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## The Mountain Within: Leadership Lessons and Inspiration for Your Climb to the Top [review] / von Stiegel, Herta

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naturally throughout the book, dealing with the most different issues regarding conflict and resolution.

I concur with the caution that we cannot fix ourselves suddenly as “peacemakers” just because we know “what” to do. We actually need a “power source” to enable us to accomplish the heavenly ideal. This shows the Godward direction of the book, confirmed by use of Scripture that shines in a special way in their specific contexts. This is evidenced in their observation that the peacemaker approach has “four G’s” to be followed in order to reach the goal which is the healing of the conflict: 1) Glorify God, 2) Get the log out of your eye, 3) Gently restore, and 4) Go and be reconciled. Such steps are fully based on the tried and true instructions that are found in the Bible but for some reason seem to be hidden from Christians when it comes to “who will win the conflict.”

Being experienced as an attorney, Sande says that even if a person rejects litigation in a court, it can still be pursued apart from court in how we deal with relatives or friends. A person may establish his position on a conflict and try to pull everybody to his side, making them “understand” his correctness or the damage he has suffered in the situation and finally “resolve” the problem. The result is that “while litigation might resolve a problem, it never achieves reconciliation” (p. 41). Reconciliation, as a healing of the conflict, is the real solution.

The book made me think in a new light on the necessity of resolving conflicts rather than avoiding them by fleeing. It convinced me to experience climbing the difficult slippery slope to reach that godly ideal of peacemaking, which will glorify God and represent His own attitude toward conflict.

In the end, I believe the book

achieves its goal: to instruct Christians who face interpersonal conflicts—be it in churches, families, or workplaces—on how to find resolution by the word and power of God. Instead of using labored words or difficult theological or psychological terms, it was written brilliantly, in such a way that anyone can understand it, with high-impact phrases and well-developed arguments that go to the point. Thus *Resolving Everyday Conflict* successfully fulfills the main purpose announced in its introduction, which is to teach the reader “God’s way of resolving conflict” through reconciliation and healing. The reader will come away striving to be a peacemaker rather than a “peacefaker” or a “peacebreaker.”

## **THE MOUNTAIN WITHIN: LEADERSHIP LESSONS AND INSPIRATION FOR YOUR CLIMB TO THE TOP**

*By Herta von Stiegel*  
*New York: McGraw-Hill (2011)*  
*Paperback, 229 pages*  
*Reviewed by ERHARD H. GALLOS*

Herta von Stiegel’s monograph, *The Mountain Within*, is based on an expedition she led in July 2008 to climb Africa’s Mount Kilimanjaro. A group of 28 multi-national climbers, including seven disabled people, set out on the tour. Against incredible odds, nearly 60 percent of the group made it to the summit. Though this expedition was recorded on film and has become an award-winning documentary, in her book von Stiegel narrates not just the expedition but also the invaluable leadership lessons she learned, all within the context of preparing for the expedition, failing to accomplish the goal a decade ago,

building a team, hanging on to the vision of conquering the Kilimanjaro, and knowing when it was time to come down from the mountain. Von Stiegel gives her reason for writing the book:

[We] need leaders who can relate spiritually and humanely to their fellow human beings.... They must be leaders who know not to stay too long at the top, because the rarefied atmosphere in the upper echelons causes us to lose perspective, to become intoxicated with power, status, and wealth and to lose touch with what matters. (p. xi)  
This book is a call to create a framework for leadership based on integrity, transparency, and the power of teamwork (p. xi).

In *The Mountain Within*, von Stiegel chronicles two attempts to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. The first one ended in a disappointing descent from the mountain at 4,200 meters from the Barranco Wall. This failure gave the author the necessary motivation to begin afresh, but this time very much better prepared than the first time. Von Stiegel openly describes her personal feelings, which range from enthusiasm to anger to emotional breakdown. The whole rainbow of emotions is displayed.

Out of these two attempts to conquer the mountain, von Stiegel draws leadership lessons applicable in business, community, church, and state politics. Beginning with the quality of resilience, she assures the reader that even those who do not possess the quality of persistence can learn it by following the guidelines outlined. Next, she discusses the issue of career vs. calling. Von Stiegel confirms that “executives who say they have a calling also report less job stress, longer tenure, more career satisfaction, and higher salaries overall” (p. 22). Third,

the author helps leaders not to be overwhelmed by the project set in front of them but break a big project into smaller steps, which are more manageable. Needless to say, this requires a lot of discipline (p. 38).

Further, von Stiegel elaborates on the attraction of preparation. Preparation means assessing the situation with the people surrounding you, as well as planning for contingencies. Never should a leader lose sight of a backup plan, since flexibility in case of an unexpected scenario is vital. Likewise, failures are part of any journey. For von Stiegel, “each failure breeds more learning” (p. 59), deserving a brief look but not long navel-gazing attention.

Team selection, inevitable for any leader, should not involve choosing a group of yes-men, but choosing the best-qualified team in which skills are complemented and a winning attitude unites. Over and over again, von Stiegel emphasizes in team members integrity and strong work ethics (p. 87). And this team, according to research done by Lynda Gratton at the London Business School, should include both men and women, because “equal gender representation can help to unlock the innovative potential of teams” (p. 88).

Von Stiegel admonishes leaders not to settle for the good in place of the excellent. Even in the business world, the author admits that high quality helps carry out transactions faster and more economically (p. 101). But high quality does not necessarily breathe high expenses. A leader should know when to make drastic decisions, such as walking away from a deal, though this should not be done lightly, because of personality clashes, or before the leader has done everything possible to change the situation (pp. 124-125).

Handling criticism is an art leaders

need to learn, since the amount of criticism a leader receives will increase as he or she becomes more visible (p. 135). In addition to handling criticism, leaders also have to face their own ego. The mission of the enterprise must supersede the leader's ego. Von Stiegel exemplifies the opposite by pointing out the recent history of megamergers in the banking industry, driven by unfettered egos of the CEOs. Some of these financial institutions ended up on the brink of collapse and needed to be bailed out by their respective governments (p. 150). Meanwhile, leaders have to overcome obstacles such as habits of short-term thinking. The author urges her readers to fight against thinking myopically (p. 184).

Finally, von Stiegel gives several suggestions to help leaders lead a winning team. First, leaders must value the contributions of each team member (p. 199). Second, they must communicate their intentions. Third, they need to give the team space to replenish their emotional, spiritual, and physical reservoirs (p. 201). Fourth, they must celebrate successes (p. 202). In summing up, von Stiegel saves probably the most important leadership lesson to the end: "Don't stay at the top too long" (p. 217). She cautions leaders that the "world is full of people who stay too long in positions of power; at best, they tarnish their legacy, and at worst, they can cause untold damage to themselves, their organizations, or their countries" (p. 215).

Throughout the book, von Stiegel reinforces the leadership lessons by recounting conversations she had with notable leaders, people such as Al Gore, former U.S. Vice President and Nobel Peace Prize winner; Kay Unger, American fashion designer; Sam Chisholm, Australia's leading media executive; and Christie Hefner,

former CEO of Playboy Enterprises.

*The Mountain Within* is written in a smooth, logical, and easy-to-follow manner. Every lesson is cemented by real life applications from either the expedition or the author's abundant life and business experience. In a follow-up edition the author may want to provide the reader with concrete sources for such general statements as: "The best psychological research in the world. . . ." or "Studies show that the. . . ." or "The brain, scientist have discovered. . . ." (pp. 7, 8, 31).

Herta von Stiegel has brilliantly succeeded in her goal to communicate invaluable leadership lessons through the matrix of an expedition. I highly recommend this book to any reader who is a leader or aspires to the ranks of leadership.