

Risking Exposure

By Gregory Wiens

A few weeks ago, Mary Kay and I had the privilege of spending a week in Grand Junction, Colorado and Moab, Utah. Both places contain some of the most beautiful mountains and unique rock formations I have ever seen and we climbed a number of the difficult and challenging ones. In the process, I learned a great deal about leadership and myself.

I am not afraid of heights, so to speak. I have bungee jumped from over 200 feet (20 stories), sky dived from 12,000 feet and taken a balloon ride with very little problems. However, at a few times during these climbs I literally began to panic. My hands are even sweating as I type these words and remember the experiences. We had to climb on mountain paths (with a 1000 foot drop) that were barely 18 inches wide and our back was against the rock. Though this was a challenge, I felt the solid security of the mountain behind me.

However, when I had to walk on a ridge with a 1000-foot drop on either side, my courage gave out. We had made some friends and were hiking with them when we came to the point where we had to make a 45-degree climb on a ridge of rock. My stomach began to do flips and my knees became weak so I sent them on. I sat down, feeling defeated and scared. I tried to convince myself that this was just in my head, remembering that I survived a sky dive. Nothing helped.

Later, as I was recounting this experience with a hiking-and-climbing expert, he mentioned the word that described my dilemma. I wasn't afraid of heights, I was afraid of EXPOSURE. I felt so exposed on the ridge of rock. Why didn't I feel exposed on the earlier parts of the climb? I had a mountain of rock behind me.

As I continued to think about my anxious feelings, it hit me that the sense of exposure is what many leaders fear. What is at the root of that fear? I think it is primarily a feeling of inadequacy.

That day hiking, my fear caused me to step out of a climb experience, which wasn't the worst thing that has happened to me. However, in our respective ministries, if we allow the fear of inadequacy to encourage us to give up, cower or crawl, the Kingdom of God suffers. Like the mountain rock that anchored me on many parts of our mountain excursion, we, too, have a Rock that surrounds us in our daily walk, especially when we are asked to take risks and assume challenges.

This Thursday, I have the privilege of addressing Florida state leaders at our annual State Minister's Meeting. We are going to look at the state of the church around Florida and then how to take our leadership skills to the next level. Facing our fears – especially the fear of inadequacy – must be addressed for growth to occur. I want to personally invite each of you to come as we all seek to be better leaders.