

Making the Most of Wednesday, July 1

"And by my God I can leap over a wall" (Ps. 18:29)

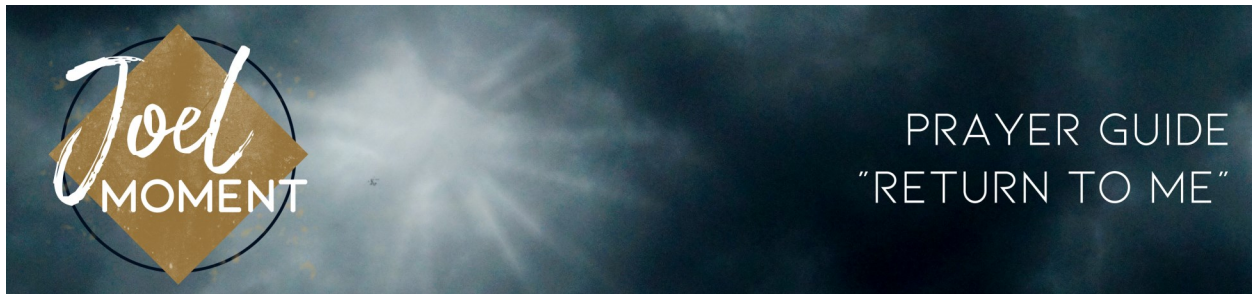


BETWEEN 6:00 AM—9:00 AM: My fingers ached, but not from climbing granite. Rather, they hurt from gripping the armrests of my movie theater seat. I had just suffered (albeit, in perfect safety) through "Free Solo," the Oscar-winning documentary film about Alex Honnold's 3,000 foot climb up Yosemite's El Capitan in June, 2017 — an ascent without a partner, ropes or safety gear. Honnold's achievement is possibly the greatest feat of strength, skill and courage the world has ever seen. Commendations poured in from around the world, making Honnold an international hero overnight.

Here's a question: What if YOU had to climb El Capitan? Could you do it? Neither could I. But what if I told you that Alex Honnold would be *with* you, telling you precisely where to place your hands and feet? Would your chances of reaching the top increase? Not appreciably, because information alone isn't enough. But, what if I said that Alex Honnold would be *within* you, so that his strength, skill and courage became your own? Would that change the equation? Again, could you get to the plateau if Alex Honnold *inhabited* your very being, so that you shared in all his physical and mental capabilities? If that were the case, I think you'd get to the top and raise your arms in triumph.

Paul thought of the Christian journey as an upward climb ("*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" — Phil. 3:14). Entering the Kingdom is a daunting venture, involving daily sacrifice and exertion as we defy the gravity of selfish desires and live out our faith in King Jesus. However, our expedition is neither free, nor solo. Notice again the last phrase in Phil. 3:14, "*in Christ.*" In other words, believers are so closely connected with our Guide and Forerunner, Jesus, that the Bible says that we're *in him*, and that he's *in us*. Thus, we disciples never go it alone. Rather, we're roped tightly with the risen Jesus, our strong safety rope, who enables us to keep reaching and stepping up.

Don't speak for sixty seconds. Just savor Jesus' inward presence. Breathe deeply and feel his peace.



BETWEEN 9:00-12:00 PM: Jesus within is our capacity to reach the Kingdom summit (Matt. 5:20; 7:13). Today we're talking about this potent companionship — Christ lives in us, and we, his church, live in him. It's a comforting and catalytic relationship that scholars call "Reciprocal Residence." But this union of spirits was forged by our Lord's tears and blood on his own "Free Solo," which the Gospels document. Jesus climbed up Mount Calvary in conditions of utter solitude and abandonment when he, though innocent, packed our sin into his person. Let's reverently picture Jesus, trudging up Calvary. The Scripture calls it a place, but church tradition from the sixth century on refers to it as a mountain or hill. What made it steep was not the degree of ascent, but the degree of abandonment from being severed from his Father for our sakes. Read these two passages with awe and gratitude:

ESV **John 19:16** *So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus,¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.*

ESV **Matthew 27:46** *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

BETWEEN 12:00-3:00 PM: Our Inner Partner moves us to invest our advantages in costly ways. The Apostle Paul said: *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

Again, the scope or sphere in which we serve and love others is Jesus Christ. Does that sound mysterious? It certainly is. So, just like no mountain is safe with Alex Holland around, no challenge to share Christ's love or serve our brothers and sisters is impossible now that we're intertwined with Christ by his linking Holy Spirit. Pray for your spiritual family at Valley Church. Ask God to defeat their fears, raise their courage, and increase their love. Call or text someone in the next three hours who might need a boost, especially someone from church you've haven't seen since the campus closed.

BETWEEN 3:00—4:00 PM: *Join the **Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.*

BETWEEN 5:00-9:00 PM: ^{ESV} **Hebrews 5:8** *Although [Jesus] was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*

When asked by a reporter why he climbs, Alex Honnold answered: "Nobody achieves anything great by being happy and cozy." God has Kingdom accomplishments ahead for our church family. Successes will mean training, and forgoing short-term ease on the valley floor. But Paul describes his peace and tranquility while living on the edge (*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"* — Phil. 4:13).



MICHAEL S. [A story about what it's like to "invest his advantages" in the lives of teenagers.]

LOUISE W. [A reflection, song and prayer about being "in Christ."]

ESV **Galatians 3:26-27** *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me"
by City Alight

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
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KURT J. [Scriptures and prayer about how Gentleness within, that is Jesus Christ, should flow out his people in all their dealings with others in this season of rage.]

ESV **Matthew 11:29** *... for I am gentle and lowly in heart...*

ESV **Ephesians 4:1-2** *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk...with all...gentleness...*

ESV **1 Timothy 6:11** *But as for you...Pursue...gentleness.*

ESV **2 Timothy 2:24** *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness.*



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (7 min.): Our theme today is “The Wonder of Within-ness.” For believers, Jesus himself has come to stay, but never to stay put. He’s on his feet (through you and me), ministering and talking to others about the Kingdom of God. Pray that our church family will express him well, going out of our way to invest our advantages of love, money and time with needy people.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (7 min.): Intercede boldly for any around you who are hurting. Ask God to lift them up as they wait patiently on God (Isa. 40:31).

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (7 min.): When the red horse of Revelation rides onto the stage of human history during the Tribulation, peace will disappear from the earth, “so that people should slay one another” (Rev. 6:4). We see people everywhere tearing and thrashing their neighbors with words, and even worse, weapons. We must not let an ounce of ungentleness seep into our churches and families. Let’s repent of angry and unkind words and thoughts towards others, and commit to building each other up and forgiving every offense. Pray for reconciliation and peace in our homes and church.

Record what God shows you in Joel Moment Part 2 — that is, the time after 4:00 PM — when we share Scripture, intercede and support each other as the Holy Spirit leads us.

BONUS: BETWEEN 9:00 — 12:00 AM: ^{ESV} **Psalm 18:31-36, 39** *And who is a rock, except our God? —the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. ³³ He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. ³⁴ He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. ³⁵ You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. ³⁶ You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. ³⁹ For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me.*

See how God gears up the Psalmist with the right skills and resources to contend in any spiritual fight, and win. What are your present enemies? Temptation? Doubt? Bitterness? Anguish? Apathy? Selfishness? What’s forcing you into darkness? Vocalize the verses above, seeing yourself ready for whatever challenges tomorrow holds. Then review the song that Louise shared in the Prayer Gathering.