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As an education major, I think I have a slight obsession with children's books; I'm guessing a little more than the average person. Anyway, I found this book called Apple Trouble written by Ragnhild Scamell and illustrated by Michael Terry in my collection, and I found a connection between one of the characters and God... I know, crazy, right? Well, I want to read this story to you with the help of my friends to act it out.

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Now that we have read and witnessed the story of how Hedgehog solved her problem and finally made it into her winter nest, I can't help but connect the story to the way we handle our obstacles. We may not have to fit into a winter nest with a large red apple and other objects on our back, but the obstacles we come across are just as real.

Being a full time college student, managing three jobs, being involved in activities on campus, and preparing for student teaching is tough, but there is one factor that not only I tend to look over, but I find that others do as well. God is not going to bring us to something without getting us through it! It may seem rough at the time and impossible to get through, but little do we know that's only part of His plan. He is going to provide us with anything and everything that we need to get through whatever he brings us to. The obstacles that we do face from day to day give us the opportunity to learn and grow. They give us the chance to make the best of situations even when they seem like the end of the world.

Hedgehog tried to get the apple off her back by curling into a ball and then uncurling, and in the end it didn't work? Well, that is sometimes how it works for us. If we try to take matters into our own hands, we don't always succeed. In order to conquer the impossible, we need to let go of what we think is necessary and listen to the signs that God gives us. I know that what I'm saying is a lot harder than it sounds, but sometimes letting go and believing that God will take care of us is the just the first step.

Now, having faith is a huge deal and, in many cases, it is the one thing that is missing. As in the song "Find Your Wings" by Mark Harris, "Faith gives you the courage to dare to do great things." Knowing that God is going to be there whenever we fall, or we need to remove an apple from our back, is very reassuring and can empower us if we allow it. With faith, we can build ourselves up for greatness and accomplish any task set before us. We are able to reach for the stars and not be afraid of taking a wrong step here or there, or into a bush or a pond. As it's stated in the book of Mark, Bartimaeus is healed by his faith, not by his own works. Because he believes in Jesus, the son of God, he is made better. Because of his faith, he is able to live the remainder of his life full of vision, just as we are able to do if we just have faith.

According to Proverbs 3:5-7, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Even when we veer off the path of what God has set for us, he always manages to get us back on track. No matter what barriers we come up against, God is the one who is there through it all. He is

there to guide us down the path He has already paved for us. He is there to watch over us and keep us safe as we do so. God will always be by our side to pick us up after we fall, or after we manage to obtain objects on our backs. God is like the Goat in the story who is there to eat the paper for dessert like it's nothing. He might leave those crumpled leaves behind once in a while, but in the end, we will be able to return to our winter nests and be protected from those large apples that fall from the tree. So, although the trouble may be the apple, the solution is always God. Amen!

PRAYER

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the opportunity to gather in this place today and worship you just as we are intended. We pray for this Holy house in which you have bestowed upon us along with your children in which you have sent to be servants of your will. Be with those that are in a time of trial. Please guide them back to the path in which you have paved for them, and let their fears be set aside while the thought of you is brought forward as they long for answers.

Lord in your mercy...

All-Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father,

We pray today for the soldiers who have recently left to go overseas and for those who are patiently waiting to return home. We thank you for sending such wonderful servants that are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to protect ours. We also pray for the leaders of this nation and around the world. We pray that they follow your guidance and your will. Please protect those less fortunate than ourselves and be with them as their struggles are sometimes more prominent than ours.

Lord in your mercy...

All-Hear our prayer

Almighty God,

We pray for the Augustana community in preparation for the second half of the semester and for new experiences. We pray for the faculty and staff that make our lives livable as well as the students who bring Augustana to life. Be with us as we move to the next stages in our lives and try to be your living will. We thank you for the opportunity to share this worship experience with one another and most importantly, with you.

Lord in your mercy...

All-Hear our prayer

God,

We thank you for today, for this is the day that you have made, so let us rejoice and be glad in it. Keep us safe as we travel to different places and as we venture forth into the world unknown. Let us remember that you are with us wherever we go, forever and for always.

Amen