

THE CAVE

By Frank Winger

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One day my friend Todd and I decided to go shooting. But pretty soon we got totally bored. It wasn't even lunchtime and we were ready to go home.

As we put our gear in the car, I noticed something odd. "Hey, Todd," I said. "What do you think that big dark spot on the hill is? Looks like a cave, doesn't it?"

We decided to take a look. We didn't have any lights with us, so we thought we would only explore as far in as we could go and still see the light from the entrance.

We walked a few yards into the cave and turned back to check the light. No problem. We walked in several more yards. Sure enough, the light was still there, but now it looked only about a foot high. We stopped and thought maybe we shouldn't go in any farther. Well, just a few steps more.

Suddenly everything went black. I don't mean dark. I mean black. We turned a full circle. There was no light.

We put our hands against the wall and began walking in the direction we had come—or so we thought. After following that wall a longer time than it took to walk in, we still couldn't see an inch of light.

We turned the other way, again feeling along the wall, but again we saw no light.

We kept turning one direction and another, but we found no light. We started stumbling over rocks on the floor of the cave. There hadn't been rocks like this where we came in.

"I'm scared," Todd confessed.

"I'm scared, too," I answered.

"No one is going to come looking for us," Todd said. "We told them we wouldn't be back until late." Todd was quiet for a minute and then he added, "Maybe we're going to die."

"Maybe."



I didn't think it was maybe. I thought for sure we were going to die. Even when we didn't show up later that night, our folks wouldn't know where to come looking for us. It would be days before they found us.

We walked on for a long time. Finally we both collapsed down onto the ground. I fought back tears. I didn't want to die like this.

"Frank," Todd said quietly, "I don't know what to do now."

"I do," I replied. "What we should have done hours ago. We're going to pray, and we're going to pray very hard."

We knelt down and poured out our hearts, pleading with Heavenly Father to show us the way out. We prayed longer than I'd ever prayed in my life. It was the most sincere and humble prayer I'd ever uttered. We were completely dependent on Father in Heaven's mercy.

When we finished our prayers we stood there for a few moments then turned in the direction we felt impressed to try. Within a few yards we saw a tiny glimmer of light. With just that tiny glimmer we knew which way to go.

When we reached the entrance of the cave, we knelt down again and thanked Heavenly Father for answering our prayers.

Then we looked at our watches. We had wandered around in that cave for eight hours! We got home and told our story, and the whole family thanked Heavenly Father.

The next day, Todd and I thought it would be interesting to take our big flashlights and go back to look at the cave.

We climbed up to the entrance and turned on the flashlights. We walked a few yards into the cave and froze with a chill of terror. It wasn't a cave. It was an abandoned mine filled with endless horizontal passageways and several vertical shafts falling into seemingly bottomless abysses. One wrong step and Todd and I would have hurtled down one of those shafts.

When I think about this experience, I think about light and darkness. I think about how captivating it is to explore just a little into the darkness. Just a step at a time, always knowing you can turn around and, seeing the light—even if only a little light—you are sure you can find the way out again. But I learned that you can take just one step too far into the darkness, and the light is gone. So, I decided right then: the best course of action is to stay out of the darkness entirely. **NE**

The author lives in California, USA.