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the lava tower at 4600 meters. I started to feel the altitude from about 4500 meters as I struggled to get enough oxygen. On the seventh day we trekked up to the base camp at 4800 meters, which was relatively easy going by now as we had acclimatized well. What I enjoyed the most about the trek was being away from the stress and pressure of everyday life. I was able to connect with God, nature, myself as well as people around me, on a deeper level. In camp, we enjoyed each other's company as well as being treated to delicious meals seemingly whipped up from nothing by our chef.

The summit attempt started around midnight Monday morning and we were trekking throughout the night arriving at the peak about an hour after sunrise. It was probably the most challenging and exhausting endeavour I've ever been through. One of the sisters, Ylva, who runs marathons regularly, said the runs were "a piece of cake" compared to the summit climb. The effects of the high altitude really set in from about 5500 meters, effectively slowing us down more and more as we struggled to get enough oxygen.

The oxygen level at the peak is less than half of that at sea level. I became lightheaded. A combination of sleep deprivation, physical exhaustion and the effects of the altitude will do that to you. I knew I needed a strong will and determination to make it to the peak.

The reality is that, although summiting is achievable for any fit person, less than half actually make it to the top. What helped me was being with a group of friends as well as knowing that many people were praying for us. I also want to live by the principle to finish what I start. Thankfully, the sunrise and warmer temperatures put a spring in my step, just at the right time.

Being at the summit was a slightly surreal, otherworldly, experience. Having trekked throughout the night with only the stars and the full moon above us, seeing the sun rise over the horizon and arriving at the summit in full, glorious, sunlight, felt almost like getting to heaven.

Descending from the peak to our next camp proved no less of a challenge than the summit climb, at least for me. Exhausted, I arrived to the camp around noon, having trekked for twelve hours without much food or water.

Incidentally, it was my birthday the day we completed the adventure. After nine days in the wild, a refreshing shower left me feeling like a man from the wilderness. That night we enjoyed a midweek service together sharing in a heartfelt message given by Alex Scherer. We may have shared a final dinner together that night but we all knew we would keep going on more adventures in the future.

I feel stronger and more faithful after the climb. I know that I can handle discomfort and live by the spirit. It has been a transformative, spiritual experience, which was what I was hoping for. I have unique friendships that will last my whole life and I have a new appreciation for and connection with our brothers and sisters in East Africa.

I hope that this has inspired you to take on a similar challenge and to encourage one another across our churches. Who knows, maybe we'll see each other on an adventure in the future.

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- ***At Least It's Not Lice!***
  Jeanie Shaw, Boston, MA, USA — Monday, 23 January 2017
  The questions kept coming as Micah and Gracie were eager to know more about their Papa's neurological disease. It's a tough one. He has lost all mobility and is wheelchair (or scooter) bound. His speech is somewhat affected and he experiences intense fatigue every...

- ***Hiking the Trail***
  Chad Billman — Monday, 23 January 2017
  Hiking! There is something about that word that I love. It is full of enthusiasm and adventure. I love the word because of the incredible memories I have had being in God's creation. There are so many metaphors that come to mind as I walk purposely down a trail, following...

- ***"Reach Every Beach": New Video on Caribbean Missions***
  Richard Beadle, St. Georges ICOC, Grenada — Friday, 13 January 2017
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- ***Limited Time: Lower Prices on Hawaiian Fellowship Cruise***
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• UPCOMING EVENTS

ICMC US West
2017 ICOC Spring Leadership Meetings
Dallas, Texas USA
April 4-8, 2017

DT Singles Cruise
Galveston, Texas USA
April 23-30, 2017

Austin, Texas USA
June 29-July 1, 2017

Middle East Conference
Cairo, Egypt
July 2017

ICMC US East
Asheville, North Carolina USA
August 4-6, 2017

2017 Family Ministry Conference
Denver, Colorado USA
September 1-3, 2017

2020 World Discipleship Summit
Orlando, Florida USA
July 2-5, 2020

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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A Mountain Top Experience

Rodney Forslund — London, United Kingdom



Many people climb mountains as part of a spiritual journey. For me, a love for adventure, nature (mountains in particular), and a desire to connect with disciples from foreign churches drove my recent successful climb up Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak.

Ditto for the rest of my team: Lauri Hallila and Ylva Lindqvist from Helsinki, Finland, and Alex Scherer and Doris Walter from Zurich, Switzerland. Having been to Mount Everest's base camp in 2011, these four friends had been planning on climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. I was swept up in their enthusiasm and buoyed by their experience.

Although my journey up famous peaks was new, my involvement with Tanzania, home of Mt. Kilimanjaro was not. Back in 2014, five friends and I organized a fundraising bike ride from Paris to London for a charity project for orphans, which was run for a year by the church in Dar es Salaam. Following that success, my friends and I committed to finding ways to support the churches in Tanzania. I met with the churches in Arusha and Dar es Salaam during a visit in 2015, where I presented them with the funds we had raised along with toys for the kids. The fundraiser's continued success allowed me to take books, a projector and tablet to the Church in Dar es Salaam in addition to providing additional financial support for charity projects run by the Tanzanian churches.

The trek: After three months of training and climbing the highest peak in the UK, it was finally time to take on the Kilmanjaro. This was a new experience for me, as I had never attempted anything as challenging. I was worried about how I would cope with roughing it for nine days and potentially getting altitude sickness. A team of 25 people served us, as everything had to be brought along for the trek. Incidentally, one of the disciples in the church in Arusha, Joseph Mapima, is a mountain guide and happened to be climbing Kilimanjaro at the same time we were.We opted for a nine-day trek to give us the maximum days for acclimatization and best chance for a successful summit attempt. On the way up I enjoyed the different scenery we passed and on the second day we got our first look at the peak from the camp.

On the fourth day we had our first taste of high altitude as we ascended to

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