

The Climb of Faith

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A Guide to the Principle and
Power of Faith

*Until we can move mountains by faith,
we need to know how to climb them.*

Don-Alan Rekow

Rekow



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Introduction

In 1986 during early morning hours, Kirk Davis, my very good friend and work companion, would work out with me in the church gym before we began our day at Success Motivation Institute in Waco, Texas. It was during these workouts and lengthy discussions that the Lord blessed us with a great understanding of how faith works. We were blessed with a “model of faith” to help us understand where we were in our own progression and how to further ourselves on our journey of faith here on earth. As we began to understand more about this model of faith, we realized how it could benefit others in their own journey.

I then began writing a book to explain the process by which I had come to understand how faith works. At the outset, I intended to take a non-religious approach, trying to discuss faith only as a “thought process.” Yet as I wrote, I realized how limited my knowledge of the subject was and quit writing. I began to understand that faith is of the Lord, and cannot be transformed into a method used to gain earthly treasures.

For the next several years, I continued to learn more about the process of faith and its important eternal purposes. As

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president of a small LDS branch in Girona, Spain, I would give a fireside now and then, sharing what I had learned about faith with a very limited number of people. As missionaries came through our branch, I shared the information with them to help in their missionary efforts, but I was still reluctant to return to the writing of the book.

Then I was convinced by one of these missionaries, Elder Armitstead from Alpine, Utah, that it was of no consequence how much I didn't know about faith, but rather what I did know that would benefit others. He pointed out that according to Doctrine and Covenants 60: 2-3, my withholding information with which the Lord had blessed me from others was not pleasing to the Lord. This scripture states, "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. And...if they are not more faithful...it shall be taken away, even that which they have." It was then that I realized that if this knowledge of faith has perchance been given to me as a talent, I dare not deny it, lest I anger the Lord.

I once again began writing about faith, a subject I've been blessed to understand, but this time, I tried to do so in a way I prayed would be pleasing unto the Lord. It is a subject, which is His, to be treated with respect and in a way that He would approve. I have written with the intent of sharing that which I've already had the blessing of learning, hoping that this may be a base to further the study of others.

In Luke 17:5-6 the apostles ask the Lord to increase their faith, and He responds: "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea and it should obey you." In Matthew 17:20 the Savior states, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." The Lord makes it clear to his disciples and us that the development of faith begins with nothing more than a small seed of desire — a desire based on "true faith."

What is “true faith?” It is defined only as faith in Jesus Christ. While much of the world labels faith in a non-religious sense as “belief,” “positive mental attitude,” and “proactivity,” among others, this kind of “faith” has nothing to do with a true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, some define faith as “trust in one’s own self,” that way avoiding the religious aspect of faith altogether. True, complete faith has everything to do with the Savior and nothing to do with ourselves. Practicing true faith thus requires that a person start and continue a course that is centered in the Lord. A faith focused on the world and its philosophies will lead to self-destruction. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we partake of the salvation He offers us.

How can we develop this strong faith in the Savior? I believe that a pattern or “model of faith” is the best way to see how faith works and how we can learn to develop it in our own lives. I will refer to this pattern or model throughout this book as “CONCEPT Q.” It is an inspired concept. I have used it within the text to explain the principle and power of faith in a way that is easy to understand and visualize. The pattern that is described within is eternal in nature, or what I like to term as “one eternal round.” This model has a beginning that leads to an end, which then begins again. This pattern can be found in the scriptures, as we will see, and as we pursue its course, we can learn how to be perfected in the process. Christ told us to “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Many times we may be tempted to excuse ourselves from the pursuit of perfection by saying, “Well nobody is perfect.” While that may be true, it’s a poor way to justify bad behavior. Everyone can and should aspire to better him or herself. CONCEPT Q gives the pattern for perfection and teaches us the way to have that true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ required for salvation. After all, Christ is ultimately how we will become perfected — it is through faith and faith in Him only that we can repent of our sins and eventually become an exalted and perfected being, just as He is.

The CONCEPT Q pattern is not only found in the scriptures but in secular literature as well. As I continue to read non-religious

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material and see how other authors who have come across the pattern express it, I know that CONCEPT Q is a simple and effective way to explain the principle of faith and how to develop it.

Faith is a subject that can occupy an entire lifetime of study and practice to be able to exercise it unto great miracles. *Climb of Faith* shouldn't be read once and left on a shelf to collect dust, but rather, it should become a basis of serious study. To effectively understand and apply this material, it must be read more than once and continually applied as new principles are learned. For even greater effectiveness, I suggest teaching the material and sharing concepts from the book with a friend, companion or spouse.

I hope and pray this material is acceptable to the Lord and desire to be able, through this book, to simplify the understanding of faith and show how each of us can benefit from the principle and power of it. I accept all responsibility for any errors that may be contained within and state that the text does not necessarily represent authoritative Church doctrine. I have, however, sought to base all information on gospel principles. Properly applied, these principles can help you in your climb of faith. Good luck and happy climbing!

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This is a story of a young climber who had an experience that changed his life forever. He tells it in his own words:

It was a good day for climbing. The sun was shining but it wasn't overly hot. A cool breeze would occasionally lift, which made it comfortable. I considered myself an experienced climber so I wasn't too anxious about this climb, but this is one that changed my life.

On this day I felt vibrant. I felt like I could climb anything. I had slept well the night before and it was a long weekend so I thought I would spend some time alone just climbing. Normally I climb with a friend, which is the best way, but everybody was busy so I thought I would attempt to climb on my own.

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When I arrived at the location I had previously planned on, everything was calm with no one in sight. I set out my equipment and warmed up a little bit. Then, I heard a voice from behind, “Hi, are you climbing alone?” it said simply.

Somewhat startled, I quickly turned and saw a man standing there with his equipment, also ready to climb. I suppose being startled and breaking my solitude would have normally made me afraid and perhaps a little angry, not knowing how long he had been standing there, but as I looked into his face it was as though I had known him for a long time. It seemed as if one of my friends, who had previously told me they couldn’t join me, had suddenly shown up. I was happy that I would be climbing with someone, but somewhat nervous because of his familiarity, not knowing if I had met him somewhere before. Also, I didn’t know how well he climbed.

“Well, I was going to,” I replied.

“Do you mind if I climb with you?” he inquired, cutting into my thought of asking him to climb with me out of courtesy.

“Have you done much climbing?” I asked, trying to assess his abilities as a climbing partner.

“I know how,” was his modest reply. I felt kind of embarrassed for asking, realizing he hadn’t questioned my abilities as a partner. “Would you like to take lead and I’ll secure?” he asked kindly.

How did he know that I always like to go first? His question made me feel even more certain that he somehow knew me. Knowing that the lead climber depends on the person securing, I amazingly felt very safe letting him be second and replied, “Sure, I like to lead.”

The route I had chosen to climb was fairly difficult with a few ceilings and some passes that required a lot of skill. The summit was some 300 feet above and I knew it would take some time to make the ascent. I felt confident, however, that I could make it, even though I had never done this particular climb.

Once again, probing to assess his abilities, I asked, “Have you ever done this route before?”

His reply was simple again but non-specific, “I know them.”

He knows them? I was not quite sure what he meant but I figured if he had climbed most of the routes then he must be a fairly good climber because this area definitely wasn't for beginners. That also made me feel good to have him as a climbing partner. We began to move around and prepare for the climb. I could see he was familiar with what he was doing and I figured we'd do okay.

As I started up the face of the cliff he gently, but firmly, whispered, “You can do it.”

I didn't reply but thought, “Of course I can,” but what did he mean? Maybe just a reassurance to bolster my confidence.

Now, not to get off the subject, but I feel I must mention that I believed in God or something that was all-powerful that kept everything in order. I believed that miracles were possible, but as far as religion I didn't belong to any one in particular. I climbed because I liked to be next to nature and felt close to it when I did. If nature was God then I got close to Him that way. I didn't feel I needed to go to any one group or any one church to be a good person. Climbing was my religion. I had time to think and better myself without anyone telling me what to do. At least that's the way I felt up until this day.

I was working my way up, concentrating on what I was doing, when he broke the silence. “You're good.”

“Thanks,” was all I could say. I didn't feel comfortable bragging and hadn't seen him climb enough to feel good about complimenting him. We became silent again and I continued to climb up.

The first part of the route was fairly easy routine stuff. The difficulty of the climb came about 170 feet or so up the face, when I hit the first ceiling. Then there was a stretch of about 100 feet that really worked me with another ceiling in the middle of it that was worse than the first. The last 30 feet were once again, fairly easy.

At 75 feet up I tied off so that my newfound climbing partner could come up to where I was. Once I had secured myself

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so I could monitor his progress, I called down, “Secure. Come on up.” I watched him as I pulled the slack out of the rope. He made the climb with ease, almost as if he were walking up the wall. I knew right away he wasn’t a beginner.

When he reached my position and began to secure so that I could continue, I complimented him and said, “You’re real good.”

His reply was rather strange to me. He just said, “I am.” He wasn’t questioning and his remark wasn’t filled with proud overtones. I accepted it just as he said it without feeling like he was being conceited.

The next 75 feet worked me a bit more and I could sense the difficulty approaching. This climb really began to appear different than any other. My new partner let me do my climb without making many comments. It was as if I was alone, but when I found myself needing a pointer he would already be telling me what options I had. He never told me what to do, really, but always let me choose among several alternatives he recommended.

I knew he was not only a good climber, but he somehow understood me as well. After he had made the second stretch and I had proceeded to the first ceiling, I was able to make it over with minimum difficulty. He came on around and I went toward the next ceiling, which protruded considerably more than the first. It was then that I realized the true difficulty of this climb. I had never feared before, at least not like I did now. I suppose I was a bit tired from the climb to this point but knew I must at least try. His words were the same as when I began.

“You can do it.”

With this I started feeling my way out. In some places I was hanging on by only two or three fingers; just the tips of my shoes were keeping me from dropping and dangling by only my arms. I saw the next anchor, but it was just out of my reach and the muscles in my arms were beginning to burn. I was able to get near the ring and passed the security strap through it.

“Slack!” I called down for him to give me some rope and I pulled some up to pass it through the other end of the strap. Just as I reached toward the strap I yelled. “I’m not sure I’m going to...”

and my toe slipped from its hold, swinging my torso downward. My fingers just wouldn't hold my weight and I fell about 15 feet before the slack in the rope pulled tight. I slammed into the side of the cliff and felt instant pain. I dangled for a minute, gaining my senses.

I remember hearing him ask, "Are you alright?"

I took an inventory of myself, and realizing nothing was broken, shakily said, "I'm OK," but I'm not sure I said it loud enough for him to hear.

I've fallen before but not quite as far. I knew that I was going to have a few bruises but I was fine physically. However, at this point my confidence was shaken. "It would be so easy to go back down," I thought, but then defeat would be mine. For a minute, under the circumstances, I wasn't sure that I cared.

"You do care," he called up. Had I said that aloud? He had read my mind or at least knew what I was feeling! "Tomorrow and the next day and the next it'll bother you that you didn't try again. You can do it."

I knew I must try again. I gave myself a few minutes to regain my position and a little confidence. What made this climb different was my climbing partner. He'd been relatively silent, but supportive. I was resting, knowing I couldn't quit. In all the excitement he had climbed to my position and was beside me and I didn't even realize it.

Again, "You can do it," he said by my side. I was a little surprised, but glad. Up to this point, my new friend hadn't said a dozen sentences, but now he began to talk. At the time I thought all his comments had been about climbing and helping me get to the top, but as I look back now, I don't think his help had anything to do with mountain climbing.

"Do you want to get to the top?" he asked.

"Sure," I replied, "I wouldn't have started if I didn't want to get to the top."

"Do you desire to finish well?"

"Of course," I hesitantly said, puzzled.

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“You must believe. You must believe that you can. And when you believe, you must act on that belief. Exercise faith. He that is faithful shall become strong in every place. I will go with you. Be patient in your problems. Do not be burdened with fear and doubt. Leave all your unproductive thoughts out of your mind. The accomplishment of anything is dependent upon the strength of the faith behind it. Continue faithful and you’ll make it to the end.”

The strength and power in those short, few phrases gave me courage and a renewed force within me. I began again. I inched my way out to the strap and this time managed to pass the rope through it. I continued to work my way out and over the ceiling. When my feet slipped again, I managed to hang on.

“Fear not, doubt not, have faith” were his only words.

I made it over and managed my way to the top. His climb was like he knew the way by memory. At the top we rested and gloried in our triumph. I pondered the words he had spoken to me earlier and wanted to know what he meant by them. I kept myself from asking.

As I prepared to rappel down the mountain, he said he would go on from there, had appreciated my company, and asked if I could make it down by myself. “Sure, getting down is the easy part,” I said, reflecting on the climb up. I asked if I would see him again and his reply seemed rather strange. He simply said, “Find the way and I’ll be waiting for you at the top.”

Again, I was somewhat confused by what he meant by “find the way” but I got a strong feeling it had nothing to do with mountain climbing.

One day several weeks later, I was at home when two young men dressed in white shirts and ties knocked on my door. They explained they knew of a “way” we could get back to Heavenly Father. As they taught me this way, they showed me a picture in which I recognized a similarity to my mountain climbing friend that special day, the day that changed my life forever.

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In our spiritual climb through life, the Lord is ever willing to coach us and help us when our faith is wavering. He wants to guide us and teach us how to use faith in a powerful way. He is the best teacher we could have to instruct us on how to overcome mountainous spiritual objectives in our lives. Let Him be your climbing coach until you, too, by faith, can move mountains.

As tall as a mountain may be, it will always be beneath the heavens and all those who desire can reach the top. However, those persons who don't try will always say that the mountain is too high.

— Korean Proverb

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The Academics CHAPTER 1

Despite the fact that faith is the first principle of the gospel and its study alone could occupy a great part of our lives, it is a subject that does not receive its due attention.

In the New Testament, Mark states that “signs shall follow them that believe” (Mark 16:17) and Mormon taught “it is by faith that miracles are wrought...and angels appear...wherefore, if these things have ceased...it is because of unbelief, and all is in vain” (Moroni 7:37). All too often, we give too little attention to the basic principles of the gospel before moving on to the “mysteries of God.” Do miracles exist in Christ’s church today? Are the sick healed according to our faith or not? Is our faith all too little in these, the latter-days? Why is it that the majority of us do not live by faith?

Like Peter, “I think it is meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir (us) up by putting (us) in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:13) of those things that are most important to our stay here on earth. Faith justly deserves more attention than we give it. We are of “little faith,” and if it were not so, many more miracles could and would be produced in these, the latter days.

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Writing this book has been an experience for me in developing my own faith. Many times I had to be reminded of the very things of which I was writing. Each trial of faith and each set of circumstances are different. Everyone's climb of faith is distinct from another's and every climb has basic steps that always follow a certain pattern. This pattern is what we will study in the following chapters.

One thing is certain; in order to return to God's presence and live with Him once again we must make the climb of faith. We must leave the comforts of complacency and move upward, extending our celestial reaches.

— Don-Alan Rekow

As a person stands at the base of a mountain looking upward, contemplating the mountain's magnificence and enormity, he usually recognizes the difficulty of reaching the top of such a height. Our return to our Heavenly Father's presence can be likened to a spiritual mountain, fraught with difficulties in climbing its heights. Physical mountains and spiritual mountains have many similarities. Both inspire and instill a desire in us to reach the top.

Elder Jack H. Goaslind explained the spiritual significance that mountains have to the Lord: "The Lord has often used mountaintops as sanctuaries. In Old Testament times, when temples were not available, the Lord used mountaintops as sacred places in which to reveal truths to his prophets. Likewise, the New Testament and the Book of Mormon describe sacred mountaintops where God revealed truths to his servants. Joseph Smith, kneeling in the Sacred Grove, was figuratively kneeling at the top of a great spiritual mountain" ("Spiritual Mountaintops" *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 9). Joseph though, had to climb that great spiritual mountain before he could kneel at its top. Moses received important instruction from the Lord on top Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:20). He first, however, had to make the climb. Abraham and his son climbed a mountain where the sacrifice of Isaac was to take place (Gen. 22:2).

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Christ cited that a small degree of faith is necessary to move a mountain, something that to man would seem impossible. He said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove” (Matthew 17:20). Whether He meant it literally or symbolically, faith as a grain of mustard seed can move the mountainous objects in our lives or the physical mountains themselves. If the Lord only meant it symbolically and not literally then somebody forgot to tell the brother of Jared, “For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove, and it was removed. And if he had not faith it would have not moved” (Ether 12:30).

Everyone must climb spiritual mountains to receive the truths, inspiration, and revelation necessary to know the kind of faith it takes to move physical and spiritual mountains. The kind of faith required to accomplish such tasks is not acquired haphazardly or by a stroke of luck or even by half-hearted efforts. It requires strict obedience to gospel principles and keeping the commandments faithfully. It requires a diligence of searching the scriptures and constant prayer to keep in tune with the Spirit. Most of all, it requires an understanding of how faith is acquired and how it works. A person who thinks that obtaining faith ought to be easy is like the young king, who being frustrated upon learning algebra, commands his tutor to teach him an easier way. In reply, the tutor says, “Your majesty, there is no royal road to learning algebra.” And so it is with faith. There is no paved road to the top of spiritual mountains.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord explains that all temporal things have a spiritual side (D&C 29:34). Likewise many spiritual things have a temporal side. Thus, in order to begin this spiritual climb of faith, it may be helpful to compare it to temporal mountain climbing. This chapter is divided into two sections: first, an explanation of the temporal side of faith through a discussion on mountain climbing basics, and second, a spiritual discussion of how these mountain climbing basics can help us apply the principle of faith spiritually in our lives.

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THE TEMPORAL CLIMB: Mountain Climbing Basics

When I was younger, on various Boy Scout trips to the mountains, we would always find our way to climb the side of a mountain or face of a cliff with little concern for safety. Once I remember having to pass by one of our leaders on a very narrow ledge. I went to the inside and he put himself on the outside; he then made a sort of bridge for me to pass under, pressing his two hands against the side of the cliff and placing his feet as far out on the ledge as he dared. I then carefully went under his arms as close to the wall as possible. I had a flimsy backpack on and everything had settled in the bottom of it, making it very bulky. As I passed under him, I remember my leader asking, “hey, what do you have in the backpack, a case of beans?” After passing him I remember looking down 300 feet below and thinking that if he would have slipped or I would have accidentally bumped him we both would have fallen, him grabbing on to my “case of beans” as a means to try and keep from going down.

Mountain climbing has changed dramatically since then, at least for me. I still enjoy the challenge but I make sure I'm safe. Antonio, my work associate, first got my interest rekindled in mountain climbing as a sport. After telling me about it for many months he took my oldest son and me and we went out and tried it. We loved it!

Today's safety equipment makes mountain climbing much safer than it was in my Boy Scouting days. One of the major pieces of equipment is a harness. Each leg fits through a support and then it securely fastens around your waist. To the harness is fastened a special rope designed for mountain climbing. Special shoes are used that are also designed for the sport. Anchors, or “bolt hangers” as they're called, have already been fastened to the mountain and are used to secure the climbers in their ascension.

Less experienced climbers use designated vias or routes that have already been opened up by expert climbers. Each via has its own degree of difficulty, some with ceilings, (overhangs that are

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rock formations protruding outward over the via), which make the route look impossible to climb. This doesn't stop experienced climbers. It's amazing some of the feats they are able to accomplish — they often seem like human spiders. A via has hangers every 6-10 feet. Climbers anchor themselves to the hangers with two D clips on each end of a safety strap designed to hook into the hanger on one end; this allows the climber to then quickly pass the rope through the other end as they climb.