

In Thy Shadow

By: Jim Hohnberger

*“He that dwelleth in the secret place
of the Most High shall abide under
the shadow of the Almighty.”*

—*Psalms 91:1*—

The grand secret to living the Christian life is learning how to live within the very shadow of Jesus. While it is easy to talk about in the abstract or as a concept, it is an experience rarely found and seldom sought, even by the most devout Christians. The experience, once glimpsed, will leave one with the desire for nothing else. So come with me and catch a glimpse of this special place—under the shadow of the Almighty....

When we moved to Montana we did not plan on my immediate return to work.

This was an experiment with God to see if we really could find Him. My first couple of years out were spent setting up our homestead and addressing myself to *my* character development and the personal reformation God wanted *me* to begin.

We lived very frugally for two years, and the experiment worked! However, funds were eventually going to run out. I might make it another year on what we had, but it was time to start looking for some type of employment. Through a number of divine interventions I was led to start a real estate practice in our little valley.

Our valley runs about 60 miles north and south, and when we moved there was only about one year-round resident per

mile. They were people who had been drawn to the area for many of the same reasons we had—the beauty, the clean water and air, as well as the isolation. There were some who viewed the whole valley as theirs, even though it was overwhelmingly government owned, and hence, it truly belonged to every citizen in the country. Many of them would have gladly put a gate at the southern end of the valley, and would have only given keys to the fortunate few who already lived here. They had found paradise, and now they wanted to keep it to themselves.

They viewed my real estate practice as the greatest threat to their happiness, and they did whatever they could to stop me. Please understand; it was not all the residents who objected, just a few extremists. But they did make life very uncomfortable for me. Whenever I posted a sign on a listing, they tore it down. You must remember, this is not your typical neighborhood where they were in danger of being seen by others and reported. The valley is huge, with very little population, so there were no neighborly eyes to question their actions, nothing to hold them back from trying to disrupt my business.

I decided to try to wait them out. I replaced the signs they took down, and they quickly removed the new ones. Before long, I had lost seventy-five signs, and

there was a tendency to allow my mind to dwell on what these "terrible" people were doing to me. After all, they were taking down my signs, spreading all sorts of rumors about me that questioned my honesty, and even my legality. They complained to the state licensing board about my supposedly illegal practice that I ran from my home. Even the state saw through this and told me, "It's just a bunch of jealous people. Ignore them, and they will soon go away." This might be true, but it was no easy matter to keep my mind from thinking about the evil things that were being done to me, especially when their actions were keeping me from gainful employment at a time when my funds were nearly exhausted.

I had found the valley of my dreams, and now that very valley was working against my efforts to earn a living for my family. When we face a temptation, we can focus upon the temptation or we can focus upon the solution. When we focus upon the problem, or temptation, it seems to grow larger and more difficult to control, just as rolling a little snowball downhill makes it grow larger and larger until it becomes so large that it gets out of our control. It is that way with every problem we face.

My choice was simple. I could spend my time trying to find out who these

people were that wanted to, quite literally, take bread from my children's mouths; I could identify them and work to discredit them; and I could seek the sympathy of others and say, "Poor me," or have a pity party because I was being picked on. Or I could do the work God called me to do. I couldn't do both.

If I put the troubles out of my mind and surrendered them to God and said, "Here it is, God. You handle it. It is just too big for me to take care of," then I could focus upon my real work. I can't control what other people do. I can't keep them from saying bad things about me. I can't keep a good reputation by defending it myself. I can, however, keep my mind focused upon God, and that is what I chose to do.

Every time a new rumor came back to me, every time I received a test, every time I had another sign torn down, I saw it as another opportunity for me to practice giving the situation to God. My mind wanted to dwell on the evil that had been done me instead of yielding those upset emotions to God and staying at peace with my fellow men, even the ones who were tormenting me. I remembered the university professor I had been in conflict with. I didn't handle that situation well, and God was taking me over the same ground again and again until my choice to

do things God's way was established as a habit.

I found out that you can *run* but you can't *hide* from the devil. Coming to the quiet and living in the wilderness or in a country setting will minimize the amount of contact and stresses you receive from other people, but it doesn't eliminate them. There is no place you can go to hide from every temptation. In this case, there was no way to avoid the temptation. Every item I bought, every time I purchased gas, I knew I was that much closer to running out of money, and that raised all sorts of emotions in me, especially when I would find another sign torn down. I needed the money from the sale of these properties badly. Through hard experiences God was teaching me to be *passive* to the voice of my flesh—that is, to the voice of my emotions and feelings. At the same time, He wanted me to become very willing to listen and obey, to be *active* toward the voice of God speaking to me.

These trials never hit me when I was ready for them, such as during my worship time. They came when I least expected them to. When I was driving along and saw another sign missing, my mind longed to mull it all over. I found that when I gave way and thought about it, when I told others about it, when I ran

into friends and shared with them how mistreated I was or talked with my family back in the Midwest, the problems always seemed much worse than they really were. In fact, the longer I did this, the more disconnected from God I became. At last, I realized I was in a battle, not with my enemies, but for my spiritual life. I came to understand that God had not brought me to the wilderness so I could have rest there in my beautiful spot. No, God wanted Jim Hohnberger to come to the quiet of His presence so that I might have rest and peace in any circumstance, good or bad, and He desires the same for you.

Back in Bible times David had fled to the wilderness, just as I had fled from civilization. David found he had enemies determined to destroy him even in the wilderness, and I also found I had enemies bent upon my destruction. The real issue for me was the same as it was all the way back in David's day: Can I find peace and rest for my soul in Jesus, apart from any change in my circumstances? Can I, by faith, entrust this whole ugly situation into His hand, and not fret about it, and simply trust God to take care of me?

I had just gotten to this point of understanding and the attacks got worse! More rumors, and now even articles and editorials in the newspaper appeared. The things they said about me were so wrong and so

biased that it was hard not to respond, and yet I had just promised to put it all in God's hands. This became my battle—not to fight the allegations, but to remain subdued and surrender to God, allowing Him to lead and direct me...

Power for Living

This article is an excerpt from Chapter 5 in Jim's new book, *Come to the Quiet*. For the remainder of the story, see either the book or the CD series, *Come to the Quiet*.



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