

# Spiritual reflections from life adventure

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To set aside a few days out of our busy lives to plunge into the wilderness is an effort unto itself. To throw ourselves into raw outdoor experiences with people whom you barely know is stretching. To develop relationship and trust, becoming cohesive as we work and worship together, side by side, sometimes hand in hand, meeting the demands of the environment and getting somewhere new together, both experientially and spiritually, is an adventure.

I recently went on an Outdoor Christian Leadership Challenge sponsored by Biola University. As we met in the classroom in advance of the adventure experience there was a soup of excitement and anticipation mixed with apprehension and fear in the air. Not one of us knew exactly what to expect. We had read a series of articles, which familiarized us with the process and the benefits, but still we wondered what would it be like. And, more importantly, "Can I handle it?"

After arriving at the base of the mountain we met up together. There were many questions in my mind. Because I was going on to another conference after this weekend, I had enough stuff for a week. The question would be what to put in my backpack. It was hot already and it was only 9 a.m. We were told to anticipate cooler weather at the top. After greeting each other and getting "the scoop" on what we were doing, we began to pack. It was suggested that I have Dave check my stuff first before I put it in. Do I need this? How about that? We got it down to the minimum and it was time to fit it all in. After all, I was to be the one to carry this thing who knows where. Bruce was already finished with his pack so he began to help me with mine. He helped fit the food, and stove, and tent, and sleeping bags into their proper places. I shoved my clothes wherever they would fit. We were reminded that we were going into the wilderness — "We will need water."

Spiritual and practical lessons and applications abound in a situation like this. Already I began to think of the need to be properly prepared for an uncertain future. I was reminded of the clear instructions in Scripture to listen to the advice of others, especially those who have experience in particular matters. In this case, I needed to listen carefully to those who know what they are doing in this. Proper equipment and supplies would be essential. Is it any wonder that the New Testament is replete with instructions as to the equipping of God's people for life's journey. The need for water could not be understated to us, especially at high altitudes. In the spiritual, I thought of Jesus offering us "living water" so that we never thirst.

Soon we found ourselves heading up the mountainside. The pack was already feeling heavy. We walked and talked, talked and walked. As we forged forward up the trail in series, we began to share about our lives. This would prove to be an important time of bonding for soon we would be trusting one another with our lives. After we found our way to our home in the wild we set up camp. We rested a bit and had lunch. Soon we were setting off to challenge ourselves on a rock climb. It is always an interesting thing in facing fears. Among the common fears that most people seem to have is the idea of falling straight down into a nearly solid granite floor with sharp rocky elements.

We received training on harnesses and

ropes and the basics of equipment use and we were off. Personally, the training went too fast for me so I wanted another round, then another. It was really important to me that I didn't let anyone fall nor descend into a perilous plunge myself. I determined to try each one of the three courses, so after choosing a partner I selected the easiest first. First I was the one to belay. Mark made it and it was soon my turn. It was more difficult than it looked and I began, for the first time, to entertain the idea that I might not make it the first time. My shoes were definitely not made for rock climbing. After some determination and listening to my coaches down below, I made it to the top. Spiritual application: Be patient, be diligent, never give up, and listen to coaching from others who might be able to help.

Soon I was over at the intermediate level climb. Sean offered that I try to use his special shoes. At first I began to decline and then decided to accept the invitation. As I began to climb I found my feet sticking to the granite like I was made to be on that wall. I immediately began to refer to them as "Spider-man shoes." Before I knew it I was quite high. I think the others were surprised. They began cheering. Then I was stuck. My comrades began to yell, "Touch it, it's right there." I suddenly realized that I was almost at my destination. I stretched, but couldn't quite reach. I pushed and still nothing. My strength was almost gone. I considered a jump, but had already been taught that could be disastrous. I waited. As my muscles began to wane I continued to look from different angles at what my options might be. Then I saw a possible place to put my right foot. It was a long shot. I reached and got it and pushed with all I had to hit the final mark. It was quite a victory. Spiritual application: Use the equipping offered to you, wait when you don't know what to do, look for your options, don't move too hastily, don't just make a jump to barely touch the goal but finish well.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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## **Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

## **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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