

Grit & Grace

a devotional for climbers



CLIMBERS
FOR CHRIST

We're so glad you found us...

This devotional was written by the leaders of Climbers for Christ just for you. Encouraging Jesus-followers and using our love of climbing as an outreach for Christ is how this whole thing started back in the '80s. Our vision is the same as it always was: **We exist so that every climber may have the opportunity to experience and follow Jesus.**

Join us in reading through this devotional that was designed to help you learn more about God and how He helps us find the balance between grit and grace within our climbing communities,

“I will not abandon you or leave you alone. Be strong and brave” Joshua 1:1-9



The word grit gets a lot of mileage these days and I'm here for it. The idea of passion and perseverance as sustained effort despite challenges, failures, and the mundane resonates with the climbing experience (how many times am I going to peel off of 'Zebra Direct' at Smith Rock before I send it?). It also resonates with life as a follower of Jesus: Can I really do it like that other Christian? They're so good, wise, and experienced! And the way in front of me in my job, volunteer time, or 'ministry' is so hard!

Joshua steps into the (figuratively massive) sandals of Moses with probably the same questions. How do I do this thing that I've clearly been prepared for?

And God says, similar to any good spotter or belayer: "I've got you, go do the thing!"

Life in the Way of Christ - especially when we are humble and courageous enough to share the Hope of Christ with our friends in honesty, gentleness and love - is going to take some grit.

Prayer: God, our creator, provider and sustainer, I want to be like you: loving, courageous, kind and full of mercy & grace. I want others to know you and I want to do the hard work of following you and inviting others into the journey. Grant me the courage, grit, and grace to follow you well.

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you
great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3



The real adventure in climbing is not found in what we already know, but in what we discover. We warm up on climbs we have done many times and there is little mystery there. The real journey begins on the routes that leave us wondering. “Which foothold works?” - “Will that beta work for me?” - “Am I even strong enough to send?” Each question pulls us into a process that reveals more than simple answers. They yield discoveries that shape us. God invites us into that same kind of discovery with Him. Following Jesus is not a fixed path with every step mapped out. It is a story where each unknown becomes a chance to learn His character and trust His care. We may not see everything ahead, but we can be sure of this: God does not abandon us in the unknown. He walks with us and guides us through every part of the adventure.

Prayer: God, help me to see where I can learn more about you through the adventures you put me on.

Thank you for walking with me and leading me through the unknown.

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13



Climbing is all about pushing against gravity. No matter who you are, gravity is always working to pull you off the rock. Every move on a route is a small act of resistance against something that never lets up. Life has a similar pull. There are forces that tug us toward shortcuts, selfish choices, and habits we know will not lead us where we want to go. We call this our sin nature. Sin promises ease, but inevitably leaves us more stuck or empty than before. When we feel that temptation to sin, we still get to choose how we respond. Do we give in and let it take us down, or do we fight upward with the same focus and determination we use when trying to send our project?

Prayer: God, open my eyes to the temptation around me and show me how to stay on Your route.

“Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.” Matthew 3:8-9



The Pharisees and Sadducees watched others confess sin but believed they didn't need to. John the Baptist reminded them that God can raise up His people from stones—true faith comes from transformed hearts.

For those who have walked with Jesus a long time, complacency can quietly grow. If we long for revival, it begins with honest confession. When a climber goes off route, the best move is to pause, assess, and turn rather than press on in pride. Experience alone won't keep you safe—repentance will. Revival always starts when we turn back.

Prayer: Father, show me where I've drifted off route. Help me turn back quickly and trust Your steady hand so my life bears fruit for You.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20



God revealed Himself in creation. Humanity instinctively senses His existence and is therefore “without excuse” for turning away from Him.

Everything around us proclaims His goodness. Creation is magnificent yet fragile in human hands.

Many who love only creation remain unfulfilled, always chasing the next achievement, route, or relationship to make it all feel worth something.

He has set eternity in our hearts—a space only He can fill. As believers, we help make Him known, revealing the “unknown God” (Acts 17:23) through what He’s done in our lives. The One who holds the stars is sovereign in the chaos and still counts every hair on your head.

Prayer: Father, remind me that You are my summit. Help me share Your purpose with others.

“and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8



I don't know about you but I find it hard to do all three of those. But for us to do “good” as God describes it we need all three. And that is the crux of the matter. I like justice for others and I love mercy for me. I struggle with the need for God's justice in my life and His mercy for those I am at odds with. That's where the humility really comes into play. But can I humbly admit that I am deserving of God's justice for my actions? And because I know I've received His mercy, display the same toward those I think deserve justice?

Prayer: God, thank you for the justice and the mercy of the cross. Help me to humbly love those around me as you love them.

“The Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as the deer.” Habakkuk 3:19



If only I was as surefooted as the mountain goats I see while out in the Cascades! And I'll freely admit that my footwork is a climbing weakness I constantly try to improve. But this is really about the steps of life. Psalm 119 talks about His word lighting our paths. Here we find that God doesn't just light the way, He also gives us the strength and skill to actually walk it out. Life is full of things that cause us to stumble but God through His Spirit makes it possible for us to stay steady and surefooted.

Prayer: Thank you Father for the gift of Your Spirit that makes it possible for me to navigate each day, help me to trust in your guidance.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31



I used to feel like this verse was a heavy weight because I was and am so keenly aware of how poorly I do this. The reality is that I need the presence and power of God in me to truly give Him glory in all things. His glory isn't dependent on me. But He can and will use even my poorest efforts to bring Himself glory. So let's walk forward in the freedom that His Spirit brings and let Him use us to display His glory to the world around us without the pressure that we need to make it happen.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for always doing what is good, right, and perfect even when I don't.

“From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”
Psalm 61:2



To me, the verse has two meanings. If you only look at the part we quote on the old CFC carabiner, “Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” it sort of applies to the good times and when you feel at your best. It’s a reminder that the Lord is still bigger and more important and better than you.

But, if you look at the beginning of the verse, “From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint” it applies to the bad times, when you feel at your worst. It’s a reminder that the Lord is bigger than your problems and that there’s hope ahead for you if you just follow His lead.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please guide me in all my work, family life, and social life to follow you, The Rock.

Amen.

Daniel Chapter 3



Aren't there times in our lives when we're called to bow down to something? Whether it's a cultural hot topic, wealth, pride, whatever idol is thrown in front of you, we are called to worship Jesus, and only Jesus. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were pressured to bow down to a golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar and refused. After being thrown into the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar leapt to his feet and said, "I see four men walking around in the fire... and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." We will have trials in this life, but please know that God will walk through the fire with us and we'll emerge on the other side unscathed.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please give me courage to stand firm on the Word of God against the cultural idols of our time and not bow down to them. Amen.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20



This verse has been of favorite of mine for years and was originally written by Paul as a mini gospel reminder. But if we as Christians really believe this verse to be true, we should be deeply impacted by its meaning. Christ's sacrifice means we get to shed our fleshly desires and live a life better than we ever dreamed with Him. This reality should change everything about us - the way we work, treat our families, and even how we act at the crag. We get to carry that joy with us through our everyday lives. The next time you get cut off on your route, show that climber that Christ is in you and give them some grace.

Prayer: Lord, I pray that our human minds come back to the truth of the gospel everyday as we go through our daily commitments. I pray that we are always in awe of You and Your Son's sacrifice and we continue to be molded into the people you call us to be.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3



Jesus set aside his God-wealth and stood in solidarity with the outcasts, strangers, marginalized and struggling - the folks we bump into at the gym or crag. Jesus fed, loved and attended to those around him without condition or pre-check. Jesus delivered divine mercy. We are asked to do the same following the lived example of our master. And what about our own poverty of spirit? Are we able to become spiritually simple and poor allowing divine mercy its encounter with us?

Prayer: Great Divine Mercy, strip me in poverty of all attitudes standing between me and a loving relationship with the you and the world you came to save. Lay me low so that you may be lifted up. Amen.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4



Only when we are shattered and broken can Great Love come pouring in to comfort us. With time, in grief and loss the Holy One fills us to overflowing with newness of life. Consider the losses, deaths, damages and burnt places you have mourned as they've gone away. Now think on who you have become, what you now know, and what love, loss, and grief have taught you through the Comforter. It is guaranteed you and those you encounter in your climbing life all share this same crux of mourning. Thankfully there is one source of Comfort we all share as well.

Prayer: Tearful Comforter, you share in our mourning and the struggle to understand the losses in our lives. May we now love all, as you do, with the comforting love grief has taught us. May we look like you as we rush to the side of others struggling with grief. May the anticipation of overflowing newness of life not disappoint. Amen.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5



To be meek and engage with the lowliness of its position is to fully enter into the upside-downness of the Kingdom of God. Those who are not familiar with meekness will soon learn the humble tone of its character - climbers learn this very quickly if they allow themselves to. Our culture values the “send”, “power”, and “summitting”. These are glorious to achieve - truly. The Kingdom of God is just like that, only upside-down. Nothingness, invisible and ordinary are hallmarks of The Way. Usual, humble, and boring even are great and ready tools in the hands of God.

Prayer: Greatest Humble One, you abandoned your throne to show us The Way. May our feet fall truly into your boot-track and may your meek gentleness lead us to ever-lowly humility that ultimately reveals our final inheritance.

Amen.

“Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness, for they will
be filled.” Matthew 5:6



If we allow ourselves to take a step back and have eyes to see and ears to hear - the suffering of the world can be blinding and cries of hunger and thirst can be deafening. The startling reality unfolding around us can be even more acute when we contrast all we have with those who do not have. We may have to ration our water on a long multi-pitch climb and descend thirsty, but we'll likely never ache for food or thirst for drink like those who truly do. It can challenge our spirit to the core struggling to relate with a suffering world when we have not suffered the same. May the righteousness we seek reflect true hunger and true thirst as we engage the Creator's world.

Prayer: Holy One who understands hunger and thirst firsthand, may we so humbly experience righteousness that our spiritual hunger is filled and thirst slaked. Unite with our spirits over the heartbreak of the world - humans, animals, the earth herself - as we bear witness to suffering and mend it as we are able. Amen

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Matthew 5:7



In our passion for following the Way of Jesus, it is imperative that we do not criticize those who are not ready for such deep spiritual desire. Moreover we must forgive the wrongdoings of others who are on this Way of Jesus with the same humility and gentle kindness that our savior showed all who crossed his path. Everyone and all things must be invited to take refuge in the grace of Christ as their inherent dignity is rebuilt with the Spirit's compassion, presence and mercy.

Prayer: Most Merciful One, gently teach us not to simply tolerate others but to step fully into compassion. True compassion comes when we are no longer better than those on the margins, but instead find ourselves identifying with them. In your Spirit may the boundaries of “us” and “them” blur and may we receive your mercy as we gratefully give it out.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Matthew 5:8



Being pure in heart has little to do with ideologies or moral attitudes. We are reminded by the early church mothers and fathers that the Creator is seen by the handiwork of creation. Listening to a birdsong, watching a small child play in the dirt, making a snow angel or viewing waves come to shore all bring us into direct encounter with God.

Gaining a pure heart is not a linear path with check-marks on a “to-do” list. It is more like a spiral journey of first ascent trad-climbing up a varied cracks system, punctuated by moments of transparent seeing, clear hearing, and open hearted reflecting of the True Light that’s come into the world.

Prayer: Oh Pure One, illuminate the darkness of our hearts that we may see you. Reflect your own image on our soul’s mirror polishing it to reflect perfectly your likeness. In this on-going never-finished task of purification may your divine light pour over us burning away everything that is not true. Amen.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Matthew 5:9



This beatitude seems a call to action more than one of disposition. The making of peace is readily questioned in cultures whose idols are armed protection and profits are from war. Stepping into the role of peacemaker can be counter-cultural and seems typical of Jesus' Way. Do my behaviors and actions seem typical of Jesus' way? How can I align my hands and feet to the movements of my Master? There are great glacial crevasses made by the rage of violence waiting to be filled with compassion, all while protecting the vulnerable and taming the beast of hostility. The Spirit of Christ is quite capable of providing wisdom on our way to becoming peacemakers.

Prayer: Great Forger of our hearts, beat our swords into plowshares and spears into tools for pruning our own interiors of violence. Aid us in being actively moving citizens of a kingdom that knows war no more. Amen.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10



Many are quick to think they are ill-used when someone disagrees with a narrow take on God-talk and cry “foul!” when disagreed with over cultural and social matters never addressed by Jesus in his recorded word. True persecution because of righteousness is a rare thing and for those who have experienced it, they will never forget. We are declared righteous not by our own doing, thinking, or believing, but by the breath of our Creator re-vivifying us to newness of life through the Spirit. We move from the death-zone back down to high-camp and life is restored. When we live in that newness of life abiding there regularly and then experience persecution because of it - we will recognize easily (and quietly to ourselves) that we have entered the domain of the saints.

Prayer: Great Shepherd of the sheep, protect all who are victims of condemnation and rejection. When betrayal arrives at our door may we welcome it in as a guest who will teach us the very way of the cross. May we humbly be put at the back of the line being fools for You. Amen.

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Isaiah 26:3



Here we see a promise of God. The word "stayed" means fixed as in to fixate. When we trust Him and fix our thoughts on Him rather than our troubles, He keeps us in perfect peace. That peace comes from God's strength, not our own, even though we naturally want to focus on the problem and try to solve it ourselves. This is also why we need to be in God's word every day and memorize scripture so that we can bring truths about God to mind when we are in the midst of a struggle. Every time we turn our thoughts to God, we win that battle. Over time, our focus shifts more quickly to God, allowing us to speak Scripture and trust that nothing is impossible with Him. I want to encourage you that your thoughts do not have to be nice or pretty, they just need to focus on God. He knows your thoughts already, so you will not shock Him. God loves you and He fights for you.

Prayer: God, I choose to fix my thoughts on You and hand over my worries, trusting Your promise to keep me in perfect peace, and I thank You for fighting for me and meeting me with Your calm presence.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9



Have you ever climbed with someone significantly stronger than you? You're struggling up a 5.10 while they casually on-sight a 5.12. It's easy to fall into comparison—thinking of all the ways you need to be stronger, better, or faster.

Our spiritual walk can feel the same. We think, If I prayed more, read my Bible better, or had stronger faith, maybe I wouldn't struggle with doubt, worry, or loneliness. We assume weakness means failure. But God says otherwise. His grace is sufficient right now, not after we improve. His strength is revealed not when we have it all together, but when we admit we don't.

You are not behind. You are not lacking.

You are enough—because He is.

Prayer: God, thank You that I am enough because of Your grace. In moments I feel weak, remind me Your grace is sufficient and Your power is at work.

Amen.

A final note from CFC's Executive Director:

He Goes Before Us

2 Kings 17:1-24



I've always loved the story of Elijah, both because he's pretty intense in faith and because I am named after him. When he first enters the scene we don't know much about him, but we do know he's all in for the Lord and runs headlong into the mission he's given. The mountaintop experience of Mt. Carmel - where God fires (literally) the prophets of Baal and then Elijah sprints a marathon faster than horses - is probably his best known work.

But, much like Jesus, his mission actually starts alone in a desert. He eats scraps from Ravens and drinks streamwater. And after that seemingly pointless anecdote about the start to his ministry, God tells him to go meet an impoverished widow and share in her last tiny bit of food. {What the heck, God!??}

I've read this passage dozens of times, but it hit me with something new: Twice, God tells Elijah to go somewhere and twice God says "I have already told to provide for you." So Elijah goes.

Similarly, one of CFC's founding board members has always said, "Where God Guides, He provides!" The good work of living and speaking the hope of Jesus may feel risky, but God does not call us without a plan. He has already set provision in motion.

He goes before us.

Written by Eli Conlee
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