever ventured through your day without lifting your heart before the Creator? Prayer can be one of the most contested activities of the Christian life.

While in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus went to seek the Heavenly Father, leaving His disciples with the instruction to, “Watch ye and pray” (Mark 14:38). When He returned, He found these three men fast asleep. What happened? The Lord sums it up in one little phrase, “the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” While the heart desires to pray, the mind and body find places to wander in distraction or slumber.

Practically speaking, the best way to fight the war of wandering and slumber is to have a strategy for prayer. The tactic is simple and easy to do. Write out a prayer list! If you use it everyday, it will become a *Strategic Tool* that forms a habit. Let me give you a small sample of my *Morning Prayer List*; I'll call it the “*Giving All Principle*.” I give to Jesus

a list of three things in the morning. Of course, this list naturally grows and expands as the habit of prayer develops.

1. Time – One of the areas a soul can be most selfish about is time. I’ve met people who will offer the shirt off their back yet find it too inconvenient to give the time of day. For them, parting with possessions is easy compared to the shortest of interruptions; these are intrusions! A red light, while driving; a long line at the store’s checkout counter cause the greatest frustrations to the busy individual.

The first item on my list is giving all my time to the Lord! If I can give God the first part of the day free from anxiety, it will be easier to hand over my frustrating interruptions to Him. All of my time is His time now! Any interruptions of my schedule are now His interruptions:

Psalm 31:15 The Message Bible

15 Hour by hour I place my days in your hand, safe from the hands out to get me.

The Psalmist must have discovered the same thing! It was necessary to take every hour and give it to God placing the whole schedule in His capable hands.

2. Possessions – The second thing on my list is giving all my possessions into God’s hands. Whether I’m rich or poor, every morning I give all I have to God. Martin Luther

once said, “I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”

If I’m going to make Him Lord of my life, then “into His hands” I commit all that I own. No man can rob me of what Jesus already holds. And, I become a steward to act responsibly with what He has given me. The amount of possessions no longer matters. The Apostle Paul must have sensed the same things. Read what he writes to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:12-13 The Message Bible

12 I’m just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. 13 Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.

3. Relationships – The final item on my list is giving all my relationships to God. Friend or foe, all my interactions I give to Him for His glory. The Carnegie Technological Institute¹ has stated that 90% of all people who fail in their life’s vocation fail because they cannot get along with people. Any relationship that needs improvement I commit to His hands that I might find God’s grace to improve it. Evidently the writer of the book of Hebrews thought it was important also:

¹ Lloyd Perry, *Getting the Church on Target* (Moody Press, 1981): taken from www.sermonillustrations.com.

Hebrews 12:14 The Message Bible

14 Work at getting along with each other and with God. Otherwise you'll never get so much as a glimpse of God.

As a child of God I do my best to get along with as many people as possible. And when it seems impossible, the best resource to find help is located in the hands of God.

E. The Strategy of Sharing

The final *Strategic Tool* is *sharing* your life of personal change to those around you. The life of the believer in Jesus becomes a resource and *Strategic Tool* for God to use. The early church in Acts provides a great example of this:

Acts 2:46-47 The Message Bible

46 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, 47 as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

The community witnessed the testimony of the individual lives interacting together. They saw believers eat, celebrate and go about everyday, ordinary lives like themselves. Never before had such a group of individuals affected a large community. In fact, the

church grew every day as a result of disciples sharing their lives with others. The *Strategic Tool of Sharing* is the practical daily witness of Christians. And this daily witness that is displayed is a result of the personal relationship the individual has with God. Sharing the walk in *High Places* with others, deepens the level of commitment the disciple has to the Lord Jesus.

Spending the Day in the High Places

The final section of *Walking in High Places* is learning to spend the whole day there. Once we've discovered the 5 *Strategic Tools* that get us to that place, why would we want to leave? Now we discover the disciple's desire is similar to that of the Psalmist of old:

Psalm 43:3 The Message Bible

3 Give me your lantern and compass, give me a map, so I can find my way to the sacred mountain, to the place of your presence...

With the *Strategic Tools* you have found the “sacred mountain,” the *High Places* of His presence. Now, let's see if we can learn to stay there throughout the day! Let me make three suggestions about spending the day in the *High Places*:

A. Quiet Times in the Morning

How do we begin our day? If we miss certain things in the morning, a dark cloud will seem to follow us the rest of the day! Morning Glory flowers are vines that typically last a single morning and wither by the afternoon. Craving the morning sun, this species will bloom every day. The flowers usually start to fade a couple of hours before the petals start showing visible curling.

Our lives are like the Morning Glory flower. If we apply the light of God to our lives each morning, the soul will bloom in all the Lord's glory. If we choose to neglect the morning sun, our lives miss the opportunity of the morning bloom. Quiet times in the morning are the light of God for the soul of the believer.

What does the quiet time look like? Let me share what it looks like to me. As a first step, I use the *Strategic Tool of His Word*. I do a systematic consecutive reading of the Bible in the morning. It doesn't need to be long, just enough reading in the Book of Life to gather insights for the needs of the day. If I look objectively at what the Bible is teaching, remembering the context, I discover promises. These promises give help for trials, direction for difficult situations, and even a word of comfort for myself or others who come into my path.

The *next step* of my quiet time is to use the *Strategic Tool of Prayer*. Here is where the *Morning Prayer List* comes in handy. First, I give thanks for God's salvation and confess any sins I may have committed! I find that after reading God's Word, with His promises on my heart, I am most inclined for this activity. Remember the three-step "Giving All Principles?" Next, I include them into my *Morning Prayer List*. Finally, I present any special requests I have to God before I rise up to take on the heat day.

B. Action in the Day

You might say, Okay, that gets me through the first couple hours of the day in the *High Places*, what about the rest of day? Morning Glory flowers wither by mid-day; I

need to last longer than that!" The Apostle Paul must have thought the same thing. He provides us with a couple suggestions for help:

Colossians 3:2-3 The Message Bible

2 Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. 3 Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life.

Your journey on earth maybe difficult. The things right in front of you can distract where you're going, but remember, you're walking in *High Places*. When distractions happen, it's time to take a moment and have a conversation with God about your most relevant issues. Look up and see Christ, talk to Him about your life and situation. Sing a song about Jesus if you have to. The day may just require many conversations with the One in *High Places – that's where the action is!*

C. Commitment to Walking in the High Places

The final thing to spending the day in *High Places* is making a commitment to staying there. The life of the disciple is ultimately a commitment to the Savior. What does that look like? It looks like the Lord Jesus' commitment to us! When faced with the hardest

road of all, He gave His life in sacrifice for our salvation. His commitment was dying a criminal's death on a cross. And His commitment becomes the foundation of ours. He committed His life to us out of a desire to do His Heavenly Father's will in love.

It is His example that inspires the heart of the disciple to lifelong commitment to Him. Where He walks, the disciples walks! Where He is, the disciple is! "*Walking in the High Places*" becomes second nature as the habit of the *5 Strategic Tools* is utilized. The blessings of God are realized for those who enjoy *Walking in High Places*!

Ephesians 1:3 Message Bible

3 How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the High Places of blessing in him.

