

A Gift of Faith Book

13

*Nature
Exploration*

Part 1

A Gift of Faith Book

13

Nature Exploration

Written by: Chariane Quille and Dina Ellens

Cover photo: Francesco Moldavian

www.nurture-inspire-teach.com

Topics

- Clouds
- Rays of sunshine
 - Wind
 - Waterfall
- A Butterfly
 - Flowers
 - Plants
 - Trees
 - Water
 - Waves
 - Birds
 - Leaves
- Mountains

- Islands
- Moon
- Lightning
 - Sun
 - Colours
- Spring, Summer,
Autumn and Winter
 - Animals
 - Forest
 - Snow
 - River
 - Lake
 - Bees
 - Ocean



Photo by tf-photography.com



Clouds


Fluffy white clouds are so pretty-looking, and the bright, coloured clouds at sunrise or sunset are beautiful to look at. But did you know that even the nicest cloud might get muddy sometimes?

Yes, it's true! As raindrops fall and the cloud descends in showers on the ground it can make muddy puddles!

Do you think it would be so nice to stay up above in the sky like the clouds, never having to be dirty, or to have the problems that you face in your life on Earth?



Photo by tf-photography.com



Well, even clouds don't stay up there always, but come down to help us on Earth, bringing the water we need.

We can be like the refreshing rain and do deeds of kindness to cheer others who are feeling grumpy. Or we can tell people about God's love and Word, and that will help to clean and refresh their thoughts and hearts.

And when you want to rise up, just like the water evaporates and turns into clouds all nice and clean again, you can do that when you take the time to sing and praise, pray and listen to Jesus. He can make your heart feel light and happy!



Photo by tf-photography.com



Rays of sunshine


Have you ever seen the light shining through a forest tree? Or seen how the sunlight shines out in paths of light from behind a cloud? Or have you seen a magnificent sunrise, or vibrant sunset?

If you were in a hot desert and really needed some rain, the sunshine wouldn't look so beautiful to you. It would just feel too hot and dry during the day.

However, in the right setting, the light shines so beautifully, and is a wonder to look at. Getting to see light, colour, and the bright, cheery rays coming from the sun can bring a feeling of joy just looking at it, or feeling its warmth.



Photo by Curtis Peter van Gorder



Words can be like sunshine, bringing rays of light into people's lives. It can bring a kind of light that even a blind person can be cheered by. Words spoken at the right time and in the right way, with lips filled with kindness and thoughtfulness, can bring a ray of happiness to someone's heart on even the dullest and most gloomy days.

Too many words, and especially those that aren't well thought-out can be like rays coming down on a desert—not very welcome. Too much talking or words said too forcefully or in the heat of anger, can just dry up people's joy.

Be like the sun's rays that are welcomed and happily received by using words that are beautiful, well-spoken, at the right time and in the most loving ways.



Photo by tf-photography.com




Wind

Like a gentle touch, it brushes over you, invisibly. You look to see what touched you, but see no one. That is wind, a gentle and soothing wind. Wind can blow gently, making a refreshing breeze. Wind can blow wildly, making trees sway from one side to the other. Wind can also make waves choppy creating a rather bumpy boat ride!

Wind can bring movement, speed to ships, and make machines function—like windmills. It can help to create electricity and energy through windmills too. Wind can carry seeds causing them to be planted elsewhere. Wind can make it possible for some games and sports—like kite-flying and hang gliding. Wind can help birds to fly high. Wind can also



Photo by Jon Berg



be rough causing damage and difficulty from sand storms and hurricanes and such.


Wind is invisible—you can only see the effect that it has on the area around it. Good winds can cause rejoicing and be a welcome relief and help. Harsh winds can cause great troubles, and no one wants it around.

Your spirit is invisible too. But the effect of your spirit on all that surrounds you can be seen, and can show what kind of a person you are, inside.

Will you blow gentle, refreshing winds on those who need encouragement? Will you blow helpful strong-enough winds for those who need to get somewhere and are having a hard time doing it on their own?



Photo by S.d..B.



Will your spirit be like a wind that blows people in the right direction, lifting them up in positive ways?

Next time you see the wind blowing through the trees, think about the effect that you have had on others today. How did you talk to others? What ideas did you inspire in them? Were you like a very still day without any wind at all, with jobs that depended on your help were left undone?

God's Spirit is like the wind too, in a way. You can't see it, but you can feel it and see the effect that His Spirit has on you and on others. If you let God's Spirit blow you in the right direction you'll have a great ride! Be a fan for God! Let His wind blow through you to refresh others.



Photo by M. McNally



Waterfall


The water rushing over a waterfall can be an amazing and powerful show to watch! Have you ever gotten to see a big waterfall up close? Even a small one can be very beautiful.

Water just pours down, gushes down, beautifully cascades while splashing downwards, completely unhindered.

If you placed a cup under the waterfall's flow it would immediately fill, then overflow while you would have to hold on ever so tightly to keep the powerful force of the waterfall from knocking the cup from your hand!



Photo by tf-photography.com



However, it would probably splash the cup out of your hand, sending it from your hand to float in the pool of water below. Rather than water just filling the cup, the cup would then be surrounded and soaking in more water than it's ever held before!

Huge lakes, long streams and rivers can be filled from the waterfall's flow. It can seem like it's a tap that is turned on full blast and can't be turned off! Wow! The sound of the rushing water is rather loud too, when you are up close.

Jesus' love can be compared to a waterfall, I think. It's so abundant and never ending.

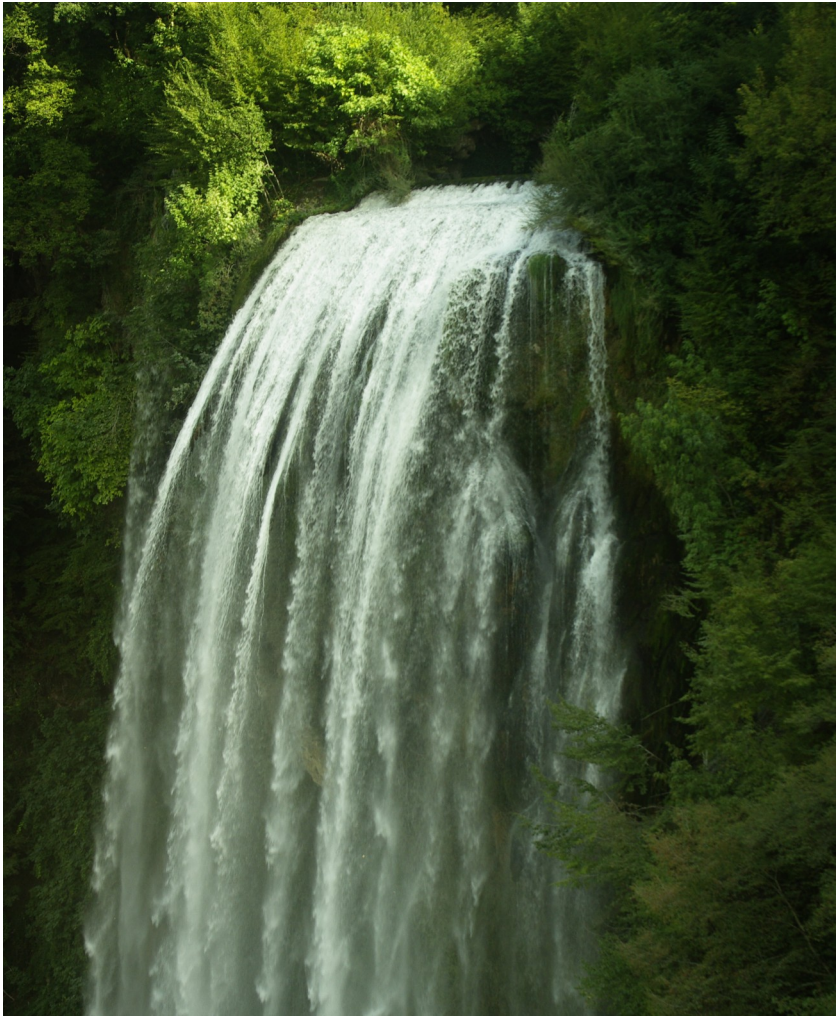



Photo by Curtis Peter van Gorder



We can use the example of the cup to get an idea of how much love He has for us. We are like a cup that is empty and is in need of Jesus' loving care.


We often wonder how much He loves us, but you know, He doesn't just have enough love to fill our cup, but more than enough so that it keeps flowing, flowing, flowing, to overflowing filling our cup again and again!

It's so much that we can just float and swim and travel in His love, because there's so much of it! He doesn't just love us with "half-a-cup full of love" or even a pitcher full, but in gushing amounts and endlessly—more than can be measured in a lifetime!



A Butterfly

Such delicate wings clothe the fluttering butterfly. They are not strong like an elephant, and don't live nearly as long. But with their wings they can see things that even the strongest creatures on Earth can't, and can go where those who have even the fastest running legs can never go.




Up it can fly and flutter, and sit on the smallest flower, or fly to a tree top. A butterfly can land on a child's hand, or sit peacefully on a pebble at the stream's edge.

No matter how hard an elephant waves his big ears, it will never fly. No matter how fast a cheetah might run, it can never make it up to the top of a waterfall's flow, or out to a nearby island over the waters' surface. Being small and light and delicate is what makes the butterfly able to do and see things that tougher, bigger, faster creatures can't.

Each one on Earth has abilities and qualities that others could only dream of having. If the tender butterfly stayed on the ground, looking at the enormous giraffe, and moaned about how very tiny it was in comparison, and said,



“I’m too small—I could never reach the tree’s blossoms,” it never would. If, however, it stopped trying to be like the giraffe, and realised that it had different abilities, and in its own way, it too, could reach its goal, its wings would take it to the blossom.



The butterfly couldn't do this if it was trying to imitate some other creature that seemed far more magnificent than itself. But it could, in its own God-given way, soar even higher than the tallest of the creatures.

If you focus on the way God made you, and you find His way to reach your goals, you can go much further, and do much more than you ever thought possible, instead of trying to do things the way that it seems others who are considered "great" are doing.

God may give you a new way, unthought-of by others. You'll be glad you did what He created you to do, and for the special way He made you.





Flowers


Taking time to look at a pretty flower up close can cheer you. When someone gives you a flower it can be a way of saying,
“I love you and I care about you.”
Flowers were made to be used as gifts of love.

You can grow a lovely flower garden, which can show that you are happy for the wonderful gift of sight that God has given you. It's like a big thank-you, to display flowers in a pretty way.

Flowers can be a way to show people that you care about them. They can also be given to someone who needs healing. Flowers make such a wonderful decoration for all kinds of parties and festivities.



Photo by tf-photography.com



They are God's decorations, to be used for special occasions. They can be made into bouquets, or placed in a vase, or even dried to make cards and pictures to give to others.

God likes pretty things—like flowers, colourful sunsets, and lovely smiles. We can be like beautiful flowers to Him, as well, when we are loving, give our time to help others, when we speak gentle and kind words, this is like growing pretty flowers in our life.

When Jesus looks at us, it will make Him smile and enjoy what He sees—just like when we look at a colourful and nice-smelling flower garden, or a special, bright and fragrant bouquet of flowers.



Photo by Duane Hanes




Plants

Plants grow as they absorb the sunlight and drink in water and nourishment from the Earth. They have to get just the right amount of each thing they need in order to thrive. If a plant were to only get sunshine, and never any water or rain, it would dry up and wither.

Or if it only received water, but was in a place where there wasn't any light, it also couldn't produce what it needed in order to keep it growing and looking healthy. If instead of being planted where it could receive nutrients the roots were in something else, like cement or play dough, it wouldn't be able to grow either.

We can look at the plants and learn something from them. Plants don't get up and move just because it seems another plant gets to be in a





prettier, sunnier or shadier spot. They stay where they are planted and do the job they were made to do.

We also can patiently do what Jesus created us for, and draw nutrients for our spirit from Him and His Word. We should also remember that not every day can be a sunny day, or a day that is only filled with fun and laughter, but there are times to learn other things, and have new experiences.

There are times when we might cry, get sick, have a hard time, or not always get just what we wanted and have to wait a while for what we'd like. These times help us to be wiser, more caring, and help us to grow in spirit which strengthens us.

Jesus can use everything we experience to make us more beautiful which He can then use to help us be a benefit in the lives many others.

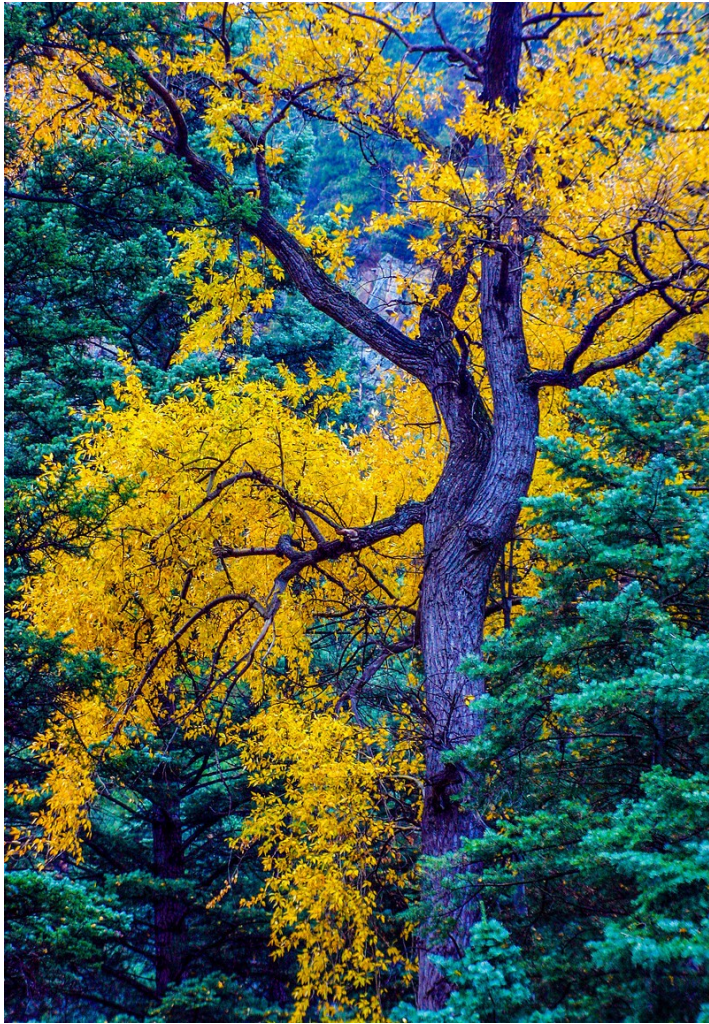


Photo by tf-photography.com

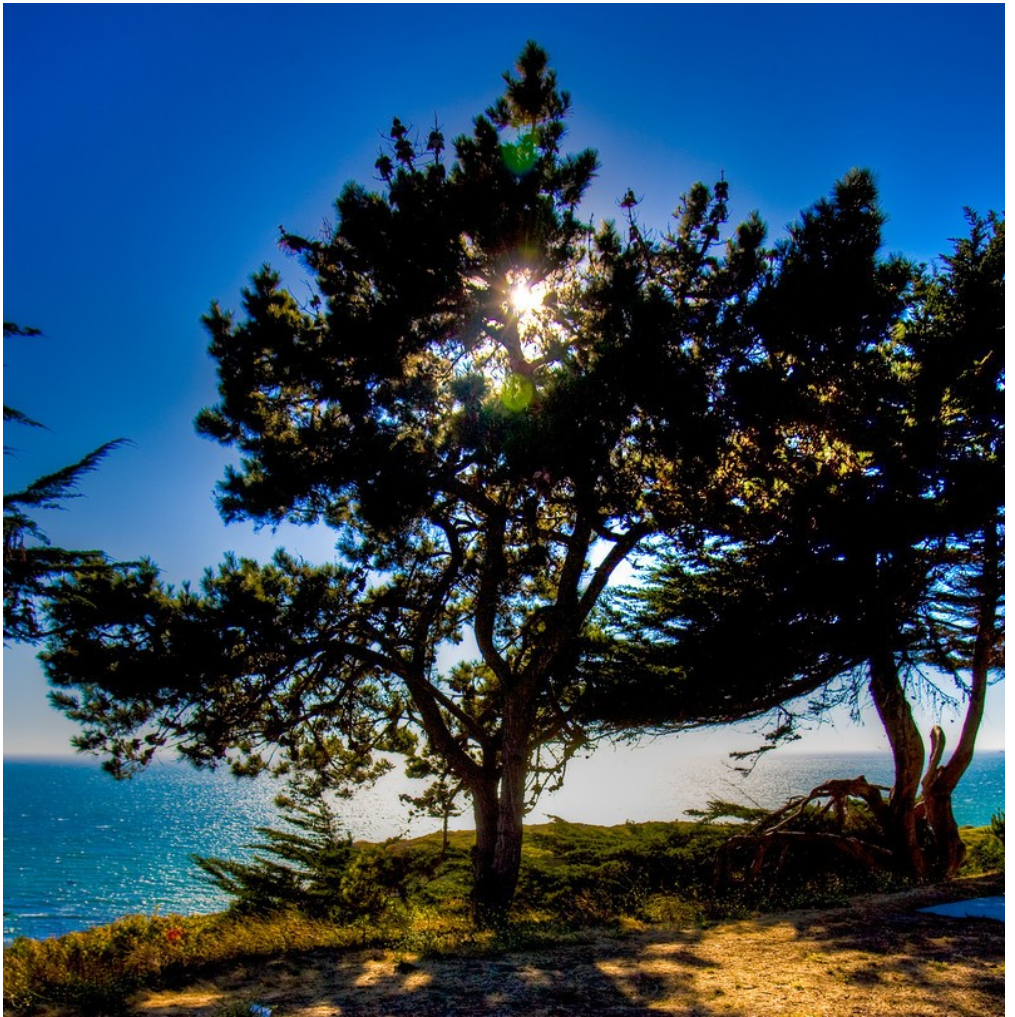



Trees

The strength of the tree depends a lot on how strong its roots are, and how deeply its roots grow. The deeper the roots spread down into the nourishing good soil, the taller it can grow, and the wider and more lustrous its branches can be. The strength is not in the thickness of its bark, or the width of the trunk. That comes with time and age. The secret lies in what is unseen, hidden, and in how far the roots grow to soak up the nourishment it needs.

Even the wind helps to prod the tree to grow yet deeper roots in order to keep the tree's balance. As the roots grow more deeply, so can the branches also spread in width, and the trunk can grow in height.

It's not what is seen about a person, what is easily noticeable about their outward appearance, but rather what is going on inside that determines their strength and ability to withstand the windy, stormy times of life.





If you feel the things you are experiencing are a bit too hard for you to manage, then be like a tree, and spend some secret time, some time where you and Jesus together can meet. Talk to Him in the secret language of your heart, with the whispers of your soul. Let Him nourish you and strengthen your heart and fortify your faith.

When someone is faithful to take time daily to be alone in the stillness and solitude of their special time communicating with Jesus –letting His thoughts and words give peace and direct their spirit, then they can be truly strong, no matter what comes their way.

As Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled. Neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) And the Bible also says, “Their strength is to sit still.” (Isaiah 30:7)





Islands

Islands can seem so alone, with nothing but water surrounding them. But did you know that they aren't just rocks floating on top of the water, but the land continues on down under the surface of the ocean.

You can't always see the rest of the land and underwater mountains that they are part of, but the islands are a part of something much bigger.

If you feel alone, and wonder if you are the only one that feels or thinks a certain way—perhaps there are people around you



Photo by tf-photography.com



Water

The sounds that trickling water makes can be rather musical. Water can sound powerful like a full orchestra playing the crescendo of a song, as the water gushes and pours down the face of a waterfall, or in a full and flowing river after plenty of rain has fallen.

A single droplet of water falling where it can echo may have a melodic and high note. A soft falling rain can sound soothing as you curl up under your warm blankets and hear it sing you to sleep with its lullaby.


The splashing sounds of a pool filled with playful children can sound so lively and stir you into action.

The sound of a pitcher of water filling a glass is a very welcome sound when you are thirsty.

Water means so much to people on Earth, for without good, clean, fresh water, people on Earth could not enjoy this life. It is one of the main keys to survival, and it can bring so much enjoyment as well.



Photo by tf-photography.com



A refreshing shower leaves you feeling clean and comfortable. A swim with friends in a crystal-clear lake is a delightful way to spend your time on summer day.

A big, hot bubble bath can calm you and relax you, and help you to sleep well that night. Frozen water can make a nice cold drink as you add ice cubes to it. Warm water can help make a nourishing soup or warm drink.

And as much as you need and enjoy water, and as beautiful as it can be displayed in ocean sunsets, on snow capped mountain peaks, in helping to form a rainbow, in the sun's beams making wavy light patterns through clear stream waters, so are you to Jesus.

Jesus loves to be refreshed with the light of your smile. It's like taking a cool fresh drink when you offer words of praise and song to the One that made you and loves you more than you'll ever understand.

You are beautiful to Him, and He wants your loving friendship with Him, as much as you need water daily.



Photo by tf-photography.com




Waves

Splashing, crashing, rolling, smashing,
Against the shore, once more,
And again retreating and repeating.

Waves are constantly in motion, never dull, never still. Sometimes the waves are gently rolling along the water's surface. Other times they are huge, gigantic—so big that you could surf through the tunnels that the crashing waves form! They are moving, always moving. The crashing and force of the waves helps to change the coast around it. The persistent water's splash can even eventually break some rocks down into sand.

Waves help to keep the sea life stirred up as sea nutrients are moved around as well. This causes them to not just settle on the bottom making it difficult for the fish to find food. It also prevents them from just resting on the water's surface which would make the water lose its freshness.





The salty sea spray that perfumes the coastline's air is invigorating and cleansing as you breathe it deeply in.

Maybe you wish things in your life would settle down, and be a bit more tranquil; that there would be less change, or at least less change that is unsettling which somewhat disturbs the serene way you wish things could always be.

But if things are causing you to move, to try new things, to experience varied emotions and feelings, and are helping you learn things that you would never be able to learn if all remained the same, always, each day, then the changes and stirrings in your life are a good thing.

Flow with it, ride it, rise above the waves as if you are a surfer using the wave for a bit of good fun. Anything that's good can be fun, if you see it in the right way and find out how it can be a benefit to you.



Photo by tf-photography.com



Birds


It seems so easy for the birds, when you are standing on the ground and unable to fly. It seems all they need to do is flap their wings a bit and off they go, away from whatever is going on down below. But you know, for them it's no less of a challenge to be a bird in the sky, than it is for you who can walk.

You can do so many other things that birds cannot. You can walk or run somewhere much more quickly than their little legs can take them on land. You can use your hands to hold onto your food while standing easily on both your legs.

You can talk and express yourself in words, describing what you feel and what you need. You can think up new inventions and create things that others have never made before. A bird might seem to have it easy and be the happiest creature in the world, able to soar high above the ground. But as it looks down on



Photo by Jon Berg



you, and sees all the many things that God made people have the ability to do, it could seem to a bird like you are the one that has all the good things!

When you are having a problem, and you are just wishing you could float above it all through the fluffy clouds and not have a care in the world, maybe you can't do that in body right now, but you can do it in spirit and in mind. You can say a prayer and it will be like you have flown up to Heaven and are talking to Jesus, right then. You can say a few words of praise or thankfulness and talk about the good things that you have to be thankful for, and it will bring a fresh breeze of joy your way.

Just like the bird sees the things down on Earth as small when it is flying up so high, that can be the same for you—the problems that seem so big to you will be smaller when you start thinking of all the many other good things that Jesus does for you.






Leaves

Leaves may look pretty, especially when they are multi-coloured in autumn, or when they are light green growing in the spring—but they are hard workers too? In some ways they are like farmers. They gather up the delicious and needed sunlight that helps the plant grow well, and helps to produce what is needed for its nourishment.

There may be countless leaves on a bush or tree! It would take you much too long to try to count just how many! But did you know that each one serves a purpose? If each leaf just thought, “Oh, there’s so many of us, I don’t really make any difference to this bush,” and it stopped doing its job, pretty soon the plant would be bare and cause quite a lot of problems for the plant.





You may think you are just one person in a world that is filled with many people, and sometimes you can get the wrong idea that one person can't make much of a difference. But just like the leaves are attached to parts of the plant, each person that you see affects and influences others—their family, friends, neighbours and others.

How they are around the people they know will in turn affect the others that they know. Everyone has an effect on the people around them. And if even just one person shares something as simple as a smile with others, it will be passed on like rays of light, from person to person in some way—and eventually the joy may even come back to them one day!

Treat people with care, and value each one, because each one is precious and special to Jesus.



Photo by tf-photography.com



Mountains


Mountains seem so big when you are down on the ground looking way up at them. They especially seem high when you start to hike up one. Each step takes effort and energy, and it isn't always so easy.

But if you were to look down below and see them from way up above, they wouldn't seem high at all—just a bump on the ground.

That's how it can be with problems and struggles down on Earth. It can seem to take a long time and a lot of effort to work out some solutions to things that are difficult for you there.



Photo by tf-photography.com




But one day, when you are happily flying in Heaven, even the things that seemed the most troublesome here won't bother you anymore.

And guess what else? You will be strong in spirit because of the mountains of struggles that you had while on Earth, that you climbed or overcame. You will have learned so many great things.

So when you look up at the majestic mountains, remember that each step in your life, and everything that you are experiencing is bringing you closer to Jesus and teaching you greater faith. And one day you'll fly far higher than the tallest mountain that has ever been climbed.





that don't understand what you are trying to say or explain, or they don't know Jesus as well as you do.

Remember, you aren't really alone; you are an essential part of the big mountain of God's family, which is very big and strong.

God's love will keep you safe, even if the opinions of others and the struggles of people around you splash around you like waves around the coast of an island. You won't get washed away. God's got you strongly attached to Him, and you'll stay secure.

Continued in Part 2