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3 July 2013: Susanne Irving, Life Church Petersfield

Focus on what is

Months before I ever sat a foot on Kilimanjaro, I was worrying about how I would cope with scrambling up the Barranco wall (I do not like heights) and the minus temperatures on summit day (I am already struggling to keep warm during mild winters.)

Then I had to leave the mountain prematurely due to altitude sickness and found myself in a sweltering valley on the days I had been fretting about in advance.

I realised that I had been anxious about a future that ultimately only existed in my imagination. If anything, I coped less well with my circumstances because they were so different from the circumstances I had rehearsed in my mind over and over again.

As Jesus points out, worry has no power to change a situation - at least not positively. Jesus says that we should focus on today because "each day has enough trouble of its own." (Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 34)

I do not think that Jesus does not want us to plan, but that we should hold our plans lightly.

My Kilimanjaro trek reminded me that we do not know what the next day will bring. We can only exercise control over some things - and all the control we have lies in the present. Worrying about what could or should be at some point in the future only robs us of the focus we need to live well today.

So whenever my mind is wandering into the future, trying to anticipate the challenges of tomorrow, I take a deep breath and remind myself to focus on what is. I can only become aware of today's blessings and opportunities when I am fully present.

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