

Chicken Soup for the Christian Woman's Soul: Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit (Chicken Soup for the Soul)

By Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Patty Aubery

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Christian women who make God and family a priority in their life will love Chicken Soup for the Christian Woman's Soul, an affirming collection of stories that share the miracles that are possible when their hearts are open to God.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jack Canfield is co-creator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series, which includes forty *New York Times* bestsellers, and coauthor of *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*. He is a leader in the field of personal transformation and peak performance and is currently CEO of the Canfield Training Group and Founder and Chairman of the Board of The Foundation for Self-Esteem. An internationally renowned corporate trainer and keynote speaker, he lives in Santa Barbara, California.

Mark Victor Hansen is a co-founder of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

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Meeting God at Thirty-Thousand Feet

I did some dumb things in junior high school. I think it just comes with the territory. But one particularly dumb thing involved a theft. I didn't steal money or shoplift and I didn't take anyone's boyfriend. I simply stole a few votes.

The scene of the crime was journalism class, where those of us on the yearbook staff sat counting ballots for the school superlatives contest. Suddenly someone yelled out, "Caron! It looks like you may get enough votes to win, 'Most Talented.'" "

Until that moment, I had been the epitome of average. Winning a category in the superlatives contest would skyrocket my approval rating at Glenridge Junior High. I was eking out a social existence because my friends had friends who were cool. Like a mere feeder fish, I hovered close to the big fish in hopes of sucking some algae off them.

But, I soon found out that I was not the only one up for Most Talented. Trailing close behind me was Cindy, our school's guitar-playing singer. Cindy had real talent. She was even asked to sing her original song, "Beauty," at a school assembly. My only claim to fame was the pen-and-ink drawings I did on notebooks and book covers. Hardly a class went by that I didn't get at least one request for "Judy & Johnny 4-Ever," or "S. M. loves T. P."

Clearly, my talent was no match for Cindy's. Someone important once said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." But no one ever mentioned how the pen would do against the guitar. Guitars were big deals. I knew if I didn't do something fast, I would live my whole life in obscurity.

So, while votes were being tallied for other categories, I secretly grabbed a handful of uncounted ballots and tossed them in the trash. I was pretty sure no one saw me. I should have felt guilty, but I didn't.

At the end of the day, I had won. And suddenly the demand for notebook art increased a good forty percent.

Why it took God fifteen years to confront me on this, I'll never know. But it was He who brought it up one morning in my prayer time. By then we were on a first name basis and He had full permission to speak to me about anything that bothered Him. Here is an abbreviated version of our conversation:

Me: God, I want to be all I can be for you. I've searched my heart for anything that might be standing in the way of this and I've come up empty. I think I've dealt with all the sins I've ever committed. But I'll just sit here and wait for you to go through your files and see if you have something there I may have left out.

God: Well, there was that time in junior high school.

Me: Which time?

God: Most Talented.

Me: You saw that? It was such a long time ago. Surely you have a statute of limitations or some kind of cut off date for people who do dumb things prior to high school.

God: Not really.

Me: But I'm twelve hundred miles away. No telling where Cindy is. Do you realize the difficulty I would have in finding her? Okay, here's what I'll do. If one day I'm walking down the street and I happen to see her, I'll know you sent her and I'll make things right with her. Fair enough?

God: Fair enough.

I felt pretty safe. I hadn't seen Cindy in years. The odds of running into her in another state were microscopic.

Six months later, my husband and I were racing through the airport trying to catch a plane. When we reached the door of the 747, it has just been shut. My husband, forever the determined optimist, banged on the door as the noise of the engines accelerated. Suddenly a nice flight attendant with exceptional hearing came to our rescue and opened the door.

We made our way to the back of the plane, comparing our tickets to the numbers overhead until we found a match. I plopped down in the middle seat assigned to me. Using my polite voice I said, "Hello," to a woman next to me who was looking out the window. When she returned my greeting, adrenaline shot through me. In unison we both exclaimed, "Oh, my gosh! I can't believe it!"

There was Cindy, the guitar-playing singer.

A boxing match began inside me. From one corner came the feeling of someone who had just been given a million dollars. And from the other came the emotions of a hunted felon. Immediately I began carrying on two conversations, one on the surface with Cindy, the other internally with God.

Me: You actually found her! This is an outright miracle! I can't believe You are forcing me to do this. You really are into the details, aren't You?

God: Yes.

From takeoff to landing, Cindy and I chattered away, but all I could think of was how, out of the hundreds of thousands of people on airplanes that day, God looked for a needle in a haystack, found it, threaded it and placed it in my hand.

My palms started to sweat. I swallowed hard. No use stalling any longer. It was time to let Cindy in on the whole story. "Cindy," I said. "You're not going to believe this but it's no accident we met today. Several months ago, I promised God I would make things right if our paths should ever cross again."

As I explained, Cindy laughed. She easily forgave me. It barely phased her. I felt like scolding God for orchestrating such an ordeal. Then a familiar quote popped into my mind, "To whom much is given, much is required." God knew that if I'd confess a small matter from the past, he could trust me with greater responsibilities in the future.

I felt far from the epitome of average.

Caron Loveless
1998 Caron Loveless

Come to Our House

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me.
Mark 9:37

I saw them nearly every day from the window of my home office: a young boy and girl passing our home on their way to school. Busy working at my computer, I would look up only to see them trudging by, never seeming to speak a word between them. The boy appeared to be about eight; the girl slightly older, although it was hard to tell as she always walked with her head down, her long hair sweeping forward to hide her face.

The girl's name was Sarah, I came to discover; the boy's was Matthew. Our daughter Amber relayed this information when she arrived home from fourth grade one day with news to share. "I have a new friend, Mom! Her name is Sarah and she's in class with me. She's moved in just down the street from us, Mom. And guess what-she even has my same birthday!"

The next day Amber arrived home with her new friend in tow. Sarah was a quiet child-too quiet, I feared. When I inquired as to what the girls would like for an after-school snack, Sarah looked up from beneath her bangs at Amber, and then quickly echoed Amber's choice. She began to come more often and seemed to like coming to our home, but she rarely spoke and she stayed right on Amber's heels at all times. Her brother Matt was a year behind her in school, and sometimes he'd come over as well to play with our two sons who were both older and younger than he. Matt said little, though, and rarely smiled.

Sarah was easily frightened, particularly, she said, when they arrived home only to find no one there. We learned that the children had not seen their father in several years and the caregivers their mother hired never seemed to last long. After an anxious phone call from Sarah one afternoon, I instructed her to leave a note on the door telling her mother that she had come to our house. "I work at home," I assured her, "and there is almost always someone here. If you are alone and afraid, you just leave a note and come on down to our house anytime."

In the next few years the children visited us often, even though some trouble in the family caused them to move out of our neighborhood and then seventy-five miles away into the city of Boston.

One night, though, we received a frantic phone call from Sarah. The police had come to their house, she sobbed, and her mother had been arrested. After posting bail, she had returned to tell the children that they would be leaving the country. Gripped with fear, Sarah hopped on her bike and didn't stop riding until she

found a phone booth, where she placed a collect call to our home.

"Sarah, where are you?" my husband queried. "Do you think you can find a police station?"

He heard a long pause, and then a small surprised voice. "I'm right in front of one!"

"Go inside, Sarah, and the officers will help you. We'll be right there!"

Several hours later my husband and daughter arrived in a driving rainstorm to find the two frightened children being cared for by a compassionate police officer and a social worker. "Kids," explained the officer, "if we have to take your mother away, do you have anywhere to go?"

"When we lived on Cape Cod," Sarah quickly responded, "these were our neighbors and they said that if we were ever alone, we could come to their house." After running a background check on our family, Sarah and Matthew were released into our custody.

Sarah and Matt did indeed "come to our house," and they stayed for many years. My husband and I went through foster care approval in order to keep the children, and they became full-fledged members of our household, sharing possessions, rooms and, yes, even birthdays with our other three children. One year we drove to Florida to visit Sarah and Matt's grandfather. When all five were teenagers, we raised money and the seven of us went to Nairobi, Kenya, one summer to donate our services to a mission school.

There were difficult times, too. Blending a family is never easy, and the children grieved at times for the life that had been taken from them. For several years we appeared to be on "speed dial" with the principal of their high school, and with four teenagers in braces at one time we were given our own parking space at the orthodontist's!

There were far more times, however, when we felt incredibly privileged to have been entrusted by G...

Users Review

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