

*He
Will*



Your Pack

My dad and I started early, loading the woodcutting equipment into the truck well before sunrise and pulling out of the driveway just as the stars began to fade. As we snacked on toast and fruit drinks, we sang Scout songs and laughed at silly things I had done as a child. But as the first rays of sunlight splashed across the pristine Arizona sky, our talk turned to my mission—just two weeks away—and to the realization that this would be our last chance to spend time together like this for two years.

The sun left the horizon as we pulled off the main road and ascended into aspens and pines. An hour later we reached our destination: a small clearing at the top of a cliff overlooking a valley camouflaged in the yellows, reds, and greens of fall.

As I climbed out of the truck and peered over the cliff, my thoughts turned to my mission. Would I see such sights there? Would anything be similar so far from home? The knot that had formed in my stomach the day I opened my call tightened.

My dad quietly stepped up behind me and dropped one of his well-worn hands onto my shoulder.

“Are you ready?” he asked. I knew he was talking about cutting wood, but I instantly thought of my mission. Was I ready? Would I be able to learn Spanish? Would I love the people? Was my testimony strong enough?

The questions gathered around my heart like a great weight, threatening to crush my spirit. And then the memory of the greatest lesson my father had ever taught

me leapt into my mind.

I was 11, shivering in a flurry of pre-dawn snowfall, staring from the edge of the Grand Canyon into the black void below. Behind me, the other Scouts were pulling on their packs and horsing around, ignoring the Scoutmaster who was trying to get everyone organized for the long hike. As the youngest—and smallest—of the group, I was intimidated by the older boys and the task that lay ahead.

“Are you ready?” my dad asked then, coming up behind me and laying a strong hand on my shoulder. My heart pounded in my chest and part of me wanted to say no, but I didn’t want to look weak in front of the other Scouts, so I nodded. A few minutes later, we hefted our packs and started down the winding trail to the river far below.

Slowly, the sun rose into the sky. The snow turned into freezing mist and then into a light rain that formed puddles in the red dirt. At last, it evaporated into a sweltering heat. We shed our jackets, applied sunscreen, and marched on.

The hours ticked by. Sweat dripped down my face, and every inch of my body ached. Blisters began to form on my feet. The pack, towering over my head, grew heavier with every step.

Miles inched past: first one, then two, then three.



BY JEFFERY A. MOULTON

*My father taught me a great lesson
about the Savior without saying
a word.*

Staring into the valley now, I no longer feared the long journey ahead or the trials I would face on my mission or at any other time in my life.

When we stopped for lunch, we had barely passed the halfway point and my legs were already turning to jelly. I dropped my pack to the ground and gratefully plopped onto a large rock beside the trail to eat my smashed peanut butter sandwich.

Relieved of their load, my muscles shook uncontrollably. I longingly watched a mule train pass on its way to the bottom. What would it be like to ride instead of walk? Much sooner than I would have liked, the Scoutmaster signaled the end of the break. I staggered as I hoisted my pack, but my dad caught me and helped me get it into place.

We started down the trail again and, almost immediately, I started having problems. Instead of resting my sore muscles, the break had tightened them. I almost stumbled with each aching step.

Ten minutes passed. My pack seemed to drag behind me, pulling me down and making it impossible to lift my feet. Still, I forced myself forward. I couldn't show weakness in front of the other Scouts. I had to keep moving.

But a few minutes later, I could go no farther. My heart beat faster as I gathered my courage to call for a stop. In my mind, I

could see the disappointment and frustration of the older boys at having to stop for the baby who shouldn't have been allowed to come in the first place. Tears welled up, and I choked back a sudden lump in my throat.

That was when my pack lifted and I suddenly felt lighter than air.

My father, who had been following close behind, had seen my distress and, just when I was about to give up, had reached out, grabbed the bottom of my pack, and lifted it with his strong arm. With the load gone, I suddenly felt like I could run down the trail.

We continued like this for several minutes, with me walking ahead and my father following close behind, lifting the pack from my shoulders. When he at last lowered the pack and removed what must have been a very sore arm, I had regained my strength and could continue on.

Over the years, the memory of that hike and what my father had done for me had faded. But as I stared into the valley that last morning before leaving on my mission, it came rushing back.

In that moment, I saw that my father had shown me an incredible example of how the Savior works. He lets us live our lives and make our own decisions. He lets the weight of the world gather on our shoulders as we face choices and circumstances that test our faith and dedication. And then, when we can go no further, He reaches out with His strong arm and lifts our packs so we can continue on.

Staring into the valley now, I no longer feared the long journey ahead or the trials I would face on my mission or at any other time in my life. I knew that the Lord would always be close behind and that, when I had done all I could, He would reach out and lift my pack. **NE**

