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LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL



*Take a deep
breath.
That C+
really won't
haunt you
forever.*

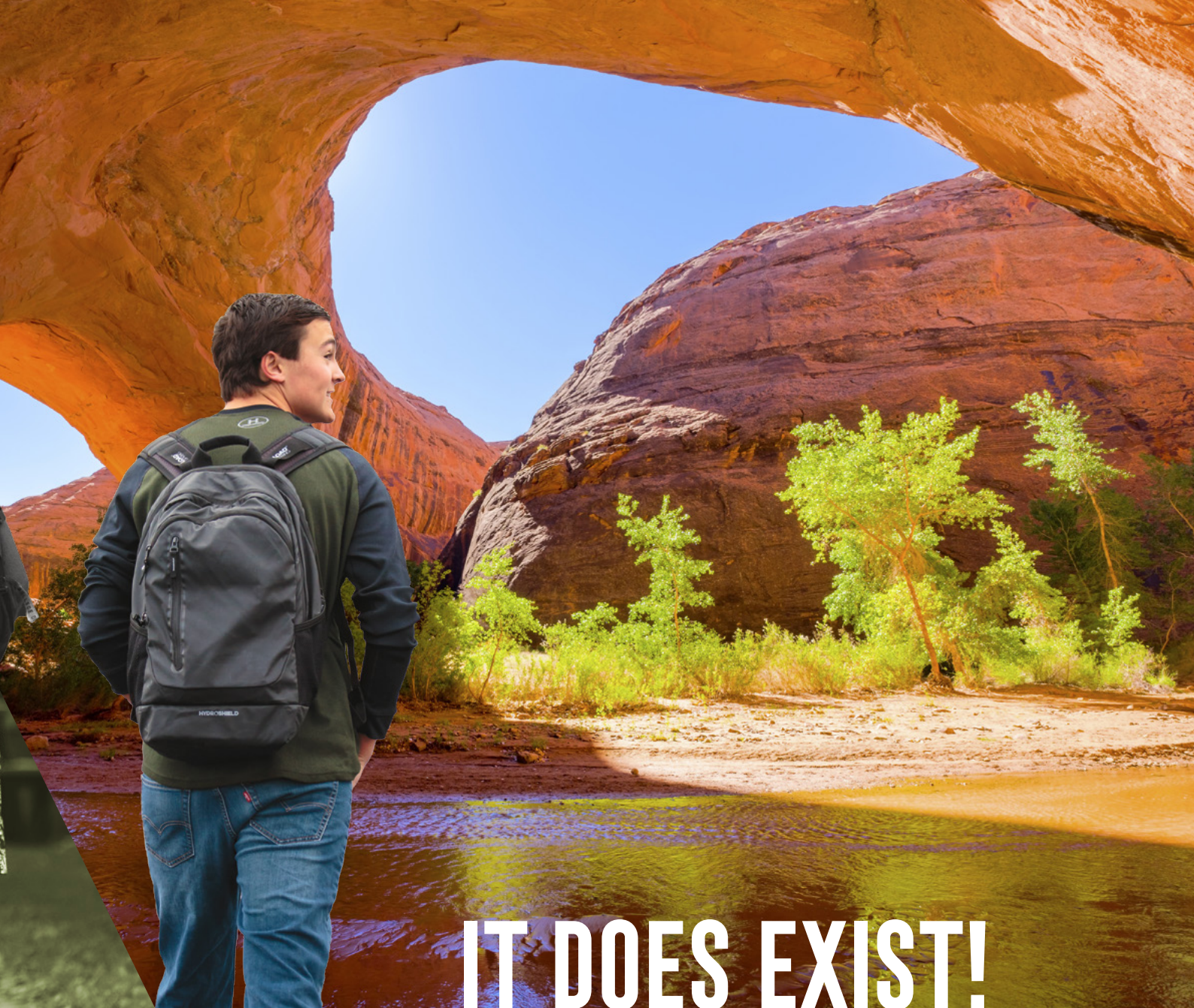
The landscape was dry, barren, and *ugly*. Beauty, admittedly, is in the eye of the beholder. That holds true for scenery as well as works of art. Yet the expanse of desert in front of me did so little to inspire my imagination that I felt sure plenty of other people might share my sentiment. The only thing growing out there was sage brush and weeds, and even those were spread thin.

I'd spent six hours in a car to reach *this*?
With my backpacking pack loaded with

three days of food, water, and supplies, I trudged across the hot sand and hoped things would get better. Soon the dry sand deepened, which made every step feel like two or three. Things went on like that for several miles: hot, dry, dusty, and nothing at all like I'd hoped this adventure would be.

And then Coyote Gulch, one of the great slot canyons of the western United States, swallowed me whole.

It's hard to describe the drastic change in



IT DOES EXIST!

scenery that engulfs you as you drop into this desert canyon. Hot, dry sand gives way to cool, packed earth. Sage brush is replaced with an oasis of towering trees, ferns, and other vibrant plants.

Barren flatland becomes a deep, shadowed canyon with towering walls on either side. A cool and refreshing stream courses through the bottom, whereas you can't see water anywhere from above.

I was blown away at every step. I took pictures by the hundred. Yet for those first few dusty miles, literally none of this staggering beauty was visible, even if you looked for it.

Life is often like that.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

The respective worlds of junior high and high school can loom larger than life while traveling through them. If your group of friends turns on you suddenly, for example, it can honestly feel like you'll be friendless and lonely forever.

Getting a C+ on your report card when you've worked hard all year can seem like something that will derail your academic train forever. Not making the team, not getting a part in the school play, or not being invited to prom can feel in all honesty like life-altering events that forever taint your future.

The adversary tries to make us think that way, at least. But it's simply not true. Life continues on. Life can improve beyond whatever challenges you're grappling with at the moment.

Most likely you have no idea what wonders lie ahead, nor how Heavenly Father might be using your experiences now to prepare you for them (see D&C 58:3–4).

A BIT STRONGER EACH DAY

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf shared a story in general conference about a challenge from his own life that became a massive blessing for him. During the challenge, however, it was hard for President Uchtdorf to see much value in the struggle. He was 11 years old at the time and had to pedal a heavy bicycle and cart to deliver laundry for his family's laundry business.

"Most of the time, I was not overly excited about the bike, the cart, or my job," he said. "Sometimes the cart seemed so heavy and the work so tiring that I thought my lungs would burst, and I often had to stop to catch my breath."

There was a reason the work was so hard for him. He was battling a lung disease he didn't even know he had. But here's the miracle: all that strenuous exercise proved to be exactly what he needed to heal his lungs. Not until many years later, when he took a physical exam to enter the military, did President Uchtdorf learn there had ever been anything wrong.

"It became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness," he said. "Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain."¹

LEARN TO LOOK AHEAD

Life takes time to unfold. We can't hit the gym one time only and expect to get in shape. We don't plant an apple seed a few months before we want to pluck fruit for an apple pie. Some of the most stunning vistas in your own life may not even be visible on the horizon yet. But they're coming! Keep your eyes set for them even if they're some distance away.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the

Most likely you have no idea what wonders lie ahead, nor how Heavenly Father might be using your experiences now to prepare you for them.



Twelve Apostles taught: "Think of the long view of life, not just what's going to happen today or tomorrow. *Don't give up what you most want in life for something you think you want now.*"²

Part of thinking of the long view of life includes recognizing that there's life beyond high school! That sounds obvious enough. But sometimes, in practice, it's not easy to convince your own brain to recognize that truth. If your life falls to pieces here and now, the adversary always heaps on discouragement. And one of the most tried and true forms of discouragement seems to be this: the idea that things are never going to be any different. But, of course, they will. You will change and grow too. With God's help, you can learn to see that brighter future even when things are dark in your life.

President Uchtdorf has taught: "If you trust the Lord and obey Him, His hand shall be over you, He will help you achieve the great

potential He sees in you, and He will help you to see the end from the beginning."³

WATCH AND WAIT

I've been able to look back over my own life and see many parallels to my hike into Coyote Gulch. For instance, I was a lousy student in high school. But with a mission and a few more years' experience behind me, I sailed through college.

Various challenges that felt permanent then proved to be fleeting at best. And don't even get me *started* on all the high school drama at every turn (which seemed like such a big deal at the time) that I haven't thought about since graduation.

So don't worry if life feels rough-and-tumble right now. Hang in there. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you."⁴

And what a *beautiful* life it will be. **NE**

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Apr. 2006 general conference.
2. Richard G. Scott, Apr. 1997 general conference.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Apr. 2006 general conference.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence," *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 9.