

## Sunday Morning – It's like Rising from the Dead!

*“Though we struggle through the night, joy comes in the morning.” (Psalms 30:5b)*

**We all struggle.** We all face storms in our lives. Some are big storms. Some are small storms. Sometimes we struggle with overlapping storms. Some are by choice – we take a risk to accomplish a goal. I struggled to come up with a theme for this year's Clean Water Climb fundraising campaign. Then it hit me – I should just tell you of the struggle to reach the summit of Africa's highest peak, Mt. Kilimanjaro. Maybe it will inspire you, with The Lord's help, to face your storms; to face your struggles. So, here goes:



### Early Saturday afternoon we arrive at the 16,000' Kosovo

**final base camp.** Before dinner we organize all of our things for our night time hike up to 19,341' - multi-layer jackets, balaclavas, heavy mittens, gaiters, heavy socks, long underwear, etc. – all the things the porters have carried in duffels for us for the past 6 days that will be used only on this one extremely cold nighttime ascent of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

**We try to eat dinner.** But everyone either has some degree of headache or nausea or both. No one has much of an appetite. But we try to eat something. There is very little talking as we try to save our energy. We will be hiking all night. The guides brief us on the final ascent plan. I suggest that we have a staggered start of 2 groups. I will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and faster group. The 1<sup>st</sup> group will lead out with the hope that the 2<sup>nd</sup> group will catch up either at the crater rim or the summit.

**I never sleep.** I just lay in my down bag and wonder. Will I make it for the 5th time? Will my arthritic hip stop me? Will my incomplete cardio preparation stop me? I pray for God's grace to be on me once again. I hear the 1<sup>st</sup> group get up, and eventually take off. They seem to be running a little late. I wait, almost dozing off, until a guide comes to my tent – it's time for the 2<sup>nd</sup> group. I arise, get dressed, and head to the dining tent for a last minute snack. No surprise, but it's bitterly cold outside! After a light snack one of the guides puts my gaiters on and pulls my mittens on over my fleece gloves. It's nearly impossible to complete these last two tasks by myself. It's embarrassing and humbling.

**My group finally departs** (around midnight) for the top of the “highest freestanding mountain in the world.” With the exception of the stars above and our headlamps, we tackle the beast in total darkness. Despite our late start, I still hope to reach the volcano's enormous crater rim by dawn. It's going to be close.

**It quickly becomes apparent that I am in another major struggle** (for the 5th straight year). It will last all night. Why don't I ever remember how hard this is? Memories of pain must not be stored in our brains. Every hour or so our guides allow us to take a break. I find a rock to sit on. I close my eyes. I want to sleep. It's the middle of the night. That's what my body is supposed to be doing. I start to doze off. But the moment I do someone is shaking me and saying “Don't fall asleep Babu (Swahili for Grandpa). Wake up Babu.” It's one of our amazing guides, servants of God no doubt, who are determined to get us safely to the summit! In what seems like just a few seconds, it's time to go again.

**It seems like an eternity has passed since we began.** What time is it? What elevation are we at? Everyone is so bundled up it would be a monumental effort just to check the time. Looking above us I see pinpoints of lights suspended in the darkness like stars in the sky coming from teams that are ahead of us. Lucky souls! “Where is that rim?” I ask myself. Similarly, an occasional glance below us and all I can see are pinpoints of lights from teams of climbers coming up from below us. Poor souls!

**I am colder this year than previous years.** Especially my fingers. But my core as well. I am wearing one less layer this year – no fleece pants or fleece jacket this year. I was too hot last year. Is it colder this year? Did I not eat enough food? Who knows? I can't keep my fingers warm. One of our amazing guides opens up a couple of hand warmers and crams them into my mittens!

**My body wants to lay down and sleep.** It seems like a dream, or maybe it is a nightmare and I am sleep walking for hours and hours and unable to wake up. I wonder if this is what hell is like? I walk on and on in this dream-like state. I am half awake. I am half asleep. I am awake enough to know how hard this is; how exhausting it is; how endless this is. With each step there is twinge of pain in my left hip. It is not bad enough to stop me. It is actually helping me stay awake!

**It seems like we endlessly struggle just to place one foot in front of the other.** I constantly ask myself if I will make it or not. I constantly ask God to give me strength. I ask Him if this is the last time He has asked me to do this. No, He says! He then questions me (over):

- “Don’t you understand how many lives the Clean Water Climb is saving?”
- “Don’t you understand how many kids become healthy enough to go to school?”
- “Don’t you understand how many parents become healthy enough to work?”
- “Don’t you understand that your 7 hour, once a year struggle is nothing compared to My people who struggle for months, and even years, without clean water?”
- “Don’t you understand I will send My replacement for you in My time frame, not yours?”
- “Don’t you believe My grace is sufficient for you?”
- “Don’t you believe that you can do all things through My Son who strengthens you?”

**He then reminds me** of the faithfulness of our Clean Water Climb donors and prayer warriors. He also reminds me of the American Summit team summiting Pike’s Peak in Colorado the same day we summit Kilimanjaro for the same purpose! I then ask myself, “How can I *not* go again?” I have to! Despite my struggle I know I am to keep going until He clearly says stop!

**Suddenly there is a glimmer of light on the horizon.** Am I imagining? I have been delusional for so long. I have been sleep walking all night. It can't be dawn – we are not at Stella Point yet. But the light gets stronger! The sun IS coming up! The earth IS still turning! We ARE getting close to Kilimanjaro's rim! We ARE going to make it! Stella Point IS just ahead! We have HOPE! “Sunday's coming!”

**We finally catch up to the 1<sup>st</sup> group.** I wondered if we ever would. They look as terrible as I feel. But despite their similar struggles they have done fabulous! They are such an encouragement to me! I now know we are all going to make it! It's like rising from the dead!

**From Stella Point we can see the summit ahead!** It's another 689' up, but it's a much more gradual ascent than what we have experienced all night in our struggle along the flank of this mighty volcano. But it's still up and the air is getting thinner with each step. We all finally reach the summit within 15 minutes of each other – around 8am – a bit later than last year, but we all made it. We spend an hour documenting our success. Lots of smiles now! ***It's Sunday Morning! It's like rising from the dead!***

Yes, the summit night struggle continues to be the hardest thing I have ever done. ***But in the end it's Sunday morning! It's like rising from the dead! Joy comes in the morning once again!***

Some struggles last 7 hours like summit night on Mt. Kilimanjaro. Some struggles last a lifetime like for our autistic daughter Melissa. Some struggles are specific to a culture one is born into like an impoverished developing country such as Malawi where there is a lack of clean, safe drinking water.



***Joy Comes in the Morning!***

I pray that whatever struggle you are in – grieving the loss of a loved one, the sudden end of a job, declining health or? – that it will soon be over and you will be filled with the kind of hope, joy, peace, and love that can only come from the Creator of the universe. He is the Uncreated Creator – Jesus of Nazareth – THE Savior of the world! (John 3:16-17)

Please join me with your financial and prayerful support of the 2016 Clean Water Climb. Help me bring joy to 333,280 people! Pray that I reach my \$200,000 goal! God Bless You!

**Thank you for your amazing support!** Last year we broke the \$1 million donation milestone! This year our team hopes to break \$1.5 million! In addition to paying all of my trip expenses, **Jennifer and I will donate 15% of every dollar you donate up to my goal of \$200,000.** If I reach my goal by July 4, I will do something crazy with my hairy head, which is getting less hairy with each passing year!

Donate here: [www.cleanwaterclimb.net/kilimanjaro/mike-navolio](http://www.cleanwaterclimb.net/kilimanjaro/mike-navolio) or by check to Child Legacy!

Until every water well is working ...to the summit!