



THE CLIMB



PREVIEW

Mountain climbing can be very difficult. It requires fitness training, proper diet, and sheer determination. Climbing spiritual mountains requires the same. What we do, what we allow into our lives, and into our mindset will affect our ability to climb.

PRAISE

Has anybody ever climbed a mountain or at least a tall, steep hill? Would you like to share that experience with us? What do you think it takes to become ready to climb a mountain?

PARABLE

Mount Everest has an elevation of 29,035 feet. The mountain peak is in the jet stream, and winds can blow 200 miles per hour. It takes 40 days to climb Mount Everest, which includes time spent in base camp so the body can adjust to the high altitude. Through December 2018, there have been 9,159 successful summits of Mount Everest. Many climbers are accompanied by Sherpas, Himalayan mountain guides. Kami Rita, one of the most accomplished high-altitude climbers of all time, holds the record for 23 ascents.

From the first climb in 1924 until January 2019, 295 people have died on Everest. Most of the bodies are still on the mountain, forever frozen in their icy tomb. The main causes of death are avalanches, falls, altitude sickness, and exposure.

Climbers burn over 10,000 calories each day, losing up to 20 pounds during the expedition. So you could say that when people set out to climb Mount Everest, they will lose weight for sure—and possibly lose their life.

PRESENT

Read Psalm 24:3. In order for us to be able to climb the mountain of God, our hands and our hearts must be cleansed from unrighteousness. What we handle and how strong we feel will affect how we climb. Jesus is not looking for perfection from us, but He wants us to do our best during the climb, which requires preparation.

History indicates that David probably wrote Psalm 24 after moving the Ark to Jerusalem from the house of Obed-Edom, where it had rested about three months. The Philistines, enemies of the Lord's people, had captured the Ark about twenty years before this. But they kept noticing that wherever they took the Ark, their people were developing tumors and dying of plague. They decided to send the Ark back to Israel, and it ended up at the house of Obed-Edom, a Levite.

David's first attempt at bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem ended in disaster. The Ark was on a new cart, and when the oxen stumbled, one of Obed-Edom's sons reached over to steady it and was struck dead. God did not want the Ark to be put on

a cart; it had to be carried on the shoulders of the priests.

The Ark was a physical manifestation of the presence of God, and was supposed to be housed in a holy place, where only the high priest could go. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest would sprinkle the innocent blood on the Mercy Seat, God would forgive the sins of His people.

The same is true for us. We can't come close to God without the atoning blood of Jesus. Read I John 2:2. Propitiation means "to atone for sin." John used the word "propitiation" to tell us that Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for our sin. We should have died on the cross, but Jesus took our place. His blood has cleansed our dirty hands and purified our polluted hearts, making us fit to approach the mountain of the Lord.

Having a relationship with Jesus gives us "redemptive lift." That means we are climbers—people who are willing to scale the heights and suffer through some falls on their way to the summit of the Lord. There is only one other option for someone who doesn't want to climb: valley dwelling. Nobody ever got any awards for staying in the valley.

This Christian life you are living is like a climb. Through the continual cleansing of the atoning blood of Jesus, you are fit to climb the mountain of God and draw near to Him. I want to encourage you today to keep climbing!

PRACTICE

A man named Bob fell down into a muddy hole. His friend Joe walked by, and Bob called out, "Hey, Joe, it's Bob! I'm stuck in this hole and I can't climb out! Can you help me?" So Joe walked over to the edge of the hole and jumped in with Bob. Astonished, Bob yelled, "What did you do that for? Now we're both stuck in the mud!" Joe smiled and said, "I jumped down because I've been in this hole before, and I know the way out."

When it looks like there's no way to climb out of the mess you're in, hold on. God is sending a friend (you could say a Sherpa) to help you continue on up the mountain. These friends, or guides, are committed to helping you climb and grow in Christ. Once you become a full-fledged mountain climber, you can help guide others.

Ask yourselves these questions: Who is in my life that is committed to seeing me grow? Who can I develop a better relationship with that will allow me to help them grow? Am I pulling my friends closer to God or pushing them away with my words and actions?

PRAY

Jesus, you promised us that if we have faith the size of a tiny mustard seed, we can look at our mountains and tell them to move, and they will be removed. But we know that if we do not see our mountain move, You will give us the strength to climb that mountain. Once we reach the summit, our mountain will be below our feet. Thank You for giving me fresh mountaintop perspective today. Help me not to grow weary in the climb. Elevate my life so those around me may see Christ through me. In Jesus' name, amen.

PLUS

Remind your club that there are people in their lives who can help them walk through tough times, people like their youth pastor and pastor. If they feel the need to talk to someone, these people can be trusted and will be more than happy to meet with them.