

Top of the World

By: Barbara Dickson

Have you ever felt "on top of the world," floating in the dizzying heights of cloud nine? We've all experienced the feeling "it can't get any better than this" - perhaps in moments like your first kiss, your walk down the aisle to meet your groom, or your newborn baby's first cry.

Mountain climbers know physically "top of the world" exhilaration when they stand above banners of cloud on peaked mountaintops. For most of us, clawing our way to the top, lugging heavy mountain gear, doesn't thrill us despite the promised view.

However, there is a way to scale one of North America's highest passes, Bear's Tooth Pass, in the comfort of your car, and to experience the ecstasy of being at the top - no hiking or clawing required.

Although in past years my family and I had scaled the harrowing road to Mount Washington's 6,000-foot summit in New Hampshire, U.S.A., and rode the elevator to the peak of Vermont's Whiteface

Mountain, I was not prepared for my encounter with the Bear's Tooth. I presumed the 67-mile highway would lead us through the mountain chain, at an altitude of six to seven thousand feet. Wrong. At 8,000 feet the highway continued spiralling upward. At every switch-back, our van twisted skyward with the road.

When we finally reached the crest of the pass, we stopped and stood on the top of a mountain jutting over two miles from the earth's surface. At 10,994 feet, we looked down with only God's great firmament above us. Cloud wisps swirled around us. We romped on a mini-glacier and communed with the bears. The road unravelled like a tiny white ribbon thousands of feet below.

I stood in wonder, awestruck at God's magnificent craftsmanship. God chiselled these mountains and capped off the mountaintop under my feet. I spun around with my arms outstretched and beheld, with an unobstructed 360 degree view, His incredible handiwork. We lingered as long as time allowed since we had unnerving roads in Yellowstone National Park to tackle before nightfall.

We began our descent. Thick clouds and the emergence of trees obscured our view. Our mountaintop evaporated

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from our sight as gravity tugged us earthward. As grayness settled around us, it was tempting to think God had slipped away with our mountain peak.

Sometimes it's easy to remember God in our "top of the world" moments and forget He walks beside us when we're down in the valley. Isn't it wonderful to know that God created both mountains and valleys for His delight, and ours?

I walked through His valley a few days later. The Valley of the Ten Peaks was tucked in amidst the Canadian Rockies, 13 kilometres up a narrow mountain road away from tourist-bound Lake Louise in Banff Provincial Park. Words offer a bare testament to the valley's beauty. Secluded and hemmed in by 10 towering peaks, Moraine Lake nestled in the valley's belly, and shimmered with an incomparable turquoise hue, giving it the name "Jewel of the Rockies." Blankets of jack pine and moraine debris covered the rugged peaks' lower altitudes.

Technically, I stood in a valley and yet I felt on top of the world. God's tenderness touched me and wonder surrounded me. The scenery had changed, but God hadn't.

Mountains and valleys rest as they nestle in the palm of God's hand. They do not worry about tomorrow. They have no fear when alpine storms roar through. They abide in the One who created them, majestically praising His name.

Whether we sing from life's mountaintops or weep in its valleys, we too can experience God's incredible peace. Reach out to Him. You'll feel on top of the world. ☮