Another Mountain

By Allyn Schuyler

673 Words

My friend and I rode up a ski lift to hike down to a beautiful mountain town in southern Colorado. The weather on that lovely fall day was perfect. The first part of the trail was a well-worn winding path, and we enjoyed the conversation and the blessing of God’s creation surrounding us. The day was magical. I had recently overcome some physical challenges and was grateful that my body was holding up to the exertion.

We took our time, knowing we had several hours before meeting up with our young daughters in the quaint little town for some shopping and dinner.

As can happen in the mountains, the weather suddenly threatened with dark clouds moving in and a chill in the air. We decided to leave the sure-footed path to crisscross the switchbacks and save time. Getting caught out in the mountains in a fall shower can be a dangerous recipe for hypothermia.

Before long, I noticed a strain on my knees. I had forgotten that hiking was always the hardest going down, when old joints fight the weight of gravity. I grabbed the first appropriate walking stick to help me bear the discomfort.

The weather worsened and my physical distress caused our pace to slow.

“We need to hurry, or the girls will worry,” my friend read my mind. We had not told them where we were hiking, so she decided to run on ahead and meet them at the appointed time while I eased down the mountain.

I lost sight of her about the time I caught sight of the end of the trail and was heartened…I could make it.

But the stubbly dirt then turned to rocky, slippery shale. I struggled for firm footing and made only very slow progress. While the end was near, every step was agonizing. Worn out, my knees were close to crumpling. When the hard, cold raindrops began to fall and the lightning appeared, I prayed. “Lord, God, please help me!”

I had nowhere to hide. My situation was so ridiculous and yet so horrible. I didn’t want to be evacuated 400 yards from my destination, so I pressed on. I began to shiver when I lost my footing and turned my ankle. Pain shot through both legs as I went down and my knees, then palms, dug into the sharp rocks and shale. For a moment, I wondered if I had the strength to get up. I started to cry, not caring who might see, although there was no one around to notice.

By the grace of God, because my own strength was spent, I was able to get to my feet and press on. I moved at a snail’s pace now, unconcerned about anything except making it to the finish line.

In the distance I heard “Mom! Mom, I’m coming!” and looked up to see my 16-year-old and her friend running up the hill toward me. What a sweet picture! At that moment, I saw myself in sharp focus, an old woman who had pushed past her abilities yet again. I had a glimpse of the future and the comfort this beautiful little late-in-life daughter would bring.

She grabbed my arm and gently helped me down the final stretch. At the bottom, we had one more obstacle, a single wire fence to cross before reaching the lift base, where my friend waited. We laughed as I told the girls that I was too weak to lift my leg and step over. They tried to help by lifting it for me and - whoops! down I went, falling back into a puddle. We all collapsed in hysterical laughter because what can one do at a time like this but laugh?!

I walked into the ski lift base broken, bleeding, drenched to the core, and covered in mud. But I didn’t care. I had been found. I was rescued. Thanks be to God, I will have yet one more chance to overdo it, because I’m certain there will be another mountain in my future.