

JESUS FILLS A LONELY HEART

Jenny Brake

I suppose I grew up as any normal kid would in the Midwest during the late 60's and early 70's. I lived in the suburbs north of Indianapolis with my parents and 4 brothers and sisters. We weren't wealthy by any means but I didn't go without much. I enjoyed many summer nights of "kick the can," whistling at bats, catching lightning bugs, and lying up on the roof of our house watching for falling stars. Inside I watched color television, (even though The Three Stooges was "my most favorite show" and that was in black and white).

I knew I was loved—at least by my parents and grandparents. I mean they had to love me, right? I didn't cause them any reason not to be proud of for the most part—as long as they didn't count picking on my older sister.

I had good grades. I was athletic. I was the kind of girl that was picked to be on teams at school even before some of the boys were picked. I won ribbons for my artwork, pie eating contests, kickball and spelling. But even before I entered middle school I knew something was missing from my life. A funny kind of feeling, like there was a lot more to it. I reasoned I was young enough that I'd figure it out later.

There was never a time I doubted God's existence. Our family went to church on Sundays for a few years. All I can remember was doodling on my bulletin and staring at Mark Ludlow, the cutest boy in junior high. I often heard things such as God loved the whole world and that Jesus loved me. I imagined I was far too insignificant and God way too busy to give me personalized attention. But I was grateful anyway. Living with a family of seven it was easy to understand the whole "personalized attention" thing. There were just too many people. I was neither the first child nor the last. I was one of those in the middle kids and I was one of those middle people. I wasn't the best or the worst in the world, just in the middle never getting much attention.

Strangely enough that inner urging for something else persisted into my teens. I finally became convinced it was the "boyfriend" quest—to love and be loved. I witnessed my girlfriends holding hands, being "in love," going steady—but I didn't get to. No one loved me. I was more like a little sister to many of the boys rather than a girlfriend. After all I could beat many of them on the basketball court or football field.

I knew that all I wanted, more than anything in the world, was to be loved for who I was or who I wasn't. I remember many nights sobbing myself to sleep feeling so unloved. I was very popular in school, not unattractive, involved in student government and on the girls' high school basketball team but I was getting very lonely on the inside. "What is wrong with me?" I wondered.

The summer before my junior year in school I went to a Christian camp with some other friends. It was in Colorado. I was anxious for two things: to go horseback riding, and hoping to find a boyfriend out there.

Each day the camp would participate in grand adventures. One day we would be hiking the Continental Divide, other times we would have rodeos, picnics, mountain climbs and square dances. Every night a speaker would open his Bible and tell us about

how much God loved each of us. This began to catch my attention. I was losing interest in the boyfriend search and shifting my attention to a God who might love me more than I knew.

As the great gospel story unfolded I understood that God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for all my wrongdoing. And it was all on account of the great love He had for me, FOR ME! Now that was personalized attention! That was love! Jesus wanted a real relationship with me. Not by anything merited. I didn't earn it and certainly didn't deserve it either. But He loved me.

That inner emptiness, that sense of missing something, was beginning to fill. I now understood that the vast hole in my heart was just waiting to be filled by the One for whom that hole was reserved, Jesus. I understood the Scriptures about His coming, His death, and resurrection and I became a believer in Him as my Lord and Savior. It was full. My heart was full. No void or empty space. I was loved. Truly loved!

I have been in a love relationship with Jesus for over 25 years now. I never thought that I could ever know the Creator of the universe of falling stars and lightning bugs. But I do. I am also promised an eternity with Him, freed from a hellish existence on earth of serving only myself and delivered from a real place apart from God called Hell, because I put my hope, confidence and trust in Him.

Jenny Brake is a wife and mother of two teens, still living in that suburb north of Indianapolis. Her heart is in discipleship and spiritual growth within the local church. She is an artist and photographer. She continues to grow in her relationship with Jesus and to this day enjoys watching falling stars, catching lightning bugs, and whistling at bats.

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