

Overcoming fear of heights

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

We were painting the house that summer. Since I wasn't working, I did most of the painting. The house was a two-story and it didn't take long before I needed to climb the scaffolding.

Heights had never been my thing. I remember as a child avoiding climbing stairs that you could see through. Like the back stairs to our apartment.

The scaffolding came in four-foot high sections. My husband set up the first section. No problem. I climbed up and had a great time. It made a wonderful platform to paint from. But then the time came to raise the scaffolding to eight feet. Now eight feet isn't really that high, about the height of a good ladder. But when I started climbing up the rails, I froze.

Not wanting anyone to know I was afraid, I backed down. Told my husband I had to go to the bathroom, and escaped.

One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Matthew 6. This is the chapter in which Jesus tells us how to pray. He says, "when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."
(Matthew 6:6)

The closet represents our human consciousness. Prayer takes place in our thought. We shut the door of our thought by shutting out fear, anger, and other worldly thoughts. Then we can commune with God.

It's not necessary to go to a particular spot to pray, nor even to find a quiet place alone. We can enter into our closet, our human consciousness, and shut the door right in the middle of a crowd. But in this case, I went into the bathroom and shut the door.

In order to quell fear, sometimes we have to affirm what we know to be true about God and man. I began knowing that God was present. That we live and move and have our being in God. That we could not fall out of the

presence of God. I thought about the fact that Jesus often went up into a mountain to pray. He was not afraid of heights. To Jesus, height meant altitude of thought, getting closer to God spiritually. So I could think of climbing the scaffolding as demonstrating my freedom from fear and confidence in the power of God.

I stayed in that bathroom until I felt confident of the presence of God within me. Until I felt calm in the assurance that I was reflecting God and that He would never let me fall.

With this mental preparation, I went back outside, stepped up to the scaffolding, and climbed straight to the top. Didn't miss a beat.

The fear was conquered. When the scaffolding went to sixteen feet, I took a few minutes to pray and remind myself of God's uplifting care. Then I climbed straight up and over with no problem. I climbed the scaffolding alone numerous times while my husband was at work. Each time, I would take a moment to affirm God's presence and power, and that I was His child reflecting Him. I worked with total freedom, and the house was painted.

One of the purposes of prayer is to conquer fear. Instead of living with fears or excusing them as justifiable, we gain strength spiritually by challenging fears and overcoming them.

Published in: *Gallatin News Examiner August 14, 1995*