

The North Face of God
Hope for the times when God seems indifferent

Chapter Three - Climbing Alone

“Ropes are one of a climber’s most essential pieces of equipment. Roped to a partner, a climber can stay the course if his eyes are blinded by the snow or his mind becomes disoriented from the altitude. A taut rope can keep a climber from slipping on scree or save him from plunging down a crevasse. ...

“The parallels in the spiritual realm are frightening. In a moment, we can lose our footing. A moral misstep when our marriage feels shaky, and it can lead to an affair. An emotional misstep when we’re going through a depression, and it can lead to a loss of a job or the loss of a friendship. A spiritual misstep when we’re suffering, and it can lead to our falling away from God, falling so hard and so far that it might lead to paralysis of some of the feelings we once had for spiritual things, even to the death of those feelings. *This is why the rope is so essential. If we are not roped to other caring Christians, it could result in a catastrophe...*”

It is important for us to know there are others we can be honest with and share our confusion, doubts, and pain:

Lamentations 3:7-12

He has walled me in so I cannot escape;
he has weighed me down with chains.
Even when I call out or cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer.
He has barred my way with blocks of stone;
he has made my paths crooked.
Like a bear lying in wait,
like a lion in hiding,
he dragged me from the path and mangled me
and left me without help.
He drew his bow
and made me the target for his arrows.

One or two trusted and mature friends can make a difference:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!
Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

A Prayer for my Friends

Dear Lord,

Your Son told his disciples,

“I no longer call you servants but friends.”

And it is true what the hymn says.

What a friend we have in Jesus.”

But it is also true that you have given us flesh-and-blood friends

To be his hands and his feet

his eyes and his ears

his heart and his voice

Thank you for those you have recruited as my climbing partners,

To hack steps in the ice,

To keep an eye on the weather,

To encourage me when I tire,

To steady me when I stumble,

To catch me when I fall.

Never let me think I can make it without them, Lord.

Thank you that the risks they have taken are not for the summit but for me.

Help me to realize that each step is the beginning of a fall

And that without those very special friends,

The fall could be fatal.

The North Face of God, Ken Gire, Tyndale House, 2005, Italics added