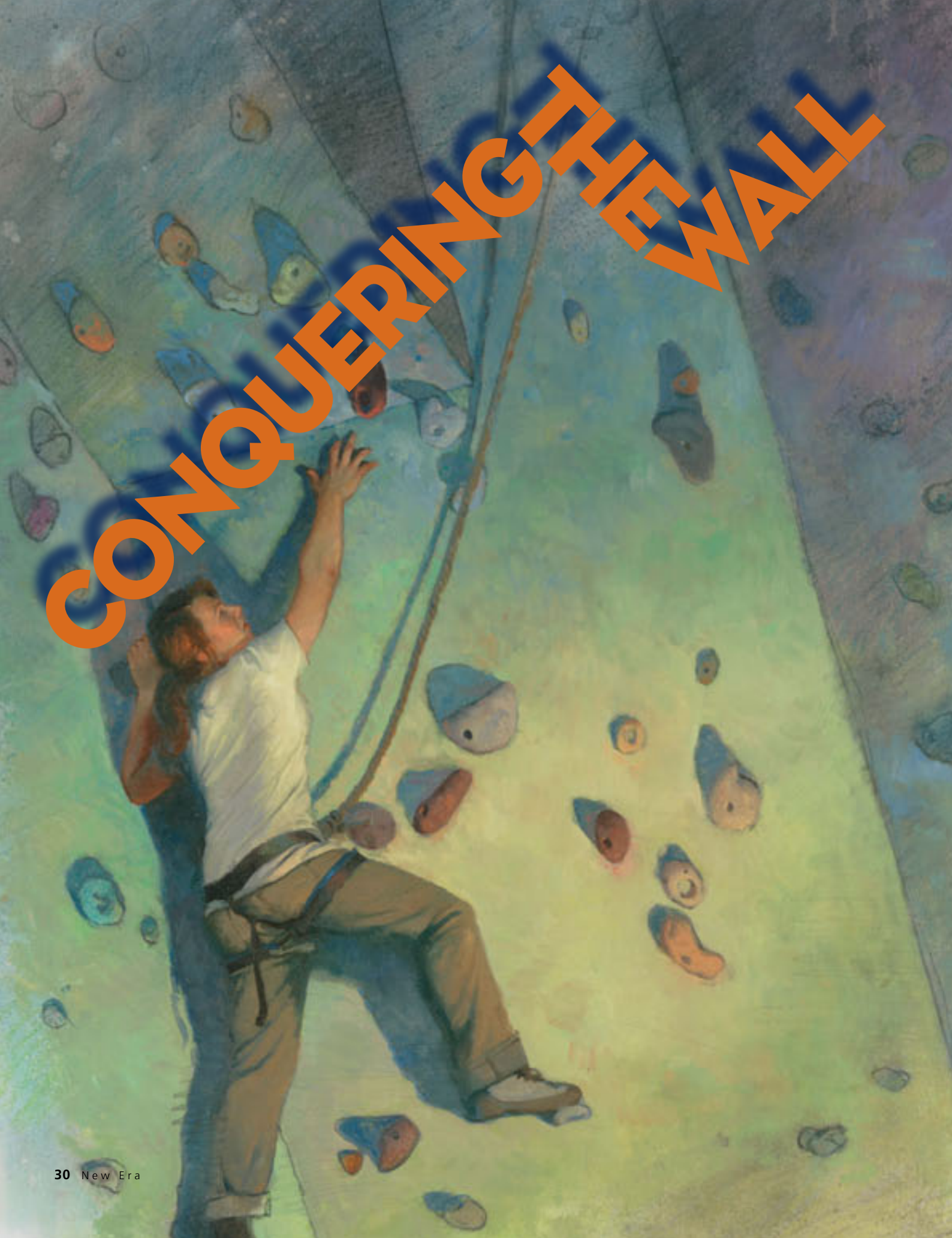


CONQUERING THE WALL



“Don’t look down!” I told myself. This was not the time to quit.

I was halfway up a climbing wall, completely stuck. Moments earlier, I had been on the ground, chatting with friends and waiting in line. Although I’d never climbed a wall like this before, I hadn’t been nervous or concerned. Within a matter of seconds though, everything had changed. I now clung desperately to handholds, my progress stopped by inexperience and fear.

Only moments before, when the man ahead of me slipped in his own ascent and descended slowly to the ground, I readied myself to climb. As I strapped on the safety gear, my friend Kent tapped me on the shoulder. “Liz, I’ve been watching the climbers and studying the wall. I know how to get to the top. Take your first step with your left foot and grab high with your right hand . . .” Kent’s directions were detailed, like driving instructions, but I just nodded without really paying attention. The wall didn’t look hard. I was sure I could do it on my own.

Disregarding Kent’s instructions, I grabbed holds right in front of me and followed the course that seemed to offer the least resistance. Climbing quickly, I took three fairly easy steps, and then . . . nothing. The next handhold was out of reach, and I couldn’t find a toehold. I was only 10 feet up, and my options had entirely disappeared.

Cutting through my predicament, I heard Kent’s voice from below. “Liz, I told the instructor that you are a first-time climber. He said you can start over. Come down and begin again, this time with your left foot.”

I quickly descended, thanked the instructor, and started again. This time I listened to Kent’s instructions as he directed me up the wall. Following the course he charted, I climbed, stretched, and maneuvered my way up. Nearing the top, I made a sickening discovery. The bell that from below had appeared easy to reach

was actually located on an overhang.

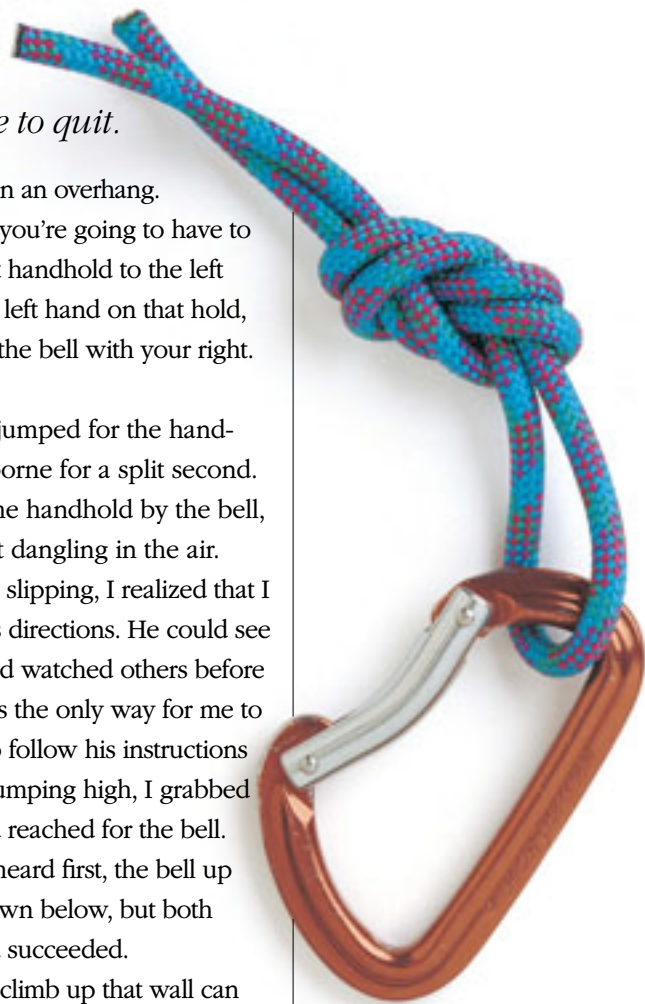
“Liz,” Kent called, “you’re going to have to jump up to grasp that handhold to the left of the bell. With your left hand on that hold, you’ll be able to ring the bell with your right. You can do it, Liz.”

Was he crazy? If I jumped for the handhold, I would be airborne for a split second. And if I could grab the handhold by the bell, my feet would be left dangling in the air.

As I felt my fingers slipping, I realized that I needed to trust Kent’s directions. He could see the entire wall. He had watched others before me. He knew this was the only way for me to succeed. I resolved to follow his instructions and trust my guide. Jumping high, I grabbed the left handhold and reached for the bell. I’m not sure which I heard first, the bell up high or the cheers down below, but both assured me that I had succeeded.

In many ways, my climb up that wall can be compared to our lives on earth. In the same way that I received instructions, advice, and encouragement from a good friend as I ascended the wall, each of us receives counsel and direction from prophets, parents, and youth leaders as we make our way through life. Like Kent, these people can see more of the wall than we can. By virtue of their perspective, experience, and knowledge, they can guide us to the top. However, we are often too arrogant, unconcerned, or prideful to listen. Setting out on the path that initially looks easiest, we often become stuck and sometimes fall.

On the climbing wall, I was given permission to try again by an understanding instructor. In life, we are given the ability to try again by an even more understanding Savior. If we repent of our errors, heed the counsel of those He has called, and keep striving upward in faith and hope, each and every one of us can reach the top and ring the victory bell. **NE**



The climb up that wall can be compared to our lives on earth. We need to listen more carefully to those who have experience and who have gone before.