

The trip was great—
until everyone got sick.

Bad Day in the Badlands



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK ROBINSON

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

“Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover”
(D&C 66:9).

Topher had looked forward all year to his fifth-grade trip to the Black Hills and Badlands in South Dakota, USA. He had saved his allowance and lawn-mowing money to pay for the trip all by himself.

The morning of the trip, Topher and his family knelt by the sofa to pray. Dad said the prayer and asked Heavenly Father to watch over Topher while he was away. Then Mom drove Topher to the school to join the rest of his class.

The bus ride was fun. Everyone sang silly songs, told stories, and made plans for what they would do when they got to their campground. At lunchtime they stopped for a picnic.

“This is the best trip ever,” Topher told his friend Alex while they ate their sack lunches. “I can’t wait to see Mount Rushmore.” All school year Topher’s class had studied the places they would visit, like the Badlands, the memorial at Mount Rushmore, and even a real gold mine. They would stay at a campground, sleep in tents, and cook their food over a fire.

“Yeah,” Alex said, but he didn’t sound very happy. “My stomach feels funny,” he whispered and pressed his hand over his stomach. His face looked kind of pale.

“Want me to tell a teacher?” Topher asked.

“No. I’ll be OK.”

Topher finished his sandwich, but Alex hardly ate anything. After lunch everyone went back to the bus.

One by one, Topher’s classmates started getting sick. Even some of the teachers and parent chaperones got sick.

By the time they got to the campground, Topher felt sick too. He managed to eat some dinner, but he quickly threw it

up. He wished he were home. His parents would know how to help him feel better. Mom would make soup for him, and Dad would give him a priesthood blessing.

That gave Topher an idea.

Brother Turner, from Topher’s ward, was one of the chaperones. Topher went and found him by the campfire. “Brother Turner,” Topher asked quietly, “would you give me a blessing?”

Brother Turner looked sick too, but he managed a weak smile. “I’d be happy to give you a blessing, Topher.”

Together Brother Turner and Topher found a quiet spot nearby. Brother Turner laid his hands on Topher’s head. He paused before beginning, then gave a blessing. He asked Heavenly Father to help Topher feel better.

Topher felt peaceful as Brother Turner finished the blessing. Although he was still sick, he started to feel a little better. He found Alex and offered to get him some water.

“Thanks,” Alex said.

The next morning back on the bus, everyone was quiet. Topher thought about the blessing Brother Turner had given him. Next year Topher would turn 12 and would be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. He promised himself that he would be worthy to receive it and to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood when he was older. He wanted to be able to help others just like Brother Turner had helped him. ♦

The author lives in Colorado, USA.



“Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can feel it, and you can see the results of it.”

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015)

“The Aaronic Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 30.