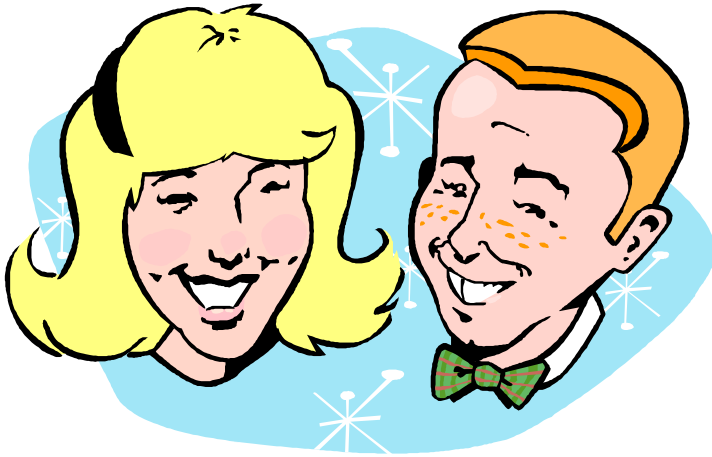


Booklet 15

# Helps for Young People



***You'll Never Make It***

***20 Great Ways To Put Your Faith In Action***

## "You'll Never Make It"

*Peter was told he'd never finish that 2,168-mile hike. But that didn't stop this college freshman from trying.*

by Peter Frost, as told to Holly Vicente Robaina

**It's impossible! You'll never make it.** John's words were not exactly comforting, but I wasn't surprised. I had just read a classmate's paper on the Appalachian Trail, and now, I really wanted to hike it. But I didn't have any hiking experience, and it took most people six months to hike the whole thing. I had three months during my upcoming summer break.

I knew my friend was probably right. John had hiked the Trail a couple years earlier, after his graduation from Wheaton College. Some highly skilled hikers could finish the 2,168-mile trek in four months, he said. But an inexperienced hiker like me? No way.

But I couldn't stop thinking about it. I loved physical challenges: The previous summer, after my high school graduation, I'd biked across the United States. I'd never done any cycling before that trip, either, but I'd kept up with experienced cyclists. *I can do this hike*, I told myself. My legs were in shape from years of playing soccer and basketball in high school. Plus, I had a whole semester to train.

I decided to go for it. Word about my trip spread fast around campus, and when Theron and Caleb heard about it, they decided to join me for the first 20 days. The two brothers had some serious hiking experience. If I could last those first few weeks with their encouragement, I could surely do the rest of it alone.

### **Day 1. Lord, I commit this trip to you.**

As we approached our first hiker's shelter, I started having doubts. *What if I can't finish? What if I get hurt?* The shelter, with only three log walls and a thin tin roof, didn't offer much comfort or protection. I plopped down on the rough wood floor and felt the wind graze my cheek, and I noticed how exposed—and alone—we were. As the sunlight faded, I quickly pulled out my Bible and flipped through it, seeking reassurance. My fingers traced the page until I found 2 Timothy 4:18:

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. ..."

Sensing God's presence, I tucked my Bible into my pack and scribbled a note in my journal. The stars were much brighter and clearer out here. I stared at the twinkling dots for a while before drifting peacefully to sleep.

After a good night's rest, I was ready to hit the trail. By the end of the second day, we'd completed 20 miles.

But I'd noticed Theron pressing his hand against his hip; it was obviously hurting him. With each mile, Theron's pain worsened. We were forced to find him a ride into the nearest town. Caleb decided to return home with his brother.

I wasn't prepared to be alone so soon. I anxiously thought of the three months ahead. Lord, I'm afraid, I prayed. Please be near me and protect me. I need you desperately.

### **Day 8. Father, as I continue my hike, make it a spiritual journey as well.**

Day after day, I walked in silence. Occasional rustling from somewhere in the woods sent chills down my spine. Was it a rattlesnake? A bear? Or just the wind?

At first, I was happy whenever the trail crossed through a town because there were people there. More importantly, I could call home on a pay phone. But after I hung up, sadness and loneliness overwhelmed me.



Going into towns soon provided little comfort. I was surrounded by strangers who didn't talk to me, didn't love me or care about the loneliness I felt.

I prayed God would send a friendly hiker my way.

### **Day 39. Father, I need your healing. Comfort me.**

After hiking a total of 60 miles in two days, my feet hurt so badly. With every step I took, I wanted to scream in pain.

Worse, I couldn't find a shelter. Somehow, I'd miscalculated the distance between the shelters, and the sun had set hours ago. I stumbled through the darkness, shining my flashlight in every direction.

In the distance, I thought I saw a light flashing back at me. I followed it.

It was a shelter—with a hiker inside! Breathing a quick hello, I dropped onto the grimy floor, exhausted. I unlaced my boots and carefully removed them. Grabbing my flashlight, I examined my hurting feet.

My right ankle looked like someone had been kicking it all day—red and badly swollen. A couple toenails had fallen off. I looked at my soles, and gasped. They were covered with bruises and open sores. Maybe this is it, I thought. Maybe it's time to give up.

"Looks like you've had a long day on the trail," the hiker commented, motioning to my feet. "My name's Rich."

Rich, it turned out, was a Christian. We hiked into town the next day, where he was getting off the trail, and had breakfast together. He encouraged me so much. I decided to relax in town for the rest of the day—which was encouraging for my feet, too.

### **Day 64. Father, thank you for the refreshing time in your Word today.**

As time passed, my feet still ached, but I decided to bite my lip and put up with the pain. And I'd talk to God as I hiked. I thanked

him each day for the friendly hikers he sent my way and for my friends back home. Some days, with tears slipping down my dirty cheeks, I'd tell God how tired I was, or how discouraged and lonely I felt. Some days, I admitted I just wanted this hike to end. But I was getting so much out of my long walk alone with God. That thought kept me going.

The quiet time also provided a great opportunity to memorize Scripture. As usual, I wanted something challenging, so I picked Psalm 119—the longest chapter in the Bible. When I repeated the verses, the words often fell into rhythm with the thud-thud-thud of my hiking boots against the dusty trail.

### **Day 88. fifty mile-per-hour winds and rain today—thank you, Lord, for rain gear!**

After months of being alone on the trail, I found a partner! I met Ryan in a shelter. He had started his hike in the middle of the Trail and was hiking in memory of his brother, who had recently died in a car accident.

"My brother hiked half of the Trail last summer," Ryan explained. "He figured he'd finish the rest later. But he never got the chance. So I'm gonna finish it for him."

Since Ryan wasn't a Christian, I prayed for a chance to share my faith with him. I soon got one. When we stopped in the next town, I got some sad news from home: Zach, a college buddy, had been killed in a car accident. Just like Ryan's brother. I cried as I shared the news with Ryan. Then I realized—I had a huge opportunity to talk about eternity.

"Ryan, if you died in a car accident, where do you think you would go?" I asked.

"I. ... I don't know," he said.

He started asking lots of questions. This is why I'm here! I thought. My bruised feet, the months of being alone—it was all worth it to be able to share God's truth and love.

## Day 103. thank you, Lord, for your promises and hard lessons.

At the base of the last mountain, Ryan and I met up with our families. My mom and I decided to hike to the summit together.

As we climbed, I heard many voices getting louder and louder the closer we got. Hundreds of people—day hikers, families, tourists—were at the top, toting video cameras and picnic baskets. Many were lined up in front of a huge sign that marked the end of the Trail, snapping photos. We stood in line, waiting for our turn to take a picture.

My mom shook her head. "None of these people have a clue of what you've just been through," she said.

Tuning out the voices and noise around me, I silently thanked God for the journey—for sticking with me, for teaching me, for changing me. I looked over at my mom and smiled.

"They may not know," I told her, "but I know where I've been."

*Now a junior at Wheaton College, Peter completed the 2,168-mile trip in three-and-a-half months, just two days before he had to be back at school. He prays for Ryan every day.*



**Don't try to carry your own burdens or you might end up like this.**

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



**The decision to follow Jesus is for many like a teenager's intentions to clean his room.. Sincere, but poorly motivated.**

<http://thebackpew.com>

# 20 Great Ways to Put Your Faith in Action

Compiled by Autumn Flutur

1. Offer to do some yard work for a widow or an elderly couple in your neighbourhood.
2. Start your own club. It can be anything from weaving baskets to playing croquet, to founding a Christian club.
3. Organize an auction where you and your friends can be bought for one day of service! Give the money to your favourite charity.
4. Volunteer to help coach your little brother's peewee football team.
5. Start your own Christian newspaper, magazine or Web site.
6. Offer to clean the bleachers, pick up the trash, etc. one Friday night after your school's football game.
7. Visit a nearby orphanage and spend the afternoon reading books and playing games with the children.
8. Volunteer at your local soup kitchen.
9. Sponsor a canned food drive. Give all donations to your local Salvation Army chapter.
10. Visit the apartments for the elderly to perform a skit or mini-play during their dinner time.
11. Coordinate a basketball game between your high school teachers and varsity team. Charge a few dollars and donate the money to your school improvement fund.
12. One Friday night, turn your basement into a coffee house. Serve desserts, hot chocolate, and of course, coffee! Play some

Christian music, and offer this as a fun and safe alternative to weekend partying.

13. Contact a church located in the inner city. With their help, plan a weekend missions trip to help them with whatever they need.

14. If you're musically gifted, host a benefit concert to support a needy family in the community. If you're not, talk to some local garage bands to see if they're interested in doing this.

15. Have an ice cream party for all the neighbourhood kids, celebrating the start of a new school year!

16. Help your parents out by spending a Saturday giving your house and garage a good fall cleaning, not to mention sorting through the boxes in the attic!

17. Teach a Sunday school class or volunteer in the church nursery.

18. Commit to becoming a "Big Brother" or "Big Sister" with your local "Big Brothers, Big Sisters" chapter or with a similar organization.

19. Volunteer at the Special Olympics games nearest you.

20. Commit to volunteering once a month. Be creative and diligent. Then watch how God blesses others—and you—through your unselfish work.

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