

# Are You a Tourist or a Mountaineer

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Walking through the tourist center, I was always impressed by the visitors. They put their quarters in the telescopes, trained them on the mountain, drew a deep breath, and concluded, “No one can climb that!” Of course, at the same time, I knew people were climbing that mountain. (They were friends of mine).

On the other hand, occasionally, a mountaineer would walk into the visitor center. He, too, would drop a quarter into the telescope, but he wasn't looking at the challenges. Instead, he was looking for opportunities. A tourist focuses on the obstacles - the rock walls, the hanging glaciers, and the knife edges. A mountain climber searches for opportunities - a crack in the wall's defenses, an overlooked chimney, or a connecting ridge.

Life is like that too. Some people see opportunities, whereas other people only see obstacles. Why is that?

Some people chose to be pessimists (the glass is half-empty), while others chose an optimistic outlook (the glass is half-full). I love the joke about the optimist who believes, “This is the best of all possible worlds!” And the pessimist is afraid he's right.

I believe we choose our outlook, positive or negative. If that's true, then we are responsible for the consequences of our choices.



*Climbing Mt. Rainier, Washington*

Eileen Guder, in her book, *God, But I'm Bored*, reminds us:

You can live on bland food so as to avoid an ulcer; drink no tea or coffee or other stimulants, in the name of health; go to bed early and stay away from nightlife; avoid all controversial subjects so as nev-

er to give offense; mind your own business and avoid involvement in other people's problems; spend money only on necessities and save all you can. You can still break your neck in the bathtub, and it will serve you right.

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It may feel like life is trying to crush you. It's always easier to just give up and go home, but mountain climbers have also learned to climb the mountain "one step at a time." Challenges can become opportunities when we focus on "just the next step." Jesus concluded, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own," (Matthew 6:34). A.J. Cronin (quoted in *The Anxiety Cure*) studied the things Americans worried about and discovered, we spend:

- 40% of our time worrying about things that never happen.
- 30% of our time worrying about things that happened in the past!
- 12% of our time worrying about our health
- We waste 19% of our time concerned about petty, miscellaneous worries
- And only 8% of our time on things that should legitimately concern us.

So, if you want to be a mountain climber and not just a tourist, choose your attitude and take life "one step at a time."



## Exercise

Are you truly living life or just getting by? Think about your days. Is Cronin's assessment right in your case? How much time do you spend worrying about things that never happen, and how much of your time do you spend focused on the things that should genuinely concern us?

