

ATTEMPT SOMETHING GREAT

During the cloudy days of the Civil War, it was difficult to find joy or strength of spirit. President Lincoln would often slip into a Wednesday evening service at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in search of encouragement and comfort through the sermon. After one particularly dramatic presentation, his young aide asked the president his opinion. He responded concerning Dr. Gurley's message: "It was well thought out, powerfully delivered, and very eloquent." The aide said, "Then you thought it was a great sermon." "No," replied Lincoln. "It failed because Dr. Gurley did not ask us to do something great."

Adventure is the by-product of living outside of your comfort zone and taking risk in order to achieve greater good. "Risk?" you ask. Remember that in any adventure, risk is minimized by the amount of readiness achieved both emotionally and physically. The adventure of mountain climbing is an example. Though filled with the possibility of danger, those who do it prepare well in advance and will tell you that, in the end, there is nothing like it. Climbing inspires you to work harder and pull a little longer before giving up; to believe that you can conquer through sheer determination and careful advancement.

I read the most inspirational story of a young man named Mark Wellman in an issue of Time magazine. A fifty-foot fall during a rock-climbing expedition cost him the use of his legs, but he does not think of himself as disabled. "My whole thing" says the park ranger, "whether it's kayaking, skiing or rock climbing, is finding another way." Since that fall, the "other way" took Wellman 3,569 feet up the sheer granite face of El Capitan in California's Yosemite Valley.

After months of swimming and weight training, he left his wheelchair behind and, with an occasional lift from fellow climber Michael Corbett, pulled and hauled himself to the top. He likened the feat to doing seven thousand pull-ups! Despite blistering heat and winds that sometimes blew the pair ten feet out from the rock, they completed their ascent in seven days -- a double conquest of El Capitan and of the presumed limitations of the human body.

You too will face mountains as difficult as El Capitan: mountains of temptation, mountains of difficulty, mountains that challenge your spirit and your convictions. The preparation and strength Wellman put in made the difference between conquering the mountain and being conquered by his circumstances. We cannot expect to climb hurdles, to beat the odds, or to stand our ground without preparation. With it, you will not only attempt something great, you will accomplish it!

Using the New Wilderness Handbook, we can make an interesting comparison between the elements and techniques involved in scaling a mountain and the basic instruction manual for leaders, otherwise known as the Bible, concerning spiritual and emotional mountain climbing "Judgment, balance of the feet, and weight distribution are essential to the skill of climbing."

JUDGEMENT

Before you can begin a climb, clear judgment must be executed by taking all factors contributing to safety into consideration. Is the weather severe or tolerable? Am I in good health and

physically strong enough? Has proper training, warm up, and preparation been completed successfully? Do I have the proper equipment and is it in good condition?

For the climb to reach new goals, many of the same questions will be applied. Instead of weather, I should be concerned with my environment: friends, acquaintances, places I spend my time and money, the mental and spiritual influence I have allowed myself to be placed under. Am I spiritually healthy? Am I prepared with the knowledge of what I want to do and how it can be accomplished? Do I have a mapped out path to a sure landing spot?

BALANCE OF THE FEET

Paul Petzoldt, director of the Wilderness Education Association, says, "Aside from judgment, balance is the basis of all climbing." Balance is achieved by putting the emphasis on the footing rather than the hands. A climber concentrates on each step of his footing to be sure it is stable before using the hands to pull toward the cliff. The security of the foothold is dependent on the angle of the feet.

Balance in spiritual and moral things can seem impossible at times, especially when the tide of the culture flows against all that you stand for. God offers balance to your stance: "He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps" (Ps. 40:2). Believe it-God desires for us to be climbers, enables us to be climbers, and climbs along with us!

Balance in decisions, in daily plans, and in goals for the future is essential to making the climb. Don't settle for the flat, uninteresting terrains of life. You can begin climbing at any time.

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

A climber can be in a safe climbing position by transferring weight from one limb to another in a smooth, flowing action. This allows the climber to release one hold at a time while maintaining the other three points of contact as the mountain is ascended. Petzoldt says a skilled climber will appear to flow up the mountain rather than move with jerks and lunges.

Chris tells me the more difficult the climb, the more fun she has in the challenge and the bigger the high when she reaches the top. The way up is difficult, but that's what makes it so exciting.

Let's get going and attempt something great!

-Dr. Jay Strack