

Off to CHICAGO

How would Alex get along without his big brother for three whole days?

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

"God gave me a family"
(Children's Songbook, 234).

Guess what!" Ben shouted as he burst into the kitchen. "I get to go on the fifth-grade field trip to Chicago. It's going to be three days. We get to stay in a hotel and ride the train and everything!"

Alex trudged in behind his big brother and dropped his books on the counter. He wanted to be happy for Ben. He really did. But Alex and Ben had never been apart. Not even for one night.



Every day they rode the bus to and from school together. They played football together. They went to church together. Ben wasn't just Alex's big brother; he was also his best friend.

Alex had a jittery feeling in his stomach. How would he get along without his brother for three whole days and nights?

"Can I call Dad at work to tell him about the field trip?" Ben asked.

Mom nodded. "Go ahead. He'll be excited for you."

After Ben ran to get the phone, Mom saw Alex's sad face. "What's wrong?" she asked.

"Why does Ben have to go away?" Alex grumbled.

"Why can't his class just stay at school?"

"Are you worried about missing him?" Mom asked.

Alex nodded. "What am I going to do without him?"

"It *will* be pretty tough to have Ben gone," Mom said and ruffled Alex's hair. "But Dad and I will be here. We're not so bad, are we?" She made a funny face, and Alex smiled, just a little.

"Not so bad," he agreed.

But the next morning, Alex felt nervous again.

"When Ben leaves I'll have to go to school on my own," Alex said. "He hasn't even left, and I already miss him!"

"You know, I bet Ben feels the same. What if you did something special for his trip?" Mom asked.

"I guess . . ." Alex thought about what he could do for Ben. That night he decided to pray about it.

"Heavenly Father, Ben is going away on a school trip. He'll probably miss me too. I want to do something special to help him not be lonely." Alex kept thinking, and soon he had a great idea. He would make a going-away bag for Ben. Ben was going to love it!

Over the next week, Alex did extra chores to earn money to buy a few little surprises to put in the bag. He put in a fun comic book, Ben's favorite candy bars, a picture of Jesus, and a little stuffed dog that looked like their own dog, Whiskers. Finally Alex wrote a letter to Ben telling him how much he loved him.

The morning of the trip, everyone got up early. Dad gave Ben a father's blessing. Then the family knelt and had a prayer. They asked Heavenly Father to help Ben be safe on his trip.

After the prayer Alex gave the going-away bag to Ben. "This is for you. You can't open it until you're on the bus."

Ben hugged Alex. "Thanks! This is the best surprise ever."

When Ben left, Alex wasn't so sad anymore. He was excited thinking about Ben opening up his special bag. They would have lots to tell each other when Ben got back. ♦

The author lives in Colorado, USA.



My older brother has a muscle disease. I love helping him when he falls down, fixing him food, and also playing with him. It makes me happy, and I know that my Savior, Jesus Christ, is smiling at me for doing great service.

Violeta C., age 5, Utah, USA