

"This is the way, walk in it,"

When I was a child we spent many family weekends in the Lake District. My Mum and Dad loved the mountains and we would climb the very largest ones on a regular basis. As a young girl I found little pleasure in this; to me it just seemed pointless to huff and puff up a massive mountain only to come back down again afterwards! I was always the one at the back dragging my feet. I watched my Dad at the front striding it out with a large rucksack on his back, followed by my Mum and my brother. The bag my Dad carried was full and heavy; he carried waterproof coats, trousers, jumpers, hats, gloves for all the family; he carried our picnic and drinks to sustain us through the day; sometimes he would even carry a tent so we would have somewhere to shelter and play at lunchtime.

My Dad was always full of energy and never seemed to get tired on these walks in spite of the heavy bag he carried. I often watched from my vantage point lower down the path and wished that I could keep up..... And then one day my eight year old self had a revelation!!! It must be that the weight of the rucksack was responsible for pushing my Dad up the mountain; that was it, that was how he could stride up the mountain with so little effort! I ran ahead and asked if *I* could carry the rucksack so that it would push *me* up the mountain. I put it on my back (the bag was so big and I was so small it virtually touched my ankles!) as my parents looked on amused. I set off up the mountain way ahead of the rest of the family; I was now full of energy and scaled the mountain in no time. It worked; the rucksack on my back was pushing me up the mountain!!!

We all have emotional or spiritual mountains to climb from time to time. Sometimes we can see God clearly leading the way and it's as if we can tangibly see His footsteps leading the way for us to follow. Other times we feel as if we're walking in a fog, we can't see the way ahead, we just keep walking because it's all we know to do. That's when we need encouragement from behind to nudge us forward; the still small voice encouraging us to keep going, keep climbing and keep reaching. God's word says:

'Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,

"This is the way, walk in it,"

Whenever you turn to the right hand

Or whenever you turn to the left.' Isaiah 30 v 21

As a child I falsely believed that the weight of the rucksack behind me was pushing me up the mountain. As an adult I **know** that God stands behind us, to encourage us forward, to carry the weight of our burdens and to catch us if we fall.

So my friend, if you are facing a mountain today, listen for the still small voice behind you directing you in the way you should go. Be encouraged. Eventually you will reach the mountain top; you will survey the new horizon and you will know that the climb was so worth it.