

Climbing Chrysolite

The view from Colorado's Mount Chrysolite steals what little breath the climb doesn't. A shawl of snow rests on the peaks to the east, marking the Continental Divide.

That's how author and minister Max Lucado describes the beauty of nature in that locale in his book *You Changed My Life: Stories of Real People with Remarkable Hearts*.

"You'd swear that's Montana you see to the north. Circles of ice-cold, trout-packed pristine ponds stretch through the valley beneath you like a straight string of pearls," he wrote.

Each Thursday during the summer, some 400 youngsters make the 14,000-foot climb. They've traveled from all over the nation to spend a week at Frontier Ranch, a Young Life camp. Some come to escape parents or hang out with a boyfriend. But before the week culminates, all hear about Jesus. And all will witness His work from the top of Mount Chrysolite.

They will all climb the peak. For that reason, several Young Life directors caboose the end of the pack. They prod and applaud, making sure every camper crests the top. Lucado said he walked with them.

One young student, whose sweet spot shows great actuarial potential, counted the strides to the peak – 8,000. Somewhere around number 4,000, Matthew from Minnesota decided to call it quits, saying he was too tired to take another step.

"I took a quick liking to the guy," Lucado said. "Most anyone would." Lucado described him as jovial, pleasant and "in this case, donkey-determined not to climb that mountain. He let everyone but a few of us pass him. 'I'm heading down,' he announced. A Young Life staffer spelled out the consequences: 'Can't send you down alone, friend. You turn back, we all turn back.'

"The small circle of 'we,' I realized, included 'me,'" Lucado said. "I didn't want to go back. I had two options: miss the mountaintop or help Matt to see it. I coaxed him, begged him, negotiated a plan with him. Thirty steps of walking. Sixty seconds of resting. We inched our way at this pace for an hour. Finally, we stood within a thousand feet of the peak. But the last stretch of trail rose up as straight as a fireman's ladder.

"We got serious. Two guys each took an arm, and I took the rear. I placed both hands on Matt's gluteus maximus and shoved. We all but drug him past the timberline.

"That's when we heard the applause. Four hundred kids on the crest of Mount Chrysolite gave Matt from Minnesota a standing ovation. They whooped and hollered and slapped him on the back. As I slumped down to rest," Lucado said, "this thought steamrolled my way: *There it is, Max, a picture of my plan. Do all you can to push each other to the top.*"

This story by Max Lucado has special meaning for those of us in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home. Our calling is to push, pull and encourage people along their way – our residents, their family members and, as associates, each other.