

Chapter One: Authenticity

Your Spiritual DNA

SONG – *I Am Who I Am*

Have you ever had a mountaintop experience? An inspirational moment, perhaps at a special place? Maybe with a special person? One of the things about mountain tops is you often have to go through valleys to get there. *Discovering Your Grace Land* includes mountaintop experiences and I'd like to share one of mine with you.

I was in San Diego on a sabbatical and my family came down to see me. My daughter was three years old, and I promised her we'd do a few things when she came down. We'd go to Disneyland. We'd go to SeaWorld. We'd go to the ocean. And as we were walking along the bank at La Jolla, I said to Mary-Jane, "Sweetheart, do you know what that is?" pointing out to the ocean.

She said, "What's that, dad?"

I said, "That's the ocean, sweetheart."

She goes, "Wow!" Her big saucer eyes were full of imagination.

"Mary-Jane, do you know who made the ocean?"

She looked at me. I could see the wheels turning...*Dad's been away for a while. He's up to something. He's on a sabbatical?* She exclaimed, "You did Dad! You made the ocean!"

I said "Sweetheart, no, no. Guess again."

"God?"

I said, "Yeah, you got it!"

Wow! Talk about a mountaintop experience. The emotions were flooding - that my daughter would believe in me to the extent that I could create the ocean! I mean it was inspiring.

It was humbling. I felt I didn't deserve that kind of devotion. But I was inspired by that moment to be the best person I could be, to show my daughter what it means to be authentic and to encourage her to do the same.

I know there were other aspects of that experience that didn't come to me at the time and that's often how it is with a mountaintop experience. Things trickle in. You remember things. It sits on your heart. That my daughter could believe I was capable of creating the ocean....

Jesus said that people are to come along and do greater things than Him. If we have God in our hearts - if we have Grace in our hearts - we can climb mountains; we can move mountains! We can do extraordinary things! Perhaps there's a seed that's been planted in you from a mountaintop experience. An invitation to do something great. To take bold action.

In my song *I Am Who I Am*, I sing “God called Moses from a burning bush, and Mo asked for God's name. God told Mo, “I am who I am. Follow me and I'll make it plain.”

This story of God meeting Moses at a burning bush is an incredible mountaintop experience! Moses was living in fear. His people, the Hebrews, were slaves under the Egyptians. He'd killed a man trying to defend his people and so he was living in hiding. God called Moses to do something incredible. Something impossible! You may have heard the expressions *climb every mountain* or *dream the impossible dream*. Yup! God asked Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery.

And Moses, you can imagine, was fearful. He didn't think he could do it. He knew *he* couldn't do it! And if God was going to ask him to do something so incredible - seemingly impossible -could He at least give him something that he could take back to his people so that they would understand that God was with them? And so, he asked for God's name. And the answer he got is for sure the ultimate statement of authenticity: “*I am who I am.*”

Moses was being called to do something incredible. Something that was massive! Something that made him very uncomfortable. Something he didn't think he could do.

Have you ever had that in your life? Have you ever felt called to do something you just didn't think you could do? Well maybe, like Moses, you could take something down from the mountaintop.

A great inspiration in my life was my dad, Gord Sheasby. I called him the Mountain Man. And I gave a message at his memorial talking about how he had climbed physical mountains in his life, but that these were also metaphors for the spiritual insights that he realized and that he brought back to level land; brought back to the practical. Taking the spiritual moment from the mountaintop and bringing it down to level land was what my dad taught me.

I've also learned a great deal studying inspirational paradigms from Anthony Robbins. And one of the things that he's been encouraging me with is that, at the right time, we've got to be willing to take massive action. Once we've made a decision - once we know what's important; once we know what our mission is - it's not enough to know it. You've got to move on it; take some initiative; take the understanding or the revelation from the mountaintop and bring it back to level land.

You know that experience that I had with Mary-Jane at the ocean? It planted a seed in me. It planted a seed that I needed to be willing to be true to who I am in claiming my mission. I was trapped in an institutional church that was not giving me what I needed; what I was expecting; what I was longing for in my calling to follow God. And one day, after a lot of prayer, I made a very difficult decision to leave the only church that I knew. It was the hardest decision I've ever made in my life. But once I had made the decision to take that massive action - not knowing what I was going to do next - I still thought, "How can I do this?"

Many people had suggested to me I should start *my own* church. So, I sat in front of the computer, and I Googled *How do I start a church?* and I got *startchurch.com*. No kidding! And that connection set in motion the process of setting up a non-denominational church... a different kind of spiritual movement that could focus on hope and Grace and compassion. Not upon control. Not upon telling people what they *had* to believe but rather encouraging people to open their hearts to connect with Grace.

That decision and the opening up of that new possibility came, I believe, because of that mountaintop experience where my daughter - a three-year-old girl - believed in her dad so much that she thought I could create the ocean!

You know, when God told Moses His name, *I am who I am*, it took Moses some time to discover who that God was. As a Christian, I believe that we have more insight into who God is through Jesus. And it's fascinating that Jesus took that statement - the *I am who I am* statement - and He gave it even more meaning when he made statements like:

"I am the bread of life." I give you what you need.

"I am the good shepherd." I care for my sheep.

"I am the light of the world." I give you enlightenment.

I believe that Jesus is the Grace of God and as we experience Grace, so we experience Christ. Now, I don't know where you're at in your spiritual journey. Perhaps that's not where you are. And that's okay because here at *Your Grace Land*, I'm not telling you what to believe.

My song *I Am Who I Am* goes on, "God is more than religious belief, the King of love remains. Always true to His own self and we should be the same."

"God is more than religious belief" to me means that beliefs are important. The head stuff is important, but it's not the most important. Sometimes people need to get a handle on things.

How is it that we can understand a loving God when bad things happen to good people? So, we need to process things in the head, but sometimes we need to get past the head stuff. Or at least allow people to be in different places - to be in different places in their beliefs - because God is *more* than religious belief.

You know, one of the stories that I love is when Jesus says that God knows us each so well that He knows the number of hairs on our head, or is it the *number* of the hairs on our head? The late Howard Watts, a good friend of mine and a member of our fellowship, once said to me, “You know, I wonder if, when Jesus said that, He wasn't talking about how many hairs are on our head, but the *number* of the hairs...the *DNA of our hair!*”

Wow! Could it be that Jesus was alluding to the fact that God knows our DNA, long before science understood DNA? Could it be that God knows our spiritual DNA? God knows each one of us. You are unique and special, one of a kind! And so is *Your Grace Land*.

I encourage you to claim your authenticity! To claim your mountaintop experiences. To reflect upon what you learned from those special moments. Maybe at a special place with another person. Maybe it's something that you can make time for or make more space for - mountaintops in your life.

And what's most important, perhaps, is to bring something down from the mountaintop to level land. To take that inspirational moment and be willing to put it into action, to have the courage to be who you're truly meant to be!

This is *Your Grace Land*.

And so it is.