

## Hilltop Living

Psalm 15:1-5

Isn't it good to dwell (to live or linger) daily in the Presence of the Lord?

### **Psalm 133:1-3 (NKJV)**

The Atmosphere of God's House should always be an atmosphere of Peace, Love, Joy and Unity. I am thankful that we feel these wonderful things every time we come together as the Body of Christ.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could dwell in the same peace and tranquility in our everyday life? Sadly, that is not always the reality once we walk out these doors.

Kandi and I have been married now for 31 years, and our love is greater today than it has ever been. Certainly, life has had its up's and downs for us. Which of us has not had both good and not-so-good times? Yet we rarely argue much anymore but it took a lot of growing and changing for both of us to get to the place we are now in our marriage.

It was not an easy road, nor was it always fun, but I am so very glad that we chose to travel it together and that God has given us the grace and determination to stick to our covenant to each another and to Him. I can only say that the Lord has helped us to make it thus far and it is the Lord who will continue to lead us on and bless us, as long as we live for Him.

Unity is a wonderful and necessary thing in a marriage, in a home, in a family and in a church. It is something we must tend like a garden and guard as precious treasure.

When we work together toward the same goals, with the same vision, nothing is impossible. That's the kind of church, the kind of people, that God can use to build his kingdom in the hearts of men and women.

However, unity is a very fragile thing.

It only takes one small, almost insignificant problem, like one instance of ignoring another person who needs to be noticed; one time of looking out for yourself instead of others; or one time of bringing a word of criticism when we should have kept our mouth shut.

But this isn't a sermon on Unity.

It's a message on what it takes to live every day in the same kind of atmosphere that we feel in God's House and around God's people when we are in Unity.

I believe that we all desire to "Dwell with God" or to live and rest in His presence all the time. To have Jesus living in your heart and that the Holy Spirit leads you and guides you through life each and every day.

**Psalm 91:1-2 (NKJV)**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> Psalm David gives us direction if we desire to dwell in the presence of the Lord.

**Psalm 15:1-5 (NKJV)**

Who can Dwell daily with the Lord on the Holy hilltop of experience?

(vs.2) "He who walks uprightly..." (*Those who lead blameless lives*)

There is only one way to live right before the Lord and that's to continually invite the presence of the Holy Spirit into your life. You must live everyday as though it is the day of Jesus return.

Walking uprightly doesn't necessarily mean that you won't do anything wrong or make mistakes, maybe even some big mistakes. It means that you live in such a fashion that makes God pleased to call you his child. That your life and decisions bring honor to Him as you reflect Him.

If you are going to dwell in the presence of God, then your life must show that you enjoy serving him. We should be happy to work in God's kingdom, doing whatever is necessary for the growth of the Church, and the spreading of the Gospel. Every member of the body from head to toe works for the health of the body. You have a place and task in the Church that Jesus established.

Walking uprightly means that we walk with integrity before God and man. It means that we live every moment, understanding that God is with us and that He sees and hears everything we do. We live daily to please God by reflecting His character and do our best not to grieve the Holy Spirit by our life choices.

How can we think that we will dwell in the high places with God and still live like the world? You can't dwell in holy high places and live the sinful low life at the same time.

If you are going to dwell with God, you must climb up the mountain of holiness. It's a hard climb sometimes because we all "fall short of the Glory of God", but you have to keep on climbing. Keep seeking Him and His will.

A rock climber can't get halfway up the face of the cliff and decide to stop there. They are left hanging between reaching the top and safety or just waiting for the rope to break, allowing them to fall. They may have to pick a different foothold or rest to regain strength for the rest of the climb. They may have to even chip away at rock face to find a way to continue on, but they must reach the top or give up and go back to the ground.

Do you know it's harder and more dangerous to descend than to ascend when climbing? Leg strength going up, arm strength going down.

Giving up and going back is not an option for those who have received Jesus as their Savior. There is no place to go but upward toward Christ for them.

If you are going to climb up to God's holy hill and dwell with Him you may have to face the hard times and take out your hammer, the Word of God, and chip away at that sin that is holding you back until God gives you the "handhold" or "foothold" to break the power of that thing blocking you.

You have to reach the top! There is no stopping for very long and no going back.

For a Christian there can be no going back because the ground you started from is no longer there. You will never enjoy that old life again. You will never find peace or satisfaction in scratching around on the earth with a bunch of worldly chickens. You are destined to soar with the eagles on the mountaintop with God.

The old friends may act like they care but they really don't. You'll never find peace, joy and fulfillment in that old life on the ground, so keep on climbing.

God will bring you to the top to dwell in His own tent and live in His high places in the realm of Glory.

(vs.2) "...and works righteousness..." *(and does what is right)*

Climbing up the hill to the high places in Christ requires that we put forth a lot of effort to get there.

It's not a place that we just get to by default. You won't just float up there like a loose balloon. You never stumble into the presence of the Lord. It's not a place where we get to by wishing it, or hoping for it, or wanting it, or believing we are going to get there without some action to make it happen.

Getting into the high places with God and living in His continuous presence requires hard work, determination and total commitment.

How many of you would like to have a fancy new car sitting out in the parking lot just waiting for you to get in and take you wherever you wanted to go? Don't you just wish that it could be true? Don't you hope that one day you will see it happen? Do you really want that beautiful car? Do you believe you will see it and have it one day?

Well, you can wish, hope, want, and believe for it all you want, but if you don't go to work, earn the money to pay for it and then search for it, pay for it, and then maintain it when you get it, you will never have the experience of it.

Anything worth having (possession, talent, relationship, career) is going to require work, effort, time and commitment to make it come true.

The same is true in reaching the High Places in your experience in the Lord.

You are going to have to put feet and hands in motion with your faith and do some works of righteousness if you are going to dwell in the high places in God.

Just coasting along in your Christian experience without spending lots of time in Prayer, Studying the Word of God and working in the Church where God has called you work for Him, will not get you into the High Places with God. You have to work at it and commit to it, then you will see your progress up that Holy mountain.

Your view improves with each step closer to God. You have to bear the fruit that shows your determination to reach the top!

(vs.2) "...and speaks the truth in his heart..." (*speaking the truth from sincere hearts*)

Scripture says God knows the very thoughts and intentions of your heart. God knows if you mean business or you are just playing church. God knows if you are on fire for him or if you are just a smoking ember that's steadily growing cold.

We have to be honest with God about our climb. Tell him what you feel. Tell him what you think. Let God hear your complaints and your disappointments and your doubts and your fears and your inability to climb higher because of the obstacles in your life.

Tell God about it all.

Because God alone can remove the obstacles or help you overcome them. He wants you to ask Him for help. He will answer you, even though we don't always like his answers.

The Apostle Paul says that we should "pray without ceasing".

Some people have a motor mouth, they never stop talking.

We talk when we should be listening.

We talk when we should be watching.

We just talk, talk, talk without really saying much that really matters at all.

Why then, can't we pray without ceasing?

Why can't we talk to God constantly like we can talk to one another?

God wants you to talk to him about your troubles and trials. God wants to hear your voice, even when other people don't, because He really cares. So be open and truthful with God.

He can take your bad attitude, your fussing, your griping and He can actually change your heart. God wants his children to continually talk to him in prayer.

If you ever want to dwell with God in His high hill, you must learn to communicate openly and honestly with Him and quit playing Church disguised as a perfect Christian.

(vs.3) "He *who* does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;" (*Those who refuse to slander others or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends*)

How can we ever expect to experience God's best if we don't treat other people as well as we should, especially those who are also in the Family of God.

We should be kind, gentle and truthful to all people, all the time, no matter where we are.

I have seen Christians who are kind and loving in church but look out at the Restaurant after service. That waiter better be wearing armor because they are going to get a barrage of pent up frustrations.

How many of you have ever bit your tongue before? It hurts, doesn't it? I think that if we would bite our tongue instead of letting our tongue bite others, we would live in a much nicer world.

The tongue wasn't made for gossip or criticism, it was made to speak the truth and to praise the Lord and to communicate love and compassion for other people.

Many people both inside and outside the church, have been wounded by the power of the tongue. Why don't we speak life into the heart of people instead of speaking death to them through criticism? I mean we can control our hands, our feet, our whole body but there are very few who can control that little muscle called the tongue.

How can we treat one another this way and expect to climb the mountain and dwell with God? God won't dwell in a house that is full of bitterness, hatred and a critical spirit.

(vs.4) "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord;" *(Those who despise persistent sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the Lord)*

If you are going to climb up that Spiritual hill and dwell in high places with God you cannot be a Friend of the world, because the world is an Enemy with God.

Certainly God wants us to witness to the lost around us. God has placed us in a sinful world and yet He expects us to live upright and build His Kingdom. We have to hold in contempt anything and everything that disagrees with the Word of God. We cannot condone anything that is unjust or sinful, no matter if it costs us something to do so.

I know many who vote for people that are for abortion and same sex unions and a lot of things that we know are absolutely against the teachings of Jesus and the Word of God and they do so because they think it will make life easier and themselves look better to the world.

When did God say that it was okay to support the wicked just to get their approval or acceptance?

God said that He would be the one to supply all of your need according to His own riches in Glory, not the laws of some wicked, vile, uncompassionate, self-centered, self-seeking politician who couldn't speak the truth if their life depended on it. (That's my opinion of most politicians.)

We often place our trust in man but not in God and that warps our thinking so that we are easily deceived and start leaning on the arm of the flesh instead of the power of God.

If we are going to dwell in high places with God, we need to sharpen our sense of right and wrong and learn to discern what is the will of God and not the will of the flesh.

The world's thinking is backwards from that of God and all too often, God's own children line up with the world's way of thinking. The world honors those who are successful and it doesn't always matter how they managed to gain their success.

God honors those who are successful, but only if they obtained that success through righteous, holy and sanctified lives.

(vs.4-5) "He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change (*keeps his promises even when it hurts*); He *who* does not put out his money at usury (*those who do not charge interest on the money they lend*), Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent." (*who refuse to accept bribes to testify against the innocent*)

We are talking about Biblical integrity, something that is lacking in society and even in the House of God today. If you are going to live in High Places with God, you will have integrity.

There was time in our nation when you could borrow money, have confidence that you could pay it back without being robbed with high interest rates, and close the deal with your word and a handshake. Your word was the only bond or collateral that was necessary because people had integrity and they would do what they promised. Sad to say, those days are gone forever. Now only money talks.

It's no wonder that God says in Revelation that all business, industry and commerce under this present world economic system will have to be utterly destroyed.

This system will be destroyed so that the righteous system of God's economy can bring prosperity during the Millennial Reign of Christ.

I can't wait for that day when your work will really bring prosperity and every man's work will be blessed.

If we really love people and love God we will never do things to harm them or destroy them, even at the expense of losing something of our own to see that they are taken care of.

We must learn to take the injustice and let God handle making all things right again.

(vs.5) "He who does these things shall never be moved." (*Such people will stand firm forever*)

If we dwell in God's high place and allow Jesus to direct our lives, we will never be defeated. Yet, God's people live in defeat all too often because we don't give God first place in our lives.

Let God rule and reign in your life. Let your life reflect Jesus and you will never be moved from the presence of the Lord.

For those who might not know Jesus, your first step is to know that you aren't even climbing yet. You are still on the ground of decision where sin abounds. You must accept the redemption of Christ, confessing that you are a sinner.

Accept Jesus as Lord of your life and let Him come into your heart and wash away that guilt and shame. Then you can start your climb into the High Places with God.

Then you can live and rest in the presence of the Lord on His Holy Hilltop Forever.