

Defeating Addiction, Finding God's Goodness on the Mountain

Byline: Brody Carter/CBN News

Mountain climbing is one of the most dangerous activities in the world. The risks of injury or death are high, and even experienced climbers can be caught off guard by the elements. But for Kent Johnson, mountain climbing has been more than just a dangerous hobby. It's also been a lifeline, helping him to overcome a mountain of addiction.

Johnson is a certified mountaineer and rock climber in California, just outside Yosemite National Park, which is seen as a top rock-climbing area in America. The valley offers death-defying routes with views that marvel.

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For Johnson, an experienced climber for 32 years, Yosemite has become more of a sanctuary and place of healing, allowing him to grow in his faith one careful step at a time.

"The Bible says the Earth cries out unto God – that the stones cry out," Johnson told CBN News.

He comes to this national park often to exercise and conquer new climbing routes for fun. He explains how adventure on a mountain helps him escape the daily grind.

"The pulse of the Earth is different than what you may have on your phone, TV, or in the city – it's healing," Johnson said.

The mountains, however, can be unforgiving. The day before CBN arrived for this story, an accident claimed the life of

another climber. Between 12-15 deaths happen in Yosemite each year, mainly due to slips and falls.

“Safety is an illusion, I think,” said Johnson’s climbing partner, Eric Hagan. “It’s really easy to make a mistake when you’re climbing if you’re not methodical. So, you have to check yourself and also check your partner.”

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Hagan has climbed for more than 30 years, learning his craft by Johnson’s example. The two are spiritual outliers in a sport that some believe is dominated by agnosticism and atheism.

“There’s definitely a lot of macho culture around these kinds of activities and I think people, when they become good at something, put a lot of faith in themselves,” he said.

Johnson’s journey to that kind of faith, however, began with him at rock bottom. Addiction became his first major mountain to overcome.

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