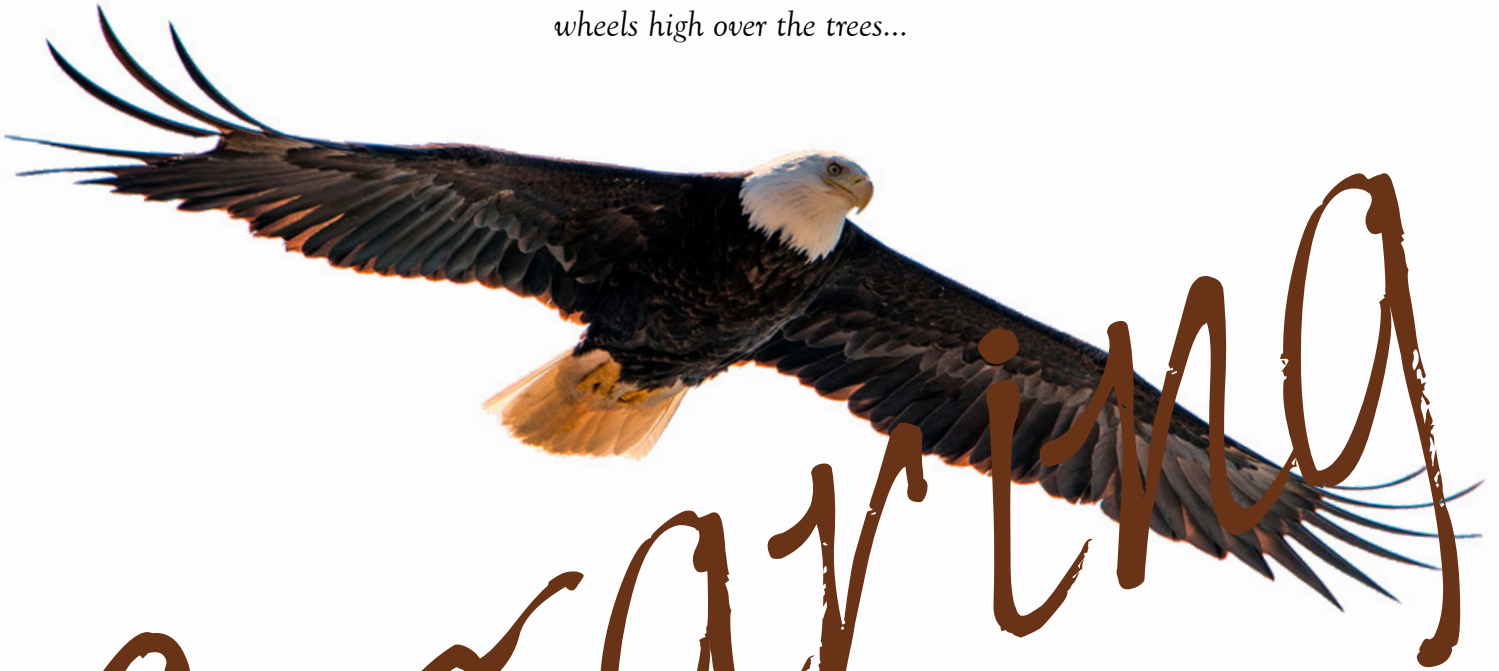


Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL

The cackling,
melancholy screech echoes through the valleys and hills. The worker raises his gaze to discover the eagle gliding on the invisible pathways of the sky. Riding the warmer currents and updrafts from its lofty sweep, the bird scans the ground for movement of prey. Effortlessly the eagle coasts across the skies, large wings outstretched, broad tail flared. She is freedom, a life freed from the constraints of gravity. She floats and soars through space, wheels high over the trees...



And the worker is envious, regretting that he, too, cannot know such exhilarating freedom.

Soaring



Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the
ends of the earth
Does not become weary or tired.
His understanding is inscrutable.
He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who lacks might He increases power.
Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
Yet those who wait for the Lord
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

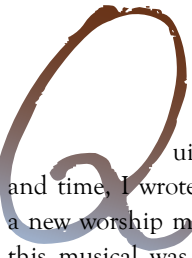
Isaiah 40:28-31

Issue #806, June 2017.

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With Wings Like Eagles



Quite a long time ago, in another place and time, I wrote and performed the narration for a new worship musical. The local church for which this musical was written did not subscribe to the traditions for enthusiastic, demonstrative worship, so there was really nothing in the production that might have been called remotely “charismatic.” This church body was conservative, even restrained in its worship, with a large contingent of venerables, and it was not my purpose to offend, but to encourage all of us into a closer, more authentic worship experience of our God.

A Time of Praise

In spite of the human factor, the Holy Spirit was indeed present during the performance. Before the musical—performed during a Sunday morning service—the music minister, deacon chairman (who was also the sound man for the production) and I met for prayer. Those few closeted moments in themselves became a time of anointed worship as we bared our souls and intentions before the Lord, and placed all of our talents and gifts upon His altar. Through the ministry of the Spirit, it was a time of exquisite, bone-racking communion with God.

The musical went well. Those who participated—both in the choir and in the pews—experienced a time of genuine worship and praise. While the worship was understated, leaning more toward instruction than dancing in the aisles, there were still a few moments in which the Spirit prodded some of us toward such things as spontaneous praise and the reverent lifting of hands.

As the worship leader, however, on the stage apron in front of the choir, I was in a good position to observe those in the congregation, and I was disappointed—but not surprised—to see discomfort, even disgust, on the faces of a few. And so I also was not surprised by a conversation I had a few days later with one of the church members—a leader not only in that local body, but in the regional association as well. This conversation, while cordial at both ends, became for me a benchmark illustration for those who are remarkably fearful of soaring too close to God.

“Quit dragging us up to God”

Over the course of a ninety-minute telephone conversation this gentleman explained to me that this

was just not how we were to do things here. At great length he pointed out that not only was he, personally, not interested in worshiping in such a manner, neither were we to do it. To him, the practice of a more demonstrative worship, such as the raising of hands in praise—indeed, even the concept of “worship” itself—was just a fad, just a gimmick. His contention was that believers in his denomination worshiped by “fellowshipping” with each other. Churches that were worship-oriented, he said, traditionally died out, whereas churches that were fellowship-oriented grow in number. We should not be demonstrative in a worship service; it’s just “not necessary, and not a [his denomination] thing.”

This brother in Christ finished the conversation by making what I found to be a rather astounding statement. I was left dumbfounded when this church leader said, “People like you are on a higher spiritual plane, and we want you to quit dragging us up to God.”

An Intimacy with God

That eye-opening conversation so long ago formed in me a renewed determination to never deny the powerful Spirit living within me, to never deny the yearning I have to live every day of my life closer to God than the day before.

To be fair, my friend was correct about one thing: No one should be “dragging” anyone else up to God. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Every believer in Christ is equipped with the same connections to God, and it is never another individual’s responsibility to drag anyone else kicking and screaming toward the throne. We are a body of equal saints before the Lord, and there will always be some uncomfortable in His presence.

My Christian brother failed to understand, however, one important point about worship. What he interpreted as worship that was self-glorifying, was in

Allured into the desert,
With God alone, apart,
There spirit meeteth spirit,
There speaketh heart to heart.
Far, far on that untrodden shore,
God’s secret place I find;
Alone I pass the golden door,
The dearest left behind.

There God and I—none other;
Oh far from men to be!
Nay, midst the crowd and tumult,
Still, Lord, alone with Thee.
Still folded close upon Thy breast,
In field, and mart, and street,
Untroubled in that perfect rest,
That isolation sweet...

reality a personal determination to connect more intimately with God. We raise our hands in prayer, worship, or praise in an effort to be closer to Him, in an effort to raise our love up to Him—which is precisely what worship is all about! Just as an adoring child lifts her arms up to her daddy when he steps in the door, we lift up our hands, crying, “Abba, Father, I love You!”

Rising into the Holiness

The mechanics of worship—whether exuberant or restrained—and daily living are not nearly so important as the question of whether or not we choose to rise into the holiness of God. If we love this earth, we are probably not loving God sufficiently.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Matthew 6:24 NKJV

There is something more than a little frightening about a child of God not wishing to be closer to his Parent. When we receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of personal redemption, we also receive a direct, almost umbilical-like link to the Father.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:15-16

What has happened in our own spirit when that connection has become frayed? What has happened to our system of priorities when the things of this earth take precedence over the things of God? What has happened to our spirit when we no longer desire to live above the pedestrian pathways of this world, in the exhilarating, ethereal presence of God? ●

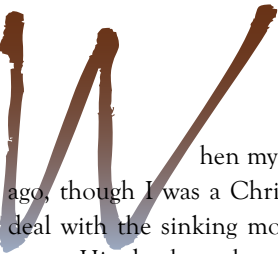
O God, Thou art far other
Than men have dreamed and taught,
Unspoken in all language,
Unpictured in all thought.
Thou God art God—he only learns
What that great Name must be,
Whose raptured heart within him burns,
Because he walks with Thee.

Stilled by that wondrous Presence,
That tenderest embrace,
The years of longing over,
Do we behold Thy Face;
We seek no more than Thou hast given,
We ask no vision fair,
Thy precious Blood has opened Heaven,
And we have found Thee there.

O weary souls, draw near Him;
To you I can but bring
One drop of that great ocean,
One blossom of that spring;
Sealed with His kiss, my lips are dumb,
My soul with awe is still;
Let him that is athirst but come,
And freely drink his fill.

Gerhard Tersteegen

The eagle waddles across the field in her ungainly gait. Her head bobs and weaves, her body switches back and forth. The large bird, her attention elsewhere, blunders into a softer depression and finds herself sunk past her claws into the sucking mud. She flaps her long wings and, for just a moment, is held tightly in the earth's grasp.



When my dad died thirty-eight years ago, though I was a Christian I was ill-equipped to deal with the sinking morass of that traumatic moment. His death at the age of sixty-two was, to say the least, untimely and, in my eyes, profoundly unfair. After working hard all his life to support his family, he had been looking forward to retirement. For the first time in their lives, Mom and he would not have to watch and squeeze every last penny; it would be a pleasant and well-deserved rest from the rigors of his daily labor.

But then he died, and I could see no logic at all in God's timetable. And there was a moment, during the traditional schedule of events associated with a death, when I found myself huddled in Mom and Dad's basement, weeping over the loss, yet more angry than sad. Where was the justice in this? Why, with all the loathsome reprobates out there in the world—men for whom there seemed to be no purpose behind their sorry lives—why did God have to take a good and decent man from his family?

At that moment I was mired in the sucking muck of the earth. Events transpiring around me were all I could see, and to the extent that eternal things did not jibe with my temporal thought process, they had become inconsequential.

A Pleasant Myopia

We all can recall those moments in which we were mired in the mud and muck of the earth—moments in which the eternal things of God became for us, if not invisible, at least secondary—even irrelevant. There are times when our horizon draws close in around us; people and events outside our shortsighted vision simply cease to exist.

Not all such moments are necessarily unpleasant, or as traumatic as the death of a loved one. There are good times in life when all our happiness and joy seem to be wrapped up inside the earthly events around us—

when we see our lovely bride walking down the

aisle toward us;

when we get a raise because of all the hard work we've put in;

when we catch a first glimpse of our new child;

when we admire something built with our own hands.

Even in moments of joy we can still be sinking deeper into the muck of temporal life—we are just feeling good as we go down.

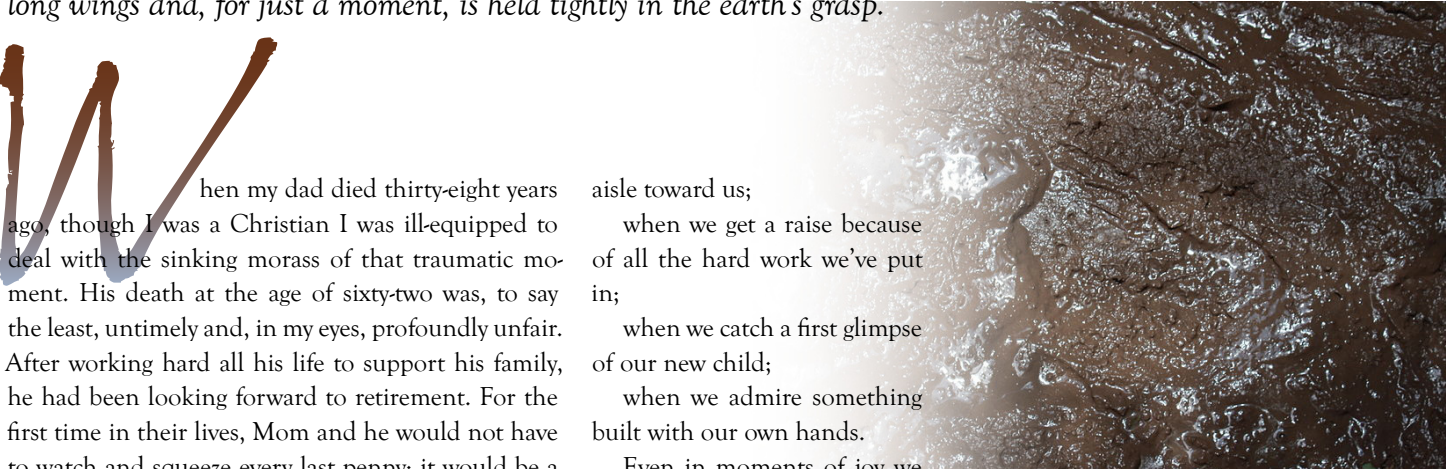
Jesus was once approached by a nice young man who, though seeking something better, was not at all unhappy with the events of his life.

A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

Luke 18:18-24

This inquisitive man was thoroughly stuck in the mire, and sinking fast. All he could see were his vast acquisitions, and in his estimation they were more important than life with God Himself. He was willing to exchange eternal life for temporal goods; no wonder he "became very sad."

To soar, one must first lift one's feet off the ground. To rise above this shallow temporal plane, one must first reject the notion that this familiar environment



is the best there is.

When my church-leader friend railed against the type of worship demonstrated in my worship musical, I imagine there was no small amount of fear being expressed in his strident opinion. Sunday church for him had become something predictable and comfortable. He could look forward to walking into a familiar building, shaking hands with old friends, chatting over common interests and, while they were at it, singing a few familiar old hymns and hearing a little preaching. All that finished off with pot roast and potatoes would, for him, comprise “worship,” and he could not permit anything outside that pattern to threaten his comfortable traditions.

In varying degrees and circumstances we are all like that. Tradition and habit combine to create a predictable pattern that we nurture and protect from any new, external threats. And in our myopia, we come to believe that what has become familiar is the best there is. Our unspoken fear is that by releasing ourselves into something possibly better, we might lose some of what we already have.

For the Christian there should be no argument, for there is nothing of this world superior to God. The fact that Jesus left us here for awhile, to live upon the earth before uniting with Him, should not be taken as His opinion that it is in any way superior. While He wanted us to remain—

Hitherto Thy love has blest me;
Thou hast bro’t me to this place;
And I know Thy hand will bring me
Safely home by Thy good grace.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Bought me with His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for Thy courts above. Amen.

Robert Robinson

“I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.”

—Jesus made our ultimate citizenship clear:

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

John 17:11,15-16

We are not of this world, and so long as we cling to it, we will remain unformed, and unhappy. The Christian has God living inside him, and the more his feet remain stuck in the muck of this earth, the more miserable will be his spirit. ●

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise His name—I’m fixed upon it—
Name of God’s redeeming love.

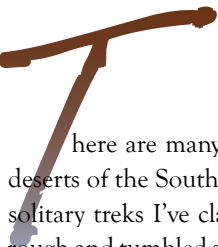
Every soul belongs to God and exists by His pleasure. God being who and what He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full Lordship on His part and complete submission on ours. We owe Him every honor that it is in our power to give Him. Our everlasting grief lies in giving Him anything less. The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all, we step out of the world’s parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way. We shall acquire a new viewpoint; a new and different psychology will be formed within us; a new power will begin to surprise us by its upsurgings and its outgoings.

A.W. Tozer

As Far as the Eye Can See

The bird at last frees itself from the possessive muck, flaps its wings to lift up and above the muddy field. Once returned to her best environment, she inhales the breath of joyous freedom, gliding easily over the land that just moments before had held her tight in its embrace.

Trapped on the ground, her world had consisted of the immediate predicament, but now free, her world reaches toward the far distant horizon. Now her sharp eyes gaze beyond the trees, over the rolling hills, across the valleys. Now she sees the lay of the land, the perils—once hidden from her sight—that lie just beyond. Now she spies the scampering prey that will become her meal, and she swoops down, silent, and with accurate aim.



There are many mountains and tall hills in the deserts of the Southwest, and I've climbed a few. On solitary treks I've clambered up the sides of many a rough and tumbled slope, grasping for purchase upon sun-baked stone or sliding sand. Whatever the locale or terrain, every slope always came with a standard set of decisions to be made—and the one most pressing would always be: How high should I go?

Because I am something less than a superior example of the male physical potential, this decision would present itself with alarming regularity. Every fifty feet or so would come the need to sit awhile and reconsider my options.

Resting atop a convenient rock after shucking my load of gear, sipping something wet and cool, I would contemplate the remarkable beauty of the panoramic view that lay before me. A wide 180-degree view would spread out before me, far more than I had seen from the ground—or even from my previous resting stop. And I would always consider the option to stop where I was and enjoy the wide view, saving myself from the effort needed to climb higher.

But usually I would press on toward the higher reward. For you see, on the side of the mountain the view is 180 degrees, but from the top, just a little higher, the view is twice as wide. From the comfortable side of the mountain one can see far into the distance, and scan wide left to right. But on the mountain top one can pivot in any direction, in a 360-degree circle, taking in the complete view, all around and as far as the eye can see.

An Historic Perspective

The closer we are to God, the more we share His vision. There is no one higher than the Lord, and from His vantage point the view is limitless.

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were born

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

You turn man back into dust

And say, "Return, O children of men."

For a thousand years in Your sight

Are like yesterday when it passes by,

Or as a watch in the night.

Psalms 90:1-4

Man's perspective is limited, his frame of reference brief. But God sees around the bends in life, and while it is true that we will never know precisely what lies around the corner, the closer we soar to God the less we will concern ourselves with what is there.

God's perspective is at once historic, contemporary, and prescient. He sees yesterday as well as today, and tomorrow as clearly as the day before.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 1:8

The historian's perspective on current events is superior to that of the person who lives only in today. This perspective certainly does not guarantee comfort, but it does guarantee context, and a superior foresight regarding the consequences of actions.

- The one who lives only in today may consider it expedient to appease such contemporary or recent rulers as Kim Jong Un, Saddam Hussein, or Bashar al-Assad, but the historian knows what resulted when Great Britain's Neville Chamberlain—along with most of the rest of the world—appeased instead of fought Adolf Hitler in 1938: World War Two.
- The one who lives only in today may see no harm in electing corrupt and amoral leaders—men or women without moral sense or principles, incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong. So long they do their civic job, where's the harm? The historian knows, however, the ignominious end such societies quickly reach that follow that path of ill-formed logic.
- The one who lives only in today may be troubled over both natural and contrived tragedies that cost many lives, sensing trends that will continue unabated. But the historian, while experiencing just as much sorrow over the loss, knows that such tragedies have occurred throughout time; they are the natural ebb and flow of this earth and its people.



The more we keep God at arm's length, the smaller we feel in comparison to Him. Distant from Him, we feel inferior, manipulated, helpless; it becomes easier to think of Him in mechanical terms, like some great and mysterious mechanized beast—uncaring and unknowable. Though supposedly aligned with Him, when our spirits remain detached it becomes easier to think of Him in almost hostile terms.

When my dad died I was angry at God, and as much as cursed Him for being so stupid and unfeeling as to take the wrong man. How dare He be so unfair! How dare He be so wrong! But that was a time when I had set myself far distant from God; that was a time when I was up to my neck in the muck of this earth and its ways. In my condition—in my distance from God—it would have been impossible for me to share His perspective. Had I been closer, had my spirit been in closer communion with His, I would have felt just as much the pain and loss of my dad, but I would have been encouraged in the moment by the clarity and scope of God's perspective.

Standing at the bottom of God's mountain we can feel only small and insignificant. Gazing upward from our earthbound perspective, His lofty heights appear to lie beyond our grasp. They seem unattainable. If we but begin climbing, however, one stone at a time, we immediately leave the clutching grip of the soil. Though still far away from the peak, we immediately begin to see it draw nearer—and the earth become ever smaller.

The higher we climb, the more accurate our view, for we are then able to take in a broader sweep. From our higher vantage point, we can see the sturdy rock within reach of the quicksand; we can see the water hole that lies just a few feet beyond the dry desert; and we can see the cool oasis that lies just beyond the next sun-parched dune.

Soaring Higher

Because he was unwilling to soar into the heights, my friend who was so critical of our exuberant worship—who was so adamantly against drawing closer to God—had a very small view of God's Kingdom here on earth. Because for him "worship" consisted of chatting over punch and sheet cake, he also had a very small view of his God.

The higher we soar toward God, the more we will have His context and perspective.

When trials come, we will be willing to accept them as simply part of His plan for our life—something for our good.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

When we are confused and persecuted, we will understand that such painful times occur for His glory.

...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;

perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

When we are feeling insecure, we will place even greater trust in the Lord who cares about our lives.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you

have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

Hebrews 13:5-6

By soaring closer to God's higher plane, we have nothing to lose, but oh, so much more to gain. ●

Letting Go

Reaching its nest, the male eagle greets his mature young with the freshly-killed prey. Before they are given the food, however, he once again coaxes them out of the nest, encouraging them to fly for themselves. Petrified at the thought of leaving the security and stability of the nest they, once again, refuse. Then, one by one, they struggle into the air on their untried wings.

Soaring is born of the Spirit, the result of living day in and day out with God through communion with the Holy Spirit. We must first realize that the Spirit is in residence, then we must come to understand how He works. More than anything else, we must not be afraid to tap into this rising pathway to holiness. For the Christian, the *presence* of the Spirit is not optional, but using that presence as a continual glide-path to God is.

There once was a member of the Sanhedrin who was reluctant to embrace the totality of Christ's experience. Part of him wanted desperately to believe, but part of him was also fearful of what others would think, how it would affect his reputation. Nicodemus was afraid to lift his feet off the ground:

There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we all know you're a teacher straight from God. No

one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren't in on it."

Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what pointing to—to God's kingdom."

"How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again. What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?"

Jesus said, "You're not listening. Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind hovering over the water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed



by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit. So don't be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God."

Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes.

There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?

"No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up— and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life."

John 3:1-15 The Message

A Small Faith

With much commotion, the tiny house rocked side to side, back and forth. For days prior there had been the insistent chattering of hungry mouths and the repetitious, monotonous flights of the parents bringing insects to their young. Once in a while a small head would show itself at the small hole, then duck back inside where it was safe, protected.

Finally came the day when the last family of wrens were to venture out from the nest and meet life head-on. From now on they would be on their own—with no adult servants to bring them meals.

They were a reluctant pair, these last two children of the summer. With boisterous coaxing the mother wren squawked at the door, then flew off as if to demonstrate how easy it really was to fly. She waited, calling to her children from a nearby branch, but when they failed to emerge, she returned to the house to coax some more.

First the braver of the two edged his little body out the door, more and more, a little at a time, until suddenly, in the blink of an eye, he flew off. But his sibling was a tougher case. Time and again the mother returned to coax and cajole: "C'mon, you can do it. I gave you life, I gave you your wings. Trust me—you can fly!"

But the last little one didn't yet trust his wings. It was a long way down from the house to the ground, and there were all kinds of scary sounds and scary beasts waiting out there. What if he fell? What if he plummeted straight down, never able to get up again? Oh no, he was safe and sound in this little house; there was no reason at all to venture out into the big world.

Then the impatient mother made one last trip back to the small opening. Her words were clearly interpreted, even by her furthest neighbors: "Now listen, you get your tiny butt out here right now!" She scolded.

Yes ma'am. In just a few seconds the baby bird cautiously edged his way out the opening. Suddenly, at the last moment, just as his unfolded wings came free of the hole, he swung out, clawing at the edge, afraid to let go. He tried to get back inside, but gravity was pulling him away. So he let go—half flying, half falling part way down the trunk of the tree, where he clung gasping for breath, waiting for his tiny heart to stop beating its way out of his chest. Then, a few seconds later, he flew off, never to be seen again.

Boundless Tomorrows

Just about everything regarding God is reciprocal and unselfish. Worship Him, and He fills the heart with song; pray to Him, and He brings comfort and consolation; serve Him, and He showers joy and blessings into a life. And, as the prophet tells us, those who find their hope in the Lord will be given new strength with which to walk, to run—to soar ever higher into His presence.

Those who are afraid to soar are afraid that they will lose something valuable by lifting their feet off the familiar soil of earth. In truth, however, they have everything to gain. The one who soars gains God's limitless vision and perspective. The one who hopes in the Lord has fewer reasons to hope in anything—or anybody—of this temporal plane.

The reluctance of some to live this way really is not surprising for, after all, what this type of living entails is *surrender*, a frightening—even repulsive—contemplation for many. To "wait upon," to "hope in," to "wait for" the Lord means that we surrender our shortsighted, immediate aspirations to His limitless, eternal promises, and some people simply cannot wait. We live in a world of immediate gratification—a world in which something's value diminishes exponentially with every minute one has to wait for its realization. As a result, most people today haven't the patience to "wait for the Lord."

But God is more generous than that; He doesn't make us wait for everything. This promise is as much for today as it is for tomorrow—and the rest of our eternity. Those who place their trust in the Lord of heaven receive an immediate result; He is a living God who is surely as alive in this minute as He is in the boundless minutes of our tomorrows. He doesn't want us to soar tomorrow, but today!

Old men generally shed their wings, and can only manage to crawl. They have done with romance. Enthusiasms are dead. Sometimes they cynically smile at their own past selves and their dreams. And it is a bad sign when an old man does that. But for the most part they are content (unless they have got Christ in their hearts) to keep along the low levels, and their soaring days are done. But if you and I have Jesus Christ for the life of our spirits, as certainly as fire sends its shooting tongues upwards, so certainly shall we rise above the sorrows and sins and cares of this "dim spot which men call earth," and find an ampler field for buoyant motion high up in communion with God. Strength to soar means the gracious power of bringing all heaven into our grasp, and setting our affections on things above. As the night falls, and joys

become fewer and life sterner, and hopes become rarer and more doubtful, it is something to feel that, though we are strangers upon earth, we can lift our thoughts yonder. If there be darkness here, still we can "outsoar the shadow of night," and live close to the sun in fellowship with God. Dear brethren, life on earth were too wretched unless it were possible to "mount up with wings as eagles."

Alexander Maclaren

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found,
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Johnson Oatman, Jr.



Her youngsters finally out on their own, the female eagle shifts out onto the branch supporting her empty nest. Spreading her wings to their full extension, she silently lifts off into space. Circling higher, soaring ever higher with wing tips flared, she drifts upon the waves of heat rising from the earth far below. Far below her the field worker lifts his gaze to the sun, and the black speck careening high overhead. He smiles, and bends back to his labor, envious of the bird's indomitable freedom. ●