

The Single Ski

By Kristian Christensen

I still remember my first cross-country skiing trip with my family. My parents, siblings, and I piled the ski equipment into our station wagon and traveled to a local mountain where we would spend the day. When we arrived at the site, I realized that in the hustle of packing I had left one of my skis at home. Worse yet, I'd forgotten my ski poles altogether.

Going home to retrieve the forgotten equipment was simply not feasible. My father, ever pragmatic, told me I'd just have to do my best. Fortunately, my older sister took pity on me and lent me one of her poles.

Having never been skiing, I didn't think that having only one ski would be a big deal. I was more excited than

disappointed—after all, I was finally old enough to participate in my family's favorite shared activity!

One by one, my siblings put on their gear and headed toward a meadow with a small hill that was fun to ski down. But I couldn't move an inch! The foot without a ski sank deep into the snow. The foot *with* the ski was also stuck because the snow clung to the old-fashioned wooden ski, making it extra heavy.

Why wasn't this coming more easily? The harder I tried, the more stuck I became and the more frustrated I grew. My struggle became more devastating as I saw my father and brothers in the distance. They had reached the

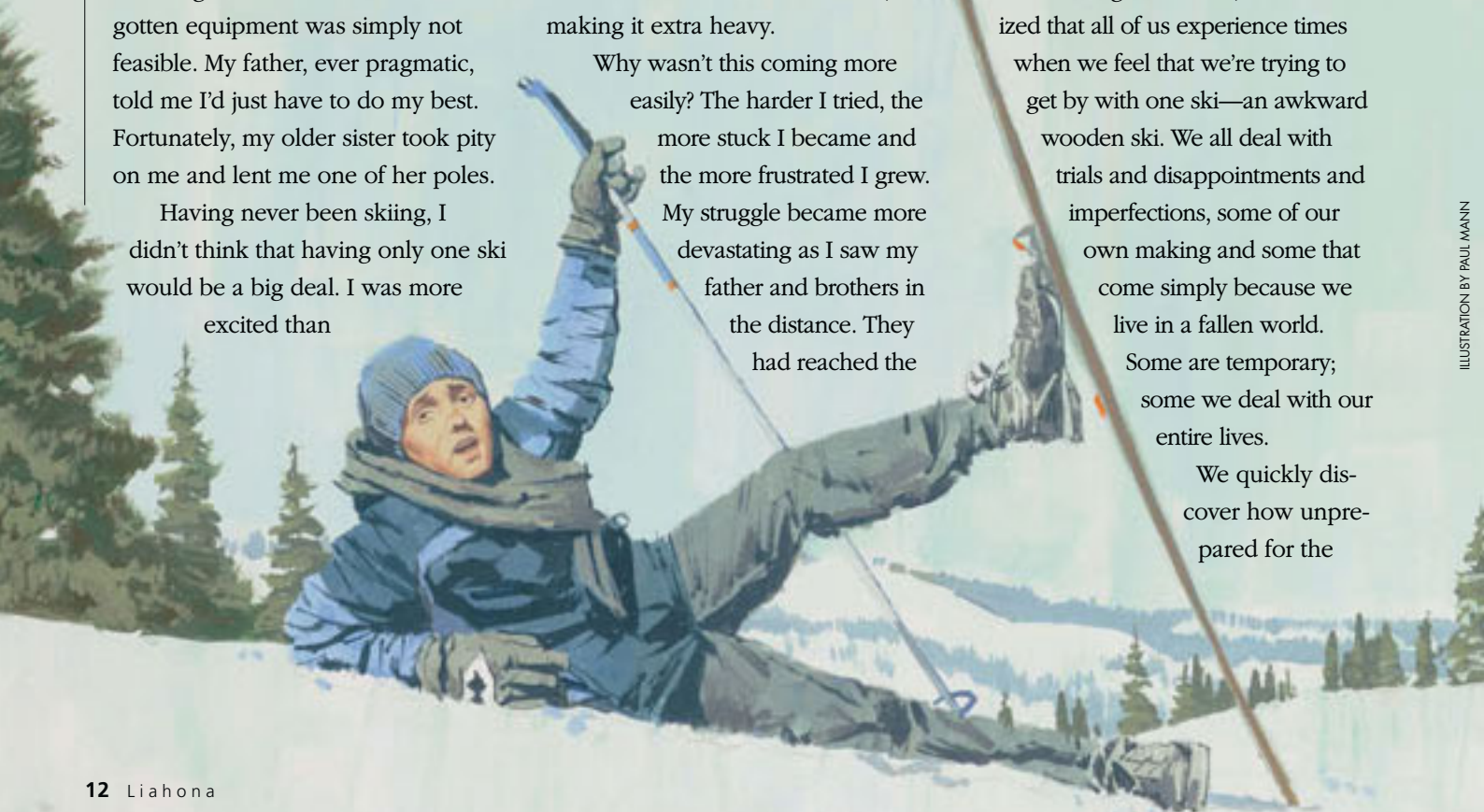
meadow and appeared to be having a great time climbing up and skiing down the hill.

Dad came back a few times to check on me, always offering some encouraging words. "Keep going! You're getting it." But I wasn't getting it. In fact, the end of that day came before I ever made it to the meadow. My first ski trip was a huge disappointment.

As I have grown older, I have realized that all of us experience times when we feel that we're trying to get by with one ski—an awkward wooden ski. We all deal with trials and disappointments and imperfections, some of our own making and some that come simply because we live in a fallen world.

Some are temporary; some we deal with our entire lives.

We quickly discover how unprepared for the



terrain we actually are. We feel inadequate. Our pain only escalates when we see others who seem to have no problems at all. In such situations it's clear we cannot make it on our own.

Fortunately, our life experiences need not turn out like my first skiing experience did. I exerted my best effort yet made no progress. But in life we can make our best efforts and then turn everything else over to God. His strength and His grace enable us to do things we could not do if left to our own capacities.

I have also learned that we need not hide our struggles from our loving Heavenly Father. Our imperfections help us better understand how He feels about us and who we really are as His children. It is because He loves us that He sent His Son.

If we come unto Christ, our weaknesses will also give us a glimpse of the Savior's grace and mercy as He works with us. For instance, there have been times when I have felt like saying, metaphorically, "Look, I have only one ski. And even if I did have two skis, I'm pretty sure I'd be a lousy skier. So don't bother with me."

But in His kindness, the Savior helps me anyway. He knows that I have challenges and asks only my best efforts: "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). Grace doesn't necessarily mean getting a sleek new pair of skis and being sent to the destination on my own. The Savior's care is more personal and more tender than that. He works with me where I am, as I am, to help me grow and become more like Him and Heavenly Father. I believe They are pleased with my best efforts, however meager they are. And I know They love me in a way that allows me to trust and rely on Them more fully.

I didn't give up skiing after that first disappointing experience. I went back repeatedly with my family and even took skiing classes in college. It's now one of my favorite pastimes. I'm grateful I didn't give it up.

I'm also grateful—eternally—that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ don't give up on us. God has not left us to our own flawed efforts. Because of His infinite love for His children, He sent a Savior to provide a way back to His presence. I know that by putting our faith in Them, all of us can move forward in our lives. ■

Would you like to share your experience about how Jesus Christ has touched your life? We welcome accounts of your gospel experiences relating to the Savior's ministry and mission. Possible topics might include the Atonement, grace, healing, hope, or repentance. Please limit submissions to 500 words, label them "We Talk of Christ," and send them to liahona@ldschurch.org.

