

A bright sun in a blue sky with white clouds. The sun is in the upper left corner, creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a vibrant blue, and there are several fluffy white clouds scattered across it.

# **Living in High Places!**

*Booklet Two*

**J. Robert Hanson**

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*Ephesians 1:3 NIV*

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Disciple,

We continue in *The Disciple's High Places* series. In each booklet I try to tell of the grace that God makes available for following Jesus Christ. Our journey was not meant to be easy. As we step higher on our path to *High Places*, life becomes more difficult. The reason I wrote this series was to help spiritual adventurers move forward in faith.

This second of the series, *Living in High Places*, is intended to aid us by discovering what living with Jesus is all about. Here we find the secret of His presence and learn the importance of experiencing a spiritual environment of Christian fellowship. We'll discover the *Strategic Assignments* that were the zeal of the first century church and uncover how these still enhance our fellowship with Jesus today. Our goal: living together in daily devotion to the Lord. Let's hasten on to the *High Places!*

J. Robert Hanson

# Living in 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.*

How is *Walking in High Places* going for you? Have you been able to experience the *5 Strategic Tools* creating a life of firm footing in Christ? By this time I'm hoping a daily walk with God has been established and you're enjoying a unique connection with your Heavenly Father. A dynamic relationship develops when we choose to allow those *5 Strategic Tools* to work.

If we forget them, or become negligent in using them, it only takes a second to recommit and begin fresh and new. Don't lose sleep over stopping. It's not worth it to anguish over shortcomings; life is too short! Just move on and begin again. It may take several times of stop and go to develop new habits of life. As a reminder, the Strategies of the *Word, Fellowship, Worship, Prayer* and *Sharing*, are practiced everyday to develop a stable walk with Jesus in the *High Places!* It took me a few years of applying the *5 Strategic Tools* to get off the rollercoaster ride—but eventually it happens!

In this new booklet, *Living in High Places*, the plan is to travel a little farther down the road. Really, it helps to read *Walking in High Places* to understand this booklet—they build upon one another.

Life is a progression. Before we experience living in a place we must get to that place by walking to it. With *Walking in High Places* we walk there by our commitment to God. In this reading we learn that *Living in High Places* is about the commitment to where God wants us to experience His presence—in a living church. Here we're going to discover the meaning of *Living in High Places*. Now, let's start by *Experiencing the High Places* in Christ!

## ***Experiencing the High Places***

*1 Peter 2:9 The Message Bible*

*9 But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you...*

Who likes rejection? All too often we go from childhood to adulthood feeling the burden of someone's disapproval. Some endure rejection better than others, but no matter how few or how many times it happens, we are left to deal with the emotion and sentiment of disappointment. Maybe we're seeking a job that we desperately need and it didn't materialize. Maybe there's a person we were hoping to enjoy a lifelong friendship with that suddenly spurns contact. Perhaps our spouse rejects meaningful communication. Possibly we've witnessed a child who has worked hard to get the attention of a parent only to be put-off and ignored. The feeling of rejection comes in all shapes and sizes—and it does not care who the object is.

I have great news for those who have felt this emotional weight—God does not treat us in that way! Having become so accustomed to rejection, we find it too easy to believe that God refuses us also. However, He does not disappoint His sons and daughters by putting them off. We may even reject Him personally, but at no time does God give up on us.

The Apostle Peter pointedly says to believers in Christ, we are “the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work...” (1 Peter 2:9) No matter what is found in our past, we’ve been brought into the *High Places*; we are invited to celebrate in the company of Jesus. Read what the Apostle Paul writes about *High Places* and enjoy his encouragement!

*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.*

By understanding Paul’s excitement and connecting that to Peter’s joy of inclusion (1 Peter 2:9), we discover that *Experiencing the High Places* must be possible for us—mortals living here on earth.

The Bible gives two ingredients for this experience. Both items work at the same time. The first ingredient is *recognizing* you’re God’s priest and second, you’re committed to a living church that encourages *answerability*.

In explaining the first ingredient, let’s start with defining a word that is often biblically misunderstood—priest. Sadly, centuries of culture have left us with a characterization more than a definition. The word *priest* conjures up images of long flowing robes and vows of celibacy. While in some cases that may be true, it is not the definition given by the Bible. The Greek word for priest is actually very broad in contrast

to the narrow definition our culture uses to describe it. Greek language experts<sup>1</sup> define the word used for priest as “one who offers sacrifices.” In this context, priests are disciples that live in devotion to Christ. Flowing robes and vows of celibacy are not a requirement. In fact, Peter would remind readers of just the opposite:

*1 Peter 2:5 The Message Bible*

*5 Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you’ll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God.*

All who put their faith in Jesus Christ and know the power of the precious blood of the Lamb are “ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people...” (1 Peter 2:9). The fact that you, as a disciple, are called a priest implies privilege and spiritual aspirations.

Now I understand this may appear both daunting and overwhelming. However, it’s really not that bad!

This is where the second ingredient comes in; it will lighten the load considerably. You’re not alone as God’s priest; there are many others with you! Thankfully, a whole group was developed who enjoy the same privilege and spiritual aspirations as you: the spiritual priesthood of all believers! And, this assemblage of spiritual priests forms a living church that encourages *answerability*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words; hierous - Strong’s 2409*

Now, to put things in perspective, understand we are *answerable* to Christ first and foremost, then to one another. Never are we to blindly follow some so-called spiritual leader on his or her path to splendor; our decisions are our own, we weigh them before Christ. We are to follow Him with freedom and liberty! Together we end up sharing the life of Jesus! It's only in this context that we become *answerable* to each other in a living church. Living in *High Places* is choosing to live as a spiritual priest in a spiritual church environment. Within the parameters of a living fellowship we grow, increase devotion, and solidify our commitment to God. Here God works in us with His *Strategic Tools*!

Allow me to illustrate this point using my grandfather's woodshop as an example. My grandfather was a man devoted to woodworking. He built chairs, tables, desks and even toys for me to play with while I was growing up. He had a very large shop, a stand-alone building, for his work area. I would spend hours watching him labor in that shop with all his tools. Every personal project (and the occasional assignment from my grandmother) were finished and completed in that building. It was designated as his work area. The building held all of his precious woodworking tools and no one had better touch them!

God has a designated, stand-alone building in which He labors with His *spiritual priests*. The living church is the spiritual work area. God makes the commitment to work with His spiritual tools in that spot. From our point of view, we make a commitment to build beside Him and join together in that spiritual workshop. And in this area of the living church, God has given *Strategic Assignments* for each of His spiritual priests to accomplish while He builds with His *Strategic Tools*.

## ***Strategies for Living in High Places***

We're going to look at 5 *Strategic Assignments* that God gives to every believer. When these assignments are actively carried out, the church grows and builds itself up in love. In fact, just read how Paul reminds the church at Ephesus of this:

*Ephesians 4:16 Weymouth New Testament*

*16 Dependent on Him, the whole body—its various parts closely fitting and firmly adhering to one another—grows by the aid of every contributory link, with power proportioned to the need of each individual part, so as to build itself up in a spirit of love.*

There is no assignment too small or insignificant. Each individual part is a “*contributory link*” in the living church. Let's go through each of the assignments in which we work with Him.

### **A. The Strategy of Ministering God's Word**

The first *Strategic Assignment* the Lord gives the disciple is *ministering* the thoughts and actions of *God's Word* to others. The Apostle John has an interesting way of saying this:

18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

First and foremost, the key to *Ministering God's Word* is learning to minister love in truth and action! I'm not trying to be schmaltsy; I want to be practical and real in comprehending the meaning of this assignment. *Ministering God's Word* is more than preaching from behind a pulpit.

The truth of the Bible is explained best by the actions of the disciple! These are the tangible, genuine actions of a Christian result in *ministering God's Word* to others. This is a *Strategic Assignment* that every spiritual priest has been selected to do. Could that mean you preaching the Bible to others? Absolutely! But, there are differing levels and abilities for each believer to do this. No two disciples are exactly alike. Nonetheless, each Christian is equipped with the grace to fulfill his or her assignment perfectly. Whether old or new in the faith, each disciple has a specific way to share the life of Christ with other people. We are His spiritual priests. We minister the truth and life of Jesus (as explained, acted and lived in the Bible) to those around us. However, before we can grow in *ministering God's Word*, the disciple must be rooted in the faith! This happens to the believer by two living methods: *grounding* and *maturing* in God's Word.

**1. Grounding in God's Word** – What does this mean and look like? Paul gives the Colossians some insight on *grounding*:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

The Biblical metaphor of *grounding* comes from a worker laying a foundation to build on. When the earth has been dug down deep and prepared for a foundation, the building is known to have a good *grounding*. The best foundations have been dug all the way down to the bedrock. A building grounded that deep is not moving or going any place!

When it comes to *spiritual grounding* the same principle applies—the deeper the better. Paul is telling the Colossians that a good grounding in what was preached as *God's Word* is paramount. Spiritual grounding is the understanding and knowledge you've received from the study of God's Word.

The disciple that digs deep into the Bible has an understanding of the sound doctrines of the faith, and knows where and how to apply them. We are changed from feeble people to rock solid Christians, devoted to Christ's will. Digging deep means that we study God's Word on our own and we love going to hear it preached in a living church all the while applying it in our lives!

**2. Maturing in God's Word** – In the botanical world, a mature plant is identified as a species that has reached a phase of growth characterized by flowering, fruiting, and a



reduced rate of size increase<sup>2</sup>. The plant arrives at a point of life where it now possesses the capability of reproduction. The Lord Jesus uses this illustration when describing the maturing that takes place from abiding in His words:

*John 15: 7-8 The New Revised Standard Version*

*7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.*

The Message Bible reads the last part of the verse "...you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples." *Maturing in God's Word* is abiding in Him and letting His "words abide in you"!

Now we understand that it is the combination of *grounding* and *maturing* that deepens the disciple. Together they enable God's spiritual priests to minister God's Word effectively to others—or as Jesus says, "to bear much fruit!" This is much more than preaching sermons. When one reads of the many examples of Jesus ministering it doesn't take long to notice that preaching was actually the smaller percentage of what He did in light of caring for others.

This assignment is ministering to others and bearing fruit. The benefits are a deeper relationship with the God. That's a commitment I can live with! A living church needs spiritual priests who are Ministering God's Word to needy souls.

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<sup>2</sup> Renaissance Gardening, Glossary Of Horticultural Terms. [http://www.rgarden.com/gar\\_glossary.html](http://www.rgarden.com/gar_glossary.html)

## **B. The Strategy of Participating in Fellowship**

Have you ever desired to be part of something special? For over 220 years only forty-four people have been numbered among an elite group of individuals. Granted, as the years pass the number will grow; however, what holds true is very few will ever embrace this position of authority, privilege and power as this fellowship. What is the elite group I'm referring to? It is none other than the Presidents of the United States of America. To the general public, joining this elite group is not even an aspiration. Yet, by design, anyone who is a natural born citizen of the U.S. can become President of the United States.

Are you looking for something special to be involved with? That is exactly what Christianity is! It is very attainable and well within reach. The concerns of Christ are arguably of greater depth and enormity than the President's job. The Living God has the ability to affect change in more futures than any civil government could. Still, there are those who have little or no aspiration for participating in something so special, attainable and tangible as a spiritual priesthood.

The second *Strategic Assignment* God gives the disciple is "*Participating in Fellowship.*" If you could see how special, attainable and tangible the *Fellowship of His Son* is, would you aspire to participate? Let's look at a verse that reflects these possibilities:

*1 Corinthians 1:9 Weymouth New Testament*

*9 God is ever true to His promises, and it was by Him that you were, one and all, called into*

*fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

There are a couple of inspirational ideas Paul delivers in this verse. Before we jump in, please note that it is God that promised to do something special with you (“God is ever true to His promise”). It is God that came up with the idea of doing it together with other disciples (“you were, one and all, called”). It is God’s *Strategic Assignment* to us to participate together in the body of Christ, His church.

**1. Into Fellowship** – The calling of God privileges us to be involved in something extraordinary. We sometimes forget the fellowship of a living church is unparalleled and special to God. It becomes so common and familiar that we overlook just how remarkable it is and that it cost Christ much to bring Christian fellowship into existence—Jesus gave His life for it!

How do we experience this honor of being called into fellowship? Others do not elect us, nor were we given inclusion by good behavior; God promised us involvement and He placed us by His grace into His fellowship! We did nothing—He did everything!

**2. With His Son** – Our participation together is with His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord! This means we are with Him in His endeavors. Anything that Jesus is doing, we are called to contribute in also. And, because it is *with Jesus*, any job He asks is a noble task to render. The high profile projects are of the same significance as the smaller ones we deem unimportant.

This assignment of participation *with Him* in a living church is something He has called you to! From that commitment grows love and devotion for the Savior.

## **C. The Strategy of Offering in Worship**

In “*Walking in High Places*” we learned that a *Strategic Tool* is *Worship*. Our *attitude* and *actions* display our complete devotion to God. Once that tool has been discovered, we are given the assignment to use the tool. Generally, tools are not placed upon a shelf to be admired and adored. These tools will be of use and helpful with the third *Strategic Assignment of Offering in Worship*.

For centuries, men have argued about what worship is and how must it be performed. It’s beyond the scope of this reading to comment on the different types of worship. Rather than attempting to retrace what is right or reacting to what is wrong, let’s consider some simple truths about worship.

We can agree on what the Bible *does* teach and leave the arguments of how to worship for another day. There are two specific things the Lord says about worshipers who desire to remember Him:

**1. Worship in Spirit and Truth** – The first necessity for a worshiper is discovered in what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well: “worshipers must *Worship in Spirit and in Truth*.”

*John 4:23-24 NIV*

*23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must **worship in spirit and in truth**.*

In the past, religion dictated that the worshiper come with sacrifices of animals to specific locations at predetermined times. Jesus summed up and focused that prior ritual into what Hebrews calls is a “new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20). The Lord told the woman “a time...has now come when true worshipers...must worship in spirit and in truth.” These are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks! I think David had at least a hint of this reality. He writes of this worshiping experience in Psalm 51:

*Psalm 51:15-17 NIV*

*15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

David recognized that above the ritual was the reality of who God is and what He had done for him. Higher than the physical offering was the spiritual sacrifice of vocal praise. It was this sacrifice from a broken spirit that discovered the truth that a contrite heart pleases and satisfies God who is Spirit. David was then moved to speak it to God!

**2. Worship at the Lord's Supper** – The Lord lends yet a second necessity for the worshiper. This one He instituted Himself on the very evening of His betrayal. On the night of the Passover He established a new way for His disciples to remember His love and sacrifice. This became our *Worship at the Lord's Supper*:

*Luke 22:19-20 NIV*

*19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”*

The sharing of the bread and wine became emblems of His love and sacrifice for all who desire to worship God in spirit and truth. And the living church shares the practice of remembrance at least once a week.

This assignment of worship is an honor every believer in Jesus Christ shares. In fact, if you recall, the Apostle Peter says it's the activity of a holy priesthood. He writes, “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

All we need is a heart full of God's grace to thank and praise this living Lord. Then you can say like David, “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” Just give it a try, you might be surprised at what praises to God come out!

## D. The Strategy of Surrendering in Prayer

The fourth *Strategic Assignment* God gives is the *Strategy of Surrendering in Prayer*. In “*Walking in High Places*,” I mention the importance of using a “Morning Prayer List.” I called it my “*Giving All Principle*,” and this is a tool I use to *teach* a new disciple how to pray and give all they are back to God! That is just an introduction to praying. Giving my “time, possessions and relationships” is just the first step in learning to pray.

This booklet is meant to go a little further. One of the great things we find the early church doing is praying together. While this may seem daunting, it actually can become simple. Learning to pray with others is made easier by the secret of surrendering yourself in prayer to God first. In prayer, each morning, I add something to my above mentioned list, I call it my “*Surrender All Principle*.” (These principles are by no means anything someone should say ritually without personal meaning. I would encourage you to come up with your own prayer list to give to God everyday. And, if you can’t come up with one, this is a list to consider using for a while until you can.)

I’m sharing it with you to help as an activity for learning to pray. Praying this perfectly doesn’t make you any more or less spiritual than you already are. Neither should you allow any guilt or condemnation to come upon you for missing or altering the prayer list. Its design is meant to help one become more comfortable with the spiritual activity of praying and that will lead to ease in praying with others. It’s not the words of the list (verbatim or implied) that are valuable, but the thoughts *behind* them that are important.

The idea is that it must become your own and used only as a tool to teach a direction

for praying. It helps lead us to the assignment of praying together as the early church did. The important thing to learn from this list is how to pray in complete surrender to God!

**1. I Surrender My Thoughts** – It is impossible for the human consciousness to think of God all the time. In fact, while I’m at work it would be irresponsible to stop doing what I am paid to do and limit my concentration to thoughts only of the Lord.

However, it is very responsible if the context of my work are found in thoughts of a godly way. *Surrendering my Thoughts* to God begins the goal of bringing glory to Him! If I start the day by surrendering my thoughts, then my work is done in view of Him. Paul makes a similar point to the Philippians:

*Philippians 4:8 NIV*

*8 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.*

I surrender my thoughts at the start of each morning so I can “think about such things” in a positive, praiseworthy, godly way during all my daily activities.

**2. I Surrender My Affections** – Our affections are directed at the object of our hearts. Many have said the heart is the control room of man. Luke reports in his gospel that the

Lordt Jesus put it this way:

*Luke 12:34 New Revised Standard Version*

*34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The second thing on my *Morning Prayer List* is *Surrendering my Affections* in my heart, so that God can be in complete control. Many things attempt to compete for that main spot. Instead, I give God my affections before anything else can effect me!

**3. I Surrender My Body** – Paul writes in Romans 12 that the surrendering of the body is a reasonable service to God; he calls it, “your spiritual act of worship.”

*Romans 12:1 NIV*

*1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

The third item on *Morning Prayer List* is *Surrendering my Body* to God. He uses men and women to accomplish His goals in this world. The surrendering of the body says to God, “I will be careful about the things I do and say because I know, Lord, my body is the temple of your Holy Spirit. Help me to glorify you in my body.” I think the Apostle Paul agrees as he writes:

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV*

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...Therefore honor God with your body.*

**4. I Surrender My Choices** – I have found that I am capable of making some pretty unwise decisions. There are things that a person can choose to do in a moment that will affect them throughout a lifetime. The fourth thing on my *Morning Prayer List* is *Surrendering my Choices* to God. Jesus Himself offered a similar prayer as the weight of Calvary bore upon Him. He prayed:

*Luke 22:42 The Message Bible*

*42 Father, remove this cup from me. But please, **not what I want. What do you want?***

I’ve found that if I take a few moments every morning to ask, “Father, what do you want me to do today?” and then say, “I surrender my choices to you,” that saves me from a lifetime of heartache. My chief desire is the do the Father’s will. This is my first step of the day showing I’m serious. By choosing to surrender my choices to the choices He has for me today, I’ve learned to say as Jesus said, “Not want I want. What do you want?”

**5. I Surrender My Spirit** – Finally, the last thing in my *Morning Prayer List* is the *Surrendering of my Spirit*. Why is this so important? If I want my choices to be the Father’s will, then I must know what the Father’s will is! In Proverbs we read:

*Proverbs 20:27 KJV*

*27 It is the spirit of man that is the candle of the Lord...*

The Bible has much to say about “the spirit of man.” When a man is born again, his spirit is rekindled in the Lord. This is the start of gaining an ability for understanding the plans of God.

The surrendering of the spirit opens my life to understanding direction from God. Paul demonstrates the importance of the spirit of the saved individual when writes to the Corinthians:

*1 Corinthians 2:9-12 The Message Bible*

*9 That's why we have this Scripture text: No one's ever seen or heard anything like this, Never so much as imagined anything quite like it - What God has arranged for those who love him. 10 But you've seen and heard it because God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you. 11 Who ever knows what you're thinking and planning except you yourself? The same with God – except that he not only knows what he's thinking, 12 but he lets us in on it...*

I certainly want my spirit to understand the things of the Spirit of God so I can discover His will and do it.

## **E. The Strategy of Sharing in God's Mission**

The final *Strategic Assignment* is *Sharing in God's Missions*. There's a great command that Jesus communicates to His disciples at the conclusion the Gospel of Mark:

*Mark 16:15 NIV*

*15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

This is the “great commission” of Jesus. A world around us has the opportunity to discover the life we have found. What does it take for us to share it? Sometimes it takes speaking. Other times it simply takes a life without any words. It has popularly been said, “Your life maybe the only Bible someone may read.” In either case, by speech or silence, it takes discernment and patience to find that perfect balance of His will.

**1. Sharing With the Familiar** – To those who have family and friends they would love to share the Kingdom with, patience and prayer are a virtue. The most effective speech is the silent behavior that exemplifies godly living. The old saying, “winning without a word” prepares those close to us for that “right word in season.”

*Isaiah 50:4 KJV*

*4 The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary...*

The old adage “your actions speak so loud I can’t hear a word your saying” justly echoes from too many mouths. “Behavior first, talk second” cultivates and prepares the soil of the heart for the planting of the seed of the Word. Having the right word at the right time can have most effective impact. There’s great joy to see friend or family won to Christ. God’s Word hid in the heart makes the life a ready remedy to the familiar soul in need.

As God has been patient in our salvation, so also He continues in patience for others. If He is patient, I choose to be patient also.

**2. Sharing With the Strangers** – This can seem like the most daunting task of all. Yet, sharing your faith with a stranger, strangely strengthens the soul in an unusual way. It takes boldness and courage to witness of the life of Christ. The Bible promises we can find boldness and courage to speak to others:

*Acts 4:13 KJV*

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*

The Lord is capable of winning the most unlikely individuals to Himself. God only needs a voice and instrument to use. The book of Acts narrates story after story of witnessing and testifying of Jesus to others. Couched within the stories, we find the need

to pray for boldness to speak to the lives around us.

In Acts 6, consider the great prayer made by the church for boldness to proclaim the good news of Christ. Then watch how individual believers become stable and solid in their lives. The “up and down” fears cease and the roller coaster ride ends. Sharing with a stranger is a faith-increasing experience. It often reminds us of the day we met the Savior.

The experience of *Living in the High Places* results from the daily choices we make. These 5 *Strategic Assignments* guarantee that we grow in our faith in Jesus Christ.

## ***Serving All Day in High Places***

Now comes the fun part: Serving! For a birthday present in my youth, I was given a model rocket that actually had the capability of blasting off! I spent hours assembling this thing with the idea that one day, I would be able to fly it. It was constructed using a cardboard tube, with balsa wood fins. The rocket carried a payload and had two parachutes neatly packed into the fuselage. It flew by the power of a very small rocket engine strategically placed at the bottom. I took great care in painting it so that it might look as realistic as possible.

The time came when my father and I jumped in the car and joined up with a hobby club that fired these model rockets off. All the building and construction had been completed, and now was the time I could enjoy watching what I built sail into the air.

In the same way, it is always exciting to put to practice the things we've learned from God. Here's the part where we try out the strategies to see if they work. These topics are not rules and regulations, but simple lessons and methods that I've found useful in my life for "*Living in High Places.*"

It's great to see God's people who have the desire to serve Christ equipped as spiritual priests contributing in a living church. Serving God all day with regularity takes three basic ingredients: the *grace of God*, the *desire to serve* and a *commitment to that grace*. With these ingredients, *Living in High Places* is really just that easy.



## A. The Grace of God.

When it comes to these 5 *Strategic Assignments*, the one thing to remember is you cannot do it yourself. On television, there are car commercials that use sophisticated driving maneuvers. In small letters, at the bottom of those ads, are words that read something like, “Professional stunt driver—don’t try this at home.” If a person decides to take on the 5 *Strategic Assignments* apart from the enabling grace of God, they will only discover an out of control car wreck. There are times when disciples give up in frustration, declaring these things don’t work. Truly, on your own, that is correct!

However, instead of giving up, let the professionals do it. The Holy Spirit is a master at dispensing the *Grace of God*. To keep Faith from becoming a “car wreck,” continually ask God for His grace. Here I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul when the Lord came to him while in the same condition of frustration and discouragement:

*2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV*

*9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.*

The first ingredient to success with these assignments is locating the *Grace of God* and discovering how to use it.

## B. The Desire to Serve.

The second ingredient is the *Desire to Serve*. It is impossible to live as a spiritual priest in a living church without hoping to involve yourself. There is nothing worse than watching an individual practice piano who has no desire to play. The tortured looks, the sloppy posture and the indifference to wrong sounding notes is enough to make anyone quit lessons before starting. However, when someone really wants to learn the piano, the passion to master it makes up for any awful cacophony. With time and patience, a decent pianist can be produced. There may not be the gift of a skilled virtuoso, but someone who plays with regularity will delight listeners.

Without the *Desire to Serve*, the spiritual priesthood of believers and their 5 *Strategic Assignments* are a waste of time. It is the *Desire to Serve* that separates a life for Jesus from a Christianity that is only a life insurance policy. If you have a desire to have a desire you are on the first step to “*Living in High Places*.” God says through the prophet Isaiah:

*Isaiah 42:3 NIV*

*3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.*

This second ingredient for serving God all day in *High Places* gets the attention of God every time it’s tried!

### C. A Commitment to God's Grace

The final ingredient is a *Commitment to God's Grace*. Time and time again, God demonstrates His commitment to us. From the depths of Calvary we discover just how far God would go in the commitment of His grace. Here again is the experience of the Apostle Paul from 2 Corinthians 12:

*2 Corinthians 12:9-10 Message Bible*

*9 and then he told me, "My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness." Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. 10 Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.*

The grace of God is enough! So often, we start with grace and end with works. This is a big mistake. Our limitations become apparent and the desire to quit catches up with us. When discovering just how weak he really was, the Apostle Paul learned to allow grace to work for him. It was all a matter of focusing and committing to the grace of God, then the experience was on! That is, "Christ's strength moving in on weakness."

Once we experience that through our weakness we are made strong to serve God,

we will find His grace is enough. When we finally come to the point where we are willing to commit to His grace rather than our strength, then our faith is made strong through weakness. In fact, Paul says it was at this point he began appreciating the gift of God's grace to a greater degree.

That is what commitment is all about—the appreciation of God's grace. It's here we never surrender to weakness. It's here the choice to serve God is made. It's here we discover the enabling power of God giving grace to complete any assignment He has asked of us. And everyday, serving all day, we can rely on the grace of God to uphold us.

What have we gathered from this little booklet? It's significant to discover we can enjoy the presence of God by *Living in High Places!* We have brothers and sisters in Christ, the holy royal priesthood of believers, which enjoy with us the experience of a *living church!* In this spiritual workshop, He has given 5 *Strategic Assignments* to act on. Everyone has something to do and to be part of in a living fellowship. It's here we experience God's grace and sufficiency for living the life of Jesus—and it happens in us! May this inspire us to continue *Living 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.*

