

Reid Siminski

What Being Tall Means to Me

Meeting new people has always been something I've been reluctant to do. People always ask me the same question: "Do you play basketball? Volleyball? What position?" - because surely, being tall means you have to be on some sort of sports team. Being tall to me does not mean being an athlete, which is what society assumes based on my height. I am not an athlete, but I am so many other things that don't fit into society's tall profile. I am a boy scout, I am a tuba player in the band, I am a team questioner on the debate team, I am a witness on the mock trial team, I am the vice president of my class, I am a student at Emmaus High School, I am a waiter at a restaurant, but I am not an athlete.

Last year, I travelled to Lima, Peru to serve on a team of medical missionaries. I had been excited and planning for the trip for weeks. I had packed my suitcase the night before with everything that I needed. The next morning, at 2:30 AM, my mom and I had loaded our suitcases along with the team's medical supplies into the back of our minivan and drove off to meet the rest of our team. When we arrived, everyone helped to transfer the supplies from our van into the back of the shuttle bus that would take us to the airport. At the airport, everyone took a hand in unloading the bags and getting them to the luggage check. When we got inside, I looked around to make sure that my suitcase was accounted for, but it was nowhere in sight. When I realized it wasn't there, I immediately ran back to the bus, telling the driver that my suitcase was never unloaded. I anxiously checked between the seats and in the trunk, but I found nothing. My suitcase was still in the back of our minivan back home. This meant I had no clothes, no toiletries, and no shoes for the week. My team members were kind enough to lend me various items including t-shirts, socks, and scrubs, but finding extra-tall pants and size 13 shoes didn't

happen. Despite this, I had the most impactful week. I served in the team's pharmacy dispensing medications, vitamins, and eyeglasses. I was always greeted with wide eyes and fascinated looks, especially from the young children. I'm not sure if it was my ill-fitting clothing, my mediocre Spanish, or the fact that I was the tallest person at the clinic. On average, Peruvian men tend to be shorter than American men, so I made quite an impression. During this trip, my height was a challenge because I couldn't easily replace my belongings for the week, however, it proved to be an asset by drawing unexpected attention that helped me to connect with people.

Being tall means so many different things to me. Being tall means that I can reach things on the top shelf. Being tall means that my friends and family can always easily find me in a crowd. Being tall means that I can't shop for shoes and clothing at the same stores as my friends, as the regular stores never have my size in stock. Being tall means that I hope to get the aisle seat on a bus or on an airplane. Being tall means that my feet always hang off the bottom of the bed, and I sometimes have to duck to fit under a showerhead.

In conclusion, being tall comes with both benefits and challenges, and being tall does not define my character, the person that I will become, or the activities or career in which I am meant to participate.