



Rachel's Tears

The Spiritual Journey
of Columbine Martyr

Rachel Scott

By Beth Nimmo and Darrell Scott

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Introduction	2
Letters to God.....	2
Resting in God's Hands.....	2
Forgiving the Unforgivable	2
"Halls of Tragedy"	2
<i>Beth:</i>	3
<i>Darrell:</i>	4
<i>Beth:</i>	4
"Living with the Lifemaker".....	4
<i>Beth:</i>	5
Opened Eyes	5
<i>Darrell:</i>	5
Flawed but Faithful	6
<i>Beth:</i>	6
<i>Darrell:</i>	6
Finding Hope in a Broken World.....	7
<i>Darrell:</i>	7
<i>Beth:</i>	7
<i>Darrell:</i>	8
Love From Above.....	8
<i>Beth:</i>	8
<i>Darrell:</i>	10
The Call to Commitment	10
<i>Beth:</i>	11
<i>Darrell:</i>	12
Creative Compassion	12
<i>Beth:</i>	12
No Solitary Soul	12
Lori (a friend at Breakthrough):	13
Your Life, Your Choice.....	14
<i>Darrell:</i>	14

INTRODUCTION

The Book We Didn't Want to Write

We are thankful that you are reading this book, but we hope you understand that it is a book we never wanted to write.

We do all this because we believe that our daughter Rachel Scott has a powerful message that survives her tragic death and needs to be heard by everyone.

We would drop everything in an instant if we could have Rachel with us once again, or if we could have kept our son Craig from experiencing the horrors he endured that day in the Columbine library.

At the same time, even though we never would have chosen to live through the past year, we *have* lived through it, and we now have a powerful conviction that God had a purpose in the way that Rachel's life unfolded.

As you will see, Rachel had a growing sense that she did not have long to live. We picked up only inklings of this while she was alive, but it all became crystal clear to us in the weeks and months after her death as we read the many journals she had written.

Letters to God

Some people cry out to God in prayer. Others reach out to God through singing, playing music, or creating works of art. Rachel did all of these things, but more than anything, she poured out her heart to God through writing in her journals.

In 1997, Beth (Rachel's mother) gave Rachel a small journal for Christmas. That very day, Rachel wrote a prayer to God on page one. Reading that prayer today, you can see the simple and joyous intimacy she had with God, telling Him about her plans for the journal, and thanking Him for the birth of His Son nearly 2,000 years ago. Over the next 16 months, Rachel would write hundreds of letters to God, leaving us with a record of her love for her Lord.

After her death, we found many of her journals, which overflow with her prayers, her doubts, her ever-evolving sense of purpose and calling, and her growing sense that her days on this earth were numbered. You will be reading portions of her private journals on the pages which follow.

Resting in God's Hands

Through the events of the past year, we have come to a deeper understanding of something theologians call the sovereignty of God. In some ways, the losses we have endured have helped us experience a deeper level of trust in God and a more accepting faith that He knows exactly what He is doing.

This is a painful thing to say, of course, for no parent wants to go through the soul-wrenching things that we and the other Columbine parents have endured.

At the same time, we know that Rachel prayed that she would make an impact on the world. She wanted to serve God with all her heart. And her willingness to die

for her faith has already had a powerful impact on thousands and thousands of young people around the world who have heard us talk about her message.

Forgiving the Unforgivable

Were we angry when our daughter was killed? Yes! Were we sad? Beyond description! But are we forgiving? That is probably one of the most difficult issues to face when you have been so deeply wronged.

Our understanding of God's heart left us only one choice, the decision to forgive. It was the choice of Jesus as He hung on a cross dying. He said in Matthew 5:43-44: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Forgiveness is not just for the offender. It is also for the one who is offended. If we do not forgive, we end up in perpetual anger and bitterness and eventually offend others with our words or actions. If we forgive, we experience a "letting go" or cleansing process that frees us from the offender.

God wants us to overcome evil with good. Such a thing is beyond human ability, but it is possible when we acknowledge our weakness and submit to God's grace. It is our prayer that this book will help sow the seeds of grace and forgiveness in your heart as you read the incredible story of our precious daughter Rachel.

"HALLS OF TRAGEDY"

The events of April 20, 1999, have generated miles of print in newspapers and magazines and months' worth of coverage on TV and radio all over the world.

Nearly everyone now knows that two troubled teens who were overcome with hatred and a desire for revenge lashed out at their peers at Columbine High School, a school of nearly 1,900 students located eight miles southwest of Denver, Colorado. When the smoke cleared, twelve young people and one teacher were dead, nearly two dozen more were injured, and hundreds more were traumatized by the hellish sights and sounds they experienced.

Investigators had to use extreme caution in analyzing the crime, and what they found was as shocking as the shootings themselves. The two boys had planted nearly 100 explosive devices in and around the school. Most of the bombs never went off, but if they had, they could have taken hundreds more innocent lives.

Since that fateful day, Columbine has become a potent symbol of the alienation and violence that can often lie hidden beneath the seemingly tranquil surface of contemporary American life. The tragedy has been endlessly dissected by various experts, civic leaders, and religious figures.

What is less well known is how that fateful day was experienced by those who were closest to the tragedy. In the following pages, Darrel and Beth recount the

emotional roller coaster they rode as the day's events unfolded.

Beth:

The dawn broke over our hometown of Littleton that fateful morning of April 20, 1999, just as it had so many times before. What began as an ordinary school day at our household in a typical middle-class neighborhood just blocks away from Columbine High School gave me no hint of the storm clouds gathering over my home, my family, my city, and ultimately my world. I could never have imagined, as I went through the usual motions of getting my children up and ready for school that morning, that before this day was over, my heart would be shredded and my familiar world left shattered. On this day, my precious 17-year-old daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, would be cruelly martyred for her faith in Jesus Christ and go to Heaven.

Rachel and Craig made it out the door to school, and after dropping Mike, my youngest son, off at his school, I went to work. The day was busy, and before I knew where the time had gone, it was after 11 AM. The office phone rang, and I picked it up. Much to my surprise it was my oldest daughter, Bethanee. I could hear panic and fear in her voice. She said, "Mom, something terrible is happening at Columbine. I'm going to go down there and get Craig and Rachel."

She frantically told me to turn on the news, and I tuned in to a news station. My heart began to race as I heard the newscaster describe a vicious attack occurring at Columbine High School. *Rachel! Craig!* My thoughts raced as I tried to make sense of what I was hearing. I called my husband, Larry [the children's stepfather], on his cell phone and told him to come and pick me up right away. We needed to get to our children!

While I waited anxiously for Larry, I had another call. A momentary rush of relief came over me. It was my 16-year-old son, Craig. The conversation didn't last long, but his words were chilling. He said: "Mom, I'm okay and safe, but this is bad, Mom, really, really bad. I've been praying with kids outside the school that may have brothers or sisters still in there that they will get out safe, but I can't find Rachel. Mom, I have a real bad feeling about Rachel and we have to pray for her. This is bad, Mom, and we need to pray for Rachel!"

Seconds after I said good-bye to Craig and hung up, Larry ran into my office. Parents were being directed to two pickup points where students were being bused in. One was Leawood Elementary School and the other was Columbine Public Library. Larry had been in conversation by cell phone with Rachel's father, Darrell, and since he was going to Leawood, we decided to go to the library.

The day was long, chaotic and confusing. Students were bused in, tearful reunions were held, and news releases were read. Around 8 PM, we were told that no more information was going to be released that evening. We were encouraged to go home. No more information? Where was my Rachel? How could I just "go home" without my daughter? Was she alive? Was

she wounded?

I knew in my heart that I needed to go home. I had four other children and a son-in-law there. Family members, our pastor, and others went with us to our house. As we drove up to our driveway, on the lawn sat my daughter Dana with friends, crying and comforting each other.

Inside, Craig was sitting on the couch in a daze. I hugged him, but he did not seem to be aware of what was going on around him. Pastor Bruce and Claudia began to reach out to him. They were sitting beside him on the piano bench when the story of Craig's experience started gushing out. He was crying hard as he tried to explain what had happened.

Craig was in the library, sitting with Matt Kechter and Isaiah Shoels. The kids heard sounds like firecrackers going off. A teacher ran into the room yelling for the kids to get down, but until they saw a wounded student come in and collapse right inside the door, they thought that it must be senior pranks. Kids started crowding under tables. Craig was between Matt and Isaiah as they crouched together. Eric and Dylan [the killers] entered the room shouting and yelling. Craig heard one of them say, "Get anyone with a white hat." Craig had worn a white hat to school that day, so he quickly took it off and stuffed it inside his shirt. There was complete chaos as guns were going off, the alarms in the school were screeching, and the shooters were mocking and taunting their victims.

As Eric and Dylan approached the side of the library where Craig was, they spotted Isaiah, one of the few black students at Columbine. They made horrible racial remarks to him and shot him. But it was if God put blinders on the killers when it came to Craig. Craig played dead so he would not draw any attention to himself. They then shot and killed Matt before moving to another table. Craig had to lie there in the blood of his two friends who were lying dead on each side of him.

At some point, the shooters left the library. The roar of gunshots was so loud in Craig's ears that he thought his ears were bleeding. He could not tell the exact location of the killers, but he began to pray. Craig asked God for two things. First, he asked God to take away his fear, and second, he asked for courage. He felt God immediately answer his prayer, and his fear suddenly disappeared. He heard what he believed to be God's voice instructing him what to do next. He was to get up and get out and take everyone with him.

The kids were paralyzed with fear. Most of them were too afraid to move a muscle or say a word. Craig started rousing them, saying, "Come on! Let's get out of here!" One young lady who had been shot in the shoulder and was in serious condition was weakly calling out, "Please, please help me." Craig helped her get up, and with the other surviving students, they made their way out of a side exit door before the students reentered the library intent on claiming more victims. Thanks to Craig's bravery, their remaining targets had escaped to safety.

That night was a painful, sleepless one. Craig was

in complete shock and trauma, and brokenhearted sorrow gripped and overwhelmed the rest of the family. It was not until around 11:30 the next morning that we received a call from the coroner's office confirming that Rachel Joy Scott was among those who died on April 20, 1999. Even as I write these words, nearly a year later, tears stream down my face knowing that the destruction of that day cannot be reversed. Real violence has real consequences.

Saturday, April 24, 1999, was chosen for Rachel's funeral service. We felt strongly that dwelling on the violence and horror of that awful Tuesday could not play a part of our remembering Rachel. She loved life far too much, and we would try our best to celebrate and remember all the wonderful things that made her so special to all of us.

As members of her family and so many of her friends stood to give tearful tribute to her, we smiled, laughed, and wept over the wonderful gift she was to us. As our pastor, Bruce Porter, stood to speak, God inspired him to talk about a bloodstained torch that had fallen from Rachel's hand. He challenged everyone to take up Rachel's torch.

Only God knew how that moment would spark a generation of young people to take up the challenge of what Rachel and the other Columbine victims represented. We were later told that CNN, which televised her service uninterrupted, logged its largest viewing audience of any broadcast shown. It even eclipsed Princess Diana's funeral, which would have pleased Rachel greatly since she lightheartedly called herself "Queen Rachel."

Our family was the first to respond to that challenge of picking up the torch that Rachel and the other slain Christians at Columbine carried. In the following pages, we want to share with you the heart of a young girl who was totally given to pouring out her life for the Lord. Because her time on earth was cut short, we have committed ourselves to walking out her mission with the legacy of her writings, poetry, and artwork as a constant reminder of what this life is all about.

Darrell:

(At the elementary school on the day of the shootings, with Sandy, his fiancé, when he first heard his daughter Rachel was probably dead:) I remember being in such pain that I could hardly think or talk. Sandy and I sat with our arms around each other for support. I was conscious of trained counselors in the room who were reaching out to the families, but I had not expressed a desire to talk with any of them. However, as we sat there, I began to sense the presence of someone directly behind me. As that feeling grew stronger, I finally looked over my right shoulder. There sat a Catholic nun, praying silently to God, with her hands stretched out to Sandy and me. There was something so serene and peaceful about her that I just turned around and spoke to her. She didn't say much, but her eyes spoke volumes. Sandy and I ended up in her embrace, and I remember sobbing from the depths of my being. Looking back, I

believe that was the moment when Rachel's death became real to me.

Around 11:00 the next morning, I received the official call that Rachel was dead. She had been shot outside the school where she was sitting and eating lunch with a friend.

Beth:

It would be months before Rachel's backpack was returned to us. The police were keeping it as evidence. One of the killers' bullets was in the backpack, where it had stopped after passing through her body and hitting her journal.

Though it would be several months before we saw this journal, shortly after her funeral, other things she had written began to turn up. Over time, we found her writings in various journals and notebooks, and written on single pieces of paper and placed throughout her room.

In a journal entry May 2, 1998, which was less than eleven months before the Columbine tragedy, Rachel wrote that it would be her last year of life. She wasn't fearful; she was thankful to God.

This will be my last year, Lord. I have gotten what I can. Thank you.

In an undated journal entry, Rachel wrote out some verses about the brevity of her life.

Just passing by
Just coming through
Not staying long
I always knew
This home I have
Will never last.

As we struggled to deal with our grief over the next few months, we carefully examined what Rachel had written in her journals, in notebooks, in letters to friends, and everywhere else, including friends' high school yearbooks. It soon became apparent to us that Rachel had a deeper spiritual life than we had ever known about, and that she seemed to have had distinct premonitions about her death.

Little by little we developed a more complete picture of this young girl who seemed spiritually wise beyond her years.

"LIVING WITH THE LIFEMAKER"

For millennia, people wanting to draw near to God have sought Him out in silence and solitude.

Moses met God on the mountaintop. Jesus regularly retreated to lonely and quiet places where He could commune with His Father. And down through the ages, followers of Christ such as Saint Francis have received guidance, encouragement, wisdom and love from the times they spent talking and listening to God.

Even Mother Teresa, a modern-day disciple who was best known for her tireless service in behalf of the

poor, said she drew her strength from her private times of prayer.

Today, we live in a fast-paced and noisy world that beguiles us with its glittering images and lulls us with its omnipresent entertainment. Finding the time and the place for silence and solitude requires commitment and work.

For Rachel, the intimacy she desired with God typically came when she was writing in her journal, which was her favorite way of communicating with her heavenly Father.

Whether it was early in the morning or late at night, and regardless of whether she was surrounded by other students at Columbine or alone in her room, she opened her journal to a blank page and poured out her heartfelt prayers.

Beth: **Opened Eyes**

Prior to reading Rachel's journals, I had known she loved the Lord. I knew she shared her faith with others. I knew she was committed to her youth group and faithful in attending meetings. And I knew she was absolutely adamant about accepting people for who they were because that's what she believed God wanted her to do.

But these are all external things. Reading her journals gave me an entirely new perspective on the spiritual journey going on within Rachel's soul, much of which had been entirely invisible to me before. You could say that the journals opened my eyes to the inner spiritual life of my daughter.

Going Deeper

Rachel had always been a good girl in terms of her behavior and her morals. Outward goodness wasn't enough for her, however, and when she was quite young, she decided to go deeper in her walk with God.

When she was 12 years old, Rachel spent some time with relatives in Shreveport, Louisiana, where Darrell's father had once pastored a church. While attending a church service there, Rachel walked forward to the altar and prayed for God to fill her with the Holy Spirit. My sister-in-law, who told me the whole experience later, said it was a beautiful thing. Here is how Rachel later described it:

It was March 5, 1993. We went to their Pentecostal church. They were having praise and worship, and if you know anything about this religion, you know that they jump around and dance during praise and worship. I had always thought it looked funny till that night. Everyone was at the altar, and I felt so drawn to it. You have to understand that I was so young, and so for a 12-year-old to be drawn that way, it was nothing short of God. I slowly walked up, till finally I reached the front. I sorta looked around and then closed my eyes and extended my hands toward Heaven. I don't remember what I said, but I will never forget the feeling I had. That night, I accepted Jesus into my heart. I was

saved.

Rachel came back from that trip with a noticeable change in her life.

An Open Book

Rachel's pursuit of God was so intense at times. In one letter to God she wrote: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry I ever doubted you. I'm sorry I didn't trust you. You know what you're doing, and you know what's best for me. From now on, I put all faith and trust in you." After reading the things that Rachel wrote to the Lord and seeing how she talked so openly to God in her letters, I was either ashamed of myself or convicted about how shallow my spiritual life had been.

Some of her journal entries reminded me of David's writings in the Psalms. David talked to God about the very issues of his heart, and he was open and passionate with the Lord in his writings. And this is the same kind of sense I get when I read Rachel's journals. There is such a passion for God, such a transparency about her doubts and fears.

I think her passionate intimacy with God went above and beyond what most people ever experience in their relationship with the Lord, but I don't think she thought of herself as a mystic or anything unusual. I think she was trying to understand God with an intensity that too many of us never seem to reach.

Darrell:

People do all kinds of things to get away from struggles in their lives. Some take pain relievers. Others drink or do drugs. Still others buy fancy cars or take expensive vacations in an effort to momentarily leave behind their troubled lives.

Something that surprised me about Rachel's journals was that there was pain in her life that I didn't know about. Even more surprising was the way she sought not to escape problems but asked God to use them to teach her things.

Some of Rachel's pain was caused by the divorce Beth and I went through. In addition, she expressed the sadness she experienced after being rejected by friends at school. Sometimes people who were otherwise very close to her made fun of her because of her faith in God, and their comments hurt her very deeply.

Instead of trying to deaden the suffering or turn away from God, she acknowledged it, learned from it, and asked God to walk through it with her.

A Passion for God

Rachel had a holy passion that at times consumed her. She would never hit people over the head with a Bible. But she was brutally honest with herself, and she had an unbridled passion to serve God.

Willing to Submit

I think Rachel understood that being a Christian and taking up the cross mean that we lay down our

need for control, giving the control up to God. She saw that Christianity meant submitting. She knew that God's grace touches us most deeply when we are weak, not when we are strong.

The question I see on page after page of Rachel's journal is this one: Who's in charge of things, God or us? It's a question we all need to ask ourselves.

FLAWED BUT FAITHFUL

Beth:

As a mother, I have to say Rachel was a very good girl who caused me very few real problems. Usually she was very pleasant in her personality and she had a quick wit, which always helped her to see the funny side of situations.

On the other hand, she wasn't perfect. Whether she was right or wrong about something, she was very intense in whatever she did, and that occasionally led to stubbornness on her part. She could also be melodramatic or charm her way into getting what she wanted.

There were times when Rachel gave me a quick answer that revealed a disobedient attitude. And like any regular kid, she routinely fussed and fought with her siblings. As the middle of five children, rather than be the forgotten child, Rachel used that position to her advantage and was quite independent. She didn't exactly fit in with her older sisters, Bethanee and Dana, or her younger brothers, Craig and Michael. I believe she learned at a very young age how to be her own individual.

Rachel's problems and temptations were not that much different from what a lot of young people are faced with these days. The way she handled them was not to trust herself but to commit all her ways to the Lord.

My daughter was not a superhuman saint, and I think she probably would have been a little exasperated to be categorized that way. But if she thought her transparency about her shortcomings could inspire others to be more honest with God, she would be glad to serve as a role model.

Darrell:

Rachel had faults and flaws, and she never pretended to be perfect. She was never happy with her physical appearance, and she and the family joked about it. She was blind to her own beauty, and I think that helped people of all kinds, shapes, and sizes relate to her.

She also struggled with the typical petty jealousies, and she wrote about that in her journal. In one instance, she wrote about her conflicting emotions after another Columbine student got a lead role in a play.

Dear God,

I know that at first I was really jealous of _____. She's sweet, pretty, popular, and she got the major part for the drama. But now I only admire those qualities. You have blessed her with gifts and talents and I can

only be happy for her. Thank You for giving her lead role in the drama. It has taught me that I won't always be in the spotlight. I am thankful to have a chance to be in the drama at all. Tomorrow I have an audition. I am not expecting to get a part. If I don't, I promise not to criticize or get jealous of those who make it. If I get a part, I promise not to let it go to my head, and I will remember to thank Thee for the ability, strength, courage and talent You blessed me with. I don't want to be successful without You, God. I can't be successful without You.

Love always,
Rachel Joy

That is the kind of thing Rachel worked on, and during the last years of her life, I never heard her say anything negative about anyone, even though she had been severely mistreated by some of her closest friends when she became more serious about her commitment to "walk her talk." When I read her journals, I see her struggles, but I also see her sense of contentment with who she was.

I was overwhelmed as I read about her struggles with peer pressure and watched her temptation unfold on paper, how she thought through the situations and made her choices.

Dear God,

I promise that I will not drink this Friday when I go out with _____. This is so tempting. I want to go so bad. Well, I thought about it (as you know) and I thought that since you would forgive me anyways I may as well do it. Then I realized that you will always, always forgive, but you may not let it go unpunished. Then I decided not to do it strictly out of fear. Then I thought about it more, and thought that if I did it out of fear it would not be done because I loved you, I obeyed you, and I followed you. That is my reason for not going now. I know that I will always be faced with temptation, but because I love you, I obey you, and I follow you, I will not fall into the core of it. Thank you, Father.

Love always, your child
Rachel Joy

Time Is Short

Rachel had an inward motivation to accomplish as much as possible. She sensed an urgency that she often wrote about. We now realize that there was a spiritual awareness on her part that time was short. She talked about the fact that she would not live long enough to get married. She wrote several poems that showed her awareness that she would die young.

Her death has caused me to consider the remaining years of my life. I was on an airplane recently that developed major engine problems, and we were forced to make an emergency landing. I found that there was no fear in my heart through that whole experience. I have also been made aware of the brevity of life and the need to walk out each day as

though it could be my last.

Ten months after the Columbine tragedy, two young people were murdered in the same Subway shop where Rachel had worked. She knew both of them. The young man had drawn a picture of Rachel and given it to our family after her death. The young woman lived in a house directly behind Rachel's bedroom, less than fifty yards away. If Rachel had not died at Columbine, she would have probably been at the Subway shop that night. She wrote in one of her poems, "Tomorrow is not a promise, but a chance." The lives and deaths of all these precious people should challenge us to live life to its full potential every day.

FINDING HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

In the days after the Columbine tragedy, pundits and commentators reacted with shock and surprise. Many of them asked, How could something like this happen in a prosperous, peaceful, and supposedly happy place like Littleton, Colorado?

Meanwhile, Internet chat rooms became havens for hundreds of people who expressed a different view of the tragedy. There, in the safety and anonymity of virtual space, young people from around the country said they understood the alienation and anger of the two killers.

Rachel Scott was far from bitter and angry, but she could certainly identify with the alienation of her fellow students, and she had tasted her share of the heartbreak and brokenness of life.

When Rachel was around seven years old, her parents--Darrell Scott and Beth Nimmo--separated and later divorced. Although they are reluctant to talk about these matters, both parents realize their failure had an impact on their children.

Darrell:

Failure and Forgiveness

Regardless of the reasons for a divorce, it is never easy when children are involved. Children will always be affected by divorce. They need their parents more than ever afterwards. If you are the divorced parent of children, please understand that God wants to use you to bring healing to your children. Do not try to heal your own hurts by encouraging your children to choose sides or by badmouthing your ex-spouse. That will only damage your children, who will one day resent you for it.

I knew the importance of both a mother and father image for children. I made a decision to never say anything negative to my children about their mother. They needed her, and they also needed me. We had joint custody of the children, so I had them with me every weekend. As they got older, they would sometimes spend more time with their friends, which was understandable.

Beth and I were able to resolve our conflicts several years before Rachel's death. I am grateful for that, because things would have been so much harder

if we hadn't.

Both Beth and I are now remarried. I am saddened by the fact that Rachel died just before Sandy and I were to be married. She had written in her diary that her dad had met a wonderful lady with three awesome sons. She had grown to really love Sandy and constantly asked me, "Dad, when are you and Sandy getting married?"

On January 30, 2000, Sandy and I were married. The first thing we did after the ceremony was take the whole wedding party out to the cemetery where Sandy placed her bouquet on Rachel's grave.

Beth:

From the time I was a little girl, I was raised to believe that marriage and family were sacred responsibilities, so when Darrell and I separated in 1989, my whole world fell apart. Out of desperation, I became a woman of prayer as I never had before.

I regret that Darrell and I did not resolve our issues as husband and wife, but I am grateful that we had resolved most of the problems long before April 20, 1999. I can't imagine what it would have been like to lose Rachel and have hard feelings still between us. I am thankful for the touch of God that forgives and brings healing.

Depending on God

As I said, prayer became like an obsession to me. There was an urgency in my heart to constantly feel the love of God. I prayed for two things every day. First, I prayed that my children would be safe and that I would know how to care for them in every way. I had taken Darrell for granted in so many of the business areas of life that I had very little experience. Second, I prayed for the healing of my own heart. I was very broken and felt personal failure and low self-esteem.

God was good to me during that time. I felt that God became my husband. I developed a deeper relationship with the Lord than I had ever experienced before. It was at this point that I started including my children in daily morning prayer.

Every day during our devotional time we shared our requests, and many times the kids would pray for something. We were well aware that it was God who was taking care of us and meeting our needs.

* * *

For the last several years of her life, Rachel referred to herself as "Queen Rachel." She loved to carry herself in a royal manner, which of course included being waited on by other family members. At one point, our telephone answering machine greeted callers with the message: "Hello. You have reached the house of Queen Rachel and her servants Larry, Beth, Dana, Craig and Michael. If you have anything you want them to do for me, please leave a message." Such antics didn't offend her siblings.

A large part of her Queen Rachel persona included *no cooking*. Rachel could not cook at all. When Rachel made tossed salad, the result looked like she put a whole head of lettuce in a bowl, threw in a tomato, and-

-voila--tossed salad. Rachel was faithful to help with chores--if they didn't include cooking.

Queen Rachel did have her low moments when she did not feel or act like royalty. Those were the times when she would struggle with her doubts and her fears, and she would question God. However, Rachel had a resiliency that allowed her to see the sunshine after the clouds disappeared. Most of the time, she would come right back with an "up" attitude and be her perky little self again.

From June 1989 to November 1995, I was a single parent. My children and I adjusted our lives the best we were able. When I met Larry Nimmo in the fall of 1994, I was not thinking about marriage at all. Larry and I started dating, and our relationship developed into so much more. It was a joke between us that only a crazy man would marry a woman with five teenagers in the house. During our dating period, our children gave Larry a hard time. They would "charge" him money to talk with me on the phone. Bethanee and Rachel were especially great at this. Bethanee always teased Larry about seeing him on *America's Most Wanted*, and I think as far as Rachel was concerned, Larry probably owed her one or two million dollars for being allowed to talk with me.

Darrell:

A Father's Final Talk

A few days before Rachel died, she and I had one of the best conversations we had had in years. I didn't know it then, but that would be our last real talk.

Rachel had been out late one night and was cited for breaking the Littleton curfew, so I had to take her downtown to pay a fine. She hadn't done anything wrong, but the city is strict about its curfew, and she had violated it.

Afterward, we were sitting at my dining room table. We didn't purposely sit down to have a heart-to-heart talk. We just started talking, and suddenly I found myself saying things that surprised me. I realized that I was in the middle of a father-daughter conversation with someone who once was a little girl but had gradually become a big girl. Graduation was still a year away for Rachel, but I began sharing with her about all kinds of things.

I talked about how I hadn't always been a perfect dad. I told her that I tried to do the best I could, but that I was sorry we hadn't spent as much time together as I had wanted to.

As we talked, I told her that I loved her unconditionally. I remember saying that if Rachel or any of the other kids ever had children, I would love the grandchildren regardless of whether they were black, green, purple, orange, or any other color.

"I can't imagine not loving my grandkids," I said. "And for me to be able to say that about grandkids who don't even exist yet, how much more do you think I love you, Rachel?"

Rachel had a unique way of tilting her head to the side when she was thinking seriously, and she was doing that during this talk. And I remember her

beautiful smile.

Our conversation was intense. By the time we finished, we were both crying. We hugged and sobbed together.

I didn't know at the time that it was to be our good-bye talk, but looking back on it now, I know there was nothing left unsaid between us. It was a total openness, and I believe God ordained that talk.

I never would have expected that Rachel would be taken from me only a few days later, but I thank God that we had such a heartfelt talk together.

God Uses Broken Things

In America today when something breaks, we typically throw it out rather than fix it. People have called ours a disposable society.

I'm thankful that God doesn't do things that way. Our entire world has been broken ever since the Fall, but He hasn't given up on the human race yet. God lovingly works with broken people to restore and redeem them, using the cracks in their lives to create something beautiful.

Rachel was aware of her brokenness, but she was also aware that God was working in her to make her whole and complete.

All of us need to understand that sorrow and failure--even on the grand scale of Columbine--are not the end. They are simply a new beginning for God's redeeming grace.

LOVE FROM ABOVE

Beth:

If you're ever read anything about Saint Francis of Assisi, you know that he loved people, animals, nature, and just about everything else God had made. Rachel was the same way.

Everyone who knew her knows that whenever she was out walking, she had a history of taking the time to stop along the way and say, "Oh, look at that flower." She had the habit of stopping to smell the roses, as they say.

If she was out somewhere and a puppy dog or a cat walked by, she couldn't resist stopping to pet him or rub his tummy. At the shopping mall, she had to stop to talk to little babies. She would get down on her hands and knees so she could be on their level and just love them, and they loved her too. She always took the time to appreciate all of God's creatures, which, as Francis said, are recurring signs of God's grace and love for us.

Standing Up for the Underdog

Rachel's love for God's creatures didn't stop with flowers, puppies and babies. Whenever she sensed an injustice being done to someone, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant it was, righteous indignation rose up within her.

Rachel was very sensitive to the underdog. She had a tender heart toward people rejected by others. Shortly after the Columbine tragedy I talked with a mother of one of the slightly wounded victims about her

son. She told me that he had been born with a physical disability that caused him to talk slowly and also affected his appearance. Other students would make fun of him and shove him around at school. However, Rachel went out of her way to find him in the halls daily just to speak a few words of encouragement.

Later, at a professional softball tournament, I sat behind this young man in the bleachers. He told me that several hours before Rachel died, she had put her arm around his shoulder and told him she was going to buy him lunch in a few days and wanted to know all about his family. "Mrs. Scott, nobody has ever been as kind to me as your daughter was. I really miss her." I vowed, then and there, that as I traveled around the country speaking to groups of young people, I would share his story and challenge them to start a chain reaction of acts of kindness in Rachel's honor.

The Story of the Gloves

Among all the things we found after Rachel's death, there was a story she wrote that captures her compassion for the underdog. It is called "Gloves of Conviction." I don't think she wrote it for a class at school. I don't even think she wrote it out for someone else to read. Rather, it was something she wrote out of her heart after failing to care for somebody as she felt she should have.

The story is about a needy-looking woman who came into the Subway sandwich shop where Rachel worked. I think we have all been in similar situations, and typically many of us prefer to turn away and mind our own business rather than reach out to someone who obviously looks as if she could use our help.

For Rachel, this one episode of failing to help someone who was more vulnerable than she was troubled her deeply and inspired her to write this story. I hope it moves you to a deeper experience of compassion for others.

Gloves of Conviction

I was opening that day for work. On Sundays, no other employees come in until 11:00, which meant I had two hours of work to do by myself and then open the store for another hour alone with customers.

Usually no one comes in until about 11:30 on a Sunday morning anyway, so I always have plenty of time on my hands. I couldn't believe how windy and cloudy it was. The cold of the breeze alone could bring you to a chill.

It was 10:00, so I flipped the switch for the open sign and unlocked the doors. It must have been only five minutes after that when I heard the doorbell ringing, telling me I had a customer. I went out front and began to put the gloves on, ready to make the first sandwich of the day.

I looked up and saw a woman who must have been in her late forties. She was wearing several layers of clothes. They were torn and dirty. Her face was dark from dirt. She was shivering, and then she began to cough in an almost uncontrollable manner. She looked up at me after she was all right and she gave me such

a warm smile.

"What can I do for you, Ma'am?" I asked.

She looked at me pleasantly and said, "Oh, I was just wondering if you happen to know what time the busses are coming. I have been waiting out in the cold for two hours. You think they wouldn't be so late, especially on a Saturday."

I felt bad when I told her it was actually Sunday. She looked at me with such embarrassment and shock.

"Oh no," she said. "I need to get back downtown. I thought it was Saturday. Do you mind if I just sit here for a while until I figure out what to do?"

I told her no problem, and she sat at the table in the far corner. As I looked at her and the situation more carefully, I realized she must have been so poor, and maybe even homeless. She was dressed in the dingiest clothes that hadn't been washed in a while. She had a snug winter hat on, three layers of flannel, baggy pants, worn-through tennis shoes, and gloves. Her gloves were turned inside out. They had fringes coming off all sides.

I felt right then and there that I should have made her a sandwich free of charge. Then I should talk to her, telling her that whatever she did, God loved her and wanted her to trust him and fall into his arms once again. I knew where all of this was coming from. I knew God was giving me these words and asking me to go talk to her. But what is ... what if ... the usual questions and doubts about why I shouldn't.

I went back to work, trying to forget about it, and hoping she would leave soon. My next customer came about an hour after that. She was a woman in her early thirties. She was well dressed in what looked like a work outfit. She had her hair pulled up nicely, and she was laced with perfume.

I made her some sandwiches, and we were at the cash register when she asked me how long the other woman had been sitting there. I told her about an hour.

"Did she get anything to eat?" the lady asked me.

I said no, and told her about the busses. Then the lady asked me if I wouldn't mind making one more sandwich. I looked at her and smiled.

I never made a sandwich with such happiness and at the same time guilt. I told the lady no charge, and handed her a bag of chips to go with it. She thanked me and then went to the other woman.

She handed her the food and began to talk to her. They must have talked for two hours before I saw them leave. As I was cleaning the tables and feeling bad for not talking to the woman myself, I noticed that she had left her gloves.

I told God that I was sorry for disobeying him. He told me something that will always give me a boldness in these situations, something that will never make me hesitate to tell others of him:

"You feel like she missed something because you lost your boldness, but she didn't lose her opportunity. The other woman is sharing with her right now and she will not lose out on me.

"You lost. You passed up the chance to gain

something. You just let a wonderful flame go past you and into the hands of another. Let this be known, child, that when you do not follow through with the boldness and knowledge I have given you, more than one person is affected by it. You are as well as they."

Darrell:

Like all people, Rachel struggled with issues of self-esteem and tried to find her place in the world. She wasn't overpowered by these feelings, but she felt their sting on a regular basis.

Talking to Rachel before she died and reading her journals after she was gone, I have become convinced that Rachel took the vast majority of her problems to God and left them in His infinite care. It is kind of like leaving your case in the hands of a jury or a judge. Rachel would go to God and make her case, then she would leave the decision in God's hands.

Rachel had an extremely intimate relationship with God. I think this intimacy is the key that unlocks the mystery of who Rachel was and how she could be so loving to everyone she met and knew. It's as if her heart was filled to overflowing with the love of God, and this love flowed out from her and touched others too.

At times it is hard to tell if the companionship Rachel cries out for in her journal is human or divine. In one entry, the two kinds of love seem to be interwoven.

Am I the only one who sees Am I the only one who craves your glory Am I the only one who longs To be forever in your loving arms? All I want is for someone to walk with me Through these halls of a tragedy. Please give me a loving friend Who will carry your name, until the end Someone who longs to be with you Someone who will stay forever true.
--

But Rachel didn't wait until her romantic love needs were fulfilled before she followed God's command to love others. She seems to have received love directly from God, and this love gave her strength to love others.

Memories of a God-Centered Girl

I'll never forget all the people who spoke at Rachel's funeral and all of the wonderful things they said.

Sarah Scott was one of Rachel's cousin's and a close friend.

Rachel was the most incredible, passionate person I've ever met in my life. We grew up together, and we went through so much together. Before she passed away, she was at my house, and she took my yearbook and she wrote some stuff in there. I'd like to share what she said in my yearbook, because it will stay with me forever:

"It's hard to find God through these halls; doubt

is a part of every man's journey, but don't lose faith." And that's a message to everyone at Columbine, because God is in our halls, you just have to find him.

Another thing she wrote to me was: "Sarah, don't let your character change with your environment. Find who you are and let it stay its true colors."

THE CALL TO COMMITMENT

Over a period of years, Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold recycled their hurts and hatreds until their souls were filled with a simmering rage at the world.

As students at Columbine High School, the two angry young men didn't respond outwardly to the perceived slights they received at the hands of fellow students, but they internalized their alienation, amplifying it with violent video games such as Doom and music by shock rocker Marilyn Manson to produce fantasies of bloody revenge.

After the killings, parents of their victims heard rumors that Harris and Klebold had made videos about their murderous plans, but in the months following the tragedy no one saw the tapes or reported on their contents.

But all that changed after a reporter for *Time* magazine got access to the tapes, and the twenty-page story he wrote about what he saw appeared in the weekly news publication just before Christmas 1999.

The exhaustive story explored the damaged psyches of the two killers, including their anger at blacks, Jews, and athletes, and their desire for celebrity, a craving that led them to speculate whether filmmaker Steven Spielberg would consider directing the movie about their lives and deaths.

Missing Motives

Curiously, the reporter overlooked one important aspect of the killers' motives. Darrell Scott and Larry Nimmo (Rachel's stepfather) immediately noticed the omission when they and other parents watched some of the tapes. Numerous comments the killers made on their grisly pre-massacre videos made it clear that they shared an intense anti-Christian hostility.

Clearly the two Columbine killers meant to wreak as much death and destruction on as many people as possible on that April 20. Their grand design called for using nearly 100 explosive devices.

According to a Littleton Fire Department report issued in February 2000, Harris and Klebold created 49 carbon dioxide or "cricket" bombs, 27 pipe bombs, 11 propane gas bombs using 1.5 gallon tanks, 7 incendiary devices using more than 40 gallons each of flammable liquid, and 2 bombs they carried into the school in duffel bags, each using a 20-pound gas tank. If more than a few of these devices had worked, it is possible that hundreds of Columbine students would have died that day.

When the mass executions failed to happen as designed, Harris and Klebold resorted to killing

students one by one, and a surprisingly large number of their victims were committed Christians.

The fact that the killers had used religion as a criterion for selecting some of their victims was discussed as early as April 22, two days after the shootings, by reporters for the *Washington Post*, who wrote a story with the headline: "In Choosing Victims, Gunmen Showed Their Prejudice." That story included these two paragraphs:

While investigators here continued today to sift through the aftermath of the rampage for clues to the shooters' motive, relatives and friends of the slain students said that they believe some victims were targeted because they represented all that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold disdained.

There is no evidence that the murderous pair moved through the corridors with a hit list of names. But it was widely known among Columbine students that the tiny culture to which Harris and Klebold belonged had little tolerance for devout Christians, or for athletes who favored caps, or for the handful of minority students who attended the school.

Rachel's Final Moments

Meanwhile, friends and family of Rachel Scott were hearing accounts of her final moments. Most of the stories were attributed to Richard Castaldo, the young man who was eating lunch with Rachel outside the Columbine library that fateful morning. Richard himself was shot more than half a dozen times and remains paralyzed.

According to Richard's account, he and Rachel were sitting outside when they saw Harris and Klebold approaching. Without warning, the two young men opened fire, severing Richard's spine and shooting Rachel twice in her legs and once in her torso.

As Richard lay stunned and Rachel attempted to crawl to safety, the shooters began to walk away, only to return seconds later. At that point, Harris reportedly grabbed Rachel by her hair, held her head up, and asked her the question: "Do you believe in God?"

"You know I do," replied Rachel.

"Then go be with Him," responded Harris before shooting her in the head.

Beth:

Rachel was very committed to Christ. She wasn't a middle-of-the-road person. She wasn't apathetic. She had a vitality for life and an all-out devotion to what she considered important, and that devotion seemed to come through in even the smallest things she did.

Rachel had love and concern for family members who were experiencing difficult times. Her cousin, Daniel Ceclre of Shreveport, Louisiana, has suffered tremendous pain and affliction since his birth. Doctors are amazed that Daniel is still with us. Rachel wrote a prayer asking the Lord to intervene on his behalf.

She also prayed and wrote notes of encouragement to another cousin who was struggling in so many

areas of his life. One note said:

You wanna know what I feel--what I think about constantly--that is on my heart ... GOD. Seriously, He is all I think about. I want to serve Him so much ... So sorry if I came on so strong. I just wish you knew how it feels. I just feel so happy and fulfilled. I know that you don't understand right now, but I'm praying that someday you will. ... You are one of the most important people in my life, that's why I want to give so much of God to you. Just to have Him in my life has made such a difference.

I could see some of this in her while she was alive, but I have learned much more from others after her death. I have heard testimony again and again about kids she witnessed to, outcasts she talked to, needy friends who would call her late at night and talk to her for hours on the phone, and lonely people she loved and reached out to. Many students that we never knew before have come forth and told us about her commitment. Such testimonies confirm some of the things she wrote in her journals about putting herself last. I believe that was what she tried to do much of the time.

Rachel was serious about living her faith, even though her decision to do what she felt was God's will cost her dearly. She wrote in her journal:

Last week was so hard.... I lost all of my friends at school. Now that I have begun to walk my talk, they make fun of me. I don't even know what I have done. I don't really have to say anything, and they turn me away. I have no more personal friends at school. But you know what? It's all worth it to me. I am not going to apologize for speaking the name of Jesus, I am not going to justify my faith to them, and I am not going to hide the light that God has put into me. If I have to sacrifice everything, I will. I will take it. If my friends have to become my enemies for me to be with my best friend Jesus, then that's fine with me. Ya know, I always knew that part of being a Christian is having enemies ... but I never thought that my "friends" were going to be those enemies.

I knew something of Rachel's commitment even before her death and before I read her journals. She was very matter-of-fact about her faith and the demands it placed on her life. That was just who she was. She talked to people about God when she worked at Subway. She reached out to strangers who needed help.

One of Rachel's journal entries was a song she had written to encourage other people in their faith, but she felt the words convicting her to "walk her talk."

Father, reach out Your hand,
Grab ahold of my life.
Open my eyes
To Your wonderful light.

Fill me up
With Your undying love.
Save me a place
In Your kingdom above.

I wrote this song, and when I wrote it, it was intended to motivate Christians to go preach the Gospel to the world. But by the time I got to the second verse, I realized that I should be talking to myself instead of everyone else. I should be taking my own advice. And as Christians, we need to remember to walk our talk.

Darrell and I always saw faith as a part of who we are. That's the way Rachel lived out her faith too.

Darrell:

Some Christians see conspiracies against believers everywhere. I personally think that in some cases, we have brought hostility on ourselves. Too often what we hear on television or hear on the radio is a misrepresentation of true Christianity. As in any corporation, club, or organization, there are good people and there are bad. Unfortunately, many have judged Christians by seeing a bad sample.

It's true that there is a spiritual battle going on. It's true that there is a spirit in this world that is hostile to Christianity. But the weapons of our war are love, compassion, forgiveness, and kindness. These are hard to resist, even by the hardest heart. Rachel challenged us to start a chain reaction through acts of kindness. I encourage you, dear reader, to stop being "religious" and reach out to those around you in love and watch the amazing grace of God perform miracles.

People are crying,
Losing their minds.
People are dying,
Taking their lives.
Will anyone save them?
Will anyone help?
Will somebody listen
Or am I all by myself?

Please reach out your hand,
Grab ahold of their life.
Open their eyes
To His wonderful light.
Let them know
Of His undying love.
That this comes only
From Heaven above.

Please reach out your hand,
Grab ahold of their life.
Don't let go,
Without a good fight.
Witness to them,
Show them the way.
Give them God's love,
And give it today.

I sit here and tell you
To go save a life.
But what am I doing
To give that good fight?
I judge other souls,
Never checking my own.
Oh my Lord,
I should have known.
Rachel Joy

CREATIVE COMPASSION

Beth:

One young lady named Jessica, who sent an e-mail to us, relayed this incident. "I met Rachel at a gas station. I was short five cents, so she pulled a nickel out of her pocket and set it on the counter. When I asked her who she was, she told me this: 'Rachel Scott, good to meet you, friend.' I didn't know her, but her kindness and her smile has stuck with me even though it is three years later."

Simple love and kindness will make a lasting impression on a person's heart as they did with a young man I will call Jim (not his real name). Jim was a student at Columbine High School who suffered with a number of physical disabilities. The young man was basically left to fend for himself and was not surrounded by friends. His life had been lonely and one struggle after another, with few happy days. Rachel took notice of this young man and, with a compassionate heart, crossed the invisible line that keeps so many of us from reaching out.

Rachel asked Jim if he had ever had a date. He was embarrassed and said, "No." "Well," said Rachel, "then I am asking you for a date." Jim was thrilled! Not only did he have a date, but she was pretty too. He was looking forward to going to a movie and supper. The events of April 20 cut short Jim's dreams of going out with Rachel. She would never be able to keep that date. In the days that followed, Jim's mother told us how he cried and said, "Now I have no friends at school anymore." The one cherished moment in the life of a very lonely young man is that one person dared to reach out, expecting nothing in return, and gave simple love and kindness.

I remember a reporter asking me once, "Do you think Rachel was a member of cliques or groups like that?" "No," I told her. "I doubt she was, but if she had wanted to be a part of a clique, she probably would have formed her own. She would have brought all the misfits and kids that fall through the cracks at school together and made them feel accepted and special."

NO SOLITARY SOUL

The highlight of Rachel's week was her youth group. Breakthrough was the youth group ministry at Orchard Road Christian Center, an Assemblies of God congregation. It was Rachel's sister Dana who brought her into contact with Breakthrough, which would change the rest of her life. Here is how Dana

remembers that process:

The last two years or so of Rachel's life, she and I went to the same youth group called Breakthrough. I remember the first time I invited her to come. A few months earlier a good friend of mine had invited me to come, and I knew from the start that this place was exactly what my heart had been looking for. I couldn't wait for Rachel to see how *on fire* and *alive* it was!

It wasn't long after that when I began to see dramatic changes take place in Rachel's life. Her priorities and passions were changing, and she was spending so much more time in prayer and Bible reading that I was a little weirded out at first. She got real intense and passionate about making sure that we never missed a Breakthrough service. She became a leader in her cell group (even before I did), and I watched as she began to pour into people's lives, particularly over the phone. She spent countless hours on the phone (and at graveyard hours in the night, no less). She had a way of teaching people that I didn't recognize as a gift until now. People listened and understood Rachel because she was very *real* with people about her Christianity. She was *real* about her relationship with God, and it impacted people in tremendous ways because they knew she was speaking from her heart. She spoke in a language of honesty that anyone could interpret as *real*. People want truth, and she lived and spoke truth in the purest way possible, by allowing Jesus to live the life He gives freely inside her!

During Breakthrough, I had the opportunity to see Rachel grow in the Lord that no one else in my family got to see. I got to see her sing her lungs out and praise God with all her heart. I got to see her dance before the Lord and worship Him. I got to see her fight her battles on her knees in prayer and really cry out to God during her times of need. I got to see her go and lay hands on friends' shoulders and pray over them and with them. She cried with them, focusing on love for them and their needs instead of her own. I got to see her love for God. I got to see God mold my sister into something beautiful because her heart was willing to allow Him to do so. That beauty radiated outwardly, but it came from within, and she didn't even know it.

God chose to take Rachel and set her by His side eternally, and I know that His ways are not our ways, and I trust the plan that He is carrying out with all my heart. After all, He didn't have to give me Rachel for 17 years in the first place. But He did, and I love Him even more for that.

God, you know my goals, my dreams. But I cannot reach them without you. I need your help. Let me find you without the need of a church. Create in me the church, so that wherever I go, I will find sanctuary.

Rachel Joy

Lori (a friend at Breakthrough):

If I had to say one thing that represented Rachel to me, it was her passion. She had a lot of passion about things. I think the strongest was her passion for God. She was very passionate about knowing God and serving God. And she was passionate for her friends. She cared very deeply about all kinds of people at Columbine.

Rachel once told me that at school she had sat at a lunch table one day with a group of kids. When she looked around, everyone else was black or Hispanic. She was the only white person at the table, and she loved that.

It was interesting to me that Rachel never had a particular clique that she always hung out with. Instead, she looked out for people who seemed to need a friend and befriended them. She didn't care what someone looked like or whether or not he was "cool." She was fascinated with people, and I mean *all* people.

Deep Calling Unto Deep

Rachel loved being alone with God, and there were times she believed she heard from God very clearly. One Sunday morning she came into one of our leadership meetings, and, with her face shining brightly, said: "Lori, I heard from God today." I remember her telling me about it.

I woke up real early today, and after I woke up, I felt like I should take a walk. So I went to take a walk with God.

I went to the park while it was still dark, and saw the sun rise through the trees. Then God spoke to me and said, *You can see the sun. Yes, you can see it in part. But you can only see the sun shining from behind the trees. You don't really see the sun clearly yet.*

Soon, the sun rose higher in the morning sky, above the trees, and I heard God saying to me, *That's the same way it is with me. You used to hear me in part. You used to have a picture of me in part. But now you're going to see me more clearly.*

Rachel told me about that experience sometime early in 1998. For the rest of her life, that experience was a foundational one for her, and her life seemed to take on a deeper spiritual dimension.

Much of the time, the things Rachel heard from God inspired her and encouraged her. But some of these things made her sorrowful and some even gave her a sense of foreboding about the future.

During 1998, I used to go by Rachel's house and pick her up for Breakthrough's small group meeting. On some of these rides, she talked to me about the sense of foreboding she seemed to be getting. She had a growing premonition that she was dying or would not be alive for very long. One of her journal entries describes some of these feelings.

God ... I have this terrible, sharp, dull pain in my stomach. I don't know if it's a spiritual feeling, if the enemy is attacking, or if it's just sickness. Whatever it is, I just ask for your healing. If it's a spiritual feeling, I ask you to bless it. If it's the enemy, I ask you to bind it. If it's just sickness, I ask you to heal it. Thank you.

Rachel Joy

She went to the doctor, but the tests didn't show anything wrong. She believed that the pain might have been something God had given her to increase her sensitivity to the pain of the world.

A Crown of Life

I think often of Rachel. She had such awesome dreams, and all of her dreams included God. She used to talk about how she wanted to live as the apostle Paul did--on the edge with total dependence on God.

Rachel wanted to impact people for God. Through her death, she touched the world, and she still touches the world today. I believe that if she had known what was going to happen to her, she would do it all over again. Her life was cut short, but God saw to it that her dream for life was fulfilled.

At her funeral, I could picture a coronation taking place in Heaven. I thought, *Wow, at 17 years of age, she is receiving a crown of life.*

YOUR LIFE, YOUR CHOICE

Darrell:

I woke up at 4:30 one morning about a month after Rachel's funeral. I felt as though God were physically in the room with me, and two scriptures from the Bible were ringing in my mind. It was as though He were speaking them to me. They were, "I have brought you to the kingdom for such a time as this," and "I will put you before kings and leaders and you will not be afraid of what to say. I will put words in your mouth." I know how presumptuous this may sound, but it is the truth.

I began to feel a sense of purpose and destiny over the next few days that wouldn't go away.

I had stepped away from full-time ministry as a teacher when it became apparent that my marriage was headed for the divorce court. I had closed the door on that part of my life and never again did I expect to publicly speak and minister to groups of people. So when I began to feel a call to move back into a ministry format, it scared me.

Several days after this experience of sensing God speaking to me, I sat on the edge of the bed one morning and prayed. I said, "God, I want to do whatever You are calling me to do, but I have two requests. I do not want to open my own doors to speaking engagements, and I don't want to wear suits. I prefer comfortable clothes such as jeans."

Within minutes of that prayer, the phone rang. It was a man by the name of Frank Amedia, who had seen Rachel's funeral on CNN a month earlier. What he said over the next few minutes altered my life forever. First of all, he said that he had been praying

for me faithfully since Rachel's funeral. He said that the Lord had shown him that I was going to be raised up to speak to leaders and young people all across this country. As a prosperous businessman, he wanted to lend his financial support to whatever God was calling me to do. That was the first of many confirmations I received about my future.

However, what he said next was to become a major contribution to Rachel's testimony from beyond the grave. He said that three times in his life, he'd had dreams that he knew were from God. The first two had to do with his business, which had spread across the United States. His third dream took place shortly after Rachel's funeral. He dreamed about her eyes and a flow of tears that were watering something he couldn't quite see in the dream. He was adamant about the eyes and the tears and wanted to know if that meant anything to me. He was disappointed when I said, "No, Frank, I don't have any idea what that means." He told me that the dream had haunted him for days, and he knew there was a reason for it. He asked me to call him if I could ever shed light on what he felt was a real vision from God. I consented, and we hung up.

Several days passed, and I forgot about my conversation with Frank. Then I got a call from the sheriff's department letting me know that they were ready to release Rachel's backpack that she had on when she was murdered. There was a bullet hole through her backpack, and they'd held it for evidence to determine whose gun the bullet had come from.

We suspected that Rachel's final diary was still in the backpack, and when opening it, we found two of them. One of them had a bullet hole entering at a place on the back cover where she had written the words "I WON'T BE LABELED AS AVERAGE." I wept uncontrollably as I read what she had written on the front cover: "I write, not for the sake of glory, not for the sake of fame, not for the sake of success, but for the sake of my soul--Rachel Joy." Could she have ever suspected that within the next twelve to thirteen months her written words would be heard around the world? That they would be quoted by newscasters across our nation? That they would be printed in book form for the reading of generations of young people yet to be born? But my biggest shock was yet to come!

I turned to the end of her last diary and could not believe what was staring up at me from that final page! A drawing of her eyes with a stream of tears that were watering a rose! Later someone pointed out that there were 13 clear tears falling from her eyes before they touched the rose and turned into what look like blood drops. There were, of course, 13 victims of the two murderers. I was so stunned that I could barely breathe. A week ago, a complete stranger who lived more than a thousand miles away had described exactly what I was looking at in Rachel's final diary! I sat for 35-45 minutes in my truck and prayed for God to help me understand what was happening.

My prayers were answered--but not immediately. We discovered that same rose in a previous diary drawn a year before Rachel's death. The first drawing

simply showed the rose with the bloodlike drops, not the eyes or the clear tears. The first drawing also showed the rose growing up out of a columbine plant. Columbine High School got its name from the state flower. In addition to that, she had drawn a cross with the words: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends!"

We had two drawings from a year apart that formed a total picture! A scripture verse stating that the greatest love is when one lays down his life for a friend. Beside that verse is a columbine flower, out of which is growing a rose that is being watered by drops of blood that have as their source 13 clear teardrops from the eyes of a young girl named Rachel.

(End of file.)