



SOS!

Allegory of a Hike

Petra Pierre-Robertson



EIGHTY-THREE hikers went in search of a waterfall deep into the forest. They were unprepared for the heavy rain. To get the group of young hikers out of the densely forested area, the guide needed to take them across a rough river. During the treacherous crossing, eighteen people were separated from the group. The hikers made an SOS. Darkness caused their rescue to become more difficult. Late into the night, all except two were accounted for . . .

How could a perfectly-planned hike end with tragedy? The guide must have known the terrain, drawn attention to the weather signs, and communicated to his young charges the rules for the journey. Without such knowledge, certainly one would not be crazy enough to venture on a hike! My dear youth, we too are venturing out on a journey. We are blessed with a Guide who not only knows the terrain, and rules, but also created them! Jesus is our guide on this rough journey. His rules are not meant to spoil our fun but to ensure our safety.

Let's have fun as we contrast the literal hike with our spiritual journey, which is sometimes just as arduous and can end in tragedy if we are not aware of the basics:

1. Dress for the occasion
2. Observe the signs
3. Consult the map
4. Obey the guide

Dress for the occasion! I can't help but smile at the memory of one of my first hiking experiences when I was just a teenager. I wore slacks, comfortable, sturdy shoes, and a hat. Yes I was a brand new hiker obeying all the rules. I couldn't believe it when my eyes connected with a young lady in a wedged-heel shoe, with an umbrella, a well-made-up face, and a handbag. "Is she going on the hike?" I whispered to my friend. My friend laughed as she responded, "If she is, she certainly won't last long." She didn't. Fashionable clothing and glamorous shoes have no place on a rough hiking trail. Is there also a special dress for our spiritual journey? The answer is "yes." Our guide specifically states that we need to have our **feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace** (see Ephesians 6:15). We need to have our **loins girded with truth, and we must have on the breastplate of righteousness**; (see Ephesians 6:14). A nicely made-up face and fancy hairdo will degenerate in quick time. Hot sun and scorching heat will make a mockery of them. For our spiritual journey a **helmet of salvation** covers a pretty face (Ephesians 6:17). The beauty that matters is not physical but spiritual. It is developed through daily prayer, Bible study, and a relationship with God.

In future articles, we will discuss observing the signs, consulting the map, and obeying the guide.

Until next time, make sure you dress appropriately!

Blessings to you. ☺

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LET US CONTINUE our hike! Our journey is spiritual. It is arduous and can end in tragedy if we are not aware of the basics. Thankfully we are blessed with a Guide who not only knows the terrain, signs, map, and rules, but also created them! Rules are not meant to spoil our fun but to ensure our safety. Our first rule was proper dress. The second rule is to be sure to observe the signs!

The weather report

I looked with remorse at the guide who commanded us to hold hands and repeat Psalm 91 before venturing into dangerous terrain on one of my several hiking expeditions. The journey began in sunshine. There was no sign of trouble. The guide pointed to the rising water level that meandered alongside us. Aquamarine water was suddenly tinged with brown. Sunshine disappeared. Silence descended. Rain plummeted. Sounds familiar? Conversion begins in joy but trials abruptly drench our joy. Consumed with rising stress levels parents, friends, work, school, and a host of other problems, you lose sight of the Guide. Didn't He promise that He would always be with you? (Matthew 28:20). It appears that everyone has pressed on and left you behind. You are lost! You cry out: "Oh God help me!" You cannot see Him, but desperation forces His name from your lips.

Your map

It is at this point that the map becomes critical. Choices can become scary when we are alone. Which path should we take? The crossroads are many. A group of us were lost

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and spent the night in the forest because of one small oversight—the lack of a proper map. Our map did not account for the several paths that faced us. We needed to make a choice to exit the forest and, unfortunately, we chose the wrong trail, because we did not have the correct map. In our spiritual journey, we must consult the correct map—the Bible—when making choices, because choosing the wrong path chosen could result in regret at best and tragedy at worst. The map advocates one way for a young person to choose the right path, by *living according to God's word* (see Psalm 119:9). The Word of God must govern our choices of spouses, entertainment, friendships, jobs, diet and all aspects of our life. "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*" (Psalm 119:11)

Follow these steps and you are guaranteed a positive outcome! Look out for Part III to find out how the story ended.

Until next time, make sure you dress appropriately, observe the signs, and follow the correct map!

Be blessed. ☺

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SOS!

Allegory of a Hike —Part III

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THE EIGHTY-THREE HIKERS were dreaming of home, anticipating shedding their wet clothes, soaking in a warm bath, eating a good home cooked meal, and nestling in a cushion before climbing into, the ultimate symbol of rest after a long arduous journey—the soft bed. There they wanted to lay their weary heads on their cushioned pillows drawing their blankets up to their chins and leaving that dangerous hike behind them . . . but did they all make it home? Late into the night all except two were accounted for.

How could that be possible? They had the perfect guide who not only knew all the terrain, signs, map and rules, but also created them! A positive outcome was guaranteed if the rules were obeyed! Didn't they see to their dress? Didn't they observe the signs? Didn't they follow the correct map?

As the search team urgently combed the forest, news came. Something was stuck in debris under a bridge. The debris was cleared. As the body of a twenty-one-year-old male hiker surfaced deafening silence covered the search team.

Didn't they listen to the guide? My dear youth, the final rule I want to share with you is that of obedience to the guide. Never ever venture out on any expedition without the approval of your Guide: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:6). Our

Guide Jesus left us a command: Stick with the blueprint I have left, it is profitable for instruction and correction (see 2 Timothy 3:16).

As the crowd silently observed the pale ashen body of the youth, a whispered lament was heard from one of the leaders, "He did not follow instructions."

Only a few minutes after the hikers entered the beautiful nylon pool into which the waterfall gushed, thunder was heard. Immediately the guide issued the signal to leave. His instruction was ignored. The hikers refused to leave because they were having so much fun. They wanted more time. As a result of the delay, the hiking party lost not only time but lives as well. Matthew: 24:39 encapsulates this tragedy; they did not take the Guide seriously until the flood came and swept them all away.

Do you take out guide seriously? You should. At the end of our journey there will also be weeping, but there will be joy too. Will you be weeping or rejoicing? Your action then will be determined by the choices you make now.

Until next time obey the rules as you *press toward the mark* (Philippians 3:14). This is the only guarantee of Salvation Of Souls! He has promised!

Be blessed! ☺

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SIMON THE CYRENE:

You . . . Pick Up
That Cross!

Petra Pierre-Robertson

**Mark 15:21 . . . Simon a Cyrenian . . . passed by,
coming out of the country . . .**

IT WAS the morning of the Passover. Instead of staying in one of the inns within the walls of Jerusalem, he chose to camp outside the city. The pristine setting nurtured an air of meditation and surrender, as he walked towards the high, thick, grey

stone wall that encircled Jerusalem. The air was fresh with the smell of dissipating dew; passing his nostrils before being sucked up by the sun, coyly giving a glimpse of its warmer personality before blazing in a burst of terrifying glory; even as the Son, would have His face marred and His body scarred before being sentenced to the earth by the very persons who



"Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross," detail from a painting by Jan Van Eyck (1400-1450)
Van Eyck painted 14 pieces dedicated to the passion of Christ.

needed His warmth and presence. Unknown to Simon, such a choice would make him a major player in an event that would change the course of humanity down through the ages forever; a role that would change his direction for good; because the Son of God was already in the situation that awaited him when he diverted from that peaceful, familiar trek.



Because you are a child of God, a cross awaits you. We do not have to go looking for it. It comes in our daily walks and experiences.

A large crowd of people was following Jesus that morning for various reasons, comprising various categories of persons and witnesses. Some were there merely to jeer and gloat, others had heard and out of curiosity wanted to see, there were those who just wanted to be there that fateful morning in history. Then, at the back there were the quiet supporters—the grieving and the faithful followers.


Simon was just exiting the country when suddenly and unexpectedly he came face to face with a violent shouting mob made up of soldiers, civilians, victims and criminals. He was soon to be not just a witness but a major player in high profile case of not merely wrongful arrest and imprisonment but wrongful execution with the authorities at the helm. It extended beyond historical, physical, geographical, and spiritual boundaries, and his was a name that would be called whenever the case came up or the story was told.

Matthew 27:32 . . . And as they came out, they . . . compelled (Simon) to bear His cross.

“Why me?” This is usually the cry when there seem to be others in the crowd more deserving of the punishment our cross seem to represent. The disciples, His close friends, were there. Why didn’t one of them approach and volunteer their assistance? “Why me?” I just had a good week, a good experience, a good devotion, a good encounter . . . “Why me?” Should I have stayed on my knees a little longer? Should Simon have continued a little further up the country road and entered another one of the massive gateways providing access to Jerusalem, thus avoiding the mob in the process? Had he taken a premature exit? He happened to be in what appeared the wrong place at the wrong time but was in fact in the right place at the right time. He found himself in the presence of Jesus.

Luke 26:23 . . . and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

Because you are a child of God, a cross awaits you. We do not have to go looking for it. It comes in our daily walks and experiences, thrust upon us unexpectedly—in our homes, at our workplaces, at the church, on the streets. If we are to be joint heirs with Jesus we must suffer as He suffered. Simon served as a forerunner to several other Christians who would later have crosses thrust upon them for simply following the example of Christ. We, like Simon, will have to bear witness of Jesus



for in the bearing of His cross we become witnesses for Him.

After the cross was placed on Simon, Jesus turned not to him but to the women following him and weeping and addressed them. Sometimes when we bear our various crosses, Jesus appears neither to address us, see us, nor be with us, while around us others appear to be basking in His blessings, grace, and love. Rest assured, He is with you. While the sun/Son may be blotted out from your vision, shadows and dark clouds are just evidences of a fixed Sun/Son that is standing firm; clouds float away, the earth rotates but the Son is ever present, ever faithful, ever shining His glory, goodness, and blessings on all who carry His cross and bear testimony of Him! ☺

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