

Commentary: Quadriplegic climbs Mount Everest at home: A question to ask today

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[Ed Jackson was a professional rugby player before a spinal injury](#) in April 2017 shattered his career and left him paralyzed from the neck down. After months of therapy, he was able to regain some use of his body. However, he suffers from Brown-Séquard syndrome, a neurological condition in which his left side does not function well, while his right side does but has no sensation.

This challenge has not deterred Jackson. To aid in his rehabilitation, he began climbing mountains. He started with Mount Snowdon, the tallest point in Wales at 3,560 feet. Last October, he climbed the Mera Peak in the Himalayas, an elevation of more than 21,000 feet.

Jackson wanted to climb Mount Everest, but the coronavirus shutdown made that impossible. So, he brought the mountain to himself. He decided to climb the equivalent of the world's tallest mountain on his stairs at home to raise money for a spinal charity. His goal was 5,566 flights of stairs and 89,058 steps over four days.

Using his right leg to climb and dragging his left leg behind him, Jackson achieved his goal, raising more than \$36,000 for spinal cord research. He posted later: "Right what's next? Thinking Tour de France around the parents' kitchen."

Ten-year-old builds a “hug curtain” for her grandparents

Researchers from Harvard Medical School and Emory University published a paper last week comparing COVID-19-related deaths in the United States to the deadliest week of an average influenza season. Their conclusion: [COVID-19 is killing 20 times more people per week](#) than does the flu.

However, despite the pandemic’s ongoing devastation, people are finding creative ways to do what matters most to them.

For example, a 10-year-old California girl used a shower curtain, Ziploc bags, disposable plates and a hot glue gun to [create an ingenious “hug curtain”](#) through which she could hug her grandparents. A judge in the District of Columbia is [officiating virtually at weddings](#) using her computer at home.

And a 34-year-old man in New York City has [created a charity to provide meals](#) for some of the 36,000 Holocaust survivors in the city. He states that 40 percent of them live in poverty.

“See, they say, how they love one another”

Early Christians had no buildings of their own; during the pandemic, ours are vacant. Early believers had to be careful of public meetings, lest they arouse the suspicions of Roman officials; during the pandemic, believers are practicing social distancing or meeting virtually.

Despite their challenges, the first believers “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). How can we emulate them today?

Tertullian (AD 155-220) reported that his fellow Christians took a regular collection “to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but fidelity to the cause of God’s Church.”

As a result, the enemies of the church were moved to respond: “See, they say, how they love one another, for [they] themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death” ([*Apology* 39](#)).

When we experience Jesus’ sacrificial love for us, we will share his love with others. We will love Christ as our Lord and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). And a culture that knows little of unconditional love and grace will be drawn to what they see in us.

A question I hope you’ll ask our Father

The key, however, is not trying harder to do better. We cannot climb this Mount Everest through personal resolve. We will overcome any challenge to love our neighbor as ourselves only when we truly experience God’s love for us. Not just theologically or theoretically, but personally and profoundly.

How can we encounter his love in this way today? I prayed about that question and was led to conduct a thought experiment. I asked my Father to bring to my attention some times in my life when he demonstrated his love for me.

My mind immediately was flooded with examples. I thought about my parents’ love for me, teachers who encouraged me as a child, the men who invited me to ride their bus to church, mentors who have guided me and

churches and seminaries that allowed me to serve God with them. I thought about the friends who helped us launch this ministry, the amazing team of colleagues with whom I work and the thousands of donors who support us today.

Most of all, I thought of my wife's unwavering love across nearly 40 years of marriage and of our sons, their wives and their children. I am grateful for them beyond words. And I know each of them, and each example that came to my mind, was a love-gift of God to me. I did nothing to earn or deserve such grace.

After this brief review, my heart was filled with gratitude for my Father's love. I began to love myself as he loves me. And I was moved to share his love with you and anyone else I can influence today.

I invite you to ask our Father what I asked him, then love yourself as he loves you and your neighbor as you love yourself.

You, and they, may never be the same.

Jim Denison is the co-founder and chief vision officer of Denison Forum. He pastored churches in Texas and Georgia and now speaks and writes to empower believers to navigate cultural issues from a biblical perspective.

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