

Give Me This Mountain

Helen Roseveare

CHRISTIAN
FOCUS



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ISBN 1-84550-189-6
ISBN 978-1-84550-189-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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First published in 1966

This edition published in 2006

Reprinted 2007

by

Christian Focus Publications,
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Scotland, UK



www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Moose77.com

Printed and bound by
J. H. Haynes, Sparkford



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And Caleb said: Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua gave unto Caleb Hebron for an inheritance.

Joshua 14: 12–13







Foreword

In 1989, around 120 young people sat cross-legged in the Piper living room and dining room, covering nearly every square inch of floor space. They had accepted our open invitation to anyone who thought missions might be in his or her future. I wish I could remember more of what Dr. Helen Roseveare told us that evening. But part of her message might easily have been the heart of this book, *Give Me this Mountain*: “I believe that, at its simplest, a missionary is one sent by God to live a Christian life, usually amongst people other than his own. It is *living* which counts. This may include formal preaching, but it will certainly include personal relationships, and these often have to be worked out under most trying conditions.” That reminds me of what Jim Elliot is supposed to have said about missionaries, “They’re just a bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody. In fact, they’re pretty much the same kind of folks as you and your family.”

The main reason I keep coming back to Helen’s books is her unembarrassed forthrightness in portraying her normal, weak, and self-centered seasons. I can hardly imagine letting the world into my life as she does. Her experience helps me realize that, as she says about herself, I cannot “escape from myself by going to Congo [or whatever my escape route might be]. Rather, I came to know myself better, perhaps more as others had already seen me.” Each time I read one of her accounts, I want to be like her, I want to know God as she does.

In sensitive contrast to that candor is her understated reserve in recounting stories of her bravery and faith that





reflect God's witness to himself during the terrifying, deadly days of the Simba Revolt.

Her stories are about a real person with a real God. And the the exultant end of so many of her stories is the great release and relief of once again being still and knowing that *God* is God and I'm not.

Noël Piper
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Author of *Faithful Women and Their Extraordinary God*





Introduction

In the following pages I have tried to write an honest, unadorned story of my somewhat tempestuous life. Except in the Epilogue I have not tried to draw any morals. But neither have I wanted to pull any punches. I have tried honestly to thank those who have helped me along the way and to be careful not to criticize unkindly others with whom I disagreed. At times this may have made the story a little lopsided since occasionally I have felt unable to give publicly all the facts that influenced me at certain periods. I do not think, however, that this materially alters the basic story.

I have only once in my life kept a diary, and that was under the special stress of the five months in rebel captivity from August to December, 1964. All the rest of the story comes as my memory prompts me. There may be some chronological discrepancies. Many episodes are excluded, either because they have been forgotten or else because I did not consider that they helped forward the main theme. Other episodes are mentioned and then never referred to again. They were there, but did not substantially alter the course of the journey.

My life has possibly included more dramatic episodes than many another, but this is not the impression I wish to leave with any reader. Rather, it has been for me a journey towards one definite and glorious goal, 'that I may know him...', our God, revealed to us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I have often felt that my life was akin to mountaineering, with a clear goal to reach the highest peak. There may be a fairly long journey to reach the foothills before the real climb begins. On the way up, clouds or lesser peaks often hide the



goal from view, but the original sight of the summit keeps us pressing on, despite weariness and even discouragement.

I found frequently that I climbed in glorious sunshine, warm and invigorating, my face set determinedly for the nearest peak I could see. As I reached it, I revelled in the sense of achievement and victory and in the glorious view. I did all I could to encourage others to join me and to help them up over the difficult parts. Then, slowly, my imagination would be caught by the next peak ahead, higher, steeper, but again bathed in sunlight, and eventually the resolve would form to set off upwards again.

Here I made a mistake, many times, as the story shows. As I went down from the present peak into the valley between the mountains, I was often shadowed by the very peak I had been enjoying. This I interpreted in a sense of failure and this often led to despair. I felt I was going down into the 'slough of despond'. I see now that I was wrong in this 'feeling'. The going down was merely an initial moving forward towards the next higher ground, never a going back to base level. The shadow was only relative after the brightness of the sun; the valley could provide rest for working out the experiences previously learnt, a time for refreshment before the next hard climb. Had I understood this meaning of the sunshine and shadow in my life rather than interpreting my experiences along life's way as 'up' and 'down', I might have saved myself many deep heartaches.

I trust, despite this failure, that readers will be able to enter into the joy of this wonderful pilgrimage and the satisfaction of a life spent seeking to know the One who alone gives life. I am in no way offering my story as an example for others to follow. There are many mistakes that I hope may warn others. There are streaks in my nature that I am glad to see the Lord is dealing with, and I should hate others to think that they ought to emulate them. I think especially of the tremendous ambition to be a success in anything I undertook, which so often drove me to set myself standards which, under all the circumstances, were not required and which, if I had been more perceptive, I should have known I had no chance of achieving. No, it is not an example; but maybe it will be an

encouragement to some on the journey to realize that others have passed the same way.

Events in Africa move fast. Already some of the place-names are out of date. Leopoldville in the following pages should now be Kinshasa, Paulis Isiro and Stanleyville Kisangani.